



Societal Consultation Report

Negotiating Public Support

Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2017

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. Social confrontations over policymaking (e.g., political strikes or violent forms of protest) have been rather rare 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. While corporatism has changed over the years, it still exists in Denmark. Involving societal actors is a way for the government to get 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*. 3. udg., 2011.

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 form of consensus-building testifies to the Dutch reputation for negotiating public support for public policies, sometimes as a precondition for parliamentary approval. In this Dutch 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 – present) governments. Recent examples include the public debate on pension reform and the national summit on climate policy after the Paris Accords. The two 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. 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 reviving “polder” tradition within a more fragmented political landscape may be the emergence of an extensive network of professional lobbyists.

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)

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.

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 aboriginal 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.

There are promises by Prime Minister Trudeau that the consultation process will be restructured and that more voice will be given to various groups, including indigenous groups. The delivery has been mixed. 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 aboriginal rights. On the other hand, the government has consulted and listened to many stakeholders in a large number of policy areas. Examples include the development of its innovation agenda and its policies for child care and labor market information.

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.

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 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 relaunched the social dialogue 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.

Hilgert, Romain. "Ruf nach Leadership." *Land.lu*, 18 Jan. 2013, www.land.lu/2013/01/18/ruf-nach-leadership/. Accessed 21 Feb. 2017.

"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 Feb. 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-se-presente/systeme-politique/index.html. Accessed 21 Feb. 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 Feb. 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 recently 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 dialogue 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:

Héritier, A. and M. Rhodes (eds) (2011), *New modes of governance in Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Heinrich, C. J., L. E. Lynn, Jr., and H. B. Milward (2010), “A State of Agents?: Sharpening the Debate and Evidence over the Extent and Impact of the Transformation of Governance”, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 20 (suppl 1):i3-i19.

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.

United States

Score 8

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.

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 amenable to consultation with trade unions, while Liberal governments have been more amenable to consultation with business groups, but governments of both persuasions have engaged in extensive consultation on some policies while eschewing consultation on others. For example, in its 2014 budget the coalition government announced substantial and wide-ranging cuts to welfare without prior consultation or warning; yet on tax reform it has proceeded slowly and carefully and has consulted widely.

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, or 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 this is not a binding legal act, 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 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 grand coalition's current 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 (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. The main exceptions are efforts to introduce Islamic religious instruction at state schools and the establishment of chairs for Islamic theology at German universities.

Latvia

Score 7

Societal consultation takes place frequently and is diverse in nature. The Tripartite Council of Latvia (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 its public consultations, the government is rarely successful in achieving an exchange of views and information that 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 also 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, teachers' unions organized a one-day strike in late 2015 over education-finance reform issues.

In 2013, the State Chancellery launched two public-engagement tools – the website Mazaksslogs (www.mazaksslogs.lv) and the mobile app Futbols. Mazaksslogs collects public opinions such as complaints or suggestions relating to bureaucratic hurdles, while Futbols collects user reviews of public institutions, focusing on experiences. In 2015, Mazaksslogs processed 164 complaints and suggestions, 31 of which related to construction and building permits. Meanwhile, Futbols collected 876 reviews (2013 - 2016), with the largest number focusing on the State Social Insurance Agency, the State Revenue Service and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. Futbols won the World Summit Award Mobile 2014 for best app worldwide in the category of m-government and participation.

Citation:

State Chancellery (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014), Reports, Available at (in Latvian): <http://www.mk.gov.lv/vk/gadaparskats/>, Last assessed: 22.11.2015.

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. Both the Kubilius and Butkevičius governments carried out public consultation on a number of policy issues, including pension-system reform, a national energy-independence strategy, anti-corruption policy and open-government measures. 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, the OECD has recently 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.

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 UK 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 scheduled, 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 is 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. 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 former prime minister, David Cameron, introduced the idea of the “Big Society” in the 2010 general election campaign and pledged to transfer power from central to local government, while encouraging people to volunteer for social work and support civil cooperation. This agenda has had some success, with a 2011 act reinforcing local governments’ rights to engage in independent initiatives.

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.”

Citation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/compact-the-agreement-between-government-and-the-voluntary-community-sector> <https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/about/>
<http://www.opengovernment.org.uk/about/ogp-action-plans/#section-3>

Belgium

Score 6

There is a strong tradition of consensual policymaking in Belgium (neocorporatist arrangements), whereby the government consults most established stakeholders to facilitate the acceptance of policy. This is especially the case for employers’ associations and trade unions (the so-called social partners) around socioeconomic issues. Such consultations have also become routinized in other fields, with the creation of specific consultative bodies, for instance the Federal Council for Sustainable Development which also gathers representatives of environmental organizations.

The current government has partially broken with this tradition, and has attempted to impose reforms in the areas of pensions, taxes, unemployment and other such matters without the support of trade unions. Arguably, some of this culture of consensus had previously stalled important but necessary reforms. The current government’s strategy has come as a cultural shock.

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. Governments are not obliged to respond to outside opinions; however, the Sobotka cabinet is much more open to dialogue with social partners and more willing to listen to trade unions' views. Various other forms of dialogue with citizens in preparing important decisions are spreading at national, regional and local levels. For example, a public consultation process to draft a new tariff structure was organized by the Energy Regulatory Office. The process received nearly 16,000 comments and suggestions from professionals and the public. As a result, the tariff reform was postponed.

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 the voters in a national referendum in October 2012. Before the parliamentary elections in October 2016 all four opposition parties declared that, if elected, they would seek to form a government that will ratify the new constitution.

Wage disputes affected labor market stability in 2014 and 2015 beginning with doctor and nurse strikes. 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 corporatism 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.

Citation:

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

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

Gylfason, Thorvaldur, Constitution on ice, in Erlingsdóttir, Irma, Valur Ingimundarson, and Philippe Urfalino (eds.), *The Politics of the Icelandic Crisis* (forthcoming). Also available as CESifo Working Paper No. 5056, November 2014. See https://notendur.hi.is/gylfason/cesifo1_wp5056.pdf

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 military operation "Cast Lead" in 2008 and the growing third sector in Israel inspired government decision 3190 for the pursuit of more societal consultation and inter-sectoral cooperation in the policy formation process. Civil protests in 2011 brought the issue of social dialogue to the forefront once more, with public complaints over obscure government budgetary procedures as well as internal pressure from parliament members to increase information sharing and transparency. This trend was only partially implemented, mainly by the establishment of a yearly roundtable event in which invited representatives discuss current and future government policies, the launch of

designated “open” governmental websites and increased participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in policy debates. In April 2015, the PMO advertised a tender for a new position: Public Sharing and Collaborations Director. As the third sector and alternative media outlets gain a stronger voice in Israeli society, consultations could gain more clout than they currently hold.

Citation:

Limor, Nissan and Avishai, Libat, “Separately and together: Structuring a relationship of cooperation between government and civil society organizations”, JDC publication 2013 (Hebrew).

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

“Israeli government, civil society and business community”, PMO policy paper (February 2008) (Hebrew)

Shapira, Asaf, “Who privatized my country?,” IDI website (March 2010) (Hebrew)

Trachtenberg report website (Hebrew)

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

“Tender 34067”, Ejobs Website 2015:

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Japan

Score 6

LDP-led governments have traditionally engaged in societal consultation through the so-called iron triangle, which refers to the dense links between parliamentarians, the ministerial bureaucracy, and large companies. However, these mechanisms tended to exclude other societal actors, including the trade-union movement and the small and medium-sized enterprise sector. 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 on 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 it gained some influence on policy matters that relate to the organization’s interests. This became evident during an ongoing row over constitutional reform. The LDP is in favor of this reform, while Soka Gakkai and Komeito have a pacifist background and try to slow down any major initiative. Abe enjoys the support of the conservative lobby group Nippon Kaigi, but its influence is difficult to substantiate and 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. Prime Minister Abe’s expectation that companies would raise wages in the wake of higher profits following the first-round effects of Abenomics has thus far been disappointed. 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.

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.bloombergview.com/articles/2015-01-13/japan-inc-isnt-very-japanese-any-longer>

Malta

Score 6

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. While NGOs concerned with social policy tend to be consulted more than those concerned with environmental policy, despite an increase in the number of policy areas open for public consultation. Such NGOs have benefited from this strategy, but they still experience difficulties. Generally they lack professionalism and organizational capacity, but enjoy greater media exposure. Consultation with civil society has steadily improved and reforms in some areas have opened formal space for consultation with NGOs. Meetings between ministries and civil society have greatly expanded consultation, one example being LGBT issues. However, in some areas more needs to be done. Regulatory impact assessments require a consultation process, but these consultations have occasionally been superficial.

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/20150915/local/white-paper-to-reduce-inspections-bureaucracy-launched.584533>
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Slovakia

Score 6

Both the second and the third Fico government have not assigned much importance to consultation with societal actors. The Solidarity and Development Council established in 2012 has not included social and environmental NGOs or representatives of national minorities. The tripartite consultation on the minimum wage failed both in 2015 and 2016 with the result that the government took a unilateral decision in increasing the minimum monthly wage from €380 to €405 in 2016 and to €435 in 2017. In some cases, for example, the controversial construction

law, consultation, has taken place a posteriori, that is, after laws have come under fire.

Citation:

Slovak Spectator (2016): Ministry wants consensus for new law. February 15, 2016 (<http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20093567/ministry-wants-consensus-for-new-law.html?ref=av-center>).

Slovak Spectator (2016): New construction act in focus. May 26, 2016 (<http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20174627/new-construction-act-in-focus.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. After the wave of protests in 2013-2014, many agencies, and especially independent regulators, opened up their work to public scrutiny and possible proposals during the process of deliberation. Presently, an increasing number of such bodies have 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 possible reactions of stakeholders may lead a government to engage in consultations mostly when a threat seems serious, not in any systematic way. This prompts strong trade unions or interest groups to voice their views and eventual reactions in order to influence decisions. In the period under review, the need to abide by the clauses of the MoU led the government to sharply reduce the scope of policies formulated through consultation. Nevertheless, in order to forestall discontent on the part of strong unions, it appears in 2016 the government abandoned some projects, like privatization of telecoms and electricity. Some groups and unions have lost influence under the crisis conditions.

Public consultation before rule-making is a regular but less systematic practice than elsewhere in the EU. 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.

France

Score 5

The traditional distrust regarding “lobbyists,” not seen as legitimate political actors, and the difficult social relations in France that hinder effective social dialogue, 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. The 2013 reform bill on the labor market followed an agreement between three (out of five) trade unions and employer’s organizations, a pact which was then made into law by the government and parliament. Another example is a similar 2015 agreement on the adaptation of supplementary pensions. Nonetheless, given persistent distrust between the social actors, especially on the part of some unions, progress is slow and there are important setbacks, such as the conflict within Air France, the failure to negotiate an agreement on the social dialogue law (2015). 2016 was plagued by repeated demonstrations against rather modest changes in labor law. This was partly due to the erratic method of government. It first presented an advanced draft without consulting social partners. Confronted with strong protest, even by the reformist, cooperative CFDT union, the draft was withdrawn. A consultation round produced a second, less ambitious draft containing some concessions to the CFDT. In the end, government failed to gain support for its bill. It was adopted with little concertation, provoking fierce opposition by most unions and in the latter case, without a positive vote of the parliament (failure to censure the government). Given the entrenched attitudes and preferences of the actors involved and the amount of mutual distrust, change will come slowly.

Italy

Score 5

Cabinet consultations with economic and social actors have not been one of the main priorities of the Renzi government. 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. Prime Minister Renzi in particular, who is keen to communicate the image of an innovative and rapid-response government, has tried to avoid entangling himself in official discussions with trade unions, which are increasingly less popular. He has 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 2014 reform of labor law – the Jobs Act – was promoted by the executive office without engaging social interests in its preliminary drafting. This does not mean that contacts with individual trade union leaders have not taken place and that low-level consultations do not exist. Relations between the government and the employers' association, Confindustria, have become tighter. The support of the Confindustria for the government's constitutional reform demonstrates strong support for Prime Minister Renzi and his government from a large majority of entrepreneurs. More recently, the government has developed a greater interest in engaging with trade unions, particularly concerning the delicate question of reforming the pension system.

Poland

Score 5

The Polish government is obliged by law to consult all parties affected by proposed legislation. In addition, there is a Council of Social Dialogue 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. The PiS government has often bypassed public consultation by relying on legislative initiatives by parliamentarians. Consultations both inside and outside the Council have been largely formal. 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. Moreover, the quick passage of major laws has reduced the time available for meaningful consultation. 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.

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 dialogue. The government managed to reach agreement with the social partners over several cornerstones of its legislative program, including austerity measures in the public sector for 2015 and 2016. 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.

Spain

Score 5 The conservative Popular Party (Partido Popular, PP) 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, 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 (for example, with NGOs involved in international development assistance, as a result of massive foreign-aid budget cuts).

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 caused a general trend of weakening with regard to the mechanism of social dialogue as an instrument for policymaking. Under the Milanović government, the tripartite dialogue 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 did not change under the Orešković government.

Mexico

Score 4 While originally perceived as a great communicator, President Peña Nieto's approval rating declined to around 25% by late 2016. In this regard, the economic situation, rampant violence and the slow battle against corruption 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.

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. The government's lackluster approach toward the disappearance - and likely murder - of 43 university students, as well as other similar incidents, has had a negative effect on its relations with civil-society groups.

Portugal

Score 4 Former president Cavaco Silva consulted widely with social actors, businesses and individual experts before he asked António Costa, leader of the Socialist Party, to form a government with the parliamentary backing of the Portuguese Communist Party, the Left Bloc and the Ecologist Party. He previously requested clarification from António Costa regarding several issues, including the role of societal actors.

The government does consult 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), which 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 is clear in the CES' plan of activities and press releases. However, since mid-2012 there has been a gradual weakening of the government's ability to generate support, particularly as austerity measures have advanced.

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

<http://www.tamegasousa.pt>

Romania

Score 4

After the resignation of Prime Minister Ponta in November 2015, President Iohannis was quick to invite a delegation of 20 civil society leaders representing Freedom House, Union of Romania’s Students and others for a consultation in the Presidential Palace. While Iohannis promised to hold similar consultations on a regular basis, they have not taken place. By contrast, the Ciolos government established the Ministry of Public Consultation and Civic Dialogue (MCPDC) to enhance communication and transparency in decision-making, ensure public access to information and involve civil-society in the government processes. While the MCPDC organized many consultations with social actors, it was largely excluded from the government’s decision-making. Consultations on the 2016 budget provoked discontent as the legislation was largely completed prior to MCPDC consultations with civil society. Moreover, important legislation such as the introduction of a postal vote for Romanians living abroad passed without adequate public consultation.

Turkey

Score 4

The country’s civil society is deepening, but the legal, financial and administrative conditions for participatory decision-making need to be improved. 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 the 2014 Activity Report of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, performance indicators assessing the development of civil-society participation and feedback mechanisms within the parliamentary processes were given negative ratings. The EU-Turkey Civil Society Dialogue has helped sponsor a number of projects involving participation by more than 40 civil-society organizations from Turkey and the EU with the goal of enabling civil society to contribute to the political reform process. Several additional mechanisms also facilitate societal participation. Development and strategic plans, as well as e-transformation projects, involve stakeholder participation, which, for example, is required under the Environmental

Impact Assessment Regulation. Moreover, institutions such as the Economic and Social Council, city councils, the Minimum Wage Determination Commission, and Web-based public-consultation applications provide participatory platforms when used effectively.

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:

TBMM Başkanlığı İdari Teşkilatı 2014 Faaliyet Raporu, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/faaliyet_raporu_2014.pdf (accessed 27 October 2015).

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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Ayşe Buğra and Osman Savaşkan, *New Capitalism in Turkey The Relationship between Politics, Religion and Business*, Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014.

Hakan Yerlikaya, *Kamu Politikalarının Oluşturulmasında Katılımcılık ve Bilgi ve İletişim Teknolojileri*, Uzmanlık Tezi, TC Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2015.

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

Greece

Score 3

After the second consecutive electoral victory of Syriza (in January and September 2015), the government started implementing a set of policies, based on the Third Economic Adjustment Program signed in August 2015. The program, which contained large-scale spending cuts in salaries and pensions, as well similar cuts in public health and education, was at odds with what Syriza had promised to its supporters among civil servants, professionals and employees associated with or working for welfare services. In this context, in the period under review. the groups which were negatively affected by the U-turn in government policy were only nominally consulted. On the other hand, the Syriza-ANEL government consulted with representatives of industrialists, merchants and the liberal professions who wanted to voice their views on private investment. The government did the same with Greek businessmen who wanted to invest in the media sector and to participate in the government’s failed attempt to shrink the range of private TV channels permitted to operate in Greece.

South Korea

Score 3

Park Geun-Hye’s administration governed in a hierarchical style. This particularly entailed a course of confrontation with labor unions, and resulting in a hard-line stance toward labor unions and civil society. Park’s unilateral decision-making style

created a perception of unpredictability, and weakened the autonomy and activities of government organizations. The Park administration consulted with an extremely narrow range of social actors, and even this typically took place after decisions were made rather than during the policy-development process.

Park's lack of communication with opposition parties and the public prompted criticism even within her own Saenuri Party. Many observers expressed concern about the return of a more authoritarian style of leadership that deemphasized civil-society consultation, freedom of expression and the diversity of published opinions.

Citation:

E-People, <http://www.epeople.go.kr>

OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2015, Country profile Korea, www.oecd.org/publications/oecd-regulatory-policy-outlook-2015-9789264238770-en.htm

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 dialogue. In response to the popular mass demonstrations organized by the Tanítanéék (I would like to teach) movement in 2016, the government created a Roundtable for Public Education (Köznevelési Kerekasztal).

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