

Recourse to Scientific Knowledge

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2024



Indicator

Harnessing Scientific Knowledge Effectively

Question

To what extent is the government successful in effectively harnessing the best available scientific knowledge for policymaking purposes?

30 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 is able to harness the best available scientific knowledge for policymaking purposes.
- 8-6 = In most cases, the government is able to harness the best available scientific knowledge for policymaking purposes.
- 5-3 = Only rarely is the government able to harness the best available scientific knowledge for policymaking purposes.
- 2-1 = The government is not able to harness the best available scientific knowledge for policymaking purposes.

Canada

Score 9

Many opportunities exist for Canadian governments to harness expertise through their own research activities, the university system, and the private sector.

The provision of policy advice is a critical activity in the policymaking process, attracting greater attention from policy scholars as policy advisory systems have become increasingly complex. More and more actors are involved in providing policy-relevant knowledge and analysis to governments. Multiple communities of scholars and experts have developed into intricate policy ecosystems, where public servants have lost any monopoly they might once have had. They are now flanked by private sector actors, NGOs, and academics in the production of knowledge aimed at or expected to benefit decision-makers.

Within these policy advisory systems, various sets of actors have distinct roles, values, and approaches to their policy activities. They conduct different types of analysis and provide diverse forms of advice. This holds true for groups such as consultants, academics, think tanks, policy laboratories, NGOs, interest groups, and many other organizations and individuals who offer counsel on policy problems and solutions.

Determining what these groups do and how successful they are in these advisory activities is a major research agenda in the field. It was often thought in the past that the location of advisers affected both the kinds of advice they provided and its influence. Especially in Westminster-type parliamentary systems, key “inside” actors

in government – such as internal policy analysts, senior civil servants, and others – were thought to exercise disproportionate policy influence over policy decisions and content. Thinking has changed on this subject, however, as evidence has mounted concerning the increasingly key role played by outside actors – from think tanks to interest groups, NGOs, and others – in the provision of policy advice.

The relationships of influence and activity between governments and external actors (public, private, and non-governmental) in the policy process are complex. Older work often argued that academic research at best had an indirect “environmental” or “enlightenment” effect on policymakers. However, more recent work on Canada has argued that previous studies misconstrued the role of outside policy advice because they surveyed “average” levels of input and, in so doing, missed the significant impact of a small elite group of “hyper-experts” within an already small group of “super-users” interacting on a constant basis with government policymakers (Migone et al. 2022).

Citation:

Migone, Andrea, Michael R. McGregor, Kathy Brock, and Michael Howlett. 2022. “Super-Users and Hyper-Experts in the Provision of Policy Advice: Evidence from a Survey of Canadian Academics.” *European Policy Analysis* 8 (4): 370–93. <https://doi.org/10.1002/epa2.1139>

Germany

Score 9

In Germany, the formulation of political decisions – whether concerning strategic, long-term issues such as climate policy or immediate crises like the pandemic and energy crises – is intricately woven with extensive consultations within the scientific community. This consultative process stands on two foundational pillars: first, routine engagements and policy recommendations from well-established scientific advisory boards; and second, on-demand, ad hoc consultations that have assumed an increasingly pivotal role, particularly in addressing urgent decision-making requirements during recent crises.

Central to the established advisory framework are scientific advisory boards within individual ministries, whose members are chosen based on their academic expertise and a diversity of academic perspectives, within the bounds of accepted scientific principles. These boards enjoy a notable degree of autonomy in selecting their focus areas and organizing their work. Several other esteemed expert advisory bodies, such as the German Council of Economic Experts and the German Advisory Council on the Environment, contribute expertise and advice through regular reports on prevailing policy challenges.

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) has played a consequential role in pandemic decision-making through its meticulous monitoring of objective data. Additionally, the German Ethics Council has showcased a high profile in media discussions and governmental decisions, particularly on ethical quandaries arising during the

pandemic, such as vaccine distribution priorities and the role of mandatory vaccination. Finally, the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina and the National Academy of Science and Engineering (acatech) regularly provide scientific expertise on various topics.

Temporary commissions, featuring leading researchers in the relevant policy field, are established for specific reform topics. Another avenue for scientific guidance is provided by parliamentary expert hearings. For significant legislation, Bundestag committees conduct expert hearings, which are transparently broadcast through Bundestag television. Despite occasional concerns that experts are selected based on their alignment with specific positions, these hearings serve as a crucial instrument for providing scientific advice to the parliament. The Bundestag also benefits from its own scientific service, which offers succinct summaries of the scientific state of knowledge to its members through briefings.

Ad hoc scientific advice is organized flexibly, involving bilateral conversations and larger rounds of experts in digital talks. This approach has become standard practice during crises, including the pandemic and recent energy challenges. Noteworthy policy decisions, such as those addressing the surge in gas and electricity prices during the energy crisis, have been shaped through close collaboration with researchers advising on optimal design.

The frequency of advice depends on the urgency of the situation, with recent crises necessitating even weekly digital expert meetings with ministers. Critically, all significant crisis-related decisions by the German government in recent years have been informed by scientific insights. Challenges, however, arise in the realm of long-term reform, where a prevalent political present-bias impedes acceptance of viable, forward-looking solutions. An illustrative example is the German pension system, where resistance against comprehensive reform, including adjustments to the statutory pension age, persists despite scientific recommendations. While complaints from non-governmental experts about superficial participation surface occasionally, the broader German scientific community generally recognizes that their advice is considered by policymakers, even if, constrained by political realities, decisions may not consistently align with this advice.

United Kingdom

Score 9

The UK government has multiple channels for harnessing scientific knowledge. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) was convened on numerous occasions in different configurations to guide the government response. SAGE membership primarily includes biomedical experts, but other means exist for gathering broader interdisciplinary knowledge. Ministers often claimed to be “following the science,” although evidence submitted to an inquiry chaired by Baroness Hallett shows that the

specific science being followed was sometimes unclear. There are calls to reform UK science advice to provide more independent challenges to the government, referencing principles of science advice such as transparency, which may be challenging to implement within the UK government system (Michie et al. 2022; Cairney and Toth 2023).

Most government departments have a chief scientific adviser who collaborates with the government chief scientific adviser (GCSA). The GCSA provides scientific advice to the prime minister and cabinet members, advises on policy aspects related to science and technology, and ensures the quality and use of scientific evidence and advice in government. The GCSA can draw on the network of departmental scientific advisers and has extensive connections with the broader scientific community.

Citation:

Cairney, P., and F. Toth. 2023. "The politics of COVID-19 experts: comparing winners and losers in Italy and the UK." *Policy and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/polsoc/puad011>

Michie, S., Ball, P., Wilsdon, J., and West, R. 2022. "Lessons from the UK's Handling of Covid-19." for the future of scientific advice to government: a contribution to the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry,' *Contemporary Social Science*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2022.2150284>

United States

Score 9

The U.S. federal government is well-resourced and supports an impressive array of in-house scientists who help monitor federal programs and better inform federal policy (Jasanoff 1990).

One of the major sites of science in federal policymaking is the Department of Energy. With an annual budget of \$30 billion and 10,000 employees – only 138 of whom are political appointees chosen by the president – the department has chief responsibility for energy production and research in the United States. It supports the National Laboratories System, which consists of 17 laboratories across the U.S., and the Office of Science, the largest funder of science in the United States (Lewis 2018).

The Department of Energy's Loan Program Office provides \$40 billion annually in loans for energy projects. It allocates special loans for advanced technology vehicles and Native American tribes. The Loan Program Office has supported many significant scientific achievements and made a substantial contribution to the United States economy. For instance, it financed Tesla's factory in Fremont, California (Loris 2016).

The Department of Energy has ARPA-E (Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy), which models itself after the Department of Defense's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) (Bonvillian and van Atta 2011). With a \$309

million budget, this program provides funding for risky but high-reward energy-related projects (Bonvillian 2018).

In 2022, the Biden administration signed into law the Chips and Science Act, a \$280 billion bipartisan bill to boost domestic high-tech manufacturing and increase funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and other research agencies, including the Department of Energy's Office of Science and the National Institute of Science and Technology.

Citation:

Michael Lewis. 2018. *The Fifth Risk*. New York: Norton.

Sheila Jasanoff. 1990. *The Fifth Branch: Science Advisers as Policymakers*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

William Bonvillian. 2011. "ARPA-E and DARPA: Applying the DARPA Model to Energy Innovation." *The Journal of Technology Transfer*.

Nick Lorris. 2016. "Examining the Department of Energy's Loan Portfolio." Heritage Foundation.

Australia

Score 8

Australian governments regularly draw on experts to inform policymaking through various mechanisms. Experts feature prominently in committee hearings preceding new legislation, providing detailed submissions. They may also work directly with government agencies, with departments like Foreign Affairs and Defence using grants programs to select qualified academic teams to conduct research on their behalf. Much interaction between government officials and academic experts occurs informally through person-to-person relationships.

The government funds national grants programs through research councils like the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Research Council. The selection criteria for the projects funded by these councils typically include some consideration of a "national benefit" that aims to align funded research with the national priorities as determined by the government.

However, academic influence on government decision-making is limited, especially in economic and social policy domains, with technical advice more readily accepted. The Productivity Commission is an exception, drawing on expert advice for inquiries and reviews.

Although the government is able to draw on relevant expertise, recent years have seen the rise of populist pressures that have diminished the standing of and respect for experts in some sectors and among some influential figures in politics. For example, despite unanimity among experts on the desirability of a carbon tax, there is still no price on carbon in Australia.

A recent development promising increased scientific evidence in policy is the establishment of the Australian Centre for Evaluation within the Department of Treasury in late 2023. This center aims to enable high-quality policy evaluation

across federal government operations by providing advice and bringing together representatives from government departments with relevant experts.

Citation:

The Treasury. 2023. "Australian Centre for Evaluation." <https://evaluation.treasury.gov.au>

Denmark

Score 8

Major reforms in Denmark are typically prepared via committees or commissions established to produce reports outlining issues and options. In recent years, commissions have played an essential role in policymaking.

The formation process includes several commissions: the Strukturkommissionen (infrastructure commission), the Velfærdskommissionen (welfare commission), the Arbejdsmarkedskommissionen (labor market commission), the Skattekommissionen (tax commission), the Produktivitetskommissionen (productivity commission), the Dagpengekommissionen (unemployment insurance commission) and the Reformkommissionen (the reform committee). Each of these commissions has been chaired by highly respected university professors, and most have had independent secretariats to ensure their independence.

The current government, which took office in 2022, has proposed the creation of 12 new commissions to prepare reports on a wide variety of issues, such as the future of welfare institutions, and child and youth life (Regeringsgrundlag 2022). These committees will be independent of the government, and they are likely to be chaired by respected academics.

The political administration is highly professional and includes in-house expertise, such as individuals with PhDs. However, for most policy areas, policymakers rely on advisory councils or expert committees as part of a consensus tradition.

On a more permanent basis, the Danish Economic Council plays an important role as an independent institution, as politicians heed its recommendations. Since 2007, the number of chairpersons (independent experts) of the Economic Council has increased from three to four, and the responsibilities of the Council have expanded. Such figures now also head the Environmental Economic Council and the Productivity Council (meeting EU requirements) and act as the fiscal watchdog (related to the Budget Law). The chairs prepare reports that members representing unions, employers, independent experts, the central bank and the government then discuss. The reports typically garner media attention. The chairs are nonpartisan positions, typically held by university professors who usually serve for several years.

Citation:

Regeringsgrundlag 2022. Ansvar for Danmark. <https://www.stm.dk/statsministeriet/publikationer/regeringsgrundlag-2022/>

Finland

Score 8

In Finland the government primarily organizes the collection of scholarly advice informally, for example by consulting scientific experts when drafting committee reports. Some formal bodies such as temporary working groups, ad hoc committees, ad hoc science panels and permanent councils also exist.

In general, various permanent and nonpermanent committees play important roles in structuring the flow of scholarly advice into government decision-making. One example of a permanent group that advises the government and ministries on research and technology matters is the Research and Innovation Council. The PMO appointed a scientific expert panel to study the effect of the pandemic in the spring of 2020.

A government resolution on the comprehensive reform of state research institutes and research funding was adopted in 2013 and implemented between 2014 and 2017. This measure aims to make the use of sectoral research in governmental decision-making more efficient and focused.

The current institutional mechanisms to some extent ensure that the government can access the best available scientific expertise from the outset and on short notice for all key projects. However, there are only a few expert commissions in critical reform areas. The Prime Minister's Office develops an annual plan to achieve strategic research objectives, promoting the systemic use of research projects and data for decision-making, steering and operating procedures. Projects falling under the government's strategic research goals are managed by the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland (Strategic Research Council n.d.).

However, a comprehensive evaluation of the best available scientific evidence seldom starts during the early stages of the policymaking process, when decisions can still be modified. Additionally, these consultations are generally not public, as they occur in closed working groups.

There is ongoing communication between government officials and non-governmental experts. However, neither the process for selecting consultation partners nor the consultations themselves are entirely transparent. Although Finland is a small country, the selected experts tend to represent a diverse range of perspectives. The circle of consulted non-governmental experts is fairly open to new members.

The scientific community offers robust criticism of the government's core plans, but generally this has little impact on government policies. Non-governmental experts regularly express criticism regarding the superficial or token nature of their participation. However, the government's plans in key areas do not blatantly contradict prevailing scientific opinions. In the fall of 2023, however, the

government rejected a research program on work-based immigration, most likely due to opposition from the populist True Finns party. The decision blatantly contradicted the consensus scientific opinion on the importance of this particular topic.

The government does not in practice attempt to manage academic controversies or reconcile divergent expert opinions.

Citation:

Strategic Research Council. n.d. <https://www.aka.fi/en/strategic-research/>

Netherlands

Score 8

The Netherlands has always had a good reputation with regard to seeking scientific support for government policy. Econometric modeling intended to inform economic policy was practically invented here by Nobel Prize-winning economist Jan Tinbergen. This was the starting point for the establishment of a series of important permanent scientific advisory institutes, formally part of ministries but effectively independent: the Center for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB), the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), the Ministry of Justice and Security's Scientific Research and Documentation Center (WODC) and parliament's Rathenau Institute, which provides advice on scientific and technological issues. These institutes produce a continuous stream of reports and advisory policy briefs, and their chairs frequently participate in meetings of ministerial sub-councils. The SCP's chair was elected "most influential Dutch person" by journalists in 2019 and 2020.

In spite of criticism of the role of the Outbreak Management Team during and after the COVID-19 pandemic years, the scientization trend has not lost momentum. Since 2019, the project Parliament and Science has picked up steam. This is a cooperative project between the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer), the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences (KNAW), the Young Academy, the Dutch Research Council (NWO), the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research (TNO), the Universities Netherlands (Universiteiten van Nederland) and the Dutch Federation of University Medical Centers (FNU). The permanent house committees now have a knowledge coordinator and an information specialist, seconded from the Analysis and Research Service. Each house committee is also tasked with drawing up a knowledge agenda for the new calendar year, with topics on which additional knowledge needs to be acquired, and has a budget for purchasing knowledge. For the science organizations, these changes prompted them to increase their commitment to 1.5 full-time staffers, and they have appointed a full-time "liaison" to Parliament and Science. Since 2020, some 18 bills have been subjected to a review by scientific experts before parliamentary debate.

Other parts of government have also enhanced their access to scientific information. In response to criticism of the state for using scientifically developed critical deposition values as a basis for nitrogen policymaking and legal decisions, a new Ecological Authority was established and tasked with critically assessing and validating scientific contributions. A Scientific Climate Council was established by the minister for climate and energy. The Ministry of Internal Affairs mobilized the public administration community in an effort to comparatively study all aspects of the obvious implementation failures affecting many government policies. In view of their ever-increasing role in implementing national policies, local governments' knowledge management and use is also being studied.

Public opinion is in favor of increasing accessibility to scientific information. According to the Rathenau Institute, between 2018 and 2021, public trust in science increased from 7.07 to 7.42 out of 10 points. Many people credit the fast development of an effective COVID-19 vaccination as having enhanced their trust in science. Interestingly, others cite this fact as a reason for their increased distrust. This is not to say that science has not come under increased societal and political scrutiny. The values used to make nitrogen policymaking and legal decisions were attacked by scientists funded by large agro-industrial companies, and with the BBB party serving as a political mouthpiece. In 2023, scientific scrutiny of party platforms before elections was skipped by many political parties, among them several major parties (e.g., PVV, NSC, BBB) likely to be coalition members in the next government. Close contacts between CPB and PBL experts and politicians have been considered beneficial to the Dutch consensus democracy with regard to easing coalition negotiations. The reluctance of political parties to subject themselves to this scrutiny is partly based on justified scientific criticism of the shortcomings and blind spots of econometric modeling as a basis for political decisions. "Broader Prosperity" initiatives and activities have begun to remedy this.

Citation:

Velden, N. van der. 2021. *Scientization of Dutch Policy Advice: A Study on the Reliance on Academic Expertise in Dutch State Committees Between 1970-2017 and Its Relation to Different Understandings of Democracy.*

NRC, Stellinga. 2021. "Naar Kim Putters, de 'invloedrijkste Nederlander', wordt echt niet altijd geluisterd." NRC November 7.

Parlement en Wetenschap. 2023. "Van Bergen, Liaison Parlement & Wetenschap."

Grootel, L. van, D. Das, and P. Diederren. 2022. *Kennis voor lokaal beleid – Verkenning van de kennis- en leerbehoeften van gemeenten.* Den Haag: Rathenau Instituut.

Spekschoor. 2022. "Ook met nieuw opgerichte Ecologische Autoriteit moet stikstofuitstoot flink omlaag." NOS Nieuws, September 3.

CPB en doorrekening partijprogramma's

Rijksoverheid. 2023. "Brief aan Wetenschappelijke Klimaatraad met adviesaanvraag klimaatneutraliteit."

Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken. Special 2023. *Inspiratie uit het buitenland.*

NRC, Rutten. 2023. "De liefde voor het doorrekenen van partijprogramma's is bekoeld: 'We doen het met tegenzin, de laatste jaren zeker.'" NRC, November 6.

NRC, Meeus. 2022. "Politiek in 2022: het rondpompen van misstanden die mogelijk niet bestaan." February 19.

Rathenau Instituut (2021). Trust in science in the Netherlands (2021 survey). The Hague (authors: Broek-Honigh van den, N., I. Glas and A. Vennekens). https://www.rathenau.nl/sites/default/files/2021-12/REPORT_Trust_in_science_in_the_Netherlands_2021_survey_Rathenau_Instituut.pdf

New Zealand

Score 8

Various institutional mechanisms exist that allow governments to harness scientific knowledge for policymaking purposes. Governments have established expert advisory groups comprising scientists, researchers and subject matter experts to provide insights and recommendations on specific policy areas. Additionally, government agencies regularly commission research, studies and data collection to inform policymaking, often collaborating with research institutions, universities and scientific organizations to gather relevant information. The prime minister also has access to the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Adviser (PMCSA), which convenes the Chief Science Adviser Forum and provides advice on how science can inform policy design.

The transparency of the consultation process varies based on the nature of the consultation. For example, while reports produced by expert advisory groups are generally made publicly available, research studies commissioned by government agencies are published less frequently.

It is important to note that the government is not obligated to follow scientific advice. Frequently, governments choose to disregard expert recommendations – even those produced through formal institutional mechanisms, such as expert advisory groups. For instance, the Labour government under Ardern and Hipkins dismissed the idea of a capital gains tax, contrary to the recommendations of its own Tax Working Group (Coughlan 2023). Similarly, environmental policy has yet to reflect the recommendations made by the Climate Change Commission (Neilson 2023) – an outcome that seems even less probable under the conservative coalition government.

Another problem is that, because of New Zealand's comparatively small population, the pool of non-governmental experts is relatively small, limiting the range of perspectives that can be brought to the policymaking process. This outsourcing of analysis and advice has sometimes led to an overreliance on corporations rather than on independent research experts (Edwards 2023).

Citation:

Coughlan, T. 2023. "Election 2023: Chris Hipkins Confirms He Killed \$10b Wealth Tax, Capital Gains Tax in Budget." *New Zealand Herald*, July 12. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/election-2023-chris-hipkins-confirms-he-killed-wealth-tax-capital-gains-tax-in-budget/LZNZMSBEBNEQFHUSJKP4637TIA>

Edwards, B. 2023. "Time for a Big Debate About Government Use of Business Consultants." 10 February. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/politics/bryce-edwards-time-for-a-big-debate-about-govt-use-of-business-consultants/WRFGYFZGRZC2RFLIOPA2VEZJUY>

Neilson, M. 2023. "Climate Change Commission: Too Much Reliance on Forestry, Calls for More Renewable Energy, Electric Vehicles and Limits on Gas in Buildings." New Zealand Herald, April 26. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/climate-change-commission-too-much-reliance-on-forestry-calls-for-more-renewable-energy-electric-vehicles-and-limits-on-gas-in-buildings/NIWQZ7COUVCWNEY34OQ5BZD5E>

Norway

Score 8

By law, all major decisions and reforms must be based on the best available knowledge. According to the investigation instruction from 2016, all new policies must be preceded by an investigation phase in which the following six questions must be answered:

1. What is the problem, and what do we want to achieve?
2. Which measures are relevant?
3. What fundamental questions do the measures raise?
4. What are the positive and negative effects of the measures, how lasting are they, and who is affected?
5. Which measure is recommended, and why?
6. What are the prerequisites for a successful implementation?

(Norwegian Government Agency for Financial Management, 2018)

Additionally, the investigation instruction requires that all those affected by the problem and the policy measures be involved early in the policy process. According to the government, involving affected individuals and coordinating different views and perspectives from various organizations is important to ensure the quality of the investigations and to safeguard democratic rights in developing public policies (Norwegian Government Agency for Financial Management, 2018).

The most important and systematic mobilization of expert knowledge in policymaking is carried out by government-appointed expert committees, which produce Official Norwegian Reports (Kommunal – og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2019). These committees vary in size, typically comprising 10 to 15 members, though they can be as small as two members. The committee members act in their personal capacity as experts, but considerations of gender equality and geographical representation are taken into account when forming the committee.

These committees hold a relatively formal status, working according to a fixed procedure and usually having a secretariat of employees from the relevant ministry at their disposal. The committee may commission reports from other experts. They often arrange open hearings and seminars involving stakeholders from the relevant policy area, and they may travel to and conduct site visits at relevant institutions and locations.

The final report from the committee is, according to a standardized procedure, circulated to interested parties with an invitation to comment on the analysis and

policy proposals. Normally, a comment period of three months is recommended, with six weeks being the minimum period. After the hearing, the government prepares a presentation for parliament. This sometimes takes the form of a parliamentary legislative proposal, and sometimes as a White Paper. Governments deviate from this procedure only in cases of emergency; any attempt to circumvent it would lead to public criticism.

The purpose of engaging expert committees is to establish, as far as possible, a consensus on the actual situation and the consequences of various value-based policy options. Government decisions may differ from expert advice, but more often than not, criticism from expert communities leads to modifications or postponements of reforms.

Citation:

Norwegian Government Agency for Financial Management. 2018. "Guidance Notes on the Instructions for Official Studies of Central Government Measures." https://dfo.no/sites/default/files/fagområder/Utretningsinstruksen/Guidance_Notes_on_the_Instructions_for_Official_Studies.pdf

Kommunal – og moderniseringsdepartementet. 2019. "Utvalgsarbeid i staten." https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/793636d2e55a4236b82e632897f96d50/h-2440-b_utvalgsarbeid-i-staten_oppdateret-01-09-2021.pdf

Sweden

Score 8

In a recent reconceptualization of policy styles, Petridou (2022) posits that Sweden has a "managerial" policy style. This style is characterized by high policy capacity and significant inclusiveness of non-governmental actors in the policymaking process, including academics who produce expert knowledge regularly feeding into public policy.

The linear, consensus-building, problem-solving approach to making public policy lends itself to incorporating academic knowledge, particularly in the process of commissions of inquiry (Statens offentliga utredningar, SOU) and during the referral process of any new legislation. Sweden has a long tradition of evidence-based policymaking. For instance, the Riksdag arranges an annual research day. The theme of the 2023 seminar, held in June, was how the Riksdag can address complex challenges with the help of research (Sveriges Riksdag, 2023).

Recent developments are concerning. The agreement that enabled government formation after the gridlock of the 2022 elections (Tidöavtalet) highlighted the newfound political influence of the radical right-wing party Sweden Democrats. The agreement included a provision to change the undergraduate education for social workers, emphasizing punitive measures with the obligatory inclusion of courses on youth criminality. It also mandated that teachers and other street-level bureaucrats report suspect individuals to authorities. Both provisions faced severe criticism and,

as of this writing, have not been implemented (Ahlgren et al., 2022; Hedman, 2022). The government also attempted to involve itself in academia by shortening the mandate period of university board members, which met sharp criticism from the vice chancellors of Swedish universities (Viberg et al., 2023).

Citation:

Ahlgren, T., Arnesson, K., Bergmark, Å., and Wiklund, S. 2022. "Ett populistiskt ingrep i socionomutbildningen." Svenska Dagbladet. <https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/sa-fungerar-riksdagen/arbetet-i-riksdagen/riksdagens-engagemang-i-vetenskap-och-forskning/>

Hedman, E. 2022. "Kritiken: Tidöavtalet kan tvinga lärare att ange elever." Skolvärlden. <https://skolvärlden.se/artiklar/kritiken-tidoavtalet-kan-tvinga-larare-ange-elever>

Petridou, E. 2022. "Following the Public Health Agency's Guidelines: The Swedish Approach." In N. Zahariadis, E. Petridou, T. Exadaktylos, and J. Sparf, eds., *Policy Styles and Trust in the Age of Pandemics: Global Threat, National Responses*. New York: Routledge, 17-38.

Viberg, M., Holmefur, N., Egnell, R., and Schnürer, J. 2023. "Brev till regeringen med anledning av förkortad mandatperiod för styrelserna." Göteborgs Universitet. <https://www.gu.se/nyheter/brev-till-regeringen-med-anledning-av-forkortad-mandatperiod-for-styrelserna>

Switzerland

Score 8

In addressing the challenges of crisis management, which became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, Switzerland has demonstrated both strengths and areas in which improvement are needed with regard to integrating scientific expertise into its policymaking process. The formation of the Swiss National COVID-19 Science Task Force – which during the first wave of the pandemic comprised more than 70 academic experts from diverse fields such as medicine, epidemiology, and even ethics and economics – exemplified Switzerland's ability to rapidly mobilize representatives of a broad range of scientific perspectives. This interdisciplinary approach facilitated extensive consultations and underscored the country's commitment to comprehensive crisis response strategies (Hirschi et al. 2022).

However, the Task Force faced challenges related to transparency, particularly with regard to its mandate and communication protocols, highlighting the need for clearer role definitions and processes. Additionally, the balance between scientific independence and political decision-making emerged as a critical issue, alongside the complexity of effectively coordinating scientific advice within Switzerland's federal structure (Sager et al. 2022). Another challenge was the Task Force's difficulty in persuading politicians to adopt its recommendations beginning with the second pandemic wave (Eichenberger et al. 2022).

The Federal Council's recent proposal for activating scientific expertise during crises, as evidenced by the creation of ad hoc scientific advisory groups, marks a significant stride in integrating scientific knowledge into the policymaking process, particularly in times of crisis. This initiative, adopted in response to lessons learned

during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores the importance of consulting scientific experts early in the crisis-management process (Federal Council 2023). The involvement of Switzerland's key education, research and innovation (ERI) institutions in nominating experts for these groups is fundamental to ensuring the effectiveness, credibility and legitimacy of the scientific advisory process.

A noteworthy aspect of this approach is the close cooperation with ERI institutions, which include prominent organizations such as the Swiss Conference of Rectors of Higher Education Institutions (swissuniversities), the ETH Board and the Swiss National Science Foundation (Swiss Science Council et al. 2023). This collaboration ensures a broad-based support system for the scientific advisory group, enhancing its multidisciplinary reach and representativeness. The implementation proposal mandates that the need for a scientific advisory group be examined whenever an interdepartmental crisis organization is established, thereby institutionalizing the inclusion of scientific advice in crisis response mechanisms (Federal Council 2023).

Additionally, the ERI institutions and the confederation have collaboratively developed a Code of Practice that clearly defines the tasks and responsibilities of scientific experts. This code stipulates that experts are expected to advise policymakers about the current state of certainty and uncertainty in their fields, develop realistic scenarios, and outline different policy options along with their respective risks and benefits. Importantly, the code acknowledges that scientific evidence, while crucial, is not the sole basis for decision-making; societal values and interests must also be taken into account (Swiss Science Council et al. 2023).

This structured approach is further complemented by the establishment of topic-related clusters for crisis preparation. These clusters, focused on areas such as cybersecurity, public health and international challenges, enable the rapid recruitment of experts in times of crisis (Federal Council 2023). Moreover, they foster ongoing discussion in these individual fields with the federal administration, and as necessary with parliament and the cantons. Such proactive engagement ensures that a network of experts is continually in dialogue with policymakers, enhancing the responsiveness and relevance of scientific advice.

Overall, Switzerland's approach to utilizing scientific knowledge in policymaking – particularly evident during the COVID-19 crisis and evolving with the more recent structural changes – demonstrates a commitment to improving the integration of scientific advice into decision-making. These efforts reflect an ongoing process intended to balance scientific expertise and political considerations, ensuring more effective and transparent policymaking in times of crisis. In normal times, the inclusion of external expertise is based on the broadly diffused practice of mandating policy evaluations (see section G8), on ad hoc informal consultations of academic experts by administrations (which can lack transparency), and on thematic extra-parliamentary commissions filled either with academics or practitioners (e.g., on the topics of vaccination or nuclear safety) (Hirschi et al. 2022).

Citation:

Eichenberger, S., Varone, F., Sciarini, P., Stähli, R., and Proulx, J. 2023. "When Do Decision Makers Listen (Less) to Experts? The Swiss Government's Implementation of Scientific Advice During the COVID-19 Crisis." *Policy Studies Journal* 51: 587-605. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12494>

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Hirschi, C., Hornung, J., Jaton, D., Mavrot, C., Sager, F., and Schlauffer, C. L. 2022. *Wissenschaftliche Politikberatung in Krisenzeiten in der Schweiz: Eine Analyse der Finanzkrise, des Fukushima-Unfalls und der Covid-19-Pandemie.*

Sager, F., Mavrot, C., and Hornung, J. 2022. *Wissenschaftliche Politikberatungssysteme in der Covid-19-Krise: Die Schweiz im Vergleich mit Deutschland, Italien, Frankreich und Grossbritannien.*

Swiss Science Council, Innosuisse, swissuniversities, ETH Board, Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, Swiss National Science Foundation. 2023. *Code of Practice for Participants in the Swiss National Science Advice Network.*

Federal Council. 2023. "Federal Council Regulates Crisis-Related Activation of Scientific Expertise." <https://www.admin.ch/gov/de/start/dokumentation/medienmitteilungen/bundesrat.msg-id-99270.html>

Belgium

Score 7

Consultation with non-governmental academic experts varies depending on the subject matter. Their influence on final decisions is often limited and marginal compared to full-time ministerial cabinet experts. The executive branch and parliament are able to harness the best available scientific knowledge, but they do not systematically consult full-time academic experts with independent views. They do so only occasionally, and their efforts in this regard do not necessarily foster genuine scientific debate.

In Belgium's neo-corporatist system, representatives of social partners (employers' organizations and trade unions) are consistently involved when strategic socioeconomic decisions are made. However, in politically sensitive areas like tax reform, academic and international expertise has minimal influence. Fobe and colleagues (2017) show that Belgium has numerous advisory bodies at federal (250) and regional (46) levels, deeply integrated into policymaking, but these advisory bodies are often valuing experiential expertise over academic opinions due to the consensus-based political system.

There are exceptions, such as the National Committee for Pensions, which had one of three subcommittees composed solely of academic experts. Yet, its impact on actual reforms was limited (see, for instance, Devolder and Hindriks 2023). The Belgian Healthcare Knowledge Center is another exception.

The trend of consulting scientific experts increased during the COVID-19 crisis, with the government forming ad hoc groups of expert scientific advisers and numerous coordination committees. However, this trend has not been consistent over time, with

scientific experts consulted more sporadically post-COVID-19. A recent example is a scientific committee tasked with evaluating the law on abortion extension (see press article).

Citation:

Press article on the scientific committee evaluating the law on abortion extension: <https://www.lesoir.be/500147/article/2023-03-10/ivg-le-comite-dexperts-favorable-lunanimite-lextension-18-semaines>

Devolder, P., and J. Hindriks. 2023. "Cadre pour une réforme acceptable des pensions." *Regards économiques* 178.

Fobé, E., Biard, B., Schiffino, N., and Brans, M. 2017. "Seven: Policy Advisory Bodies in Belgium." In *Policy Analysis in Belgium*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Estonia

Score 7

The extent and impact of academic consultation are framed by the overall pattern of government decision-making. Limited strategic capacity at the center and a tendency to delegate policy-formulation initiatives to line ministries result in a fragmented landscape. The final reports of research projects are made publicly available on the websites of the governmental institutions that requested the study. However, most studies are commissioned solely to obtain overviews of problems or to provide evidence for the government's standpoints.

Other forms of non-governmental expert consultations, such as roundtable discussions and workshops, are quite widespread. Experts and opinion leaders have been regularly engaged in preparing the long-term Estonia 2035 strategy, and the relevant website enables interested citizens to participate in and interact with developing the strategy. However, these events are often held on a pro forma basis, and do not lead to effective policy changes.

Since 2017, the Foresight Center (FC), a parliamentary think tank, has been active in conducting long-term social and economic analyses and drafting development scenarios. The center consults parliamentary committees but has only an implicit connection to the executive.

Recently, the initiative Science for Policy conducted a study among relevant stakeholders in Estonia to map the situation of the Estonian science-to-policy ecosystem. One of the conclusions was that while there is strong awareness of and readiness for an approach based on evidence in policymaking (EIPM) from the demand side, it is heavily dependent on ministries. Often, public administrators and politicians alike ignore EIPM as they try to enhance efficiency.

Furthermore, data literacy levels are low, and structures occasionally restrict knowledge transfer with universities and research institutions. There is also a lack of ex post assessments. Problems from the supply side include poor data availability, strict time frames, role conflicts and overworked staff. Additionally, there is no repository of existing knowledge and research.

However, overall, the introduction of science advisers in ministries has been an important step toward improving this situation. The GO Strategy Unit is clearly willing to promote EIPM. To achieve this, the scattered system of science advice needs to be consolidated, and incentives for academics to engage in policy advice must be created.

Citation:

OECD. 2023. “Building capacity for evidence-Informed policymaking in governance and public administration in a post-pandemic Europe. Inception Report Estonia.” <https://etag.ee/en/bridging-science-and-policy-insights-from-the-estonian-research-council-seminar-in-brussels/>

Ireland

Score 7

Irish policymaking incorporates scientific knowledge through in-house civil service research and outsourced analysis from organizations like the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), the National Economic and Social Council, various research contracts and private consultancy. One of the three pillars of the 2023 central government strategy, Better Public Services – the Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy, is “evidence-informed policy and services designed for and with our public.” The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC), an independent statutory body of five academic experts, is mandated to assess and comment on the government’s budgetary targets and objectives. Additionally, advisory posts within governmental departments are predominantly held by academics.

However, national policy is largely dominated by economics, particularly neoclassical economics, which limits the diversity of perspectives and values informing policy. There has been no assessment of the efficacy of such advisory roles on policymaking, nor is there an established pattern of consultation with non-governmental experts.

The application of scientific knowledge in policymaking is fragmented, and the quality of evidence varies substantially. Knowledge cultures often favor reductive, simplifying and short-term analyses over holistic, complex and long-term approaches (O’Mahony and Torney 2023). This limitation is evident in the criticism of the reliance on technology to achieve sustainable development, a criticism that began more than a decade ago (O’Mahony 2013) and has now become mainstream (O’Mahony 2018; Gaur et al. 2022). Monodisciplinary inquiry is common, whereas interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches may be more desirable. Quantitative analysis is often equated with objectivity and is favored over qualitative analysis, with STEM fields preferred over Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS).

International observers have noted weaknesses in Ireland’s research and development, including inadequate funding (European Commission, 2020). Funded

research is dominated by agriculture, a powerful vested interest in policy, with limited investment in environmental and energy research (OECD 2021). Concerns have been raised about the independence of Irish research and policy advisory, particularly the influence of the meat industry (Carrington 2023). Groupthink was evident during the financial crisis, with overly optimistic economic growth advice given to the government (O'Mahony et al. 2023). The exclusion of marginalized groups, including those experiencing poverty, deprivation and minorities such as refugees and migrants, is also a concern. This exclusion may be linked to deficits in key services such as housing, where powerful vested interests have influenced policy to favor limited government intervention, resulting in housing scarcity that supports rent-seeking by property owners and landowners.

Citation:

Government of Ireland. 2023. General Scheme of Research and Innovation Bill, 2023. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d6827-general-scheme-of-research-and-innovation-bill-2023/>

Government of Ireland. 2023. "Impact 2030: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy." <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/27c78-impact-2030-irelands-new-research-and-innovation-strategy>

Government of Ireland. 2023. "Press Release." <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/c6f16-minister-harris-establishes-new-research-and-innovation-policy-advisory-forum-and-issues-call-for-members/>

Government of Ireland. 2022. "Organisation Information." <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/8f949-irish-government-economic-and-evaluation-service-igees/>

Government of Ireland. 2023. "Better Public Services." <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/1cde2-better-public-services/>

Government of Ireland. 2023. "Infrastructure Guidelines." <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/e8040-infrastructure-guidelines/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/public-spending-code/>

Carrington, D. 2023. "Revealed: the industry figures behind 'declaration of scientists' backing meat eating." *Guardian*, October 27. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/oct/27/revealed-industry-figures-declaration-scientists-backing-meat-eating>

European Commission. 2020. Commission Staff Working Document: Country Report Ireland 2020. SWD (2020) 506 final. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0506&from=EN>

Gaur, A., et al. 2022. "Low Energy Demand Scenario for Feasible Deep Decarbonisation: Whole Energy Systems Modelling for Ireland." *Renew. Sustain. Energy Trans.* 2: 100024.

OECD. 2021. OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Ireland 2021. OECD iLibrary. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9ef10b4f-en>

O'Mahony, M., and D. Torney. 2023. "Transforming Development: Economy, Innovation and Finance, Chapter 6." In *Irish Climate Change Assessment 4*. https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring-assessment/climate-change/ICCA_Volume-4.pdf

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O'Mahony, T. 2013. "Decomposition of Ireland's Carbon Emissions from 1990 to 2010: An Extended Kaya Identity." *Energy Policy* 59: 573-581.

Lithuania

Score 7

In most cases, the government effectively utilizes the best available scientific knowledge for policymaking purposes. Both internal and external institutions facilitate this use of scientific knowledge. The Government Strategic Analysis Center (STRATA) provides the government and ministries with independent expert information necessary for evidence-based policy decisions. The Research Council of Lithuania is an expert institution and advisory body accountable to the government on the topics of research, development and higher-education policy. It also implements competitive funding for research, including applied research, acting as a

knowledge broker institution between policymakers and the scientific community. This includes collecting information on the political demand for scientific advice and funding research activities that supply expert analysis to meet this demand.

The STRATA, the Research Council of Lithuania, and the chancellery of the government have benefited from the European Commission and OECD technical assistance project on strengthening capacities for evidence-informed policymaking. This project began in early 2023 with participation from seven EU member states.

There are also permanent and ad hoc advisory bodies established by the government that bring together officials and scientific experts. The State Progress Council was first set up in 2010 to advise on the preparation of the long-term Lithuania 2030 strategy. In late 2021, its membership was renewed by Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė and tasked with providing advice on the new long-term development Lithuania 2050 strategy. The preparation process included many scholars from Vilnius University and other scientific organizations and lasted for almost two years (2022 – 2023). During this period, thematic discussions with experts and stakeholders, sensemaking workshops, and analysis of megatrends were employed, creating platforms for exchange between policymakers and researchers. These platforms were useful in enabling dialogue, and for bringing a research-based focus to topics affecting future policy. At the end of 2023, the strategy was approved by the Seimas. The government also sets up temporary ad hoc bodies (working groups, commissions) to advise on particular matters important to society, such as managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2023, the Research Council of Lithuania launched a network of research and innovation advisers – an initiative funded by the Next Generation EU facility that is expected to last until 2026. With academic backgrounds, 15 advisers will work in the chancellery of the government and line ministries to provide advice on facilitating the use of scientific knowledge during the drafting of policy initiatives and fostering a culture of evidence-informed policymaking.

Despite initiatives aimed at practically implementing the government's ambition to enhance capacities for evidence-informed policymaking, the systematic use of scientific expertise in daily legislative drafting is still lacking. Although the use of impact assessments for draft laws prepared by the government was formalized in 2003, it is rarely undertaken properly. This means that assessments are not conducted in a timely manner, do not consider several policy alternatives, and often forgo consultations with experts and stakeholders. The government has sought to strengthen the capacities of ministries to conduct both ex ante and ex post impact assessments, including organizing training sessions for civil servants through STRATA in 2021 – 2023. However, these efforts remain underutilized.

Thus, while key formal and informal institutions for evidence-based policymaking are in place, their practical performance has limitations. After the aforementioned technical assistance project expired, STRATA has yet to settle on a permanent

operating and financing model. Its role in evidence-based policymaking remains unsettled, and its organizational capacity fluctuates significantly, as indicated by frequent changes in the organizational structure and the reduction of staff by half at the beginning of 2024 due to financial constraints. Similarly, while the government actively involves non-governmental experts for consultations on policymaking, strategic foresight and planning, many of these experts have criticized such initiatives for their superficial nature, and have pointed out that the experts' recommendations are rarely reflected in the final decisions.

Citation:

STRATA. <https://strata.gov.lt/en/home/>

Research Council of Lithuania. 2023. <https://www.lmt.lt/en>

Austria

Score 6

Recent Austrian governments have tried to create the impression that they are eager to benefit from the advice of accomplished experts. For instance, presentations by external experts marked the kick-off event of the ÖVP–Green government conclave early in 2023.

The role of experts in Austrian public policymaking has been generally limited and ambiguous. Governments may seek expert opinions when it is politically convenient, but they are not obligated to do so. Typically, they invite and listen to experts they are already aligned with. There is no formalized process to ensure strictly evidence-based governmental activities and public policies.

One existing agency, the Council for Research, Science, Innovation and Technological Development, is intended to provide expert advice to the government. However, its concrete impact has remained uncertain or even limited. Austria lacks an equivalent to the U.S. Council of Economic Advisers, a body institutionalized to provide scientific advice on economic policy. In contrast, Germany has formal standing scientific advisory committees at the ministries of finance, labor, and the economy. Austria has nothing comparable. A very limited role is played by the Staatsschuldenausschuss, a body concerned with advising on government debt issues.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a new forum – the “Future Operations Clearing Board” – was established in the chancellery to facilitate the exchange between scientific knowledge and policymaking. Recent governments have also made a limited effort to provide scientific micro-data.

Different scientists, particularly concerning issues of climate change and environmental protection, have criticized governments harshly for failing to take necessary steps. However, it is worth noting that the relative weakness of scientific expertise as a source of public policymaking in Austria has been accompanied by a strikingly low appreciation for scientific research among the wider Austrian public.

Citation:

file:///C:/Users/c4021008/Downloads/expertise_in_krisenzeiten_gecko.pdf

<https://science.apa.at/power-search/7052218416774764840>

file:///C:/Users/c4021008/Downloads/Open%20Science%20policy%20Austria%20eng.%20(1).pdf

<https://oe1.orf.at/artikel/703253/Wenn-Politik-Experten-regieren>

<https://www.citizen-science.at/blog/oesterreich-und-die-wissenschaft-eine-komplizierte-beziehung>

Koenig, Thomas. 2020. "Wissenschaftliche Politikberatung in Österreich. Die Erfahrungen mit der Einrichtung und Durchführung eines „Future Operations Clearing Board“." *Forschung. Politik – Strategie – Management* 13 (3-4): 101-106.

Czechia

Score 6

The government does not have a strong record of systematically involving scientific expertise, except perhaps in science policy. However, some experts participate in committees and subcommittees at the government and ministerial levels. A commission was created in June 2019 to prepare material for the government on climate adaptation and mitigation, but it did not meet during the pandemic, and its last report was produced in 2021. The commission includes independent experts, including those from NGOs, and some of these experts publish their views independently.

An example of innovative practice from the scientific community is AVex. This series of explanations addresses scientific issues, each approximately six pages long, and is prepared by institutes of the Academy of Sciences. Since 2019, there have been three publications each year that tackle potentially controversial topics in a forthright manner. For instance, one publication explains global warming rigorously but in an accessible way for the general public. Another addresses migration, providing a historical account that argues permanent immigration is inevitable. It also discusses ways to counter myths and racial and religious stereotypes, as well as how to improve the lives of immigrants. Despite these efforts, the publications have not yet visibly altered the opinions of state organs and members of parliament, the intended target audience.

<https://www.avcr.cz/cs/veda-a-vyzkum/avex/>

France

Score 6

The influence of research on policymaking, and the development of evidence-based policymaking more generally, strongly varies across policy areas in France. Generally speaking, the highly elitist character of the upper echelons of French administration is not favorable to academic input. The central role of “*énarques*” – that is, ENA graduates – tends to marginalize scientists. The use of research under this regime is mostly opportunistic.

The COVID-19 crisis illustrated this rather well. The executive created a scientific council on 10 March 2020, six days before the beginning of the first lockdown. It met about 300 times and produced a total of about 74 notes and opinions. Yet in the early days of the crisis, several problems of miscommunication occurred, for example when Prime Minister Edouard Philippe explained that general mask mandates were useless, on March 13 on prime time TV. Thereafter, however, the government tended to follow the council's advice rather closely, at least for a few months. In particular, the advice to limit individual mobility in September 2020 was delayed by more than a month. The advice to lock down again after the Alpha variant began spreading in January 2021 was not followed, and the publication of the note was delayed several months.

Things are probably better in those areas where expert opinions are generated in-house. This has historically been the case for members of the “grands corps” – that is, the most prestigious administrative departments – many of which are staffed by engineers from France's top schools. This has been true for the energy sector, in particular, which is historically managed by the monopolistic public utilities firm EDF. Similarly, many major infrastructure projects and certain French success stories – such as the high-speed train TGV – were historically steered by this type of state engineer.

Things are much more complicated in the area of social sciences, where state appreciation of expertise is very limited. The exception is probably economics, as successive generations of economists appear to have had a continuing influence on policy within the critical ministries.

Citation:

Bezes, Philippe, and Patrick Le Lidec. 2016. “Politiques de l'organisation: Les nouvelles divisions du travail étatique.” *Revue française de science politique* 66 (3): 407-433.

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Aglietta, Michel, and Antoine Rebérioux. 2010. *Dérives du capitalisme financier*. Paris: Albin Michel.

Israel

Score 6

There are no formal mechanisms for integrating scientific knowledge into policymaking. Often, the government establishes a committee to examine specific issues. These committees include experts, such as scientists from academia. Many committees are chaired by a judge and are generally independent. Committees analyze the problem and suggest solutions based on their professional understanding of the situation. Such committees have been formed for several significant legislative initiatives and reforms, including changes to the education system, the natural resource tax regime and land issues in the south concerning the Bedouins.

Hence, although no formal or regular mechanism for consultation exists, consultation with scientists and experts frequently occurs. However, the consultation process and the protocols of committee meetings are often not transparent. Nevertheless, most committee reports are made available to the public.

In addition, scientists from academia are often invited to various professional forums to share their opinions and findings. Many government ministries collaborate with academia by providing research grants for specific questions of interest or access to information. For instance, the Ministry of Education often issues calls for proposals on topics such as student evaluations and special education. The Prison System has issued calls for proposals that use data provided by the Prison System and the Ministry of Environmental Protection often provides grants for research on environmental issues. Furthermore, the Ministry of Science offers specific grants aimed at promoting collaboration between government agencies, departments and academia to improve policymaking and public access to information. These various grants from the ministries and the Ministry of Science help to widen the circle of scientists consulted.

In the last year, the judicial overhaul has sparked significant criticism from scientists, particularly economists, legal scholars and political scientists, regarding government policy. Critics argue that mounting scientific evidence suggests the government's policies will harm the economy and democracy in Israel. The government, however, has dismissed these critiques as partisan.

In the most recent national budget, the government imposed severe budget cuts on many scientific institutions and attempted to close the main scientific office of each ministry. This suggests that the current administration does not view science or scientists as important contributors to policymaking.

Non-governmental experts often criticize government policy. This is evident in their frequent appearances in the Knesset, the issuance of policy papers on various subjects and media interviews.

Japan

Score 6

Increasing the role of scientific advice has been a topic in Japanese politics for some time and has been highlighted by the experience of the Fukushima triple disaster. Since 2001, the cabinet has been advised by the Council for Science, Technology and Innovation, of which half the members are academics. The council supports the government in formulating policy and can be consulted by cabinet members on any question regarding science and technology. It is also involved in supporting cross-ministerial coordination and initiatives related to science and technology. In 2011, the government announced it would seek to consult scientists more frequently. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Japanese government relied, as did many other

countries, on the advice of a select number of experts who rose to public prominence. Initially, however, the Japanese government withheld information from the public and thus did not fully disclose the basis on which policies were decided (V-Dem).

Academics are involved as members of various advisory bodies both on the cabinet and ministerial levels. Their selection, however, is traditionally heavily influenced by the vested interests of different institutional players. On the ministerial level, advisory councils (*shingikai*) have been criticized as mere rubber-stamping institutions meant to legitimize decisions already made by bureaucrats that reflect the interests of the ministry involved. Advisory councils' secretariats, run by ministry officials, have strong influence on the selection of members, choice of topics for discussion, as well as the drafting of proceedings and reports, which decreases overall transparency. Moreover, scholars who disagree with the ministry stance have occasionally been removed from the councils.

Instructive in this respect is Japan's energy and climate change policy. After Fukushima, the government initially pledged to abolish the "nuclear village" of bureaucrats, politicians and industry, which had dominated energy policymaking, and replace nuclear power with renewables. When the LDP returned to government in 2012, it professionalized the oversight of the nuclear industry by setting up an independent regulatory body. However, it also backtracked on some of the commitments of the previous government to cut emissions due to political considerations as it emphasized economic growth over climate policy.

The Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy has been considered the most powerful permanent advisory body to the cabinet, as it has drafted the policy guidelines for fiscal and economic management, as well as budget formulation. However, only one of its four private-sector members is an academic. Individual prime ministers often establish separate advisory councils dealing with the priority policies of their governments. Among the members of the Council of New Form of Capitalism Realization, established by Prime Minister Kishida in October 2021, university professors assumed only three of 16 posts. While big business representatives dominate in advisory bodies related to the economy, individual academics such as Takenaka Heizō under the Koizumi government (2001 – 2006) or Hamada Kōichi and Honda Etsurō under the second Abe government (2012 – 2020) occasionally exert strong influence over the government's economic strategy. Rarely, they are even nominated as ministers.

The government's initiatives occasionally encounter criticism from academia. For instance, in 2015, a vast majority of constitutional scholars, including some of those summoned to the parliament by the ruling parties, admitted that the legalization of self-defense by the Abe government violated the Japanese constitution.

Citation:

Arimoto, Tateo, and Yasushi Sato. 2012. "Rebuilding Public Trust in Science for Policymaking." *Science* 337

(6099): 1176-1177.

Kameyama, Yasuko. 2016. *Climate Change Policy in Japan. From the 1980s to 2015*. London: Routledge.

Nonaka, Naoto, and Haruka Aoki. 2016. *Seisaku Kaigi to Tōron naki Kokkai. Kantei Shudō Taisei no Seiritsu to Kōtai Suru Jukugi [Policy Councils and the Diet Without Debates. Deliberation on the Establishment and Demise of the Kantei Leadership System]*. Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun Shuppan.

Varieties of Democracy Project. 2020–2021. “Pandemic Backsliding: Democracy during COVID-19.” <https://www.v-dem.net/pandem.html>

Latvia

Score 6

National Research Programs (NRPs) in Latvia are initiated by ministries based on their specific needs and funding. These top-down, multi- and interdisciplinary studies focus on various scientific fields and groups. NRPs support science by guiding Latvia in identifying and investigating critical issues for sustainable development and shaping the focus of Latvian scientific institutions’ work.

Ministries and other public institutions, such as local governments, also commission studies individually. Once a survey is finished, it is published in a public database maintained by the State Chancellery. As a center of government, the State Chancellery conducts various studies to develop evidence-based public administration. However, Latvia needs more capacity and funding to systematically generate significant evidence that supports policy identification and implementation.

Non-governmental experts are usually invited to participate in task force units or specially designed working groups. However, there is limited information on whether the expertise provided by these experts has been utilized effectively and has positively affected policy outcomes.

The process of obtaining scientific knowledge for policymaking is constrained by procurement and grant procedures with strict, administratively demanding, and relatively short time limits that discourage scientists from delivering scientific evidence.

Latvian policy coordination and implementation rely on numerous policy documents (i.e., white papers) and cross-ministerial working groups. However, this interministerial approach does not depend on scientific evidence.

The ombudsman has criticized the government’s decisions during the COVID-19 crisis, explicitly pointing out its failure to heed scientific advice. This criticism highlights concerns about the government’s approach to managing the pandemic, indicating a perceived need for sufficient engagement with scientific expertise in decision-making processes (Meļņiks, 2021).

The non-governmental expert does not frequently criticize superficial or token participation. In 2021, however, amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers’ Rules of

Procedure were criticized. These amendments were supposed to narrow social and civil dialogue in meetings of the Secretaries of State, the Cabinet of Ministers, and cabinet committees. Still, these amendments were not adopted, possibly following objections from the non-governmental sector.

Citation:

Latvijas Zinātnes padome. 2023. "Valsts pētījumu programma (VPP)." <https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/valsts-petijumu-programma-vpp>

Valsts kanceleja. "Pētījumu un publikāciju datubāze." <https://ppdb.mk.gov.lv/datubaze/>

Ministru kabinets. "Pētījumi." <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/petijum>

European Commission, Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, Mackie, I., Fobé, E., Škarica, M., Reinholde, I., et al. 2022. "Evidence-informed policy making: building a conceptual model and developing indicators." Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2887/81339>

Meļņiks, R. 2021. "Tiesībsargs: šodien lemtais iespaidos mūsu dzīvi ilgtermiņā." <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/viedokli/latvija/tiesibsargs-sodien-lemtais-iespaidos-musu-dzivi-ilgtermina-14256164>

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Portugal

Score 6

The government's use of the best scientific knowledge in policy formulation varies by sector. Due to Portugal's past financial crises, institutions like the independent Public Finances Fiscal Council (Conselho de Finanças Públicas) and UTAO, a parliamentary body that publicly discloses budgetary reports, have been established to prevent recurrence. However, in areas such as agriculture and water management, there are no comparable institutions to ensure policies are guided by scientific knowledge. This gap is present in several other governmental domains as well.

To address these shortcomings, the central government has created three state "competence centers": PlanAPP (planning), JurisAPP (legal), and TicAPP (digital). These centers aim to provide a comprehensive and integrated approach to anticipate future needs.

PlanAPP is tasked with conducting analyses and prospective studies on economic, environmental, and social issues, as well as evaluating and monitoring relevant policies. This entity includes UTAIL (Technical Unit for Legislative Impact Assessment) from the Legal Center of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, established in 2017. UTAIL offers training and technical support to ministries and other public administration bodies and reviews assessment reports. Through this collaboration, PlanAPP integrates scientific knowledge into the public policy cycle, working with various entities to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation.

Citation:

Conselho de Finanças Públicas. n.d. ". " <https://www.cfp.pt>

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Slovenia

Score 6

The Government Office and the ministries collaborate with non-state actors and experts in various ways. To establish dialogue with civil society organizations and non-governmental professional institutions in specific areas, the government co-establishes working committees and other bodies. The civil society organizations and professional institutions determine their own representatives.

In 2022 and 2023, the government set up several working committees comprising representatives from civil society and academia. In October 2022, the government established the Development Council of the Republic of Slovenia – an expert advisory body focused on scientific research and innovation activities – which includes ministers and representatives from various research institutions. Additionally, the Public Agency for Research and Innovation, along with the ministries, is preparing a call for targeted research projects that address political topics the government needs to tackle. Research institutes and universities are eligible to participate in these tenders.

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Spain

Score 6

Recent institutional innovations in Spain have aimed to incorporate scientific expertise into both the executive and legislative branches, marking a shift from the traditional reliance on in-house experts. The most significant of these innovations is the National Foresight and Strategy Office, established in 2020. Now a Directorate General of the Presidency of the Spanish Government, this office analyzes future challenges and opportunities to help the country prepare for them. It collaborates closely with ministries, state bodies, universities, think tanks, foundations, NGOs, and civil society organizations. This office has become a regular interlocutor with the European Commission on policy strategy, contributing to Spain’s third-place ranking in the previous SGI strategic planning indicator (Sustainable Governance Indicators 2022).

However, there are no institutional mechanisms to ensure a formalized connection between the government and external experts. Although university scholars, think

tank analysts, and practitioners are often consulted by ministries, this typically occurs only at the beginning of the legislative process to prepare draft bills and assess their impact.

To ensure the participation of civil society groups and the private sector in the design and implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), several consultative councils have been established. In 2022, the government sought external advice for fiscal reform, and the names of the experts and the final report were published. These experts represented a broad geographic spectrum and diverse perspectives. The Ministry of Labor based its 2022 initiative to increase the minimum wage on a report from a commission of experts, whose names and the final report were also published.

The Spanish government presents its legislative projects on a sound scientific basis, leveraging expertise from European and international institutions. Generally, during the period under review, the scientific community was not particularly critical of the government's central plans, such as those concerning climate change, digitalization, or economic transition. However, there have been frequent criticisms from non-governmental actors regarding the reform of the civil code and the amnesty law, popularly known as the “only yes means yes” law, which allowed some convicted offenders to have their sentences reduced.

Citation:

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Greece

Score 5

In Greece, there is ample opportunity for the formulation and expression of scientific opinions, both in support of and against government initiatives. Universities and research centers in the country operate independently and are not subject to government control.

Historically, the interaction between the scientific community and the government was weak, but significant progress has been made. While evidence-informed policymaking has advanced, it remains somewhat fragmented (Ladi et al., 2022). Various government bodies and non-governmental organizations provide expertise during the policy formulation stage.

For example, the “National Council for Research, Technology, and Innovation” (ESETEK) is a high-ranking expert committee loosely connected to the Ministry of

Development, focusing on scientific research, technology, and innovation. In economic and fiscal policy, the Council of Economic Advisors (SOE) and the Hellenic Fiscal Council (EDS), both hosted by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, serve as advisory bodies to the Minister of Finance.

Similar expert committees exist in other policy areas, though the presence of such committees varies widely across ministries. Some ministries have established mechanisms for integrating scientific evidence into policymaking, while others have not.

Even in the absence of a formal expert committee, the government often seeks guidance from the scientific community when challenges arise. A notable example is the government's collaboration with scientists during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022). The government relied on scientific advice and adopted recommendations on healthcare policy from the Committee of Epidemiologists and the National Committee on Vaccinations, both hosted by the Ministry of Health.

The members of the National Committee on Vaccinations did not always agree, and they were free to express their disagreements. The government, however, retained the responsibility for making final decisions on contested issues. Similarly, in late 2023, the government established a new scientific committee to advise on artificial intelligence, a rapidly emerging challenge for governments and public administrations (Presidency of the Government 2023).

While government officials and non-governmental experts engage with each other, this exchange is infrequent. However, the experts consulted represent a wide range of perspectives, ensuring diversity in the policy advice provided.

In education policy, for example, successive governments have faced strong criticism from academics who disagreed with the education ministers on reform efforts. During the recent economic crisis and its aftermath, academics and teachers, often allied with political parties and trade unions, mobilized students and civil servants against education reforms.

In labor market policy, Greek trade unions frequently consult experts affiliated with their organizations rather than the government. During consultations on new bills, non-governmental experts are invited and consulted both before the bills are submitted to parliament and during discussions in parliamentary committees.

Despite this engagement, the government does not always adopt expert opinions. In Greece's parliamentary system, characterized by single-party majority governments and infrequent coalition governments, the government may choose not to reconcile differing expert opinions. Instead, it may proceed with its policy agenda and pass legislation that has faced criticism from the scientific community.

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Italy

Score 5

As in every advanced country, governments in Italy have access to a vast stock of scientific knowledge that can be utilized in the decision-making process. However, the way this knowledge is accessed and processed by policymakers determines its potential impact. In Italy, the recurrent politicization of advice, ad hoc searches for scientific knowledge, and the use of such knowledge mainly to legitimize political choices rather than to design them are common issues.

Firstly, there is no strong tradition of regular government consultation with non-governmental scientists in Italy. Typically, a small group of partisan experts, selected by the prime minister and other ministers, provides frequent strategic and technical advice. Independent experts are rarely consulted transparently, and there has been no institutionalization of an open and transparent consultation process for major legislative proposals. In the ministries of finance, culture, and labor, the role of external experts is more firmly established, but even here, independent academic experts are involved only on a short-term basis for specific tasks like spending reviews.

Against this traditional practice, the Draghi government gave impartial experts a prominent role by assigning them to four key ministries: environmental transition, infrastructure, technological innovation and digital transition, and universities and research. However, the Meloni government has revived the pre-Draghi model, returning to the practice of partisan appointments. Furthermore, the Meloni government developed some of its most important policy proposals – such as the bill on differentiated autonomy and the proposal for constitutional reform – without appointing a committee of experts, instead interacting only with those experts who share the government's policy objectives.

Interaction with public research institutes is highly contingent and based on ad hoc requests, as shown by a recent study. There are no established projects for systematic cooperation between the government and academic institutions.

Overall, the system of policy advice in Italy, with the exception of the Draghi government, is still not very inclusive and relies primarily on bureaucratic expertise combined with partisan advisers. The academic community has consistently

provided strong and detailed criticism. This was evident in the response to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) designed by the Draghi government, with many scholars highlighting that it was too ambitious, too centralized, and ill-equipped to address implementation problems. Similarly, during the first year of the Meloni government, the most important policy decisions faced strong criticism based on the existing body of scientific knowledge.

Citation:

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Poland

Score 4

The PiS government's inconsistent reliance on independent expert opinions raised concerns about transparency and accountability in policy development. This approach prompted questions about the government's commitment to evidence-based reasoning and thorough analysis in its decision-making processes, and potentially hindered its effectiveness in addressing complex challenges.

Furthermore, prioritizing ideological criteria over merit-based considerations has drawn criticism, particularly with regard to the appointments of key officials and the formulation of policies. This sparked debates about the overall direction of governance, highlighting the balance between political ideologies and the need for pragmatic, evidence-driven decision-making. Examples such as the overexploitation of Polish forests and the delays in decarbonization due to the lack of focus on the development of renewable energy sources underscore the government's disregard for scientific knowledge and expert opinions.

Several of the government's major infrastructure projects, including the Vistula Spit Canal and Central Communication Port, faced significant criticism from experts regarding their economic cost-effectiveness. However, these concerns were disregarded. Additionally, there were instances in which legal experts were selectively chosen on matters concerning judicial reforms and understanding the merits of European integration.

At the ministerial level, scientific expertise was occasionally considered. The minister of health had to appoint national consultants from various fields relevant to healthcare, such as medicine, pharmacy, nursing, midwifery and psychology. Regional consultants were also appointed, although their roles diminished in 2023 as the number of COVID-19 patients declined. Experts were involved in advisory commissions, such in the case of the minister of climate and environment's Commission on Genetically Modified Microorganisms and Genetically Modified Organisms. Still, the core decisions were made chiefly on political grounds.

Hungary

Score 3

The Orbán governments have shown little interest in seeking independent, knowledge-based advice and have alienated many leading experts who initially sympathized with them politically. The culture war waged by Fidesz and the growing restrictions placed on academic freedom have further intensified this alienation (Enyedi 2018, 2022; Labanino and Dobbins 2022). The government has invested significantly in creating a network of partisan experts in pseudo-independent institutions that can influence public opinion, and has used such institutions to promote government views in international debates. Limiting decision-making functions to an inner circle and disregarding broad-based advice leads to groupthink and low-quality decisions that are often detached from societal reality. In 2023, the government announced a tender for the organization of policy advice until the end of 2026. There were only two applications, both pro-government: the Századvég Group Foundation and two companies close to Nézőpont (Observer Budapest Médiafigyelő Kft). Századvég Group won consultancy contracts worth over HUF 24 billion (€57 million), while Nézőpont secured contracts worth HUF 22 billion (€54 million). The advice is likely to be neither unbiased nor of high quality, and the funds are vulnerable to corruption, given the close ties between the owners of the companies/think tanks and Prime Minister Orbán. A broad study on the subject states: “In Hungary, the level and types of advisory activity of political scientists is more limited by demand-side factors than by the supply side of knowledge production and by viewpoints within the scholarly community itself” (Molnár 2022: 199). In other words, Hungary has good advisory competence, but the government is not interested in utilizing it.

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Slovakia

Score 3

The institutional mechanisms in place are designed to ensure that the government can access the best available scientific expertise from the outset and on short notice for all key projects. However, the advisory system is unstable and operates on an ad hoc basis (Krajňák et al., 2020). Since the pandemic, there has been an increasing tendency to bypass formal institutions (Buščíková and Baboš 2020), except under the Ódor caretaker government. The Matovič and, to a large extent, the Heger

governments did not fully utilize the formal institutional potential (see Malý and Nemeč, 2023).

The Heger government prepared the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, which was approved by the EU in the spring of 2022, partly using external expert capacities. The Ódor government established several expert commissions to produce its “White Papers.” For example, the “White Paper” titled “Bližšie k občanom” (Closer to Citizens), focusing on self-government reforms, was prepared in consultation with numerous experts and representative associations.

Former Prime Minister and later Minister of Finance Igor Matovič’s approach to experts can be characterized as antagonistic. For instance, he set up a temporary advisory body, the Economic Crisis Council; however, he demonstrated a near-zero capacity to regularly and systematically consult and collaborate with critical stakeholders during the COVID-19 crisis. Despite lacking expertise and executive experience, Matovič tried to behave dominantly, rejecting or publicly mocking many proposals from these advisory bodies. When most medical experts protested against blanket testing in October 2020, Matovič retaliated by publicly calling them “mazes” (Gręndzińska et al., 2022: 37).

There is no established indicator measuring the frequency of criticism for disregarding scientific advice, but the media cover such cases on an ad hoc basis. Criticism usually results in the resignation of experts.

Citation:

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