

Education Councils in Europe

>>Balancing expertise, societal input and political control in the production of policy advice.

Eunec

Brussels, 1 December 2010

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Presentation Structure

Introduction

- I. Study on Educational Councils in Europe
- II. Questions
- III. Working Groups



I. Study on Educational Councils in Europe

- 1. Definition
- 2. Research questions
- 3. Theoretical background
- 4. Legitimacy
- 5. Methods - Case studies
- 6. Findings and recommendations



1. Definition: education councils

- 1) Made up of a collection of members sourced from at least the expert and/or civil society communities.
- 2) Contains no obvious domination in membership from one social or political grouping.
- 3) Recognised by the government as an advisory body, either legal, financial or through the employment of the body by the government.
- 4) Provides, as its primary and chief function the provision of advice of an instrumental, conceptual or agenda setting nature.
- 5) Formed with an open ended remit as opposed to one which is time limited.



2. Research Questions (RQ1)

- **1) What are the different types of education councils in international comparative perspective? (descriptive)**
 - a. How are education councils organised and institutionalised (membership, internal organisation, legal base, status, level of autonomy, funding, institutionalisation,..) and what accounts for different modes of institutionalisation?
 - b. What types of education councils can be identified?
 - c. How is the process of advising organised with respect to the policy making process?
 - d. What is the impact of education councils on the policy making process?
 - e. What is the impact of current societal developments on the organisation, institutionalisation and policy impact of education councils?



Research Questions (RQ2)

- 2) What is the influence of different aspects of the institutional arrangement on the outcome?
(exploratory/explanatory)
 - a. What is the impact of the *institutional embedding on the outcome*?
 - b. What is the impact of the *width and depth of participation* on the outcome?
 - c. What is the impact of *process design and management* on the outcome?



3. Theoretical Framework

- Challenges to policy-making
- Boundary Work/Organisations
- Types of policy impact



Challenges to Policy Making

- **Professionalisation:**
 - Expertise, evidence, complexity of policy issues
- **Interactiveness**
 - Contested knowledge – shared knowledge – multiple actors
 - Acceptability, - implementation success – policy support
 - Democracy and participation
- **Political control**
 - Electoral mandates
 - Steering towards end of legislation results



Boundary work/organisation

- As permanent systems of advice educational councils can bridge the worlds of policy-makers, expertise and science, and civil society
- To produce useful products to all three worlds: innovativeness and policy impact, social learning, conflict reduction, satisfaction and policy support, scientific reputation
- Independence of boundary work lies in its dependence on multiple communities

Types of 'policy impact'

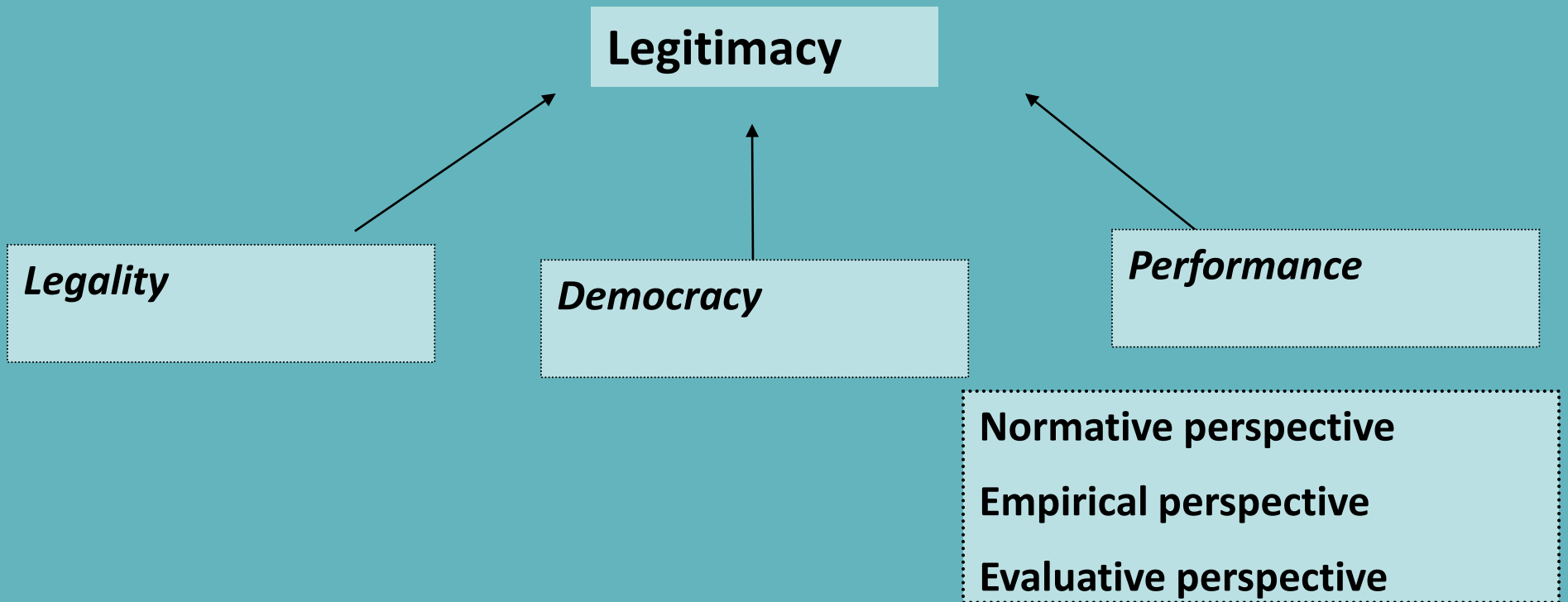
- Types
 - Instrumental
 - Conceptual
 - Agenda-setting
 - Strategic - Political



4. Conceptual model – policy legitimacy

- Policy legitimacy: normative vs evaluative perspective
- Operationalisation of concepts (empirical perspective)
 - Input
 - Throughput
 - Output

Model





Normative/evaluative perspective

LEGITIMACY OF ADVISORY PROCESS/EDUCATION COUNCIL		
<i>From a normative perspective</i>		
Input legitimacy	Throughput legitimacy	Output legitimacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity • Representativeness • Inclusion • Transparency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information equality • Equality in interaction • Independence • Openness • Transparency • Depth in interaction • Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovativeness • Impact on policy
<i>From an evaluative perspective</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with input results (part of process) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with throughput results (part of process) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with output results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy support (overall satisfaction) 		



Empirical perspective

Empirical perspective

Input phase	Throughput phase	Output phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political framing and commitment • Administrative support • Legal status • Social status • Principals • Membership (boundary rules) • Role (scope rules) • Discretion • Authorization and accountability rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision Making (Aggregation) rules • Information rules • Interaction rules • Process of agenda setting and advice production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination (targets and forms) • Utilisation (instrumental,..) • Quality of content (relevance, consistency, evidence-based, innovativeness)



Input (1)

- **Administrative Support:**
 - Level of financial support
 - Number of permanent Staff
- **Legal Status:**
 - Government Recognition
 - Independence of budget
 - Consultation and Feedback Requirements
- **Social Status:**
 - President & Members
- **Number of Principals**
- **Membership**
 - Openness (entrance rules)
 - Diversity (diff communities)
 - Representativeness



Input (2)

- **Role:**
 - Long Term vs Short Term
 - Right of initiative
- **Discretion:**
 - Rule Environment



Throughput

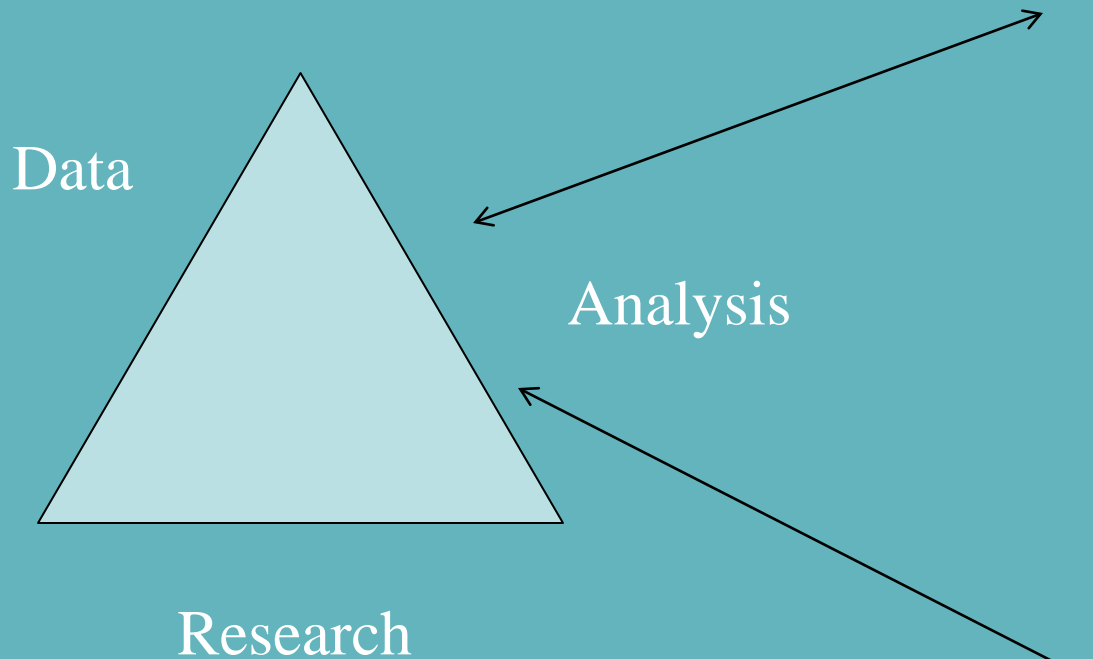
- **Decision Making**
 - Official Consensus
 - Striving for Consensus
 - Official Mechanism for Minority Inclusion
- **Interaction:**
 - Internal
 - Communities involved
 - Directionality of 'group' interaction

Output

- **Dissemination:**
 - Government, Parliament, media, internet
 - Customisation of the Advice
- **Utilisation:**
 - Instrumental
 - Conceptual
 - Agenda Setting
 - Strategic-Political
- **Quality**
 - Innovativeness
 - Non-Dilution
 - Consistency
 - Evidence Base

Output concepts

Dissemination: Lindquist (1990)



Publication Activities:

- Memos
- Briefings
- Reports
- Articles
- Papers
- Monographs
- books

Convocation Activities :

- Workshops
- Seminars
- Symposia
- Conferences
- Briefings
- Speeches



5. Methods – case studies

- Desk Research
- Literature Review
- Questionnaires
- Interviews

>> 15 fact sheets EC

>> 6 case studies EC



- Basic fact sheets (15): constitution, membership, secretariat, role, production
 - Belgium (CEF, VLOR), Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Romania
- In-depth case studies (6): founding, membership, structure, administration, legal and social status, relationship ministry, analysis advisory process



General Overview: Case Selection Strategy

- Least Similar Selection Method
 - Geographical
 - Political
 - Types of Expertise
 - Advisory Style
 - Country Size
 - Membership
 - Community Linkages



In-depth case studies:

- Portugal: established, large, broad membership, mixed scope, high status
- Dutch: small, expertise focus, agenda setting, high ratio staff to members
- Flemish: established, strongly embedded, large, strong admin support
- Estonian: very large, broad, open access, weak legal status, 1 principal, long term focus, high discretion
- Greek: focus on instrumental advice, no right of initiative
- Spanish: established, large, broad, representational membership, active presence government





Analysis of 11 pieces of policy advice

- Sexual Education (Pt)
- 0-12 Education (Pt)
- Open Resources (NI)
- Foreign Languages (NI)
- Higher education reform (FI)
- Competences Dutch (FI)
- Curriculum (Est)
- Learning Estonia (Est)
- Election of rectors (Gr)
- Access to universities (Sp)
- Report on situation and state of educational system (Sp)



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Organisation and institutionalisation (RQ 1a)

- Administrative support
- Legal status
- Social status
- Principals
- Membership
- Role
- Discretion



Administrative support

- Budget – Staff
- Important for building expertise, institutional memory
- Divide Western-Europe – Eastern Europe
- High level of professionalisation versus reliance upon volunteers
 - *But volunteers professionalise too!*
- High levels connected to embeddedness in policy-process



Legal status

- Generally high
- Consultation versus feedback requirements
 - Flanders high
 - Spain consultation requirement but no feedback requirement
 - Netherlands: no consultation requirement but feedback requirement
 - Consultation requirement only for operational matters in Greece
- Procedural or argumentative approach
- Weaker legal status in Greece and Estonia



Social status

- Some very high status (Portugal)
- Interesting mix of high status versus lower status in light of inclusiveness (Flemish case)
- Weight of status may differ: expertise or social weight (Netherlands)



Principals

- Multiple principals is common: parliament, government, member organisations
 - Flanders, Spain, Portugal
- One principal in Estonian case
- Disjointed interaction with principals in Greece



Membership

- Closed access is the rule
 - Estonia is exception: all can join
- Logic of representation dominant over logic of expertise
- Yet blurred
 - Mechanism for garnering expertise
 - Cooptation (Portugal)
 - Appointment of experts (Spain)
 - Ad hoc consultation of experts (Flanders)
 - Member organisations send experts
 - Mechanisms for garnering societal input
 - Experts broadly representative of society (Netherlands)
 - Experts with different political leanings (Greece)
 - Expert bodies consult societal interests (Netherlands)



Roles

- Conceptual and agenda-setting (NL)
- Instrumental (operational use in Greece)

- Long-term (Estonia)
- Short-term (Greece)

- Mixes (Spain, Vlor)



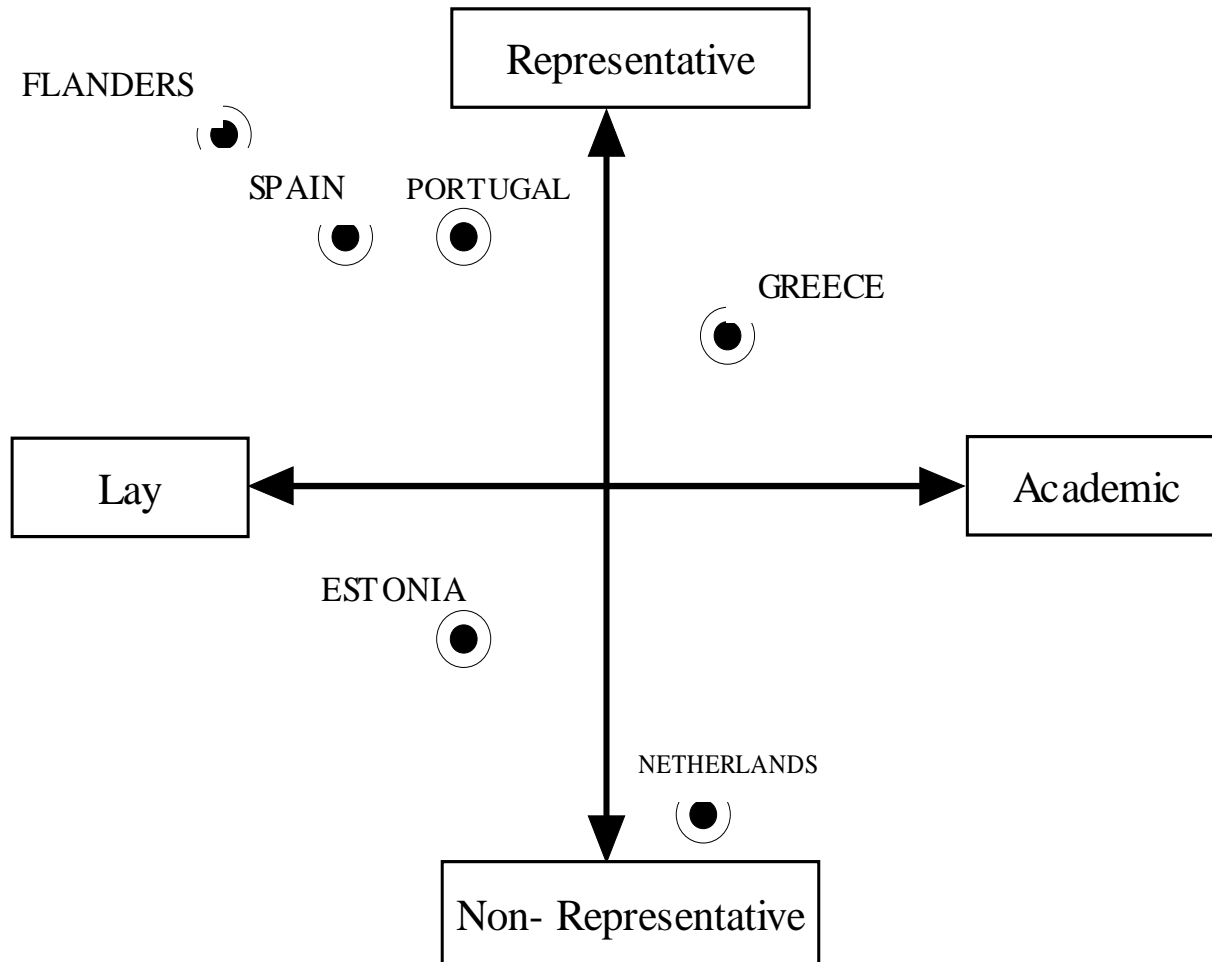
Discretion

- Complete adaptability and flexibility (Estonia)
- Strict rules in combination with degree of flexibility
 - Consult additional people
 - Timing
- Right of initiative
 - All but Greece
 - Important for agenda-setting use



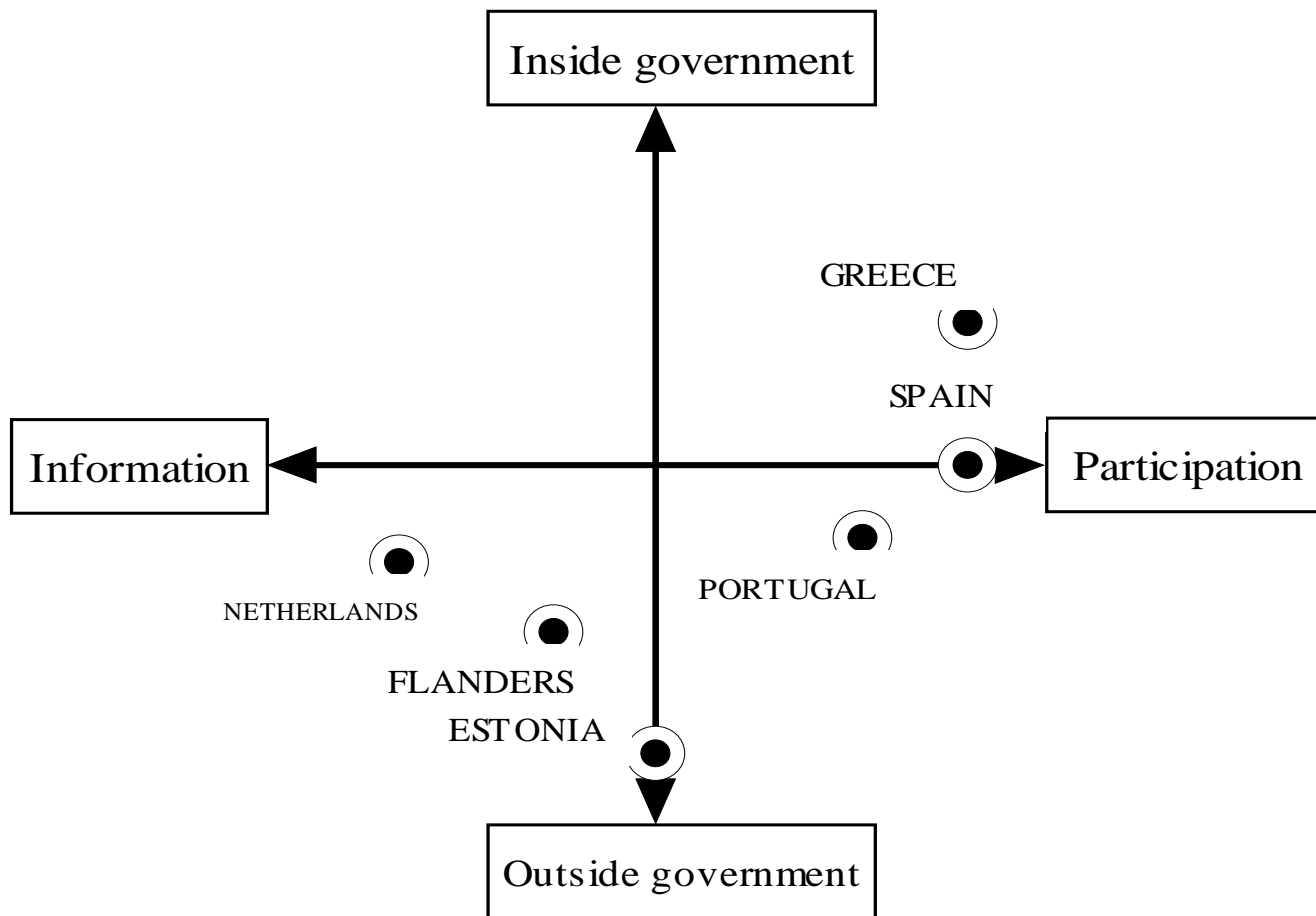
Types of education councils: (RQ1b)

Types: membership (RQ1b)





Types: government interaction





Organisation of the advisory process (RQ 1c)



Organisation of the advisory process (RQ 1c)

- Agenda-setting
- Routinization
- Consensus – majority – minority
- Interaction intensity



Agenda-setting

- Several principals involved
- Formally government in some cases, informally council
- President and central administrators key figures
- Preparatory work and support to advisory process by permanent staff!!

Routinization

- Optimal paths (older councils)
- Alternative paths (Flanders and Netherlands)
- Experimentation (Portugal)
- Supplemented by informal mechanisms (Greece)



Interaction intensity

- Most councils interact with several communities
- Weight of community interaction is towards society
 - Not so in expert body Netherlands
- Independence from government or from societal interests?
 - How remain independent from government whilst at the same time having government participate?



Output (RQ1d)



Output (RQ1d)

- Impact?
- Dissemination
- Quality of advice
- Utilisation of advice



Dissemination

- Wide dissemination strategies
 - Parliament too
- Some degree of Tailoring of advice
 - Summaries and translations
- Conscious media strategies by some
 - timing



Quality of advice

- Innovation versus dilution
- Incrementalism not necessarily a bad thing
- Research and other evidence
 - Best available evidence
 - Streamlining evidence to avoid fragmentation
- Challenge to combine opinion and evidence



Current trends (1e)




Current trends (1e)

- Inclusiveness
- Evidence based movement
- Competition of advice – political control

- Councils adapt with
 - Membership
 - Garnering evidence and research
 - Increased co-ordination with government



Organising for better results (RQ2)



Organising for better results (RQ2)

- Legal embedding
 - Secured roles in the policy-making process
- Diversification
 - Membership
 - Role diversification
 - Principal diversification
- Dissemination and tailoring of advice
- Use discretion to the full



7. Recommendations



Recommendations Meso

- Ensure sufficient funding and means to the advisory council as an organisation, or to the members.
- Grant the advisory council a status in law.
- Legally embed the roles of advisory bodies.
- Legally settle the council's access points to different stages of the policy cycle.



Recommendations Meso

- Raise their commitment as a principal by assigning leading civil servants
- Allow for the inclusion of different communities; if not through membership, representation, and co-optation, than through mechanisms of consultation of experts and civil society interests.
- Raise the number of principals, by for instance including parliament as a client of the council's advice.
- Combine legal guarantees with granting sufficient discretion..
- Invest in knowledge base



Recommendations Micro

- Adopt strategies and tools for combining civil society input and expertise, next to what is settled in their membership structure: expert pools, e-fora, or focus groups.
- Adopt different advisory tracks
- Adopt conscious and diversified dissemination strategies, in order to communicate with their different principals, raise the utility of their products, increase their networks.
- Customize information in the process and products to the different principals and audiences.



Recommendations Micro

- Engender with members and principals different understandings of advisory success
- Efficiently plan and time advisory processes and products in multi-annual and annual work programmes.
- Make use of the best available evidence in their advisory process and products: data, research, and analysis, the latter of which blends in opinion of stakeholders.
- Develop conscious strategies to train staff and leaders as boundary workers: communication and policy analytical skills;



- Questions?



Contact?

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Added value of education councils

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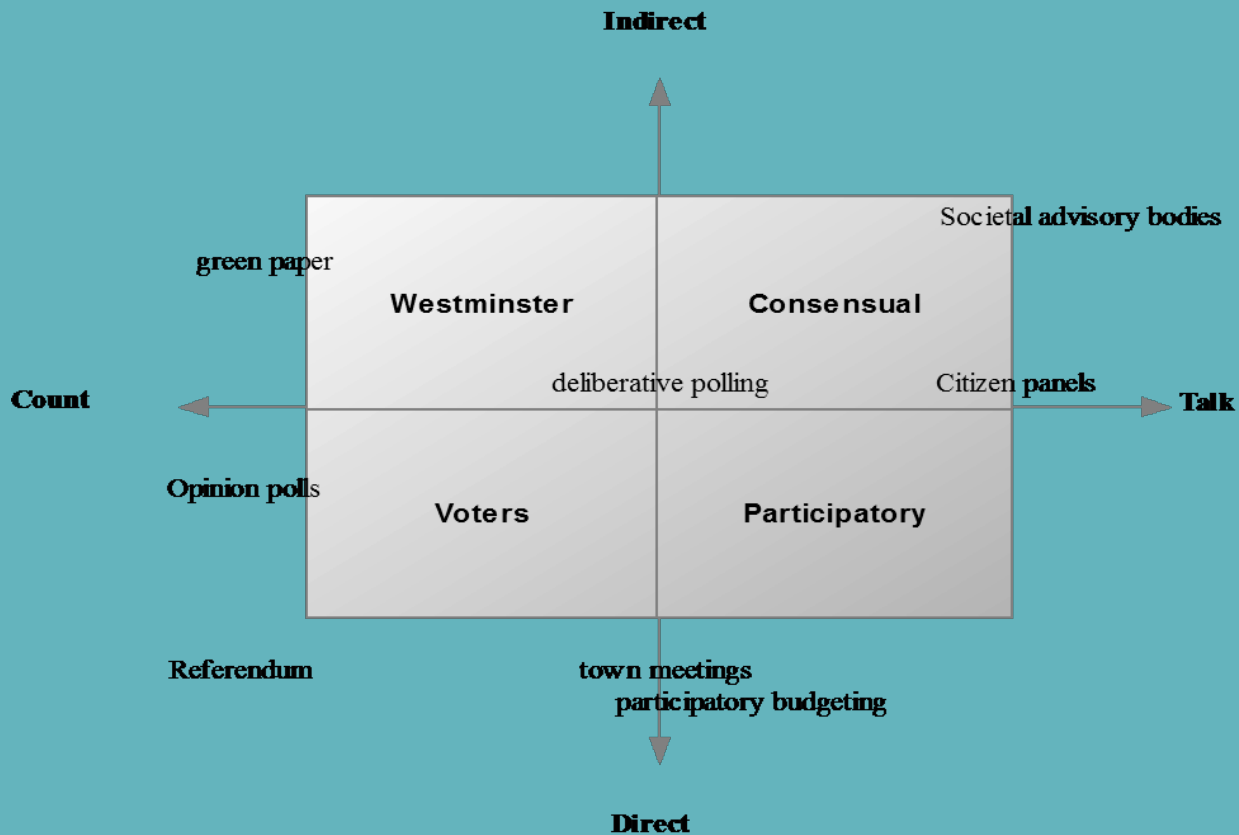


Added values

- Added value for democracy
- Added value for professional problem-solving



Added value for democracy





Added value for policy-making

- Added value for problem-solving
- Professional policy-making for the 21st century
 - Ingredients for effective policy-making
 - Opportunities and challenges for education councils

Added value for problem-solving

- For assessing symptoms and framing problems
 - Scientific theories
 - Causality, priorities
 - Policy theories
 - Past policies
 - Government language
 - Field theories
 - Lay experts
 - Stakeholders
 - Experienced base knowledge

Adding to problem-solving: for making problems tractable

		Scientific consensus	
		great	small
Normative consensus	great	Tractable problems	Untractable scientific problems
	small	Untractable ethical problems	Untractable political problems

Arrows indicate relationships between problem types:

- A horizontal arrow points from "Untractable scientific problems" to "Tractable problems".
- A vertical arrow points from "Untractable ethical problems" to "Tractable problems".
- A diagonal arrow points from "Untractable political problems" to "Tractable problems".



Professional policy-making for the 21st Century

- Forward looking - strategic
- Outward looking
- Joined up
- Evidence
- Learning
- Innovativeness and flexibility
- Inclusiveness
- Consultation



- Thank you
- Marleen.brans@soc.kuleuven.be