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**Roundtables “International Perspectives on Evidence-based Policymaking” and “How to strengthen Evidence-based Policymaking? Strategic Positioning within Government” – Event Documentation**



**Initiative for Evidence-based Policymaking 2023**  
Lena Diekmann | Regina T. Riphahn | Monika Schnitzer

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### Editing

Sandra Kumm, German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina  
Contact: [leopoldina@leopoldina.org](mailto:leopoldina@leopoldina.org)

### Translation

Alan Frostick

### Coverillustration

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In the „Leopoldina Forum“ series, the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina documents diverse perspectives on issues of high relevance to science and society.



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## Introduction

The Initiative for Evidence-based Policymaking of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina provides a platform for dialogue and the networking of stakeholders from politics and academia. The project has existed since 2018 and is coordinated by the Academy's Presidential Office. In addition to prompting exchanges and networking among policymakers and administrators, the goal is to gain an understanding of the role and responsibility of policymakers and researchers on the path to evidence-based policymaking.

The purpose of evidence-based decision-making is to enable informed political discussion that translates into clearly structured, transparent, and fact-based decision-making processes. Empirical analyses should not and cannot replace the political process, as political decisions involve diplomacy and incorporate a variety of perspectives. However, taking into account scientific evidence and the analyses of empirical effectiveness can significantly improve policy formulation and outcomes. To this end, the Initiative for Evidence-based Policymaking examines instruments, procedures, and the structures of science transfer within the German political administration system and government across all policy fields.

Most recently, the project's perspective was extended to an international framework, in order to learn from promising activities in politics and administration that make use of scientific findings. Here, we document the results of two roundtable events to enable reflection on the impulse statements as well as the fruitful discussions that arose from them, despite the limited time given by such online events. The two events, entitled "International Perspectives on Evidence-based Policymaking"<sup>1</sup> (2021) and "How to Strengthen Evidence-based Policy-

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1 Roundtable *International Perspectives on Evidence-Based Policymaking* took place February 18, 2021 (online, no recording available).

making? Strategic Positioning within Government”<sup>2</sup> (2022) featured selected presentations from Australia, New Zealand, Finland, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and the OECD. The contributions gathered in this volume were written based on presentations by the speakers and published with their support. We sincerely thank all of them for their participation and, in addition, Jeromin Zettelmeyer, whose analysis allowed us to consider the results of the second roundtable (2022) in the light of the German administrative system. By way of introduction, we provide a brief overview of the content presented:

**United Kingdom: Miriam Styrnol, Senior Advisor of the UK Evaluation Task Force (ETF)**, *presents the work and aspirations of the UK government team that was established in 2020. The task force, which reports jointly to HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office, is a central advisory and coordinating unit that supports various government departments in their evaluation activities. It is thus an essential component of a set of measures to improve the quality of public spending through policy evaluations. Various task assignment profiles within the British public administration serve as further catalysts for policy evaluation – and thus for evidence-based policymaking.*

**Germany: Kai Hielscher, Head of the Coordination Office for Regulatory Sandboxes at the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action**, *presents the development, activities and goals of his office. The regulatory sandboxes are part of an innovation policy that is characterized by a clear interest in integrating knowledge. The sandboxes, which are limited in time and often in space, make it possible to test innovative technologies, products, services and approaches under real conditions that are not yet covered, or only to a limited extent, by the legal and regulatory framework. The utilization of the findings from these test deployments is an impressive example of how the legal framework can be further developed in an evidence-based manner.*

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2 Roundtable *How to strengthen Evidence-based Policymaking? Strategic Positioning within Government* took place September 20, 2022 (online). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEs0-OISUY0> (last retrieved on: July 24, 2023).

**Canada: Mona Nemer, Chief Science Advisor.** *Canada is one of the few governments in the world to appoint a Chief Science Advisor and a federal Minister responsible for science. Since 2017, an advisor has provided independent advice to the government on matters of science and government policies that support it. The mandate includes recommending ways to strengthen existing structures and ensure that scientific evidence informs policy discussion and can be considered in making government decisions. Dr Nemer's activities demonstrate the formative power that the mandate of a Chief Science Advisor can unleash for science.*

**Australia: Jason Lange, Office for Best Practice Regulation.** *Jason Lange presents the regulation in Australia of e-cigarettes to illustrate the benefits of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) findings. The Office for Best Practice Regulation (now the Office of Impact Analysis) sits within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. This office is responsible for advising on and reviewing regulatory impact assessments carried out by government departments. The RIA is a tool that assists in the drafting and implementation of major policy decisions. It supports presentation of the objectives of regulatory projects, explores the possibilities of their implementation and resulting consequences – on the basis of evidence. The expected benefits of a proposed regulation are weighed in relation to the costs and possible negative effects that could arise. Conflicting objectives are made transparent.*

**New Zealand: Jonathan Ayto, Principal Advisor at the Ministry of Finance and part of the Regulatory Quality Team.** *This presentation was given by Jonathan Ayto as a private person. The example demonstrates the application of a conceptual approach to evidence-based policymaking. The focus here is on creating theorized frameworks for policy action that influence what information and scientific evidence enter the policymaking process: Policy goals thus become transparently defined and their achievement measurable. Jonathan Ayto introduces the Living Standards Framework and the Principle of Regulatory Stewardship. Both concepts require looking at the regulatory system holistically and taking into account continuous changes to policy design.*



**Finland: Maria Kaisa Aula, State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance,** *presents the development and implementation of the pilot project LAPE (2015–2023). The program was created in the context of the reform of child and family services in Finland. It tests the implementation of four selected psychosocial interventions to support families. The goal of the program is to improve the quality of public services through the strategic introduction of evidence-based interventions and to build a working culture based on current and evidence-based knowledge. Maria Kaisa Aula traces the main stages of the project's implementation and reflects on the role of evidence-based policymaking.*

**OECD: Stéphane Jacobzone, Senior Advisor, Public Governance,** *provides an overview of key drivers of evidence-informed policymaking. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is actively engaging in the agenda for evidence-informed policymaking as part of its overall efforts to strengthen trust in government institutions. It has developed recommendations that are related to this issue, including on policy evaluation and regulatory quality, and has published thematic reports on building capacity for evidence informed policy-making, as well as on mobilizing evidence for good governance. It has also addressed these issues in a set of country studies to assess country practices and facilitate the sharing of good practices. The presentation addresses the importance of evidence in policymaking, including data, analysis, evaluation and scientific studies, and its preconditions for transfer, where the standards of quality in scientific evidence are crucial. It also provides some examples of successful implementation of evidence-informed policymaking methods.*

The variety shown in these contributions reflects the wide range of activities that are possible in the field of evidence-based policymaking. However, these are only a small sample and must be considered in their respective contexts. It is essential that any activity in evidence-based policymaking is dependent on the constitutional context in which it takes place: whether local actors are willing to engage in the often uncomfortable processes of robust analysis, and above all on whether there is the political will. The existence of appropriate structures does not necessarily mean that they will be used. It requires committed

actors on the political leadership and administrative levels as well as the inclusion of scientists. It is also necessary that scientists communicate their results in a form that can be understood by administrators – not a simple undertaking. We believe that only a jointly led dialogue can break down institutional barriers and facilitate transfer.

With our events and further activities for this initiative, we hope to make a contribution in this field and are pleased by the many participants from the federal government, scientific institutions and others who have registered for the events.

## Contributions from the event “How to strengthen Evidence-based Policymaking? Strategic Positioning within Government” (2022)

### United Kingdom

#### **Summary based on the presentation “The Evaluation Task Force – A Case Study from HM Government” by Miriam Styrnol, Senior Evaluation Advisor in the Evaluation Task Force, HM Treasury and Cabinet Office**

The Evaluation Task Force (ETF) is a team in the UK government jointly reporting to HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office. It was established in 2020 with the intention of improving the quality of public spending through policy evaluations. The Task Force is a central advisory and coordinating unit that supports departments in their evaluation activities and reviews the results. Close cooperation with HM Treasury is a key factor for the active use of the Task Force’s services. As of March 2023, the ETF provided advice on 211 evaluations, covering £115 billion of government spending.<sup>3</sup>

The ETF provides cross-governmental teams with resources that can facilitate the use of evaluation throughout the policy process. In addition, the ETF also offers specialist evaluation advice to Government departments on an ad-hoc basis. This can include, but is not limited to, advice on the design of proportionate evaluation plans and their budgeting in policy formulation. The ETF supports HM Government to assess the quality of evaluation evidence that accompanies funding requests. Annual Operational Delivery Plans, in which departments have to summarise progress-made and future plans on their priority programmes, are also assessed to ensure proportionate evaluation and evaluation evidence informs departments’ activities.

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3 Evaluation Task Force Output and Outcome Indicators (2023) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-task-force-output-and-outcome-indicators-march-2023> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

The clear evaluation system pays tribute to part of the ETF’s portfolio, which is dedicated to increasing transparency and accountability and to improve communication about evaluation projects and results. For example, the ETF maintains a public website<sup>4</sup> on which it provides updates about its work, a curation of methodology training courses, guidelines and evaluation results. As an additional incentive to increase evaluation activities, the ETF administers a £50 million fund from which government departments can draw funds for evaluation in projects for priority areas.<sup>5</sup>

A variety of assignment profiles within the British public administration serve as catalysts for policy evaluations. In addition to a Director of Analysis, a large number of departments also have a Chief Scientific Advisor and employ social researchers as consulting analysts for policy evaluations. Furthermore, the establishment and coordination of external structures that contribute to effective and efficient policymaking are part of the ETF’s package of measures.

The Evaluation and Trial Advice Panel (ETAP)<sup>6</sup> is such an advisory structure that brings in external expertise to improve evaluation efforts. Departmental staff can bring their projects to the panel for discussion and enhance the quality of evaluation for their projects. In addition, the ETF acts as the secretariat for the What Works Network of 13 research centres whose mission is to provide scientific policy advice.

In 2019 – a year before the ETF was established – the UK Cabinet Office found that robust evaluation plans were in place for only 8% of planned spending on major regulatory projects in key areas of government (£432 billion in total).<sup>7</sup> The ETF, in operation since April 2021, has since become one of the world’s pacesetters for a policy style that is focused on effectiveness and efficiency, with a wide range of measures and

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4 Evaluation Task Force website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/evaluation-task-force> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

5 The Evaluation Accelerator Fund (EAF) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-accelerator-fund> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

6 The Evaluation and Trial Advice Panel (ETAP) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cross-government-trial-advice-panel-role-and-membership> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

7 House of Commons. Committee of Public Accounts. Use of evaluation and modelling in government (2022). <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/22451/documents/165470/default/> (last retrieved July 24, 2023).

offerings for public administration. HM Treasury has set itself the goal of equipping every new and significant regulatory project of the British government with an evaluation plan by 2025.<sup>8</sup>

## Germany

### **Summary based on the presentation by Kai Hielscher, Head of the Office of Regulatory Sandboxes at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action**

Regulatory Sandboxes are testing spaces for innovations and regulations that are operated for a limited time and in a limited part of a sector or area. The concept enables in a real-life environment for the testing of innovative technologies, products, services and approaches, which are not fully compliant with the existing legal and regulatory framework or are subject to open questions. The aim is to make Germany more innovation-friendly and at the same time to learn about the consequences of using an innovation without weakening existing protection standards. Regulatory Sandboxes are thus part of an innovation policy characterized by a distinct regulatory interest in learning that is based on scientific findings. The utilization of the insights gained from these test deployments is therefore an impressive example of a way to advance the regulatory framework in an evidence-based manner.

The Regulatory Sandboxes Office<sup>9</sup> is located in the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. It accompanies the implementation of Regulatory Sandboxes in an advisory capacity, acts as a central information platform and works on establishing conditions for an innovation-friendly framework for regulatory sandboxes. The office’s current wide-ranging portfolio of tasks goes back to a project idea debated on the ministry’s operational level and across various areas of responsibility in the ministry on how the development and market integration of

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8 ETF Strategy 2022-2025 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-evaluation-task-force-strategy-2022-2025/the-evaluation-task-force-strategy-2022-2025-html> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

9 Regulatory Sandboxes Office <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Dossier/regulatory-sandboxes.html> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

digital and sustainable innovations could be strengthened in Germany. Based on this joint work, an extensive dialog process with practitioners, various needs analyses and expert opinions, and surveys among the members of the Regulatory Sandbox Network, the Regulatory Sandbox Strategy<sup>10</sup> was developed. The Regulatory Sandbox Office has been implementing the strategy since 2019. In addition to improving the legal framework, the Regulatory Sandboxes Office has set itself the task of reducing (legal) uncertainties and information deficits and strengthening the networking of science, business and administration. The Regulatory Sandboxes Network with more than 700 members, information services such as the Handbook for Regulatory Sandboxes<sup>11</sup>, Regulatory Sandbox Innovation Award are among the key elements of the office’s comprehensive information and networking activities.

Instrument and central mechanism that often enable the use of Regulatory Sandboxes are Experimentation clauses in the legal framework. For example, if a regulatory sandbox for autonomous driving and passenger transportation is to be piloted in a municipality, the experimentation clause in the Passenger Transportation Act, among others, paves the way for it. The Regulatory Sandbox Office, in cooperation with an interministerial working group, is working to strengthen experimentation clauses at the national and European level.

In April 2021, the German government decided, in order to reduce bureaucracy, to examine in each future law whether a regulatory sandbox could be implemented, if possible by including an experimentation clause. This illustrates the potential that a bottom-up initiative can have. The use of this screening is currently not mandatory, although it would strengthen the innovation-friendliness of the German legal framework by increasing the use of such clauses. Reasonably, these clauses include an obligation to systematically evaluate the regulatory

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10 Regulatory Sandbox Strategy <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Dossier/regulatory-sandboxes.html> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

11 Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi). *Making space for innovation The handbook for regulatory sandboxes*. (2019). <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/Digitale-Welt/handbook-regulatory-sandboxes.html> (last retrieved: August 23, 2023).

sandbox. A working aid for the formulation of experimentation clauses<sup>12</sup> has also been provided to support legislators. At the European level a common understanding of the 27 member states on regulatory sandboxes and experimentation clauses was created in 2020 during the German Council Presidency, and the European Commission was urged to take the inclusion of regulatory sandboxes and experimentation clauses into account in future legal acts.<sup>13</sup>

As a mandate from the coalition agreement the ministry is currently working on the planned Regulatory Sandbox Act, which is intended to create uniform standards and new (legal) opportunities for Regulatory Sandboxes. An important component of this is the evaluation of Sandboxes, which enables continuous regulatory learning.

## Canada

### **Summary based on a presentation by Dr Mona Nemer, Chief Science Advisor of Canada**

The Canadian government is one of the few in the world to appoint a Chief Science Advisor (CSA) and a federal minister responsible for science. Since 2017, an advisor has provided independent advice to the government on issues related to science and government policies that support it. This includes advising on ways to ensure that scientific knowledge is considered in public policy decisions and that government science is fully available to the public. Since its establishment, the position has been held by molecular cardiologist Dr Mona Nemer. A former professor and vice-president of research at the University of Ottawa, she has received numerous awards for her research.

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12 Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWV). *New flexibility for innovation. Guide for formulating experimentation clauses*. (2020). <https://www.bmwv.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/Digitale-Welt/guide-new-flexibility-for-innovation-en-web-bf.html> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

13 As it is currently being done in the drafts on AI regulation.

Although Canada has a long tradition of using evidence-based regulatory policy tools, such as policy evaluation<sup>14</sup>, in 2012 the government faced protests by the science community about the lack of scientific evidence in policy decisions. Budget cuts to environmental programs and the perception of poor information policy on unwelcome scientific findings had upset scientists and caused them to hold a mock funeral for scientific evidence as a symbolic protest on Parliament Hill.<sup>15</sup> In 2015, election platforms of Canadian political parties took up this expression of concern and developed concepts for a stronger representation of the sciences in the Canadian government. In 2017, the government established the Office of the Chief Science Advisor. By some, the protest could be interpreted as a crystallization point for the establishment of the office of a Chief Science Advisor.

The mandate of the Chief Science Advisor provides for the coordination of scientific advice to the Prime Minister; the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry; and the Cabinet. This includes the preparation of research findings and strategic foresight on key government issues. In addition to advisory activities, more formative aspects come into play in the role. Thus, the advisor is responsible not only for advising on existing structures, but also for recommending new processes to ensure that scientific analysis is considered in government decision-making. Other areas of responsibility include recommendations for the promotion of excellent research and public access to science. An annual report<sup>16</sup> for the Prime Minister and Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry provides current information on the Office of the Chief Science Advisor’s activities and the state of science in the Canadian federal government.

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14 Derlien, H-U. (1997). Evaluationen im internationalen Kontext. In W. Bussmann, U. Klöti & P. Knoepfel (Hrsg.). *Einführung in die Politikevaluation*. Basel und Frankfurt am Main: Helbing & Lichtenhahn.

15 CBC News. *Death of scientific evidence mourned on Parliament Hill*. Jul 10, 2012. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/death-of-scientific-evidence-mourned-on-parliament-hill-1.1218019> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

16 Chief Science Advisor. *Annual Report*. <https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/office-chief-science-advisor/annual-reports> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).



In 2018, Dr Nemer succeeded in introducing a model policy on scientific integrity in federal departments and agencies<sup>17</sup>. The model policy provides guidance and sets uniform standards. Departments that were early adopters have provided the CSA’s office with helpful feedback that is guiding the development of tools, resources and training to support policy objectives. The CSA is also pursuing the expansion of the scientific advisory network and open science activities.<sup>18</sup> The approach aims to make scientific processes transparent and to enable open access to collected data. Another aspect of open science practice involves the transfer of topics from citizens to science. One example of this is the founding of the Chief Science Advisor’s Youth Council;<sup>19</sup> the body’s task is to conduct evidence-based explorations of issues affecting young people.

The multitude of activities demonstrates how beneficial the mandate of a senior advisor for science can be to governance, promoting ongoing dialogue and building trust. An external and integrative perspective can benefit policymakers in all policy areas, and in science and research policy in particular. The advisor’s role benefits from having someone experienced in the sciences. Dr Nemer considers clarity in communication, honesty, and integrity to be key success factors in carrying out her mandate.

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17 Model Policy on Scientific Integrity <https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/office-chief-science-advisor/model-policy-scientific-integrity#1> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

18 Roadmap Open Science (2020). <https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/office-chief-science-advisor/open-science/roadmap-open-science> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

19 OCSA’s Youth Council (CSA-YC) <https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/office-chief-science-advisor/ocsas-youth-council-csa-yc> (last retrieved: July 24, 2023).

## Contributions from the event “International Perspectives on Evidence-Based Policymaking”. (2021)

### Australia

#### **Summary of the Australian presentation “Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA)” by Jason Lange, Office of Impact Analysis (formerly Office for Best Practice Regulation), Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Australia is one of the leading nations at making methodical use of regulatory policy instruments to strengthen evidence-based policymaking by the systematic integration of scientific evidence.<sup>20</sup> These include Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA), which is the responsibility of the Office of Impact Analysis (OIA) within the Prime Minister’s department.<sup>21</sup> The OIA receives up to 1,800 cross-policy major policy changes for consideration each year, of which only about 5% meet the threshold necessary to complete an RIA.<sup>22</sup>

The RIA is a tool that helps analyse new policy decisions. In an evidence-based manner it supports presenting the objectives and explores the possibilities of implementation and its consequences. The expected benefits of major policy change are weighed in relation to the costs and any negative effects that could arise, making obvious any conflicts between objectives. In its analysis of the effects of implementation of a policy decision, an RIA involves a wide scope of consideration such as environmental, public health, employment, labour market, competition

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20 OECD (2021). *OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2021*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/38b0fdb1-en> (last retrieved: July 25, 2023).

21 Since 2014, the *Office for Best Practice Regulation* (OBPR) has sat within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Its name was changed in November 2022, to the Office of Impact Analysis (OIA) <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/> (last retrieved: July 25, 2023).

22 The calculation of whether the threshold is exceeded is based on the expected impact on businesses and/or citizens.

policy and consequential costs for businesses and citizens. In addition, distribution issues must be taken into account by examining whether their impacts differ for groups of people and other stakeholders, such as varying among income groups, sizes of business, genders, the indigent population, and from urban/rural differences.

Among the challenges is that although an RIA is essentially based on scientific evidence, this is not the only criterion in decision-making. Some (intangible) properties are difficult to quantify and often limited public funds make trade-offs in the implementation of policy decisions unavoidable. The task of an RIA is to present all these aspects to the government as an overall assessment.

The pioneering role that RIAs can play in the legislative process is illustrated by the example of the planned ban of e-cigarettes in Australia. Despite the massive social damage that is caused by tobacco consumption and the controversial role of e-cigarettes, the decision to ban e-cigarettes met with stern rejection by some politicians and sections of society. The first attempt at regulation was in fact revoked by the minister responsible on the same day the decision was announced.<sup>23</sup> In its analysis of e-cigarettes, the regulatory authority had only assessed the clinical aspects and had not considered any alternatives to a ban. With the help of the then *Office for Best Practice Regulation*, an RIA was able to clearly demonstrate the harmful effects of the ban on individuals and businesses and assess the regulatory alternatives, thus informing the department’s decision for a compromise solution. The RIA process, at first deemed unnecessary, became the central analysis instrument for the policy decision. As a result, e-cigarettes have been regulated by prescription in Australia since October 2021.

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23 (2020, December). Vaping: Greg Hunt abandons plans to ban importation of devices after Coalition revolt: Decision may reduce enforcement of ban on possession of liquid nicotine without a prescription. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/dec/22/vaping-greg-hunt-abandons-plans-to-ban-importation-of-devices-after-coalition-revolt> (last retrieved: July 25, 2023).

## New Zealand

**Summary of presentation “The NZ Government’s Wellbeing Approach and Treasury’s Living Standards Framework and Regulatory Stewardship” by Jonathan Ayto, Principal Advisor at the New Zealand Treasury and part of the Regulatory Quality Team. The presentation given by Jonathan Ayto is as a private citizen**

New Zealand’s example demonstrates the possibility of a concept-guided approach to evidence-based policymaking by the creation of a theoretical framework for policy action that influences what information and scientific evidence is incorporated into the process. The Living Standards Framework (LSF) was developed by the Ministry of Finance to help policymakers gain an overall understanding and to reflect on the long-term impact on various dimensions of wellbeing when designing policies. The predefined factors of each dimension allow for a systematic consideration of scientific evidence when taking policy decisions. Another framework is the Principle of Regulatory Stewardship. The two concepts differ in objective and definition. Regulatory Stewardship is a responsibility of government agencies that has statutory support in the Public Service Act.<sup>24</sup> It asks those agencies to adopt the mindset that regulatory systems are important societal assets that require ongoing care and attention. Both maxims of policy design are united in their intent to regard the regulatory system holistically as well as to design policies for the long term in light of their distributional effects. They are briefly presented below.

### **Living Standard Framework:**

First developed in 2011, and periodically refined and enhanced over time, the LSF maps the country’s prosperity as the aggregate of a range of factors. The aggregation of these factors into an overarching framework,

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<sup>24</sup> *Stewardship* is one of five public service principles in New Zealand’s Public Service Act (2020) <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0040/latest/LMS356871.html> (last retrieved: July 25, 2023).

with their definition and measurability, represented a paradigm shift in New Zealand policy. Development of the framework was prompted by concerns that traditional measures such as GDP were too narrow to adequately assess the living standards of New Zealanders. The carefully defined dimensions (see Fig. 1), originally drawn from the OECD Better Life Index<sup>25</sup>, and these now serve as a guideline for the variables that should be taken into account when forming policy. The aims of the LSF are to understand and systematically consider the long-term effects of political decisions and to disclose the evidence used to arrive at the decisions and the needs addressed. The perspective of the system also maps the multiple prerequisites for the concept of wellbeing as defined by New Zealand. Conceptual challenges included dialogue about what wellbeing means, how it is measured, and whose wellbeing is addressed.<sup>26</sup> The parameters of the model may take on a different meaning across generations or against the background of cultural and/or socioeconomic characteristics. The model itself, and the government’s decision<sup>27</sup> to make the LSF central for policy decisions, changed the way the government works on issues and measures its results. The framework is accompanied by statutory reporting requirements: a Wellbeing Report<sup>28</sup> must be published every four years from 2022.

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25 <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org> (last retrieved: July 25, 2023).

26 The current version of the LSF model (2022) distinguishes three levels: Wellbeing on individual and collective levels, the role of institutions in ensuring wellbeing, and the wealth of Aotearoa-New Zealand. The notion of wellbeing, as coined by the indigenous people, encompasses aspects of wellbeing that are often not captured in economic metrics, such as nature as a resource and a person’s opportunities for development. The levels of individual and collective wellbeing are derived from 12 domains that define the important prerequisites for the wellbeing of individuals as well as communities. They range from health and income to housing and social ties (see Fig 1). Each of these values is calculated from a set of indicators developed specifically by the Ministry of Finance. In addition, the application of the framework must take into account distributional effects, which may vary between groups of people, places, generations, etc.

27 “Speech from the Throne” for the opening of the NZ Parliament in 2017 <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech-throne-2017> (last retrieved July 25, 2023).

28 <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/strategies-and-plans/wellbeing-report> (last retrieved July 25, 2023).

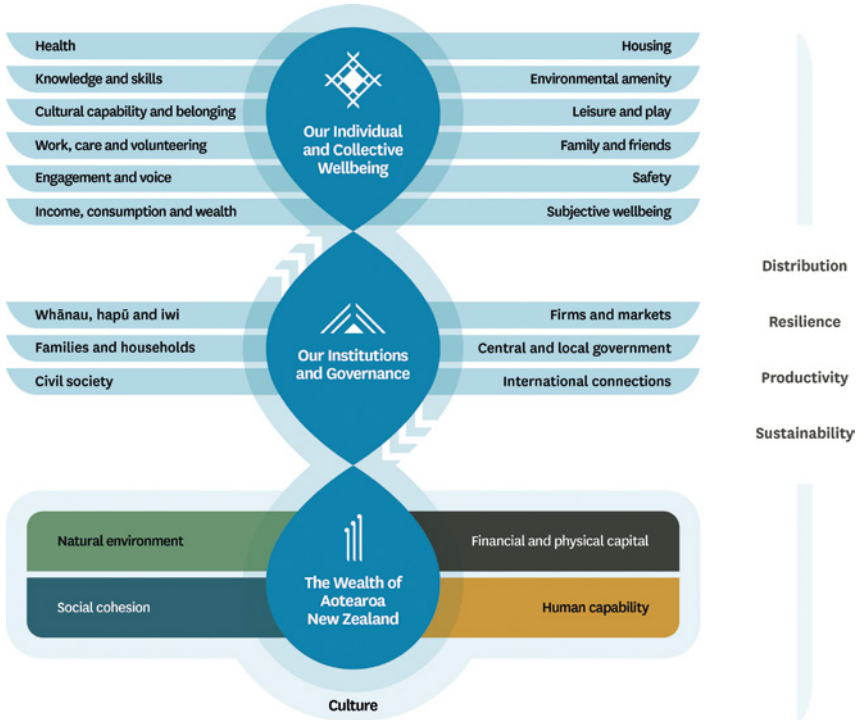


Fig. 1. Living Standards Framework developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Finance, as updated in 2021 <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework> (last retrieved July 25, 2023).

### Regulatory Stewardship:

Regulations are understood in the broadest sense as all government interventions aimed at influencing the behaviour of individuals, companies and other actors. The principle of regulatory stewardship views regulatory systems as assets because it aligns with the presumption that a regulatory system should generate added value that exceeds its costs.<sup>29</sup> Like many other assets, regulatory systems depreciate in value over time without systematic monitoring as well as and ongoing care and attention.

One central concern of the Principle of Regulatory Stewardship is to enforce the view that policy goals (e.g., workplace safety) require a set of measures that, because of their interdependencies, must always be viewed as an integrated system. Agencies are required to take these interdependencies and their ongoing changes into account in policy-making through proactive and cooperative dealings among themselves.

Another element of the principle of regulatory stewardship is to ensure the long-term effectiveness of regulations, since the effects of political decisions are per se uncertain – whether due to a constantly changing environment (caused, for example, by technical and societal changes) or due to sources of error in policy design. Thus, the principle of accountability stands for a counter design to the “set and forget” attitude<sup>30</sup> – a frequent phenomenon in the complex process of lawmaking, whereby “forgotten” regulations are often only recalled in the context of regulatory failure. The oversight of regulations by public authorities should therefore include, whenever possible, the following: (1) continuous review and reporting to assess whether regulatory objectives are being met; (2) the use of regulatory policy tools (risk and regulatory impact assessments, stakeholder consultations); and (3) training of regulatory staff.<sup>31</sup>

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29 Ayto, J. (2014). Why Departments Need to be Regulatory Stewards. *Policy Quarterly*, 10 (4), 23-27. <https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/pq/article/view/4506/3995> (last retrieved July 25, 2023).

30 *Set and Forget* in the sense of forgetting about a policy once it has been implemented.

31 OECD. (2021). *OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2021*. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/38b0fdb1-en> (last retrieved July 25, 2023).

The Living Standards Framework and the Principle of Regulatory Stewardship recognize that policy decisions often have to be made at a time when little is known about the effects of a corresponding regulation. Their conceptual approaches address this by understanding policies as experiments within complex and adaptive systems. By outlining the overarching policy goals and committing to holistic perspectives, the concepts provide guidance to policymakers and administrators. They help to determine what kind of information and scientific evidence should be included and mark out the path to transparent and coherent policy design.

## Finland

### **Summary of the presentation “Evidence-based Policymaking – Piloting with Psycho-Social Interventions to Help Families and Children” by Maria Kaisa Aula, State Secretary of Finland’s Ministry of Finance**

There is intense discussion within the Finnish government about strengthening government policy instruments to promote evidence-based policymaking. A large number of projects and programs already include research and impact evaluation,<sup>32</sup> but consistent formal procedures and a strategic framework are needed to systematically transfer processes implemented at micro level into policy preparation, decision making and successful implementation. Unresolved challenges apply, especially to the ex-post impact evaluation of policy measures. However, impact assessment and stakeholder consultations are already well-established instruments in Finnish lawmaking.<sup>33</sup>

One of Finland’s showcase projects in the implementation of evidence-based policymaking is a pilot project called LAPE (2015-2023).

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32 These are visible, for example, in strategies for the social and health sectors, in the successful introduction of *Social Impact Bonds* and in the structural reform of the Ministry of Finance *Employment rate up!* Plans are laid to establish a *Center of Excellence* for cost-effectiveness to help the administrations base their policy decisions on scientific evidence.

33 OECD (2021).



The program tests psychosocial interventions intended to support families and children. It was developed in the context of a reform of services for families and children in Finland, with participation of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education, and two NGOs. The program was scientifically monitored. The need for systemic and cross-sector changes to the services system arose after years of rising costs for health and social services. The goal of the LAPE program is to build a working culture that is based on current and evidence-based knowledge, resulting in an improvement of the quality of public services and, in particular, improvement of the wellbeing of children. It should be noted that the concept of evidence-based intervention is less familiar among social services and education professionals than it is in healthcare.

In the first phase of the program, international psychosocial interventions were evaluated in order to select four with the greatest impact. Each of the Finnish regions first received an introduction to the interventions and then selected one intervention for local implementation. The goal was to create a permanent structure for three to four effective interventions that could be used for basic services.<sup>34</sup> In the second phase of adaptation, the regions of Finland signed an agreement with their policymakers that ensured the implementation of the methods for the next five years. In the regions with the greatest call for specialized services, the Ministry of Health plans to establish regional competence centres to support the interventions. Prerequisites for effective implementation of the interventions include integration into local services and communities, acceptance by specialized staff, and quality monitoring.<sup>35</sup>

Evidence-based methods enable cross-sector interaction and can achieve cost-saving effects. Nonetheless, in order to inject knowledge from research into the policymaking process, appropriate intermediate structures are needed that can bundle and summarize the knowledge. Evidence-based policymaking is therefore first and foremost a strategic decision that should be taken on the national level as well as achieve

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34 Basic services include daycare centers, schools, family counseling, and health centers.

35 In the process of active implementation, more than 2,000 professionals were trained in the selected methods and more than 10,000 families attended courses. Media campaigns were also carried out.

acceptance at the local level, taking into account the training of leaders, management and staff: guidance for evidence-based policymaking must be collectively demanded.

## OECD

### **Summary of the presentation “An OECD Perspective on Evidence-informed Policymaking” by Stéphane Jacobzone, Senior Advisor, OECD Public Governance**

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has developed work on evidence informed policymaking, drawing on a range of its workstreams, including on policy evaluation, centres of government and also on regulatory quality/Better Regulation. The use of government policy instruments such as regulatory impact assessments and policy evaluation are some of the desirable features of better policymaking. Their use enables the systematic transfer of the findings of analysis, evidence and scientific research into the dealings of government.

The OECD is actively engaging in the agenda for evidence informed policymaking. It has developed recommendations and has published thematic reports on building capacity for evidence informed policymaking, as well as on mobilizing evidence for good governance. It has also addressed these issues in a set of country studies. Through its work on regulatory quality, it also publishes reports, recommendations and guidelines in order to encourage regulatory improvement and monitors their implementation across OECD membership and beyond.

This presentation (1) addresses the role of evidence of all kind in policymaking including at the administrative to political interface, (2) discusses the prerequisites for its transfer, (3) gives examples of successful implementation of evidence-informed policy, and (4) identifies qualitative standards for scientific evidence and the ability to probe scientific information. All these are key to the success of knowledge-informed policymaking.

- (1) High quality evidence in policymaking plays a critical role in improving the quality, responsiveness, and accessibility of public services. Evidence-based systems should ensure the incorporation of research findings into the policymaking process and support policymakers in their decisions. However, the OECD adjusts this perspective in terms of correcting the notion from evidence-based to evidence-informed policymaking. This recognizes that while policy negotiation ought to be based on scientific evidence, in practice it incorporates other factors, which are a legitimate part of the debate and include trade-offs, and the conflicting goals, priorities, voices and values of the policy community reflecting democratic settings and the voice of the people.
  
- (2) Good public governance, including well established instruments, procedures and institution can facilitate a more successful implementation of political decisions. These facilitate the transfer of expertise drawing on evaluations, data and scientific knowledge into the political decision-making process. The challenges for an effective transfer lie both in a global oversupply of information and that when specific information is needed, there is only limited knowledge about the issue to be regulated. Nonetheless, decisions must be reached even when there is an incomplete set of data. In almost all OECD countries, there are institutional gaps in the handling of evidence and scientific studies to support decision making. In order to reliably incorporate evidence into policymaking, capacity needs to be provided or built on both the institutional and individual levels. This includes the availability of research results as well as the possibility to consult interest groups. Also playing a role are motivational incentives for staff and their ability to evaluate the research results and information obtained, because a minimum level of understanding of the concepts is a crucial prerequisite for the critical evaluation of scientific evidence.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> SEER (*Seeking, Engaging with and Evaluating Research*) is an instrument that was developed in Australia to measure the individual skills of policymakers in their engagement with and use of research findings.

- (3) As mentioned above, the use of regulatory policy instruments facilitates a systematic assessment of research findings for policy action at the organizational level. Such instruments can take a variety of forms. Formally established procedures, such as regulatory impact assessments, are now practiced in almost all OECD member countries.<sup>37</sup> In addition countries are mobilizing new and innovative approaches to support policymaking. For example, New Zealand developed the analytical Living Standards Framework<sup>38</sup> and the Policy Method Toolbox<sup>39</sup> as a working tool for political officials, enabling them to make better-informed decisions. A further approach is to establish special units for policy analysis that are responsible for coordinating economic analysis or scientific evidence. One example of this is the U.S. Evidence Act, which provides designations of senior data scientists and evaluators in U.S. agencies. These examples are taken from the OECD publication *Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making* (2020)<sup>40</sup> and this analyzes the prerequisites for evidence-informed policymaking, proposing a series of specific measures for its implementation.
- (4) Aspects like standards of quality and the responsible use of scientific evidence are significant in policymaking. In health care, the Cochrane Centers have long established standards for the efficacy and effectiveness of health interventions. There is a great need to apply these kinds of approaches to social and policy analysis spheres as well. In 2020, the OECD published a report,<sup>41</sup> analyzing the dissemination of standards of scientific evidence in government agencies and intermediary institutions, as well as detailed examples of application and a checklist for self-assessment on the handling of

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37 OECD (2021).

38 See contribution by Jonathon Ayto, New Zealand.

39 As above.

40 OECD. (2020). *Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: Lessons from Country Experiences*. OECD Public Governance Reviews. OECD Publishing: Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/86331250-en> (last retrieved July 25, 2023).

41 OECD (2020). *Mobilising Evidence for Good Governance: Taking Stock of Principles and Standards for Policy Design, Implementation and Evaluation*. OECD Public Governance Reviews. OECD Publishing: Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/3f6f736b-en> (last retrieved July 25, 2023).

evidence in the respective organization. Not only the content of evidence, but also the processes in which it is used must be examined. Responsible handling includes assessing the suitability of the materials, checking whether there are conflicts of interest, and challenging any doubts. It is important to ensure that the scientific evidence that is presented to ministers is of the highest possible standard.

Building an evidence-based work culture requires investment across the spectrum of policymaking. Complementing existing tools for the efficiency of expenditure and regulatory quality, tools must be developed to ensure the resilience and validity of evidence and scientific results brought to bear in decision making processes and the ability to implement the decisions that are informed by such evidence. Strategic leadership and champions among the staff are critical for building such organizational structures and systems.

## Concluding remarks

The keynote speeches present various approaches to how scientific evidence can be used to support policymakers and administrators.

In the example from the United Kingdom, the Evaluation Task Force (ETF) provides interdepartmental support for carrying out evaluations of political measures effectively and efficiently, improving them and making them transparently accessible. The task force provides support for the systematic integration of policy evaluations into processes. Whereas the UK's ETF operates *ex post*, the regulatory impact assessments operate in advance of legislation and urge a reliable characterization of legislative objectives. These have been well developed in countries such as Australia, the UK or New Zealand. The focus of the Regulatory Quality Teams operating in New Zealand is more on the systemic and long-term effects of policy measures. In this way, they broaden the view of policymakers beyond the short-term need for political action and provide orientation with regard to the necessary accompanying scientific studies. Similar procedures have also been adopted by Finland. In Canada a Chief Science Advisor is appointed, who can provide scientific advice directly or coordinate consultants. However, the impact of this is not institutionally ensured. Another approach known as regulatory sandboxes is used in Germany, which implement statutory experimentation clauses to generate *ex ante* evidence on potential innovations and regulatory projects in the form of pilot schemes.

While the value of scientific evidence for enhancing the effectiveness of policies is beyond question, it is a challenge to institute reliable and long-term structures in all countries. On the one hand, the resources and capacities are needed to build evidence-based decision-making systems. On the other hand, it must be ensured that political decision-makers acknowledge the relevance of science-based research, set verifiable targets for political action and ensure data availability. This is particularly challenging when the measures attract a great deal of public

attention, crisis situations are present, or the success of the change is difficult to predict and measure.

In the final discussion, it became clear that the processes of evaluation should be rooted in stronger institutionalized settings and kept at arms' length from executive influence. Experimental designs and sunset clauses can trigger automated reviews of target achievement, and bodies such as the National Regulatory Control Council could be entrusted with enforcing the evaluations and publishing their results across government departments.





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**Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina e. V.**  
**– German National Academy of Sciences –**

Jägerberg 1  
06108 Halle (Saale)  
Phone: 0049 345 472 39 600  
Email: [leopoldina@leopoldina.org](mailto:leopoldina@leopoldina.org)

Berlin Offices:  
Unter den Linden 42      Reinhardtstraße 16  
10117 Berlin              10117 Berlin

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