How should policies be made?

Ideally by policy makers making decisions after weighing the facts and reconciling the different values that exist in plural democratic societies. Reality often looks different! Operating at both sides of the science-policy interface is made challenging due to the over-supply of knowledge on one side and the complexity of the political process on the other. The amount of information to be considered by the policy makers is overwhelming and ever more complex, while our information processing can be skewed by our biases. Yet there remain important evidence gaps on ‘what works’ in many policy areas. As a result, science, politics and the needs of people are harder than ever to reconcile just when we most need evidence-informed policies.

Yet, paradoxically, complex policy challenges such as immigration, dual labour markets, fairness, youth disengagement, digital transformations/AI, etc., require a lot of evidence. These challenges are compounded in a “post truth” world, where the speed of reaction is dictated by the social media and facts are not always verified. The challenge is to be able to foster informed judgement and to ensure that the public sector is equipped with the right skill-set to nurture evidence-informed policy making (EIPM). New technologies, a growing body of policy-relevant research and a diversity of citizens perspectives demand new skills for effective and timely policymaking.

The civil service need the right skills to commission, understand and use evidence. Effective civil service capacity support should ideally encompass a range of interventions: from developing skills, values and norms to promote EIPM at an individual level, to supporting the adoption of procedures, incentives and resources, financial and human, to enhance use of evidence. The civil service needs critical appraisal skills, in order to assess the provenance of evidence, its robustness, the fit with the policy questions, its relevance and impact, as well as meeting ethical standards, while feeding into institutional set ups that take into account wider political constraints.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

This joint workshop provides an opportunity to discuss what a skillset for policymakers for EIPM should contain and in what sort of institutional framework it will be most effective; how to introduce it in civil service organisations or networks and how to ensure a supportive institutional setting. Acknowledging that evidence use is a collaborative and iterative process, participants will discuss how to improve the communication between scientists/experts and policymakers.

Building on previous joint work, the OECD and the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) have been working to map various public sector skill sets that are needed to foster evidence use for policy making. This draft skills map will be the baseline scenario from which the interactive work and group discussions at the workshop will start. Participants will be invited to share experiences, in order to decide on what skills are essential for our policy makers when taking evidence-informed decisions at different points in the policy making process and how the institutional setting can be optimally configured.

The ultimate aim of the workshop is to reach a consensus on the skills map and on best practice in ensuring that these skill sets can be meaningfully mobilised in real life situations. The discussion on skills will be complemented by debate on existing best practices and brainstorming on training (or other) interventions which would either strengthen or introduce these competencies in our professional environments.
The workshop will address three core objectives:

1. **What are the skills needed for obtaining evidence?**
   This will include the skills needed to frame questions, understand what evidence is, data literacy, commission and select evidence, and ensure appropriate stocktaking.

2. **What are the skills needed for the appraisal of evidence?**
   This will include the skills needed for reviewing evidence such as data analysis, quantitative assessment, systems thinking. It will also explore critical appraisal skills, including assessing the risk of bias and application of standards of evidence. It will also cover feedback from policy implementation and monitoring. It will include how to debunk untruths and to interrogate critically evidence given by interest groups.

3. **What are the processes, institutional set-up and skills needed for incorporating evidence in policy-making?**
   This will include how to incorporate evidence and other inputs to the policy-process, including stakeholder consultation, the role of emotions and values and the role of co-production. This will include fostering an understanding of how facts and evidence can support decision-making, but also how political decision making has to integrate other political constraints, and be combined with emotions and values.

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**PARTICIPATION**

Around 40-50 senior civil servants, including from the OECD public governance policy communities, also public employment and schools of government networks, experts working at the intersection between evidence and policy will be invited to share their experience and expertise. The meeting is jointly organised by the OECD Public Governance Directorate and the Joint Research Centre, the science and knowledge service of the European Commission.

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**EXPECTED OUTCOME AND TARGET AUDIENCE**

The resulting skills framework will be relevant to senior policy makers and/or operational staff, whether inside of government or in the public sector outside government, including staff in What Works Centres, international and development public bodies as well as knowledge brokers.

It is expected that at the end of the workshop the JRC and OECD will have a blueprint for a capacity building workshops for senior policy makers on how to use evidence in policymaking.

In the months after the workshop the blueprint will be refined and validated through testing with relevant stakeholders. Ultimately, this will lead to a curriculum for capacity building in national administrations. It could be envisaged to organise a pilot capacity training workshop with country representatives, particularly from a senior civil service angle.
The contemporary context presents a number of challenges for political decision making.

The hyper complexity of policy challenges as well as their global nature and ambiguity require a joined-up, multidisciplinary and evidence informed approach to solving them.

The erosion of trust in public institutions, in experts, and in the science community impairs policy making, with implications for both the demand and supply of evidence.

The successful uptake of evidence requires a civil service and wider public sector with skills in evidence use, as well as key enabling institutional features.

The panel will address the needs of today’s policymaking and how a skilled senior civil service can support effective policymaking. The panel will outline different approaches and types of organisations improving the effective use and impact of evidence in political decision making.
PART ONE - Towards a “Baseline scenario” skillset

Skills for Policymakers for Evidence-Informed Policy Making

This session discusses the continuous professional development framework necessary for a high performing civil service. The European Commission will present its work to improve the interaction and cooperation between science and policy. OECD will present its work to identify what are the competences an effective civil service of tomorrow needs.

In particular the session will identify the “baseline scenario” skillset needed to obtain, assess and apply knowledge and scientific evidence in public policymaking.

14:15-15:45

PART ONE - Interactive session

Skills for Policymakers for Evidence-Informed Policy Making – interrogating the baseline scenario

Following the lead presentations, delegates will divide into small working groups and discuss posters of the baseline scenario of the skills clusters. Each poster will represent a cluster. Each group will discuss each of the clusters and rotate in a word café style. In each of the groups, participants will discuss the following questions:

- What needs to be modified from the current baseline description and skills clusters?
- How can we develop skills that matter to improve policy development, policy implementation and policy evaluation?
Skills Clusters for Policymakers for Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTAND</th>
<th>OBTAIN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence literacy.</strong> Understanding what evidence is. Understanding what EIPM is, e.g. introduction to Evidence-Informed Policy Making including the role of evidence in policymaking process. Distinguishing between types of evidence, who uses them and why. Detection of challenges that affect the use of knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<th>INTERROGATE/CONSIDER</th>
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<tr>
<td>Holistic perception, syntheses and systemic understanding. Critical thinking, questioning the prevailing conditions. Assessing evidence critically, including analysing source, legitimacy, credibility, bias and quality, as well as basic principles of research methodology. Use of diverse information and expertise. Use of inconvenient evidence. Questioning the prevailing assumptions and practices. Counterfactual reasoning. Debiasing.</td>
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<th>APPLY</th>
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<tr>
<th>ENGAGE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue with evidence community.</strong> Interaction the dialogue between knowledge and decision-making. Setting and managing knowledge communities. Co-operation and co-production.</td>
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<th>EVALUATE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluating</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Producing multidimensional impact assessment. Assessment of intervention results.</td>
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15:45-16:00 Coffee Break
PART ONE - Interactive session (continued)

Skills for Policymakers for Evidence-Informed Policy Making – interrogating the baseline scenario

Continuation of group discussions. Rotation of groups and skills clusters.

PART ONE: Synthesis and discussion of the results

Each group will report on the results from their discussion and on the modifications, additions and edits they propose for the skills clusters and map. Participants will vote on the final skills clusters and their corresponding competences. The objective will be to agree on a consensus version of the baseline scenario skills map.

17:00 - 17:30

Experiences from the USA and EU

Many jurisdictions are already experimenting with interventions for improving skills for evidence use, alongside different institutional arrangements that foster evidence informed policy making.

In this plenary session, the focus will be on sharing experience of how evidence is used for better governance and what specific skills in handling and applying evidence have proven successful.

Diana Epstein
Evidence Team Lead, Office for Management and Budget, US

Ulrik Mogensen
Policy Officer - Impact assessment, Secretariat General, European Commission

18:00

Close

19:15

Self-financed drinks and dinner at Brasserie L'Aero
Tuesday 10 April

8:30
Welcome coffee

9:00-9:45
PART TWO - Plenary Session
A deep dive into specific skills clusters

Many jurisdictions are already experimenting with interventions for improving skills for evidence use, alongside different institutional arrangements that foster evidence informed policy making.

In this plenary session, the focus will be on the specific skills clusters, thinking about what are the leading initiatives in the capacity building on evidence-informed policymaking.

Expert speakers will describe specific capacity building initiatives and in which context they are best applicable.

Elena Oyon
Learning Services Manager, Alliance for Useful Evidence

Wim Riedijk
Managing data scientist, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and Erasmus Medical Center Rotterdam

Nick Carrol
Economic Counsellor, Permanent Delegation to the OECD, New Zealand

Annelise Dennis
Programme Specialist (Capacity Development), INASP

09:45-11:00
PART TWO - Interactive session
A deep dive into specific skills clusters

Following the lead presentations, delegates will divide into small working groups. Each group will focus their attention on one of the skills clusters, giving the opportunity to reflect in greater detail on the specific skills cluster based on their interest, experience and knowledge.

Each group will be responsible for sketching out a training blueprint for that cluster. They will recap on the previous questions but also consider how to facilitate progress in each cluster including specific approaches to capacity building, what works and practical aspects of the trainings.

• What are the best strategies to build capacities on evidence-informed policymaking in public service?
• What current trainings and good practices exist to develop and strengthen these skills?
• How do the skills required vary according to an individual’s seniority and institution?
• How does the capacity building need to be customised by profession and policy area?
Strengthening institutional enablers and overcoming barriers

The civil service of tomorrow needs to be properly equipped and skilled in order to meet the challenges of public policymaking. However developing the right skill set for evidence informed policymaking is just part of the equation.

The right institutional conditions, procedures, incentives and culture are also needed to enable evidence-informed policies. This is particularly important in a context where the risk of fake news creates a new challenge for policy design and implementation.

There is also a need of better understanding of how politics, values, ethics and facts are reconciled in public and policy debates, and what can be the role of transparency and external engagement.

In this plenary session the focus will be on identifying what barriers and facilitators of evidence-informed policy-making exist.

Experts will present examples of procedures and institutional conditions, as well as which incentives are best for stimulating evidence-informed policymaking.
13:45-15:00  PART THREE - Interactive session

Barriers and incentives for evidence-informed policy-making. Developing innovative solutions

The delegates will divide into small working groups to discuss on specific institutional barriers as well as institutional enablers to EIPM in national administration and how to build positive incentives in the system. The delegates will propose specific solutions and interventions to build an EIPM friendly environment.

- What are the barriers and facilitators to developing the capacity for EIPM uptake in different jurisdictions?
- How can proper institutional set up and incentives to help improve the evidence-informed policymaking? How can checks and balances be put to work?
- How to develop institutional culture which will best enable senior civil servants to be receptive to EIPM?
- Is there a role for transparency and open government approaches, and if so, how can it support EIPM approaches?

15:00-15:30  PART THREE: Synthesis and discussion of the results

Each group will report shortly on the results from their discussion. The objective will be to identify a set of good institutional practices that could be summed up in a policy brief to support EIPM, in consultation with experts. The delegates will also agree on a strategy for capacity building for each skills cluster (blueprint of toolkits and building blocks to strengthen capacity).

15:30-16:00  PLENARY SESSION: Conclusion and next steps

Please do not forget to fill in our evaluation form
This work builds upon the OECD and JRC's joint experience of working at the intersection of science and policy. You might find it useful and interesting to consult some of these before the event:

- JRC's Framework for Skills essential for researchers active in the science-policy interface.
- The OECD's reports on Skills for a High Performing Civil Service and on Core Skills for Public Sector Innovation.
- The European Commission's 2017 Quality of Public Administration: Toolbox for Practitioners.

Reference documents

Please come ready to share your experience with us!

Building on these reports and other existing work we have prepared the Baseline Scenario 'Skills Clusters for Policymakers for Evidence-Informed Policy Making' and you can find it on page 7 of this document. We want to know what you think: this event is about hearing about the innovative work you are involved in to build capacity for evidence use in your jurisdiction.

So we ask you to review the Baseline Scenario ahead of the event and come ready to discuss and share your experience. You might consider the following:

- Three suggested additions to the draft skills map baseline scenario.
- Three examples of capacity building work to build skills for evidence use in their own jurisdiction.

These ideas will be welcomed and used in the group discussions.