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OECD Conference Centre

Governing better through evidence-informed policy making

Conference summary

International Network for Government Science Advice

Campbell Collaboration

European Commission

OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

Overview

This document presents the summary of the conference 'Governing Better Through Evidence-Informed Policy Making.' The conference was organised jointly by the OECD and the EU Joint Research Centre on 26-27 June in Paris, in cooperation with Campbell and INGSA. Over 100 participants from government, academia and civil society discussed the challenges they faced in connecting evidence to policy. The discussions organised around smaller interactive groups helped to share expertise and best practices and offered an opportunity to collaborate in promoting a culture of evidence-informed policy making.

This policy agenda attracted strong interest, reflected in rich discussions about improving both the supply and demand for evidence and improving the connection with policy makers and political decision making. Consensus emerged about the importance of international cooperation. Concrete proposals were discussed across a range of policy areas (Early Childhood Intervention, Access to Justice, Well-being and Risk and Crisis Management of disasters) for addressing knowledge gaps, for creating opportunities for data linking, and developing impact assessment.

Participants debated the skills, tools, methods and guidelines that are needed for effective use of evidence. The discussions addressed the role for potential guidelines and standards of evidence, and the need to diffuse innovative practices and facilitate experimentation, as well as the role of an evidenced informed approach to support the use of behavioural insights.

The conference highlighted the usefulness for the OECD to engage in this agenda. Strong engagement by country representatives in the final discussion showed significant interest in the options for work that had been laid forward, with proposals for amendments and requests for continued collaboration. The OECD secretariat will be updating these options for work in light of the discussions. The outcome of the conference will help to frame a proposal for the public governance committee and its relevant working parties to follow up on implementing this agenda in cooperation with relevant partners and stakeholders.

Setting the Scene

Rolf Alter (*Director Public governance, OECD*) welcomed delegates to the conference that had been organised in partnership with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and in collaboration with the Campbell Collaboration and the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA). At the 2015 OECD Public Governance Ministerial Meeting, Ministers emphasised the importance of evidence as a critical underpinning of public policies. They also recognised the need for a continuous effort to develop policy-relevant evidence, including processes within government that allow for the use of evidence, and importantly evidence on the efficiency and effectiveness of policy interventions. The OECD as an organisation has evidence-based policy making as a core part of its genetic fabric and has built a stock of knowledge for policy makers to draw on across a wide range of policy areas. Building on these solid foundations, the OECD can support this agenda by helping to provide capacity to support decision makers' use of evidence, mapping evidence systems, offering standards and good practice guidelines for sharing and comparing evidence. Participants were invited to consider how to make progress on two key issues:

- How can we help bring governments, researchers, and scientists together to work on this common agenda?
- How can countries work together to share evidence and benefit from partnerships across borders?

Charlina Vitcheva *(Deputy DG JRC, European Commission)* addressed the challenges of working at the interface between evidence and policy, the theory of change in the radically changing landscape and the initiatives undertaken by the European Commission and the JRC in this area. Operating at 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 another. Policy problems are increasingly 'wicked' in nature, requiring coordination from a range of governmental departments and a multidisciplinary approach where evidence is required to be available immediately. Both science and policy world have their own language, different understanding of the time horizon and budgetary constraints. This is compounded by the crisis of knowledge and facts: we cannot simply answer a demand of politics of emotions with a strengthened politics of facts. To be better, policy solutions need to be coherent, consistent and inclusive. To achieve this, policy makers need the evidence and tools that science provides. It is important to anticipate policy issues to enable timely policy research and advice. Recent developments in the JRC have brought it even closer to the heart of the policy making process in EU. The JRC acts as a generator and synthesiser, helping to make sense of knowledge and to offer it at the right time to policy makers and it has recently set up specialist knowledge centres. Further reliance on knowledge brokers who can work at the interface of science and policy is essential. Evaluation of its own work is also a key to the JRC, driving improvements and increasing accountability to citizens.

Evidence and politics: feeding evidence into political decision making

Philip Rycroft (Cabinet Office UK) welcomed the OECD's initiative in this area. Both the increased complexity of the world and the ambition of government to improve citizens' lives speak to the need to engage on the evidence agenda. Philip underlined the value of the "what works" experience and also the contribution of behavioural insights to promote incremental policy improvements. The UK What Works Centres provide service users and practitioners with relevant, practical evidence on what works. There is growing evidence that the Centres are changing practitioners' behaviour and thus have a major impact. He also highlighted parallels with manufacturing and cycling to make the case that incremental improvements, pursued relentlessly, can lead to transformational change.

Behavioural insights need to be supported by political buy-in, but the offer is an attractive one: low cost, low risk experiments that bring defined evidenced benefits. Behavioural insights were also argued to allow for a sophisticated use of evidence that works with the grain of political need, creating a positive feedback loop. Indeed, the aim of a well-managed policy development process should ensure that policy makers involved see the value of engaging with the evidence, leading to more

sustainable policy outcomes. The use of these techniques requires civil servants to possess a rich skill set which has led the UK to invest in civil service skills, particularly on the advisory side.

Philip concluded by highlighting that evidence will only ever be part of the story: evidence is necessarily based on past experience whereas current policy is trying to shape an unknown future. Therefore, evidence will always be mediated through a political process that allows political intuition to shape the final policy as is the nature of democracies.

Olli-Pekka Heinonen (*DG Finnish National Agency for Education)* shared six messages he has learned about what is essential in trying to govern better through evidence-informed policy making:

- We have to be able to break silos. Too often, we are trying to solve horizontal problems with vertical governmental structures. These silos are often also present in the academic disciplines. Approaching policy issues from the perspective of what works, offers one way to overcome these silos, as it doesn't distinguish the background of the knowledge. Service design ideas, putting the citizen in the centre of the process, along with the use of open data were also argued as ways of overcoming the problem of silos.
- We have to build trust. Evidence-informed policy making cannot take place without communication between policy makers and the academic and research community. Both sides need to appreciate the logic of each other's endeavour and respect professional boundaries.
- New roles and forms are needed. In particular, trusted referees, such as knowledge brokers have an important role to play in evidence-informed policy making.
- Evidence needs to be integrated into the main process of decision making. If evidence remains at the margins, it will not have an effect. It needs to inform the what, why and how of policy making, forming a learning circle of the activities of government.
- We need tools to finance the supply of evidence. For example, Finland has published themes of the government priorities, which the scientific community can then decide whether, and how best to address, through open calls for tender administered by the Prime Minister's Office. The annual budget for this research is 10.4 million euro.
- The system needs to be holistic permitting the diffusion of a wide range of knowledge and approaches. Openness and transparency were also argued to be critical for evidence informed policy-making.

How to ensure the uptake of evidence at the political level?

Supporting evidence-informed decision-making at the political level requires a better understanding of the enablers. The main take-aways are:

- **Necessity of evidence:** What are the benefits of using evidence in decision making at the political level? Are there any obstacles – perceived or otherwise?

Evidence is necessary to fight against a post-fact/fake news world, to design more effective policies, and to better align resources; but that there was a need to have a nuanced understanding of the use of evidence in political decision making. In a world of competing interests, there is a need to understand that in reality evidence competes with values, feelings, and emotions (of politicians and constituents), and that good evidence is only one element in political decision making. Policy-making is also no longer linear, and that uncertain landscapes and political cycles impact the necessity of evidence around certain timelines.

- **Meeting demand:** What tools and communication techniques could be used to better meet the demand of evidence by political decision makers?

To better meet the demand for evidence by political decision makers, we need to better understand their needs. A user driven approach, coupled with the use of knowledge broker functions as a way to

improve communication and understanding of evidence for politicians and political advisors, can help ensure evidence fits demand. There is value in evidence repositories, clear articulation of research questions, and targeted funding for priority research questions of government. Finally, capacity building and training of evidence suppliers and users at the political level as well as the use of highly skilled independent intermediaries such as Campbell and Cochrane was mentioned.

- **Evidence mismatch:** What is the difference between supply and demand of evidence at the political level? How to create a convincing narrative when facing complex and partial results?

To match the supply and demand of evidence, there is value in building evidence with citizens and users to form trust, as well as transparency in methods, communicating risk, and peer review of results. There is a need to match different types of evidence to different stages of the policy cycle, to clearly define roles for different actors, and recognising the range of varying time frames actors in the space work within (i.e. media time – quick; scientist – longer/publishing cycles; politicians' cycles – 4-5 years).

- **Institutional set-up:** What kind of institutional and process changes are needed to ensure the uptake of evidence?

It is important to use established ex ant and ex post evaluation processes in government – such as regulatory and economic impact assessment – to enhance a culture of evidence. Additional institutional shifts can enhance the uptake of evidence such as creating innovation labs to co-design policies and services, formalising roles for knowledge brokers and processes for stakeholder engagement with citizens and scientists, as well as building new analytical capacities within government.

Using evidence in practice: engaging with decision makers

Decision makers will need evidence at the right time and in the right format to be able to use it to make well-informed decisions. The way in which evidence is presented is an important part of the 'what works' approach.

In the introduction, *Steve Martin* (Public Policy Institute for Wales, UK) stressed the role of the Public Policy Institute for Wales in ensuring that decisions in Welsh government are informed by the best available evidence alongside improving the effectiveness of policy and delivery in Wales. Steve explained that the Institute achieves these objectives by working directly with ministers to identify their evidence needs and then identifying and working with authoritative independent experts to provide and present evidence to Ministers. The work of the Institute has led to rich insights into both the supply of and demand for evidence. On the supply side, many researchers need help to apply and convey expertise. On the demand side, the Institute's experience is that Ministers value support to identify evidence needs and experts. *Kenichi Tsukahara* (*Kyushu University* Japan) focused his presentation on lessons from investment in disaster risk reduction for building resilience. Public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction is both cost effective whilst being instrumental in saving lives and ensuring effective recovery and rehabilitation. The case was made that the effective presentation of evidence was critical in building political consensus that investments in disaster reduction is a cost effective policy.

The main take-aways from group discussions are:

- **Decision makers' needs:** What kind of evidence is important for decision making? How can we prepare timely evidence that is context specific and can address needs of decision makers?

Policy makers and producers of evidence need to come to a common understanding of the policy question, as well as considering the role(s) that evidence can and cannot play in decision making. This can help ensure that the evidence produced or synthesised would be both relevant to the policy

options under consideration, as well as being implementable in practice. Participants underlined the importance of building compelling narratives as vehicle to ensuring evidence gains traction. The discussion also addressed how to ensure that evidence is used to frame and inform different policy options. This could include the impact of different options, the degree of confidence and uncertainty surrounding the evidence, the costs of acting compared with not acting as well as potential criticisms and counterarguments. Given the increasing interest in international comparisons, evidence producers and knowledge brokers need to consider the transferability of evidence from one context to another.

- *Presentation:* How should evidence be presented to ensure its uptake?

There was also much discussion about the best delivery method to ensure evidence is understood and to frame the right policy messages. Where written reports were used, these need to be concise, use compelling narratives, and simple language. Face-to-face contact between researchers and policy makers can enrich the quality of communication and transmission of research but they often benefit by being mediated by a range of evidence brokers. Visual imagery matters, such as infographics, to facilitate clear communication of research evidence. The results ought to be clear: evidence needs to give policy makers a detailed understanding of the issues and the policy options. This includes being clear about any differential impacts of a policy option, such as by geography or social background, thus helping policy makers to appreciate any winners and losers of a policy proposal.

- *Priority features:* What are the most important features of evidence that should be highlighted to facilitate more and quicker uptake by decision makers?

Building on the discussion of the presentation of evidence, a number of important observations were made concerning which priority features of evidence should be highlighted to facilitate to ensure the uptake of evidence by decision makers.

It was felt that researchers needed to communicate the strength of the evidence and where there are evidence gaps or uncertainty in the current evidence base. The intended and unintended impacts of policies and programmes also need to be communicated. An honest appraisal of the full range of effects of a policy and programme should facilitate learning both successes and failures of previous policies leading to incremental improvements in policy development. In order to ensure that the evidence is considered relevant to the current policy context, evidence should be linked to relevant priority agendas and policy initiatives. Similarly, setting the evidence base within the current legal and regulatory context was deemed to be a priority, as was being able to cost recommendations on the basis of the evidence.

Evidence needs to be disseminated in a timely and tailored manner integrating the needs of the targeted policy audience. Although senior policy makers are an important stakeholder, it is important not to overlook the full range of officials at all levels who are involved in the development and delivery of government policy.

International cooperation on evidence-informed policy making

This session considered how to better leverage and connect the existing international networks that exist – either in the natural sciences, economic and social sciences, development policy or behavioural insights – to improve their effectiveness and diffuse their results. The discussion addressed the following aspects:

- Barriers to sharing evidence: What is preventing the sharing of evidence on a global scale? What are the opportunities of Open Science?
- National relevance: How can international networks for evidence create results that are relevant at the local level?
- Synergies: How can we best define the respective roles and synergies among existing international networks in facilitating access to evidence and spreading its use, particularly within government?

- Diffusion: How can we create improved and more systematic diffusion channels, including web-based repository and search systems, so that evidence can be more easily accessible?
- Facilitating role: What can be the role of the OECD in this arena as an international network or facilitator of networks on evidence?

Howard White, (Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Collaboration), outlined three waves of the evidence revolution. The first involved the rise of New Public Management and the results agenda. This agenda shifted focus from monitoring inputs to monitoring outcomes. In order to estimate the difference a policy or programme makes, Howard advocated for the use of rigorous impact evaluation with a valid control group. The second wave therefore is the 'randomisation revolution' which refers to the rapid increase in the use of randomised control trials in multiple fields over time. There are many pitfalls with relying on single trails to guide policy, with examples of where this has led to erroneous conclusions or courses of action. Thus the third wave is 'the rise of rigorous evidence synthesis'. A weakness in the current approach to evidence synthesis is that separate organisations and initiatives are producing separate reviews of the same evidence. Although Cochrane Library achieves coordination in the health field, this is not the case in other sectors. There is a need for greater coordination in the future as this represents a global public good. Howard offered suggestions for how this might be achieved.

James Wilsdon (*INGSA, University of Sheffield*) introduced the purposes, progress and plans on INGSA's work is to improve institutional capacities and capabilities at the interface between evidence and policy at all levels of government. INGSA works through a number of means including developing networks of practitioners, policy makers, institutions and academics at the interface between evidence and policy and creating an infrastructure and platform for sustaining and developing this community of expertise and interest. INGSA's plans for the future include a range of capacity building seminars, the launch of a manifesto and establishing chapters in different parts of the world.

Thematic Interactive sessions

Participants were invited to identify how and what kind of evidence is necessary to inform policy and practice in several areas. The discussions were focused around a set of common questions:

- Demand and supply of evidence: what kind of information is missing (evidence gaps) to inform better policies in this area?
- Presenting evidence: how should the evidence that is available, be transformed to fit the needs of evidence users?
- Using and linking data: what are the opportunities for expanding the "data frontier", through open data and through improved use of administrative data? What are the challenges in using and linking data to improve the quality of evidence?
- Role of the OECD: what can the OECD do to facilitate better production and distribution of evidence in this area?
- Impact assessment: what kind of evidence is needed to be able to prove whether a policy intervention actually made a difference?

Early Childhood Intervention

Far too many children do not get the best possible start in life, which has important consequences for the rest of their life. Differences in access to quality formal education, as well as pre-school education and care in particular mean that there is no equality of opportunity across children. There are therefore potential huge returns on investment to improve children's early start in life, which can benefit from an evidence-informed approach underpinned by the right kind of information and identification of data needs. *Tom McBride, (Early Intervention Foundation, UK)* outlined that the Foundation's work on early intervention covers child and adolescent mental health and well-being, the early years and the inter-parental relationship. EIF's standards of evidence for assessing interventions uses a continuum

from interventions at earlier stages of their development, doing important foundational work to interventions with multiple rigorously conducted evaluations. *Robyn Mildon (Centre for Evidence and Implementation Australia)* focused on the implementation and scale up of interventions designed to improve outcomes for children, families and communities across a variety of health and human service areas. Knowledge brokers such as her centre need to have a commitment to evaluating their own impact and demonstrating their utility as an extra cost to the system. Finally, *Majella McCloskey (Centre for Effective Services Ireland) presented the* Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative (PEII) and presented the 52 prevention and early intervention programmes throughout Ireland over the period 2005–2013 for a total of 127 m. Euros. The initiative resulted in rich learning about the commissioning and implementation of early intervention interventions and how to engage children families and parents. The importance of monitoring and evaluation to inform if an intervention is working and why, was highlighted. Another lesson from the initiative is that inter-agency working takes time and effort. Furthermore parents' previous experiences of school and other services need to be considered, as do the structural factors that influence outcomes, such as poverty.

The discussion which was moderated by *Monika Queisser* and *Olivier Thevenon* (OECD) highlighted the value of the OECD work to provide comparative policy analysis, including performing country visits and reviews of current practice with practical recommendations on next steps. OECD could also help to foster an understanding of where there are evidence gaps across countries. A further avenue to peruse is publishing comparative data on countries' use of evidence base practice in the area of early intervention, such as the % of GDP spent on evidence based policies and programmes. Standards of evidence needed to balance a focus on rigorous evidence of efficacy and effectiveness whilst, at the same time, permitting innovation of new practices. This spoke to the need of a continuum approach, which recognizes science based approaches with a sound theory of change but that have yet to undergo rigorous impact evaluation. Building capacity for self-assessment was also felt to be important.

Access to Justice

Under the purview of the Public Governance Committee, the OECD is actively seeking to deepen an evidence-based and people-focused approach to understanding what works in access to justice and making justice policies effective (including various Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms). During this session, country and international experts discussed the role of evidence in designing and implementing an efficient people focused delivery of justice services. Experts called for more detailed data and evidence for justice policy design and evaluation, including government data, especially that civil justice remains a relatively obscure area of law with the emphasis on short term solutions. The EU Justice Scoreboard is one example highlighting the use of data for policy decision—making. The role of robust evaluation approaches, such as randomised control trials, was also highlighted to understand what actually makes a difference for various groups of the population. Experts underlined that evidence on legal needs and their impacts can come from different sources (e.g., police records, social welfare and health systems), and that if a justice problem is not resolved properly the consequence might manifest in the welfare, health, hosing or other systems. In addition, experts highlighted an important interaction between policies across various sectors (legal aid, housing policies, credit rates, litigation funding, digital reforms, etc), which also often makes it difficult to attribute specific outcomes to a particular legal or justice policy or service intervention.

Legal needs surveys were considered the most common tool in assessing access to justice, stressing the importance of a 'whole system' approach to policy design: they help understand a range of 'justice pathways', how volumes funnel down, and the critical points where interventions can be targeted. The surveys can also help to reach hidden populations (those who have given up in addressing their legal problems). Yet, significant limitations remain in using these surveys, including their cost, labour and time intensity, as well as the need for the repeated use. Experts highlighted the importance of moving towards a triangulated approach, including the use of administrative data and qualitative methodologies, in order to appropriately understand people's legal needs and the ability of justice service continuum to address them.

During the discussion, participants underlined significant evidence gaps on access to justice services, including in the area of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms. Formulating clear definitions of essential concepts, such as access to justice services, as well as focusing on the latent justice needs of people and their origin were mentioned as clear priorities. In order to improve relevance and use of evidence, participants highlighted the importance of an integrated approach for collecting data, including the creation of a common framework, identifying the needed data to understand whether the legal needs have been met and layered presentation of evidence for different purposes and audiences. They also called for a clear and convincing narrative (e.g., business case) on the importance of an evidence-based approach to access to justice in order to stay among top priorities for political and civil service leaders. Accessibility, openness and greater interoperability of government data, such as the development of data repositories, were considered among the main priorities for a better design and evaluation of justice services. In addition, to improve impact evaluations of legal and justice services, participants underlined the importance of experimentation and the development of pilot projects and case studies.

Finally, participants underlined the role of the OECD as a facilitator to better generate and distribute evidence in this area by sharing best practices and producing publications related to data validity assessment. Participants highlighted that the Organisation is in a unique position to support and encourage governments to understand which policies "work" for greater impact.

Overall, the main outcome of the discussion involved an agreement on the need for more comprehensive data approaches to understanding what works in meeting legal needs for both citizens and businesses.

Well-being

Improving well being of the population and focusing the performance of public sector organisation to this effect is another important area which can benefit from an evidence informed approach. **Nancy Hey (UK** Works Centre for Well-being) discussed how to develop and share robust, accessible and useful evidence about well-being. The UK What Works centre for Well Being collects a range of data to understand the current state of well-being, and evaluates the strength of this evidence, linking the data to better understand the impact of certain interventions on well-being. **Michaela Saisana**, (EC JRC Competence Centre on Composite Indicators and Scoreboards) presented the JRC Social Scoreboard which covers 12 areas along 3 dimensions of 'societal progress'. This an online tool, drawing on extensive data from EU countries allows for analysis and comparisons between countries. The Scoreboard, with its data updated regularly online and user-friendly interactive visualisation, helps policy makers in EU countries make evidence-informed decisions. **Jennifer Wallace (**Carnegie Trust, UK) presented insights on creating a well-being framework for government, as a way to align action by using a mission statement, outcomes and indicators to track progress. A well-being framework can help provide a holistic view of social progress to make best use of existing, expensive data sets, and to communicate openly with the public on progress. Well-being frameworks can also make positive impacts on joining up government, informing policy development, and involving citizens and are currently implementing in a range of jurisdictions including Northern Ireland, Virginia State, and Scotland. As a follow up **Roger Halliday,** (Chief Statistician) presented Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF), as a dashboard of outcomes and indicators that are priorities for government. The framework is about embedding an outcomes approach, using intermediate outcomes, high-level measures and linking these to the overall vision for the specific outcome and purpose for the country.

Risk and crisis management of disasters

This session was introduced by *Satoru Nishikawa* (Japan Center for Area Development Research), *Virginia Murray* (Public Health England), and *Ian Clark* (EC JRC Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre). The discussion focused on four key issues:

- *Demand and Supply of Evidence*

Risk assessment is the foundation to inform disaster risk and crisis management policy decisions and has been identified as a priority in the OECD Recommendation on the Governance of Critical Risks and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Among the main gaps in disaster risk assessments are data on damages and losses, economic, health and environmental impacts and geographic mapping of the underlying hazard events. The economic benefits of investments in prevention, mitigation and preparedness are additional gaps in the evidence that could be helpful to design efficient disaster risk management policies. International comparisons and case studies of what works can provide useful, if anecdotal, evidence to better contextualize risk management policies. While physical, material, and life sciences are mature in terms of informing policy decisions, behavioural sciences are less developed in this area. Insights from psychology, sociology, social and cultural anthropology, geography and behavioural economics are often under-utilised in designing risk communication, despite a wealth of academic literature. These disciplines could also be used to improve knowledge of the full social impacts of disasters on communities and on individuals as workers and consumers.

- *Presenting Evidence*

Appropriate multi-disciplinary and international expertise networks combined with better tools to ensure a functional interface between science and policy making which are key to better informed decisions in risk management. In particular, developing trusted multi-disciplinary expertise networks that can be mobilized quickly to _make sense_ of complex crises are essential. Universal standards to measure transboundary phenomena (from radioactivity to infectivity) would help ensure that meaning is accurately conveyed in scientific terms and should reduce the margin for misunderstanding between international partners. Before a disaster, the interface between scientific advice and crisis management decisions can be accelerated with information gathering, synthesis and analysis tools, e.g. through hazard maps, risk atlases, early warning and alert systems, especially when they visualize the scientific findings and monitoring using an all-hazard approach.

- **Using and linking data**

Big data and open disaster-related data hold great potential for better risk-informed policies and practices. Governments need to develop their skills in data science to keep pace with the private sector achievements, that characterise many emerging systems and in particular the health area. This would help governments remain the authoritative voice in safety and security decisions with the capacity to maintain open public access to data. Governments and risk managers need to have the necessary capacities to make optimal use of the available data to improve risk management.

- **Impact assessment**

Empirical evidence of effective policy interventions in risk management is often elusive, even if sectors such as health do routinely monitor and evaluate interventions. Research often focuses on what damages and losses were avoided thanks to such interventions reflecting on what might have occurred in the absence of such interventions. Beyond the avoidance of damages and losses, there is a need to collect evidence of positive spill overs that can flow from investments in structural protection measures which could enhance risk assessed investment decisions at all levels. Building coherent and comprehensive data sets both on negative and positive spill overs allows proving effectiveness of policy interventions in risk management.

The conclusion of the discussion moderated by *Jack Radisch* and *Charles Baubion* (OECD), highlighted that the OECD could:

- Boost international cooperation on the use of scientific advice for crisis management, and leveraging international network for rapid sharing of science advice in emergencies.

- Facilitate a greater dialogue between risk managers and national science-policy councils or platforms.

- Identify opportunities and challenges of the data revolution in risk management

- Liaise with relevant evidence broker institutions to help strengthen what works approaches in this area to translate scientific evidence related to disaster risk management into policy advice for risk managers.

- Consider partnering with others on conducting research into an improved use of behavioural science for better risk management policies.

The realities of providing Science Advice

In this second day keynote address **Sir Peter Gluckman**, (*Chief Science Advisor New Zealand, and President of INGSA*) addressed the multiple dimensions of providing science advice at the highest levels, and discussed the art of confronting the expectations and standards of science driven analysis with the needs of reaching timely decisions in the realm of policy making. At the nexus between science and public policy, the implicit assumption is that governments are more likely to make better decisions when they use well-developed evidence wisely. However, scientists and policy makers often come with different conceptions of evidence and its role in the policy process. The policy process can be 'messy', involving formal and informal actors, both elected and unelected. Contemporary science advice needs sensitivity to integrate these complex dynamics and work with range of actors. There are tensions between the contrasting skills and priorities of scientists and policy makers. Many organisations are trying to enhance the uptake of scientifically developed knowledge into public policy, such as universities and What Works centres, facilitating knowledge generation and knowledge brokering. However, effective knowledge brokers need a unique skill set, understanding both the complexities of the science as well as the realities of the policy cycle, an area where INGSA is also very active.

Changing minds: assessing the impact of evidence on policy and practice

This session focused on how evidence can make a real difference in citizens' lives and for society, and what action can be taken for evidence to positively influence the mind-set. Such a discussion has to take into account the emergence of a post-truth environment that creates a very challenging policy context, particularly coupled with the impact of social media. In this respect, **Matthew d'Ancona,** *(Journalist, UK),* underlined the fundamental shift that occurred in terms of the consumption of data, information and evidence, as highlighted by recent political events. Facts tend to become subordinate to emotions in this context. It is no coincidence that the rise of alternative facts in politics coincides with a rise in conspiracy theories, pseudo-science and holocaust denial. The developments were argued to have their origin in the collapse of trust in traditional institutions and the digital revolution. This means that the traditional hierarchical approach to the flow of knowledge has been replaced by peer-to-peer recommendations and algorithms. Matthew underlined that 'facts are not enough' – meaning that the post truth world will not be addressed by more facts. Trying to counteract falsehoods with more facts can, ironically, reinforce the falsehood. Indeed facts need to be communicated in way that recognises both the emotional aspects as well as the rational. This means that facts need to be personalised as far as possible: we need to start thinking about aligning factual claims with emotional significance. This is about demanding and treating voters as adults, and expecting them to understand that truth is not the preserve of the elite, but is something that they are entitled to and must engage with.

Molly Irwin, (U.S. Department of Labor), presented the US agenda for evidence-based policymaking at the Federal Level. One example is the use of Tiered-Evidence Grantmaking. This approach directs the majority of funding to programmes backed by rigorous evidence of effectiveness whilst investing some funds in promising or innovative approaches. It requires the use of rigorous evaluation to determine impact and to inform future funding. The Evidence-Based clearing houses are another key

component, which include the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research and the What Works Clearinghouse that are sponsored by different government departments which pull together and catalogue different programmes and practices. **Clara Richards***, (INASP Charity UK),* discussed the needs, constraints and knowledge gaps of consumers of evidence in the context of international development and developing countries. INASP has created a large body of research on different approaches to develop capacity to use research. This was illustrated through examples, including the case of the Climate Change Bill in Kenya which involved a series of roundtables and a job shadowing scheme to ensure that that relevant knowledge was included in the Bill. Lessons learned included issues around the political context and the nature of institutions, ensuring the credibility of the evidence and the importance of clear communication. INASP has developed a model to describe the organisation context of research and knowledge systems for policy making in this context.

Nick Carroll (Delegation of New Zealand to the OECD), presented the social investment approach, designed to better understand the needs of the most vulnerable, addressing the drivers of issues rather than responding to the symptoms. In New Zealand, this is achieved by setting measureable outcomes, using data to understand need, focusing on what works for whom, transferring funding to effective services and robust measurement to improve services and inform future investment decisions. The approach has had a strong Ministerial mandate, which has supported take up. The use of a wide variety of activities, such as analysis and use of evidence and public sector accountability was also thought to have supported buy-in and progress, but had led to the agenda being dispersed. This innovative approach has encouraged use of evidence in policy-making but still remains at the development stage.

Key elements for evidence-informed policy making

This breakout session addressed key elements that are needed to make sure that evidence-informed policy making works, and what this means in practical terms for decision makers, knowledge brokers, scientists and analysts. Which skills, tools, networks, methods, and guidelines are needed to make evidence work? The outcomes of the small, moderated group discussions are presented below.

Guidelines and standards for evidence

During this breakout session participants discussed the needs of those making or using evidence and how guidelines and standards can be defined to ensure quality and comparability of evidence, without constricting the evidence base. **Stephen Fraser***, (Education Endowment Foundation UK)* introduced the Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit, which is designed to support teachers, school leaders and policy makers to use evidence to inform their decision-making. Each thematic strand addresses questions about the effectiveness of the intervention, the security of the evidence and the cost. Guidance reports combine the research evidence with EEF's learning from their own evaluations and make practical and evidence-based recommendations for teachers. D*avid Gough, (UCL Institute of Education UK)* introduced the notion of 'justifiable evidence claims' in relation to evidence standards to inform decision making. David explained that, in relation to systematic reviews, justifiable evidence claims have three dimensions: the review method, the included studies and the evidence produced. The justifiable evidence claims are situated within a wider context wherein it is necessary to consider the interpretation and integration with other information and the outcomes of decisions.

Paul Cairney*, (University of Stirling, UK),* underlined first that maintaining strict adherence to evidence standards is tantamount to tying hands behind your back. Second, there is a trade-off between maintaining scientific integrity and using evidence pragmatically to ensure impact. Third, we should not divorce discussions of evidence standards from evidence use. Having policy impact requires more than just having a supply of evidence: the way one uses evidence to frame a policy problem is often more about the way one connects information to a demand than about the robustness of the evidence (for a fuller discussion of these issues see https://paulcairney.wordpress.com/2017/06/27/the-role-of-standards-for-evidence-in-evidence-

informed-policymaking/). **James Wilsdon**, (University of Sheffield, UK, INGSA) introduced a manifesto for scientific evidence and advice. INGSA is working with stakeholders to develop a draft set of principles and guidelines for government science advice, which will be presented at the World Science Forum in late 2017. There were a number of options and next steps for the guidelines, including how best to deal with context specificity and the form of the final product. Consideration needs to be given as to how to move from scientific advice to knowledge brokering, which calls for repeated interaction with decision makers and for ensuring a diversity of perspectives.

The discussion covered a range of topics, including the role of OECD as a standard setter, bringing organizations together on common standards of evidence. Participants also expressed caution about the misuse of standards and the challenges of standardization.

Diffusing innovations and experimentation

This breakout session drew on synergies with the OECD Observatory for Public Sector Innovation and the European Commission Joint Research Centre. A key challenge is to combine an evidence-informed policy making approach with the need to make decisions under conditions of unpredictability, uncertainty, and complexity. In a context of highly uncertain events, how can decision making be transformed to cope with uncertainty and avoid paralysis? This requires exploring evidence-innovation-experimentation nexus, and giving attention to the ways that evidence can be produced through experimentation within innovative processes. *Piret Tonurist* (OECD) introduced experimentation in the public sector, where experiments are defined as 'procedures to support, refute, or validate a hypothesis by creating an intervention which is observed, measured and evaluated'. Experimentation can be worthwhile when the 'right' answer in unknown, when there is room for action and when a 'proof of concert' generated could lead to wider positive change. This opens the way to a range of practical considerations, including whether randomisation is possible, the sample sized required and establishing an appropriate counterfactual. Experimentation also presents a number of challenges including the need to address cultural or organisational barriers, the danger of obtaining evidential support for pre-determined policy solutions and the ethnics of experimentation.

The group discussions discussed two cases, one from France and one from Iceland. There was lively discussion about whether government could or should be in the business of experimentation. Participants raised issues around informed consent and the extent to which experimentation can be possible in government. There was also debate about the role of capacity building to enable experimentation in jurisdictions with no previous experience in the area. Even in countries where the use of experimentation is increasing, codes of conduct are still underdeveloped in comparison with, for example, the academic community. The discussion concluded that the OECD could develop advocacy in promoting the use of experimentation within government; establish guidelines on the use of experimentation within government; and develop research to document the experimentation taking place in countries.

Skills for policy makers and scientists

The session focused on the importance of developing the skills and competences of the scientists and policymakers working at the science-policy interface to work together, communicate and co-create.

In her presentation, *Sharon Smit* (University of Groningen, Netherlands) presented the work of her current EU-financed project, ACCOMPLISH, as a knowledge broker for science-policy collaboration and co-creation. ACCOMPLISSH aims to accelerate co-creation with partners from government, academic, private and third sectors by identifying the enablers and barriers for it. From the academic perspective, enablers for co-creation and for improving social sciences and humanities research impact include: communicating the value of research; proximity with face-to-face time; clarifying the possible impact of research; and from the policy makers perspective, sharing success stories through better narratives; adjusting vocabulary to the target group; listening rather than talking; clarifying the process of research; and talking about failure and success. *David Mair* (EC JRC) underlined the need

for crafting a new profession as knowledge brokers between scientists and policy makers in a world with complex and interconnected policy challenges with an abundance of knowledge. In reality problems no longer arrive in neat department of ministry-shaped boxes and policy-making no longer follows a traditional cycle. Evidence advocates therefore need to professionalise, with a distinct new skillset. They need to do so across the science-policy continuum, not just on the supply side of evidence, in order to provide and use the best possible evidence at the right time. The JRC has developed a skills map which addresses the practical skillset needed to increase the uptake of research evidence in policymaking. The 8 skills which are meant to be understood as part of a collective skill set, include: Interpersonal skills; Research Synthesis; Management of Collaborative Expert Community; Understanding Policymaking for Scientists (and 'Science for Policymakers'); Communicating Scientific Knowledge; Science Advice/Evidence Advocacy; Public Engagement; Monitoring & Evaluation.

During the discussion participants in this session identified some of the most important barriers to governing better through evidence-informed policy making: lack of behavioural proximity between policymakers and scientists; misaligned motives and different time scales, insufficient awareness about science and how it can help policy, inadequate communication engagement (scientists have concerns that simple could be taken for simplistic, that advocating for their research or using social media to spread their message is wrong), etc.

Participants also made proposals for trainings, which could improve and increase the use of evidence in policy making. Some of the suggestions included: communication for scientists wishing to influence policies, soft skills, empowering scientists to advocate for their research results, pairing and placement programmes, better understanding of the policy and evidence cycle and how to create a proximity between both. A special emphasis was put on the need to train the policymakers and to increase their awareness on how evidence and tools that science provides can help take more coherent, consistent and inclusive and overall successful policy decisions.

Using behavioural insights to inform policy and practice

This session provided participants with an overview of the field of behavioural science and how different institutional models for applying behavioural insights exist, as well as how knowledge can be aggregated and disseminated through international networks. The session opened with a presentation of recent OECD work, including lessons learned from the recent publication *Behavioural Insights and Public Policy: Lessons from Around the World* that highlights more than 100 applications of the use behavioural insights around the world and key insights from the May OECD Behavioural Insights Events. **Ms. Mariam Chammat** from the *Secrétariat général pour la modernisation de l'action publique* (SGMAP) highlighted how France's Prime Minister's Office is using behavioural insights and evidence-based policies to improve regulations, tax collection, and information. Challenges were also highlighted, particularly in regards to translating behavioural insights from one context to another, time constraints associated with scientific experiments, and ethics regarding transparency, manipulation, and potential misuse of the science. **Mr. Daniel Shephard** formerly with the White House's Social and Behavioural Sciences Team (SBST) spoke about the US model established to provide collaborative inter-agency support to develop the competencies of government agencies to design, test, and implement policies using behavioural science by embedding capacity for applying behavioural insights across government and within agencies and departments. Results were disseminated through annual reports that provide short, transparent details about the interventions and any results, positive or negative. **Mr. Nicolò Di Gaetano** from the Regulatory Authority for Electricity, Gas and Water (AEEGSI) spoke about Italy's effort to apply behavioural insights to implementing better regulation that empowers consumers in the energy retail market. AEEGSI reviewed energy bills and developed new guidance to simplify layouts, wordings and content. In addition, a pilot project was launched to test consumer behaviours when using electronic appliances, with the goal of developing new provisions for providing data on energy consumption.

Discussion centred on how to responsibly transfer knowledge from one policy context to another. Panelists highlighted the need to share the results of experiments, whether they worked or not, as well as to rigourously test and re-test interventions to ensure that behavioural solutions are applicable in different policy contexts, places, cultures, and languages. Key questions that were raised included how to share information on applications and results when it may be politically sensistive, as well as how to ensure governments are adhering to consistent and robust standards when testing and implementing behavioural insights to maintain credibility in this tool and effectiveness in its application.

Identifying actionable next steps

To introduce the session, **Stephane Jacobzone** (OECD), presented the options for a work agenda, which had been prepared by the OECD. The goal is to support good governance in a post-truth era, where the challenge is how to ensure evidence is informing policy decisions and practice. The options and proposed work streams first include core activities, with capacity building, showcasing practical examples and international standards. Second, there is the possibility to further strengthen international networks, provide a mapping of the evidence broker function across countries and to contextualise the evidence function as part of an analysis of the evaluation systems and advisory functions of government. In addition, the Evidence Informed Policy Making Agenda can benefit from synergies from relevant related existing OECD work streams, such as behavioural insights as part of the regulatory work, or the innovation and experimentation, as part of the Observatory of Public Sector Innovation.

David Mair (EC JRC), explained how the JRC is supporting EU policy making activities through "knowledge centres" which share some similar functions to the UK What Works centres, even if they differ in other respects. These knowledge centres offer a model for co-creation, exchange and interaction between scientists from diverse disciplines and policymakers involved in specific policy issue (risk management, territorial development, migration). The JRC is also developing similar centres for the skills and professions, to foster text and data mining, modelling for public policy and the production and use of composite indicators. We also need to further develop the interconnections with innovation, behavioural insights and foresight, which in JRC lie with the EU policy lab. Scientists and policymakers working at the science-policy interface need to be equipped with better skills and competences to do their job and trainings are needed to meet these needs. There is a need to develop the profession of knowledge brokers and how to manage networks. The JRC will have a summer school for scientists and policymakers in early September, and is looking forward to develop further training for policy makers in joint cooperation with OECD. There is also a need to develop robust metrics on measuring the impact of research on policy and decision makers. Finally there is a pressing need to develop further the theory of how decisions are made, how to change minds with facts and how to convince policymakers with science.

There was strong interest on follow up issues from participants. On behalf of INGSA, **Sir Peter Gluckman** called for developing capacity capacities for the diplomacy of science, and that it was crucial to work both on the demand and supply side. It is important to not duplicate or replicate efforts and offers of cooperation with the OECD will be very welcome. Sir Peter also urged consideration of the different levels of science advice, including not just at the country level, but also cities and districts. **Howard White**, on behalf of Campbell, also expressed willingness to work further with groups and organisations together, to coordinate events and to develop training for using systematic reviews.

Countries expressed strong interest too. **Holger Sperlich** from Germany was interested in exploring the ethics of experimentation, to develop case studies with regard to ethics, and to understand legal safeguards. Sir Peter added that it is also necessary to consider whether the requisite 'social license' has been obtained for experimentation within government, which requires more deep consultation with the public. A representative of Finland also underlined training for young social scientists on experimentation, and was keen to develop more training for using this evidence provided by the

public sector. A code of conduct for social experiments was drafted in collaboration between the PMO's and researchers in 2016. A representative from Finnish strategy reflected that it would be useful to share practices to see how to organise the institutional frameworks for evidence brokerage, and that the OECD could show some best practices. *Molly Irwin* from the US expressed a readiness to share what is being done in the US, and welcomed a forum to share among countries and facilitate the development of international networks. A French representative from France strategy looked forward to sharing standards on the quality of experimentation and working towards common ethical standards. The importance of sharing knowledge and best practices in terms of the institutional frameworks for evidence brokerage was again highlighted. A representative from the Italian Ministry of Finance called for mapping the minimal requirements for the use of evidence or standards, and to highlight what were the various evaluation systems in each country.

Francis P. Crawley (Good Clinical Practice Alliance, Brussels) noted that there are not yet strong ethical systems in place for carrying out social experiments: this would be a good area for leadership from the OECD and JRC. Dr. Nishikawa from Japan called for increased sharing of real experiences across OECD countries especially in disaster risk management, through a variety of platforms. The UK expressed interest in expanding the experience of the what-works centres, mapping out existing evidence, and also identifying existing examples where evidence has generated impact. Carthage Smith (OECD) underlined the importance of the distinction between the applications of scientific methods for policy evaluation on the one hand and scientific advice and issues such as risk analysis, crisis management, GM foods etc on the other. There needs to be continued work to bring these two communities and agendas together. A representative from Israel called for attention to be given to skills for the implementation side of policy, and also for developing mechanisms for peer learning, a point which was echoed by Spain.

The outcome of the conference will help to frame a proposal for the public governance committee and its relevant working parties to follow up on implementing this agenda in cooperation with relevant partners and stakeholders.

Annex of contributors (in order of appearance)

- **Rolf Alter,** Director for Public Governance, OECD

- **Charlina Vitcheva,** Deputy Director General of DG JRC, European Commission

- **Olli-Pekka Heinonen,** Director General, Finnish National Agency for Education, Former State Secretary, Finnish Ministry of Finance

- **Philip Rycroft,** Second Permanent Secretary and Head of the UK Governance Group, Cabinet Office

- **Steve Martin,** Director, Public Policy Institute for Wales

- **Kenichi Tsukahara,** Professor, Kyushu University

- **Sir John Elvidge,** Chair, Carnegie UK Trust

- **Howard White,** Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Collaboration

- **James Wilsdon,** Vice President of INGSA, Professor, University of Sheffield

- **Robyn Mildon,** Executive Director, Centre for Evidence and Implementation, Australia

- **Tom McBride,** Director of Evidence, Early Intervention Foundation, United Kingdom

- **Majella McCloskey,** Centre for Effective Services, Ireland/Northern Ireland

- **Cris Coxon,** Head of Civil and Administrative Justice Research, Ministry of Justice, United Kingdom

- **Aristotelis Gavriliadis,** DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission

- **Christopher L. Griffin,** Research Director, Access to Justice Lab, Harvard Law School

- **Nancy Hey**, Director What Works Centre for Wellbeing, United Kingdom

- **Roger Halliday,** Chief Statistician, Scottish Government, United Kingdom

- **Michaela Saisana,** Senior Scientific Officer Leader of the European Commission's Competence Centre on Composite Indicators and Scoreboards (COIN), DG JRC, European Commission

- **Jennifer Wallace,** Head of Policy, Carnegie Trust, United Kingdom

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