

Support Mechanisms for Evidence-based Policy-Making in Education

Eurydice Report





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Policy context

Establishing a solid evidence base for effective policy-making has, for many years, been a key factor in promoting continued improvement in education systems and standards across Europe. The first phase in building European monitoring systems was the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), which helped countries identify best practice in different policy areas. The education thematic working groups were set up in 2001 as part of the OMC and have been integral to the various Education and Training strategies implemented since then, including the current ET 2020 strategy. The working groups cover the various fields of education, from early childhood education and care (ECEC) to higher education, as well as adult learning and transversal key competences. Their primary focus is to assist Member States in furthering policy development through mutual learning and the identification of good practice, as well as understanding what works in education.

The first benchmarks for monitoring most effective practices and learning between EU Member States (i.e. on preventing students from leaving education early and on early childhood education and care) had already been incorporated into the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 ⁽¹⁾. Moreover, since 2001, the European Commission has been contributing to the evidence base by publishing statistical analyses of both the challenges facing education and training systems and the progress made in combating these difficulties. In addition, the Education and Training Monitor has, since 2012, been charting the development of education and training systems and showing the progress towards meeting European targets and benchmarks, thus acting as an extra spur to evidence-based policy-making.

Moreover, Commission communications and Council conclusions generally call for the building of a sound evidence-base for supporting decision-making. In 2006, a Communication from the European Commission stressed that

'effective long-term policies must be based on solid evidence. For Member States to fully understand and monitor what is happening in their systems, they need channels for producing and accessing relevant research, a statistical infrastructure capable of collecting the necessary data, and mechanisms to assess progress as policies are implemented' ⁽²⁾.

This communication was, as an example of evidence gathering on a European level, underpinned by an analytical report *Efficiency and Equity in European Education and Training Systems*, written by the European Expert Network on the Economics of Education (EENEE).

Almost 10 years ago, the European Commission in a paper directly addressing evidence-based policy-making: 'Towards more knowledge-based policy and practice in education and training' reiterated the call for evidence-based policy-making, urging 'Member States and the EU institutions ... to use evidence-based policy and practice, including robust evaluation instruments, to identify which reforms and practices are the most effective, and to implement them most successfully' (European Commission 2007).

⁽¹⁾ Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000. Presidency Conclusions (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm)

⁽²⁾ Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament: Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems, COM(2006) 481 final. Brussels, 08.09.2006. (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52006DC0481>)

This invitation to evidence-based policy-making at European level was also included in the Council conclusions from 2009 ⁽³⁾ in the strategic framework for European cooperation (2010-2020), which state that

'European cooperation in education and training for the period up to 2020 should be established in the context of a strategic framework spanning education and training systems as a whole in a lifelong learning perspective. (...) The periodic monitoring of progress towards a set objective provides an essential contribution towards evidence-based policy-making'.

This is followed up in the Joint Report from 2015 ⁽⁴⁾ which state that

'strong analytical evidence and progress monitoring are essential for the effectiveness of the ET 2020 framework (...) Since the 2012 Joint Report, the governance of ET 2020 has improved, in particular by strengthening evidence building (the Education and Training Monitor) and the operational character of Working Groups and regular platforms for exchanges between key stakeholders such as the Education, Training and Youth (ETY) Forum'.

In addition to the EU institutions, other institutions, such as the OECD and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) have developed well known surveys such as PISA (testing 15 year olds), PIAAC (adult skills) to measure achievement in core areas (both by OECD), PIRLS (fourth graders), TIMSS (fourth and eighth graders) (both by IEA), thus contributing to the monitoring progress outlined in the Council conclusions. These surveys have been used for highlighting the comparative strengths and weaknesses of education systems.

Some Member States have been active in organising European events on evidence-based policy-making. For example, the workshop 'Cost Benefit and Cost Effectiveness Analysis in the Field of Education Policy' was organised in Stockholm in November 2013 as a joint event between the European Commission, the Lithuanian Presidency, the Swedish Ministry of Finance and the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research. In April 2016, the Dutch presidency, together with the European Commission, organised a conference in The Hague with the aim of discussing ways forward to improve policy-making based on evidence and data ⁽⁵⁾. The conference called for understanding of the state of play in the area of evidence-based policy-making, and this report feeds into this process.

Concepts and the systemic framework for evidence-based policy-making

While evidence-based policy-making may seem a self-explanatory concept, it is difficult to define (see for example Cairney 2016). For the purposes of this report, however, a rather straightforward definition is used as the scope of this preliminary mapping of evidence-based policy-making does not allow for a wide-ranging discussion of the issue. Davies (1999) has defined evidence-based policy-making as an approach which 'helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation'. Research-based knowledge is but one of many influences upon policy and practice. With respect to

⁽³⁾ Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020'), OJ C 119, 28.05.2009, p. 2.

(<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:en:PDF>)

⁽⁴⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020): New priorities for European cooperation in education and training, COM (2015) 408 final. Brussels, 26.08.2015. (http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/documents/et-2020-draft-joint-report-408-2015_en.pdf).

⁽⁵⁾ <https://evidence-seminar.teamwork.fr/en/programme>

policy-making, for example, Davies (2004) highlights six factors other than research evidence that cannot be overlooked:

- experience, expertise and judgement
- resources
- values
- habit and tradition
- lobbyists, pressure groups and consultants
- pragmatics and contingencies.

No matter the definition of the concept, the Commission (European Commission 2007, p. 13) suggests that for education and training to realise its potential, it would be helpful for the education sector to learn from other policy domains which are more successful in using research and other evidence to improve their practices. As is the case with any public policy area, education is a complex field, but its four dimensions make it especially so (OECD 2016, p. 22):

- Education systems are multi-level systems (local, regional, national in many countries) and alignment between the different levels is a major challenge, particularly in decentralised countries (Hopfenbeck et al., 2013; Blanchenay, Burns and Köster, 2014).
- Our societies are increasingly diverse both in terms of their demographics (students, teachers, and communities) and the values and identities which we ascribe to ourselves.
- There are a growing number of education stakeholders who increasingly voice their desires not only for themselves and their children, but for education systems as a whole.
- Education is a field where there are strong *a priori* beliefs tied to both our identities and experiences, and to what education systems should deliver, as well as to what works and what does not.

According to Niemi (2007),

'the aim of research/evidence-based or research/evidence informed practice is promoting economic competitiveness and social cohesion by improving educational resources, structures, and practices. For promoting these two objectives, we need an educational infrastructure that provides all learners with opportunities to obtain an education at the highest level commensurate with their own growth and growth potential'.

This means that decision-making in education should strategically aim for improvements in education and training, and for this purpose we need research and evidence (European Commission 2007, p. 11).

In this report, there is a wide understanding of what constitutes evidence. It considers information, research and statistics from government bodies, higher education institutions, as well as other organisations. In addition, consultations with experts and stakeholders which aim to produce evidence through dialogue for the policy-making process are taken into account.

Scope, structure and methodology of the report

This report describes the mechanisms and practices that support evidence-based policy-making and it covers the member countries of the Eurydice network. It examines both the public and private institutions that can provide evidence for policy-makers. It does not include evidence used for assessing policies i.e. evaluations, except in the cases where the evaluation of a previous policy is explicitly used as evidence for policy reform. This report is only intended to provide an initial mapping of the support mechanisms for evidence-based policy-making, but it could act as the basis for a more detailed analysis in the future.

The issues related to evidence-based policy-making in education are complex. Hence, the report only attempts to gather basic information about the actors involved, the flow of evidence, and the types of evidence used in policy-making. The Commission Staff Working Paper *'Towards more knowledge-based policy and practice in education and training'* (2007) identified three challenges in evidence-based policy-making: knowledge creation, mediation and application. This short report will identify the actors and institutions involved in knowledge creation (e.g. departments in higher education institutions and statistics offices), knowledge mediation (e.g. databases, advisory groups and knowledge brokers) and knowledge application (recent examples of using evidence to support policy reform).

The actors involved in evidence-based policy-making can be divided into policy-makers (e.g. politicians/civil servants), research providers e.g. (universities, research agencies, consultants, think tanks), and other stakeholders (e.g. teachers, parents, local administrations). The report will include evidence provided for policy-makers in the policy process from initiation stage until the policy is implemented by educational organisations/institutions.

The report is divided into two parts: 1. A short comparative overview which examines the institutions involved in evidence-based policy-making (section 1) and the efforts made to facilitate access to evidence including any mediation or knowledge brokerage services for policy-makers (section 2); both sections offer examples from relevant countries. The second part contains more detailed information on each country, with practical examples of evidence-based policy used in recent or on-going education policy reforms. There is a glossary at the end of the report.

This report is based on answers provided by the National Units of the Eurydice network to a questionnaire developed by Unit A7 Erasmus+: Education and Youth Policy Analysis which coordinates the Eurydice network within the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). The data is based on official information about legislation, regulations and policies of the central/top-level authorities with responsibility for education located at national (state) level in the vast majority of countries. In some countries, the regions (Communities, *Länder*, etc.) have responsibility for all matters relating to education. In Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom, the different jurisdictions have their own education ministry.

The preparation and drafting of the report was coordinated by the Unit A7 (EACEA) during the second half of 2016 and early 2017. It was checked by all National Units participating. All contributors are acknowledged at the end of the document.

PART 1: COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW

1.1. Institutions and practices in evidence-based policy-making

While there is a wide range of evidence available, the challenge is to ensure that the evidence used in policy-making is pertinent to current policy issues. There are two important challenges here: timeliness and relevancy. Firstly, constant societal change implies that policies must be adapted to address new and emerging issues (such as coping with migrants, radicalisation, youth unemployment etc.). As a consequence, the evidence to support policy-making often does not exist when it is needed. Secondly, the complexity and multidimensional nature of education system poses challenges to produce relevant and reliable evidence using an appropriate methodology. As Pierre and Peters (2005) point out, 'where once we had central government, we now have governance, which can be defined as the processes of establishing priorities formulating and implementing policies and being accountable in complex networks with many different actors'. Education systems can also be described as 'complicated, convoluted, constituted by many policies and practices, by regulatory norms and by individuals, each with their own intentionality' (Mason 2016, p. 437). Indeed, these differences could mean that there are different types of arrangements (legal requirements or guidelines) for evidence-based policy-making, which are appropriate to a particular political system.

In the survey carried out for this report, the countries reported a wide variety of arrangements for the gathering of evidence to support policy-making. Most countries have arrangements that are articulated in official documents and/or legislation that describes the procedures to be followed. In some cases, relatively strict arrangements are prescribed in legislation.

For example, Latvian law stipulates that policy-makers are legally required to conduct an impact assessment both at the planning and implementation stages of policy-making. Latvia also legally obliges policy-makers to invite the social partners and professional organisations to participate in the policy planning process.

In some countries evidence is gathered in the early stages of the policy process. In Hungary, if a policy intervention is financed from the central state budget, government bodies or Ministry-backed institutions (Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development, Education Authority) are required to provide evidence. Such evidence may provide the basis for problem analysis or to reveal current trends. Surveys may also be carried out as a means to explore policy objectives and determine the scope of interventions. These bodies are not involved in the later stages of the policy process except, in a few cases, when the intervention is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

In the Czech Republic, the law prescribes the methodology for the preparation of strategic documents that may potentially be incorporated into legislation. This methodology recognises the need for policy based on data, which requires experts to be selected through public tenders at an early stage in the policy process. In Ireland, various institutions may be asked to provide evidence on a particular policy question at any stage of the policy-making process, from policy scoping to implementation. Reports and evidence may also be commissioned from private institutions both in Ireland and overseas. Organisations may also undertake their own research activities and can submit the outputs to the Department of Education for consideration.

When it comes to official arrangements, a distinction can be made between arrangements set down in legislation that demand the production and/or use of evidence in policy-making, and less strict guidelines set out in official documents that recommend the production and/or use of evidence. Furthermore, there is a difference in the types of evidence to be used: research evidence, statistics or other data; or consultations with stakeholders.

According to the findings, a legal requirement to involve stakeholders is more common (18 education systems ⁽⁶⁾) than a legal requirement for the production of research/statistics or other kinds of data from evidence providers (12 education systems ⁽⁷⁾). 11 out of the 12 education systems require the production of both types of evidence.

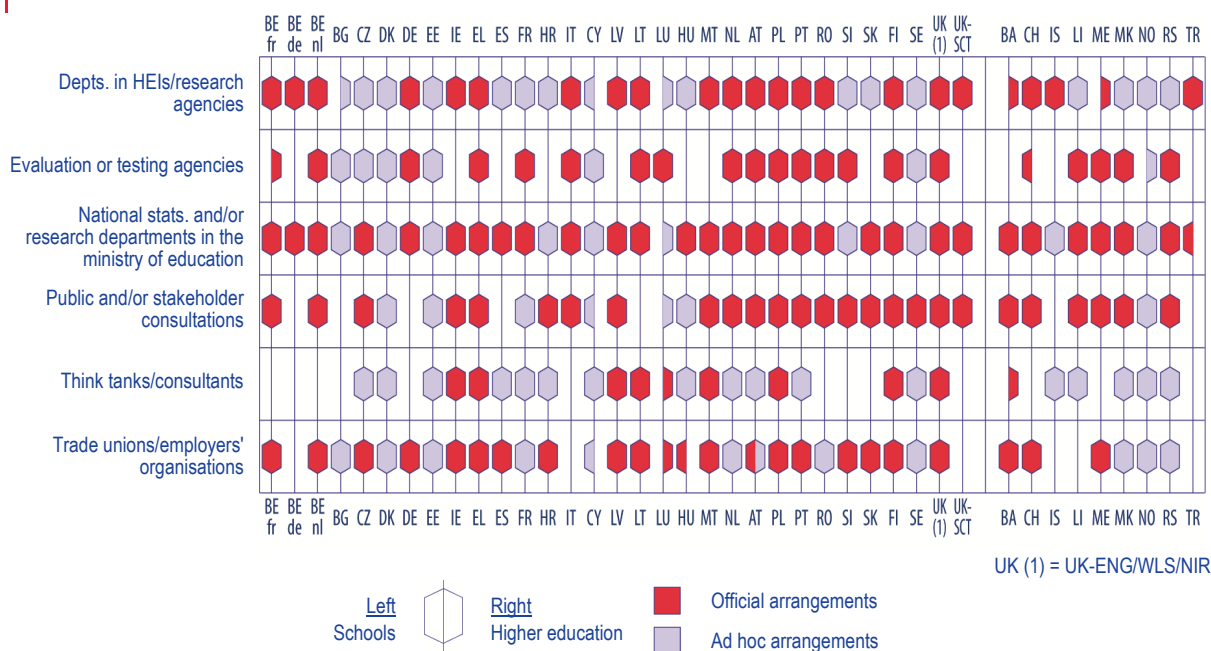
While there are legal requirements for using evidence in policy-making, it is not necessarily required for all policy areas. For example, in Germany the requirements apply only to vocational education and training. In Austria, the legal requirement concerns only school education, but in practice evidence is used for higher education policies as well.

Four countries (Bulgaria, Denmark, Cyprus and Norway) do not report having any official arrangements, but they have ad hoc arrangements for evidence-based policy-making. Even though official arrangements may be compulsory and seen as more 'robust' than ad hoc-arrangements, there is no judgement made here that official arrangements are necessarily better. For example, ad hoc-arrangements may be well-embedded in institutional practices, but policy-makers have more freedom in determining how they will gather and use evidence than through official arrangements.

For example, in Denmark, relevant partners and stakeholders are involved in the initial stage of the evidence gathering process on an ad hoc basis. The length of the process can vary and sometimes there is not enough time for a thorough dialogue with stakeholders, but the hearing/consultation phase should be four to six weeks.

In a few other countries, evidence is used at all stages of the policy process. For example, in Norway, evidence is normally collected in the early stages of policy development, but work on evidence and dialogue with relevant institutions and stakeholders may continue until final decisions are made.

Figure 1.1: Sources of evidence used in policy-making in the field of education, 2016



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory note

If the country has both official and ad hoc arrangements for a category, the figure only shows the official arrangement.

⁽⁶⁾ Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), the Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Liechtenstein

⁽⁷⁾ The Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Liechtenstein, Switzerland

Figure 1.1 shows the institutions or organisations from which evidence potentially comes. In general, countries have many different options in gathering evidence for policy-making, but the policy area in question may be the determining factor in deciding which sources to use, and some sources are used more often than others.

All countries have either official or ad hoc arrangements with departments in higher education institutions or research agencies. Official arrangements usually involve research departments within the ministries of education and/or national statistics offices (31 education systems). Departments in higher education institutions and/or dedicated research agencies have official arrangements with policy-makers in 24 education systems.

Public and/or stakeholder consultations take place through official arrangements in 26 education systems. Likewise, trade unions and/or employers organisations are involved through official arrangements in 23 education systems.

Evidence from consultants and/or think tanks is the least likely to be called for as part of official evidence gathering arrangements (10 education systems). It is not surprising that these sources are used less than public sector institutions as there may be political considerations and cost implications when deciding which institutions to call on for evidence.

In general, not many countries have significant differences between policy-making for schools and policy-making for higher education in terms of the procedures and providers used when gathering evidence. In Luxembourg, there are both official and ad hoc arrangements mostly for higher education policies, while only departments in higher education institutions and/or research agencies are involved in school education policies. In Slovakia, there are official arrangements for evidence providers only in relation to higher education policies.

1.2. Accessibility and mediation/brokerage services

The Commission Staff Working Paper from 2007 (European Commission, 2007) identified a challenge related to knowledge mediation. According to the Working Paper,

'Mediation is the bridge between creation and application, without which successful knowledge management and use is impossible. Mediation involves translating and disseminating knowledge and the outcomes of educational research through networks, platforms, websites and the media that can inform and influence policy and practice'.

According to the OECD (2016, pp. 19-20),

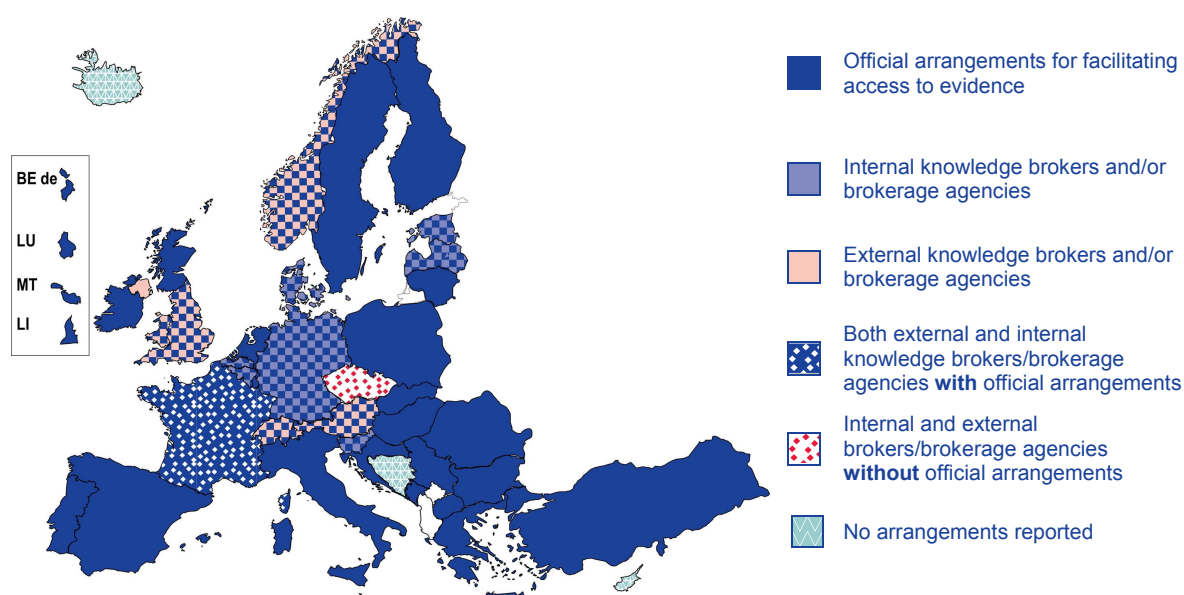
'For the policy-maker tasked with developing a response to a particular issue, it is often not fully clear what kinds of evidence are needed in order to address key policy issues – and in fact there may be multiple paths to a particular evidence-based solution. Apart from the use of knowledge by policy-makers, important questions are how and where knowledge is produced and how it is transmitted to policy-makers. In this context, the role of brokerage agencies is becoming increasingly important'.

Descriptive system data (for example on achievement or graduation) needs to be combined with research findings that can determine whether something is working or not. In these processes, for example, knowledge brokers can play a role, combining different sources of data to produce evidence (Fazekas and Burns, 2012), and also tailoring research findings so they may be more easily used by policy-makers.

The use of knowledge brokers is not very common in the European countries participating in this report. They are used only in about a third of education systems (see Figure 1.2) ⁽⁸⁾. Knowledge brokers are understood in broadly two different ways: in some countries (Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Latvia and Slovenia), there are knowledge brokers within government education administrations that specialise in interpreting evidence for policy-makers. For example, in Germany, knowledge brokers are joint enterprises by and/or for the federal government and the *Länder* and consequently advise both levels of government on questions of education (e.g. the German Council of Science and Humanities, the Institute for Educational Quality Improvement, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the German Institute for International Educational Research). In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), an agency of the Department of Finance, produces and disseminates statistics and research to inform decisions and improve understanding. Its knowledge brokerage role includes education, but is not education-specific.

The other type of knowledge broker is external, and includes various types of institutes and agencies. These can be found in the Czech Republic, Austria, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Switzerland and Norway. For example, in Austria, the Federal Institute for Educational Research, Innovation and Development (BIFIE) serves both as a research agency and also as a knowledge broker.

Figure 1.2: Facilitating access to evidence and mediation/brokerage services for education policy-makers, 2016

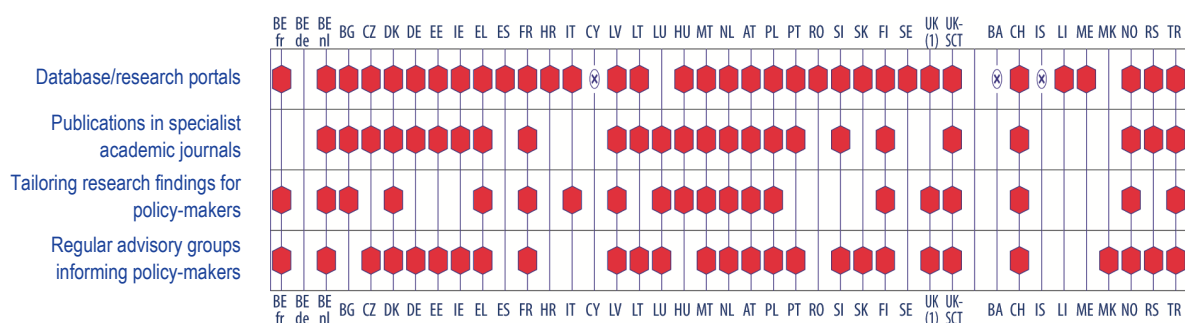


Source: Eurydice.

About half of the countries report three of the four types of arrangements for facilitating the flow of information between evidence providers and policy-makers. As Figure 1.3 shows, databases and research portals are the most common way of doing this (34 education systems). Also, publications in specialist academic journals and regular advisory groups are relatively common (in about half of the countries). Tailoring research findings to meet the needs of policy-makers is the method least used.

⁽⁸⁾ Belgium (French and Flemish Communities), the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Latvia, Austria, Slovenia, the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Switzerland and Norway

Figure 1.3: Arrangements for facilitating the flow of information between evidence providers and policy-makers in the field of education, 2016



Source: Eurydice.

⊗ No arrangements

UK (1) = UK-ENG/WLS/NIR

In the United Kingdom, the Cabinet Office (a government department which supports the Prime Minister and ensures the effective running of government) funds an initiative to improve the way government and other organisations create, share and use (or 'generate, transmit and adopt') relevant and reliable evidence to enable policy-makers, commissioners and practitioners to make decisions based upon evidence of what works and to provide cost-efficient services. This initiative is not education-specific. Other types of funding go, for example, to organising conferences or working groups (for example in Denmark and Luxembourg).

Conclusions

There are two main findings arising from this initial mapping of support mechanisms for evidence-based policy-making. First, most countries reported official arrangements with a large variety of organisations which could potentially provide evidence. However, these arrangements ranged from strict rules prescribed in legislation to more loose guidelines about who should provide evidence and who should be consulted during the policy-making process. Second, there were both internal and external knowledge brokers who were given the task of interpreting evidence and mediating between research providers and policy-makers. However, only about a third of the countries reported such arrangements and so they are not in the majority.

The limited scope of this report did not allow for a detailed examination of evidence-based policy-making, but it raised some questions that could be explored in more detail in the future. For example, how does the type of political system affect the way in which support mechanisms for evidence-based policy-making develop? There may be differences depending on the complexity of the system (one level vs multi-level governance). Moreover, a more detailed picture could be formed by examining a limited number of case studies in a more comprehensive way. Also, the question of how evidence influences policy could be examined in more detail.

The pages that follow give country-specific information on the support mechanisms for evidence-based policy-making, including practical examples of how evidence-based policy-making has been undertaken as part of recent or on-going policy reforms.

PART 2: COUNTRY INFORMATION

This part contains country-specific information, together with concrete examples of recent or on-going policy reforms undertaken through evidence-based policy-making.

Belgium (French Community)

The French Community of Belgium legally requires all normative legislation education to be negotiated with representatives of associations representing the employers' organisations (*Fédérations de Pouvoirs Organisateurs*)⁽⁹⁾ (Article 4 of the Decree of 20 July 2006) and trade unions (Decree of 19 May 2004). For this purpose, policy-makers hold formal stakeholder consultations with these bodies and other stakeholders such as the Parents' Association (*Association de Parents*) during the policy-making process. Furthermore, the Community has official arrangements with all French-speaking Belgian universities and EU organisations (e.g. Eurydice and Eurostat) and also has access to data from the statistical department within its Ministry of Education. Moreover, depending on the issue, the Ministry of Education may set up public consultations. To encourage the flow of information between policy-makers and evidence providers, the Ministry of Education has databases, a statistical department, a Committee to evaluate public policy (*Comité de l'Évaluation des Politiques Publiques*) as well as a research department (*Service Général du Pilotage de l'Enseignement*). Furthermore, the Steering Committee (*Commission de Pilotage*) and the Education and Training Council (*Conseil de l'Éducation et de la Formation* – CEF) regularly advise the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, the Community does not have any designated bodies which act as mediators between policy-makers and evidence providers. The general administration (*L'Administration Générale de l'Enseignement*) is supposed to take on this role as part of their advisory responsibilities to the Minister of Education.

As part of the Pact for Teaching Excellence (*Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence*)⁽¹⁰⁾ the Ministry of Education asked French-speaking universities in Belgium to share their expertise as part of a larger project for the general improvement of education. The administration of the French Community of Belgium contributed by providing its own statistics, data, experience and information as part of the participatory process of the Pact. Other partners also joined in various working groups on a broad range of topics. Cabinet advisers, members of the Administration, and other participants acted as knowledge brokers.

Belgium (German-speaking Community)

There is a legal requirement for evidence-based policy-making for some education policies, but it is not a general rule. The legislation of the German-speaking Community provides guidelines for communication procedures between the institutions concerned once policy-makers have come to a decision on a particular measure. Examples of evidence-based policy through official arrangements include, for example, using external evaluations of school inspections as evidence for future reforms. In addition, there are ad-hoc arrangements for using statistics from the Ministry of Education statistical departments. To facilitate access to evidence, the Ministry of Education of the German-speaking Community regularly publishes statistical data.

As part of a major reform of secondary education in 2016, the parliament adopted a new decree to amend the 2008 core competencies and frameworks in education. The procedure to prepare for the adoption was initiated in February 2016. The amendments were mainly based on evidence drawn from external evaluation, inspection and school development consultation.

⁽⁹⁾ All schools (private or public) have an authority which assumes full legal responsibility.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://www.pactedexcellence.be>

Belgium (Flemish Community)

Flemish education law obliges the Minister of Education and Training to obtain the advice of the Flemish Education Council (VLOR) on all preliminary draft bills on education and training, policy proposals and on draft decisions on temporary projects. The VLOR comprises representatives from organisations across the entire educational field and from socio-economic and socio-cultural organisations. However, the Council is not required to base its advice on evidence, but it bases the advice on internal consultations. In addition to the Education Council, a range of organisations (but not think tanks or consultants) are involved formally or informally in providing evidence, for example through public and stakeholder consultations; however, their participation is not mandatory. Within the department of education, the 'Knowledge Policy Unit' commissions scientific research, finances policy research centres, valorises research findings, and promotes a close collaboration between themselves and the unit 'Strategic Planning', which is responsible for providing policy support, on an ad hoc basis.

Generally, individuals and institutions participate in the preparatory phase of policy development; however, some organisations (especially stakeholders) also take part in evaluation processes. External bodies such as universities and/or university colleges, consultants, the education inspection services (for thematic evaluations), the Court of Audit (for financial audit), and expert commissions usually carry out the evaluations. In addition to external bodies, evaluations can also be carried out internally by the Ministry of Education and Training. The 'Knowledge Policy Unit' at the Department of Education and Training mediates between policy-makers and researchers.

The Flemish Government is currently in the process of revising the existing attainment targets and developmental objectives to modify and reduce the number of targets. In this context, on 3 February 2016, the Flemish Minister of Education and Training launched a large-scale public debate with a large number of responses in an on-line consultation. In total, over 2 000 positions were defined. On 4 October 2016, the Education Commission of the Flemish Parliament presented the final report of the public debate.

In parallel to the broad public debate, the Umbrella Organisation of Flemish Pupils organised a debate with pupils in secondary schools at the request of the minister and the parliament. On 9 June 2016, the final report of a research project on the functioning and effectiveness of the current attainment targets, carried out by the University of Leuven, was presented in the Flemish Parliament. In 2016, Flanders also took part in the project 'Governing Complex Education Systems' of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The formulation of attainment targets was examined as a Flemish case study. On 17-18 October 2016, the results of the case study were presented in a seminar. In the autumn, experts, stakeholders and members of parliament in the Flemish Parliament debated a number of crucial issues from the broader consultation round. Together with the results of the academic research, the public and pupil debates, these workshops form the basis for further parliamentary work.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria does not legally require the provision of evidence in policy-making and there are no institutionalised arrangements for providing evidence or mediating between providers of evidence and policy-makers. Nevertheless, representatives of different scientific and academic institutions and NGOs are commonly included as members of working groups for the development of educational policy documents, strategies, curricula, standards and programmes related to the creation and/or implementation of educational policy. These groups also serve as gateways to, and forums for the exchange of information between departments of education, research agencies, national statistics offices, consultants, stakeholders' organisations, international organisations and trade unions.

The Ministry of Education and Science is adhering to the principle of partnership with stakeholders, and is committed to wide consultations with the public in the preparation and implementation of the Operational Programme 'Science and Education for Smart Growth' 2014-2020. During the development of this programme, representatives of the academic community, government, private organisations, civil society representatives, experts and advocates participated in the National Development Programme. This document served as a draft for the operational programme for the 'Bulgaria 2020' and 'Europe 2020' strategies. Proposals were presented in regional information centres where discussions with the partners and potential beneficiaries were held.

Furthermore, the Ministry set up a 'Research and Technological Development' sub-committee and three thematic working groups. These provided a forum for a more detailed discussion of the proposals and of issues relating to transparency in the financial allocation of resources under the Operational Programme. The working groups were dedicated to higher education, pre-school and school education, and social inclusion through education. They also supported the work of the Monitoring Committee under Priority Axis 2 'Education and Lifelong Learning', and Priority 3 'Learning environment for active social inclusion'. Here, their role was to review and discuss the draft annual work programme, including its methodology and the selection criteria for the proposed operations, as well as other matters relating to these priority axes. The working groups are under the direction of civil servants from the Ministry of Education and Science.

In addition, the Managing Authority of the Operational Programme organised a wider information campaign which allowed stakeholder representatives to make additional remarks and comments on the issues discussed in draft documents.

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, legislation recognises the need for evidence-based policy-making. Consequently, research/statistical departments at the Ministry of Education, the national statistics office (Czech Statistical Office), trade unions (e.g. the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions), employers' organisations (e.g. Czech Chamber of Commerce), and international organisations (e.g. OECD, UNESCO) formally participate in the policy-making process. These bodies as well as consultancy organisations (e.g. the Institute for Democracy and Economic Analysis) also partake informally on an ad hoc basis. Moreover, interdepartmental monitoring, working groups and commenting procedures are common. Likewise, organisations that are directly managed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports such as the Czech School Inspectorate are involved in mediating between providers of evidence and policy-makers. Nevertheless, there are no specific institutional arrangements to facilitate the flow of information between evidence providers and policy-makers.

The legislative basis for the process is the Czech Government Resolution No. 318 of 2 May 2013 on the Methodology for the Preparation of Public Policies. The Methodology requires public policy to be supported by data. However, it does not explicitly define which bodies are to be involved in the preparatory phase of the process. Rather, the selection of organisations and other matters depend on the individual departments and their specific priorities. Nevertheless, organisations run directly by the ministry usually automatically take part in the process of policy formation or in the commenting procedure.

Where public bodies are involved in policy-making, they participate at the initial stages; yet, there is no regular process of evidence gathering from research institutions either before or during the process of policy formation. The external evaluation of schools and school facilities is carried out under the

Education Act by the Czech School Inspectorate; the external evaluation of higher education institutions and the quality of their accredited programmes is carried out by the National Accreditation Bureau under the Act on Higher Education Institutions. Both of these agencies provide evidence to policy-makers.

An example of using evidence in recent policy-making was in the development of the Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic to 2020, where public consultations took place. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports held round table discussions with NGOs, thematic conferences and established the Board of Opponents, a board of experts. Moreover, the website 'vzdelavani2020.cz' was created to inform the public on the progress made in developing the strategy.

Denmark

Denmark does not legally require policy-makers to gather and use evidence in the policy-making process. Therefore, there are no official arrangements in place to support this or to facilitate the flow of information. However, it is common practice to involve stakeholders on an ad-hoc basis through informal arrangements and there is a strong emphasis on dialogue in policy-making.

Often, there is a hearing/consultation phase at the initial stages, which usually lasts about 4-6 weeks, unless there are other time constraints. These consultations seek to include all stakeholders and generally involve departments within higher education institutions; research and testing agencies; other departments within and outside the ministry; think tanks and consultants; as well as trade unions and employers' organisations. The policy-making process also draws on reports from international organisations where applicable.

The Minister of Higher Education and Science has, in addition, established the Danish Council for Independent Research and the Danish Council for Research and Innovation Policy. Both councils can provide advice to the minister and others on policy-making, predominantly in the field of research, technology and innovation, but they are occasionally among the parties involved in the consultation process on proposed education policy developments.

The National Agency for Quality and Supervision under the Ministry for Children, Education and Gender Equality (*Ressourcecenteret for Folkeskolen/Videnskontoret*) has been tasked with mediating evidence on primary and secondary education (ISCED 1-3), and as such may be regarded as a knowledge broker. However, there are no mediating agencies in other areas of education. Nevertheless, the Danish government funds activities, for example conferences on a specific topic/activity to facilitate access to evidence.

Examples of recent policy reforms for which evidence was provided are the 2013 SU Student Grants Reform and the Study Progress Reform, both of which were intended to reform university practices in order to reduce student completion time. Based on data on the number of months each university exceeded the standard time limit, each university was given a reduction target to reach by 2020. In this process, proposals for both reforms were sent out for consultation to the institutions and other relevant stakeholders, for example the Danish Joint Student Organisation (*Danske Studerendes Fællesråd*). The Ministry and the institutions also engaged in dialogue on the more technical and legal aspects of the proposal. In 2015, the reforms were revised after feedback on the implementation.

Germany

As education in Germany is a *Länder* (federal states within Germany) competence, many institutions in the field of educational research as well as knowledge brokers are joint enterprises by and/or for the federal government and the *Länder* and consequently advise both levels of government on questions of education (e.g. the German Council of Science and Humanities, the Institute for Educational Quality Improvement and the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the German Institute for International Educational Research).

Germany legally requires the gathering of evidence for policy-making in the field of vocational education and training (VET). Moreover, the federal government and the *Länder* must produce a joint national education report, which is submitted to the parliament every two years. Drafts of this national report are regularly provided for the Joint Steering Group of the Federation and the *Länder*. The steering group is a joint venture by both government levels. Its role is to assess the performance of the education systems in international comparison. The aim of the report is to facilitate the flow of information between evidence providers and policy-makers. Moreover the Federation and the *Länder* also jointly host science infrastructures ⁽¹¹⁾ that process and document educational information at the German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF). These services include the central guide to education on the internet, i.e. the German Education Server ⁽¹²⁾, and the German Education Portal ⁽¹³⁾ which offers access to publications and research data. Paragraph 91b (2) of the German Constitutional Law outlines the collaboration in studies and recommendations between the Federal Government and the *Länder* in relation to the performance of the education systems in an international comparison.

Apart from VET and the national education report, consulting and gathering evidence from stakeholders is not legally prescribed. Nevertheless, a number of institutions regularly provide evidence in other areas of education policy-making. These include departments from within higher education institutions, dedicated education research agencies, evaluation and testing agencies, interdepartmental research and statistical departments at the ministry of education, national statistics offices, trade unions, employers' organisations, stakeholders' organisations, international organisations and other institutions such as the Institutes of the *Länder* for School Development. However, in areas outside VET, governments are not legally bound to consider the provided evidence.

An example of evidence-based policy-making is the recent targeted policy to support poorer-performing pupils. The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* (the *Kultusministerkonferenz* – which addresses the joint interests and concerns of the *Länder* in education policy) decided to focus on this topic after the results in international comparisons of school performance (PISA, PIRLS/IGLU, TIMSS) suggested that a significant share of pupils do not achieve the minimum level of competence in the tested subjects. In October 2016, the Standing Conference presented the centralised results of the study 'IQB Educational Trends'. The study was conducted by the Institute for Educational Development (*Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen*) in Berlin and was a nationwide (i.e. cross-*Länder*) comparison of the competence levels of pupils in the languages taught at lower secondary level: German and English and, in some *Länder*, French. The study aimed at finding out whether students were achieving the expected competences set out in the educational standards of the Standing Conference and in which areas corrective measures were needed. The Standing Conference has drawn preliminary conclusions from

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://www.dipf.de/en/scientific-infrastructure>

⁽¹²⁾ www.eduserver.de

⁽¹³⁾ <http://www.dipf.de/en/scientific-infrastructure/education-portals/german-education-portal>

the results of the IQB Educational Trends study – for example, when teaching German, the linguistic potential of pupils from a migrant background needs to be better recognised.

Estonia

Estonia legally requires evidence to be taken into account when policy that will lead to legislative proposals or amendments is being developed. There is no such obligation when developing strategic policy plans, although the Ministry of Education also expects these to be based on evidence. The Estonian Ministry of Education considers evidence at all stages of the policy-making process. At the agenda-setting stage, the Estonian government focuses on data collection and analysis. Additionally, Estonia consults advisory groups for policy steering purposes, and, if necessary, also commissions an ex-ante impact assessment to guide policy design. Furthermore, evidence also drives policy steering and monitoring and the Estonian Ministry of Education commissions additional research for mid-term and final evaluations of the impact of strategic plans.

During this process, the Analysis Department of the Ministry is primarily responsible for facilitating and mediating the flow of information between evidence providers and policy-makers. Various institutions produce the evidence on an ad hoc basis, such as departments within higher education institutions (e.g. University of Tartu), evaluation or testing agencies (e.g. SA Innove), national statistics offices (Statistics Estonia), think tanks and consultants (e.g. Praxis Centre for Policy Studies or the Estonian Centre for Applied Research), trade unions, employers' organisations (e.g. Estonian Employers' Confederation), stakeholders' organisations, international organisations (e.g. OECD) and other organisations. Public consultations also take place. Nonetheless, there are no designated knowledge brokers and Estonia does not have dedicated education research agencies.

Estonia introduced a needs-based support system for students in 2014. In the development phase, the ministry collected data from the Tax and Customs Board and from the Estonian Education Information System to estimate the amount of support required and finances needed. Nevertheless, the first year showed that fewer students than expected used the system. In order to understand the problems and further develop the system, the Ministry of Education commissioned the private research agency Praxis to survey students to ascertain their awareness of the new system and find out what concerns they might have. Altogether 3 706 students from different institutions and with different experiences in applying for support responded to the survey. The results showed that the application process was considered clear and easy. As there were significant differences in how well students from different institutions were informed about the system, it showed the crucial role of higher education institutions in disseminating information. More than half of the students did not apply for support as they assumed they would not qualify, while 38 % said they did not need support. The Ministry of Education and Research used some of the findings to improve the system and some recommendations are still waiting to be implemented.

Ireland

The Education Act 1998 provides that the Minister for Education and Skills 'shall make all reasonable efforts to consult with education partners when carrying out his or her functions'. It also requires the Minister to consult with education partners when making regulations or prescribing such issues as the length of the school day, grievance procedures or changes to the school curriculum. In recognition of this arrangement, the Irish Department of Education and Skills regularly, formally and informally, consults with departmental agencies within their ministry (e.g. National Council for Special Education – NCSE), dedicated research agencies (e.g. Education Research Centre), research/statistical departments at the Ministry of Education and Skills (e.g. Evaluation Support and Research Unit –

ESRU), national statistics offices, think tanks, interest groups, partner organisations (e.g. the National Parent's Council) and international organisations (European Commission, OECD). Moreover, a dedicated school inspector is assigned to provide advice and support in the development of curriculum policy, and statisticians from the national statistics office are seconded to the Department to assist with data collection and analysis. Nonetheless, Ireland has no designated intermediaries between providers of evidence and policy-makers, with contact between such entities usually being direct or part of the consultation processes.

If the ministry consults with institutions, they can ask the consulted institutions to provide evidence on a particular policy question at any stage of the policy-making process. Furthermore, the Department of Education and Skills can also commission reports and evidence from private institutions both in Ireland and overseas. Organisations can also undertake their own research activities and submit the outputs of this to the Department of Education and Skills for consideration.

A recent example where Irish policy-makers have included evidence in policy-reform is the New Model for Allocating Teaching Resources to Schools to Support Children with Special Educational Needs. After a 2013 report by the NCSE (i.e. the advisory body on the matter to the Department of Education and Skills) recommended changes in the way teaching support is allocated, the Department of Education and Skills requested the NCSE to form a working group to develop a proposal. Moreover, the ministry consulted with disability groups, schools and education partners, who welcomed the proposed measures. Based on this proposal, the Department of Education and Skills set up a pilot project to test the system, where 28 primary schools and 19 post primary schools tested the proposed model for the school year 2015/16. Based on this evidence, the suggested reform is currently (October 2016) under review.

Greece

Greece legally requires the gathering of evidence for use in policy-making. Advisory bodies at the national level as well as the institutions directly supervised by the Ministry of Education generally play the most important role in the provision of evidence, although other bodies are also involved. The process formally involves dedicated education research agencies, evaluation or testing agencies, think tanks, trade unions, research institutes, international organisations and public consultations, but not specific research/statistical departments at the Ministry of Education. However, the General Directorate for Strategic Planning provides statistical data to meet the needs of research projects. Moreover, research agencies and national statistics offices are also involved on an informal, ad hoc basis. In most cases, evidence providers participate prior to policy reform or at the early stages of the policy-making process. Additionally, Greece uses other channels to facilitate the flow of information such as journal publications, databases and statistical departments. Furthermore, the Institute for Educational Policy (IEP), which is under the supervision of the ministry, mediates between evidence providers and policy-makers.

A recent example of evidence-based policy-making in education is the on-going policy development to improve the integration of refugee children in the Greek educational system. In March 2016, the Ministry of Education commissioned targeted research on support measures for refugee children. The research committee comprised 26 academics and scientists working closely with the Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and the Coordinator of the Strategic Committee for the Support of Refugee Children. The research committee submitted the survey of educational activities in refugee accommodation centres and made recommendations for the psycho-social support of children and their families as well for the development of the necessary infrastructure. The recommendations covered the role of accommodation centres and local school units, the curriculum of reception classes,

and the recruitment and training of the necessary staff. Having considered the recommendations and evidence, the ministry proceeded to formulate an action plan and to introduce new regulations for piloting the new measures.

Spain

Spain legally requires the production of evidence and the participation of advisory bodies policy-making prior to reform for some specific subjects. Using evidence in decision-making is not legally required, but in practice policy-makers usually consult the evidence. Since the country is highly decentralised and regions have legislative power in education policy, formal arrangements to produce and provide evidence are located at both the national level (e.g. State Board, General Board for Vocational Training and University Board) and the regional level (e.g. Autonomous School Boards and Vocational Training Boards for each Autonomous Community). The following types of organisation most commonly provide evidence through formal arrangements: research/statistical departments of the Ministry of Education, national statistics offices, trade unions, employers' organisations, international organisations as well as specific corporate bodies. Moreover, these organisations as well as departments from within higher education institutions and think tanks can be involved through informal, ad hoc procedures. Usually, at an early stage in the development of legislative proposals, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MECD) collects, analyses and, in some cases, orders data and studies related to the subject to be produced. In addition, the MECD must submit all legislative proposals (regarding to the general planning of education, the basic rules for the development of education right and the general organisation of the education system) to the consultations of the State School Board. Other consulting and participating bodies (e.g. the University Board, the General Board for Vocational Training, the Superior Board for Artistic Education) report on the legislative proposals when it is deemed necessary or upon request by the ministry.

Nevertheless, Spain does not hold public consultations and there are no brokerage agencies or knowledge brokers. Moreover, while researchers may access information from databases, the MECD and other institutions, there is no requirement to publish results in any particular academic journal nor do researchers tailor their findings specifically to the needs of policy-makers. The *Libro Blanco* of Non-University Teaching Roles was developed in 2015 by the research team led by José Antonio Marina for the MECD. This white paper summarised information and made proposals to initiate a debate and help those involved in making decisions about the teaching profession, including initial training and continuing professional development, access to the public service sector, the provision of teaching jobs, and/or the recognition and motivation of teachers. The MECD has made the document available for the whole educational community and has asked for contributions by email ⁽¹⁴⁾.

France

In France, the main legal obligations to include evidence in education policy reform stem from the Organic Law relating to finance (LOLF), which links budget procedures and parliamentary control to policy performance targets. The statistical departments at the ministry in charge of school and higher education and research, respectively the Evaluation, Forward-Planning and Performance Directorate (DEPP) and the Information Systems and Statistical Studies (SIES), produce the majority of the data used to monitor the indicators. Both comply with the European code of good statistical practice and notably the principle of independence. Performance plans/reports are distributed to parliament and are freely accessible online for the general public. As for the very process of policy-making, using

⁽¹⁴⁾ <http://www.mecd.gob.es/mecd/dms/mecd/destacados/libro-blanco/libro-blanco-profesion-docente.pdf>

evidence is not formally a legal obligation but is done on a regular basis, especially when it comes to evidence regarding the evaluation of the system. Two ministerial bodies are officially in charge of evaluation: first, the DEPP and the SIES, and second, the General Inspectorates.

In addition to the legal (LOLF-based) and institutional (policy-making) processes, research agencies (education and other), international organisations, think tanks, researchers and other organisations (e.g. *Agence Nationale pour la Cohésion Sociale et l'Égalité des Chances*, *Associations de Parents d'Élève* and trade unions) participate in producing evidence on an ad hoc basis. Additionally, public and stakeholder consultations can take place for specific purposes.

To facilitate the flow of information, the ministry provides access to its information including databases, tailored research findings, regular statistical studies and collections of indicators, as well as reports. The DEPP and the SIES publish and promote their own work as well as run networks of researchers regarding the evaluation of the system. Different mediating institutions also exist in France. The *Conseil National d'Évaluation du Système Scolaire* (CNESCO) carries out independent evaluation and also disseminates the results to decision-makers. The *Observatoire des Sciences et des Techniques* (OST) is responsible for designing and conducting analyses essential to the development of national strategies for higher education, research and innovation. Other important mediating institutions include the research and knowledge mediation centre the *Institut Français de l'Éducation* (IFÉ), the *Ecole Supérieure de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche* (ESENESR), as well as the *Écoles Supérieures du Professorat et de l'Éducation* (ESPE).

A recent example of including evidence in policy-reform has been the reform of Priority Education. This process took place in September 2014 after numerous national reports (cf. Inspectorate's reports – e.g. Note d'information n°13.07 – DEPP – mai 2013 ⁽¹⁵⁾ had exposed high levels of social inequality in educational performance, which was later confirmed by international comparisons (PIRLS 2011⁽¹⁶⁾, PISA 2012).

To carry out this reform, the Minister of Education launched a new evaluation. The evaluation involved the main ministerial departments, the general inspectorates and the French Institute of Education (IFÉ) with the support of the *Secrétariat Général pour la Modernisation de l'Action Publique* and its consultants. Furthermore, the ministry asked all the parties involved in priority education – at local and regional levels – to respond to the proposals and supporting evidence put forward in a diagnostic report. More than 100 000 people took part.

Meanwhile, working groups run by the ministry, with the co-leadership of the general inspectorates, brought together grass-roots stakeholders, academia and representatives of the organisations closely involved in priority education policy, to work towards the definition of a set of priority education standards ⁽¹⁷⁾, with six priorities stemming from research findings. These groups were given the feedback from the above-mentioned consultations.

Croatia

In Croatia, there is a legal requirement for the social partners (employers' organisations and trade unions) and the public ('interested citizens') to be consulted in the drafting of legislation. In addition to

⁽¹⁵⁾ http://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/2013/62/4/DEPP_NI_2013_07_education_prioritaire_etat_des_lieux_251624.pdf

⁽¹⁶⁾ http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/2012/68/0/DEPP-NI-2012-21-PIRLS-2011-Etude-internationale-lecture-eleves-CM1_236680.pdf

⁽¹⁷⁾ http://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/education_prioritaire_et_accompagnement/53/5/referentiel_education_prioritaire_294535.pdf

these actors, in the process of drafting a new legislative document, the government body responsible must obtain a written opinion on the draft from all other government bodies whose work is related to the regulation in question, particularly the Ministry of Finance. Besides these institutions, departments within higher education institutions, dedicated education research agencies, international organisations, the national statistics office and consultants may participate informally on an ad hoc basis. Croatia does not have any knowledge brokers; however, the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports provides internal databases for the collection and storage of information for policy-makers. Participating organisations only partake in the drafting phase, whereas monitoring and evaluation, is exclusively done by the central regulatory bodies (ministries).

One of the major current policy reforms related to education in Croatia is the Comprehensive Reform of the Curriculum. Following the adoption of the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology by the Croatian parliament in November 2014, a 7-member Expert Working Group was established with the mandate to organise and manage thematic expert groups to work on the development of about 50 different curricular documents. By February 2016, these groups produced draft documents, which they then submitted to experts for consultation. During these consultations, a number of presentations and expert meetings were organised with school teachers and education experts, and each of these meetings and presentations resulted in written consultation notes. In April 2016, the ministry submitted the draft documents, modified according to the feedback from the expert consultation. The public consultation was concluded in early autumn 2016.

Italy

Italy legally requires the gathering and use of evidence in the main policy-making processes of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). For this reason, evidence gathering procedures are codified in the routine practices of the Ministry. The consulted organisations usually include educational research, evaluation and testing public bodies (e.g. *Istituto nazionale di documentazione, innovazione e ricerca educativa* – INDIRE; *Istituto nazionale per la valutazione del sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione* – INVALSI; *Agenzia nazionale di valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca* – ANVUR), research/statistical departments within the Ministry; and international organisations. Stakeholder and public consultations are also held.

Evidence gathering and consultation also takes place informally on an ad hoc basis. However, there are no knowledge brokers or brokerage agencies. Databases are used to facilitate the flow of information between evidence providers and policy-makers. Policy-makers also draw on the resources of the statistical and research departments within the ministry and the results of tailored research.

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) drafted the 2015 school reform (law No. 107/2015) on the basis of a white paper which made use of information that was either already held by the ministry or was provided by statistical offices or other dedicated bodies. Data and evidence have been included in the justification process for the legislation and have informed the open public consultation and the subsequent parliamentary debate.

Cyprus

Cyprus does not legally require the collection and use of evidence in policy-making. Consequently, there are no formal arrangements to involve evidence providers, information mediators or other measures to facilitate the flow of information. Nevertheless, in relation to higher education policy, evaluation agencies (e.g. the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education), national statistics offices and consultants participate through informal arrangements on an ad hoc

basis. Moreover, policy-making for primary and secondary education may involve departments from within higher education institutions, research/statistical departments, public consultations, international organisations, national statistics offices, and trade unions, on an informal and ad hoc basis. In addition, ad hoc stakeholder consultations take place informally. When these organisations are involved, they may deliver evidence at all stages of the policy process, but it occurs particularly in the preliminary stages.

Currently, Cyprus is reforming its school curriculum. Education authorities, academics employed for the purpose, civil servants, as well as the inspection body and teachers, have all provided evidence in order to develop the new curricula. These groups formed committees for each knowledge area. The curriculum reform covered all the subject areas taught in pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary education (e.g. reading and writing, sciences, maths, technology, religion and ethics, foreign languages, history, geography, etc.). For each domain and each level (secondary, primary and pre-primary) a committee was formed comprising one or more academics prominent in the field, relevant inspectors and a few senior teachers in the area. The aim was to study carefully the existing state of the curriculum, the international trends and innovations in terms of content as well as pedagogy, with a view to producing a proposal for a new curriculum in each domain. The ministry asked the committees to deliver their proposals within a year. In this respect, the teachers and other civil servants involved acted as knowledge brokers.

Recent reforms to the assessment and examination system and the structure of the school year were proposed by an ad hoc committee consisting of academics, civil servants, union representatives, and consultants administered by the minister's office. The school year has been divided into two semesters during which independent formative assessment will be held. In addition, university entrance examinations have been introduced which will be separate from school graduate examinations. Academics participating in the development of the proposals brought in exclusive research evidence as well as reviews of international literature to support the need for change. Following the submission of the proposals, the academics involved were invited to explain and support the need for change as well as present the related research evidence to stakeholders in seminars and workshops organised for this purpose.

Latvia

Latvian law stipulates that policy-makers should, as far as possible, use research methods to evaluate any new policies implemented. In addition, policy-makers are legally required to conduct an impact assessment both at the planning and implementation stages of policy-making. Lastly, Latvia legally obliges policy-makers to invite the social partners and professional organisations to participate in the policy planning process. Likewise, state and local governments are required to exchange information on the achievement of the set objectives and the expected results when planning new policy. Based on these principles, the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) formally engages departments within higher education institutions (especially the University of Latvia), national statistics offices, statistical departments at the MoES, trade unions, employers' associations, consulting companies, and other organisations (e.g. the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments – LALRG) in the planning and implementation stages of policy-making and holds public and stakeholder consultations.

The Regulation on the Development and Impact Assessment of the Development Planning Documents ⁽¹⁸⁾ states that an assessment of impact (including planned impact) must be made at the

⁽¹⁸⁾ <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=270934>

initial, intermediate and final stages of the policy planning and implementation process. For instance, the MoES commissioned external organisations to evaluate some aspects of the education system before the development of new education policy guidelines for 2014-2020. However, the available financial resources may determine the scope and depth of the research. Depending on the available resources, a procurement procedure may be used to identify analytical services providers; otherwise there may only be an internal consultation between units and subordinate bodies of the policy-making organisation. The MoES does not have its own research department and there are no research agencies that are specifically dedicated to education. Policy-makers have to involve state institutions (e.g. the National Centre for Education and the State Employment Agency) in the policy-making process. Sometimes, in order to be considered as consultants or analytical services' providers, organisations based in Latvia or in other countries (e.g. universities, trade unions) have to go through a procurement procedure. International organisations may participate without going through the procurement procedure if they provide an 'exceptional service'.

To mediate the flow of information between policy-makers and evidence providers, and also society, Latvia designated recently 'communicators' for projects within the ministry who specifically coordinate the communication between data providers and the intended target group. Moreover, according to the law, all surveys and analyses paid for out of the public purse must be made publicly available. Consequently, the MoES publishes information on these in a database (¹⁹).

In December 2013, the MoEs requested the World Bank to provide (1) an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the existing approach to the financing of higher education; (2) a report on the strategic objectives for the higher education system and the link to financing; and (3) a proposal for a funding model based on the results of consultations with stakeholder organisations – such as the Rectors' Conference, the Council of Higher Education and students' organisations. As a result, at the end of 2014, the World Bank presented a proposal suggesting a three-pillar financing model. In summer 2015, the Cabinet of Ministers approved regulations on a performance-based funding model for higher education institutions and the MoES started to implement the new system.

Lithuania

Lithuania legally requires that each legislative proposal must come with an explanatory note, which should include, among other things, an evaluation of the potential positive and negative effects of the legislation (cf. Article 135 of the Parliament Statute). Moreover, stakeholder consultations are legally required for amendments or drafting new policy. However, the law does not specify that evidence should be collected. Policy-makers can decide whether findings should be included in policy proposals and how this is done. Nevertheless, to facilitate the inclusion of evidence, the Ministry of Education provides databases (e.g. Education Management Information System). These databases are available to external bodies, although they need to apply for access. Databases are not accessible to the public. The institutions that formally participate in the policy-making process usually include dedicated research agencies, evaluation/testing agencies, research and statistical departments at the Ministry of Education, international organisations, national statistics offices, think tanks and consultants. Likewise, representatives of businesses and trade unions, professional lobbyists and other interested parties can take part in the public policy-making process by providing comments in the public hearings and in parliamentary committees, to which these actors have free access. However, Lithuania does not have informal arrangements to include these groups in the process. Moreover, the country does not have any designated knowledge brokers or brokerage agencies.

(¹⁹) <http://petijumi.mk.gov.lv/>

Luxembourg

Luxembourg does not legally require the inclusion of evidence or the involvement of evidence providers in policy-making. However, as Luxembourg is a small country (with one university and three research institutes), a regular exchange between these organisations is common on an informal basis. Moreover, Luxembourg has one formal arrangement for the inclusion of evidence. In spring 2016, the Minister of Education signed a convention with the University of Luxembourg in which the Luxembourg Centre for School Development (LuCS) was created. One of its missions is to provide evidence-based input for policy-makers. Luxembourg does not have any designated knowledge brokers but organisations that function as knowledge brokers are sometimes engaged on an ad hoc basis. Since 22 April 2011, a decision taken by the governmental council requires that each legislative proposal has to come with an explanatory note, which should include, among other things, an assessment of the expected effects of the legislation. However, the decision does not specify whether or how this obligation should relate to the inclusion of evidence or the involvement of evidence providers. Policy-makers can determine this themselves.

In 2013, evidence from PISA and national standardised tests showed that pupils experienced problems with mathematics. The Ministry tasked SCRIPT (*Service de Coordination de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Pédagogiques et Technologiques*), a service dedicated to promoting innovation in public education, to find ways to develop and implement new ways to teach mathematics and adapt national mathematics curricula. During 2015, the new project was tested in 35 schools with around 1 000 students. Currently, SCRIPT is evaluating the pilot project. The outcomes will determine the reforms to be introduced by the ministry.

Hungary

Hungary legally requires all legislative proposals to include an impact assessment. Moreover, where the proposed changes are to be financed from the central state budget, government agencies and research institutions (the Educational Authority and the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development – HIERD) must provide evidence that the issue has been analysed, different policy objectives have been explored and the scope of proposed measures assessed. Furthermore, the law obliges policy-makers to evaluate the national core curriculum at least every five years, although it does not explicitly state which organisations should be involved, or the procedures to be followed. When higher education institutions, research agencies, or statistical/research departments are involved officially, evidence is gathered through formal administrative channels. The organisations are invited by ministerial letter to provide evidence for decision-makers or invited to appoint representatives to participate in the evidence gathering or analysis stages of the process. When organisations participate on an ad-hoc basis, they are commissioned on a contractual basis to provide evidence on a specific topic. Commissioning can take the form of public procurement or tendering processes or an invitation letter may be sent followed by a contract specifying the requirements.

Apart from these arrangements, the National Council on Public Education has a legal right to express opinions on legislative changes. The Council comprises academics, experts, trade unions and school heads. On policy issues relating to teachers, the National Teachers' Assembly may state their opinion. Other actors formally involved include other research agencies, the Educational Authority at the Ministry of Education, international organisations, and employers' organisations. Similarly, stakeholder consultations are formalised but they are ordinarily used on ad-hoc basis. Moreover, these bodies as well as departments within higher education institutions, the national statistics office, and consultants can also contribute informally. Likewise, stakeholder consultations can also take place informally, on an ad hoc basis. Informal consultations usual take the form of Round Tables, e.g. the Public Education

Round Table and the Anti-Segregation Round Table (for 'Roma issues' in general, but also relating to education). These arrangements work for a limited period of time with a special mandate. Generally, policy-makers in Hungary use evidence for context/problem analysis, scoping or option analysis, but rarely for monitoring, evaluation or implementation analysis. The country generally expects that those carrying out the research and/or collecting the evidence will make their findings accessible to policy-makers and thus ensure the flow of information. Likewise, the country does not have any brokerage agencies or knowledge brokers.

Hungary reformed its national core curriculum (NCC) extensively from 2010 to 2012. After a Green Paper by the Christian Democratic Party called for changes in the NCC, the Ministry of Education commissioned the HIERD to write a project proposal for the reform process. During this development process it held stakeholder consultations. These involved official consultative committees in the field of public education (e.g. the National Public Education Council). Furthermore, the ministry discussed the proposal with social and ethnic minority interest group committees such as the National Minority Committee and the Jewish Community Round Table as well as professional Associations (History Teachers Association, etc.). Likewise, a special Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences made extensive comments on the proposals for the science curriculum. As a result of the contributions made by the different lobby groups and professional interest groups during the stakeholder consultation, almost 25 % of the original proposal was amended by the Ministry. The reform was adopted in the spring of 2012.

Malta

Malta does not legally prescribe the involvement of evidence providers in the policy-making process, except for the National Skills Council, which was set up by legal notice in August 2016. The Council acts as a consultative body in the area of skills forecasting, and liaises between education and training institutions and industry representatives. It will also act as a catalyst for change and will feed into policy direction provided by the Ministry for Education and Employment for the skills development programmes developed and delivered in Malta. The Council looks at the skills gap and skills development needs across industry as well as at other economic and non-economic needs. It is expected that the Council will be setting priorities for the specific areas to be addressed at the various stages. Apart from this Council, the Early School Leaving Unit which falls under the remit of the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Early School Leaving (ESL) coordinates three working groups. The working groups are not specifically set up for evidence gathering, but their representatives do provide relevant quantitative and qualitative evidence in order to tackle ESL in Malta. Moreover, an inter-ministerial committee is to be set up to devise policies on this issue.

Apart from the formal arrangements mentioned above, a range of organisations contribute informally to policy-making, including departments within higher education institutions (especially the University of Malta), evaluation and testing agencies, research/statistical departments at the ministry, international organisations, the national statistics office, think tanks, consultants and trade unions also. Moreover, the ministry also holds public and stakeholder consultations on an ad hoc basis. Public consultations are held on all major reforms as, for example, with the introduction of co-education. The consultation process includes organising meetings with stakeholders (including the students themselves), distributing questionnaires and making the consultation documents available on the ministry's website as well on the website of the Ministry of Social Dialogue and Civil liberties where all those interested can submit their feedback. The Education Psychosocial Services of the Student Services Department at the Directorate for Educational Services carries out an annual tracer study of students at the end of compulsory education in order to acquire evidence-based data to make well

informed decisions about any policy changes. Generally, organisations and institutions are becoming involved in providing evidence at all stages as the policy formulation and development process matures. Additionally, Malta provides ways to facilitate the flow of information between evidence providers and policy-makers on an ad hoc basis. Nevertheless, the country does not have knowledge brokers or brokerage agencies.

Currently, Malta is reviewing its post-secondary system. A working group made up of representatives of interested stakeholders and chaired by an Education Department consultant met for one year to draft a recommendation for the reform of post-secondary education. A number of interviews with teachers and students in different educational institutions were held to collect evidence. The key stakeholders – members of the working group – shared their own evidence with the group. At the end of its work, a consultation document will be written which will be given to the Minister of Education for his consideration. The last meeting between the key stakeholders was held on 10 November 2016. The draft report has gone through a process of public consultations and is currently in its final stages. The target is to issue the report in January 2017. This process was initiated in spring 2015. Some of the key stakeholders include educators, education leaders in post-secondary education including those from church and private schools, and also the Directors General of Education from the Ministry for Education and Employment.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, there is an official procedure for developing the policies that are intended to lead to primary legislation or regulations. At the outset, there must be an inquiry to establish the reason for the reform, indicating the problem with the current situation, the aims to be achieved, the stakeholders involved, the most appropriate instrument to be used and the potential consequences. The most relevant parties must be heard or asked for advice. Advisory boards for primary, secondary, vocational, higher and science education which represent schools and other educational institutions must be consulted. In the most important cases, the Education Council must be asked for advice (this council usually advises about more fundamental issues). The draft must be put out for consultation on a dedicated website ⁽²⁰⁾ to enable all citizens to comment on it. After this, the draft goes to the Cabinet Council and then to the Council of State. It subsequently goes to parliament (if it is a law), or the King or the minister of education signs it (if it is regulation).

The policy-making process often involves research agencies (dedicated and other), evaluation or testing agencies, international organisations, national statistics' offices and think tanks. Besides these, private research companies also frequently take part in monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, the Netherlands Initiative for Educational Research (NRO) ⁽²¹⁾, which coordinates and funds educational research, acts as an informal knowledge-broker. Furthermore, the Dutch government organises conferences to facilitate the flow of information between policy-makers and evidence providers.

An example of a recent policy reform in which evidence was used was the draft for the law on teacher-registration that was accepted by the Lower House on 11 October 2016. In the National Education Agreement, Dutch minister Bussemaker and state secretary Dekker have agreed with the social partners in the education field that from 2017 onwards each educator in primary, secondary and vocational education will have to obtain a teaching certificate in order to be allowed to teach. This is supported by research. The aim is that in 2018 all teachers will be registered in the register of

⁽²⁰⁾ www.internetconsultatie.nl

⁽²¹⁾ <https://www.nro.nl/en/>

teachers. Only qualified teachers, meaning those who have obtained a teaching certificate, can register. Registration allows teachers to demonstrate their professional qualifications and keep up with the latest developments in their area of specialisation.

Austria

In some cases, Austrian law requires evidence-providing institutions to monitor the education system and submit evidence to the Ministry of Education ⁽²²⁾ and the Federal Ministry of Science, Research, and Economy ⁽²³⁾ regularly. The Federal Institute for Educational Research, Innovation and Development of the Austrian Educational Sector (BIFIE) writes a national education report every three years. For higher education, public universities annually submit the Intellectual Capital Report based on indicators and performance agreements and every three years via performance agreements. Apart from the BIFIE, departments within higher education institutions, other dedicated research agencies (e.g. Institute for Advanced Studies), evaluation and/or testing agencies (e.g. Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria), research/statistical departments at the ministry (e.g. Executive Department 7 – Educational Development and Reform), international organisations, national statistics offices (e.g. Statistics Austria), trade unions (e.g. trade union of civil service employees), employers' organisations (e.g. Austrian chambers of commerce) all participate in policy-making for the school sector. Moreover, public and stakeholder consultations take place with, for example, representatives of parental and family-interest associations. In higher education policy, the Staff Unit on Higher Education Development is responsible for commissioning higher education research projects (studies, surveys, e.g. 'Higher Education Prognosis' by Statistics Austria). Other involved stakeholders, based on the appropriate topic are the *Hochschulkonferenz* (Austrian Higher education Advisory Board), the *Uniko* (Universities Austria, rectors' conference of Austrian public universities), the *Fachhochschulkonferenz* (FHK, association of UAS providers) as well as the ÖPUK (rectors' conference of Austrian private universities), the AQ Austria (Agency for Quality Assurance Austria), the *Wissenschaftsrat* (Austria Science Board), the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development, trade unions, the Chamber of Commerce, *Industriellenvereinigung* (Federation of Austrian Industries), *Arbeiterkammer* (the Chamber of Labour) and several working groups set up by the ministry.

Generally speaking, the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy and the Ministry of Education consider evidence at all stages of policy-making. Making an impact assessment is legally required for all legislative proposals.

In the area of school policy, Austria has three mediators, with one being part of the Federal Ministry of Education (Executive Department 14 of the Ministry functions), and the other two being set up by the ministry as external bodies (the BIFIE, see above) and the Austrian Centre for Language Competence). All three function as both mediators and providers of evidence. Moreover, for school policy, Austria uses databases, publications, tailored research, and the education research and statistical departments within the ministry to facilitate the flow of information between evidence producing institutions and policy-makers. However, Austria does not have any mediators for higher education, but contacts between evidence providers and policy-makers are direct or part of consultation phase.

Following the OECD and the EU recommendation to reduce the effects of streaming students into different educational pathways/tracks too early, Austria has reformed lower secondary education

⁽²²⁾ Which is responsible for the school sector

⁽²³⁾ Which is responsible for higher education (i.e. public and private universities and universities of applied sciences), with the exception of the University Colleges of Teacher Education, which are governed by the Ministry of Education

(ISCED 2). The Austrian government introduced the New Secondary School (*Neue Mittelschule*) scheme as a pilot project in the school year 2008/09 at 67 locations (331 classes) in five Austrian provinces. A broad-based evaluation of the pilot phase was done by BIFIE and the results were published online. The parliament passed the legislation in 2012. In addition to government, parliament and participating schools, the evaluation process included a survey of parents during the pilot phase in 2010. There was also a network meeting with school leaders. By 2018/19, all general secondary schools (*Hauptschulen*) will have been transformed into new secondary schools (NMS).

Poland

Poland legally requires the involvement of evidence providers for policy-making for both schools and higher education. When it comes to policy reform in general, Polish law (cf. Act of 6.12.2006 on the rules for preparing the policy of development) obliges the authors of strategies to prepare diagnosis of the socio-economic situation in the country and to consult with local government authorities, social and economic partners (employers organisations, trade unions, vocational self-governments, chambers of commerce, NGOs, research institutions and the Board for Public Benefit Activity), and with the Common Commission of Government and Territorial Self-government (local authorities). Moreover, at the draft consultation stage, all involved parties are required to base their reasoning on rational arguments derived from the available scientific sources, outcomes of analysis and empirical research. The Ministry of National Education assumes that this type of discussion based on evidence allows all parties to achieve a consensus. In policy-making all kinds of institutions (see Figure 1.2), except for think tanks, participate, both formally and informally. For higher education, fewer actors are involved. Departments in higher education institutions, research/statistical departments at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, international organisations, national statistics offices, and consultants provide evidence through official arrangements. Policy-making for both school and higher education levels involves actors and institutions primarily in the drafting stages; however, the relevant ministries participate in all stages. Nevertheless, there are no intermediaries involved in the provision of evidence at either school or higher education levels.

A recent example of using evidence in policy reform is the drafting of the strategy on the Lifelong Learning Perspective'. In February 2010, the Prime Minister of Poland established the Inter-departmental Team for Lifelong Learning (including representatives of the National Qualifications Framework body) to produce a proposal. While drafting the strategy, the Team cooperated with many institutions, but in particular with the Educational Research Institute (IBE) and the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP). Moreover, the Team used data from different sources, including the Central Statistical Office (GUS) and the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) (the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Academy – IFiS PAN in particular). Due to the involvement of the Education Research Institute (IBE), there was no need to engage brokerage agencies, since the IBE carried out research on the topics indicated by the Team. The IBE also analysed and interpreted the research results and reviewed other surveys and reports prepared by other research institutions relevant to the issue. The drafting process was subject to the Governmental Programmes Preparation Procedure, including inter-departmental negotiations and consultations with economic and social partners. Moreover, at the draft consultation stage, all involved parties were required to base their reasoning on rational arguments derived from the available statistics, scientific sources, outcomes of analysis and empirical research. The Council of Ministers adopted the final document in September 2013.

The new act on higher education will be prepared by the representatives of higher education institutions. In February 2016, the Minister announced a competition: 'Act 2.0 – Foundations for the

Higher Education System'. The competition was open to Polish higher education teachers and researchers to formulate a new act on higher education. The existing Act on Higher Education has been amended so many times that it has become unclear. The minister has expressed his wish to have the legislation adjusted to the needs of the current academic environment and the Polish economy. People interested in participating in this process had two months to establish research teams and prepare a general plan of the new legislation. Proposals had to comply with the thematic scope published by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The three winning teams of experts nominated in June 2016 – grant recipients – are responsible for wide consultations in academic circles. The feedback from the consultations, supported by analyses will be integrated into the initial project proposal resulting in a comprehensive documentation of opinions and a complete dossier of practical solutions which will become the basis for the new act of parliament. The initial project proposals with full supporting documentation should be ready by 31 January 2017.

Portugal

Portugal legally prescribes that all new laws and normative decisions have to undergo a period of public consultation and stakeholder hearings. In this context, the Portuguese Government has set up an independent body, the National Education Council, to advise ministers and parliament on all matters relating to education. The Council may act on its own initiative or in response to requests made by parliament or the government. It seeks to ensure the participation of scientific, social, cultural and economic stakeholders in the search for broad consensus on educational policy. In addition, think tanks, trade unions, and employers' organisations also formally participate. Besides these organisations and institutions, departments within higher education institutions, dedicated education research agencies, 'other' research agencies, evaluation/testing agencies, research/statistical departments at the ministry, the national statistics' office, think tanks, international organisations and consultants also contribute informally on an ad hoc basis. Nevertheless, Portugal does not have standardised procedures to facilitate the flow of information between policy-makers and evidence providers, nor does it have any designated mediators of evidence. However, the Ministry of Education often establishes formal working groups with experts from various fields to inquire into the need for new policy measures.

A recent example of evidence-based policy-making in Portugal is the reform of financial support for students in private schools. A survey was conducted to analyse the capacity of public schools to receive students from private schools that received public financial support. The measure was based on the results of the earlier study 'Reorganisation of the private and cooperative education network with contracts of association', which was undertaken by the *Faculdade de Letras*, University of Coimbra, at the request of the Ministry of Education in 2011. The initial survey which was carried out at the beginning of 2016 by the Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics (DGEEC) and the Directorate-General for Schools (DGEstE), with contributions from the Institute for Financial Management of Education (IGeFE) and the Directorate-General for School Administration (DGAE) revealed a 73 % duplication of public network provision. This analysis was followed by another more detailed one, which was based on information from the schools themselves, and on contributions from the different sections of the educational community, including the ME's central services, the ME's regional delegations, schools with contracts of association, as well as about 100 head teachers. Furthermore, 79 schools (19 in the Norte region, 44 in the Centro region, 14 in the Lisbon and Tagus Valley region and 2 in the Alentejo region) and a total of 636 classes from beginning of the cycle (237 from year 5, 265 from year 7 and 134 from year 10) were analysed, representing total potential funding of around EUR 51 million. Of these classes, 363 were taught in public schools. The Ministry of

Education decided to reduce the support based not only on the results of the surveys but also on the qualitative data gathered as a result of the large number of meetings with the stakeholders.

Romania

Romania legally requires policy-makers to provide evidence to justify any proposed policies. However, the requirement is not specific about who must provide the evidence. The following organisations are usually formally asked to deliver evidence: departments within higher education institutions, dedicated education research agencies, evaluation/testing agencies, research/statistical departments at the ministry, national statistics offices as well as international organisations. Usually, these institutions engage in the initial or the evaluation phase. Additionally, stakeholder consultations are formalised. Moreover, Romanian legislation recommends that the ministry should hold public consultation periods of at least 30-60 days. Each draft regulation should be accompanied by documentation on the key issues, including the goals to be achieved by the regulation, and the possible solutions to any potential problems should be provided by experts (cf. the Resolution on Legislative Regulation). For this reason, public consultations also take place on an ad hoc basis. Generally, the formal participants in policy reform also contribute informally, as do trade unions and employers' organisations. To facilitate the flow of information, the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research (MENCS) provides databases and uses publicly available research. These arrangements mainly concern the initial stages of policy-making and are covered by policies promoting open government such as the Governmental Initiative on Open Data Access. Nevertheless, knowledge brokers participate only on an informal, ad hoc basis, e.g. when the government decides to create special advisory/expert groups for a specific policy process.

In 2011, after more than eight years of piloting and data gathering, Romania introduced a per-capita funding system in pre-university education. Thematic reports and studies on education financing at pre-primary, primary and secondary level created the knowledge base for this reform. The reports were requested by MENCS from the departments specialised in financing pre-university school education, the Institute of Education Sciences and other international organisations (e.g. UNICEF, the World Bank, the UNESCO and the National Institute for Statistics). Policy-makers designed the formula taking into account the research results and data, and an advisory group acted as a knowledge mediator. In the following years, the internal monitoring unit at the ministry and other relevant institutions (i.e. the Institute of Education Sciences, UNICEF Romania, Save the Children Romania, the National Institute of Statistics, and the Academy of Economics – Bucharest) provided feedback and recommended changes to the formula. A revised formula is in the process of adoption; whose aim is to be more equitable and to better address the needs of specific categories of school (i.e. rural schools, those with a high proportion of Roma students, and those in socially and economically disadvantaged areas, etc.).

Slovenia

Slovenia legally prescribes the involvement of a number of evidence providers in the policy-making process. The use of evidence and involvement of evidence providers is prescribed by regulations for the legislative procedure as well as those pertaining to the organisation and financing of education. Accordingly, the government has set up expert bodies (the Council of Higher Education, the Council of Experts for General Education, the Council of Experts for Vocational and Professional Education, the Council of Experts for Adult Education and the Council for Quality and Evaluation) to provide expert advice for decision-making and the drafting of regulations in specific areas of education. The Councils are required to base their decisions or opinions on evidence. The procedures set down require all the

parties involved to prepare evidence to support the decision-making process. The Ministry of Education is legally required to seek the Councils' opinion during the legislative drafting process. Moreover, the law allows the state to set up public institutes to examine the different areas of education, although it is not obliged to do so. Such institutes have been in operation for more than half a century. The National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia is one such institute.

Every draft legislative proposal must include a situation analysis which includes the reasons why the legislation is needed; however, this analysis does not necessarily include evidence. Each draft must be published for public consultation. Cooperation between the ministry and trade unions is required in some cases and is formalised. There may also be ad hoc cooperation in addition to the prescribed forms. Dedicated education research agencies, national statistics offices, trade unions, employers' organisations, and stakeholders (e.g. Parents' Association, Slovenian Student Union) also participate informally.

The responsibilities of the Education Development Office within the Ministry of Education include the task of compiling ad hoc reports and extracting and analysing data from available sources, thus acting as a knowledge broker. Slovenia also has databases and the state co-finances the annual publishing of specialist academic journals.

In December 2015, the regulation on school libraries was amended. In this context, the Ministry of Education produced the situation analysis and appointed the working group which included representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Inspectorate, and the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. In close cooperation with the national library⁽²⁴⁾ and the Institute of Information Science (IZUM)⁽²⁵⁾ the group drafted amendments to the legislation based on the conclusion that the role of school libraries should be reconceptualised. The next steps, from December 2016 on will be the gathering of statistical data under the auspices of the national library. This data will provide the evidence for the Ministry of Education to establish feasible standards for school libraries and for the development of a four-year strategy. Regular data collection will allow the new standards to be monitored and evaluated.

Slovakia

Slovakia legally requires the gathering and use of evidence in the policy-making process. The procedure usually involves research/statistical departments within the ministry, public consultations, international organisations, trade unions, employers' associations and other institutions such as the National Institute for Education. These organisations generally participate through the 'intersectoral commenting procedure' – an official procedure for commenting on proposals. Prior to this, an internal commenting phase takes place within the Ministry of Education's departments and advisory bodies (e.g. Board for System Changes in Education). The proposals are then sent for 'intersectoral commenting' to other ministries such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Labour, Social affairs and Family, the social partners, as well as other institutions such the National Institute for Education.

The commenting procedure usually takes place at the various stages of the process: problem identification, drafting, detailed evaluation and impact analysis. Apart from this procedure, there are no other formal or informal ways to consult evidence providers. Moreover, there are no knowledge brokers or brokerage agencies, either formal or informal. To facilitate the flow of information, Slovakia

⁽²⁴⁾ <http://www.nuk.uni-lj.si/eng/>

⁽²⁵⁾ <http://www.izum.si/default-EN.htm>

uses databases, research and statistical departments within the ministry, as well as consultative bodies (e.g. Board for System Changes in Education, *Rada pre systémové zmeny v školstve*).

The Slovakian government approved the new Act on Vocational Education and Training in March 2015. The new act deals with the systems of vocational education and training of pupils with emphasis on the introduction of elements of dual education and practical training for pupils at vocational secondary schools. Before the adoption of the Act, the Young Stars pilot project tried to identify any potential problems in introducing dual education in Slovakia. The Slovakian Government was able to implement the project thanks to the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in the Slovak Republic, the Austrian Economic Chamber and other partners. It aimed at addressing the lack of qualified experts in selected professions by means of dual education. The pilot project served as a model for the implementation of elements of dual education in Slovakia. In the new legislation (Act on VET), changes have been introduced to ensure that the training of young people to meets the demands of the labour market: VET schools providing theoretical teaching now have agreements with employers to provide practical on-the-job training for their students.

Finland

Finland does not have any legal requirements for the gathering and use of evidence in the legislative process. Nevertheless, many formal and informal arrangements exist to involve a wide range of organisations. Typically, stakeholders and public institutions provide evidence at the beginning of the policy process. The regularly used permanent services are the statistical and survey data collected by Statistics Finland as well as the analyses and anticipation of skills and educational needs done by the Finnish National Agency for Education. Open access to statics on all education is freely available in the Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland.

Policy-makers enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy when it comes to selecting evidence, consequently a great deal of responsibility for the provision of evidence lies with the evidence providers themselves. The use of evidence providers is done on a case-by-case basis. For example, the reform of the curriculum is often done through established procedures. In general, decision-makers are guided by research and data from the national statistics office, and if needed, they can commission quick short-term research reports on a given topic.

As part of the implementation of the 'Knowledge and Education' key project, the Ministry of Education is reforming upper secondary vocational education and training. In January 2016, the Minister of Education and Culture appointed two rapporteurs to prepare a proposal for a model training agreement and a plan for its introduction into vocational education and training institutions. The model training agreement seeks to promote workplace learning and practical ways of completing qualifications by creating flexible pathways in vocational education. The rapporteurs submitted the proposal to the Minister of Education in April. The rapporteurs proposed that the model training agreement and, in a broader sense, the new model of workplace training, will be introduced by 1 January 2018 as part of the reform of vocational education and training.

Sweden

Swedish law stipulates that policy-makers must obtain necessary information and opinions from affected authorities when developing government policy. Furthermore, they should gather information and opinions from municipalities 'to the required extent'. Likewise, associations and individuals should be given the opportunity to comment on the same terms. Affected authorities differ from case to case. So do the decisions taken by the ministry or policy-makers on what constitutes 'the required extent'.

However, anyone has the right to send in their comments and views on proposals under consideration by the government, including public authorities, organisations, companies and individuals. Nevertheless, there is no legal requirement for institutions to base their advice on evidence.

The Government may, at any time in the policy process, commission the Swedish Higher Education Authority, the Swedish National Agency for Education or any other government agency to submit evidence in the policy process. These two authorities are regularly obliged to send in reports on the state of the education system. Usually, this occurs early in the policy process. Furthermore, all other types of organisation providing evidence, for example research agencies, evaluation bodies and consultants contribute on an informal basis. They may contribute at any stage of the decision-making process. However they usually do so at an early stage when, for example, a question is under investigation by a government committee or when the government office is exploring different policy options. However, there are no institutions that act as intermediaries between evidence providers and policy-makers. To facilitate the flow of information between the two, some institutions (e.g. the Swedish Higher Education Authority ⁽²⁶⁾) provide publicly accessible databases. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Research has the Division for Analysis and International affairs which has a staff of fifteen.

An example of an on-going reform that is based on evidence is the Government's National Coalition for the Teaching Profession. The Swedish Government launched the national coalition in the Budget Bill for the year 2015 and included measures to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession with e.g. an increase in salary and professional development for teachers and pre-school teachers. The decision to initiate a national coalition was preceded by the compilation of evidence within the Government Office which included research findings generated by mainly Swedish economists, national and international statistics, and the experiences of other countries. In addition to the scientific community and international and national statistical institutions, the OECD, the National Agency for Education, the Swedish Schools' Inspectorate, the Swedish Higher Education Authority and municipalities provided evidence. Statistics were also generated on the number of applicants for teacher training and prognoses of expected teacher shortages were ordered.

United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

Legislation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland does not prescribe the inclusion of evidence providers in the policy-making process. However, they oblige all civil servants to conduct their duties objectively, which in the documents is defined as basing advice and decisions on analysis of evidence. The public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities in England and Wales to have due regard to a number of equality considerations when exercising their functions. An equality impact assessment may be used to demonstrate compliance with the law but is not in itself mandatory. Policy-makers in Northern Ireland are guided by the guidance on public authorities' obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ⁽²⁷⁾. Generally, all types of evidence providers participate in the policy-making process at all stages on a formal and informal basis. To encourage the flow of information between policy-makers and evidence providers, policy-makers have access to databases, tailored findings, regular advice from advisory bodies (for example the Teachers' Professional Development Expert Group for England, the Maths Task and Finish Group for Wales and the qualifications Expert Group in Northern Ireland), as well as the research/statistical department of the relevant Ministry. A particularly important role in the context of evidence-based policy-making is

⁽²⁶⁾ <http://english.uka.se/>

⁽²⁷⁾ <http://www.equalityni.org/PublicAuthorities>

played by the What Works Network ⁽²⁸⁾, which serves as a mediator of evidence across multiple policy fields. It consists of seven independent What Works Centres and two affiliate members in Scotland and Wales. Moreover, Wales has its own regional knowledge brokers, the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data & Methods and the Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) (which is also a member of the What Works Network). Meanwhile, in Northern Ireland, knowledge brokerage forms part of the role of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency staff and economists based in departments, while higher education institutions also play a role in mediating evidence.

Consultations within the field of education are generally initiated by the relevant government department or Select Committee ⁽²⁹⁾ and published online. Consultations may alternatively take the form of questionnaires or focus groups. A recent example of the use of evidence in policy-making is the reform of the secondary school accountability system in England. A number of evidence sources had raised concerns, including two non-ministerial departments in England, Ofsted (which inspects and regulates services providing education and skills) and Ofqual (which regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments). This evidence suggested that the system's focus on pupils gaining five A*-C grades at GCSE level, was encouraging schools to concentrate on C/D borderline pupils to the detriment of others.

In response to this, civil servants in England's Department for Education developed a set of alternative proposals, which embodied the Government's policy aims. The Department then published an online public consultation to collect written views on these proposals. The consultation ran from February to May 2013 and was aimed at teachers, head teachers, schools, parents and carers, awarding bodies, subject associations, unions, and governors/governing bodies. The data from the consultation response document ⁽³⁰⁾ shows that 57 per cent of respondents came from these categories.

The consultation document was broadly well-received, with generally supportive responses from parents, teachers, heads, and educationalists. However, the responses also raised some issues. For example, while the consultation document proposed retaining a grade C threshold in English and Maths, some responses argued that this would not achieve the intended policy aims. The Department took account of the consultation evidence and removed the grade C threshold in both subjects. The new system took effect from the 2015/16 academic year. There was no prior piloting, in order to avoid implementation delays. However, schools were permitted to opt in a year early if they preferred.

One UK (Northern Ireland) example of evidence-gathering from higher education institutions having an impact on policy decisions relates to an evaluation ⁽³¹⁾ of Nurture Group provision. Nurture Groups are an intervention for children with particular social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which are creating a barrier to learning within a mainstream class. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland commissioned Queens University Belfast to evaluate the impact of the Nurture Groups funded by the Department. The evaluation found firm evidence that Nurture Groups were having a significant positive effect on children's social, emotional and behavioural outcomes. The Nurture Signature Project officially ended in June 2015, however the Department of Education has continued to support, fund and expand Nurture Group provision. Northern Ireland's Education Minister has commented that: 'The valuable research and evaluations that have been undertaken provide sound evidence on which we can base future decisions in relation to nurture'.

⁽²⁸⁾ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network>

⁽²⁹⁾ A select committee is a cross-party group of MPs or Lords given a specific remit to investigate and report back to the House that set it up. Select committees gather evidence on their area of inquiry and ensure that the Government has to explain or justify its choices.

⁽³⁰⁾ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/249893/Consultation_response_Secondary_School_Accountability_Consultation_14-Oct-13_v3.pdf

⁽³¹⁾ <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/nurture-provision-primary-schools>

United Kingdom (Scotland)

Scotland does not legally require the involvement of evidence providers in making policy. Nevertheless, the region has formally set up arrangements for the inclusion of such institutions. Typically they are involved in the consultation part of the process as routine stakeholder engagement. This involvement takes place early on in the policy formation process. Moreover, institutions participate informally in an ad hoc manner. In these cases, evidence providers partake both at the early stages of policy-making and later in the process (e.g. evaluation). The following organisations are usually involved in providing evidence: departments from within higher education institutions, research agencies ('other'), evaluation or testing agencies, research/statistical departments at the Ministry of Education, international organisations, public statistic offices, think tanks, consultants, and trade unions, all on an ad hoc basis. Moreover, public and stakeholder consultations take place in an ad hoc manner. The Scottish Funding Council acts as informal intermediary by distributing funds on behalf of the Scottish Government and then collecting and submitting evidence. Moreover, Scotland has a regional affiliate office of the What Works Network, a network aiming at mediating evidence in education for all of the United Kingdom. To facilitate flows of information, practitioners and partner organisations (the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the Scottish College of Educational Leadership) gather their own evidence and pass the information on to the Scottish government through joint advisory boards and stakeholder engagement events. However, the Scottish Government also publishes a range of statistics and commissioned research on the education system. Additionally, the Scottish government facilitates access to its data under agreements with the interested researchers to use the data responsibly and confidentially.

An example for evidence-based policy-making is the introduction and revision of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). This reform had been in development since 2002, in implementation since 2010, and completed with final implementation over three years to 2016. Leading up to 2016, the Scottish Government undertook several attempts to gather evidence. From 2011 to 2012, the Scottish Government implemented the CfE survey they had previously conducted to report to the CfE Management Board. Moreover, the country participated in the OECD Programme for Student Assessment (PISA) and commissioned the OECD to carry out a review of CfE in 2014 and 2015. Additionally, the Qualifications Authority and Scottish Government published attainment statistics.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina legally requires administrative bodies to exchange information, data and experiences, as necessary, so that these bodies can fulfil their duties. Nonetheless, policy-makers are not obliged to formally involve evidence providers in the policy-making process or to take evidence into consideration. Departments within higher education institutions, dedicated research agencies, national statistics offices, research and statistical departments at the Ministry of Education, international organisations, consultants and employers' organisations can and do formally participate. Depending on the policy, these organisations may be included at the very beginning of the process, when the draft document is being drawn up. Moreover the law requires all policies to be open to public consultation through the ministry's website. After the consultation, policy-makers must incorporate all suggestions they deem reasonable. All policies have an evaluation period after which policy-makers prepare an implementation plan. The plan includes input from all stakeholders involved in the implementation process. For example, for policy-making in higher education, policy-makers gather evidence through consultations and meetings with the main stakeholders, and also through using official data of statistics offices. After drafting the document, public consultation takes place. Then, the document is amended in accordance with the feedback received and sent to the stakeholders for final

approval. Wider public consultations are also held. Outside these procedures, there are no informal arrangements for participation and consultation, nor are there other channels to facilitate the flow of information or bodies which act as mediators in the gathering and use of evidence.

A recent example of the use of evidence is the development and creation of the reform strategy 'Priorities for the development of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2016-2026' ('Official Gazette', number 35/16). The reform prioritises the measures identified in the 'Analysis of the situation in higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina'. The production of this report was preceded by the collection of data on higher education from a number of key education authorities including higher education institutions, the Office of Statistics and Agency for Statistics, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, the Agency for the Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, the Directorate for Economic Planning, Transparency and International Affairs, as well as World Bank, the Council of Europe, the European Higher Education Area, OECD, EU IPA projects and other sources.

Switzerland

In Switzerland, the 26 Cantons (i.e. the federal states) are the top-level authorities for compulsory education, who share the responsibility for post-compulsory education with the Confederation (i.e. the national level). The Cantons have their own arrangements in place for evidence-based policy-making. In Switzerland, a public and stakeholder consultation is officially required in the legislative process at both national and cantonal level with the intention of providing policy-makers with information on whether the content is accurate, on the feasibility of implementation and on whether it would be acceptable to the public. Anyone and any organisation (e.g. research institutions, employers organisation and trade unions) may participate in a consultation procedure. The law also requires an explanatory note for each legislative proposal which has to provide, inter alia, an appraisal of the stakeholder consultation, a justification for the objectives and an evaluation of the expected impact.

In the education sector, the Constitution stipulates that the Confederation and the Cantons have joint responsibility for ensuring the high quality and permeability of the Swiss education system. In light of this duty, both levels of government formally agreed on the systematic and evidence-based monitoring of the education system. A monitoring report is published every four years which serves as a basis for the setting of education policy goals by the Confederation and the Cantons, as well as the basis of the system of accountability and public debate. Draft legislation for 2017 aims to reinforce coherent and evidence-based policy-making.

Currently, the bodies which usually participate formally in the early stages (especially fact finding and problem identification) of the policy process include departments from within higher education institutions, dedicated education research agencies, research/statistical departments within the federal and cantonal ministries and the national statistics office. Additionally, stakeholders (e.g. teachers, employers, parents) participate in the consultation phase during the adoption process. Knowledge brokers and brokerage agencies exist at national, regional and cantonal level, with the Swiss Coordination Centre for Research in Education fulfilling this function at the national level. Moreover, Switzerland has specialised information systems (e.g. ARAMIS and EDUDOC) and journals. Advisory groups and researchers specifically tailor research for policy-makers.

The Confederation and the Cantons jointly commissioned research institutions to evaluate the 1995 reform of Baccalaureate Schools in 2004 (EVAMAR I) and 2008 (EVAMAR II). The evaluation explicitly aimed to provide evidence for the future development of these schools. Based on the results of EVAMAR I, the authorities decided to partially revise the Order on Baccalaureate Schools (mainly to

strengthen natural sciences). On the basis of EVAMAR II, an advisory body (with members of the Confederation, the Cantons, school organisations, and the teacher's union) made several recommendations to the political bodies. In 2011, the Confederation and the Cantons jointly agreed to a goal which was intended to ensure that students would be admitted to university on the basis of their Baccalaureate without the need for any further examinations. To this end, the Cantons and the Confederation agreed that basic skills in mathematics and the first language would be used to demonstrate general scholastic aptitude in 2016. These skills are now part of the framework curriculum for Baccalaureate Schools.

Iceland

Iceland does not legally stipulate that evidence providers must be included in the policy-making process. Nevertheless, in 2015, the country formally established the Directorate of Education, which is expected to assist in the preparation of policy and legislation by providing information and advice, shaping policy and supporting education decision-making. Furthermore, dedicated research agencies (the research/statistical department within the ministry, international organisations and the national statistics office) and consultants participate informally, on an ad hoc basis. Generally, institutions or external consultants enter the policy-making process at the preparatory stage of policy-making, contributing to fact-finding and analysis of the education system. In some cases, institutes, consultants and stakeholders are also involved in the development of policy papers and legislation, but not in the implementation or evaluation phases. There are no official arrangements between government and other institutions that gather information for the purpose of facilitating policy development. Moreover, Iceland does not have any mediating institutions or departments. However, the Ministry of Education does have access to internal databases.

In 2015, the Ministry of Education commissioned the Institute of Economic Studies at the University of Iceland to assess the economic impact of new legislation for upper secondary schools which would reduce the length of upper secondary education by one year. The same institute was appointed to assess a proposal for new legislation for student loans in 2016.

Liechtenstein

Liechtenstein legally requires the involvement of evidence providers in certain areas of education policy, but not others. Formally, this process includes departments within higher education institutions, dedicated education research agencies, evaluation or testing agencies, the research/statistical department at the Ministry, quality assurance agencies in higher education, and consultants. Stakeholder consultations also take place. Apart from these formal arrangements, the same organisations and institutions, as well as the national statistics' office, can also participate informally. Nonetheless, the country does not have any mediating institutes or agencies. To facilitate the flow of information between evidence providers and policy-makers, it makes use of databases and research journals as well as the statistics' office within the Ministry.

The *Institut für Bildungsevaluation* (University of Zürich) constructs and analyses the annual national standard tests and produces advisory reports. Any reform project in the area of education usually includes a working group responsible for planning (on demand external experts may be involved) a test phase (around 3 years), an evaluation phase (involving of external experts report, students and teachers survey, stakeholder consultation), and an eventual amendment of the concept – depending on the decision of the government.

Montenegro

Montenegro primarily uses evidence at the planning stage of education policy-making. There is a formal requirement for all educational institutions up to higher education level to record data in the Ministry of Education's information system, which the ministry then uses to produce statistics and perform analyses. Apart from this system, the national statistics' office is also involved in producing evidence. Moreover, both public and stakeholder consultations are formalised. As of 2015, the Ministry of Education became an administrative information source for national statistics. This cooperation was formalised by a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Statistical Office of Montenegro. Additionally, these types of actors and institutions also participate informally on an ad hoc basis. Public and stakeholder consultations can also take place for specific purposes.

To facilitate the flow of information, Montenegro has created an online portal for information exchange ⁽³²⁾. This platform is used by employees of institutions engaged in developing educational policy (the Ministry of Education, the Bureau for Education Services, the Centre for Vocational Education, the Examination Centre and the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids). However, Montenegro has no intermediaries between decision-makers in the field of education, although the Ministry of Education mediates between educational institutions and other ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare).

Examples of evidence gathering include data collection and analysis in several areas such as the number of students choosing elective subjects, whether children demonstrate a greater interest in some areas than in others, the number of students per class, teachers' age profile, how far children live from the educational institutions they attend and whether they use transport, the number of student absences, and the level of student achievement in regular assessment and external testing. Other examples include evidence gathered to justify the construction of a new school in a certain location (e.g. the number of children of school age gravitating to that area), or to justify the reorganisation of the school network in order to create better social and educational conditions for students (e.g. the distance of students from their school, whether the road is passable, whether there is transport available, etc.).

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The law in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia does not prescribe the use of evidence or the inclusion of evidence providers in the policy-making process. However, public institutions are legally obliged to publish all draft versions of legislation on the National Electronic Register of Regulation/Legislation (ENER) platform ⁽³³⁾. ENER is used by citizens/the general public, companies and the administration to post remarks, suggestions and opinions during the preparation of official documents. Furthermore, the National Examination Centre informally provides interpretations and explanations of the results from international assessments (e.g. PISA, TIMSS) for the Ministry of Education and Science. Apart from these provisions, there are other formal arrangements for the involvement of evidence providers even though they are not mandatory. Evaluation/testing agencies, research and statistical departments within the ministry, national statistics offices and foreign institutions such as the Cambridge International Examinations Centre all contribute to the policy-making process. The State Statistical Office (SSO) is frequently contacted by the Ministry of Education and Science when drafting legislation. The SSO performs regular surveys and updates of educational data such as drop-out rates, the number of master's degrees awarded, the number of doctoral

⁽³²⁾ www.podaci.edu.me

⁽³³⁾ www.ener.gov.mk

degrees awarded, the number of unemployed graduates, etc. In certain cases, the data provided by SSO is also compared with data provided by other institutions. In addition to the existing Education Management Information System (which covers school education), the Ministry of Education and Science is working on the development of an information system which will be specifically dedicated to the data collected from higher education institutions (the project is in the initial phase, defining the technical and functional specifications of the system).

Moreover, stakeholder consultations take place (e.g. with the Council of Parents) as well as public consultations. The various stakeholders (such as NGOs, individuals, other public institutions, private companies, trade unions, chambers of commerce, etc.) may be consulted at various stages of the process (the initial identification of the problem, the creation of an action plan, the preparation of draft proposals/bills) and during the public debate. For instance, associations/NGOs as well as individuals would be able to contact the Ministry of Education and Science in order to press for the cancellation of university admission fees for a particular group of students (such as single parents, students from marginalised groups, etc.) Moreover, trade unions and employers' organisations are involved in the preparation of the draft version of the Law on Vocational Education and Training. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia does not have any mediating institutions.

In 2014, for the preparation of the Strategy for Entrepreneurship Education, the Ministry of Education and Science relied on the findings, research and recommendations provided by the South East European Council for Entrepreneurship Learning. The National Council for Entrepreneurship Education facilitated and mediated the process of evidence exchange. The development of the Strategy was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia and supported by the European Training Foundation and group of experts from the United Kingdom. The other institutions involved were, for example, various ministries, student organisations and universities, together with different agencies, such as the Centre for Vocational Education and Training and the Centre for Adult Education.

Norway

Norway does not legally require the involvement of evidence providers in the policy-making process. Nonetheless, the country commonly engages in dialogue with institutions and stakeholders to achieve a shared understanding and agreement on the knowledge base and its strengths and weaknesses. There is also dialogue on the effectiveness of different policy measures. In these informal arrangements, the organisations usually involved include departments within higher education institutions, research agencies and departments (internal and external to the ministry), the national statistics office, consultants, trade unions, stakeholders' and employers' organisations, and international organisations. Furthermore, there is a process which involves the setting up of independent committees and public hearings. Consultations and hearings normally take place at the early stages of policy development, but may continue until policy-makers have made their final decision. In order to mediate between evidence providers and policy-makers, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has established the Knowledge Centre for Education as part of the Research Council of Norway. This centre synthesises and translates research and organises seminars for practitioners and policy-makers.

A recent example of the involvement of evidence providers in policy reform is the Programme for Improving Completion Rates in Upper Secondary Education. For this project, the central government, counties and municipalities have been cooperating on a long-term basis to increase completion rates in upper secondary education by developing, implementing and disseminating information on

measures to prevent students from dropping out or to help them return if they have dropped out. The project works along two major tracks.

The first seeks to systematize and develop the counties' experiences in working to prevent students leaving upper secondary education prematurely. A network with representatives from all counties is established where knowledge and experiences are shared and new measures discussed.

The second track is to develop research-based knowledge by trying out different measures in such a way that solid evidence is obtained about cause and effects. Researchers and counties were invited to apply for support to finance studies of measures intended to improve completion rates. A requirement was that the projects should be carried out by a group of researchers cooperating with representatives from the counties. Four projects were selected and are being supported, starting in 2016; all are using randomized control methods on a set of measures.

Serbia

Serbia does not legally require the involvement of evidence providers or the inclusion of evidence in policy-making. Nevertheless, Serbian education law stipulates that educational institutions and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development are required to collect data and keep records about education-related topics and indicators. Moreover, it explicitly states that one of the goals of this collection is to support education policy planning and recommends data collection and evidence-based policy-making at the earliest stage of preparation of new legislation. For certain institutions, such as the Institute for the Improvement of Education, the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation, the Statistical Office of the republic of Serbia and others, the evidence gathering process is based on an agreement with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. According to the agreement, the institutions are required to submit reports and data to the Ministry at previously determined intervals. Additionally, the ministry may require supporting evidence when needed. In other cases, the process varies depending on the subject of the policy reform in question and the bodies involved. The bodies usually formally asked to provide evidence include evaluation agencies, research and statistical departments within the ministry, national statistics offices and consultants. Moreover, Serbian law requires public consultations in cases where policy reform could bring about significant change in the area. However, the procedure is not well developed and consequently usually determined by the ministry. Apart from these arrangements, departments within higher education institutions, research agencies, international organisations, interest groups (trade unions, employers' organisations) and stakeholders also participate informally for specific purposes/measures. To facilitate the flow of information, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development provides an open database⁽³⁴⁾, which contains all the information the ministry collects except for personal data. Additionally, regular advisory bodies, publications and the research and statistical departments within the ministry are also used. However, Serbia does not have any mediating institutions.

Serbia adopted the New Law on Textbooks in 2015. During 2014 and 2015, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development collected and analysed the data available in the annual catalogue of textbooks including prices, volume and publishers as well as textbooks in minority languages. Information on the quality of textbooks and the number and quality of submitted manuscripts was also examined; this was provided by the Institute of Improvement of Education and had been collected over the preceding five years. During the preparations of the draft law, the ministry organised consultations with experts, round tables and working groups (e.g. round tables with the

⁽³⁴⁾ <http://opendata.mps.gov.rs/>

NGO sector, the national minority councils, and representatives of professional associations). Consultations were also held with school heads, teachers, parents, publishers, university professors and others. Furthermore, the ministry held public consultations after the draft law was published on the official web pages of the ministry and of the government. The public (including state and private institutions, representatives of associations, councils, publishers, textbooks authors, parents and other individuals) participated in these consultations and provided written comments, suggestions and objections to the draft law.

Turkey

Turkey has statutory bodies and other actors that may provide evidence in the policy-making process. Although there is no explicit legal requirement for educational decision-makers to take account of this evidence, it is usually taken into account in planning, investment and evaluation. The information collected serves many different government bodies and institutions, as well as academia and the business sector.

The institutions usually involved, either formally or informally, are departments from within higher education institutions, other research agencies, research/statistical departments at the ministry, national statistics offices and other institutions such as the Ministry of Development. The Council of Higher Education is the major institution involved in all studies on higher education, collecting data on, for example, students, academics, programmes and institutions across the sector, as well as on administrative matters such as strategic planning. The Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI) collects and reports annual data concerning various dimensions of educational provision at all education levels. Major themes include: formal education, non-formal education, educational expenditure, continuing vocational training in enterprises and adult education.

Moreover, stakeholder consultations also take place and, in addition, the ministry takes account of reports from international organisations such as PISA. However, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Development usually gather their own evidence. To facilitate the flow of information between evidence providers and policy-makers, Turkish policy-makers can access the databases of the Council of Higher Education National Thesis Centre, the Turkish Academic Network and Information Centre and universities. Furthermore, external stakeholder questionnaires and meetings with advisory groups in workshops and symposiums are common. Nonetheless, Turkey does not have any designated mediators of evidence; although academic personnel at universities can act as informal mediators on an ad hoc basis.

The Ministry of National Education prepared its 2015-2019 Strategic Plan using an evidence-based and participatory approach, taking account of global developments, the demands of society and the economy. In addition, educational reports and other documents were considered which emanated from international foundations such as UNICEF, UNESCO and OECD, the European Union *Acquis* on education and training, the 10th Development Plan, government programmes and national education councils. Within this framework, 179 universities, 72 education faculties, 238 non-profit organisations, 140 journalists and columnists, and approximately 35 000 internal and external stakeholders were included in the process through written and face-to-face interviews and questionnaires. Furthermore, the ministry organised five workshops with an attendance of around 1 500 people to discuss the opinions and suggestions of central and provincial ministries.

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GLOSSARY

Brokerage agencies help facilitate the flow of evidence between policy-makers and research providers, and are based on the argument that 'the main channel of communication between researchers and lay people ought to be reviews of whole fields of research, rather than reports of single studies' (Foster & Hammersley, 1998, p. 610).

Evidence-based policy-making is an approach which 'helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation' (Davies 1999). Policy-making here is understood to take place at a national (top level) or regional/federal level.

Knowledge brokers are positioned at the interface between the worlds of researchers and decision-makers, they are seen as the human force behind knowledge transfer, finding, assessing and interpreting evidence, facilitating interaction and identifying emerging research questions (The theory and practice of knowledge brokering in Canada's health system. Canadian Health Services Research Foundation; Ottawa: 2003).

Official arrangements refer to arrangements articulated in official documents and/or legislation that describe procedures to be followed in policy-making processes.

Tailored research findings summarise research results to produce concise and accessible versions for policy-makers that are easier to use in evidence-based policy-making.

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) has been developed to facilitate comparisons of education statistics and indicators across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. The coverage of ISCED extends to all organised and sustained learning opportunities for children, young people and adults, including those with special educational needs, irrespective of the institutions or organisations providing them or the form in which they are delivered. In this report, evidence-based policies from any of the ISCED-levels (ISCED 0 – pre-primary education to ISCED 8 – doctoral or equivalent level – can be cited as examples.

Top-level authorities are the highest level of authority with responsibility for education in a given country, usually located at national (state) level. However, for Belgium, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom, the *Communautés*, *Länder*, *Comunidades Autónomas* and the UK devolved administrations are responsible for all or most areas relating to education. Therefore, these administrations are considered to be the top level authority for those areas of responsibility. Where responsibilities are shared with the national (state) level, both levels of government are considered to be top level authorities.

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Subdirección General de Orientación y Formación
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Support Mechanisms for Evidence-based Policy-Making in Education

The report describes the mechanisms and practices that support evidence-based policy-making in the education sector in Europe. It comparatively looks at institutions and practices in evidence-based policy-making, as well as the accessibility, and mediation, of evidence. The report presents more detailed information on each individual country, with specific examples of the use of evidence in policy formulation for each separate country.

The Eurydice Network's task is to understand and explain how Europe's different education systems are organised and how they work. The network provides descriptions of national education systems, comparative studies devoted to specific topics, indicators and statistics. All Eurydice publications are available free of charge on the Eurydice website or in print upon request. Through its work, Eurydice aims to promote understanding, cooperation, trust and mobility at European and international levels. The network consists of national units located in European countries and is co-ordinated by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. For more information about Eurydice, see <http://ec.europa.eu/eurydice>.