

Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Governance and Public Administration in Belgium

Preliminary Findings from the Diagnostic Report and Needs and Gaps Assessment

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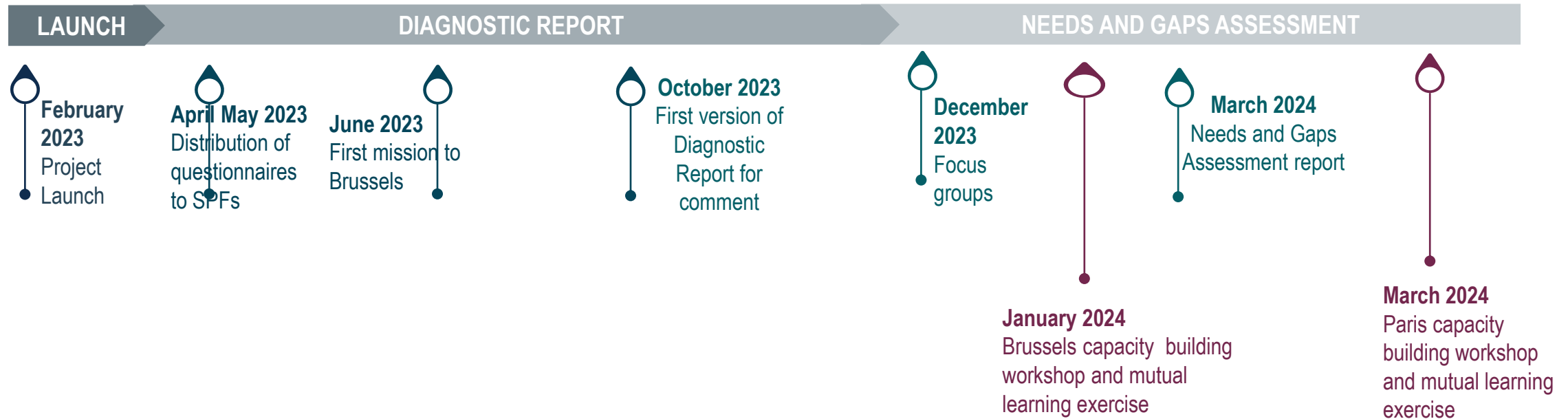


Evidence Informed Policy Making: the Belgian work in broader context

- The largest multi-country public administration reform project by Technical Support Instrument (TSI), A two-year project implement by the JRC and OECD.
- Belgium (Federal Level) participate along with seven EU Member States



Timeline



- A mix of country level analysis and thematic capacity building and Mutual Learning (Foresight, Policy Evaluation, AI Forthcoming)₂



A SHARED OECD EU/JRC ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

SUPPLY OF SCIENCE AND EVIDENCE

DEMAND FOR SCIENCE AND EVIDENCE

WHERE DEMAND AND SUPPLY MEET

Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional and team competences Incentives to engage in science for policy Career profiles, mobility programmes and challenges 		
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandates & missions Dedicated structures, processes & support for science for policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of civil service in policymaking Resources and staff suitable for evidence-informed policymaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better regulation, RIA, foresight, knowledge valorisation, policy evaluation, science advice, planning, European commitments and processes (Structural Funds, RRP, etc.)
Inter-organisational level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination mechanisms & boundary organisations for policy engagement Role and functions of scientific councils, academies, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-institutional coordination (e.g. knowledge sharing mechanisms) Boundary organisations and actors to engage with scientific community and knowledge 	
Systems / policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies on research assessment, inter-sectoral mobility, research funding, etc. promoting EIPM-culture and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies/processes/norms promoting EIPM-culture and values, public trust, and processes between branches of public administration 	

The aim is to understand how the Belgian Federam system is equipped in these dimensions.

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Supply of evidence





Strengths

- > Outside of the FPS, most public institutions feel they can attract qualified staff for analytical purposes,
- > Employees with relevant analytical or technical backgrounds.
- > Good examples of collaboration between academics and administration

Weaknesses

- > Lack of training on EIPM or related issues
- > Researchers and administration often speak different languages
- > Particularly within some SPF, analytical backgrounds can be lacking, and issues with small fragmented structures



Needs

- > Greater qualification levels in staff, data science, behavioral aspects
- > EIPM-specific training programmes
- > Better communication and collaboration between researchers and government

Potential Interventions

- > Comprehensive mapping of analytical skills by BOSA
- > Shared approach to the management of analytical staff
- > Development of training programmes
- > Formalising relationships with universities, i.e. with secondment

International Best Practices

- > Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service
- > France INSEE Network
- > UK Policy profession
- > UK framework of digital professionals
- > Ghent University's Research Dimension Portfolio



Strengths

- > Several ministries and institutions have good internal capacity to produce analysis (i.e. FPS Economy, NBB, Federal Planning Bureau)
- > Legal basis for circulation of academic research (Open Access Legislation)
- > Agile funding of scientific research through BELSPO programmes

Weaknesses

- > Funding cuts mean some ministries face significant staffing constraints (FPS Employment, FSP Social Security)
- > Lack of sharing of resources, information and staff within ministries
- > Links between academia and administration, when present, remain informal



Supply at the **organisational** level: Needs, Potential Interventions, and International Best Practices

Needs

- > Greater collaboration and exchange within different FPS teams
- > Greater use of evidence within advisory bodies
- > Stronger links between academia and government

Potential Interventions

- > Implement FPS-wide research agendas
- > Set joint-responsibility objectives for FPS
- > Encourage joint development of research priorities with academia
- > Increasing understanding of procurement procedures

International Best Practices

- > US Cross-Agency Priority Goals
- > Netherlands Advisory Councils
- > Research Pillars of the Flemish Government (Steunpunten)



Strengths

- > Rich data landscape, integration of social data bases.
- > Large amount of data publicly available
- > Some content oriented advisory councils (BOSA, national accounts, CS Emploi)
- > A few excellent knowledge management centres, notably in health area (KCE, Sciensano)

Weaknesses

- > Lack of human resources and other governance gaps and organisational constraints hinder timely implementation of data requests
- > Data providers cannot always integrate data sources
- > Data literacy is low
- > Most advisory bodies serve a rather societal function,



Supply at the **interorganisational** level: Needs, Potential Interventions, and International Best Practices

Needs

- > Greater capacity to integrate different data sources
- > Higher data literacy levels in government
- > More cross-domain advisory bodies

Potential Interventions

- > Promoting shared governance approach for data
- > Central mapping of existing data skills to identify knowledge gaps
- > Implementation of research agenda at federal level

International Best Practices

- > UK Statistical Authority Governance
- > Lithuania Data Governance Agency
- > Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR)

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Demand of evidence





Strengths

- > Some opportunities exist within line Ministries for those within universities to gain work experience.
- > Some ministers with academic background are genuinely interested and fuelling demand
- > Some examples of formal evidence-related targets
- > Some examples of analytical leadership positions

Weaknesses

- > Examples of analytical leadership positions are few and far between
- > Lack of capacity and/or willingness to make use of evidence in civil service



Demand at the **individual** level: Needs, Potential Interventions, and International Best Practices

Needs

- > Greater capacity and willingness within civil service to make use of evidence
- > More easily recognisable leadership positions related to EIPM

Potential Interventions

- > Practical training programmes
- > Incorporating EIPM into evaluations
- > Make analytical and science-based roles in government more explicit

International Best Practices

- > EIPM training in Japan
- > Chief Scientific Advisers in UK
- > New Zealand Policy Skills framework



Strengths

- > The political level, via the cabinets, plays a significant level in stimulating demand for evidence.
- > There is some evidence of formal processes within ministries to encourage links between policymakers and academic networks (FPS Social Security)
- > Some ministries have capacity to absorb and interpret evidence
- > Some excellent examples of knowledge brokers, i.e. Sciansano and KCE

Weaknesses

- > The timing of demand for evidence by the political level is strongly linked to national elections, with much fewer space for evidence use between elections.
- > The complex structure of oversight of the FPSs by the cabinets leads to several bureaucratic layers that can make it difficult to trace and understand demand.



Demand at the **organisational** level: Needs, Potential Interventions, and International Best Practices

Needs

- > Less siloed structures to facilitate sharing of evidence
- > Greater institutional memory
- > More knowledge brokers

Potential Interventions

- > Make use of existing knowledge brokers for training purposes
- > Create shared platform for access to evidence
- > Articulate long-term evidence plans

International Best Practices

- > Netherlands Strategic Evaluation Agenda
- > France evaluation spring
- > UK What Works Network



Strengths

- > BELSPO incentivised policy-oriented research through its various co-funding mechanisms, using flexible and innovative approaches.
- > Some science-to-policy interfaces exist (Federal Institute for Sustainable Development, BELSPO programme committee).
- > Some examples of formal collaboration mechanisms for specific cases (FPB/NBB/STATBEL)
- > Several examples of bilateral partnerships
- > A few top-down policies for incorporating certain considerations into policymaking exist.

Weaknesses

- > However, some lack of mutual understanding between BELSPO and ministries over needs and timeframes.
- > Lack of space for strategic studies of wide national interest, lack of broader intersectoral think tank despite the function of the Federal Planning Bureau



Demand at the **interorganisational** level: Needs, Potential Interventions, and International Best Practices

Needs

- > Top-down federal initiative for promoting evidence sharing across FPS
- > Whole-of-government working plan for evidence needs

Potential Interventions

- > Greater involvement of Members of Parliament in evidence demand
- > Mobilise meetings of FPS presidents
- > Coalition agreements more focused on objectives than measures
- > Platform for access to research

International Best Practices

- > Estonia Ministerial Network of Science Advisors

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Where supply meets demand





Strengths

- > A few strategic foresight frameworks for specific policy areas – for example, the FPB provides a recurring energy outlook as well as a transport outlook.

Weaknesses

- > There is no interorganisational capacity for strategic foresight and risk anticipation.
- > Stretched workforce unable to dedicate resources to this

Needs

- > Greater workforce capacity
- > Perception that Belgium is too small to merit focus on foresight work

Potential Interventions

- > Focus and prioritise foresight agenda within FPS activity portfolios

International Best Practices

- > SITRA, Finland



Challenges

- > The system for regulatory impact assessment is not effective. Most laws that reach parliament are not supported by any impact assessment.
- > There are very few laws which include requirements for ex-post policy analysis.

Needs

- > More cost-benefit analysis
- > More open consultation processes
- > More forward planning
- > Use of proportionality principles for review and assessment

Potential Interventions

- > More visible and regularly updated forward planning processes, perhaps connected to coalition agreement
- > Implementation of proportionality mechanisms
- > Use of online platform

International Best Practices

- > Latvia's Single Portal for Development and Harmonisation of Draft Legal Acts
- > UK de minimis rule
- > Regulatory planning (UK Canada)



We look forward to an interactive discussions on the findings

Your time to speak!

Next steps

- > Prepare a roadmap for policy implementation
 - > Finalise Roadmap for policy implementation
 - > Finalise an integrated report
 - > Capacity Building Workshops (role of knowledge brokers, Artificial Intelligence)
 - > Further opportunities for sharing, final conference (national level and overall project)
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