Meeting report Annual Meeting Ghent Group 6-7 November

The role of science in dealing with dilemmas in policy making

Ghent Group
Science-based advice in
Agriculture and Environment

INRAE

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PEER

Introduction & Programme

Ghent Group
Science-based advice in
Agriculture and Environment

Introduction

The Ghent group is an informal community of European institutes and individuals working with science-based advice in the fields of agriculture and environment. The group has a common interest in sharing best practices, learning and teaching. It is named after the first training course in Ghent, Belgium in October 2022**.** On the 6th and 7th of November 2024 the annual meeting of the Ghent Group took place in Brussels, focusing on **the role of science in dealing with dilemmas in policy making.**

The Mansholt Lecture was included in the Ghent Group meeting. The Mansholt Lecture is an annual event held in Brussels organised by Wageningen University & Research (WUR) since 2019. Its purpose is to inspire European policymakers and stakeholders on critical societal issues, particularly those related to sustainable agri-food systems and the living environment. It is a form of interaction at the science-policy interface.
The Ghent Group meeting was preceded by a Living Labs Workshop on generating policy impact. This workshop was organised by the Joint Programming Initiative on Food Security, Agriculture and Climate Change (FACCE-JPI).

Programme annual meeting Ghent Group

Day 1 – Wednesday 6 November

1. Science-policy interface methods: how do we generate impact?
   - Learnings from the Living Labs workshop
   - Pesticide free agriculture in 2050: reconnecting research and policy debates
   - Climate modelling with policy makers: the experience of MACSUR SciPol
   - How do we assess the impact of scientific advice on policymaking?

     Policy Coherence Methods workshop
   - Methodologies to assess Food Policy Coherence and Integration
   - Assessing the coherence between Italian and EU policy frameworks
   - Comparative analysis of existing urban food policies
2. Mansholt lecture

Day 2 – Thursday 7 November

2. Digesting the dilemmas presented by the Mansholt lecture

   The national perspective
   - Theory of different roles in science-policy
   - The experience of WUR in utilising the dilemma approach

   The European perspective
   - Knowledge for policy: concepts and methods
   - Challenges in translating science into policy: experiences from the European Parliament
   - Dialogue between Finland and Italy: conflict and synergies around the supply chain
3. Working session: how do we bring the work of the Ghent Group forward?

Ghent Group
Science-based advice in Agriculture and Environment

List of participants

Name		Organisation
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FLAMMARION	Patrick	INRAE
FOCKAERT	Lysander	VLM
FREYA HÖFT	Leslie	Aarhus University
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HEGELUND	Lene	DCA - Danish Centre for Food and Agriculture, Aarhus University
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HENKE	Roberto	CREA
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JOKINEN	Taru	European Parliament, Committee on Agriculture and Rural development
KOELE	Rens	Wageningen University and Research
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LIEVENS	Eewoud	Government of Flanders - Agency for Agriculture and Fisheries
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MARIN	Cristobal	INRAE/FACCE-JPI
MAZZOCCHI	Giampiero	CREA
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RIKKONEN	Pasi	Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)
ROTICIANI	Chiara	Eurocities
SALEEMI	Sundus	ZALF
SAVARY	Clara	INRAE
SCHARFBILLIG	Mario	JRC
SKJOLDBORG HANSEN	Anja	DCE Aarhus University
TZEMI	Domna	Natural Resources Institute, Finland, (Luke)
VERHOEVE	Anna	ILVO

Day 1 – Wednesday 6 November

Activities of the Ghent Group: from 2021 till today – and beyond!

Aarhus University (Thomas Plesener, Lene Hegelund, Anja Skjolborg Hansen)

In 2021 Aarhus University organised a web conference on 'science-based policy advice in agriculture, food, climate and environment', for researchers that are active in the science-policy interface. After a successful conference, two advanced training courses followed in Ghent in 2022 and 2023. Gradually the group developed into an informal community, the Ghent Group, focused on knowledge exchange on the different challenges they face, including pressure for 'quick answers' to complex questions, politically motivated requests for science-based advice, requests to delay publishing to facilitate political processes, political battles leading to different interpretations of results, and stakeholder's organisations trying to discredit researchers and results. In short, there is a need for a European forum for sharing experiences in the science-policy interface!

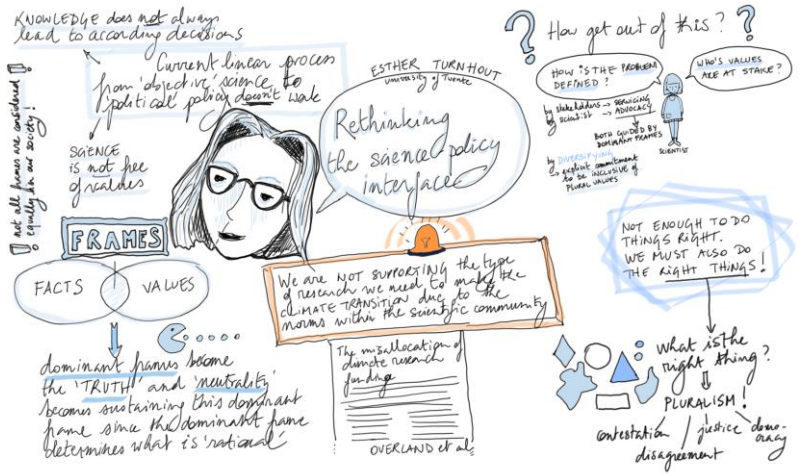
Key outcomes of advanced training courses in Ghent

- Roles and methodologies – pitfalls and best practices of co-production in science-policy interfaces
- Stakeholder involvement – sharing best practices and dealing with criticism and conflicts
- Importance of framing - Esther Turnhout underlined the importance of framing: we should be aware of our own perspectives and how this impacts our way of working. In general, '*the dominant frame becomes the 'truth' and 'neutrality' becomes sustaining this dominant frame since the dominant frame determines what is 'rational*'.

The Ghent Group is becoming increasingly known. It is mentioned in two science-policy work packages (Agroecology Partnership, FutureFoods). It also formed the basis for a strategic webinar in Denmark and the knowledge from the courses has been included in a course at the University of Aarhus on science-based advice. Recently an example of good management of the science-policy interface was the Green Tripartite Agreement on Climate, Environment and Biodiversity in Denmark. Cocreation between scientists and policymakers played a big role in the realisation of this agreement.

Now we will take the Ghent Group further in this annual meeting. Possibly we can come to an even closer collaboration via knowledge sharing, policy advice sharing, best practices and shared publications.

Link to full presentation



Learnings from the Living Labs workshop – can they help foster the science-policy interface?

INRAE, FACCE-JPI (Heather Mckhann, Cristóbal Marín Rojas)

Aim of the workshop

To better understand whether *Living Labs* (LLs) can serve as instruments for co-creation and generate feedback loops between research and policy. If so, what specific arrangements, techniques, and structures contribute to their success? Four approaches conceptualising the research-policy relations were explored in the LLs (see Boswell article). There was a case study bazaar with eight case studies followed by a discussion using the fishbowl methodology.

Keynotes

- Christian Huyghe (INRAE) on characteristics of agroecosystem living labs and how they might foster the science-policy interface
- Kristiaan Kok (VU) on the characteristics of policy labs and the difference between policy labs with policy-makers and living labs that give input to the science-policy interface

Eight case studies of Living Labs or networks of Living Labs

- Alison network – LLs for Health – Barcelona
- Agricultural Climate Solutions – trans-Canadian network of LLs
- MOSAIC – policy labs for land use – Belgium
- Food Pilot – food processing – Belgium
- AGROFORSYLL – agroforestry – Organic heterogeneous material – Italy
- ProDij – Agri-food transition at the territorial level -- Dijon
- Feast LL – community-driven policy lab in Cork
- PrepSoil – co-designing science-policy interactions for soil health LLs

Key findings

- Sufficient time and resources are needed for a Living Lab.
- Flexibility and adaptability are necessary: it is an interactive process; different factors can change during the process.
- There is a diversity of Living Lab and Policy Lab types, that can be useful under different circumstances.
- The science-policy interactions may take multiple forms in one Living Lab (linear, co-creation, top-down and bottom-up).
- Involvement of knowledge brokers is helpful; they can help bridge disciplines and transition between (conflicting) interests.

Challenges

- Need for time and (sustained) resources
- Involving marginalised groups and not only the usual suspects; also involving citizens.
- Dealing with conflicting interests
- Difficulty of inter/transdisciplinary
- Involving social scientists

Remaining questions

- Can we generalise/spread knowledge from Living Labs?
- How to remain flexible during the process (especially with European funding)?
- How do you overcome the conflict between niches of innovation and the dominant frame?
- How to better involve citizens/customers and to keep people involved.
- How to measure impact?
- How to ensure scientific integrity in a Living Lab?

Science policy interface methods: how do we generate impact?

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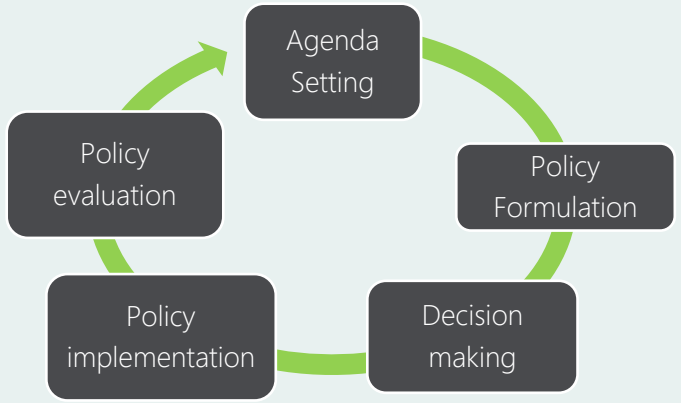
Pesticide-free agriculture in 2050: reconnecting research and policy debates

INRAE (Oliver Mora)

Key findings:

- A foresight study conducted by INRAE helps to look ahead and identify sound options and the knowledge needed to achieve the desired objectives.
- Three scenarios were achieved using stakeholder workshops, with four linked case studies.
- Foresight studies are linked to the policy cycle: try to impact timely the policy formulation and decision-making steps.
- Policy making is not a linear process: often you need to take steps back (e.g. farmers crisis) before going forward.



Link to full study & Link to full presentation

Climate modelling with policy-makers: the experience of MACSUR SciPol

ZALF (Katharina Helming)

Key findings:

- Pilot exercise initiated by FACCE-JPI to bring science and policy actors together for the strategic design of responses to climate change adaptation and mitigation challenges in the agri-food sector in Europe.
- Synthesising model-generated knowledge: provide evidence-based policy support for achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, adapting to climate change and understanding synergies and trade-offs in achieving these targets.
- Developed shared social pathways in the seconds phase of the programme; a frame to compare different countries.
- MACSUR SciPol can be a knowledge broker. Developed 9 policy briefs. These briefs can be an indirect measure of policy-interaction: to structure information and know how to communicate.
- Challenge: participatory and simplified modelling, to avoid a black box and be able to cocreate.

Link for more information & Link to full presentation

Assessment of the impact of public policy support activities

INRAE (Didier Richard)

Key findings:

- INRAE has developed a method for qualitative evaluation of impact of public policy support activities using different indicators.
- The indicators enable comprehensive monitoring while prioritizing the relevance and the feasibility. The indicators are aligned with the JRC's study on evaluating 'science for policy'.
- A criteria matrix is used to give insight in the scores on the different criteria.
- Some of the chosen indicators still need further consideration for effective monitoring.
- Indicators could enhance qualitative and supplementary methods for assessing the impact of EAPP activities such as narrative activity reports and examples of impact pathways on specific topics.
- It would be complementary to use a qualitative approach to assess the impact of EAPP activities, employing the ASIRPA methodology (close to the Impress methodology developed by CIRAD) for a few major topics.

Link to full presentation

Group sessions – impact

With the different presentations in mind, during breakout groups, discussions were held on the following three topics:

- What do we mean by impact on policy long-term?
- How do we measure impact making?
- What are key insights from the presentations so far?

The table on the right shows the different types of impact. The red 'stickers' show the number of participants that perceive this type of impact with their own research or with research they come across.

Types of impact

- 'Understanding and awareness' is probably the most straight forward and clear first step in the policy impact of scientific research.
- 'Policy' impact follows second, however it is already harder to attribute the impact because multiple factors can contribute. When does it count as *your* impact?
- Some categories of impact can only be measured on longer timescales. For example, 'cultural impact', e.g. the changing of values, takes a long-term effort. Thereby it is even more difficult to see the link between your research and the developed change.
- Effort is put by research to achieve environmental impact, but this leads to limited results so far.

Type of impact	Definition
Understanding and awareness 27	People understand an issue better than they did before, based on your research.
Attitudinal 7	A change in attitudes, typically of a group of people who share similar views, towards a new attitude that brings them, or others benefits.
Economic 12	Monetary benefits arising from research, either in terms of money saved, costs avoided or increases in turnover, profit, funding or benefits to groups of people, or the environment measured in monetary terms.
Environmental 13	Benefits from research to genetic diversity, species or habitat conservation, and ecosystems, including the benefits that humans derive from a healthy environment.
Health and wellbeing 8	Research that leads to better outcomes for the health of individuals, social groups or public health, including saving lives and improving people's quality of life, and wider benefits for the well-being of individuals or social groups, including both physical and social aspects such as emotional, psychological and economic well-being, and measures of life satisfaction.
Policy 23	The contribution that research makes to new or amended laws, regulations or other policy mechanisms that enable them to meet a defined need or objective that delivers public benefit. Crucial to this definition is the fact that you are assessing the extent to which your research made a contribution, recognising that it is likely to be one of many factors influencing policy to enabling those policies to deliver public benefits. If the policy intervention would have had the same impact without the elements based on your research, can you really claim to have had impact? Arguing for the significance of your contribution is therefore an essential part of demonstrating that your research achieved policy impacts.
Other forms of decision-making and behaviour change impacts 16	Whether directly or indirectly (via changes in understanding/awareness and attitudes), research can inform a wide range of individual, group and organisational behaviours and decisions leading to impacts that go beyond the economy, environment, health and well-being or policy.
Cultural 5	Changes in the prevailing values, attitudes, beliefs, discourse and patterns of behaviour, whether explicit (e.g. codified in rules or law) or implicit (e.g. rules of thumb or accepted practices) in organisations, social groups or society that deliver benefits to the members of those groups or those they interact with.
Other social 3	Benefits to specific social groups or society not covered by other types of impact, including, for example access to education or improvements in human rights.
Capacity or preparedness 18	Research that led to new or enhanced capacity (physical, financial, natural, human resources or social capital and connectivity) that is likely to lead to future benefits, or that makes individuals, groups or organisations more prepared and better able to cope with changes that might otherwise impact negatively on them.

Group sessions: impact and impact measurement

The way forward to have more impact on policy making

- To have impact we need to have a strategic agenda: plan your impact pathway linked to political timeliness from the beginning of your research. And consider the difference between timelines between politics and science.
- Advice can be encouraging but also discouraging – you can have an impact if your negative advice is taken into account (e.g. a policy is not implemented)
- Impact stories can be used for evaluation and science dissemination; tell successful stories about farming management practices.

Measuring impact

- It is easy to measure what we do, but not our final impact. Make the distinction between and define direct results/output –> outcome (scientific level) –> impact (societal level).
- Quantitative analysis: number of citations by policymakers, number of mentions in the parliament, amount of financial support, number of researchers in commissions/working groups. indicators INRAE (ASIRPA), indicators JRC . *Numbers can give an adequate description of the system, but perhaps not of the impact.*
- Qualitative analyses with interviews with policymakers and researchers. Look at scientific, economic and societal impact (change is qualitative). Example: ILVO sends a questionnaire to all involved stakeholders at the end of a research project; start gathering contact information early in the process.
- Qualitative: move from paper to person. Personal interaction between scientists and politicians is the most important measure for impact. It is a best practice to regularly check in with your stakeholder and have them also co-create the question with you at the beginning

Important insights from participants – headlines

- Importance of foresight studies and scenario's: participatory modelling to avoid black box. One of the aims is to reach comparability of models at the EU level.
- Living labs can be a good instrument for science-policy interaction.
- Policy cycle: different stages ask different activities related to science-policy interaction.
- Organisation of the interface with formalised contracts and governance; internalised science-policy advice within the process (example of Denmark).
- Impact is mostly seen on the local farms while transitions need to fuelled at a system level.
- Can we develop a common mechanism for assessing impact at different levels?
- Push or pull? We need a good interaction – mutual dependency to create impact. Scientists and policy-makers both need each other.
- Different types of policy officials need different types of interaction – we need to differentiate the process. How can we best have impact in different situations?
- Challenge: handling high turnover of policy officials.

Food policy coherence – methods workshop

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Methodologies to assess Food Policy Coherence and Integration

University of Bologna (Fransceca Monticone)

Key findings:

- Food policy coherence is the alignment of policies that affect the food system with the aim of achieving health, environmental, social and economic goals, to ensure that policies designed to improve one food system do not undermine others.
- Coherence between agricultural and environmental policies is the lowest; overlaps between agricultural production and environmental issues are still critical, despite the high number of policies addressing them.
- Prioritize policy coherence from the first stage.
- Assess coherence adopting **mixed methods**, which allow for better evaluation and more complete impact assessment.
- Systematise the methods adopted for coherence evaluation, as methods fragmentation can enrich academic studies but has to be limited among practitioners.
- What hinders policy coherence is often a matter of **implementation** and of inertia in the system.

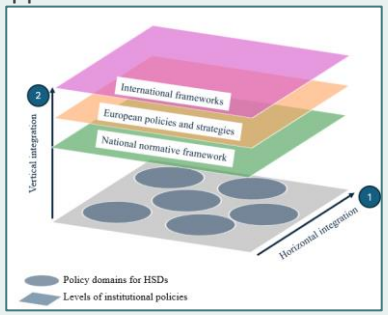
Link to full presentation

Assessing the coherence between Italian and EU policy frameworks

CREA (Gampiero Mazzocchi)

Key findings:

- Healthy and Sustainable Diets (HSD) in institutional literature come with different visions. There is not much coherence in terms of policy domains, the richness of HSD domains, sustainability (three dimensions) and effects on producers, processors and consumers.
- There is a strong need for coordination at the local institutional level to go from «what can be done» towards «what should be done».
- Many domains need to be considered in order to reach integrated and coordinated forms of governance of HSDs
- Food Environments can be the link between food production and consumption, representing a fundamental setting and approach for HSDs.



Link to full presentation

Comparative analysis of existing urban food policies

Cleverfood project and Eurocities (Chiara Roticiani)

Key findings:

- The Cleverfood project aimed to compare urban food policies across 59 European cities.
- Different methodologies were combined to get the best results: literature reviews, survey, in depth multilevel interviews and detailed interviews. 59 cities in 10 different EU countries were part of the study.
- The political commitment for urban food policies is relatively high, however the transformation into practices (such as a technical food policy office or presence of budget) is lower.
- Varying levels of Multi-level governance connections exist for urban food policies across the cities studied

Link to full presentation

Discussion on policy coherence

The following key points were identified and reflected upon by the Ghent Group:

- **Policy vs politics:** Policy coherence over time and different political mandates is important. Sometimes coherence can be a driver of change. Sometimes coherence can be a method to change direction compared to previous goals. It can be an objective for certain political parties. This has not been taken into account in current research.
- **Coherence on paper vs implementation:** You can have coherence on paper, but it can still go wrong in implementation, as the study of Cleverfood showed amongst others.
- **Lack of resources and capacity:** Different cities (Cleverfood project) wanted to continue their work on urban food policies, but they are dependent upon EU funded projects to keep their capacity and personnel.
- **Difficult to overcome silos in institutions:** The research on policy coherence made the civil servants realise that they don't speak enough with each other, especially between the different departments.
- **Policy coherence vs power dynamics:** It can be an assumption that policy coherence is a good thing, however coherence may also ignore inequities and unintended consequences beyond the technical goals. Perhaps power dynamics are missed by focusing on policy coherence alone? On the other hand, if you have policy coherence you can better manage the trade-offs – which saves money and time.

Mansholt lecture: Dilemma's in agriculture

The Mansholt Lecture is an annual event held in Brussels organised by Wageningen University & Research (WUR) since 2019. Its purpose is to inspire European policymakers and stakeholders on critical societal issues, particularly those related to sustainable agri-food systems and the living environment.

The Ghent Group took part in the Mansholt Lecture of 2024 which focused on 'key dilemmas on future land use for agriculture, forestry and nature.

The lecture was followed by a reflection by Members of European Parliament. You can find more information about the Mansholt lecture as well as the full report online: WUR perspectives on agriculture, food and nature

Day 2 – Thursday 7 November

Digesting the Mansholt lecture: presentations

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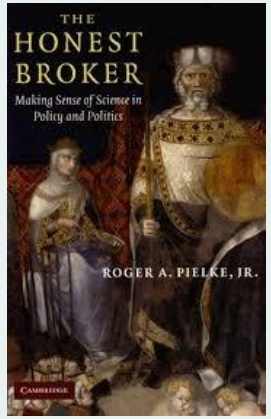
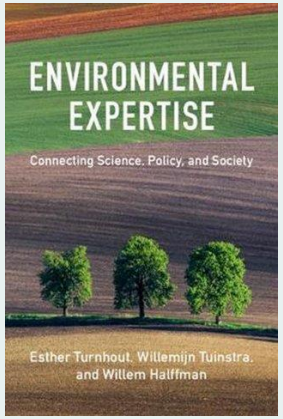
Theory of different roles in science-policy

WUR (Nowella Anyango van Zwieten)

Key findings:

- Uncertainties are the difference or the gap between reality and scientific results. They can come from limited knowledge, unpredictability (variability and indeterminacy) and from different possible frames.
- Scientists can take up different roles within the science-policy interface:
  - Role 1: servicing, research advice gives an overview of potential solutions
  - Role 2: advocating, research presents a selection of the potential solutions
  - Role 3: diversifying, adds more aspects and perspectives to the starting question(s). Here the dilemma approach can be helpful.
- Characteristics of dilemmas: contested definition of the problem(s), diversity of values and interests, conflicting 'facts', no win-win situation possible.





The experience of WUR in utilising the dilemma approach

WUR (Allard Jellema)

Key findings:

- In the Dutch complex political context, with strong protests from farmers and climate activists, people tend to focus on short-term solutions. The WUR is using dilemmas to open the discussion on more long-term political questions. The initial report was created for the Dutch context and subsequently adapted for the European context to be presented at the lecture.
- Dilemmas can bring nuance to the political debate and offer insights into the different choices involved in addressing societal challenges and stimulate long-term visions.
- To develop the dilemmas a large literature analysis was conducted from which six main dilemmas were identified.
- In all different dilemmas, choices and decisions must be made. At the same time, the various dilemmas are interconnected with the outcome of one decision affecting the other topics. This shows the complex nature of dilemmas.
- Following the publication of the Dutch Dilemma Report, there was a great deal of media coverage and political debate. Furthermore, it was employed as a means of initiating dialogue. Dilemmas enable stakeholders to observe the effect of their decisions on other sectors and stakeholders.
- The WUR is currently starting the development of a serious game based on the themes of the dilemmas. They are also enhancing the quantitative basis for this serious game.

Link to full report

Digesting the Mansholt lecture: reflection and debate

Panel discussion with Liselotte de Vos, Mikkel Lustrup Jensen, Nowella Anyango van Zwieten and Allard Jellema (Flemish Government, Danish Agricultural Agency, Danish ministry, and Wageningen University and Research)

Input gathered with the 'popcorn' facilitation technique

- The dilemma approach is a method to structure complexity. However, it is mentioned that a more quantitative foundation would be helpful.
- The presentation of the dilemmas can be seen as 'too neutral'. In this case, Dutch scientists did not want to exclude stakeholders. The dilemmas help to stay engaged with political opposition.
- Although the topics under discussion are not novel, they are presented in a manner that encourages reflection and engagement with the subject matter.
- The interlinkage between the topics can be made clearer. Choices have to be made; what kind of scenario can take place where and with whom?
- Who wins and who loses? Make the consequences clearer.

Critical reflection upon the dilemma approach

- The communication strategy around the study of the Dutch dilemmas was very effective. It led to debates with politicians and the President of WUR being invited on national TV. It turned out to be a good starting point for discussions. However, this required a lot of communication effort.
- Dilemmas can be a good way to communicate problems and get an overview of what needs to be done and who should be involved. However, it is not clear how the dilemmas can help create solutions and take the next step.
- It is a very useful perspective and a way of communication, possibly specifically in the polarised context of the Netherlands. When the gap between perspectives is particularly big, dilemmas can help bridge the gap.
- WUR has made a choice on which dilemmas to include. With this method, there is a risk of missing out on important perspectives, such as the marine perspective (blue biomass inclusion).
- Don't underestimate the role of civil servants in long- and short-term efforts. Politicians focus on the short term, while civil servants focus on the long term.
- Dilemmas are more complex than trade-offs and don't show proportionality/desirability. Gaining on one thing doesn't mean losing on another.

A next step after dilemmas

- The creation of scenarios or pathways can be an effective subsequent step following the formulation of the dilemmas. This is particularly the case when they incorporate interactions to illustrate the potential consequences of specific decisions.

The European perspective on science-policy interaction

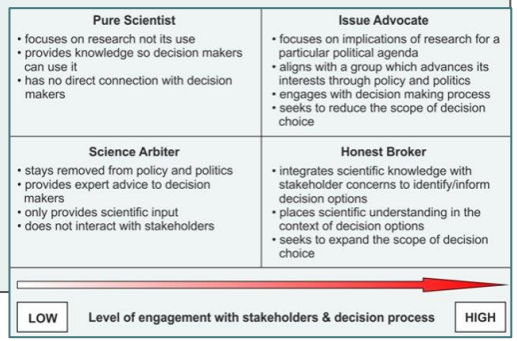
Knowledge for policy: concept and methods

JRC, Joint Research Centre (Mario Scharfbilling)

Key findings:

- The JRC is part of the European Commission. It supports EU policy with scientific evidence to improve society. The JRC's support for Science4Policy aims to enhance the competencies of scientists and policymakers, foster the development of ecosystems, understand limitations, and foster connections to society.
- Different types of scientific input are useful at different moments in the policy cycle.
- Scientists and policymakers live in different worlds. Scientists are about precision/truth and work on multi-annual projects. Policy makers reconcile different viewpoints and work in strict timelines.
- In general, there is a lack of opportunities for scientists to meet policymakers. There are also no career incentives for scientists for policy engagement.
- JRC has developed tools such as an online tool 'smart4policy' for self-reflection as a team
- The 2024 Trustworthy Communication Report presents a model designed to enhance our understanding of people's orientations and the polarization that exists within our society.
- Scientific advice is also value driven; direct the efforts, frame problems, be aware of ''myside'' bias.

Link to full presentation



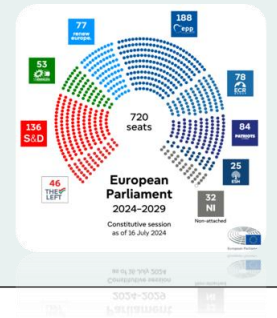
Challenges in translating science into policy: experiences from the European Parliament – view from the MEP office

European Parliament (Taru Jokinen – adviser to MEP Elsi Katainen renew Europe)

Key findings:

- The European Parliament (EP) administration and secretariat are understaffed and under-resourced in comparison to the European Commission. The committees, such as AGRI, are responsible for reviewing and evaluating EU legislative proposals.
- The European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) is the in-house research service and think tank for the Committees. However, to set the agenda for the Committees, the EP relies heavily on information from stakeholders, scientists and the public.
- In the context of the EP, it is evident that all decisions are, by necessity, compromises. To achieve broader targets, initial proposals must be sufficiently ambitious. Furthermore, the EP is primarily concerned with the formation of majorities, whereby the optimal outcome can be attained through the establishment of a broad majority between opposing groups.
- Scientists and policymakers both have the same information, but somehow, we get to different conclusions along the way. The number of different views can be a challenge.
- Some Members of the EP (MEP) have good connections with scientific institutions, for example, the yearly LUKE meeting with Finnish scientists and the MEP is very helpful.

Link to full presentation



Dialogue between JRC and MEP

JRC (Mario Scharfbilling) and MEP (Taru Jokinen)

How do we make science attractive to decision-makers?

- The members of the European Parliament agree that decisions need to be based on science. At the same time they need to interpret science only, to make it understandable for the citizens who are voting.
- In general, the JRC has found that people love science; they still believe in facts. The problem can be the use that is made of science. For example, when people say 'We have science on our side', that doesn't mean anything.
- It would be helpful if scientists could find agreement in conflicting studies. If we would have 'living reviews' showing the robustness and the level of consensus of the results.
- The MEPs look for research that supports their opinion mainly. If there is bulletproof evidence that they are wrong they might change their minds. However, they cannot always change ideas because they need to take into account their supporters. MEPs play a political game for popularity.

A need for knowledge

- We need knowledge in the world of policymaking for laws to better reflect reality. E.g. when it comes to the nature restoration regulation and the costs linked to measures; what do we need to do to reduce the costs? That is where we need scientific advice.
- Some European laws do not stipulate how member states must achieve specified objectives, such as the reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050. Each country is thus free to determine its course of action. It is therefore necessary to employ scientists at the level of individual member states.

Informal system of science advice

- There is no formal system for science advice for the European Parliament. There is however a lot of dialogue taking place at public hearings. And Member States can invite scientists or stakeholders to explain their views.
- Request from MEP to scientists: be in active touch with your MEPs. Make sure important studies are brought to their attention. Members can organise events for the EP.
- Organisations across Europe cannot contact the Committees directly. This is always based on the input of MEPs. LUKE (Finland) is doing a good job at this. They visit Brussels every year to convene a meeting where they highlight studies that are relevant for the EU. The discussions provide a forum for the exchange of science-based information, which may inform future decision-making.
- The current decision-making process within the EU is highly complex and fragmented. All levels require access to scientific advice and information. If you want to make an impact, you need to be able to reach a wide audience, but as an individual researcher, you cannot be everywhere. This requires a strategic approach.
- Researchers feel that they need to be 'asked'. This is not how it works. Published articles might be used in further reports, research is not meaningless. Your results may be used even if you don't know it.

Conflict and synergies around the supply chain

Ghent Group
Science-based advice in
Agriculture and Environment

How science interacts in enhancing resilience and security of the supply of food systems in Finland

LUKE (Pasi Rikkonen)

Key findings:

- The COVID-19 outbreak was a big motivator to sustain and develop more resilient food systems which enable to buffer, adapt and transform in respond to changes and disturbances.
- Different key elements of a resilient food system have been identified: 1) system thinking through science and communication, 2) redundancy of activities and networks, 3) diversity of production and partners, 4) buffering strategies.
- Good practices and measures to develop resilience have been identified, at different levels.
- Each actor has a role. Public administration, research and development and primary production were highlighted as the major actors responsible to prepare for disruptions.
- Resilience doesn't come without costs; you need to invest specifically and put efforts.

Link to full presentation

Local Food Policies – debate about how science and policy combine in Italy

CREA (Giampiero Mazzocchi)

Key findings:

- Local Food Policies highlight the need for policy coherence and integration among different governance levels and the costs of non-coherence.
- There is great momentum for local food policy in Italy: many food strategies and policies are in place. Food Atlas has been developed as a tool to map the local food system and Food Councils emerged as a bottom-up process for open dialogue among stakeholders.
- The local food policies focus on key action areas, with a lack of an integrated approach. There is a limited staff and budget and a general lack of data that supports the studies (they focus on the qualitative aspects).
- Agriculture is the 'elephant in the room', the weakest element in the local food policies, which focus on the consumer role.
- It is a challenge to expand the scope, to ensure scientific rigour and evidence-based policy and to define the role of scientists in policy support.

Link to full presentation

Dialogue between LUKE and CREA

Key findings:

- CREA finds room for policy-advice at a local level. However, they don't want to show a disparity between different territories. And there is no national level food policy.
- One of the main needs in Italy is data; it difficult to obtain data for sub entities.
- LUKE sees that Finland needs more effort on information about the measures that should be prioritised for resilience building.
- The Finnish National CAP Strategic Plan gave instruments for resilience (e.g. ensures income for farmers) however it does not identify resilience as an important theme.
- Disruptions can also have a positive impact (towards sustainability). In either case resilience measures go hand in hand with sustainability as well.

Open Space: Ghent Group in the future

The participants of the Ghent Group meeting suggested topics for a more in-depth discussion. Five topics were chosen:

1. **Policy perspective**
2. **Measuring impact**
3. **Developing a value framework**
4. **Characterization of Ghent Group organizations**
5. **Research-policy relations**

During the Open Space all meeting participants could give input on the different topics; what should be done by whom in the following months/years?

1. The policy perspective: what do the policy makers (officials, civil servants) need from us?

Practical suggestions for the coming years. How to get policymakers involved more:

- Civil society constitutes an integral part of the interface between science, policy and society. It is therefore essential to include civil society groups in discussions on this topic.
- When we are deciding the agenda ask feedback from policymakers and invite them to meetings to discuss the agenda.
- We have Invited the JRC for the last 3 years. Would be nice to see from the perspective of MS, who went through the exercise of JRC, how was it for them? How successful was it? Can see how policymakers can improve their institution. Invite JRC and Member States involved in the Mutual Learning Exercises to present their experiences.
- More case studies: less presentations, less talks from research institutes. Good examples of co-creation by policy makers and researchers.
- Use the Ghent Group as a place for researchers to understand policy makers and their expectations.
- Uncertainty: how to deal with that? How to translate that to policy frameworks (examples?), uncertainty communication. Examples could be the NUSAP approach used in PBL Netherlands
- Social norms and country habits – how do they come into this interface. (gender, etc.)
- Connect to the Commission's Scientific Advice Mechanism, STOA and the wider European Science Media Hub at the European Parliament, and national + regional panels of experts to connect to experts at every level.

Next steps: concretely, if we are meeting next year, organisation should take into account those points.

Open Space: Ghent Group in the future (2)

2. Measuring impact: can we have a common method for assessing impact?

- We can measure outputs and outcomes, but measuring impact seems impossible.
- Can measure output at different levels 1) policy maker is referring to your paper/work including tools and models, 2) how the policymaker is going to use that. In a way to justify certain actions for example.
- How can we impact the mindset of the policymaker? Be part of a trend (a lot of papers on the same topic), participatory approach with policymakers (different versions)
- Need to identify the targets from the beginning, increases chances to impact the policymaker. Also consider the scope: local, European, national.
- Experiment with policymakers. Show results in different ways. Show different methods, and which techniques could help enter the policymaker's mind. Experimental setting.
- Think about a pertinent issue (climate change for example) and keep that as a topic and then use this to see how we can address it from different science-policy interfaces.

Next steps: an important part of science for policy. Maybe invite experts with testimony on the impact on policies or have a dedicated session with someone closely working to policymakers.

Responsible: Marta can share ideas for speakers, Heather, Siavash (experimenting with policy-makers)

3. Develop value framework: framing the knowledge perspective, how do we keep our integrity? Define and uphold integrity while giving policy advice.

- We have to define what we mean by integrity.
- Include (more) the perspective of the social sciences, particularly science and technology studies.
- How do you identify and then communicate your values? Identify missing frames and perspectives.
- '' Framing is not blaming'': just be aware of people's positions. We have to navigate between the values of scientists and the interests of policymakers, without compromising.
- What are the differences between defining integrity in the context of research and defining it in the context of providing advice? In what way does this affect the process of co-creation? A dual role is played when undertaking research and also facilitating at the interface.
- Integrity: to be transparent about the method, keeping the truth. When negotiating with stakeholders, can be more messy. Should you keep arm's length with those discussions? Or how close should you get? Keep on having that discussion.
- General: how your values and preconceptions play a role in the way you define research questions, methods you use, the case of the Mansholt lecture (6 key topics discussed and not 7 or 10, is a political decision), balance it and be transparent.
- Value statements: collective exercise, what are values that move people to do their job.

Next steps: include it in next year's agenda. Possibilities in the meantime: email list, LinkedIn group or common SharePoint to share documents and/or have discussions.

Open Space: Ghent Group in the future (3)

4. Characterization of the different organisations in the Ghent Group. What are the differences? Where can we learn from each other?

- In 2022 a set of characteristics was sent to the different organisations put up by Aarhus University (see questions below).
- These questions have been asked to the different organisations in the Ghent Group, to define the different organisations. We already have data from five organisations collected.
- The questions included: Type of organisation, Supply or demand-driven, Main areas of science-based advice, How are your fundings, Who receives your advice, Governance structure S..I., Precautionary set-up, Important principles (for integrity), How do you deliver your advice, Where in the policy cycle do you deliver, (How) do you measure impact? At what level (regional, national, international) is your advice given?

Next steps: Aarhus University will ask the organisations to update and complete the data. Will work with drop-down menus. The different organisations will be asked to produce one illustration to show how they work. It is for internal use for the Ghent Group, or possibly to put online on the website.

Responsibility: Thomas (Aarhus), Abigail (WUR)

5. Research-policy relations: use our experience in the Ghent Group to improve the Boswell and Smith paper. This can be a tool for dialogue

- Collect empirical input from the Ghent Group on science-policy relations based on where in the policy cycle, what kind of institutional arrangements, who initiated the policy advice
- Learnings: can we better define the interface? Can we validate the Boswell paper?
- Think about target groups; linking with wider strategic research and policy agendas
- Think about the representativeness of cases, our institutions do not represent all cases
- The first step is to describe and analyse different cases, the second step will be the description of a typology.

Next step: Aarhus and ILVO will think about structuring on case level (organisational level), questionnaire/framework for data collection. Online interactive meeting in coming months to present the framework of the case evidence collection to the Ghent Group. Based on the response, the group joined for the case study research. We will make the framework. Framework for the questionnaire the call for cases – discussion from the cases to typology is the next step. We will prepare the next steps.

Setting the agenda: relevant topics to further discuss in the Ghent Group

What do we want to work on?

1. **Characterization:** Characterization of the different organisations in the Ghent Group. What are the differences? Where can we learn from each other?
2. **Measuring impact**: Can we have a common method for assessing impact?
3. **The policy perspective:** what do the policy makers need from us?
4. **Artificial Intelligence:** Can AI help us? Collecting data, to help navigate in complexity?
5. **Research-policy relations**: Use our experience in the Ghent Group to improve the Boswell and Smith paper. This can be a tool for dialogue
6. **Different roles**: institutional and organizational roles in policy advice
7. **Integrity and values**: Framing the knowledge perspective, how do we keep our integrity? Define and uphold integrity while giving policy advice.
8. **Synthesizing knowledge:** What are the best ways to turn complex scientific information into something that policy makers can understand?
9. **Structures for science-policy interaction**: Informal and formal structures, for example at the EU level but also similar groups like the Gent Group. How can we connect, can we help the JRC?
10. **Communication:** How do we present and communicate complexity? What different useful methods do we have?
11. **Serious game WUR**: Possible to play it next year at the annual meeting if it is finished.

Feedback 2024

- It was a good idea to include the Mansholt lecture to watch science policy in action
- Introduction presentations are nice for newcomers; give interesting insights into the previous years.
- Missing how the different countries work on the science-policy interface. In case this is already available on the website, it could be a useful tool for gathering information in advance.
- Good content: the team built upon the knowledge and remaining questions from last year. Built knowledge together and take steps to go further. Good result for an informal group.
- Helpful to call it an annual meeting instead of a course, fitting the content and the community.
- The formal part is excellent (content), informal part (e.g. coffee breaks, time to catch up and network) is essential as well.
- 'Open space' method worked well, gave energy and was very productive.
- This year more policymakers are involved. But it can be even better next year.
- Report will be on the website of the Ghent Group from this year onwards.
- The involvement of professional facilitators is of significant benefit, as it facilitates more effective discussions, efficient organisation and reporting.
- Nice dynamics in the group – good discussions, share best practices. Inspiration for similar interaction at the national level.

Forwards towards the annual meeting 2025

- Find your Eastern European partners and take them to the Ghent Group! Already involve them from the planning phase, we are an open community.
- We will release something very soon, an invitation from the Ghent Group: this is who we are and what we have done. WUR will take care of this.
- Involving policy makers more? We can build an inventory of policymakers through the case study approach (ILVO and Aarhus). Some of the content should be more relevant for policymakers. Take care of which lectures are on the programme.

INRAE will host the next annual meeting. See you in Paris next year!