

Interplay between Politics, Research and Operational Business

*How to govern the country better – An example of good
practice for employment policy*

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CERGE-EI

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- Some general remarks
- Relevance: Asking the right questions
- (Unsolvable?) Tensions
- Preconditions for „good“ policy advice
- Conclusions

The strategic triad: Evidence-based scientific policy advice



- Excellent research is the foundation of scientific policy advice.
- High-quality data are the basis for evidence-based policy advice.
- Claims of evidence-based scientific policy advice:
 - Answering relevant questions!
 - Generating political impact!
 - Making a difference!

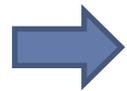
- Organisational structure of the IAB might rise doubts concerning the scientific excellence and the quality of policy advice.
- Independence of research by law, reinforced by formal documents from the Federal Employment Agency and the Ministry of Labour:
 - Free choice of research questions within the legal framework
 - Free choice of research methods
 - Results are ex ante indeterminate and will be generated within the scientific process
 - Freedom to publish the results
 - Formal documents signal credibility towards the scientific community and towards the political community. They reflect the awareness of the main addressees that only independent research is of value.
- Neutrality: Oriented towards political decisions but not engaged for specific political parties or interest groups.

Relevance: Asking the „right“ questions

- Combining scientific excellence with institutional and political knowledge:
 - Specific access to operational and political processes
 - Personal and institutionalised contacts
 - Headquarters and regional directorates of the FEA
 - Self-government board of the FEA (unions, employers' associations, Ministries)
 - Regular meetings with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
- ➔ Generating and discussing research topics together with stakeholders.

Policy advice: there will be tensions (I)

- Time: Politics needs quick answers, research needs time, e.g. data availability.
- Some questions cannot be answered by research:
 - Research has to give advise how to put the questions right.
 - Politics should get in touch with research early enough to create structures/instruments that are accessible to evaluation.



Establishing permanent expertise within the institute with respect to core questions of labour market policy!

- Stable contacts for specific topics.
- Specialised units at the gateway between research and main addressees.

Policy advice: there will be tensions (II)



Unsolvable tension: Research will generate results that politics and/or administrations do not like, but some measures might alleviate pain:

- Transparency and equal treatment: All results will be published.
- A reputation of political neutrality and objectiveness.
- Fair and direct communication to the addressees of policy advice.
- Institutionalised communication with different parties/interest groups: The self government body of the FEA offers a permanent and direct interaction with the main actors of labour market politics (checks and balances with respect to research results)

Preconditions for „good“ policy advice



- Transparency: Publication of results to open the contents of policy advice to a general debate.
- Structural knowledge of political and administrative processes: Offering trainings or internships to researchers, “job shadowing”.
- Sharing the same understanding about the research question and the capabilities of research: Clarifying the tasks at the beginning.
- Comprehensibility (speaking the language of the addressee): Four-eyes principle also with respect to communication, publication series targeting at a broader audience.
- Mutual understanding between research and politics/administration: Regular talks about the functioning of policy advice as an interplay between politics and research can help to find solutions in critical situations.

Conclusions



- Challenge to combine the best of two worlds: Freedom of research *as well as access to* institutional and political knowledge.
- A good interplay between research, politics and operational business needs close interaction *and* independence!
- Tensions are an essential part of the advisory process and important for the credibility of policy advice!
- Institutionalised structures of exchange and policy advice within the FEA and with the Ministry of Labour are adequate means of conflict prevention and „mediation“.
- External reviews give credits to research and policy advice, e.g.
 - Scientific Advisory Board
 - Evaluation by neutral instances like the German Research Council

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Output: Publication Series



- Journal for Labour Market Research
- IAB Forum (now “online only”)
- IAB Forschungsbericht
- IAB Discussion Paper
- IAB Kurzbericht
- IAB Regional
- IAB Bibliothek
- FDZ Datenreport
- FDZ Methodenreport



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