

## STUDY AND EXPOSURE TOUR: UNITED KINGDOM SYSTEMS AND MECHANISMS FOR EVIDENCE- BASED POLICY MAKING

- Notes -

21 – 25 November 2016, London



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
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Swiss Agency for Development  
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## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND EXPOSURE TOUR**

Study and Exposure Tour was organized with an aim to provide senior government officials and social scientists from Albania and Serbia with a first-hand opportunity to learn about the structures and mechanisms of evidence-based policy making in the British Government system and how the system contributes to better quality policies and decisions.

## **ABOUT PERFORM**

PERFORM – Performing and Responsive Social Sciences – is a project of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, which has its focus on strengthening the relevance of social sciences for socio-economic and political reform processes. PERFORM collaborates closely with national research systems in Albania and Serbia with the option of being extended to other countries in the Western Balkans in the future.

The current phase started in January 2015 with a 9-month inception period and will end in December 2018. Two further phases are considered.

## Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

**Dr Jeremy Vincent**, Head of Research & Insight (Government Social Research Profession), Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
**Natalie Jones**, Leads on engagement with government and public services for Economic and Social Research Council

## Economic and Social Science Research Council

The UK has numerous research councils which provide research funds. One of them is the Economic and Social Science Research Council. Some of the councils have their own research institutes; ESRC does not. By next year, the different councils will merge.

DFID (Department for International Development) has issued a research fund - The Global Challenge Research Fund – which is being administered by ESRC. The fund finances collaborative research between groups of British researchers and researchers from less developed countries. Western Balkan countries are on the list.

The fund has three thematic lines:

- Leave No One Behind
- Sustainable Societies and Economics
- Support Peace and Justice.

## Science and government in the UK

Different levels of Government need evidence for decision making and policy making, from local, to regional to national and the Parliament.

Principles:

The interaction between scientists and policy analyst should be Knowledge exchange, thus a two-way dialogue, rather than the researcher telling the policy analyst what to do.

This can happen through:

Seminars, interactive sessions, place younger researchers in departments

Panels for experts which regularly meet

Each Department (Ministry) has a chief scientific advisor.

## Input support system

Research Excellence Framework (REF) – for performance measurement of researchers. Their contributions to public policy development will be considered in their performance evaluation. Measures impact on society

The different government departments document their research agenda for the period of a parliamentary period (4 to 5 years)

## **Mechanisms for facilitating inputs**

- Funding built into grants for researchers
- Direct investment of policy makers
- Consultation on priorities
- Joint funding with policy makers
- Researchers are accountable to research councils

## **Challenges**

- Growing demand for research evidence
- Building trust and networks
- Different career and incentives
- Different working cultures
- Access to academic knowledge

## **Case studies**

- Research in the UK parliament: social scientists embedded in Parliament
- Students conducting research for three months in the Parliament
- Capacity building for parliamentary staff and politicians
- POST unit in Parliament

## **What works centres**

- Crime reduction, well-being, etc.
- Partnerships with government

## **In Departments:**

- Analysts support ministers and policy officials

## **EPPI – Centre, University College London**

**David Gough**, Professor of Evidence Informed Policy and Practice / Director, Social Science Research Unit at EPPI- Centre / Managing Editor, Evidence and Policy

Building systems for drawing in evidence into policy making essentially started in 1997 with modernising government systems under the government of Tony Blair.

The main input from researchers into the policy cycle is not from fundamental research, but from reviews of existing knowledge. Prof Gough and his team have developed a method for systematic review of research, to ensure that this is an explicit and accountable process. Impact case studies is another tool commonly used.

Policy papers by researchers adds to their performance score; however, this is done more competitively, rather than collectively.

It is important to have the performance scoring of the institution rather than of the individuals.

Parliamentary Select Committee on Science and Technology reviews the quality of evidence that is used for decisions in departments.

An interesting model is NICE – National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. Its mandate is to improve health and care through evidence-based guidance. Only

They make a difference between responsive research (on demand) and blue sky research.

## **Government Science & Engineering (GSE) Profession Team, Government Office for Science**

**Dr Shabana Haque**, Head of the Team

This is the association of scientists and engineers within government services. It is made up of about 10,000 civil servants. They support their members in their professional challenges which they face. This may include capacity building and skills development, raising their profiles, management and leadership training, etc.

## **Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Chief Scientific Adviser's Office**

**Sir Robin Grimes**, FCO Chief Scientific Adviser

The FCO's Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) is responsible for providing advice to the Foreign Secretary, Ministers and officials on science, technology and innovation (e.g. specific topics, or specific countries). Topics he provides advise on are selected either by the Ministers, or by the CSA's Office (they recognize them as relevant). Research is commissioned in-house, but done by universities and research centres. CSA has discretionary power to select groups of researchers directly (if urgent), but if there is enough time than a public call for researcher is published.

Researchers have incentives for conducting policy research – 25% of their marks is counted based on their contribution to policy development; young researchers are particularly keen to conduct policy research.

Role of CSA is to ensure that FCO's work on key issues undergoes proper scientific challenge, and to strengthen the scientific and engineering capacity within the Foreign Office. The CSA works

closely with the cross-government community of Chief Scientific Advisers and the wider UK and international academic science community.

FCO Chief Scientific Advisor is civil servant, selected based on the public call and open and transparent procedure. There are 4 people working in CSA's Office, while CSA works 3-4 days per week, rest of the time he/she spends at his/her university/research centre, as it is important for CSA to keep his/her scientific credibility and links with the academic community.

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/people/robin-grimes>

## Government Office for Science (GOS)

**Dr Rupert Lewis**, Director of GOS

Government Office for Science (GOS) ensures that government policies and decisions are informed by the best scientific evidence and strategic long-term thinking. It is an organisation of up to 80 permanent staff, located in London in the offices of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The role of the Government Chief Scientific Adviser is to advise the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

GOS is responsible for:

- Giving scientific advice to the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet, through a programme of projects that reflect the priorities of the Government Chief Scientific Adviser;
- Ensuring and improving the quality and use of scientific evidence and advice in government (through advice and projects and by creating and supporting connections between officials and the scientific community);
- Providing the best scientific advice in the case of emergencies, through the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE);
- Helping the independent Council for Science and Technology provide high level advice to the Prime Minister.

GOS mainly works on synthesizing the existing knowledge and research (meta-synthesis), since yearly around 2 million of scientific publications are produced. There are two main teams in GOS:

- a) Foresight Team – conducts in-depth analysis of certain topics, research can last up to 1 year;
- b) Horizons Team – conducts scanning of a certain issue, not in-depth but looking more broadly; research lasts up to 2 weeks.

Decisions on which topic/issue will be researched by GOS are made based on the: a) impact of the topic; b) beneficiary (who is the use it – ministry of some other Government body). GOS also creates a 'market' or demand for research – e.g. by putting the topic of artificial intelligence related to jobs, legal issues, etc. on the Government agenda.

Dr Lewis shared his views on 2 models of collaboration between scientist and policy makers:

- 1) integrated model – scientist work closely with policy makers, they are embedded in the policy making system. This system has proved to be much more functional than the second model;
- 2) scientists and policy makers work separately – this has not proved as successful model.

GOS relies also on the Royal Society and different experts. They are not additionally paid for their work, as they are already paid through budget. Researchers are very interested to influence policy making, due to evaluation of scientific work that values also contribution to policy making.

Web: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-office-for-science>

## The Royal Society

**Rachael Mann**, Public Affairs Officer at The Royal Society

**Dr Emma Hennessy**, Deputy Chief Scientific Advisor, Foreign & Commonwealth Office

**Prof Peter Styring**, Sheffield University

The Royal Society is the independent scientific academy of the UK and the Commonwealth, dedicated to promoting excellence in science. They also administrate part of the Government funding for science. The Royal Society doesn't do research, but they sometimes create working groups on certain topics (composed from their participants in their fellows' program and other experts). They also provide fellowships for young researchers (funding their post and some research money).

The Royal Society is running a *Pairing scheme* that gives policymakers and research scientists an opportunity to experience each other's worlds (they support 30 pairs per year). Those taking part gain an insight into how research findings can help inform policy making, and come away with a better understanding of how they can get involved. Researchers and policy makers visit each other in their workplaces and shadow each other for 4 days, to get an insight into their everyday job. Benefits are networking, trust-building and getting the knowledge on certain issues.

Web: <https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/pairing-scheme/>

## Office for National Statistics (ONS)

**Jonathan Athow**, Deputy National Statistician Economic Policy

**Helen Patterson**, Senior Manager, Public Policy Division

**Emma Rouke**, Director, Public Policy Analysis

Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and the recognised national statistical institute of the UK. ONS is responsible to the Parliament.

They provide analytical support to the central Government, provide data and participate in early stages of policy process (sitting at the table at initial discussions. But producing statistics is not enough, so part of ONS' work is to interpret the data for policy makers (but no policy recommendations, just data). Role of ONS is also to help policy makers to ask better questions and define what they need from policy.

ONS provides short-term analysis (it can take from 1hr up to 1 day), but for longer-term analyses they create working groups that work for few months. ONS is trying to engage more with the academics, they have panel of experts (researchers who work on specific issues).

Web: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo>

## Parliament, House of Commons Science & Technology Committee

**Stephen Metcalfe**, Committee Chair

**Marsha David**, Second Clerk

House of Commons Science & Technology Committee exists to ensure that Government policy and decision-making are based on good scientific and engineering advice and evidence (identifying gaps in science policy). The Committee also holds pre-appointment hearings with chosen candidate for the position of Chief Scientific Advisor.

Academia can make submissions to the Committee, if they think there are certain problems in some policy areas. Committee then launches public inquiry and makes a call for submitting evidence (to academia, private sector, civil society, general public). Committee produces 10-15 reports per year.

According to Mr. Metcalfe, key pillars for establishing evidence-based system are: a) reserachers/analysist (chief scientific advisor or chief analyst) embedded into the system; b) system for scrutinizing the policies. i.e. functional Parliament.

Web: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/>

## Parliament, House of Lords Science & Technology Committee

**Lord Hunt of Chesterton**, Committee member

House of Lords Science & Technology Committee scrutinises Government policy by undertaking cross-departmental inquiries into a range of different activities. These include:

- Public policy areas which ought to be informed by scientific research (for example, health effects of air travel);
- Technological challenges and opportunities (for example, genomic medicine) and
- Public policy towards science itself (for example, setting priorities for publicly research).

In addition, the Committee undertakes from time to time shorter inquiries, either taking evidence from Ministers and officials on topical issues, or following up previous work.

The Committee holds annual joint planning with the House of Commons' Committee – they sometimes overlap with the topics they work on, but there are also different topics). Committee is also bale to put some topics on the agenda of the Government.

Web: <http://www.parliament.uk/hlscience>

## Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)

**Dr Abbi Hobbs**, Social Sciences Adviser

Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) is Parliament's in-house source of independent, balanced and accessible analysis of public policy issues related to science and technology. POST runs several fellowship schemes with Research Councils, learned societies and charities to enable researchers at all career stages to spend time working in Parliament

POST provides services to both Houses of Parliament. Every MP has its own budget and can hire 2-3 researchers to work for him/her. It has 8 full staff members and 2 support staff, as well as students/interns. POST provides peer-reviewed literature review on certain topics (reviewed by external stakeholders: NGOs, private sector, researchers, etc.) and synthesis of existing knowledge, does not provide new research. Topics are decided by the Board, that meets quarterly and decides on priority issues for POST to look at.

Web: <https://www.parliament.uk/post>

## Government Operational Research Service (GORS)

**Hiroko Plant**, Senior Analyst at Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

**Ben Shalavi**, Economic Advisor, Analysis Directorate, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

**Anthony Morris**, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Government Operational Research Service (GORS) supports policy-making, strategy and operations in many different departments and agencies and employs around 500 analysts, ranging from sandwich students to members of the Senior Civil Service. Simply put, Operational Research brings intellectual rigour to the decision-making process. By looking closely at complex systems, and developing models that predict the way they behave, GORS' Analysts can bring a new perspective to the way problems are tackled. Many of GORS analysts are working in Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

BEIS Strategy also does pre and post regulatory impact assessment, with an aim to have better regulations and spending of the budget. For low impact policies, they provide 'fast/track' assessments (5-7 pages long). Everything that BEIS spends money on has to be analysed and supported by research evidence (evaluation). It spends around 6 mil GBP per year on research.

Web: <http://www.operational-research.gov.uk/recruitment>