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Building Capacity for Evidence Informed Policymaking in Governance and Public Administration in Latvia

Findings from the Diagnostic Report & Needs and Gaps Assessment

29 November 2024

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Introductory Note

This document, presenting results from the Diagnostic report and the Needs and Gaps Assessment report, has been prepared as part of TSI project “Building capacity for evidence-informed policymaking in governance and administration in a post-pandemic Europe” (22EL07). The action was funded by the European Union *via* the Technical Support Instrument”, and co-implemented by the OECD and the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC), in cooperation with the European Commission DG Reform.

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The document is made available for a Latvian audience as a complement to the OECD paper “Building capacity for evidence-informed policymaking in Latvia: Assessment and recommendations roadmap”.

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1 Overview

Diagnostic: Key findings

Despite significant improvements in recent years, Latvia still faces challenges in systematically generating and using evidence at the right time and in the right format to inform policymaking. The COVID-19 crisis has shed light on the key role of evidence for policymaking and underlined some of the existing gaps, which has in turn generated a need for longer term expertise, including through the development of additional research programmes.

Supply of policy-relevant evidence has increased but still suffers from limited funding and capacities both inside and outside the government

Notable progress has been observed in Latvia in recent years in terms of supply of evidence for policymaking with an increase in policy-oriented research. However, the country still faces significant challenges in producing this evidence systematically. While some ministries are increasingly effective in this regard, including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, on the whole both government and knowledge brokers operating at arm's length from government are not **yet equipped with sufficient skills or staffing to produce policy actionable evidence** in a systematic way. In particular, sectoral line ministries lack sufficient analytical skills, in part as a result of the low attractiveness of salaries inside the government. This is well-recognised by the government, which has recently adopted a public sector reform including a change in the remuneration law, although this has come without a corresponding increase to the budgets of line ministries. There is no sufficient training available, although the Latvian School of Public Administration is developing several interesting initiatives such as the Digital Academy, with trainings on digital skills in co-operation with some line ministries. Inside the government, line ministries **rarely have organised units responsible for evidence production** and mainly rely on formal and informal collaborations with arm's length institutes and universities.

At the same time, **universities have limited interest in working on policy-relevant research** at national level as they suffer from limited capacities and low level of research funding and are heavily geared towards receiving European funding. On the other hand, **public research institutes and other arm's length institutions play a major role in evidence supply in Latvia**. The collaboration across these institutions often relies on informal mechanisms rather than clear and structured processes. However, informal mechanisms do not contribute to a systematic approach in terms of facilitating the supply. Multidisciplinary advisory bodies are also underdeveloped.

Concerning access to data for research purposes, access is in theory possible, but in reality, it is often difficult. The decentralised nature of the Latvian statistical system and lack of a strong data governance framework makes data sharing difficult. However, access is often granted on *ad hoc* basis given individual connections and status of the researcher. In recent years, Latvia has made progress by creating a central Open Government Data Portal and adopting an Open Data Strategy. It also has an Open Science Data Strategy.

The recent reform of the **State Research Programme by the Ministry of Education and Science** has allowed line ministries to directly fund policy-relevant research, encouraging the overall supply of policy-

oriented research even though the question of its full usability remains for some ministries given some of the constraints attached. Despite ambitious goals, the overall level of R&D in GDP remains well below the European average, and even below other Baltic states.

Demand for evidence is heterogenous across ministries but the adoption of evidence plans and the creation of a research database represent two promising practices

Ensuring supply of evidence is not sufficient to guarantee its use. In Latvia, evidence is not consistently used in policymaking, with demand varying across government entities and with the risk of being instrumentally used to justify predetermined decisions. At the individual level, skills to demand evidence are lacking in line ministries and there is limited awareness on the values of using evidence for policymaking. However, in some cases, significant interest by specific ministers can have a direct impact, and does facilitate use in certain cases. At the organisational level, interesting practices to promote demand for evidence have emerged, although they are not yet systematic. In particular, the recent establishment of a list of commissioned research to be submitted by all ministries to the Chancellery Cross-sectoral Coordination department represents an interesting instrument to strengthen demand and increase its visibility. In addition, the chancellery maintains a research and publication database containing both planned and existing studies commissioned to inform the planning phase. The Bank of Latvia competition of student scientific research papers is also another promising initiative to stimulate visibility of policy-relevant evidence.

At the inter-organisational level, several actors, both within and outside of the executive, have the mandate to promote the use of evidence and an overall culture for transparency across government, including the fiscal council, the productivity board, and NGOs like Providus. Nevertheless, there are still insufficient spaces for them to connect and discuss evidence needs. Beyond the executive, demand for evidence has increased in Parliament in recent years, and a Parliamentary analytical unit was established in 2017.

Some policymaking processes have been streamlined across government and made more transparent, although they are still not able to systematically channel evidence

Key policymaking processes can significantly help in integrating evidence into the policy cycle. In the past years, Latvia has made significant progress in the development of tools and frameworks for planning as well as for regulatory impact assessments (RIA) and stakeholder consultation. The TAP portal offers an interactive and open platform to receive feedback from stakeholders and to monitor the advancement of policy proposals within government. These tools have helped in creating common practices across ministries and in channelling evidence into policymaking processes as well as in increasing the transparency and overall accountability of the policymaking system. The planning processes are well developed in part to meet the requirements of the funding processes at European level, which also reflect multiyear planning. However, some of the requirements of the planning processes are excessively developed and may result in undue pressures at the level of some of the line ministries. Despite progress, the way that evidence is channelled into policy processes remains fairly heterogeneous across ministries and relies on the skills and motivation of individual civil servants. Evidence is employed to a relatively great extent in the development of strategic long-term documents, while its adoption remains more heterogenous in sectoral plans. However, foresight approaches are barely existent to support forward looking analytical approaches.

Needs and gaps assessment

The needs and gaps assessment seeks to identify the key issues that need to be addressed to move away from a fragmented use of evidence towards a more systematic approach to evidence informed policymaking, where use of evidence is standard practice. While strong practices do exist within Latvia, in specific institutions or line ministries, such practices are sporadic. In general, the knowledge and skills

needed to promote EIPM are unequally spread throughout the government. As such, the focus should be not on creating new organisations, but on making full use of existing organisations, as well as centralising and standardising approaches to EIPM. Furthermore, siloes should be broken down and collaboration fostered to a greater extent, both within and outside the government itself. This needs and gaps assessment helps to identify key actions and recommendations that will be helpful for the future:

- **Limited analytical skills in line ministries to conduct systematic analyses**
  Outcome of the assessment: perform a mapping of current analytical skills with the possibility to better define the skills needed for some job functions, develop further trainings on the use of specific tools (methods for RIA, strategic foresight, use of data, *ex post* evaluation, etc.), attract researchers to work in government through the creation of a partnership scheme, establish mobility schemes across public administration.
- **Limited skills for science4policy in the academia and absence of schemes to attract researchers inside the government**
  Outcome of the assessment: develop training on evidence-informed policymaking/Science for Policy for Phd students, develop a research mobility scheme.
- **Unstructured organisation of analytical resources inside ministries with a siloed approach to evidence generation**
  Outcome of the assessment: facilitate the creation of some analytical units inside strategic line ministries, promote the co-operation among line ministries on evidence generation and research to address major multidisciplinary challenges.
- **Access to data across administrations is burdensome and can hinder evidence generation**
  Outcome of the assessment: Clarify the role of different actors in data governance, strengthen the capacity and leadership of the Statistical Bureau within a broader framework of data management, with the capacity to provide access to linked data in secure settings, simplify some procedures to access data across administrations for research purposes.
- **Still limited space for collaboration in evidence supply across research institutes, universities**
  Outcome of the assessment: Strengthen multidisciplinary collaborations across universities and researchinstitutes developing multi-disciplinary working groups and increase space for multi-disciplinary research.
- **Lack of sufficient skills to demand and commission evidence**
  Outcome of the assessment: Promote trainings on EIPM for policymakers and on commissioning evidence.
- **Demand for evidence is not strategically planned in many areas and ministries**
  Outcome of the assessment: Expand and develop more strategic evidence plans and discuss them both within the organisation and across different organisations to identify share needs and avoid repetition.
- **Strategic foresight is lacking to inform the development of strategic plans**
  Outcome of the assessment: Promote the use of foresight methodologies in strategic planning, develop training and capacity to increase future literacy and engage with actors outside of the executive.
- **Minor gaps in quality and relevance of the regulatory management tools, in particular regulatory impact assessment and more significantly *ex post* evaluation**
  Outcome of the assessment: develop specific trainings and guidelines to support civil servants with RIAs and *ex post* evaluation, strengthen the capacities in the State Chancellery to ensure quality oversight for laws or regulations of major impact, further develop *ex post* evaluation.

2 Diagnostic

In recent years, across the OECD particularly in Europe, democratic governments have been exposed to multiple crises which have considerably challenged democratic resilience and undermined trust in public institutions (OECD, 2023[1]). Unfortunately, crises are likely to become a structural element of governments' operating environment (Tooze, 2022[2]). For this reason, central governments need to strengthen their policymaking processes to be fit for this challenging environment. The goal is to, nurture capacity to design and implement state of the art policies to deliver quality services that improve outcomes for people. Using an evidence-informed approach is also particularly useful to address the complex and 'wicked' policy challenges that governments are facing today. Indeed, Evidence-Informed Policy making (EIPM) can significantly support governments in different stages of the policymaking cycle by helping identifying policy priorities, designing policies, and assessing their impact. By using reliable and quality evidence in a transparent and inclusive way, governments can facilitate the acceptance of policy decisions and increase accountability and trust.

Evidence-informed policymaking has a key role to play in improving public governance while helping to reinforce democracy. Indeed, by using the best available evidence to inform decisions, governments can improve the quality, responsiveness, and accessibility of public services. The definition of evidence used for this report is purposedly broad and encompasses a series of data, information and results stemming from a range of social and natural sciences, and policy analysis practices rooted both inside government (such as policy evaluation or data science) and outside or at arms' length from government (such as applied scientific research and policy analysis). In research terms, the notion of evidence corresponds to as a "*systematic investigative process employed to increase or revise current knowledge*". In this context, Evidence-Informed Policy making EIPM can be defined as a process whereby multiple sources of information, including statistics, data, research and evaluations, are consulted before making a decision to plan, implement, and (where relevant) alter public policies and programmes (OECD, 2020[3]).

Overview of the state of play for capacities for EIPM in Latvia

In the last years, Latvia has significantly improved its evidence-informed approach to policymaking. It has done so by developing key policy instruments, such as regulatory impact assessment, by moving consultation through open online processes, developing instruments for ministries to mobilise the results of research programmes, creating mechanisms to co-ordinate evidence needs across public entities, increasing the transparency of commissioned research through a user-friendly database and encouraging the use of evidence in key policy processes such as planning.

Looking at the systemic level, evidence is still not methodically used in policymaking processes. Indeed, the demand for evidence is very heterogenous across the government and this increases the risk of using evidence at a late stage in the process, prioritising the evidence that is compatible with the view of politicians or policy planners, rather than using evidence to inform policy trade-offs in the first place. There is also a risk of prioritising *ex post* the evidence and evaluation that reflects positively on implementation rather than using evaluation for accountability and peer learning. At the same time, the supply side suffers from significant low levels of research funding which hinders the availability of policy-relevant research

either to design and plan policies or to assess the results *ex post*. All these systemic aspects will be discussed in the following sections of the chapter.

Supply of evidence and policy-oriented research has increased in the past years, but it continues to face some challenges. Both government and external actors are not equipped with the sufficient skills to produce policy actionable evidence systematically or to transform evidence and research into policy actionable conclusions in terms of knowledge brokerage. Inside the government, line ministries rarely have organised units responsible for evidence production and mainly rely on formal and informal collaborations with arm's length institutes and universities. Finally, collaboration across institutions for evidence production often relies on informal mechanisms rather than clear and structured processes.

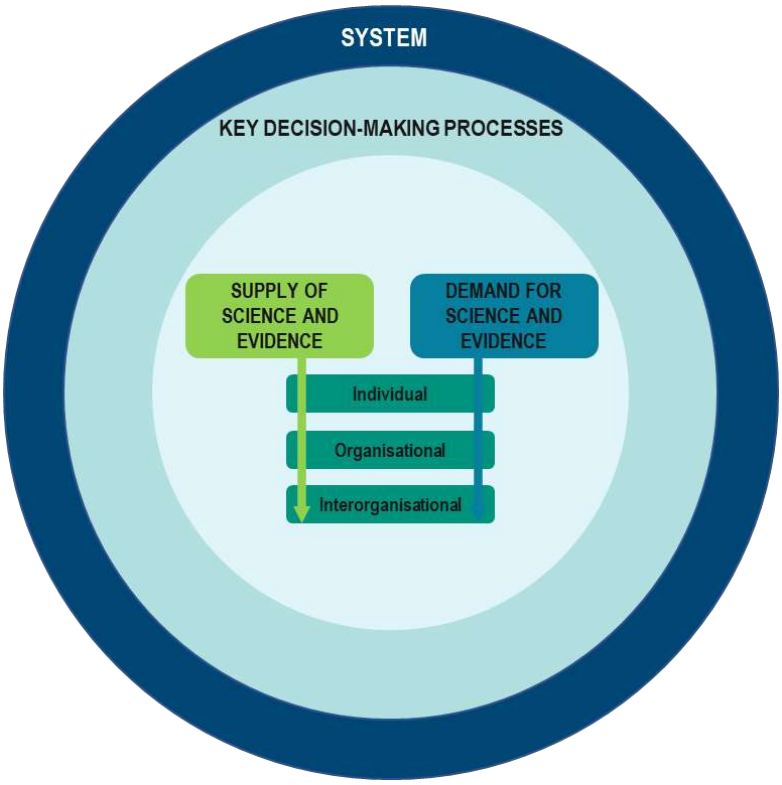
Similarly, demand for evidence is very heterogeneous across institutions. Skills to demand evidence are lacking in line ministries and they are not always aware of the value of using evidence for policymaking. At the organisational level, interesting practices to promote demand for evidence have emerged, but they require more systematisation and ambition. At the inter-organisational level, several actors, both in the executive and outside of the executive, have the mandate to promote the use of evidence across government but there are still no space and no connection and discuss about evidence needs.

Finally, significant progress was made in the development of tools and frameworks for planning, regulatory impact assessments (RIA) and stakeholders' consultation. These tools have helped in creating common practices across ministries and in channelling evidence into policymaking processes. However, despite this progress, the way that evidence is brought to bear in policy processes remains fairly heterogeneous across ministries and relies on the skills and motivation of civil servants rather than on established structured procedures.

The analytical framework for assessing capacities for EIPM

This diagnostic report assesses how the Latvian government is able to obtain and use evidence to inform policymaking. Its analysis is structured around the analytical framework for assessing capacities for EIPM, developed jointly by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Joint Research Centre for the purposes of this project (see Figure 2.1). This framework rests on the assumption that a sound EIPM system functions as a 'market' for evidence, where there is both high availability and quality of evidence (the 'supply') and the interest and ability to use this evidence by the people making the decisions (the 'demand'). This model of demand and supply has been extensively used in academic research to look at EIPM and rests on the work of Weiss (1979) and Caplan (1979) (Weiss, 1979[4]; Caplan, 1979[5]; Stewart, Langer and Erasmus, 2018[6]). Without researchers, universities and governmental analytical units, policymakers and decision makers are not in a position to take evidence-informed decisions. At the same time, without demand for evidence in the first place, the availability of policy relevant evidence on the market is going to be low. While interlinked, each side of the market respond to specific dynamics and incentives, as well as require different skills and organisational structures to be maintained. For this reason, to understand both sides it is important to look at them through different levels, including in terms of individual, organisational and inter-organisational capacities and incentives. The input of looking at this aspect at different levels comes from the analytical framework developed by Stewart, Langer and Erasmus (2018), which, in their model on the use of evidence, include an analysis at multiple levels (Stewart, Langer and Erasmus, 2018[6]). Finally, the analysis should consider key policymaking processes embedded in the machinery of government where supply meets demand ('key policymaking processes'). Beyond this, it is important to frame and understand "system level" factors, which are influenced by cultural and environmental factors which are not directly amenable to single government action ('system' level).

Figure 2.1. Analytical framework to frame the analysis of Evidence-Informed Policymaking



Source: Authors' elaboration based on the OECD/JRC Framework for capacities for Evidence-Informed Policymaking. See OECD (2020[3]), Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: Lessons from Country Experiences; and Stewart , Langer and Erasmus (2018[6]), "An integrated model for increasing the use of evidence by decision-makers for improved development".

Under this framework, system-level factors influencing evidence-informed policymaking in Latvia are examined in this introductory chapter. The next section looks at the supply side of evidence in Latvia, particularly looking at the skills for policy-oriented research, the organisation of evidence supply inside the government and the collaboration across different actors to produce cross-sectorial and multi-disciplinary evidence. It then focuses on the demand side, particularly on the skills available to demand and use evidence inside the government, the ways in which evidence is requested and used across institutions, as well as how evidence is shared across institutions. Finally the report looks at how evidence is embedded in key policymaking process which create systematic uptake of evidence into policy action.

System-level factors influencing EIPM in Latvia

At the system level, many factors can affect the way in which evidence is used in policymaking. Some of these factors can be conjunctural, such as the advent of an exogenous shock prompting heavy reliance on scientific evidence, as was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic, while other factors are structural. This is the case for instance of different cultural approaches to policymaking, the balance of powers between the executive and Parliament or the levels of trust in public institutions as well as societal trust more broadly. Whilst these factors can have an important impact on the use of evidence for policymaking, it is hard for governments to influence them in a direct manner as they may not always be amenable to policy levers. For this reason, system-level considerations influencing EIDM in Latvia are discussed in this framing introductory section to offer a state of play of EIPM in the country.

The COVID-19 crisis has shed light on the key role of evidence for policymaking

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of using evidence in policymaking processes, as well as the complexity that exists between public decisions and science (Françoise et al., 2022[7]), including in countries with more institutionalised evidence ecosystems.

In Latvia, the management of COVID-19 crisis shed light on the expectations and knowledge gaps existing between policymakers and experts for various reasons. As was the case in many countries, the government felt a strong need to root major policy decisions in solid evidence, against a context of patchy and many unknown unknowns. As a result, the government responded to the crisis by setting up a multidisciplinary advisory body to provide guidance on the crisis response. This expert group, created in March 2021 and co-ordinated by the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, was asked to assess Cabinet's proposals regarding the management of the crisis (Latvian Public Broadcasitng, 2021[8]). However, the process tended to be destabilised over time. The group of experts increasingly felt that their voices were not sufficiently heard in the policymaking process, and, to the contrary, that the group was tried to be used as a way to support government's decisions that had already been made. Besides that, politicians almost did not use the expert group to ask questions generating significant frustration. Probably also as a result of this, experts started to express themselves directly in the media with dissenting voices. This situation created tensions, which ultimately led to the dissolution of the group in the autumn 2021 (LETA, 2021[9]).

After the "hot phase" of crisis management, the COVID-19 crisis revealed a need for stronger longer-term expertise. As a result, the government did set up a state research programme on "Mitigating the consequences of COVID-19", which included a set of 10 different projects. For each project a budget of roughly EUR 0.5 million was allocated. These projects were very collaborative in their nature and often involved multiple universities and research centres. Yet, researchers report that managing these projects was also challenging, due to the very short periods of time in which they were developed (around one month) and the short turnaround allotted to deliver results (around 6 months), all the while in a context of budgetary constraints (see Table 2.1). At the same time, even if the projects were conducted with a tight schedule, results were still often obtained too late and could not support the need for quick and decisive actions.

Table 2.1. State Research Programme "Mitigating the consequences of COVID-19"

Project	Actors involved	Results
A multidisciplinary approach to monitoring, control and containment of COVID-19 and other future epidemics in Latvia	University of Latvia, Riga Stradiņš University, Riga Technical University, BIOR, Latvia University of Life Science and Technologies, Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre, Institute of Electronics and Computer Science	Provided timely practical recommendations and data for limiting of disease's spread
Establishment of an integrated platform for biobanking and associated data of COVID-19 related samples in Latvia	Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre, Riga Stradiņš University, University of Latvia, Riga Technical University	A high-quality biobank and data exchange resource have been created
Clinical, biochemical, immunogenetic paradigms of COVID-19 infection and their correlation with socio-demographic, etiological, pathogenetic, diagnostic, therapeutic and prognostic factors to be included in guidelines	Riga Stradiņš University, University of Latvia, Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre	Improved diagnostic and treatment efficiency, developed diagnostic methods, clinical algorithms and clinical guidelines
New therapeutic and prophylactic tools to mitigate the effects of coronaviruses and their infections	Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre, Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis, Institute of Solid State Physics (University of Latvia), Riga Technical University, University of Latvia	Operative method for the creation of vaccines against coronaviruses, a new type of drug for the treatment of COVID-19 has been created

Project	Actors involved	Results
Impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the healthcare system and public health in Latvia; strengthening the health sector's preparedness for future epidemics	Riga Stradiņš University, University of Latvia, BA School of Business and Finance	Developed recommendations to promote the health sector's preparedness for future epidemics
New Technologies for Targeted Tracing, Testing and Treatment of COVID-19 patients (3-T Project)	Pauls Stradiņš Clinical University Hospital Scientific Institute, University of Latvia, Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre	A set of policy proposals for automated analysis of indoor infection risks has been developed, two new variants of antigen tests have been studied
Integration of Secure Technologies for COVID-19 Protection in Healthcare and High-Risk Areas	Riga Technical University, Rezekne Academy of Technologies, University of Latvia, Institute of Electronics and Computer Science, Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis, Institute of Solid State Physics (University of Latvia), Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre, Riga Stradiņš University, Latvian State Institute of Wood Chemistry	A handwashing quality evaluation system was created, the design and manufacture of a disinfectant sprayer was completed, innovative high-frequency electrodeless UV radiation lamps were made
Prospective technologies for sustainable and reliable services	Riga Technical University, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, University of Latvia, Rezekne Academy of Technologies, Liepaja University	Nine proposals for state support and intervention in crisis management were prepared
Economic, political and legal framework of Latvia economic potential for preserving the competitiveness to support the growth of the pandemic crisis (reCOVery-LV)	University of Latvia, Latvia University of Life Science and Technologies, Riga Technical University, Riga Stradiņš University, Latvian Academy of Sciences	Recommendations have been developed for municipalities on the nutritional value of lunch meals, solutions have been provided for strengthening the resilience of agricultural raw materials, food products and nutrition systems
Life with COVID-19: Evaluation on the coronavirus crisis coping in Latvia and Proposals for Societal Resilience for the future	Riga Stradiņš University, University of Latvia, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Institute of Electronics and Computer Science, Rezekne Academy of Technologies	Many consequences of problems were revealed, such as increased workload and psychological pressure on families, violations of labor rights in the private sector, insufficient access to government support mechanisms

Note: The Universities underlined are the universities that were the responsible for the overall programme
Source: (Latvian Science Council, 2021[10]).

In addition, the nature of the research meant that some projects garnered considerable media attention, with some experts being asked to present their conclusions in front of the press. Whilst not unusual, in a crisis context, such interventions in the press from experts, who were also advising the government as part of the advisory group, may have created confusions in the mind of the general public on the boundaries between science and policymaking. In several contexts, these created also political tensions as interventions were often against government decisions or were proposing more stringent actions that politicians were not willing to take.

Overall, these examples show that whilst the COVID-19 period had positive impacts on demand for evidence for policymaking, they also highlighted some of the tensions that can arise when scientists and decision makers are made to interact with no clear pre-established boundaries, rules or processes, and potentially conflicting objectives.

The general context at system level in Latvia is not conducive to instrumental use of evidence

Despite the progresses made during COVID, however, in Latvia evidence still seems more frequently used in symbolic or conceptual ways rather than instrumentally, that is to say to foster meaningful change of a policy (see Box 2.1).

Box 2.1. Types of use of evidence for policymaking

The literature on evidence informed policymaking identified three main types of uses (Ledermann, 2011[11]):

- **Symbolic use:** (also known as persuasive) occurs when the results of evaluations are taken up to justify or legitimise a pre-existing position, without changing it.
- **Conceptual use:** happens when results lead to an improved understanding or a change in the conception of the subject analysed.
- **Instrumental use:** is when recommendations deriving from the study inform policymaking and lead actual change in the policy being evaluated.

Source: Ledermann (2011[11]), "Exploring the Necessary Conditions for Evaluation Use in Program Change", *American Journal of Evaluation*, https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214011411573.

Against this background, there are still a number of positive examples, where evidence is mobilised to inform policy reforms. An interesting examples is the study on "Fluctuations in the Economic Activities of Latvia's Administrative Territories and Internal Activities of the Population Using Mobile Network Load Data" (see Box 2.2) which was commissioned by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and used to inform the Administrative territorial reform.

Box 2.2. Fluctuations in the Economic Activities of Latvia's Administrative Territories and Internal Activities of the Population Using Mobile Network Load Data

As part of the administrative territorial reform, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development commissioned a study "Fluctuations in the Economic Activities of Latvia's Administrative Territories and Internal Activities of the Population Using Mobile Network Load Data". This was carried out by the University of Latvia and two interim reports were produced.

The aim of the study was to model the internal migration of the population and the economic activity of administrative territories, using new data sources and collection methods, which provide an evaluation for the proposals of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development for a new administrative territorial division. The study was based on mobile phone call data records. For the first time in Latvia, Big Data (the Latvian Mobile Telephone (LMT) mobile network in the period from 21.01.2016 - until 20.01.2018) were used to measure economic activity and mobility.

During the research, the new city centres of the municipalities were determined and migration trends within the municipality as well as between municipalities were clarified. The study allowed also the ministry to determine the centres of the new municipalities.

Source: (University of Latvia, 2019[12]; University of Latvia, 2019[13]).

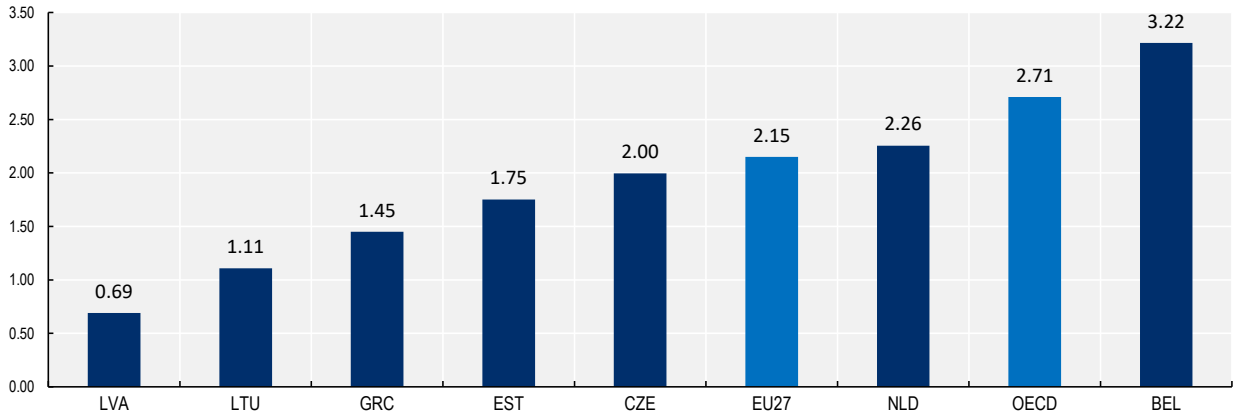
Another interesting example comes from the Minimum Income Reform of the Ministry of Welfare. In this case, several analytical sources were mobilised to inform the debate which started with the study of the World Bank in 2013 (World Bank, 2013[14]). In the years that followed, the Ministry requested evidence to several stakeholders in particular to the Bank of Latvia. Indeed, the Bank was asked to evaluate two different scenarios, and these were evaluated using micro-simulation tools. These analyses helped in understanding the potential impact of each scenario and informed the overall process (Cabinet of Ministers, 2021[15]). However, on average evidence in Latvia is mobilised late in the policy process or it is used to support pre-existing decisions, thus undermining the overall quality of the EIPM system, as highlighted through many of the interviews.

Structural low levels of research funding are adversely impacting the research system despite recent improvements

A healthy EIPM system requires a dynamic research environment with strong supply of science. Unfortunately, this was not the case in Latvia until recently and several reforms were undertaken to increase the overall quality of the research system (European Commission, 2019[16]). Latvia has one of the lowest R&D spending across all OECD countries with only 0.69 of gross domestic spending on R&D in 2021 (see Figure 2.2). Together with low spending, the Latvian research system was historically characterised by a high level of fragmentation and lack of a co-ordinating institution which were hindering the overall quality of the system (European Commission, 2019[16]).

In recent years, steps were undertaken to strengthen research excellence at domestic level and increase the social and economic value of research (World Bank, 2014[17]). These were informed by a series of external analyses conducted by the World Bank and by peer-reviewed analysis on the Latvian research system and outlined in several strategic documents (National Development Programme, and sectorial guidelines like the Smart Specialisation Strategy). Since 2011, the number of scientific institutions has more than halved going from 150 in 2011 to 64 in 2023 (European Commission, 2019[16]). This was an important process of rationalisation and clarification of roles and activities. To ensure some degree of co-ordination and oversee of scientific activities, in 2022, the Latvian Council of Science was reorganised in a way to gain more mandates, which were transferred from the State Education and Development Agency. The Council is responsible for the administration of state-funded research projects, including the Fundamental and Applied Research Programme and the State Research Programme. Finally, in the 2023 budget, additional EUR 8.6 million were added to the State Research Programmes going from 7 million to around EUR 15 million. This shows an important investment in science for policy in terms of policy-oriented research.

Figure 2.2. Gross domestic spending on R&D



Note: Gross domestic spending on R&D is defined as the total expenditure (current and capital) on R&D carried out by all resident companies, research institutes, university and government laboratories, etc., in a country. It includes R&D funded from abroad, but excludes domestic funds for R&D performed outside the domestic economy. This indicator is measured in USD constant prices using 2015 base year and Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs) and as percentage of GDP.
Source: OECD (2024[18]), "Gross domestic spending on R&D" (indicator), https://doi.org/10.1787/d8b068b4-en (accessed on 29 June 2023).

Challenges and opportunities in the overall EIPM system in Latvia

Setting up a coherent and well-functioning system, able to produce quality evidence and use it to inform decisions, is not a straightforward process and it comes with challenges. There are several factors which can impact indirectly the overall EIPM system. Indeed, the use of evidence in policymaking processes can be influenced by a variety of external factors such as trust in public institutions and in science, the way governments are formed, the size of the country and others. These elements, while difficult to change, are important to take into consideration to better understand of the overall EIPM system.

Low levels of trust in public institutions can present government with many challenges, including the need to promote evidence informed policymaking as a way to improve trust in government decisions. Trust is an important indicator to measure how people perceive the quality of government institutions (OECD, 2022[19]). At the same time, low levels of trust in public institutions can be caused by several additional factors which are not the sole result of government actions but are influenced by historical and external factors. However, regardless of where the low levels of trust come from, governing with low levels of trust comes with significant challenges. The OECD's 2021 survey on *Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions* shows that only 25% of Latvians trust their national government, compared to the 41% average of the OECD countries surveyed (OECD, 2022[19]). Trust and Evidence-informed policymaking can influence each other (Bundi and Pattyn, 2022[20]). While more studies have focused on how evidence-informed policymaking affects trust, the reverse relationship is also true and, trust can influence the attitudes of people toward EIPM (Bundi and Pattyn, 2022[20]). A recent study on six European countries shows that the citizens attitudes toward EIPM are positively correlated to trust in science and negatively correlated with trust in government (Bundi and Pattyn, 2022[20]). This means that when levels of trust in government are low, support for EIPM is expected to be higher becoming more beneficial for governments to invest in EIPM systems.

On the other hand, the coalition nature of Latvian governments can influence the extent to which evidence is used in policy formulation. Indeed, the way in which government are organised can have important implications on the overall use of evidence. Latvian governments have been coalition governments since the country regained its independence in 1991. At times, coalition governments can have an impact on how often evidence can be used in policymaking. In Latvia, at the beginning of the term, each government prepares three overarching documents which will guide the government actions for the four years ahead (or less if the government changes before): the co-operation agreement, the government declaration of intended activities and the implementation plan. These documents benefit extensively from the inputs of ministries and civil servants which can support policy design with evidence and data (Reinholde, 2021[21]). However, within the term of a mandate, opportunities to use evidence and data are typically more limited, as policies and decisions must follow the path set out by these overarching medium-term planning documents. In fact, planning documents are supposed to have medium-term assessment to evaluate what works, what does not work and what changes need to be made to plans and policies, but the willingness to mobilise such opportunities for evaluation may not always be there.

In addition, the relatively small size of Latvia plays an interesting role in EIPM. Indeed, size can influence the way in which evidence is accessed, exchanged, and ultimately used. In large countries personal contacts and informal exchanges might play more marginal roles as both the political and the intellectual groups are larger. In smaller countries informal exchanges can occur more often. Being among one of the least populated countries in the European Union, this element was significantly present in Latvia where most actors were quite familiar with each other's. This offers opportunities and presents challenges for EIPM. Indeed, thanks to informal collaborations and direct contact, the public administration is often able to overcome situations that would represent barriers to EIPM in other countries. This is the case with data access or collaboration requests. At the same time, the small size of the country hinders the adoption of more structured processes for evidence uptake, which are essential to guarantee a trustworthy and well-functioning EIPM system.

Finally, as discussed in section 4 of this report, being a member of the European Union has provided Latvia with an important external push towards increased use of evidence in policymaking.

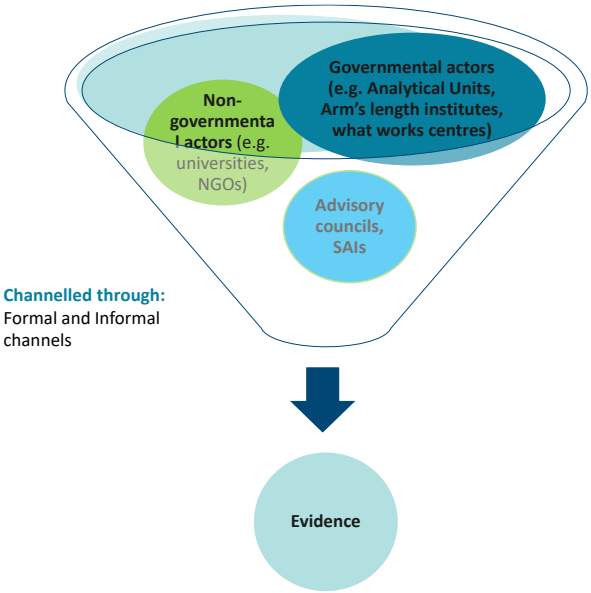
Supply of evidence for policymaking

Introduction

To adopt an evidence-informed approach to policymaking, governments first need to have access to good quality evidence. Quality evidence can be defined as evidence that is methodologically robust as well as produced following principles of good governance, which ensure its trustworthiness (OECD, 2020[22]). Accessing quality evidence is essential to make sure that it can be used with confidence and help to deliver better policies enhancing citizens well-being and trust.

Supply of evidence can come from several actors. Indeed, evidence can be supplied by governments (for example, by ministries or institution at the arm's length of the executive) or by actors outside the government, such as universities, research institutes or consultancy companies (see Figure 2.3). Both are important evidence suppliers for different reasons. As a benefit of being close to the policy units, research teams inside government typically produce evidence that is more policy actionable. They might do so through policy evaluations, government statistics, performance information to name a few sources. On the other hand, research by external actors can run the risk of being less policy relevant but can equally benefit from being more independent. In addition, actors outside of government are not bogged down by the day-to-day running of administrations and thus often benefit from having more time to do their research.

Figure 2.3. The different actors involved in evidence supply



Source: Authors' elaboration.

To ensure supply of evidence, governments need to access specific skills, either internally to the administration or externally (this is the issue of capacities at the *individual level*). Governments also need a critical mass of those skills and to make sure they are organised and managed in such a way that they have the time and resources to produce quality evidence (this is the issue of capacities at the *organisational level*). Finally, evidence is not generated in a vacuum and often requires different stakeholders and actors to work together. This is the issue of *inter-organisational* co-operation across the government, as well as between government and external research organisations.

In Latvia, supply of evidence occurs mainly through informal and not systematic channels, even though planning processes do require some systematic gathering of data. Both government and external actors are not equipped with the sufficient skills to produce policy actionable evidence systematically. Inside the government, line ministries rarely have organised units responsible for evidence production and mainly rely on formal and informal collaborations with arm's length institutes and universities. This is a more systemic approach to evidence informed policymaking could be so beneficial. Finally, collaboration across institutions for evidence production often relies on informal mechanisms rather than clear and structured processes.

In this context, this section provides an overview of the current skills, capacities and mechanisms in place in Latvia to supply policy relevant evidence. It looks at supply of evidence at different levels starting at the individual level (skills for civil servants and scientists), moving to the organisational level (the existence of analytical units, etc.) to finally move to the inter-organisational structures in place to ensure evidence supply (data governance, data access, etc.).

Skills to supply evidence inside and outside of government, capacity at the individual level

To supply good quality evidence, governments first and foremost need to ensure that public servants have the right skills to do so. The exact skills required of public servants depend on what type of evidence is at hand, and, more generally, how supply of evidence is organised inside government. To present things schematically, public servants may require two different types of skills to promote the supply of quality evidence:

- the skills to conduct research and evaluations themselves or that to access and synthesise results from governments or non-governmental evidence
- the skills to commission research and evaluations.

Governments require a mix of these to have access to quality evidence. The OECD framework on Skills for a High-Performing Civil Service describes these skills respectively as "policy advisory skills" and "commissioning skills" (see Box 2.3).

Box 2.3. Skills for a high performing civil service

The OECD report 2017 on civil service skills report identifies **four main skill groups that are necessary to create public value**:

> ***Policy advisory skills*** *[require] leveraging technology and synthesising a growing range of evidence-informed scientific insights (e.g. behavioural economics, data science, strategic foresight) and a diversity of citizen perspectives for effective and timely policy advice to political decision makers.*
>
> ***Engagement skills*** *[require] working directly with citizens and users of government services to improve service experience, legitimacy and impact by leveraging the "wisdom of the crowd" to co-create better solutions that take into account service users' needs and limitations.*
>
> ***Commissioning skills*** *[require] designing and overseeing various contractual arrangements (outsourcing, PPPs, service level agreements, etc.) and managing projects to achieve impact through organisations (public, private, not-for-profit) that are best placed to deliver services due to their expertise and/or local position.*
>
> ***Network management skills*** *[require] collaborating with a range of independent partners to address complex/wicked policy challenges by developing a shared understanding of the problem, collectively identifying potential solutions and co-implementation.*

While each civil servant does not need to be highly skilled in all of these areas, public institutions do require a solid mix of these skills in order to deliver public value in the modern public sector arrangement.

Source: OECD (2017[23]), *Skills for a High Performing Civil Service*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264280724-en.

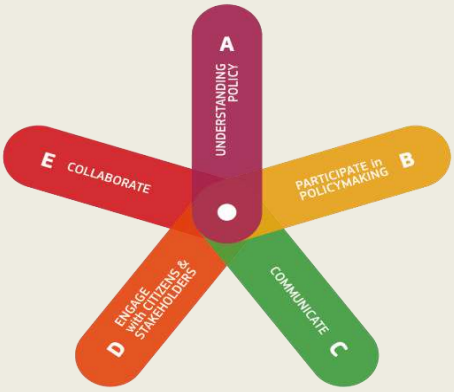
In addition, as evidence often comes from external actors, it is important that also scientists and researchers possess the right skills to supply the evidence that is needed. Indeed, these are often different from the skills they have been trained on. The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) competence framework on "Science4Policy" identifies the skills that scientists should possess to ensure policy impact (Box 2.4).

Box 2.4. The EC JRC's 'Science4Policy' competence framework for researchers

Achieving policy impact is challenging for scientists and researchers as it requires specific skills which are often absent in formal university and doctoral programmes. These 'Science4Policy' competences are essential to increase the impact of scientific knowledge for better policies. The European Commission Joint Research Centre has developed a dedicated competence framework underlying the skills needed for scientists to achieve policy impact.

The competence framework is organised along five clusters: Understanding policy, Participate in policymaking, Communicate, Engage with Citizens and Stakeholders and Collaborate. Each cluster is also composed of a more granular set of competencies, for a total of 27 competences. The idea of the framework is not that each scientist should possess an advanced level in all the 27 competences, but rather that groups of researchers and scientists should try to cover these competencies collectively to make sure their research can reach policymakers and achieve impact.*

Figure 2.4. 'Science4Policy' competence framework



Source: JRC (2023[24]), Competence Framework 'Science for Policy' for researchers, https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/visualisation/competence-framework-%E2%80%98science-policy%E2%80%99-researchers_en.

Analytical skills are heterogenous across government and particularly across line ministries

Regardless of how they set up their evidence supply function, whether through conducting most analysis in house or through commissioning evidence to external parties, governments still need a critical mass of analytical

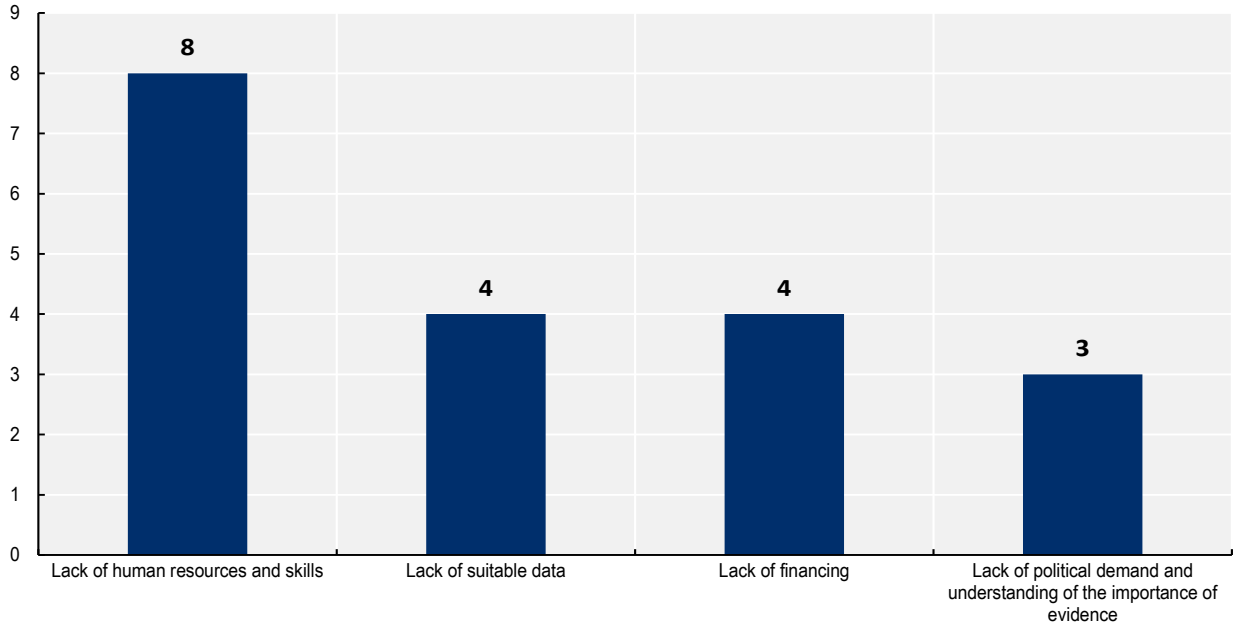
skills available in-house. These analytical skills are especially important inside ministries, to ensure that the teams preparing policies and laws, managers, as well as ministerial cabinets can have access to policy relevant and timely evidence for their work. Yet, such analytical skills are also needed in institutions outside of the executive, for example in Parliament, to assure that laws initiated through the legislative are similarly grounded in evidence, in Supreme Audit Institutions to conduct performance audits or in Independent Fiscal Institutions to assess the sustainability of public finances.

Ensuring that public institutions have access to sufficient analytical skills is a challenge in several OECD countries (OECD, 2020[25]). This difficulty can arise due to different reasons, such as rigid public service hiring processes, low salaries, or limited career prospects, which impact the attractiveness of public service jobs. In other countries, these challenges can also result from a general scarcity of professionals with these skills on the job market.

Overall, although significant variation is present across government, analytical skills are not sufficient in the Latvian public administration to ensure a systematic production of evidence. Indeed, there are institutions outside of the executive that seem able to attract the analytical capacities that they need. This is the case with the Bank of Latvia or different research institutes at arm's length, such as the Institute of Food Safety, Animal health and Environment 'BIOR', to which some permanent functions were explicitly delegated by the state.

On the other hand, line ministries are on average not equipped with sufficient analytical skills. This was often mentioned by ministries as one of the main challenges for evidence-informed policymaking (see Figure 2.5). The insufficiency of these skills is also recognised in the Public Administration Modernisation Plan 2023-2027 which, as part of the activities to strengthen the quality of policy and regulation, wants to strengthen the skills for data analysis of policy planners (State Chancellery, 2023[26]).

Figure 2.5. Main challenges to EIPM as perceived by Latvian Ministries



Note: 9 respondents: State Chancellery; Ministry of Education and Sciences; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Climate and Energy; Ministry of Economics; Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Welfare
Source: Questionnaire responses.

First, Latvia line ministries encounter difficulties in attracting analytical skills because of the low attractiveness of salaries inside the government. Before 2023, salaries in the public administration had not been modified for over a decade (Cabinet of Ministers, 2022[27]). As a result, salaries in the Latvia public

administration are considerably less attractive than in the private sector. Ministries also compete with other public institutions to attract the best talent, as some public institutions outside the executive at national level can offer better salaries. This is the case for example with the Bank of Latvia but also municipalities. To tackle this issue and to increase attractiveness, the government has worked on a Remuneration Law as part of the State Administration Reform Plan 2020. The Law on Remuneration increased the competitiveness of public wages by setting the amount of monthly pay in the state administration (on average) as equal to 80% of the average level of compensation paid in the private sector (Cabinet of Ministers, 2022[27]). However, this increase in remuneration was not accompanied by additional funding allocated to the ministries making the implementation potentially difficult. Given the very recent implementation of the law, complete statistics are still not yet available on this topic.

Second, the availability of analytical skills is heterogenous across the public administration as a result of the fact that ministries have significant autonomy in how they organise their staff. For example, both the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Climate and Energy have people with analytical skills spread across different divisions. This is true also for the Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. This may not always allow for these teams to reach a critical mass of skills to allow full implementation of EIPM possibilities.

In addition, few ministries dispense trainings on capacities to produce evidence and analysis. The Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and the Ministry of Health are interesting exceptions. However, overall, the quality and the availability of these activities strongly depend on the different Human Resource departments of line ministries. In addition to these, the Latvian School of Public Administration (LSPA) offers a list of free courses accessible to all civil servants (see Box 2.5). Course programmes are decided through regular exchanges with the State Chancellery and line ministries themselves. For example, the school is developing together with the Ministry of Environment and Regional Development, the Ministry of Economy and Education and Sciences a Digital Academy to ensure trainings on digital skills. Even if a large variety of courses is available, the school has encountered difficulties in creating trainings on analytical and evaluation practices due to low availability of trainers in these fields. In addition, being fully funded by European structural funds makes difficult for the school to develop trainings on important areas which are not covered by European projects.

Box 2.5. Latvia School of Public Administration

The Latvian School of Public Administration was founded in 1993 and is under the supervision of the State Chancellery. The task of the Public Administration School is to develop and provide a high-quality teaching on the current and future needs of employees in the public administration. In 2020, the school priority learning topics were digital skills, talent management and policy design skills. The applied teaching methods are lectures, discussions, work in groups, exchange of experiences, case analysis, and situation simulations.

It offers paid courses, free of costs courses and personalised courses. As of June 2023, four paid learning blocks are available: customer service, personal efficiency and growth (e.g. effective time planning, professional burnout, conflict resolution in the work environment, etc.), innovation and co-creation (e.g. LEAN in public administration – essence, principles and methods, LEAN in public administration - Development and implementation of practical projects) and information and communication technologies and data literacy (for example, techniques to speed up work with Microsoft Word and PowerPoint and Quick and efficient creation of schemes, diagrams and graphs with Microsoft Visio). Two course programs are implemented free of charge: Prevention of conflict of interest and professional ethics of public officials, and the training programme for procurement agents (the programme consists of two levels - basic level and advanced level). As of June 2023, the five most

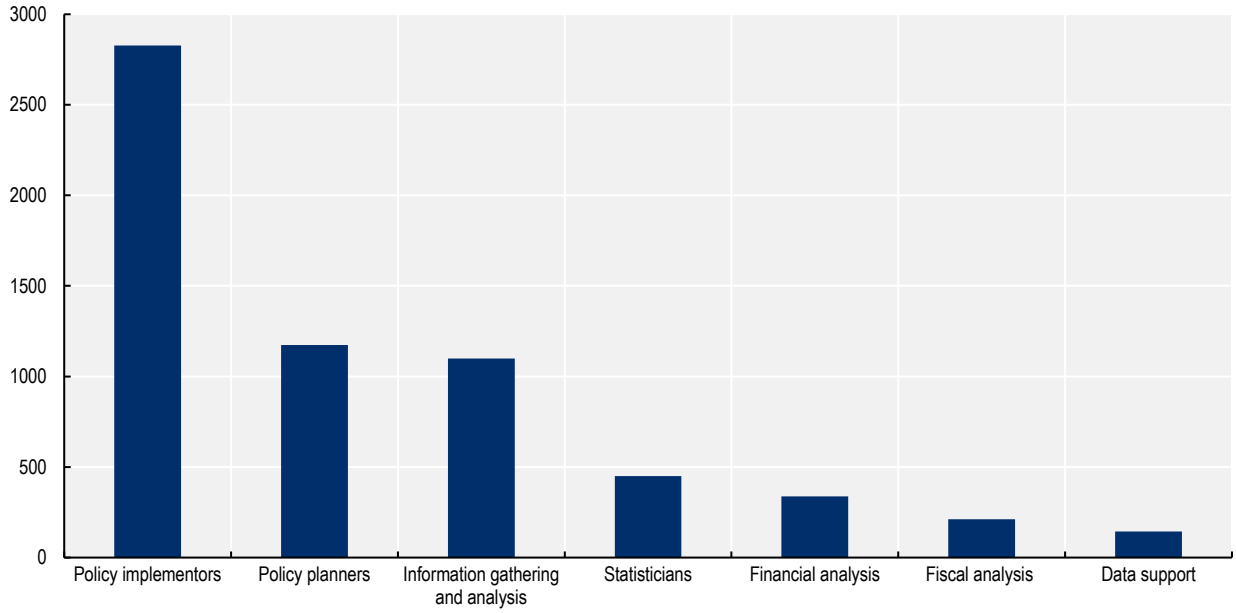
requested personalised learning courses were in management skills; communication skills, psychology, and design thinking; legal matters of state administration; information technology, and professional English.

In 2021, the school in co-operation with joint-stock company "Datorzinību centrs" organised a free training on digital tools. The purpose of the training is to strengthen the digital skills of adult and professional education tutors by learning the most demanded and widely used information and communication technology tools. The course consists of three learning modules, within which several topics is covered (25 topics in total). Some of the topics covered are cyber security and digitisation (data security, risks, copyright, etc.), webinars and communication tools, file and document sharing tools.

Source: Public Administration School, https://www.vas.gov.lv/lv (accessed on 8 June 2023).

Finally, having a clear picture of the exact availability of analytical skills across the administration in Latvia can be challenging. Several job categories with a clear 'policy analysis' orientation exist (see Figure 2.6). In addition, job categories were recently amended as part of the State Administration Reform Plan. The new positions catalogue has been updated to reflect the realities of the labour market, including new, current positions and removing family levels that are no longer needed or relevant (State Chancellery, 2022[28]). The purpose of the new Positions catalogue was to simplify the descriptions by reducing the levels and groups written for specific institutions preventing duplication of groups and level and to ensure that the criteria for job levels correspond to the actual situation (State Chancellery, 2022[28]). The new Position catalogue has a total of 51 job sub-families (Cabinet of Ministers, 2022[29]).

Figure 2.6. Number of employees with some 'policy analysis' function



Note: Data from March 2023. Apparently, there were a total of 60 251 staffs in central government in Latvia (Ministries and related agencies, denominated as "State Budget Institutions". So, the total devoted to EIPM would be about 2500 for policy planners, information gathering and analysis and statisticians, or 4% of the total in a strict sense, and a bit less than 10% in the broadest sense.
Source: State Chancellery.

Skills to commission evidence are not sufficiently developed

Together with analytical skills, it is important for ministries to have commissioning skills. When analytical activities are outsourced, it is important for governments to have the skills to effectively commission the research to guarantee the quality of the analysis. This requires both a good understanding of the commissioning process but also of the technical aspects of the research. Most of the evidence coming from external institutions is obtained through public procurement. On this topic, the School of Public Administration has developed a significant number of trainings for example with a focus on procurement which can support the development of these skills. However, these are more generic courses which do not focus specifically on the technicalities of commissioning research and evidence that require some additional skills (in particular, a good understanding of research needs). On this aspect, an emergent role is played by the Latvian Council of Science which provides support in the creation and definition of specific research programmes, the State research programmes. However, the Council has not yet developed more systematic trainings to equip line ministries with these skills.

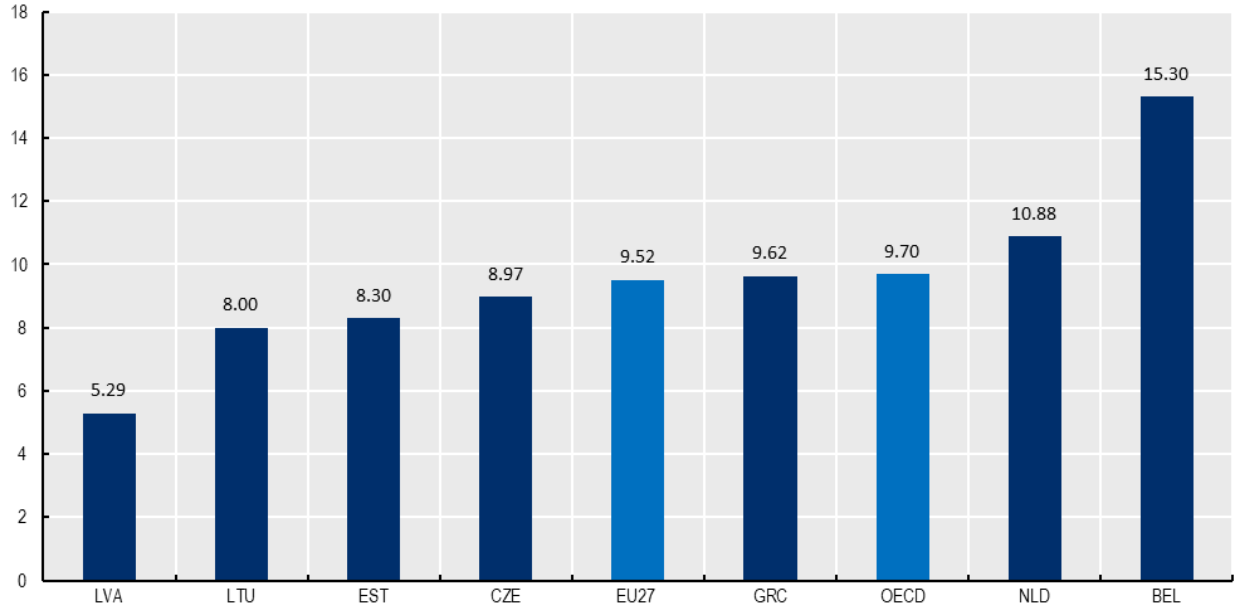
Scientists are generally not trained with some science for policy competences

Not all evidence for policymaking must necessarily come from inside government. On the contrary, universities and research institutes are often able to provide more thorough research and analysis, especially in areas that require investment of significant time and resources. However, the evidence produced in the scientific and academic world is not always accessible and actionable for policymakers and often focuses on fundamental research. This creates barriers for decision makers to access, understand, and ultimately use, this evidence. For this reason, to ensure supply of evidence from the academic world it is important for scientists to have specific skills. The JRC has developed a competency framework for scientists to engage in 'Science for Policy' with five competence clusters: Understanding policy; Participate in policymaking; Communicate; Engage with Citizens and Stakeholders and Collaborate.

In Latvia, researchers and scientists are rarely formally trained with a policy-oriented approach. However, some universities are trying to provide PhD students with relevant skills that can help them in this activity. For example, at the University of Latvia, researchers have to work on their presentation skills and are required to provide a summary of 850 words of their research. In addition, PhD students are often offered to collaborate in line ministries for a short period of 1-2 months to have a first impression of the policymaking world. However, longer and more formal secondments from the universities to the public administrations do not exist making it sometimes more difficult to secure a systematic cross-fertilisation between the academic and policy world. An underlying factor preventing researchers to interact more frequently with policymakers are limited capacities in the Latvian academic world. Indeed, Latvia is one of the OECD countries with the lowest number of researchers per 1 000 employees making for them difficult to concentrate to other aspects other than fundamental research (see Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7. Researchers

Total, per 1 000 employed, 2021



Note: Researchers are professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems, as well as in the management of the projects concerned. This indicator is measured in per 1 000 people employed and in number of researchers; the data are available as a total and broken down by gender.
Source: OECD (2023[30]), "Researchers" (indicator), https://doi.org/10.1787/20ddfb0f-en (accessed on 3 July 2023).

Organisational structures to supply evidence, capacity at the organisational level

Having the skills inside line ministries is not a sufficient condition to ensure a systematic production of evidence that can be easily used in policymaking. Indeed, there is need for some structured processes ensuring that the right evidence is channelled in the right moment. This can occur by organising efficiently analytical skills inside line ministries with clear mandate to perform these activities and by establishing collaborations with universities and research institutes to obtain evidence in the right moments. Without these organisational structures supply of evidence would occur mainly on *ad hoc* basis potentially hindering the overall quality and trustworthiness of the evidence. This section provides an overview on how line ministries organise evidence supply inside the ministry and how they outsource to research institutes and universities.

Analytical functions are often spread across directorates and not organised in dedicated analytical units

Analytical units inside line ministries are often very useful to establish a good co-ordination of evidence production and use inside ministries. These can perform different analytical activities like ex ante and *ex post* policy evaluation as well as macroeconomic analysis and forecast. Even if small in size, when efficiently organised, they can co-ordinate evidence needs both inside the ministry and contract out specific requests to research institutes and universities.

Most line ministries in Latvia do not have a specific analytical unit responsible for collecting systematically and supplying analytical or scientific evidence. Hence, evidence supply occurs often in a patchy and unstructured way making EIPM more a voluntary activity rather than a structured process increasing the chances of potentially low-quality evidence and cherry picking. The only ministry with a specific analytical unit is the Ministry of Economics which has a dedicated team for these activities, the Analytical Service (see Box 2.6). For other ministries, analytical functions remain spread across the ministry or outsourced to arm's length institutes and universities. When spread across departments, analytical work represents only one of the several other tasks that they are required to do and, for this reason, it is carried out in sporadic and unstructured ways, from what was observed during the interviews. In some cases, interesting analysis is carried out due to the motivation of the employees rather than because of actual requests.

Table 2.2. Organisation of evidence supply at the level of line ministries

Ministry	Analytical functions are spread across the departments	Analytical Unit	Advisory bodies
Ministry of Agriculture	X		Council of Science of Ministry of Agriculture'
Ministry of Climate and Energy	X		
Ministry of Economics	X		Research and Innovation Governance Council Economic Council Productivity Council of Latvia Tripartite Cooperation Sub-council for Competitiveness and Sustainability The Employment Board
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	X		Environmental Advisory Council National IT Security Council
Ministry of Health	X		State Operational Medical Commission Institution of Main Specialists
Ministry of Welfare	X		Steering Committee on Social Inclusion Policy Committee on Gender Equality

Note: Check Table A A.2 for more information on the advisory bodies.
Source: Questionnaires responses and https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/konsultativas-padomes.

Box 2.6. The Analytical Service in the Ministry of Economics

The Analytical Service provides analytical support to the Ministry of Economics. Its mandate is to analyse Latvia's macroeconomic development and make proposals on the necessary changes, co-operate with EU and other international institutions on economic analysis, co-ordinate issues related to EU economic policy, support the sectoral policy units in the Ministry of Economics. The Analytical Service also conducts foresight analyses in areas like economic development, labour market forecast and demographic projections.

It has 14 employees and has a low turnover, proving to be an attractive unit inside the public administration. All positions in the Analytical service require graduate degree (master's degree is desirable) in social sciences. Additionally, employees of Analytical service need to have knowledge in English and/or other foreign language and knowledge of legislative policymaking and policy planning processes.

Analytical Service has done analysis on Latvia's trade with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, macroeconomic analysis for the National Industrial Policy Guideline 2021-2027, analysis on socio-economic impact of COVID-19, as well as every two years produces medium- and long-term labour market projections.

Source: Responses from Questionnaire and Fact-Finding Mission.

Finally, supply of evidence can also occur through the establishment of working groups and scientific advisory bodies. In Latvia, the interaction with scientists and experts is different across ministries. There are no permanent or ad-hoc scientific bodies in each ministry. Some ministries have dedicated bodies for advice like the Ministry of Health (with the Main specialists) or the Ministry of Welfare. The first one is composed of institutions of the main specialists in the Ministry of Health. The main specialist is a medical practitioner who represents one of the 21 specialties established in Latvia. As of July 2023, there are a total of 22 main specialists in the Ministry of Health (a total of 3 specialists in the field of infectious diseases) (Ministry of Health, 2021[31]). Candidates for the main specialist are nominated by professional associations, the Ministry of Health, and its subordinate institutions. The main specialist's responsibilities are to participate in the development of health development planning documents and other regulatory acts, as well as to provide proposals for the industry.

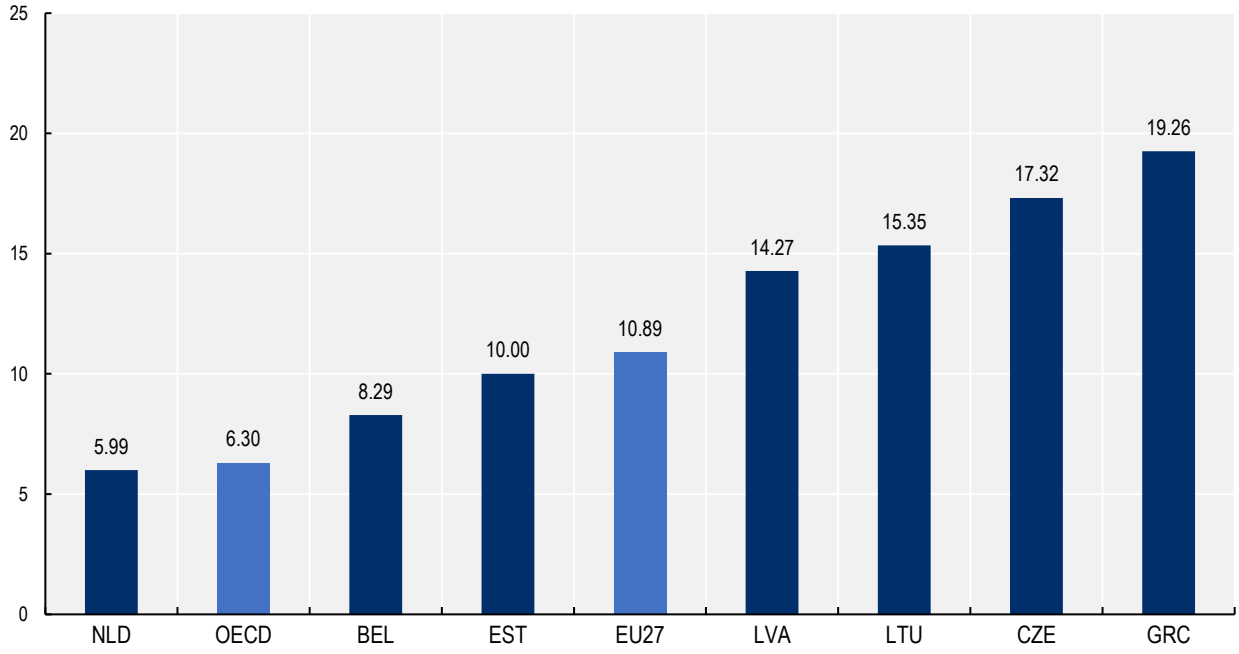
Evidence mainly comes from research institutes at arm's length but also from universities through formal and informal channels

Across OECD countries, ministries often rely on research institutes at arm's length to obtain evidence that are not able to internally supply. This system presents several benefits. Being located outside of the actual administration is often a sign of independence and can help ensuring the credibility of the evidence. This, however, depends on the mandate of these institutions, how they are financed and how independent they are in their decisions. Indeed, if poorly financed or if financed only by one single institution the overall independence and credibility of the institution can be hindered. In addition, being subordinated to the respective ministry may impact influence and being located outside of the actual ministry might also decrease their chances of impact as the ministry might not use conclusions which contradict current policies.

In Latvia, it is not uncommon for researchers to work inside the public administration especially in more technical institutes. Indeed, even if the number of researchers is significantly lower than the OECD average (5 researchers per 1 000 employees), the share of these researchers working in the government is quite high with around 14% of total researchers working in public sector institutions (OECD, 2023[30]; OECD, 2023[32]) (see Figure 2.7 and Figure 2.8). The significance of this is ambiguous, as it rests on an overall low number of researchers in Latvia, and may also reflect on the lack of private sector alternatives for RD.

Figure 2.8. Government researchers

Government researchers as a percentage of total researchers, 2021



Note: Government researchers are professionals working for government institutions engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems and also in the management of the projects concerned. The graph shows the number of researchers working in government institutions as percentage of the total researchers in Latvia.
Source: OECD (2023[32]), "Government researchers" (indicator), https://doi.org/10.1787/c03b3052-en (accessed on 3 July 2023).

Across the five ministries analysed, several of them rely on organisations at arm's length to acquire technical and scientific knowledge (see Table 2.3). The question remains however as to whether the ministries are properly equipped in terms of skills for demand of evidence to ask the right questions to these institutions, which will also be discussed in the following sections.

The overall collaboration with research institutes was assessed as positive by both stakeholders. This collaboration can occur through formal channels with ministries publishing their research needs in the form of tenders and institutes applying to the specific proposals based on their capacities. However, the staff in these organisations are often poorly paid and see high level of competition. At the same time, more informal and continuous exchange of less structured evidence in forms of statistics, briefs and also advice take place. The question remains however as to whether the ministries are properly equipped in terms of skills for demand of evidence to ask the right questions to these institutions, which will also be discussed in the following sections.

Table 2.3. Co-operation of line ministries with analytical institutes operating at arms' length

Ministry	Institutions that support EIPM functions at arm's length of ministries
Ministry of Agriculture	BIOR Latvian State Forest Research Institute 'Silava' Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics Institute of Horticulture
Ministry of Climate and Energy	Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre Institute of Physical Energetics State Forest Research Institute "Silava"
Ministry of Economics	
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	State Regional Development Agency Nature Conservation Agency
Ministry of Health	Centre for Disease Prevention and Control Health Inspectorate National Health Service
Ministry of Welfare	

Note: see Table A A.2 in Annex A for additional information. Note: the Ministry of Economics does not have a dedicated research institute but has a significant internal Analytical Service (see Box 2.6). The institutions underlined are scientific institutions. Most of these institutes have some knowledge brokerage function.
Source: Questionnaires responses.

In addition to these arm's length institutions, some line ministries co-operate also with universities directly (see Table 2.4). Again, this can occur in different forms through formal or more informal channels. For example, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development has signed a co-operation agreement with the Latvian University of Biosciences and Technologies and the University of Latvia for the promotion of co-operation in social sciences, natural sciences, including limiting the negative effects of climate change, artificial intelligence, and other fields. In the field of regional policy, the Ministry also co-operates with the Riga Technical University and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences. The Ministry of Agriculture has some positive collaboration with the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies on greenhouse gas emission, air quality and other related aspects. In the absence of more structured agreements, research requests are conducted under procurement procedures. This is what is used sometimes by the Ministry of Welfare which has not yet developed such a formal collaboration with universities.

Secondments and exchanges across ministries and universities is under explored. Few ministries organise internships or opportunities for PhDs. Overall, this remain limited and, as mentioned before, there are no formal ways to engage PhDs students inside the public administration. Such opportunities often represent the possibility to create a bridge between the world of research and the world of policy, helping future researchers to acquire some understanding of the needs of policymakers and providing ministries with direct access to research results. An interesting activity is organised by the MEPRD that has established a Coordination Group, which collects potential research topics for long-term student involvement in the areas of digital transformation, environmental protection, and regional development.

Overall, researchers working with government were on average positive about their collaborations even if experiences are heterogenous across different institutions, faculties and fields. Even if experiences across faculties might be difficult to generalise, some common elements emerged that should be tackled. The competition for policy-oriented research is very high and often poorly paid. In some contexts, universities are unable to compete with consultancy firms and the latter ones are selected based on lower prices rather than higher quality. In addition, universities are often unable to apply to interesting research opportunities as the time of the tenders is often too limited to create some interesting research proposals.

Table 2.4. Collaborations with universities are less frequent

Ministry	Formal collaboration with universities
Ministry of Agriculture	Latvia University of Life Science and Technologies
Ministry of Climate and Energy	Latvia University of Life Science and Technologies
Ministry of Economics	Productivity Board (University of Latvia)
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	University of Latvia Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences Riga Technical University
Ministry of Health	-
Ministry of Welfare	-

Source: Questionnaires responses.

Inter-organisational co-ordination mechanisms for evidence and science for policy, capacity at the inter-organisational level

Evidence Informed Decision Making requires a capacity to work across policy clusters to address complex challenges through a holistic approach. For this reason, also policy relevant evidence needs to be produced in a multidisciplinary and collaborative settings. To produce this evidence there is need for collaboration on several aspects, in particular:

- To access data for research purposes across both governmental and non-governmental institutions.
- To ensure collaboration across different actors in supply of evidence.
- To support multidisciplinary policy oriented research.

This section provides an overview of the various interorganisational elements supporting EIPM in Latvia. It discusses data governance looking in particular at access, and use of data for research purposes and the recent advancement in open data and open science data. It then analyses how the government collaborates and interacts with different knowledge producers to inform policies. Finally, it looks at which instruments Latvia uses to promote multidisciplinary research.

Access to data and data governance to support EIPM

To produce reliable analysis, there is need to have access to high-quality and timely data, as well as appropriate tools to use the data. Indeed, EIPM strongly relies on the use of different data sources to generate the evidence needed (see Box 2.7). However, despite its importance, data quality and availability represent one of the biggest challenges faced for evidence-informed policymaking in all OECD countries. In particular, EIPM can be hindered by:

- a lack of available data,
- issues with data access,
- capacity gaps among government departments and agencies to generate data in a format that can be used.

Box 2.7. Data sources for evidence-informed policymaking

Conducting quality analyses requires quality data, which may come from various sources:

- **Statistical data:** commonly used in research, it corresponds to census data or more generally to information on a given population collected through national or international surveys.
- **Administrative data:** this data is generally collected through administrative systems managed by government departments or ministries, and usually concerns whole sets of individuals, communities and businesses that are concerned by a particular policy. For instance, it includes housing data, tax records and data from public administrations.
- **Big data:** mainly drawn from a variety of sources such as citizen inputs and the private sector, big data is most often digital and continuously generated. It has the advantage of coming in greater volume and variety.
- **Evaluation data:** this data is collected for the purpose of the evaluation. It can take the form of qualitative questionnaires, on-site observations, focus groups, or experimental data.
- **Open scientific data:** data collected and used for scientific research which is available freely to ensure reproductivity of scientific results.

Combining different data sources also has the potential to unlock relevant insights for EIPM.

Source: (Results for America, 2017[33]).

Some of these challenges are present also in the Latvian context that, despite some recent improvements, is still characterised by limitations. Indeed, several ministries mentioned difficulty related to data access or use among the most significant barriers to EIPM (see Figure 2.5). Also, researchers experience difficulties in using government data as this data is often difficult to find, collected in incompatible formats or requires significant time to be analysed.

The decentralised nature of the Latvian statistical system makes data sharing difficult in the absence of a strong data governance framework

The statistical system in Latvia is quite decentralised making sometimes difficult to understand where the databases are located and how to access and merge them. The main producer and managing institution of the Latvian Statistical System is the Central Statistical Bureau (hereafter CBS) which is an institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Economics (Saeima, 2015[34]). Production of statistics is regulated by a three-year Official Statistics Programme which establishes a list of official statistics to be produced during the planning period. All databases of national importance must also meet minimum quality standards. Together with the CBS, there are other 38 national statistical institutions providing official statistics (see Table A A.1 in Annex A). For this reason, identifying and merging data can be challenging. On this aspect, an effort was done with the creation of the research data catalogue on the Official statistics portal which lists some anonymised individual data available either offsite or on the remote access system of the CBS (Official statistics of Latvia, 2023[35]). However, at the moment the catalogue contains only 10 datasets all from the CBS.

Access to data for research purposes is possible but still require significant transaction costs (in terms of time). Indeed, even if the statistical law allows for data access for research purposes (see Box 2.8), there is no governance mechanisms in place for researchers to access government data

systematically. Data requests are treated *ad hoc* and, even if in most cases researchers end up obtaining the data needed, these can require significant time.

Finally, the very decentralised collection system hinders the comparability of data and, once data is obtained, data formats are often difficult to use both for researchers and analysts inside the government making analysis considerably time-consuming. To address these issues, the Ministry of Economics is working to create a National Data Analysis Centre but this is still at an initial phase. The CBS has still not been involved in the process proving once again how much decentralised the data governance is in Latvia.

Box 2.8. Access to indirectly identifiable data for research purposes

The Latvian Statistical Law allows for access to Indirectly identifiable data for research purpose. For the scope of the law, research purposes are '*works that provides case studies, analysis, drawing up of conceptual proposals or impact assessment*'. To have access to this data applicants have to submit an application with the following information:

1. the purpose for the use of indirectly identifiable data
2. description of the research project to be carried out
3. reason why indirectly identifiable data are needed for the research
4. list of the required indirectly identifiable data and indicators
5. specialists who will use indirectly identifiable data, description of their qualification and experience
6. information regarding any research carried out previously
7. information regarding the publication of research results
8. information regarding data protection and disclosure control methods
9. preferred type of access.

Source: Saeima (2015[34]), Statistikas likums (Statistics Law) 2015/118.3, https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/274749-statistics-law.

In the meantime, to share data more easily both universities and line ministries have developed specific agreements with institutions with whom they collaborate more frequently. For example, the Faculty of Engineering Economics and Management of the Riga Technical University has agreements to use data from governmental databases such as with the State Land Service to use cadastral data for academic research. To have access to data essential for monitoring and analysis, the Ministry of Welfare has established a special Information system called LabIS. This was established in 2015 and integrates pseudonymised data from registers of the ministry and its subordinated institutions together with data from other ministries like the Ministry of Education and Sciences.

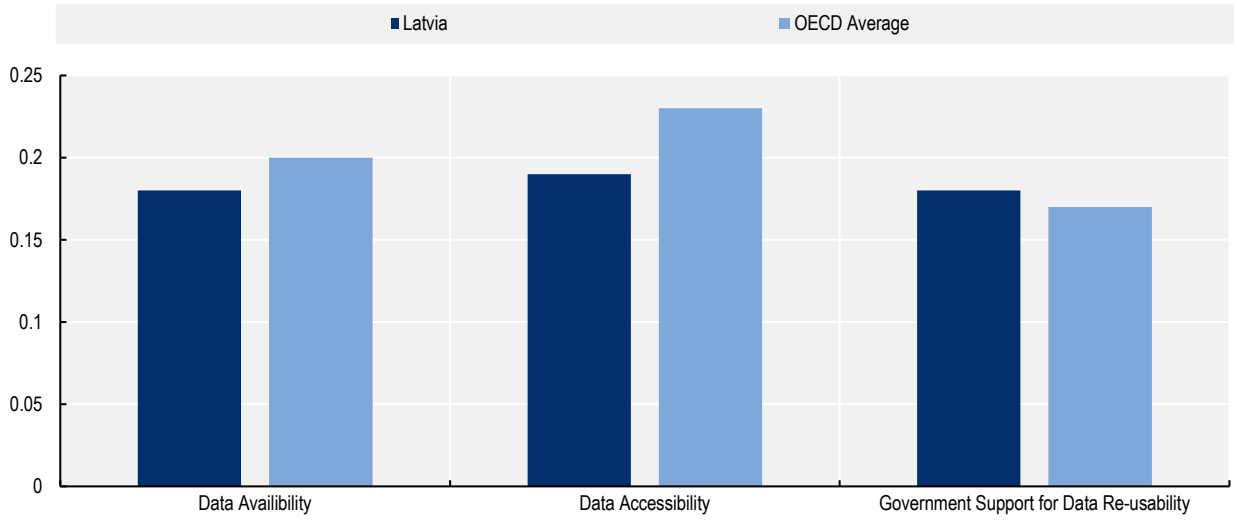
Overall, in Latvia the main problems related to data for research are the comparability and merging of datasets partially caused by the high level of decentralisation of the statistical system.

Recent advancements in open data and open science data need to be pursued

Publicity of data is important to make sure that analysts and researchers are aware of the different existing datasets. As it was mentioned above, this could still be improved in Latvia as datasets are often located in different institutions and it is sometimes difficult to have a complete panorama of the existing ones. However, important progresses in open data occurred in the past years. The OECD OURData index, which measures accessibility, usefulness and re-usability of public data ranked Latvia slightly below the OECD average but above both the two Baltic states Estonia and Lithuania (see Figure 2.9) (OECD, 2020[36]).

Since the previous edition in 2017, Latvia has increased considerably its position by creating a central Open Government Data Portal enhancing data availability and accessibility and adopting an Open Data Strategy for 2019-2022 (OECD, 2020[36]) (see Box 2.9).

Figure 2.9. Breakdown of the OECD OURData Index



Source: Adapted from (OECD, 2020[36]), OECD OURdata Index: 2019 - Latvia.

Box 2.9. Latvia's Open Data Portal

The Latvian Open Data Portal was created as part of a project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund in 2017. Latvia's Open Data Portal is under the supervision of Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The Ministry provides methodological support to publishers, while the State Regional Development Agency manages the technical aspects of the portal. The CKAN open-source technology platform and the open-source data catalogue were used to construct the Latvian Open Data Portal. As of June 2023, the portal contains 770 accessible data sets gathered from 96 institutions (ministries, municipalities, state and municipalities' institutions). The data is categorised into 14 categories. Data can be found based on the data provider, data category or data type (e.g. CSV, XLSX, JSON). All of the data released on the open data portal for Latvia are also available on the European data portal.

Source: Latvian Open Data Portal, https://data.gov.lv/lv (accessed on 2 June 2023).

Open-government data can be used as inputs for scientific research (OECD, 2020[37]). At the same time, scientific research also produces new data that can be used openly to help diffuse latest knowledge and ensure the quality of the scientific findings. For this reason, not only government data but also scientific data should be open and accessible to facilitate evidence informed policymaking. The importance of Open scientific data is stressed by the European Commission that, with the new research and innovation funding programme Horizon Europe, will require not only open access to publications by default (as it was the case for Horizon 2020) but also open access to research data. To guarantee this, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed the Latvian Open Science Strategy 2021-2027 (see Box 2.10).

Box 2.10. Open Science Data Strategy in Latvia

Open Science data in Latvia is one of the three pillars of Latvia's Open Science Strategy 2021-2027. As of 1 January 2023, all state-funded research programmes must make their scientific publications openly accessible in green (for free) or gold (for payment) open access without an embargo period. The Latvia's Open Science Strategy indicates that open access publications must be provided with permanent identifiers, scientific institutions must introduce open access publishing incentives for researchers, teaching staff and research groups, and scientific institutions must continue to provide researchers with educational opportunities about open access publishing practices.

In connection with Latvia's open science strategy 2021-2027, Latvian scientific universities (University of Latvia, Riga Stradiņš University, Riga Technical University, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies) have founded the **Higher Education and Science Information Technology Shared Service Centre (VPC)**. The centre's main functions are to provide publicly funded basic services for all scientific institutions and high-quality and secure open data infrastructure. As of June 2023, members of the Higher Education and Science Information Technology Shared Service Centre represent 58% of Latvia's students and 64% of researchers and scientists.

With the support of Ministry of Education and Science, the centre will establish the *DataverseLV* - general research data repository network in Latvia. *DataverseLV* will provide an opportunity for anyone interested to find and access the research data of Latvian researchers. The DataverseLV network will allow researchers whose scientific institutions do not offer their own research data repositories to deposit research data in it. As of June 2023, in *DataverseLV* only one repository of scientific institutes is available, which is Riga Stradiņš University.

Source: (Ministry of Education and Science, 2022[38]; Higher Education and Science Information Technology Shared Service Centre, 2023[39]).

Overall, Latvia is working toward a more open and accessible data infrastructure. This will considerably benefit research and production of new evidence. However, even if very useful, open data and open scientific data will not be sufficient to perform more sophisticated and advanced analysis. For this reason, together with the open data strategy, more attention is required for data that can't be made open but that can play important role in EIPM. In addition, besides the data, the challenges are also about the capacity to construct simulation models which can use these data and simulate consequences of various policy choices.

Inter-organisational collaborations in evidence supply

As already underlined, different actors can provide policy-relevant evidence and contribute to the EIPM ecosystem. In Latvia there is a significant number of relevant institutions contributing to the evidence ecosystem by supplying policy-relevant research. These actors are located outside of the executive and play a different role in the system. For example, the Fiscal Discipline Council, the Competition Council and Bank of Latvia, even if they are independent institutions can sometimes help governments in performing analysis which require specific skills. This often occur more through informal rather than formal channels. In addition, together with research and analyses, these actors are also often involved in working groups and provide advice in a more recurrent and unstructured way.

A set of actors at arms' length from government are also active in evidence production and knowledge brokerage

A set of key institutions at arms' length from government play a significant role in terms of knowledge brokerage and interorganisational mechanisms. The Fiscal Discipline Council (FDC), established in 2013 by the *Fiscal Discipline Law*, supports Latvia's fiscal management by monitoring compliance with fiscal rules, scrutinising and endorsing macroeconomics forecasts (OECD, 2021[40]). It is an independent institution with an independent budget which provides relevant policy-oriented research in fiscal policies. The evidence produced by the institution is used considerably by the Ministry of Finance, especially in the budgetary process and also by the Budget and Finance Committee of the Saeima. The Council is composed of 6 members – 3 members nominated jointly by the Governor of the Bank of Latvia and Minister for the Finance, and 3 members nominated by at least 10 deputies of the Parliament (Saeima, 2013[41]). Additionally, the Council is composed of the specialists of the field in economics and finances either from Latvia or any other Member State of the European Union. The Council is also supported by a secretariat of three people. In the last years, the Council produced some regular reports on revenue-expenses, budget implementation, macroeconomic forecasts as established by the *Fiscal Discipline Law*. Together with these activities, the Council also performs more *ad hoc* research at the request of the Ministry of Finance. An interesting example is the recent impact assessment of Latvia's National Resilience and Recovery Plan (NRRP) which was conducted together with the Productivity Research Institute and will be discussed later (see Box 2.23).

A similar role is played by the Competition Council which operates in accordance with the *Competition Law* (Saeima, 2001[42]). Competition Council was established in 1997 and since 2023 works as independent institution. To strengthen the operation and independence of the Competition Council, in 2023 the Ministry of Economy developed the Regulations of the Advisory Council of the Competition Council, so in 2023 the Advisory Council, consisting of 9 people, began to operate (Competition Council, 2023[43]). Every year, the Competition Council publishes an overview of their activities as part of their role of monitoring competition (Competition Council, 2023[44]). The Council also produces original studies which are planned early on the competitiveness of specific sectors and include public opinion studies.

Also Bank of Latvia plays an active role in the production of evidence both for policymakers and for the general public. Indeed, the Bank produces relevant analytical activities and has a dedicated research unit composed of 12 researchers. Research activities are planned yearly through a research plan that is discussed and approved with the Council of the Bank. The quality of the analytical work is ensured by a peer review system. In addition to these papers, the Bank has engaged on several occasions with municipalities and ministries to help them performing some analyses. For example, the Ministry of Welfare asked the Bank help to develop an impact assessment of the minimum income reform (discussed earlier in Chapter 1). Even if these represents good examples of collaboration, they occurred through *ad hoc* agreements and were not sustained by any arrangements which could make them more systematic types of collaborations.

Even if several advisory bodies exist, multidisciplinary advisory bodies are underdeveloped

Evidence supply is not only provided in terms of written research and policy briefs but can also take place in multi-stakeholders' fora through more structured or unstructured mechanisms. Inside OECD countries, there is a great variety of structures and institutions that provide scientific advice to the government, which can therefore be considered as scientific advisory bodies (see Box 2.11) (OECD, 2015[45]).

Box 2.11. Different types of advisory bodies

Science policy advisory committee or councils: They are dedicated to providing advice on science and technology policies. These are typically deliberative bodies which can be either embedded in the government or be independent with a governmental mandate.

Permanent or ad hoc scientific/technical advisory structures: Governments rely on scientific/technical advisory structures to provide evidence and advice on a wide variety of policy issues.

Academies, professional societies and research organisations: Academies and professional societies are collectives of academic, industrial, and other researchers representing scientific communities. They usually do not have an exclusive or primary focus on providing science advice, but in some instances they can have a significant influence on policy.

Individual scientific advisors and counsellors: Governments in many, if not all, countries also rely on scientific advice from individuals, either in an informal way through personal networks, or via formally appointed scientific counsellors.

Source: OECD (2015[45]), "Scientific Advice for Policy Making: The Role and Responsibility of Expert Bodies and Individual Scientists", *OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers*, No. 21, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/5js33l1jcpwb-en.

In Latvia, a significant number of advisory bodies exist (see Table A A.2 for the ones of the five ministries analysed). As it was presented above, these often involve scientists and experts. However, most of these advisory bodies cover a specific policy domain and when looking at multidisciplinary councils and bodies, these are mainly to co-ordinate across ministries. The need for more spaces for multidisciplinary discussions between ministries and academics was underlined by both actors during the fact-finding mission.

An important council for the promotion of EIPM is represented by the Research and Innovation Strategic Council (PISP). This council was created in 2014 to provide high-level advice to the Cabinet of Ministers and the Parliament on the area in which science and research should focus. This council was chaired by the Prime Minister and included as members higher education institutions, public research organisations, the Academy of Science and business organisations (OECD, 2023[46]). Despite the good premises, the Council activity has been minimal and, between 2018 and 2020, no meetings occurred[1]. At more technical level, the Innovation and Research Management council (IPPP) involves the Ministers on Education and Education and Science, the Council of Science and the Directors of the LIAA agency.

Overall, even if collaboration with different actors occur, these are more often based on informal voluntary collaborations and are not always sustained by sufficient funding and mandates able to make them structured and recurrent interactions.

The State Research Programme helps connecting ministries and researchers

The State Research Programme (SRP) represents one of the most significant policies that Latvia has adopted to actively produce policy-relevant research and to foster the visibility of research in society, as well as to strengthen the link between research and public policies (Cabinet of Ministers, 2018[47]). With

[1] See background report on Specific Support for the development of the human capital for research and innovation in Latvia https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/6088/download

the new SRP, all sectorial ministries are able to create their own research programmes to obtain evidence tailored to their policy needs. During the development of the programme, the sectoral Ministry consults with the Latvian Academy of Sciences and the Latvian Council of Science (Cabinet of Ministers, 2018[47]). The Latvian Council of Science helps the ministries with the development of the project tender; evaluates the conformity of project applications with the administrative criteria; organises and ensure the scientific expert-examination of project applications, the mid-term scientific review of the project and the final scientific review of the project applying the approach and principles of the evaluation of the European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation "Horizon 2020" or "Horizon Europe" (Cabinet of Ministers, 2018[47]). The programme is approved by the Cabinet of Ministers and generally covers a three-year period. In addition, for each programme a strategic council is created involving the line ministry, the Ministry of Education and Science, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders (but not the research institution).

Until 2018, only the Ministry of Education and Science was able to implement research programmes and ministries were only consulted on their needs but were not directly involved in the creation of the programme itself. Since 2018, almost half of the ministries have developed at least one state research programme, and some are in the process of developing their first one (see Table 2.5). The programme is financed from the State budget resources allocated to the sectoral Ministry for the current year.

Table 2.5. State Research Programmes in Ministries

Ministry	Have used State Research Programme	Have not used State Research Programme	Examples	Budget
Ministry of Education and Science	X		Mitigating the consequences of COVID-19	EUR 5 million
			Latvia's heritage and future challenges for the country's sustainability	EUR 3.11 million
			Latvian language	EUR 3.11 million
Ministry of Agriculture	X		Sustainable management of land resources and landscapes: challenges, development scenarios and proposals	EUR 5 million
Ministry of Health	X		Mitigating the consequences of COVID-19	EUR 5 million
Ministry of Welfare		X		
Ministry of Climate and Energy			Policymaking support system for achieving climate neutrality target	EUR 1.25 million
			Overtaking Ministry's of Economics SRP in Energy	-
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	X		Sustainable development of the territory and rational use of land resources	EUR 405 000
Ministry of Economics	X		Energy	EUR 5.1 million
			Innovation Fund - sectoral research program	EUR 11.4 million
Ministry of Finance	X		Reducing the shadow economy for sustainable development	EUR 251 536

Source: Latvian Science Council (2023[48]), Valsts pētījumu programma [State Research Programme], https://www.lzp.gov.lv/lv/valsts-petijumu-programma-vpp.

Overall, the programme is considered quite successful both from researchers and policymakers allowing them to interact on a more regular basis. However, not all ministries were considered equipped with the skills to understand and demand the evidence they needed. In some cases, research conducted in SRP was still too abstract and difficult for policymakers to use directly. Part of this issue is that the research is evaluated against academic standards which do not necessarily help making it policy focused. In addition, the very short time dedicated to submit the project proposal (around one month) makes it difficult for academics to meaningfully contribute to the project proposal. On the other hand, on the side of the ministry there is not a definite time to elaborate the proposal and the finalisation of the proposal can be delayed by the time it takes to agree on the emphasis of the programme and to successfully propose it to the Cabinet of Ministers. Overall, the SRP has helped in creating an instrument to facilitate evidence supply, however, there is need for line ministries to foster evidence demand to ensure that the right questions are asked.

Demand for evidence for policymaking

Introduction

Supply of evidence does not ensure its use. This is a well-documented fact both in research and practice across many jurisdictions and even in some of the most advanced OECD countries in this area. The Prime Minister's Implementation Unit in the United Kingdom carried out a review of the government's Major Projects back in 2019 and found that only 8% (35 billion GBP) of the 432 billion GBP pounds being spent on these projects had robust evaluation plans in place (NAO, 2021[49]). Another study on over 2 000 Australian public servants showed that, even if public servants have access to academic research, they are not using it systematically in policymaking (Newman, Cherney and Head, 2016[50]).

Indeed, together with supply of evidence, there is need for decision makers to demand the evidence for it to actually be used. This remains a challenge in several OECD countries. Demand for evidence, and precisely low demand for evidence, depends on a variety of reasons. At the individual level, evidence users – namely, decision makers – can have difficulties in understanding and interpreting evidence if they do not have the appropriate skills and knowledge to do so. Decision makers must also have access to evidence in a format that is fit-for-purpose and in a timely manner, in order to use it. This is why organisational strategies to promote demand for evidence, such as publicity and communication, or thinking early about evidentiary needs, through evidence plans for example, play an essential role in promoting EIPM. At the same time, to ensure that evidence can benefit multiple stakeholders and to avoid the risk of duplication, there is need to share and discuss evidence needs between different actors.

In Latvia, demand for evidence remains a challenge for a variety of reasons. Skills to define and demand evidence, which is policy relevant, are lacking in line ministries. As a result, decision makers are not informed about the values of using evidence for policymaking or – even when they are – do not have the appropriate competences to do so. At the organisational level, interesting practices to promote demand for evidence have emerged, but they require more systematisation and ambition. For instance, the high level of transparency makes access to published research easy across the government, but that research rarely reaches the right audience because of insufficient communication of results. At the inter-organisational level, several actors, both in the executive and outside of the executive, have the mandate to promote the use of evidence across government but there are still insufficient spaces for them to connect and discuss about evidence needs.

This section will examine the state of play regarding individual skills to use evidence in Latvia. It then analyses the organisational structures in place in the country to promote the use of evidence such as the use of evidence plans and knowledge brokers. Finally, it provides an overview of the mechanisms currently in place in Latvia to demand evidence at the inter-organisational level.

Skills to use evidence inside the government, capacity at the individual level

Having skills to conduct analysis or to commission evidence inside the government is not a sufficient condition in of itself to promote evidence-informed policymaking if there is no interest from the people making the decisions to actually use evidence. Moreover, interest in using evidence is only a first step: to use evidence, decision makers must possess the skills to access, comprehend and translate it into policy decisions. In Latvia, the ability to use evidence is very heterogenous across ministries and use of evidence can change considerably with political change. To ensure that use of evidence, including to inform policymaking, is resistant to political change, it is important to equip senior civil servants with the skills to access and use evidence as much as possible. To do so, there is first of all need to identify which are the skills needed. The OECD and JRC have developed a joint framework for skills to develop a good use of evidence from decision makers in government (Box 2.12). In addition, use of evidence is also one of the 7 cluster competences needed for innovative policymaking according to the JRC framework on innovative policymaking (see Box 2.12).

Box 2.12. Skills for use of evidence and framework for innovative policymaking, OECD and JRC approaches

The OECD has developed a framework for skills to ensure a good use of evidence from decision makers in government in co-operation with JRC over 2018-20. This skill set is meant to be considered as a collective goal for the improvement of public service in the future, as opposed to a list of skills that each public servant needs to master individually. Thus, the 6 skills listed below are complimentary to each other.

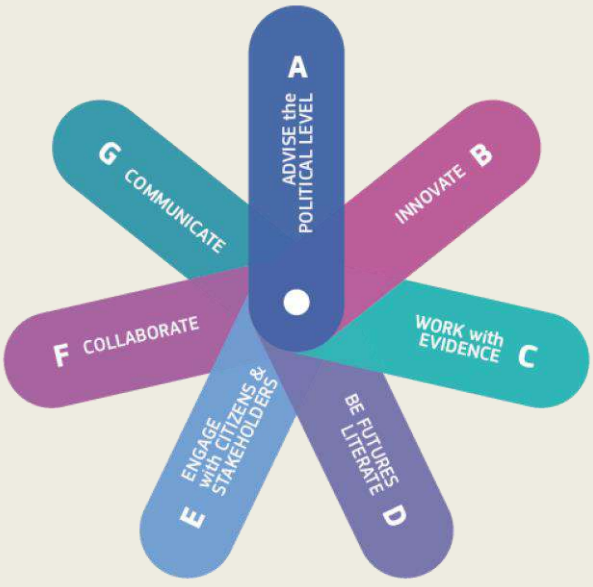
- **Understanding EIPM** – this skill relates to the capacity to understand the policy cycle and know how evidence can be employed in each of its component. Such a skill has to be underpinned by a familiarity with fundamental research and statistical methods.
- **Obtaining Evidence** – this skill relates to ability to recognise and measure the existing stock of evidence in a relevant policy area and identify the evidence gaps to commission high quality studies.
- **Interrogating and Assessing Evidence** – this skill relates to ability to assess the provenance, reliability and appropriateness of evidence by using systemic, holistic and critical thinking tools free of personal bias.
- **Using and Applying Evidence in Policymaking** – this skill relates to having in depth knowledge of a policy area and understanding how different evidence, research and innovative approach can be used to support policy design and implementation in this field.
- **Engaging with Stakeholders in EIPM –** this skill relates to engagement and communications skills. It reflects one's ability to engage various groups of stakeholders in a discussion and to communicate policy messages effectively.
- **Evaluating the Success of EIPM** – this skill relates to the ability to use different evaluation approaches to inform and improve EIPM processes, as well as the overall policy cycle.

Figure 2.10. 6 complementary skillsets for using evidence

Source: OECD (2021[51]), *Mobilising Evidence at the Centre of Government in Lithuania: Strengthening Decision Making and Policy Evaluation for Long-term Development*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/323e3500-en.

In the following years, the JRC has further invested to shape a competence framework for innovative policymaking, with a corresponding systematic mapping of such skills, in a way that it could be used as a competence framework by human resource managers. The competence framework consists of 36 competences divided into 7 clusters of competences: Advise the political level, Innovate, Work with evidence, Be futures literate, Engage with citizens and stakeholders, Collaborate, and Communicate, all enabling innovative policymaking.

Figure 2.11. Competence framework for innovative policymaking



Source: Schwendinger, Lene and Viktoria (2022[52]), *Competences for Policymaking,* EUR 31115 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, https://doi.org/10.2760/642121.

Initiatives to promote individual skills to demand evidence are limited in Latvia

As mentioned in the previous section, Latvia lacks champions with the skills to commission and demand evidence in a way that ensures its quality, relevance, and applicability. This was often mentioned as a challenge when developing the State Research Programmes.

To secure these skills inside the public administration, several OECD countries have specific figures which help in identifying evidence needs and can communicate evidence to policymakers. This role is sometimes carried out by Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA) or equivalent. The CSA can play a very important role in connecting evidence to policy by acting as broker and expert navigator between the government and the scientific community also ensuring the proper use of scientific evidence in the government (OECD, 2015[45]). Being involved in policymaking and possessing the skills to understand and access evidence put them in a very good position to perform this activity. This champion does not exist in Latvia even if Ministers sometimes rely on appointed advisors for some of these tasks. However, as discussed before, the role of these experts in the Latvian administration is often only technical and they are not consulted on strategic aspects.

Another complementary practice to increase skills inside the government for demand of evidence is to provide training programmes for Senior Civil Service leadership. Some of these approaches have been underlined in the OECD Building Capacity for Evidence Informed Policy-Making (OECD, 2020[3]). In Latvia, the School of Public Administration has developed a Senior Management Development Program partly financed by the European Social Funding and partially by the state budget (State Chancellery, 2023[53]). This very ambitious project, which lasted more than 6 years (precisely 83 months), targeted senior managers of public administrations, targeting only state secretaries, their deputies, and heads or deputy heads of public institutions closely working with Small and Medium Enterprises. It included modules on data literacy and provided different trainings which covered several aspects important for EIPM (communication, cross-sectoral co-operation, etc.). However, this programme had a different scope and objective and there are no other relevant programmes able to target experts and senior managers in the area of EIPM covering specific skills like synthesis of evidence, communication and translation of evidence. Some interesting examples of trainings on the use of evidence for Senior Civil Service were developed in Canada and in Finland.

Overall, despite some interesting training opportunities targeting the right category, skills for demand of evidence are still underdeveloped in the Latvian government hindering the overall potential of evidence supply. This was often highlighted as an issue when developing State Research Programmes as, without a good understanding of both the political and the research world, commissioning research become difficult.

Fostering demand for evidence inside the government, capacity at the organisational level

Individual skills to demand and use evidence are important, however, they are not enough to guarantee a systematic use of evidence inside the government (OECD, 2020[3]). Organisational capacities and efforts are also important to promote demand for evidence in a more systematic and coherent way (OECD, 2020[3]). Moreover, promoting a coherent and common approach to demand and use of evidence is very important to ensure the credibility and trust in advice. Indeed, by making demand and use systematic, there is lower risk of cherry picking and more transparency in how and why some evidence has been used.

At the organisational level, demand can be systematised through different mechanisms, for instance:

- Adopting research / evidence plans inside the ministries and across the government in order to plan evidence early in such a way that it can usefully feed into policymaking in a timely and fit-for-purpose manner.
- Creating research units, whose mandate is to obtain evidence on specific policy areas. These research units often function as internal knowledge brokers by providing almost exclusive policy-oriented research and stepping slightly outside the academic world.

The use of ministerial lists of commissioned research is still in an early stage but concerted efforts have been made to disseminate this practice

For evidence to feed into policymaking in a real way (and not a 'tick-the-box' formalistic way), it needs to be timely for policymaking, as well as fit-for-purpose. One way in which organisations, and specifically ministries, can promote use of evidence, is therefore by thinking about their needs early, for instance through developing early research plans. Research or evidence plans indeed provide a useful tool for researchers both inside and outside the ministry to understand what type of evidence is needed for what types of decisions. Several OECD countries make use of such plans to co-ordinate evidence production both inside and outside government. In the United States, for example, Departments and Agencies must develop yearly Evidence-building plans (i.e. Learning agendas) which are then used as inputs for the President's management agenda and other cross-government plans increasing their visibility and strategic importance (Office of Management and Budget, 2022[54]). Another similar example is the Strategic Evaluation Agenda in the Netherlands (OECD, 2020[25]).

In Latvia, demand for evidence is mostly managed at the organisational level, even if some attempts to harmonise those efforts across government have occurred. As a result, until recently, only some ministries had developed yearly list of commissioned research (see Table 2.6). Moreover, these lists were not made public or even disseminated widely within the ministries themselves.

Nonetheless, some ministries did make concerted efforts to plan their evidence needs more systematically. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture adopts both a Study Plan and an evaluation plan for the evaluation of EU funds every year. The Study Plan is approved by the Council of Science of the Ministry of Agriculture, which is composed of directors of the different departments of the Ministry. This represents an interesting practice to ensure the involvement of senior civil servants and increase the ownership of the studies commissioned. The Ministry of Climate and Energy also creates an early list of research activities they will commission during the year. However, the plan is an internal document to help the ministry to plan financially and is not shared outside the ministry.

Table 2.6. Yearly plan for developing evidence needs

Ministry	List of research commissioned	No list	Additional related plans
Ministry of Agriculture	X		Evaluation plan of the EU funds
Ministry of Climate and Energy	X		
Ministry Economics			
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development			Ministry's Work Plan (only for evaluations)
Ministry of Health	X		
Ministry of Welfare		X	SPLM Strategy

Source: OECD questionnaire responses.

In addition, the new amendment (Regulation n. 541 of 2022, paragraph 14) of the regulation Procedures by which Public Entities Commissions Research, mandates each ministry to submit a list of commissioned research to the State Chancellery by the 31st of January of each year (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013[55]). This new provision aims at co-ordinating evidence needs across institutions to avoid duplication of research and increase visibility of findings. This new initiative demonstrates commitment at the highest level of government to think about evidence needs early to encourage public institutions to use evidence in a meaningful way. However, inside some line ministries the OECD team encountered little awareness about the existence of these plans.

Ministries support the creation of research centres to address specific demands but often without sufficient funding

To obtain the evidence they need, some ministries also support the creation of specific centres working on single policy areas. These are often financed by the individual ministries themselves and perform more policy-oriented work with respect to traditional academic research units. For example, since 2015, there is an agreement in place between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the University of Latvia for conducting policy-relevant research at the Centre for Diaspora and Migration Research (CMDR) in the Advanced Institute for Social and Policy research at the Faculty of Social Sciences (Univeristy of Latvia, 2023[56]). Every year the ministry and the researchers of the CMDR agree on the topics to study that year. These topics are also discussed at the multi-institutional Diaspora Advisory Council at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so that the research would address the most urgent needs in the field.

Another interesting example is offered by the Productivity Research Institute "University of Latvia Think tank LV PEAK" which works as a think tank and conducts independent analysis on productivity issues supporting the Latvian Productivity Council functioning as the National Productivity Board of Latvia. The Council is an advisory body of the Ministry of Economics, which is composed of prominent academics, economists, and representatives of the private sector (Univeristy of Latvia, 2023[57]). The centre is an important evidence supplier in the field of economic policies. Since 2020, it produces a yearly productivity report which provides policy-oriented evidence on productivity factors and dynamics by main sectors. In spite of its interesting analysis and activities, the centre does not have an independent regular budget and is financed by the already limited resources of the University.

The creation of specific research units dedicated to relevant policy questions is a good practice to help satisfying the demand for policy relevant evidence. However, it is important to secure sufficient funding to ensure that research activities performed can meet quality standards (e.g. sufficient number of researchers full-time equivalent (FTE)).

Overall, demand for evidence inside ministries is heterogenous and while efforts have been made to systematise it, through the use of research plans and the creation of dedicated research units, these efforts are still nascent.

Inter-institutional evidence exchanges and demand, capacity at the inter-organisational level

A well-functioning EIPM system is composed of several actors that contribute to the promotion and exchange of evidence. Indeed, interaction with external actors can play a role in increasing government interest in EIPM by creating pressure to use evidence and by making the evidence easy to find. In addition, promoting the exchange and use of evidence across institutions, the public can monitor how evidence is used reinforcing overall trust and transparency. To foster EIPM across organisations there is need to:

- Promote evidence exchange across government and transparency to the public. This can be done by making evidence available in platforms or by promoting their discussion in different settings.
- Promote the role of multiple actors that can foster a culture of evidence, transparency, and participation.

While there are some interesting practices of exchange of evidence and co-ordination mechanisms across government, there is still room for improvement

Multiple actors might have questions and problems which could be answered by the same evidence. Indeed, complex policies require multidisciplinary evidence as they cover multi-thematic aspects. For this reason, it is essential to ensure that, when evidence is commissioned, the request is able to incorporate the needs of the different actors that can benefit from it. In addition, possessing some co-ordination mechanisms is essential to avoid duplication of already existing evidence and create awareness around which research and evidence are already available to use.

In Latvia, this co-ordination role is performed by the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Department, which has been recently re-established inside the State Chancellery and is expressed in the *Procedures by which a Public Entity Commissions research* (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013[55]). Since the last amendment of the law in 2022, the department is now responsible for the creation of an annual list of the research topics planned by public entities. The governmental level list is developed by putting together the lists submitted by each ministry by the 31st of January of each year (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013[55]). The list is then inserted in the Research and Publication Database, which containing both the planned studies and the ones conducted.

Overall, the creation of a database and of a research plan represents a very positive step toward increasing the demand and use of evidence across the government. However, there is still little awareness about this research plan and several respondents were not aware of the existence of a research plan in their ministries. This is comprehensible as this requirement has been introduced only in August 2022. The plan is also not published as a unique document but is directly integrated in the database together with past and already planned research activities making more difficult to understand exactly which activities have been planned in 2023 with respect to the ones that were already present. Finally, since each ministry has only to submit its research plan and the integration is done by the State Chancellery, there are not sufficient exchanges between ministries on their research needs hindering the overall share of evidence and awareness of these instruments.

Important efforts have been made to increase transparency and publicity of evidence

Making evidence public is important to achieve impact, to avoid duplication and to increase public awareness. In addition, it can help increase public trust in the government not to “cherry-pick’’ the evidence produced by the advisory bodies, and thus increase the overall use of evidence (OECD, 2021[51]). Overall, the importance of publicity and transparency of evidence is well recognised by a majority of OECD countries which make results from evaluations public by default (OECD, 2020[25]). This is particularly true

also in Latvia that has implemented several actions to make evidence commissioned by public entities more accessible and visible.

In Latvia, the government has worked considerably to increase the level of transparency and openness. This has brought to the creation of several databases, digital platforms and interesting participatory tools which allow different stakeholders to monitor and control government actions (see for example the TAP portal in next section). As it was mentioned above, relevant research conducted for policy planning can be found both in ministries' websites as well as in a unified portal managed by the State Chancellery (see Box 2.13). The open database contains all research commissioned by national level public sector entities since 1998, as well as information on studies planned up to 2028 used for strategic planning.

Similarly to ministries, universities in Latvia also ensure public access to research and projects. For example, the results of publicly funded research are widely available to public as is often requested for receiving funding. Additionally, within the framework of Latvia's open science strategy 2021-2027, four Latvian science universities established the Higher Education and Science Information Technology Shared Service Centre (VPC). The VPC, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science, will establish a network of general research data repositories *DataverseLV* (Ministry of Education and Science, 2022[38]). *DataverseLV* will guarantee public access to research data of Latvian researchers.

Box 2.13. Research and publications database

The Research and Publications Database (http://petijumi.mk.gov.lv/) contains research from the public entity and its subsidiary bodies since 1998 commissioned for strategic planning. Until 2020, the Research and Publications Database was managed by the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre and is now under the supervision of the State Chancellery. The scope and procedure of information to be provided in the database on research are determined by the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation on the Procedure for Ordering Research by a Public Entity. As of June 2023, the Research and Publications Database contains 3205 documents (e.g. public opinion survey, policy evaluation, EU-funded research). Research can be found based on the name of the institution, type of research and policy area.

The database is undergoing a transition in a new platform (https://ppdb.mk.gov.lv/) which already contain all studies commissioned after 2020.

Source: Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, The Research and Publications Database, https://petijumi.mk.gov.lv/ and https://petijumi.mk.gov.lv/ (accessed on 2 June 2023); State Chancellery, The Research and Publications Database, https://ppdb.mk.gov.lv/ https://ppdb.mk.gov.lv/ (accessed on 2 June 2023).

More tailored and synthetic communication materials are not yet available

However, publicity of evidence is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Research shows that in isolation, publicity alone is not enough to improve use of evidence (Langer, Tripney and Gough, 2016[58]; Dobbins et al., 2009[59]). Indeed, with limited time and knowledge policymakers do not have the time and the skills to use the academic publications or long research report. The Research and publications database, despite being a very useful tool, mainly provides access to long research materials. Few are the cases which contain structured executive summaries or clear recommendation sections, thus making the evidence difficult to access for decision makers.

Together with communication, there is a need for more dissemination of results in Latvia. An institution which is considerably active in this field is the Bank of Latvia. The Bank manages a website dedicated to promoting all the relevant activities and researchers (*Macroeconomics.lv)*. It also organises interesting

seminars and prizes to increase evidence sharing and production (see Box 2.14). In the first six months of 2023, 9 seminars were organised with relevant international speakers presenting works related to the activities of the Bank.

Box 2.14. Bank of Latvia Competition of Student Scientific Research Papers

Bank of Latvia organises an annual Competition of Student Scientific Research Papers to promote the research and analysis of Latvia's and euro area's macroeconomic issues. The competition is at its 21st edition and is open to citizens and non-citizens of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia who at the time of the competition are registered as students of higher education institutions accredited in the Baltic States. All the submitted papers are evaluated by a committee of economists of the Bank of Latvia.

This represents an interesting activity to engage with students and potentially young researchers to produce innovative analyses and engage with the world of research.

Source: Bank of Latvia (2023[60]), Latvijas Banka's Competition of Student Scientific Research Papers, https://www.macroeconomics.lv/konkursi/latvijas-bankas-competition-student-scientific-research-papers.

Thus overall, Latvia has made some significant efforts to publicise results, but more active communication efforts are needed. Initiatives such as the one in the Bank of Latvia provide good practice examples for other government institutions.

The role of actors beyond the executive in promoting an evidence driven culture

Effective EIPM requires the involvement of several actors to not only supply evidence but also to encourage its use, and beyond the executive branch of government. An important role to promote the use of evidence across OECD countries is performed by Supreme Audit Institutions, the Parliament and in some cases NGOs. The way in which these actors interact depend on their different mandates across countries. Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) are often involved in promoting evidence use in policymaking in different ways. They can do so by directly recommend it to the government as part of their performance audits or *ex post* policy evaluations. At the same time, they can also generate higher demand for evidence from the public if their reports are able to attract interest. In 2018, 27 Supreme Audit Institutions out of 33 had competences on policy evaluation at the central level (OECD, 2020[25]). Parliament can demand governments or Supreme Audit Institutions to provide evidence or evaluations of policies, indirectly pressuring governments to conduct analyses in the first place. Finally, NGOs can promote the use of evidence by supporting the government or the Parliament in accessing evidence or organising events to make it more visible. The involvement of different actors is essential to increase the transparency of the EIPM process and foster trust. In Latvia all these actors play a role in promoting evidence-informed approaches to policymaking by increasing the visibility of evidence and directly or indirectly promoting its use in government and across the public opinion.

The State Audit Office actively encourages the government to use an evidence-informed approach

The State Audit Office is the Supreme Audit Institution regulated by the *State Audit Office Law*. The Office performs three types of audits: financial, compliance and performance audits. Particularly relevant for EIPM are performance audits which looks at the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of policies and provides evidence on the impact of government policies. Performance audits are often accompanied by recommendations to help governments in addressing the issues encountered, however their impact is

difficult to estimate. Together with providing evidence on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of policies, the State Audit Office often pushes ministries to invest in quality data collection and to set the right performance indicators to make the evaluations of policies easier.

In the Parliament demand for evidence has increased in recent years

The Parliament can also promote an evidence-informed approach by demanding evidence and by using it in the legislative process. By demanding evidence, the Parliament is able to ameliorate the quality of legislation and to perform its function of control over the executive, ultimately encouraging the latter to adopt an evidence-informed approach as well. To ensure that evidence is available when demanded, the Parliament has recently developed an internal Analytical Unit (see Box 2.15). The Analytical Unit works only by demand of the Members of Parliament. In spite of its relatively small size, there is a strong demand from parliamentarians. In addition to this, the Parliament can encourage the government and ministries to produce evaluations by including evaluation clauses in law. However, in Latvia as in many other OECD countries, this is not the case at the moment.

Box 2.15. Saeima Analytical Unit

The Parliamentary Analytical Unit was established in 2017 and is subordinated to the Presidium of Parliament. As of 2023, the Analytical Unit has 4 full time researchers and 1 assistant. The purpose of the Analytical Unit is to provide research, analysis and library services. The Analytical Unit contributes to Parliament by providing objective information in a format that works for the Parliament for drafting laws, strengthens a culture of argumentative and evidence-based political debate and provides control over the executive power. The Unit conducts three types of studies – original studies, synthesis report and briefings. The Analytical Unit works on demand from Presidium of Parliament, fractions, commissions, or at the request of at least 20 deputies. At the end of each year, the Analytical Unit invites parliamentary commissions or groups to create a list of topics to research. For the year 2022, 6 research topics were submitted to the Analytical Unit while for the year 2023 11 topics were submitted and approved, showing that the interest in analytical activities in the Parliament is slowly growing.

Source: Interview with Analytical Unit.

NGOs also play an important role in promoting a transparent and trustworthy use of evidence

In the Latvian system, some NGOs are significantly involved in promoting higher quality of policymaking. These organisations provide policy relevant evidence, offer capacity building activities and organise events and consultations. Overall, the relationship is generally positive and based on mutual trust and respect. Attention is particularly given to the transparency of the policymaking process but also to the use of evidence.

For example, since 2002, Providus has been an important think tank on public policy in Latvia. Providus' work methods include research, policy and legislation analysis, providing recommendations and opinions, monitoring policy implementation. One of the main areas of activity of the think tank is to promote an evidence-informed approach to decision making. Indeed, the think tank played an active role in the development of the Saeima Analytical Unit. In addition, Providus participates in working groups, organises public events and discussions on various relevant public administration topics and well as capacity building activities both in the Parliament and in the Government.

Delna, which is the Latvian branch of Transparency International, is Latvia's leading non-governmental organisation in the field of anti-corruption and its goal is to create an open, fair and democratic society that is free from corruption in politics, the public and private sectors, as well as interpersonal relations (Delna, 2023[61]). Delna's main activities are informing and educating the public, engaging in monitoring and capacity building of law enforcement institutions, promoting public involvement in whistleblowing. Even if more indirectly, promoting a transparent and open culture plays an important role in developing a well-functioning EIPM system.

Overall NGOs play a significant role in Latvia to increase transparency in government action and to improve the relationship between citizens and government in particular on the way evidence is mobilised and used.

Key policymaking processes where supply and demand meet

Introduction

Evidence needs to be embedded in government practices and processes in a systematic way to achieve impact. Evidence plays a significant role throughout the entire policy cycle: it informs planning and strategic documents contributing to the identification of policy priorities; it can support the development of policies by providing ex ante analysis and evidence on what works and what does not; it can help in assessing the effectiveness and impact of policies. It can also provide an *ex post* feedback loop that can feed into new policy design. Finally, it can provide insights on future needs and increase government preparedness through foresight and anticipatory governance. Countries including Latvia are continuously investing to develop and strengthen tools such as strategic planning, regulatory impact assessments (RIAs), *ex post* policy evaluation, as well as foresight.

This section looks at how evidence is embedded in such key policymaking processes in Latvia, and specifically at how evidence can be used at different stages of the policy cycle to improve the overall quality of public governance. In particular, it focuses on the use of evidence in:

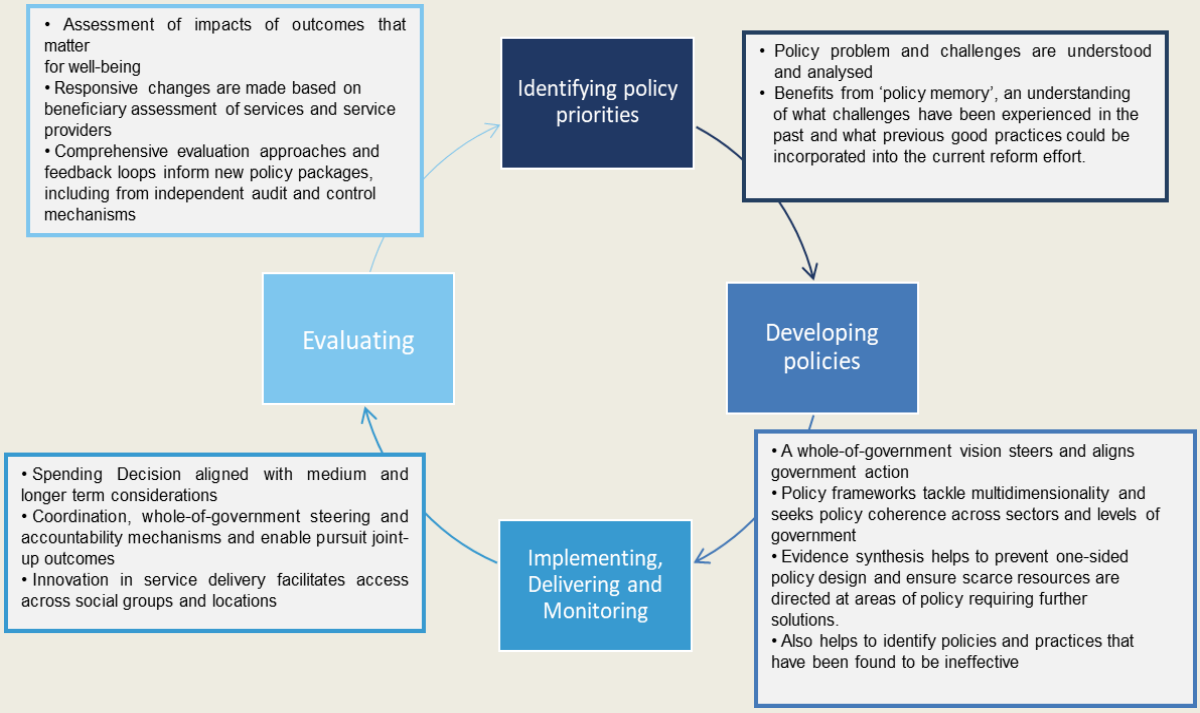
- strategic planning and anticipatory governance
- regulatory management,
- policy evaluation and the evaluation of EU structural funds.

Overall, in recent years Latvia has done significant progress in the development of tools and frameworks for planning, regulatory impact assessments (RIA) and stakeholders' consultation. These tools have helped in creating common practices across ministries and in channelling evidence into policymaking processes. However, despite this progress, the way that evidence is brought to bear in policy processes remains fairly heterogeneous across ministries and relies on the skills and motivation of civil servants rather than on established structured procedures.

Box 2.16. How does evidence feed into the Policymaking Cycle

The policymaking cycle reflects a conceptual approach of the policymaking process as a continuous and virtuous learning cycle, as presented in the figure below. Evidence can feed in all these stages improving the overall quality of the policy process. However, in practice the policymaking is not always linear nor cyclical as it is also impacted by values, beliefs, political conflicts and priorities.

Figure 2.12. Policymaking cycle

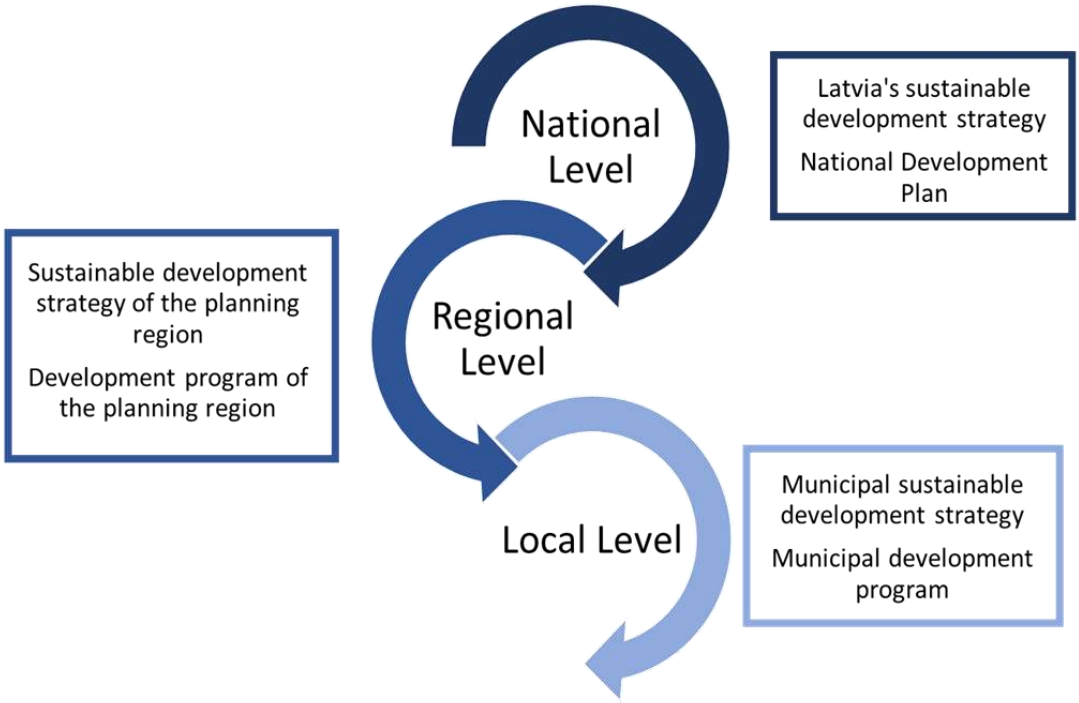


Source: OECD (2021[51]), *Mobilising Evidence at the Centre of Government in Lithuania: Strengthening Decision Making and Policy Evaluation for Long-term Development*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/323e3500-en.

The role of policy planning in Latvia

Planning plays a significant role in the Latvian policymaking process and represents an important mechanism to inject evidence into policymaking. The planning system was developed in 2009 with the Latvian Development Planning System Law which established a unified national development planning framework (Saeima, 2009[62]). The law defines three types of development planning documents: policy planning documents, management documents of authorities and spatial development documents. At the same time, development planning documents are developed at the national, regional and local level (see Figure 2.13) and for different time frames: long term (up to 25 years), medium-term (up to seven years), short-term (up to three years). Overall, this implies a significant number of planning documents which have to interact and coexist. The hierarchy of these documents is established by the law, which states that national planning documents are hierarchically superior to regional and local ones and that long-term planning documents are hierarchically superior to medium-term and short-term ones. For this reason, the most important planning documents are the Sustainable Development Strategy (national and long-term) followed by the National Development Plan (national and medium-term).

Figure 2.13. Hierarchy of planning documents



Source: Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre (2016[63]), Politikas veidošanas rokasgrāmata [Policymaking handbook], https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/pkc_rokasgramata_090316_web.pdf.

Since the planning system produces a variety of different planning documents, it involves a significant number of actors to ensure co-operation, co-ordination and coherence. The main actors include the National Development Council (NDC), the Cross-Sectoral Co-ordination Centre (now a department inside the State Chancellery) and ministries and working groups (see Figure 2.14). The NDC is a collegial body composed of ministers (Minister of Education and Science, Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Minister of Economics, Minister of Finance) and representatives of the Parliament, the President and the government's social and co-operation partners. The National Development Council is led by the Prime Minister. While it had the role of supervising and evaluating the implementation of Latvia's sustainable development strategy, the National Development Plan and the Declaration on the activities planned by the Cabinet of Ministers these roles were transferred to the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Department, itself transferred to the Chancellery. The Cross-Sectoral Co-ordination Department drafts and co-ordinates the implementation of the highest hierarchical national development planning documents, organises and implements cross-sectoral policy co-ordination and cross-departmental monitoring, and develops proposals for national reforms and resource reallocation in line with national development priorities and policy guidelines.

Overall, the existence of a clear legal framework establishing a hierarchy, defining roles and objectives has helped in systematising the planning system across ministries. This is an important feature given the high level of heterogeneity across ministries in several other policymaking areas. It has also created an important community of "policy planners", across the various ministries.

Figure 2.14. Actors involved in planning

Note: The Cross Sectoral Coordination Centre is now in the Chancellery.
Source: Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre (2016[63]), Politikas veidošanas rokasgrāmata [Policymaking handbook], https://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/pkc_rokasgramata_090316_web.pdf.

While the planning process requires the use of evidence, it is also very complex in light of the scarce analytical resources of the Ministries

Ministries are encouraged to use evidence when developing the plans and to monitor and evaluate their plans fostering overall an evidence-informed approach. These principles are stated in the Policy Planning Handbook which was created by the Cross-Sectoral Co-ordination Centre and which does support ministries in the development the planning documents (Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, 2016[63]). The Policy Planning Handbook lists among the fundamental principles to develop the planning documents, the use of evidence (principle of evidence), that claims that goals, results and actions are planned based on evidence that the determined action will achieve the relevant results (Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre, 2016[63]). Together with this, a detailed calculation and reasonable evidence of the additional costs of the measure must be provided to the decision makers. However, this relies on the ability of civil servants inside ministries to do so.

Unfortunately, analytical skills are quite heterogeneous and scarce across Ministries and systematic use of evidence is difficult to ensure. For the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Strategy, which are the hierarchically superior documents, a high number of experts including from academia, municipalities, NGOs and other public bodies are generally involved and more structured consultation processes take place. For example, for the National Development Plan 2021-2027, an inclusive multi-stakeholder process was developed with 6 working groups which co-created the content, and public discussions took place in all regions of Latvia and on-line and are based on evidence. However, also sectorial plans can sometimes mobilise significant evidence and bring together stakeholders from

different policy fields. An important example, which has positive spill overs in terms of research and evidence production, is the Smart Specialisation Strategy (see Box 2.17).

Box 2.17. Smart Specialisation Strategy

One important sectorial plan is the Smart Specialization Strategy which sets the areas in which Latvia should specialise from an industrial, educational and investment perspective based on the country strengths and comparative advantages. The Ministry of Economy, in the field of innovation and business development, and the Ministry of Education and Science, in the field of higher education and science, are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3).

RIS3 in Latvia operates at 3 levels: operational, strategic and high-level representation. At the operational level, five steering groups are working in the five fields identified. The Innovation research and governance Council works at the strategic level and includes the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia and the Latvian Science Council. Finally, the Research and Innovation strategic council works with high-level representation and is composed of Prime Minister, ministers, entrepreneurs and researchers.

The involvement of different actors ensure that significant evidence informed the strategy. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy is conducted by the Ministry of Economics which regularly report and monitor the advancements in the implementation of the strategy.

The strategy shares significant elements with other strategic plans. Indeed, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development is involved in the promotion of regional balanced development and regional specialisation within the framework of regional innovation and knowledge platforms and the implementation of digital transformation and the Ministry of Agriculture in connection with the implementation of the Bioeconomy Strategy, which is among the five areas identified.

Source: Fact-finding mission; (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020[64]; Investment and Development Agency of Latvia, 2022[65]).

In addition, planning documents are being monitored and evaluated according to the monitoring and evaluation principle stated both in the law and in the Policy Planning Handbook. For sectorial plans, the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation lies with the ministries which are often not in a real position to fully perform them. Indeed, for several indicators data is not systematically collected and the overall quality of evaluations is heterogenous. More attention is provided to the reporting and monitoring of the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Strategy. Every two years, the Cross-Sectoral Co-ordination Department produces a report on behalf of the Prime minister and presents it to the Sustainable development commission of the Parliament showing the process in achieving the goals of both plans. These reports use different techniques like primary data, secondary sources and external evaluations.

The planning process should also be very participative and transparent according to the law on planning. To ensure the transparency and visibility of planning documents, all planning documents are published in the information system of the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre Database of Policy Planning Documents (POLSIS). At the same time, the “State Administration Modernization Plan 2023-2027”, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in May 2023, is expected to boost co-ordination and skills development. It commits the State Chancellery to deliver: “*A network of policy […] planners which acts as a platform for the exchange of experience between policy planners of different institutions and within which training is organised on current impact assessment issues.”* The objective set for this goal is to have at least 70% of policy planners attending this training.

Overall, the planning system seems to absorb significant resources …

Even if it plays an important role in identifying policy priorities and co-ordinate them across ministries, the Latvian planning process appears to be quite heavy and entails risk of conflict and potential duplication with many overlapping documents. This is true even if Ministries have some flexibility in terms of when and how to develop their planning documents. Indeed, despite such flexibility, many experts and analysts in Ministries interviewed by the OECD team reflected they have to develop plans even when they represent rather mechanical exercises. The reason behind is that plans are essential to justify and obtain funds both from the national budget and in turn from the European Union. In fact, the whole planning process has been designed and adjusted to meet European requirements.

Some elements of foresights are included in the planning phase, but they remain limited

The recent crises have shown the importance and value of investing in the future, in terms of being prepared to alternative scenarios and of policies to be "future proof". Indeed, a significant number of uncertainties can make all the planning efforts quickly irrelevant if not sufficiently considered in the development phase. For this reason, it is important to include strategic foresight when developing medium- and long-term plans. Strategic foresight can be defined as "*an approach that aims at making sense of the future, understanding drivers of change that are outside of one's control, and preparing for what may lead to success or failure in the future´* (Hurtado, 2023[66]). Foresight generates evidence using a range of methodologies (see Box 2.18). The role of foresight is not to replace planning but to strengthening it by including questions that might go unasked in the development of a plan (OECD, 2023[67]).

Box 2.18. Methodologies used in foresight

Foresight includes a variety of activities such as:

> ***Horizon Scanning:*** *seeking and researching signals of change in the present and their potential future impacts;*
>
> ***Change Drivers:*** *Identifying which potential changes could be the most surprising and significant;*
>
> ***Scenarios:*** *Developing multiple stories or imaginary pictures of how the future could look in order to explore and learn from them;*
>
> ***Opportunities & Challenges:*** *Exploring what could change in the policy environment that could make it easier or harder to achieve certain policy objectives;*
>
> ***Policy Implications:*** *Developing perspectives for action in the present that help to inform policy making;*

Source: OECD (2023[67]), "What is foresight", https://www.oecd.org/strategic-foresight/whatisforesight/.

However, despite a well-developed planning system, a formal framework for foresight is lacking in Latvia. Some line ministries do use elements of foresight during planning. Indeed, policy planners have some foresight function and, in some cases, use models or microsimulations in their planning phase. The Ministry of Welfare for example uses a microsimulation model on the social security system which was developed in co-operation with the World Bank in 1990. In addition, the Ministry is now developing a more advanced IT solution partly financed by the Resilience and Recovery Fund, showing the interest in these instruments. Another important actor is the Analytical Service of the Ministry of Economics which conducts on a regular basis development analysis and forecasts on economic development, labour market dynamics and

demographic projections. These analyses are also conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Latvia for forecasts of macroeconomic indicators.

In addition, when analyses can't be conducted internally, some ministries commission a significant number of research on future scenarios. Both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Climate and Energy are significantly interested in foresight and commission research mainly on these aspects. In the area of climate, foresight activities cover the projections and evolution of the greenhouse gas emissions, mathematical modelling is used as well.

Maximising the potential of regulatory management tools to support evidence informed policymaking

Regulatory management tools and practices have a role to enable and support evidence informed policymaking in Latvia, ensuring that demand can also match with the supply of evidence and how these contribute to the achievements of economic and social goals. It will examine how effectively the regulatory management tools – of ex ante Regulatory impact assessment (RIA), stakeholder engagement and the *ex post* review system – have been integrated into Latvia's rule-making process and ensuring that they contribute to evidence-informed approaches. While the RIA process exists, with significant co-ordination mechanisms, and a rather developed system for systematic consultation, it has limited impact on the legislative policymaking. It also lacks robust quality assurance mechanisms for RIA. However, there is a structured and systematic consultation process with social and civil partners, using a recently established online state information portal.

Use of regulatory management tools is critical in supporting evidence-informed policymaking

Regulatory management tools, including ex ante RIAs, stakeholder consultations and *ex post* evaluations of regulations, play an important role in supporting evidence-informed policymaking, and in ensuring that the supply of evidence can feed into political demand and support the development of regulation. Their importance and role are recognised in the OECD 2012 Recommendation of Regulatory Policy and Governance (OECD, 2012[68]). These regulatory management tools, and their value to evidence informed policymaking are explained in more detail in Box 2.19.

Box 2.19. The use of regulatory management tools to support Evidence Informed Policymaking

The OECD has produced a series of publications to advise governments on the effective use of regulation to achieve better social, environmental and economic outcomes, including the 2012 Recommendation of the Council on Regulatory Policy, which was developed in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial and economic crises. It focuses particularly on the importance of the three key regulatory management tools of stakeholder engagement, regulatory impact assessment (RIA) and *ex post* evaluation of regulations, which form critical aspects of the regulatory lifecycle.

- **RIA** refers to the process of critically examining the consequences of a range of alternative options to address various public policy proposals. RIA is a central aid to policymaking, helping to provide objective information about the likely benefits and costs of particular regulatory approaches, as well as critically assessing alternative options. A growing number of OECD countries apply a proportionate approach to decide whether or not RIA is required and to determine the appropriate depth of the analysis.

- **Stakeholder engagement** refers to informing and eliciting feedback from citizens and other affected parties so that regulatory proposals can be improved and broadly accepted by society. At a time of general mistrust of governments, it is imperative that consultation with stakeholders provides a meaningful avenue for those affected to be able to help shape regulations so as to maximise overall well-being. Countries are increasingly seeking feedback from citizens and businesses about regulatory proposals.
- **Ex post evaluation** involves an assessment of whether regulations have in fact achieved their objectives, as well as how they can remain fit for purpose. The 'stock' of regulation is extensive in all countries, typically having accumulated over many years, while scant attention is often paid to regulatory proposals once they have become laws. There has only been a minor increase in the number of countries that have formal requirements and a comprehensive methodology in place for *ex post* evaluations.
- **Regulatory oversight** is highlighted in the 2012 Recommendation as a critical enabler of effective regulatory frameworks. The recommendation outlines a wide range of oversight functions, which governments should institute, in order to promote high quality evidence-based policymaking and enhance the impact of regulatory policy. These functions include the quality control of regulatory management tools; examining the potential for regulation to be more effective; contributing to the systematic improvement of the application of regulatory policy; co-ordination; training and guidance; and strategies for improving regulatory performance.

Source: OECD (2012[68]), *Recommendation of the Council on Regulatory Policy and Governance*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264209022-en.

Despite progress, in particular in terms of consultation, the implementation of these tools still suffers some limitations in Latvia

Previous OECD studies have identified a number of challenges to successfully implementing the key regulatory management tools within the Latvian rule-making process, including an OECD accession review of Latvia's regulatory policy processes in 2015, as well as the OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2021 which map the efforts of members and accession counties to improve regulatory quality (see (OECD, 2021[69])).

Figure 2.15 from the Regulatory Policy Outlook 2021 sets out Latvia's overall score from the OECD Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance survey, which analyses how effectively each OECD member government has implemented the key regulatory policy tools. The OECD found that Latvia scored below the OECD average in its implementation of ex ante RIA and *ex post* evaluation, but above average in its implementation of stakeholder engagement practices. The report noted that:

- RIA is required for all draft legal acts including subordinate regulations submitted to the Cabinet. Policymakers now have the benefit of guidance material to assist in the preparation of RIAs. However, consideration should be given to improving the quantification of impacts of draft legislation.
- There is a structured and systematic process for consulting with social and civil partners. Public consultations are now systematically conducted at a late stage of policy development. While early stage consultation initiatives exist, the next step will be to institutionalise this more broadly.
- Reviews of regulatory stock are mostly focussed on administrative burdens, and there is no explicit programme on *ex post* evaluations (OECD, 2021[69]).

Box 2.20. Recent trends in Regulatory Policy across the OECD

The 2021 OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook takes stock of countries' efforts to improve regulatory quality based upon the iREG (indicators for Regulatory Policy and Governance). The key findings are:

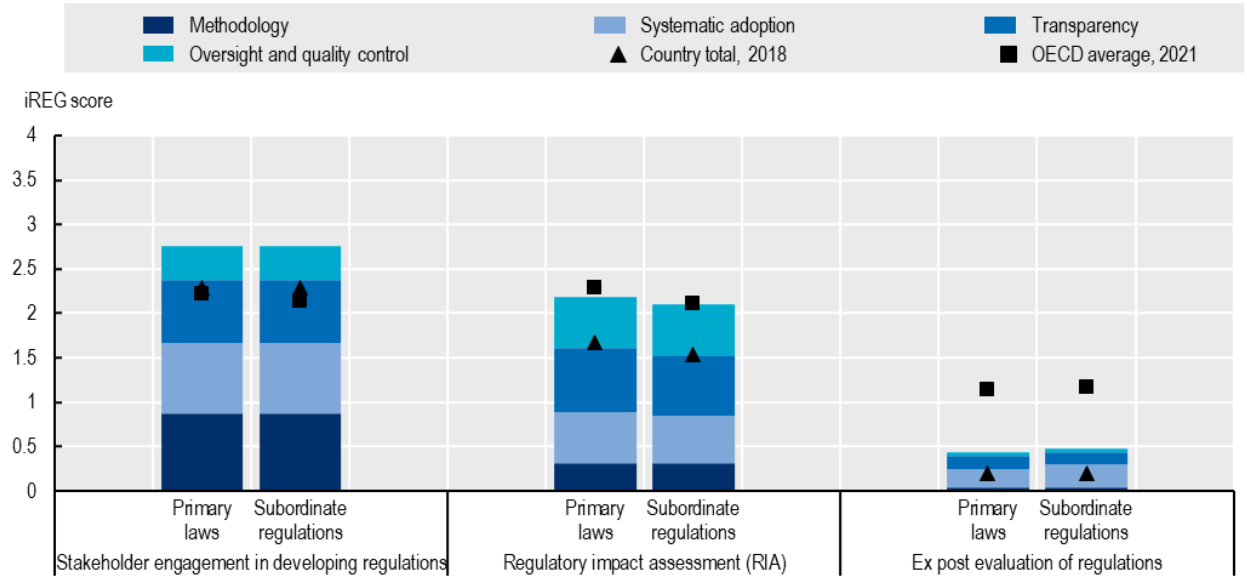
- Only a few countries consult systematically at an earlier stage of policy development, to define policy problems and consider potential solutions. Most OECD members consult with stakeholders once a draft regulatory proposal exists. A limited number of countries consult when reviewing existing regulations.
- There is a need to comprehensively consider a broader range of alternative options – especially non-regulatory ones – when developing proposals.
- An increasing number of OECD members require policy proposals to be proportionate to the significance of their impacts, most commonly using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative thresholds to determine whether a regulatory proposal warrants more in-depth analysis.
- The growth in availability and use of exceptions to conducting impact assessments is a significant concern. The number of OECD members with exceptions to conduct impact assessments when regulations are introduced in response to an emergency has increased since 2017.
- Despite potentially large gains from "stock" reforms are, OECD members lag behind when it comes to *ex post* evaluations, with progress languishing since 2014.

Source: OECD (2021[69]), *OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook 2021*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/38b0fdb1-en.

However, progress has been made since then. In particular, Latvia has made several substantive reforms building on its existing better regulation policy framework, in particular through enhancing the transparency and organisation of the legislative process for stakeholder engagement, through the development of the *"Single Portal for Development and Harmonisation of Draft Legal Acts"* (TAP portal) in 2021 (State Chancellery, 2023[70]). The TAP portal provides the public with more opportunities to follow all stages of legislative drafting (see sub-section "The use of stakeholder engagement procedures " for more information on the portal).

While the impacts are required to be assessed for any legislative acts, ex ante RIA appears a largely formal exercise to justify choices already made. It often lacks an analysis of wider economic impacts, or analysis of alternative options. This depends both on the ability and willingness of the civil servants to evaluate alternatives and on the willingness of politicians to listen to alternative proposals. Reviews of regulatory stock to date have been mostly focussed on administrative burdens. Ex post reviews of existing laws and regulations are not mandatory and are undertaken place rarely across ministries.

Figure 2.15. Latvia compared to OECD Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance, 2021



Policy and Governance a country has implemented, the higher its iREG score. The indicators on stakeholder engagement and RIA for primary laws only cover those initiated by the executive (69% of all primary laws in Latvia).
Source: Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance Survey 2017 and 2021, http://oe.cd/ireg.

A clear understanding of the implementation problems with RIA amongst the political leadership offers a window for action

There is a clear recognition within the Latvian Government of the need to reform the RIA framework. In 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a report, developed by the State Chancellery entitled *"Improving the Impact Assessment System"* which identified a series of challenges with the RIA system and put forward recommendations for reform in order to improve its efficiency, proportionality and transparency (see Box 2.21 for more details). In the protocol decision of the Cabinet of Ministers attached to the report, the Chancellery was given the task of taking forward proposals for reforming the RIA process.

Box 2.21. Latvian review of RIA process: *"Improving the Impact Assessment System"*

In 2021, a report entitled *"Improving the Impact Assessment System"* was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. The State Chancellery, who developed the report, conducted an in-depth evaluation of 1898 pieces of draft legislation submitted to the Meeting of the Secretaries of State over 1 January 2019 to December 2020.

The report found that RIA assessments were carried out in a formal manner, without exploring alternative policy options, a lack of quantitative cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis, and generally without meaningful public involvement, with only one in six RIA documents subject to more than the statutory minimum level of public participation (publication on the Ministry and State Chancellery website 14 days before publication in Meeting of State Secretaries – now superseded by the requirement to publish on the TAP Portal). The report also noted that RIA documents are often completed after the drafting of the legislation. In addition, there was insufficient action by ministries to implement the "Zero Bureaucracy" approach to administrative burden reduction, and such burdens resulting from EU legislation were often not monetised.

Weaknesses in the RIA system were identified including lack of tools, methods and capacity in state and local governments to ensure practical participation; lack of political will to involve the public in law-making; lack of resources within ministries to carry out full assessments and gaps in methodological understanding as well as inconsistent use of RIA results in the policy process.

The report concluded that the State Chancellery, the Ministry of Justice, the Saeima Analytical Service, line ministries, and, other institutions and experts, should revise the RIA in order to improve its efficiency, proportionality and transparency. Also, the State Chancellery is advised to raise awareness of RIA through strengthening training provided by the School of Public Administration, and raising awareness of RIA amongst policymakers. Finally, the State Chancellery was advised to strengthen methodological RIA guidelines and implement a single digital legislative portal to enhance the transparency of the policymaking process.

Source: State Chancellery (2021[71]), *Improving the Impact Assessment System: Information Report*, Government of Latvia, Riga, https://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40495849.

In addition, the *"State Administration Modernization Plan 2023-2027"* was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in May 2023, with Action 3.2 setting out concrete measures for reforming the RIA system, to be taken forward by the State Chancellery (State Chancellery, 2023[72]). These measures include establishing an administrative burden reduction team to develop solutions for reducing burdens from regulation; developing a methodology for determining the impact of RIA; and establishing a cross-government network of policy planners to exchange best practice on RIA issues (see Table 2.7 below for more detail).

Table 2.7. State Administration Modernization Plan 2023-2027

Action 6.3 – Improving the Impact Assessment System

Action result		The resulting indicator	Due Date
A meaningful impact assessment is carried out through proper research of alternative solutions, cost-benefit or utility analysis, as well as ensuring public involvement	The administrative burden is reduced by declaring obsolete legislation or individual legal provisions to be invalid, or by abandoning actions that create a disproportionate burden, unnecessarily prolong or make the process more expensive	An administrative burden reduction team has been established	The first half of 2023
		The Administrative Burden Reduction Team develops solutions to reduce the administrative burden and criteria for evaluating actions that create a disproportionate burden, unnecessarily prolong or increase the cost of the process	Second half of 2024
	The impact assessment capacity of the state administration has been strengthened	A methodology for determining the level of impact of legislation has been developed, and legislation with a high level of impact is subject to *ex post* evaluation	The first half of 2025
		A network of policy planners is being developed, which acts as a platform for the exchange of experience between policy planners of different institutions and within which training is organised on current impact assessment issues. At least 70% of policy planners have participated in the training	Second half of 2027

Source: Cabinet of Ministers (2023[73]), Order of the Cabinet of Ministers no.240 on the State Administration Modernization Plan 2023-2027, https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2023/89.3.

The responsibilities for conducting RIA are dispersed throughout government

Every government institution initiating a legislative proposal is mandated to conduct ex ante RIA and assess a wide range of impacts

According to OECD data, RIA is now required in all OECD countries for the development of at least some primary laws and subordinate regulations, including for Latvia (OECD, 2021[69]). An obligation to undertake RIAs on draft laws and regulations was introduced by Regulation No. 108 of the Cabinet of Ministers from the 2009 "Legislative Drafting Rules", complemented by instruction No.19 of the Cabinet of Ministers from the 2009 "Rules for Completing the Initial Impact Assessment of a Draft Legal Act" (Cabinet of Ministers, 2009[74]). In 2021, these documents were updated by Regulation No.66 "Rules of Procedures of the Cabinet" (Cabinet of Ministers, 2023[75]), and the "Procedure for Evaluating the Initial Impact of the Draft Legal Act" (Cabinet of Ministers, 2021[76]).

Guidance produced by the State Chancellery states that there are three types of impact assessment including a mandatory ex ante or initial RIA at the beginning of the rule-making process; interim evaluations which examine and monitor the implementation of a regulation; and an *ex post* assessment on existing regulations (which is not presently mandated upon ministries) (State Chancellery of Latvia, 2021[77]). To examine this in more detail, Section 2 of the "Procedure for Evaluating the Initial Impact of the Draft Legal Act" states that ministries should produce an "evaluation of the initial impact" early in the rule-making process, and that this should involve targeted public participation, if possible. Ministries are obliged to assess a wide range of economic, social and environmental impacts, with the Procedure listing 25 themes and issues to be addressed in the initial evaluation, e.g. efficiency at achieving the goal; the proportionality of requirements and costs to the benefits of achieving the objective; the reasonableness of the resources required for enforcement; impact on the national economy; impacts on gender quality; impacts on the environment etc.

In addition, Section 2 of the procedure states that for all types of legislation[2], an annotation (*akin to a RIA document*) must be prepared and uploaded online to the TAP Portal (see sub-section "The use of stakeholder engagement procedures "). Ministries are obliged to address the following issues in the annotation. These include the need for project development; groups of society that will be affected by the project; a monetary assessment of administrative costs and the monetary assessment of compliance costs; impact of the project on the state budget and municipal budgets; compliance of the project with the international obligations of the Republic of Latvia etc.

Furthermore, following a decision adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 20 August 2019, as of 1 November 2019, all ministries must ensure compliance with a "Zero Bureaucracy" approach. This means that when submitting a draft legal act to the Cabinet for approval, which increases the administrative burden or creates new compliance costs for economic operators, a ministry must simultaneously submit a draft legal act that reduces the administrative burden for the same target group or removes the compliance requirements to an equivalent extent, working in close co-operation with representatives of the target group, as well as with the Ministry of Economics (Cabinet of Ministers, 2019[78]).

The challenges of calibrating the analysis of policy impact according to the size of the problems

Many OECD countries have acknowledged that not every regulation or proposal needs the same level of scrutiny. The costs and time to develop and analyse a regulatory proposal should be clearly outweighed by the positive effects in terms of improving the quality of policy decisions. Therefore, it is important the resources used to develop a policy scale with the size of the problem and its solution (OECD, 2020[79]).

In Latvia, guidance produced by the State Chancellery states that proportionality is one of the principles of the RIA process, and that *"the resources invested in the evaluation must be commensurate with the benefits resulting from the successful implementation of the regulation"* (State Chancellery of Latvia, 2021[77]). In addition, paragraph 16 of the "Procedure for Evaluating the Initial Impact of the Draft Legal Act" states that an assessment of administrative costs within a RIA is only obligatory if the administrative costs (in monetary terms) for a target group of individuals exceeds EUR 200, or for a target group of legal entities exceeds EUR 2 000.

However, the OECD found – during fact finding interviews and through scrutinising a selection of RIA documents – that there is little evidence of this proportionality principle being operationalised. In practice, the RIA format and the level of analysis tends to be the broadly the same for all draft laws or policy documents submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers. There is little evidence of quantification of the potential impacts of draft legislation, beyond the measurement of administrative burdens upon society. OECD best practice states that requiring a detailed level of RIA analysis across the board might stretch already busy policy officials under time pressure, and lead to the analysis being produced late in the policy process. There is a risk of dissipating analytical investment across numerous proposals with limited impact, instead of privileging a better tailored, strategic allocation of resources. Furthermore, it is unclear whether ministries possess the analytical capacity to undertake RIA on a wide range of the impacts, as they are obliged to in the governing regulations and guidance.

[2] The types of draft laws requiring a RIA include: international agreement or its draft; bill; draft decision of the Saeima; draft regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers; draft instruction of the Cabinet of Ministers; draft recommendations of the Cabinet of Ministers; draft order of the Cabinet of Ministers; cabinet of Ministers session protocol decision draft.

Several government institutions are involved in the co-ordination of RIAs

The institutional responsibility for co-ordinating regulatory policy and promoting regulatory quality is spread across several institutions, with the main roles attributed to the Ministry of Justice and the State Chancellery. Competences of each institution are defined in the respective government documents. The Ministry of Justice responsibilities are mostly in the area of legal quality of regulation that includes mainly compliance with other legal instruments, and also co-ordinates the transposition of EU legislation.

The State Chancellery represents another important institution performing a quality check on newly adopted regulations, with its Legal Department focuses mainly on compliance of each regulatory draft with the rules for drafting legislation, including the obligation to conduct RIAs or requirements for consultations and stakeholder engagement. Its opinions are also binding for the Ministry responsible for drafting the regulation. The Ministry of Economy plays a significant role in co-ordinating administrative simplification activities across government – including the "Zero Bureaucracy" initiative. This institutional setup appears to be functioning reasonably effectively, although there appears to be lack of mechanisms to ensure quality control of regulatory management tools (as will be explored in sub-section "Mechanisms for quality assurance and control").

The role of RIA in the legislative process

Despite Latvia putting in place a comprehensive set of ex ante RIA requirements, most RIAs appear to be often conducted as a formality, with limited impact on the legislative process. Current quality assurance mechanisms are also lacking, with responsibilities dispersed across the government and scarce human resources. These are proving very limited efficacy at driving up RIA standards (see sub-section "Mechanisms for quality assurance and control" for more detail on regulatory oversight). The RIA process is lacking an effective proportionality mechanism, which would enable ministries to target their scare analytical resources (for conducting RIA) towards those draft regulations with the highest potential impact.

RIA does not appear to be undertaken at an early stage of the policy process, when there is a genuine interest in identifying the best available solution and there is an opportunity to consider alternatives to regulation. Assessments are rarely based on hard data or comparative analysis of alternative options. There is little apparent use of more sophisticated RIA methodologies such as Cost-Benefit Analysis, or Cost-Effectiveness Analysis for the quantification of potential impacts. The review of the RIA process by the State Chancellery in 2021 found that ministries often don't monetise the burdens resulting from EU legislation (see Box 2.21).

Other identified weaknesses in the RIA system include lack of analytical capacity, including access to tools and methodological guidance for assessing impacts. There has also been a lack of political will to make a greater use of RIA in the rule-making process, although the State Chancellery's 2021 review of RIA process (see Box 2.21) and the proposals for reform in the State Administration Modernization Plan 2023-2027 point to a growing appetite to reform and improve the use of RIA in policymaking. The review also found a failure in ministries to implement the "Zero Bureaucracy" approach, with insufficient actions to reduce regulation, or to tackle cross-departmental regulatory burdens, and that regulatory burdens stemming from EU legislation often were not monetised. A review by the State Audit Office supported these findings and reported that *"according to the calculations of the State Chancellery, the administrative burden in monetary terms has increased by approximately 1.2 million euros from 2019 to September 2021"* (State Audit Office, 2021[80]).

Furthermore, whilst RIA documents are also attached to the draft legislation that is sent to the Saeima, they are not subsequently updated to reflect the impact of any legislative amendments by Members of Parliament. The Legal Bureau of the Saeima checks the quality of draft laws which are submitted to

Parliament, however impact assessments are not carried out on any amendments that are discussed during the approval process of the draft legislation.

Mechanisms for quality assurance and control

OECD best practice suggests that effective regulatory oversight is a crucial precondition for a successful RIA process, which includes putting in place mechanisms for ensuring the quality control of RIAs (OECD, 2020[79]). Regulatory oversight bodies located at the centre of government are entrusted with a relatively broad range of functions but are the preferred location for functions where centrality is essential, such as co-ordination of regulatory policy and provision of guidance. Those located in Ministries of Economy, Finance or Treasury tend to focus on quality control of regulatory management tools and are also involved in providing guidance and training as well as in identifying potential areas for improvement. Regulatory oversight bodies located at Justice Ministries focus on reviewing the legal quality of proposals, although not exclusively (OECD, 2021[69]).

As of 2020, some quality control mechanisms exist in Latvia, and are dispersed throughout the government. In Latvia, the Ministry of Justice and the State Chancellery share overall responsibility for regulatory quality. Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers define the mandate of the Ministry of Justice and the State Chancellery in relation to regulatory quality (Cabinet of Ministers, 2021[76]). Before draft laws or policy documents are discussed by the Cabinet of Ministers, two key quality checks are conducted. The Ministry of Justice assesses the purpose and nature of the document, its legislative impact on the existing legal system, its impact on the institutional structure of the government and compliance of the draft legal act with Latvia's international obligations, including the extent to which the draft legal act correctly transposes EU legislation. The State Chancellery assesses the compliance of the draft with drafting rules, the quality of the administrative burden data included in the RIA and compliance with any other requirements, including consultation procedures and coherence with development planning documents. The assessment of the Ministry of Justice and the State Chancellery is binding upon other ministries. The ministry responsible for drafting the document revises the proposal if the document does not comply with the relevant requirements.

Within the State Chancellery, the Public Administration and Policy Development Department and the Cross-sectoral co-ordination department lead the assessment of the documents submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers. Public Administration and Policy Development Department, which consists of 30 people, half of which are working on RIA specifically, is responsible quality evaluation of RIAs. The economic aspects should be evaluated by the Cross-sectoral co-ordination department, but given the workflow, it is not in a position to review all the incoming drafts. There is currently no mechanism for prioritisation and focusing attention on the "high impact" laws. The practice suggests that there are relatively few cases in which a draft law is rejected because of the poor quality of the RIA or non-compliance with drafting rules. Statistics on RIA quality are not yet systematically collected. Crucially, the lack of analytical capacity within the State Chancellery means that is not in a position to carry out in-depth quality control on RIAs, as the team in the Legal Department which monitors ministries compliance with RIA rules is made-up of only four officials, with RIA compliance being merely one of their regular responsibilities. While the Ministry of Justice has slightly larger staffing resources (around 40 people), they are exclusively devoted to legal issues, with purely legal skills, and are therefore not in a position to provide substantive feedback on the impact assessment. However, there is still the possibility to add some capacity for economic analysis in the ministry of justice.

RIA guidance and training

To support line ministries in the preparation of RIAs and effectively implement the instructions of the Cabinet of Ministers, the State Chancellery in conjunction with external partners, have published a

government-wide guidance document in 2021 for assessing the initial impact of draft legislative acts, as well as instructions for the content of the annotation document (or RIA document), which must be uploaded to the TAP Portal during the legislative process.[3] This guidance contains links to a more detailed methodological guidance document, published in 2012, which provides information on the use of analytical techniques such as the Problem Tree method, Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA), and Cost Effectiveness Analysis.[4] The State Chancellery has produced detailed guidelines on how to calculate administrative burden respectively on businesses and citizens, also based on the Standard-Cost Model.[5]

However, despite the availability of guidance material, there appears to be a lack of training offered to Latvian officials in RIA, and the different methodologies for assessing impacts. The Latvian School of Public Administration currently appears to lack the resources and in-house expertise to provide such training. Previous OECD studies noted that the State Chancellery in co-operation with the Ministry of Justice used to organise seminars for central government institutions on legal drafting techniques, however the OECD Team were informed that the Justice staff involved in the training have been redeployed to more urgent tasks. Accordingly, the OECD Team found that policy teams in ministries often do not have the analytical capacities in ministries to carry out RIA, although there were higher concentrations in analytical expertise in the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economy. Policy teams within most ministries typically offer little support with regards to providing analytical support or capacity building for RIA. This finding mirrors that of the State Chancellery's 2021 review of RIA process which found that there was a "lack of resources and competence in the ministries to carry out a full-fledged and objective impact assessment" and "methodological information gaps" (see Box 2.21).

The use of stakeholder engagement procedures in the legislative process

OECD best practices on RIA recommend that stakeholder engagement should be incorporated systematically in the RIA process to give an opportunity for all stakeholders to participate in the regulatory process (OECD, 2020[79]). Indeed, consultation and user engagement can give important information on the feasibility of proposals, on the alternatives considered, and on the degree to which affected parties are likely to comply with the proposed regulation. Furthermore, the assumptions underlying RIAs can be improved if they are tested after the carrying out of the RIA through public disclosure and consultation.

Latvia has instituted a transparent and structured process for consulting with social and civil partners. The requirement to undertake stakeholder engagement during the process of developing new regulations is stipulated in Regulation No. 970 of the Cabinet of Ministers "*Rules for Engagement of Society in the Development Planning Process"* (Cabinet of Ministers, 2009[81]). Also, in September 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers approved Regulation No 606, "*Rules of Procedures of the Cabinet*", which mandates that a ministry responsible for the elaboration of a draft regulation is obliged to publish notification on a possibility to participate in the consultation process on the TAP Portal. The notification has to be published no less than 14 days (although this period can be longer if necessary, up to 30 days) before submission of the document for official announcement at the Meeting of State Secretaries or submission to the policymaking authority in other cases. Any interested party may take part in the consultations including individuals, companies or NGOs.

[3] The document is called the "Guidelines for Assessing the Initial Impact of a Draft Legislative Act and Preparing the Assessment Report on the Single Legislative Drafting and Consultation Portal". (State Chancellery of Latvia, 2021[77])

[4] The document is called "Support for the implementation of structural reforms in the public administration"

[5] The document is called "Innovation process to reduce administrative burdens"

The transparency of the law-making process, and public consultation procedures have been substantially enhanced by the development of the new online legislative portal – the "TAP Portal" – which became operational in 2021 (State Chancellery, 2023[70]). Ministries are obliged to publish draft legislation on this online portal for public comment. This has made the process of developing legislation more transparent – the portal allows a draft legislative proposal to be published during the formulation stage, and other government institutions, as well as external stakeholders can follow the development of the draft in a clear, structured process.

In addition, the RIA requirements are integrated into the consultation process. A draft legal act posted on the TAP Portal is obliged to be accompanied with an annotation (or RIA) report according to the afore mentioned Regulations. During consultations, those consulted have a right to comment on the draft as well as on the RIA report. Ministries can also utilise the stakeholder consultation guidance published by the State Chancellery in 2022–- the *"Guidelines for Ensuring Public Participation in Public Participation"* (Cabinet of Ministers, 2023[82])–- which draw upon OECD best practice to present a range of approaches to public participation.

In practice, ministries tend to consult with stakeholders through formal and informal working groups and networks, sometimes in the early stages of preparation of the draft legislation and even prior to submitting on the TAP portal. For example, in order to update the corporate governance recommendations in accordance with modern requirements, from 2018 to 2020, an Advisory Board for the development of a new Corporate Governance Code was established under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice. This group consisted of civil servants, NGO representatives, businesses, as well as academics (Ministry of Justice of Republic of Latvia, 2021[83]). Similar types of early consultation processes also exist in the agricultural area. However, despite these examples of early-stage consultation it is unclear if it happens on a systematic basis in the consultation process. Latvia is not unusual in this respect as OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook data indicates that most consultation efforts in OECD countries continue to focus on later stages of the rule-making process, i.e. when a preferred solution has been identified and/or a draft regulation has been prepared (see Table 2.8. below).

Table 2.8. Better late than never, but earlier engagement is still needed

	Stakeholder engagement to inform about the nature of the problem and to inform discussions on possible solutions		Consultation on draft regulations or proposed rules		RIA documents made available for consultation with the general public (requirement)		Stakeholder engagement in *ex post* evaluation
	Primary laws	Subordinate regulation	Primary laws	Subordinate regulation	Primary laws	Subordinate regulation	
Australia	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Austria	■	■	■	■			■
Belgium	■	■	■	■			■
Canada	■	■	■	■		■	■
Chile	■	■	■	■			
Colombia		■	■	■			
Costa Rica	■	■	■	■		■	
Czechia	■	■	■	■			■
Denmark	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Estonia	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Finland	■	■	■	■			■
France	■	■	■	■			■
Germany	■	■	■	■			■
Greece	■		■	■			

	Stakeholder engagement to inform about the nature of the problem and to inform discussions on possible solutions		Consultation on draft regulations or proposed rules		RIA documents made available for consultation with the general public (requirement)		Stakeholder engagement in *ex post* evaluation
	Primary laws	Subordinate regulation	Primary laws	Subordinate regulation	Primary laws	Subordinate regulation	
Hungary							
Iceland							
Ireland							
Israel							
Italy							
Japan							
Korea							
Latvia							
Lithuania							
Luxembourg							
Mexico							
Netherlands							
New Zealand							
Norway							
Poland							
Portugal							
Slovak Republic							
Slovenia							
Spain							
Sweden							
Switzerland							
Türkiye							
United Kingdom							
United States							
European Union							

Systematic approach
For some regulations
Never
Not applicable
Not available*

Note: Data are based on 38 OECD members and the European Union. * Due to a change in the political system during the survey period affecting the processes for developing laws, data for Türkiye are not available for stakeholder engagement in developing regulations and RIA for primary laws.
Source: Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance (iREG) Survey 2021.

Issues can be fast-tracked at the request of a minister, as part of an "Urgency Procedure" as stipulated under Regulation No.606. Such fast-tracking means that the usual procedures for stakeholder consultation can be circumvented. For example, in 2020, 40% of all issues before the cabinet were fast-tracked, an increase from 2018, likely driven by the need to respond to the COVID-19 emergency (Mangule, Auers and Jahn, 2022[84]). The OECD Team was informed by external stakeholders that the use of this urgency procedure was still being utilised excessively after the COVID-19 emergency had passed, thereby limiting their opportunities to input into the rule-making process. OECD best practice states that where exceptions to the use of regulatory management tools are invoked (and to reduce the incentive for their misuse), it should be mandatory to conduct an *ex post* evaluation in such cases. Data arrangements to monitor the regulation's impacts must be made at the time the regulation passes into law at the latest.

There are other areas for improvement in the use of stakeholder consultation in Latvia, despite the noted recent improvements to the process. The State Chancellery's 2021 RIA Review observed that there has often been a formalistic approach to stakeholder consultation across ministries. The report found that in an in-depth evaluation of 1898 pieces of draft legislation submitted to the Meeting of the Secretaries of State over 1 January 2019 to December 2020, only one in six RIA documents subject to more than the statutory minimum level of 14 days for consultation (see Box 2.21 for more details). Furthermore, a survey of Latvian civil servants carried out in 2022 entitled *"Public participation in the work of public administration"* found that only 17% of respondents estimated that organising of public participation events is often part of their work responsibilities and 58% stated that such organisation of public participation events is not at all part of their work duties. The survey found that stakeholder engagement is more often organised by the three Ministries of Finance, Interior and Culture. Ministries were asked about the greatest challenges in carrying out stakeholder engagement that go beyond simply posting a draft bill online, with half of respondents justifying this by a lack of time and 37% by a lack of knowledge of other available methods (Mangule, Auers and Jahn, 2022[84]).

It appears that feedback from stakeholders is often sought more to confirm a preferred option, rather than to identify and evaluate different options. This is due, in part, to the RIA document accompanying draft legislation providing too little information to engage stakeholders in a constructive discussion on the impacts of the proposed legislation. Accordingly, it can be said that public or stakeholder feedback rarely alter the substantive content of the RIA.

The overall importance of engaging with the citizens and promoting a more transparent and participative system is evident also by other initiatives outside of the public administration. An example is the e-petition platform which offer a space for citizens to directly propose legislative initiatives (see Box 2.22).

Box 2.22. E-petition platform "Manabalss.lv"

Manabalss.lv was launched as a private initiative in 2011. The purpose of the manabalss.lv platform is to promote public participation in policymaking processes. Currently, the portal manabalss.lv has influence in the policymaking process, ensuring that public thoughts are heard.

ManaBalss.lv confirms the identity of every voter in the Latvia's registered internet bank or e-signature (eParaksts) system. Initiatives can be initiated and signed by any citizen of Latvia who has reached the age of 16. Every initiative that meets the quality criteria of ManaBalss.lv and collects at least 10 000 citizen'' signatures on the platform goes to the Parliament. Some of the examples of petitions that were approved in the parliament are the ban on lynx hunting, the protection of fur animals, the data-based vaccination certificate policy.

In 2022, the Manabalss.lv platform published 125 initiatives, of which 23 initiatives were submitted to the Parliament and 14 initiatives to municipalities. As well as 37 collective submissions in 2022 were in the Parliament and ministries at various stages of consideration. In total, from 2011 to 2022, a total of 2 730 000 votes were casted on the platform.

Source: Manabalss.lv (2023[85]), Manabalss.lv website; https://manabalss.lv/pages/par-manabalss-lv.

The system of ex post assessments of existing laws is still at an early stage

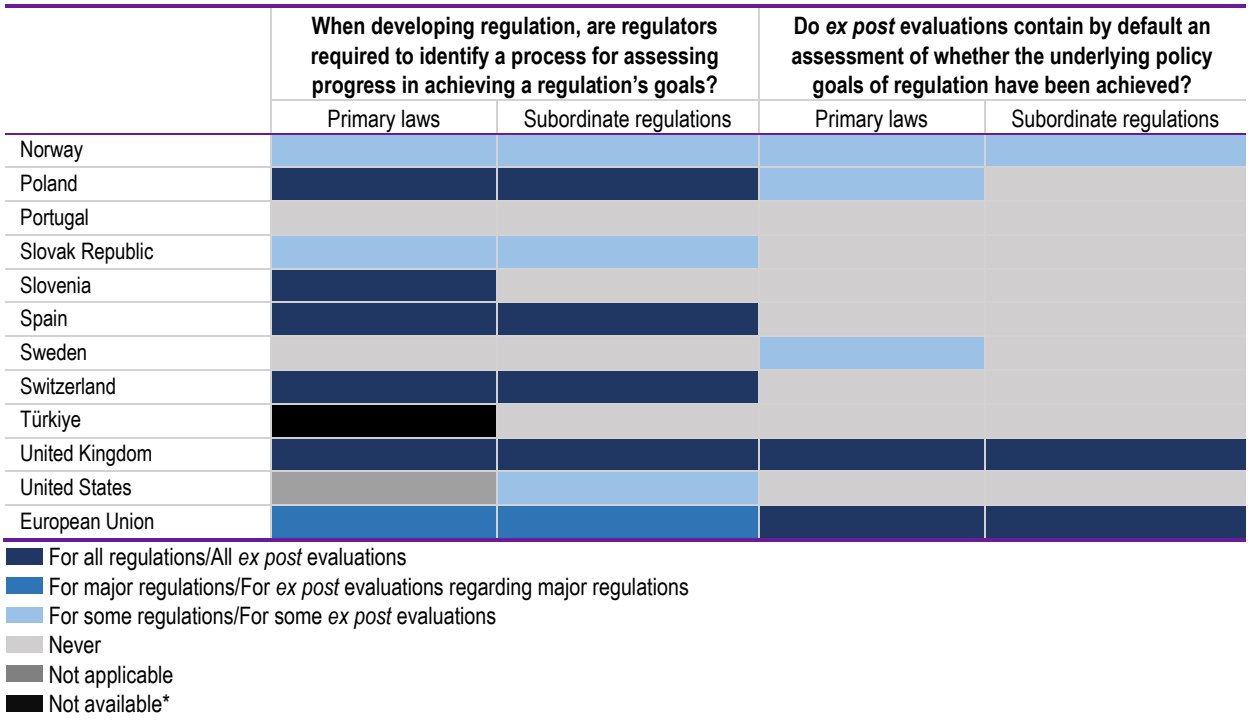
Regulations should be periodically reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. Ex post reviews complete the "regulatory cycle" that begins with ex ante assessment of proposals and proceeds to implementation and administration. The broadly accepted notion of a ''regulatory cycle'' recognises that

regulations are akin potentially to depreciating assets that require ongoing management and renewal. Even if they start out well, many regulations may no longer be fit for purpose some years after. The accumulated costs of this in economic or social terms can be high.

However, according to the OECD iREG data, *ex post* evaluation systems are still rudimentary in most member countries, and it is still not mandatory to conduct an *ex post* review in one quarter of OECD countries (OECD, 2021[69]). In most countries where a requirement exists, it does not apply systematically to all or major regulations. OECD countries have put in place different types of requirements to trigger *ex post* evaluations, including "thresholds", "sunsetting" clauses or automatic evaluation requirements. Results from the iREG survey suggests that some OECD members require policymakers to identify a process to achieve a regulation's goals at the time when the regulation is first created. However, when it comes to reviewing regulations via *ex post* evaluations, OECD members are less likely to have requirements in place to assess whether the underlying policy goals were in fact achieved or not (see Table 2.9). While *ex post* requirements are relatively underdeveloped in Latvia, it is therefore not the only OECD country in that position.

Table 2.9. Ex ante requirements exist in some OECD members to state how a regulation's goals will be achieved, although ex post evaluations do not generally require an assessment of whether this has happened

	When developing regulation, are regulators required to identify a process for assessing progress in achieving a regulation's goals?		Do *ex post* evaluations contain by default an assessment of whether the underlying policy goals of regulation have been achieved?	
	Primary laws	Subordinate regulations	Primary laws	Subordinate regulations
Australia				
Austria				
Belgium				
Canada				
Chile				
Colombia				
Costa Rica				
Czechia				
Denmark				
Estonia				
Finland				
France				
Germany				
Greece				
Hungary				
Iceland				
Ireland				
Israel				
Italy				
Japan				
Korea				
Latvia				
Lithuania				
Luxembourg				
Mexico				
Netherlands				
New Zealand				



Note: Data are based on 38 OECD members and the European Union. * Due to a change in the political system during the survey period affecting the processes for developing laws, data for Türkiye are not available for stakeholder engagement in developing regulations and RIA for primary laws.

Source: Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance (iREG) Survey 2021.

Under paragraph 20 of the Regulation No. 617 on 7 September 2021 *"Rules for Completing the Initial Impact Assessment of a Draft Legal Act"*, ministries are obliged to add information about the necessity of a future *ex post* evaluation into the RIA (Cabinet of Ministers, 2021[76]). This information is supposed to indicate the justification of *ex post* evaluation, author, deadline, as well as the results of the project and their evaluation indicators. In theory, external independent evaluations should be used as an instrument, particularly when there are sensitive pieces of legislation and need to ensure that the public can trust the results of the evaluation. However, there is no explicit provision in ministry budgets for *ex post* evaluations, which is best practice according to OECD Best Practise Principles for Reviewing the Stock of Regulations (OECD, 2020[86]) (OECD, 2020[86]). It is also not apparent that ministries are appropriately equipped in terms of analytical capacities for carrying such *ex post* assessments.

The State Audit Office in Latvia performs an important role in *ex post* evaluation, particularly through the use of performance and compliance audits (State Audit Office, 2023[87]). These audits provide the Latvian government with robust evidence regarding the performance of specific public policies. For example, the Audit Office published a report in 2023 *"Management of mineral resources in Latvia*", which reported a number of challenges regarding the government's policies for ensuring sustainable management of mineral resources in Latvia, including shortcomings in the framework of laws and regulations (State Audit Office, 2023[88]).

Reviews of regulatory stock are mostly business oriented. Various initiatives to reduce the administrative burden were included in previously valid state administration policy planning documents, 196 pilot projects and commissioned studies have been implemented to define and reduce the administrative burden. In order to reduce the administrative burden on entrepreneurs, the Ministry of Economy has been developing and implementing the Business Environment Improvement Measures Plan for more than 20 years, in co-operation with the stakeholders–- the National Economic Council, the Foreign Investors Council in Latvia,

the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Employer'' Confederation of Latvia. However, as mentioned earlier, it is unclear how successful these initiatives have been at actually reducing regulatory burden in practice, as a review by the State Audit Office reported that *"according to the calculations of the State Chancellery, the administrative burden in monetary terms has increased by approximately 1.2 million euros from 2019 to September 2021"* (State Audit Office, 2021[80]).

The processes for co-ordinating the negotiation and transposition of EU legislation are well established

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs co-ordinates the preparation of Latvia's position on proposed EU legislation, involving key players inside and outside government. Line ministries responsible for the relevant policy area consult with external stakeholders already at the stage of forming the position. The Saeima also plays an active role through a permanent committee that discusses any position document and can ask for refinements.

The Ministry of Justice co-ordinates the transposition of approved EU legislation. There are the same requirements for RIA and stakeholder consultation for transposed EU legislation as for domestic legislation. A RIA is prepared for transposing legislation and a special section of the RIA requires a close correspondence between the EU legislation and the proposed transposing legislation to avoid gold plating. Ministries have to justify any amendments to transposing legislation that go beyond requirements set by EU legislation. Gold plating does not appear to be a particular problem and was not raised as an issue to the OECD Team. According to the latest Single Market Scoreboard, Latvia has a low transposition deficit and one of the lowest numbers of incorrectly transposed directives among EU countries. However, the State Chancellery's 2021 review of RIA process (see Box 2.21) found that regulatory burdens stemming from EU legislation often were not monetised.

Impact of European processes on policy evaluation

In Latvia, as for almost all European countries, the European Union has played a significant role in the development of monitoring and evaluation practices. Indeed, these activities must be conducted for all European Structural and Investment Funds according to the Commons Rules on EU funds (2021-2027) (European Parliament, 2021[89]). In Latvia, this signifies that a large number of programmes are monitored and evaluated given the relatively high share of EU funds with respect to the national budget. The total funding amount available for the country in the period 2014-2020 was EUR 4.51 billion and for the period 2021-2027 will be of EUR 5.4[6] billion (European Commission, 2019[16]) (Ministry of Finance, 2023[90]).

The organisation of monitoring and evaluation is in line with the European standards (see Figure 2.16 for a synthetic overview). The Ministry of Finance is the EU Structural Fund's Managing Authority. It prepares information on the evaluations carried out in the calendar year. Ministry of Finance, in co-operation with Line Ministries (Responsible Authorities), prepares proposals for the implementation of the strategic recommendations included in the evaluation reports (Questionnaire). Monitoring of evaluations and their quality is provided by the thematic sub-committees of the Monitoring Committee, which, according to the order of the Ministry of Finance, includes representatives of leading institutions, institutions and non-governmental organisations involved in the implementation of EU funds (ES Fondi, 2023[91]). The Ministry

[6] The EU Cohesion Policy Programme for 2021-2027 (European Social Fund Plus, European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, Just Transition Fund), the ESF+ Programme for Reducing Material Deprivation (European Social Fund Plus), the Action Programme for Fisheries Development 2021-2027 (European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund).

of Finance has an Evaluation Unit responsible for co-ordination of evaluation of the EU funds composed of five people. The Evaluation Unit is functionally independent from the planning and implementation of EU funds. Until the 2014-2020 round, this unit was the one responsible for outsourcing all evaluations of structural funds but, from now, line ministries will be the ones responsible for procuring out their own evaluations. The contracting out is in line with what suggested by the EU to ensure the independence of the assessment. In addition, for conducting evaluations and quality monitoring, the managing authority can attract experts from the relevant industry, who represent the responsible authority of the relevant industry or an institution or organisation related to the relevant industry (ES Fondi, 2023[91]). Also the evaluation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan will undergo the same processes. A first impact assessment was already commissioned by the Ministry of Finance and conducted by the Fiscal Discipline Council and the Productivity Board (see Box 2.23).

Box 2.23. Evaluation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) Plan

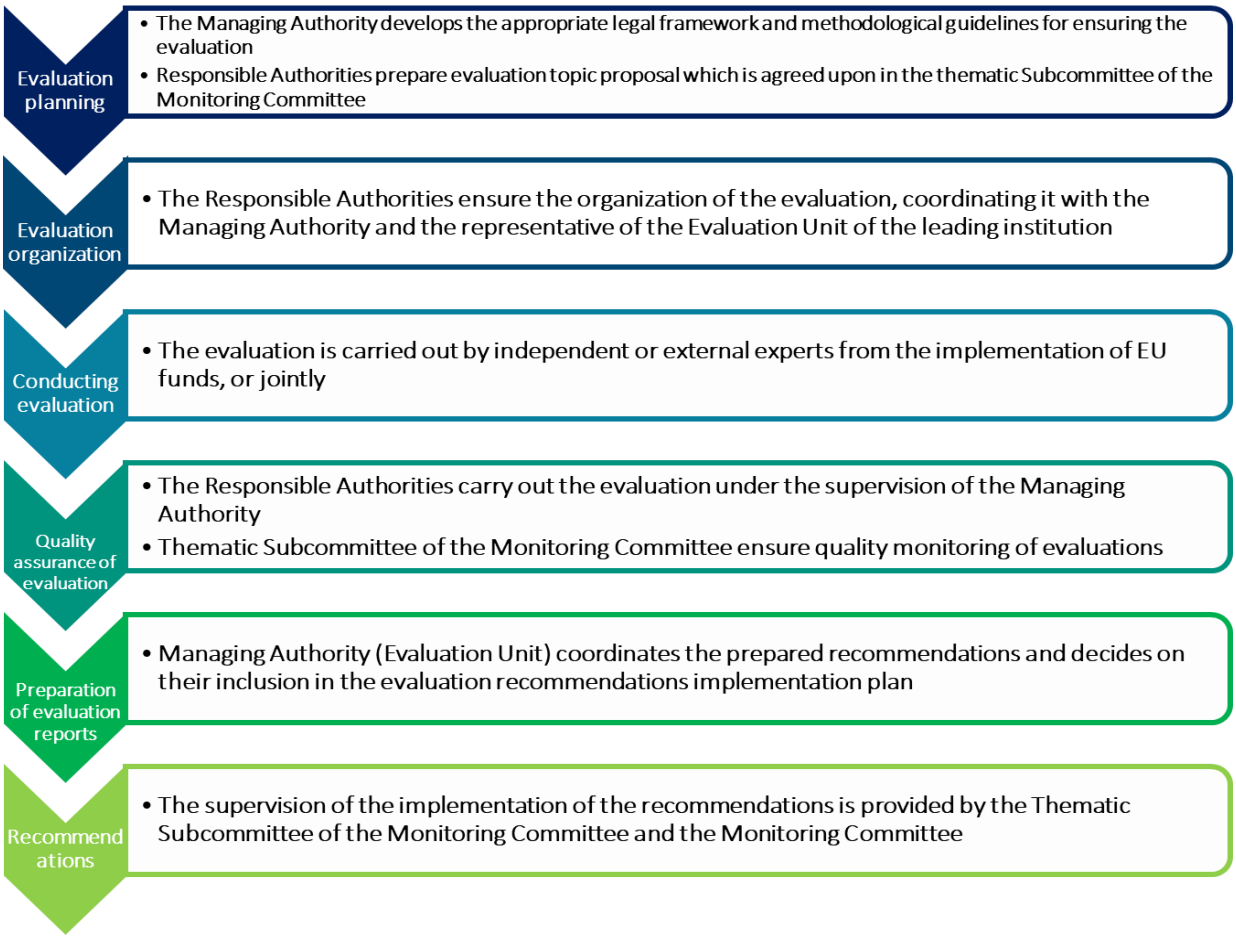
In 2021, the Fiscal Discipline Council jointly with Latvian Productivity Council LV PEAK established an expert panel to assess the RRF plan. Expert panel consisted of 14 experts in various fields, such as economy, macroeconomics, energy, public finance, fiscal policy and digital transformation. The assessment was requested by the Ministry of Finance (FM letter No 5.1-25/21/720 of 8 February 2021). In general, the RRF Plan was examined from the perspectives of macroeconomic impact, fiscal impact assessment and compliance assessment for the plan's objectives.

Some of the main conclusions of the study were that the plan is fiscally neutral, because the RRF plan's financial resources are included in the budget as EU grants, and according to the simplified forecast of the experts of the Fiscal Discipline Council, from 2022 to 2026, the RRF programme could increase budget revenues by more than EUR 500 million. Additionally, it was highlighted that a greater connection of the RRF plan with the National Development Plan of Latvia is necessary. Finally, experts pointed out that the plan will have the most impact on economic transformation and productivity reform while the least impact on the rule of law.

Source: Jakobsons, A. et al. (2021[92]), ES Atveseļošanās un Noturības Mehānisma Plāna Novērtējums [EU Recovery and Resilience Plan Evaluation] https://www.fdp.gov.lv/en/media/2979/download?attachment.

Among line ministries, interesting innovative practices have been set up by the Ministry of Agriculture which administers the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (ES Fondi, 2023[93]). The Ministry has a Strategy Analysis Unit composed of two people, which is responsible for overseeing the evaluation process, preparing the contract, in co-ordination with all involved responsible colleagues, drafting terms of reference and then monitoring implementation of the evaluation (terms, submission of delivery, compliance with the intended work result).The evaluations are generally commissioned to the Agricultural Resources and Economics which has developed a long-term experience in performing these evaluations. This represents a very good balance to ensure both independence and policy-relevance since the institute is in between the research world and the policymaking one.

Figure 2.16. EU funds evaluation system in Latvia



Source: ES Fondi (2023[91]), Izvērtēšanas sistēma Latvijā [Evaluation system in Latvia], https://m.esfondi.lv/izvertesanas-sistema-latvija.

Overall, monitoring and evaluation did not spread outside the area of structural funds

The way in which the monitoring and evaluation of structural funds is organised did not allow the practice of monitoring and evaluation to spread on policies not covered from the EU funds. Indeed, by promoting the outsourcing of monitoring and evaluation, line ministries do not have incentives to invest and acquire the analytical skills themselves. Overall, *ex post* evaluation is not a common practice in Latvia as it was already mentioned. Indeed, in Latvia there is still no legal framework on *ex post* evaluation and this practice occurs only on *ad hoc* basis.

3 Needs and gaps assessment

While the diagnostic report captured the situation in Latvia as it currently is, this needs and gaps assessment report aims to outline the ideal "to-be" situation for the national actors. The OECD conducted four focus groups with a variety of beneficiary organisations and stakeholders (see Table 3.1). The goal of these focus groups was to help the representatives of these organisations define their ideal circumstances at the different levels defined in the Diagnostic Report – individual, organisational, and inter-organisational.

The concept of needs and gaps needs to be seen from a holistic perspective, in terms of the unrealised potential of the system which includes these organisations. The focus groups discussed how to address current needs and gaps, as well as options to move towards an ideal situation, which can help form key take aways to inform the next stage of the project, namely the roadmap.

This report is structured similarly to the diagnostic report. Each section highlights a wide range of strong practices from other OECD and European countries. In light of both these international practices and in light of the discussions held in the focus groups, it then offer 7an outcome of the assessment.

Table 3.1. Focus groups conducted in Latvia

Title	When	Main topics covered	Institutions involved
Green Transition, Energy and Climate	22 November 2023	• Skills to produce and use evidence, specifically for green transition • Role of advisory bodies, research institutes and internal analytical units • Availability of interdisciplinary fora	Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Climate and Energy, Ministry of Agriculture, State Chancellery , Ministry of Economics Latvian State Forest Research Institute "Silava", Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology
Digital Transformation and Services	22 November 2023	• Data sharing practices between institutions • Possibility of building statisticians' network • Open science	State Chancellery, Ministry of Welfare Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Science, Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
Human capital and Skills	23 November 2023	• Collaboration between ministries and academia • Training for scientists • Communication between scientists and policymakers	State Chancellery, Ministry of Education and Science, Association of Latvian Young Scientists, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Rīga Stradiņš University, Riga Technical University, Latvia University of Life Science and Technologies, Latvian Council of Sciences, University of Latvia
Expertise for Policymaking	23 November 2023	• Data registries and open science • Evidence and training plans in ministries • Analytical skills in ministries and state institutions	State Chancellery, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Saeima (Parliament), Bank of Latvia, Competition Council, Central Statistics Bureau , Institute "BIOR", Providus, Delna

Supply of evidence for policymaking: Current needs and gaps

A well-functioning EIPM system requires a good supply of policy-relevant evidence coming from different actors and sources. Both internal and external evidence producers can have an important role depending on what type of evidence is needed. Indeed, for exploratory and in-depth research, academics and researchers are often equipped with higher degrees of expertise while for more recurrent evidence needs, internal staff could be placed in a more strategic position. It is then important to have sufficient skills for policy relevant research both inside government and in the academic world (skills at the individual level). Governments also need a critical mass of those skills and to make sure they are organised and managed in such a way that they have the time and resources to produce quality evidence (this is the issue of capacities at the *organisational level*). Finally, evidence is not generated in a vacuum and often requires different stakeholders and actors to work together. This is the issue of *inter-organisational* co-operation across the government, as well as between government and external research organisations.

This chapter analyses the current gaps in evidence supply at the individual, organisational and inter-organisational level. The gaps are mainly identified on the basis of findings from the diagnostic report. It then mobilises some strong international practices to show how other countries have tried to solve similar gaps. Finally, it identifies which are the current needs in Latvia to move toward the best practices examples.

Individual gaps and needs

Analytical skills are insufficient to produce sufficient internal evidence on a systematic basis

As previously discussed in the Diagnostic Report, Latvia currently possesses limited internal capacities to systematically conduct policy relevant research. Currently, both government and external actors are not equipped with the sufficient skills to produce policy actionable evidence systematically. Inside the government, line ministries rarely have organised units responsible for evidence production and mainly rely on formal and informal collaborations with arm's length institutes and universities. Finally, collaboration across institutions for evidence production often relies on informal mechanisms rather than clear and structured processes. Overall, the adoption of new mechanisms and the reinforcement of some already existing mechanisms is envisaged to strengthen evidence supply.

The lack of analytical and strategic skills is reflected in important strategic documents like the Public Administration Modernisation Plan 2023-2027 (State Chancellery, 2023[26]). The public administration is currently unable to attract or build in-house the analytical skills it would need. Indeed, salaries are often considered too low and only a few institutions, such as the Bank of Latvia, have the funds to be more attractive. Even if a Remuneration Law was passed in 2022, this has not produced significant changes yet as the law was not accompanied by a budget increase. Together with this, the public administration is not able to build these skills in-house. Indeed, the Latvian School of Public Administration has limited offer of specific courses on methods for policy analysis, evaluation or evidence-informed policymaking. Some new courses have been developed within the framework of the Digital Academy and include some analytical courses in line with the new competence framework for policy planners. However, it also suffers from insufficient structural funding as most funding comes from EU funds and are not permanent.

In the academic world, researchers do not receive any training on science-for-policy and have limited incentives to engage systematically in policy-relevant research

To ensure supply of evidence from the academic world, it is important for scientists to have specific skills, often defined 'science for policy skills'. The JRC has developed a competence framework on

"Science4Policy" and has organised the essential skills in five clusters: understanding policymaking, participating in policymaking, communicating, engaging stakeholders and collaborating (JRC, 2023[24]). However, in the Latvian academic world, researchers are rarely trained and incentivised to acquire these skills. Indeed, even if several researchers already engage in policy-relevant research, these skills are often self-taught. Indeed, there are no overarching courses providing trainings for PhD students on how to interact and impact policymaking. The courses that do exist are often non-compulsory and are rarely undertaken given the significant amount of work that researchers are confronted with. In addition, there are also limited opportunities for researchers to spend periods inside line ministries to conduct policy-relevant research. Indeed, this happens only sporadically and is not part of a broader and more systemic approach.

In addition to this, there are limited incentives to engage in policy-relevant research. Indeed, researchers are mainly assessed on their scientific publications and projects and can sometimes see the policy-relevant research as a secondary priority. It is worth noting that this is not necessarily true in all scientific domains. Indeed, given the often-limited resources available in the academic world, several researchers engage also in more policy-oriented projects to complement the limited resources in purely academic activities. However, this mechanism is not always conducive to quality and additional incentives should be developed to allow researchers to engage in policy-relevant research not only as secondary activity.

Table 3.2. Summary of individual needs, gaps and potential interventions

Current Need/Gap Description	Relevant Organisation(s)	Potential Intervention(s)
Lack of analytical skills in public administration	State Chancellery	Perform a skills mapping to understand current gaps Develop schemes or job functions to attract new skills Invest in analytical training
Limited Science for policy skills and incentives in universities	Ministry of Education and Science	Strengthen SFP incentives for academics at a broader level Strengthen science4policy skills by developing specific courses for PhD students
Absence of clear incentives for researchers to work with government on policy-relevant research	State Chancellery, Ministry of Education and Science	Increase opportunities to work for and with the government Explore ways to value policy-relevant research in assessment of academics and researchers

International best practices

Across OECD countries, ensuring that sufficient analytical skills in public administration exist is a common challenge (OECD, 2021[94]). Indeed, public administrations often face issues in attracting skills that are on high demand in the job market. However, some countries have implemented successful actions to either attract or build these skills internally. For example, in the United Kingdom the policy professions are able to attract a significant number of civil servants with strong background in social sciences and research. France and Ireland have also developed some specific career paths able to ensure attractive job opportunities for economists in the government, with decent remuneration at the start of the career, as well as mobility schemes and access to networks (Box 3.1). While specific job categories are often characterised by a salary difference, which help increasing the attractiveness of the job, non-monetary components can also play a significant role. To better understand the role of different attractiveness factors, some countries have also invested in developing branding strategies (see Box 3.2).

Box 3.1. Developing specific analytical roles in the government: Ireland and the United Kingdom

In Ireland, the **Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES)** has a role as an economic and analytical resource co-ordinator across government. The IGEES manages a network of analytical staff who are hired centrally and later posted in line departments. The IGEES staff conduct economic analysis and evaluations, and more generally contribute to better policymaking in the line departments. IGEES was launched in 2012 in the aftermath of the Global financial crisis, initially aimed at insuring the quality-for-money of public policies in response to budgetary pressures (OECD, 2020[95]). On average, 20 recent graduates are hired through this scheme every year, which brings the total number of analysts hired by IGEES to over 150 across the government. The IGEES also supports network building and knowledge sharing by providing its staff with incentives for mobility: after an initial 2-year period, staff will move either within the department or to another department. A learning and development framework has also been established whereby IGEES staff receive training in the following areas: policy analysis and evaluation methods, appraisal methods, data and advanced quantitative methods, and applied economics (OECD, 2020[95]).

In **the United Kingdom**, there are around 15 000 "policy professionals" that work as analysts across the different government departments. The term regroups several professional tracks such as the government economic service, the government statistical service and the government social research service (OECD, 2020[25]). The policy profession framework includes a two-year apprenticeship programme, as well as a three-year graduate scheme. There is also a common framework for all policy professionals, which includes a shared skillset (18 competences in 3 areas: Analysis and Use of Evidence, Politics and Democracy, Policy Delivery), 3 levels of expertise, as well as a clear training and career progression framework.

Source: (OECD, 2020[95]; OECD, 2020[25]; OECD, 2021[51]).

Box 3.2. Using employer branding strategies in OECD public administrations to attract talent

In **France**, since 2020, a cross-departmental project was launched with human resources experts and two dedicated surveys to define the attractiveness arguments to be used by the branding strategy. The branding project has three target audiences listed in order of priority: 1) future candidates for civil service positions; 2) the general public (i.e. information and awareness-raising campaigns not focused solely on recruitment); and 3) current public servants (i.e. to promote opportunities for mobility).

The **Swiss federal administration** has developed an employer branding strategy focused on identifying the administration as a prospective employer and, moreover, sets it apart from other competitors for talent. The strategy explicitly recognises that fact-based communication is not enough, and treats branding the public sector as if it were a consumer brand. The strategy centres on an "umbrella" brand outlining the brand benefit, attributes, tonalities and iconography. The administration is developing guidelines to operationalise the strategy, including on corporate language and phrasing for job advertisements.

Source: OECD (2023[96]), "Attracting and Developing Skills in the Public Service in the Czech Republic", in *OECD Public Governance Reviews: Czech Republic: Towards a More Modern and Effective Public Administration*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/cab781a2-en.

Together with creating schemes to attract the skills needed, other countries have focused more on investing in trainings to reskill and upskill the current work force. These are often developed through the Schools of Public Administrations but can be directly developed with universities as well. The Italian project "PA 110 e lode" is an example of an attempt to mobilise universities to upskill the public administration (see Box 3.3).

Box 3.3. Approaches to develop skills in public administrations: Italy's new reskilling and upskilling strategy "PA 110 e lode"

As part of the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), the Ministry of Public Administration has developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of University and Research in 2021 to incentivise civil servants to access bachelor's degrees, masters and specialisation courses at reduced prices. At the moment, 72 universities have joined the project and civil servants can access several courses at reduced prices. The strategy also allows for the joint development of research programmes and study programmes consistent with the specific interests of public servants, allowing any new skills developed to be consistent with the needs of the civil service. Furthermore, it allows for the development of specific lists of researchers available for secondment or other opportunities within the public administration, helping foster relationships with universities and research institutions.

Source: Ministry of Public Administration (2022[97]), PA 110 e lode, salgono a 63 le Università che hanno formalizzato l'offerta formative, https://www.funzionepubblica.gov.it/articolo/ministro/24-08-2022/pa-110-e-lode-salgono-63-le-universita-che-hanno-formalizzato-lofferta.

An important step to undertake to have a clear picture of the skills and the training needs of civil servants is to map the skills they currently possess. These mapping exercises have been conducted by several countries to assess the current situation for key skills (see Box 3.4).

Box 3.4. Understanding the current skills: the United Kingdom framework of digital professionals

In 2015, the **United Kingdom's Government Digital Services** (GDS) underwent a broad mapping of digital skills in the government to evaluate the capacities and needs of the British government in this aspect. This mapping looked at digital professionals as well as other roles which are indispensable for well-functioning digital services. This mapping exercise helped to show that employees with such digital skills had different job titles, functions and salaries. Following this mapping, the GDS developed the "Digital, Data and Technology Capability Framework" that includes 37 jobs and identifies the skills needed for each of them, as well as the competences needed to advance to a higher-level title within each job. This framework has helped the UK civil service address the issue of digital professionals' recruitment and career advancement, identify capacity gaps to design training and facilitated the creation of community of practice.

Source: OECD (2021[94]), *Public Employment and Management 2021: The Future of the Public Service*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/938f0d65-en.

To increase the skills of researchers in policy-relevant research, some jurisdictions have also adopted interesting schemes. In Flanders (Belgium), for example, researchers have to dedicate some percentage of time to policy relevant research or for work related to government policy (further discussed in the next section). In addition, some universities within Belgium have proposed innovative solutions to reduce the impacts of this problem – a notable example is Ghent University, who have made a portfolio of research

dimensions which allow researchers with an interest in policy work to go down this path and be recognised for doing so (see Box 3.5).

Box 3.5. Mechanisms to increase incentives to conduct policy-relevant research in Belgium

Ghent University's Research Dimension Portfolio

Ghent University's Research Dimension Portfolio was created to aid in the description, planning, and evaluation of research.

The portfolio includes a variety of dimensions, including leadership, ability to work in an interdisciplinary way, scientific impact and socioeconomic impact. Professors are able to select competencies within this portfolio that best match their profiles. These dimensions can be used for context in deciding on the appointment and promotion of university members of staff.

The portfolio splits into two main sections: 1) design and development of research; and 2) impact of research. This highlighting of the importance of impact, including impact in policy, is a valuable incentive for researchers to dedicate greater amounts of time to policy-related work. By including the impact dimension, the portfolio is able to create an incentive for researchers to conduct policy-oriented research. This in a sense enables to create a "Science for Policy Marker" in the evaluation of research.

Source: Belgium Diagnostic Report.

Key takeaways: Need to strengthen policy analysis and science for policy skills in both academia and in the public administration

In Latvia, there is a good understanding of the need to strengthen both internal and external skills for policy analysis. Indeed, the Diagnostic report helped to identify relevant gaps both inside the public administration and in the academic word. To concretely address these gaps, beneficiary organisations should take concrete actions. This could start by fully understanding the current analytical skills inside the Public Administration. Indeed, while there is a clear gap in these skills, there is not sufficient understanding about the extent of this gap. The current job categories in Latvia do not offer sufficient information on what skills they each require, with the too generic and loosely defined category of "policy planner". In addition, there is also a need to invest in more systematic trainings specifically in the areas of policy analysis, evaluation and evidence-informed policymaking. Finally, the implementation of the Remuneration law to increase public sector attractiveness, will require an adjustment in resources for such skilled staffs within ministries budgets. The reform of remuneration ensures a change in the salaries of public servants that would, on average, be equivalent to at least 80% of the salaries of equivalent positions in the private sector (Cabinet of Ministers, 2022[27]).

To strengthen the skills of researchers in science for policy, specific trainings should be made available, especially at an early stage of the academic career. The ongoing PhD reform offers an interesting window of opportunity. The aim of the new PhD programme is to enable Latvian universities to implement innovation-oriented doctoral programmes in line with the Salzburg Principles. The reform provides for doctoral studies to be organised in centrally established units - doctoral schools - in line with the World Bank's recommendations for higher education institutions (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020[98]). The new doctoral funding model in Latvia provides for PhD students to take up the position of non-elected research staff in their field of research for a fixed period of time during their doctoral studies (Ministry of Education and Science, 2020[98]).

To further increase incentives for researchers to conduct policy-relevant research, there is a need to initiate strategic thinking on how academics, professors and researchers are assessed across universities in Latvia. There is a broader need to recognise the contribution of academia to policy and public life in more general terms. While Horizon Europe already includes a policy angle, several points deserve further attention at Latvian level. The Council of the Rectors could, for example, discuss with the Ministry of Education and Science how to better institutionalise research units with a policy focus in the universities and how to fund some secondment schemes. Developing some alternative options to researchers could significantly increase their interest in performing policy-oriented research. There should also be some possibilities to recognise overall, as part of the assessment of professors, their contribution to policy advice, time spent in policy advisory bodies, and relevance of research to policymaking frameworks.

Organisational gaps and needs

Analytical and research functions inside line ministries are not always efficiently structured

Together with the right skills, line ministries need to have structured processes ensuring that the right evidence is channelled at the right time. This can occur in multiple ways, for example by concentrating analytical skills in dedicated units inside line ministries or by establishing collaborations with universities and research institutes to obtain evidence at the right time. Latvia, together with 6 other countries, is currently involved in a TSI project on developing in-house analytical capacities that by mid-2025 should deliver action plans for establishing internal consulting (analytical) capacities within public administration.

At the moment, several organisational gaps make evidence production *ad hoc* rather than systematic. Most line ministries do not have specific analytical units responsible for the production or commission of evidence. Indeed, with the exception of the Analytical Service in the Ministry of Economics, the other line ministries rely on a more decentralised analytical expertise.[7] While this can offer higher degrees of specialisation and expertise in each department, however, it also contributes to knowledge silos and hinders knowledge transmission and institutional memory. In addition, when analytical capacities are scarce, as is the case in Latvia, creating critical mass can make a difference to produce internal evidence. Given the absence of critical internal capacity, evidence is more often commissioned to external institutions through public procurement. However, this process was often identified as unable to select the best research proposals (this aspect will be further discussed in the demand section). While some advisory councils exist, these represent more fora for stakeholder consultations rather than organised fixed councils where evidence is systematically demanded and produced.

In addition, line ministries are currently unable to systematically attract researchers as there are no relevant opportunities in place such as PhD schemes or secondments. This hinders the possibility of cross-fertilisation between the policymaking and academic words. However, institutes working at arms' length from ministries, such as the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in the health area, are often able to attract these kinds of skills. Finally, while some partnerships with universities have been established to address evidence needs in a more systematic way (e.g. Centre for Diaspora and Migration Research (CMDR) or University of Latvia Think tank LV PEAK), the limited resources allocated often make these centres unable to completely fulfil their functions.

[7] For example, the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control analyses the available health data much more widely than is necessary for official statistics, but in the regular research of health behaviour, they buy only field work, not analytical work, in the form of public procurement. The Ministry of Health promptly receives any available information on public health from the Centre, based on both primary research and secondary administrative data.

Table 3.3. Summary of organisational needs, gaps and potential interventions

Current Need/Gap Description	Relevant Organisation(s)	Potential Intervention(s)
Absence of analytical units across line ministries	State Chancellery Ministry of Education and Science + involvement of other line ministries	Explore ways to focus and strengthen internal supply of evidence, possibly through hubs and spokes approaches
Absence of schemes to attract researchers in government	Ministry of Education and Sciences and State Chancellery	Develop a scheme to attract researchers inside the government
Limited funding to specific policy-relevant centers	Ministry of Finance	Increase funding available to some strategic knowledge broker identified also through the new evidence plans

International best practices

Strengthening analytical units is essential to ensure supply, possibly through networks approaches

To ensure that evidence is systematically supplied, several OECD countries have developed analytical units in line ministries. However, the exact scope of their functions can vary significantly across them. Overall, across OECD countries three different models have been identified (see Box 3.6):

- Analytical units in each line ministry/ department with some strong co-ordination/ rotation mechanism (e.g. Ireland)
- Analytical units in most line ministries covering specific policy area and not strongly interlinked with one another (e.g. France, Greece, the Netherlands, or the United Kingdom)
- Central evidence centres supplying evidence to line ministries based on demand (e.g. Czechia)

Overall, each approach comes with some trade-offs and there is not a one-size fits all solution. This depends on how different departments are organised, their size and resources. Having a strong analytical unit at the centre can still help in supplying evidence for more cross-ministerial policies, plans or projects. In addition, a central unit can also act as a co-ordinator, connecting units when needed or keeping track of the different evidence needs.

Box 3.6. Analytical units inside governments: different approaches

Whole of government approach – Ireland

The IGEES is a horizontal network, embedded across Government Departments supported by the Department of Expenditure and Reform (DPER), which is part of the policymaking process and which supports the whole of Irish Government in delivering evidence-informed policymaking (EIPM) by guiding policy research, evaluation, and appraisal through a variety of processes and frameworks. The whole network is composed of around 200 civil servants analysts working across the entire Civil Service. Still within each of the Ministries, the IGEES economists tend to be predominantly regrouped within a central analytical unit.

Central Approach- Czech Republic – Government Analytical unit

The VAÚ is a recently formed cross-sectoral analytical unit with 13 analysists within the Office of Government that works on demand with several line ministries on the design and management of RIA processes. The VAÚ seeks to entice the most competent experts with policy analysis experience. VAÚ provides guidance in RIA processes and analytical functions by writing evaluations of the literature, doing statistical modelling, or fostering conversations about the creation and analysis of policies. In addition, VAÚ promotes EIPM through training and acting as a role model.

Policy- specific units in Greece – M.E.K.Y.

The **Unit of experts in Employment, Social Insurance, Welfare and Social Affairs (MEKY)** was established in September 2021 to provide analytical support to two ministries, the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance (MoLSI) and the Minister of Social Cohesion and Family (MoSCF). The scope of the unit is to inform the development of new policy measures in the policy areas of the two ministries. In particular, it provides analyses on the social impact of the measures and the distributional effects of such policies. The unit will also develop an expertise in *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluation as well as engaging in forecasting.

Source: (OECD, 2020[95]); Czech Diagnostic report; Greece Diagnostic report.

Attracting researchers in the public administration

In addition to creating analytical units, some countries have also created research opportunities inside the government to attract researchers. This represents a good way to encourage supply, build internal capacity and develop the skills of researchers in science4policy. Several remedies have been implemented – for example, Estonia has recently introduced a programme to increase intersectoral movement of employees. If successful, this programme should increase researchers' knowledge of the workings of government and vice versa, allowing for better collaboration (see Box 3.7). Within Belgium, the Flemish government used to offer funding for researchers looking at themes particularly relevant to public policy (see Box 3.8).

Box 3.7. Estonian Cross-Sector Mobility Programme (SekMo)

The **Cross-Sector Mobility Programme (SekMo)** aims to increase intersectoral movement of employees, and thus encourage co-operation between government, higher education institutions, private sector and third sector institutions. It aims to involve at least 600 participants in mobility schemes by 2029.

Objective of SekMo is to foster collaboration between Estonian R&D, higher education, and private, public, and third sector organisations and to expand knowledge co-operation across various sectors through the intersectoral movement of employees. Researchers, academia and PhD students can apply for this programme. All the projects applied for by SekMo must relate to at least one smart specialisation (NS) growth area: everyday digital solutions, health technology and services, the forestry sector, and the food industry. The programme supports three types of mobility schemes – a researcher wishing to carry out a secondment in a private sector institution or within government, a PhD student wishing to carry out a secondment in a private sector institution or within government, or a specialist within the private sector or government who wishes to carry out a secondment within a university. All secondments funded by SekMo must relate to at least one growth area: everyday digital solutions, health technology and services, the forestry sector, and the food industry. As highlighted both in the Estonian Diagnostic report and in the need and gap assessment, the programme has been more successful in connecting academia to the private sector than to the public one. However, with few adjustments, this still represents an interesting approach.

Source: Estonia Diagnostic report.

Box 3.8. Flanders Scheme to support policy relevant research

Flanders Scheme

The Support Points Programme for Policy-relevant Research (*Steunpunten* in Flemish) was launched in 2001 to provide scientific support to policy. It provided focal points for researchers, both short-term and long-term, based on themes the Flemish government considered to be a priority and relevant to its policy – for example, in the 2012-2015 round, child poverty and immigration were two of the programme's focal points. The Flemish government provided funding to universities and other researchers doing work related to these, provided the research was able to have a tangible impact on policy work. Funding issues meant that these support centres were discontinued from 2016 onwards.

Source: Belgium Diagnostic Report.

Finally, some public administrations have developed inbuilt tertiary education structures which offer high quality courses with the requirement of working for some years for the public administration. Such schemes are common for training police officers and other specific roles in the public service, and exist to some extent also in Latvia for these categories, and are used for example in France for economists and statisticians (see Box 3.9).

Box 3.9. France approach to form highly skilled economists inside the public administration

In **France**, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) has an inbuilt tertiary educational system, which trains a set of specialists in economics, statistics and econometric analysis through the ENSAE school, and statisticians and data scientists at the ENSAI school. Part of the graduates from these schools are to be enrolled in the civil service and receive a stipend during their studies in exchange for working in the civil service for a minimum period of 8 years. Within the civil service, graduates from the ENSAE/ENSAI serve in the analytical offices in each ministry, as well as a variety of public institutions such as INSEE, France Stratégie or the Central Bank. At entry level, this pool of graduates is co-ordinated centrally by INSEE, thus creating a shared market place for analytical and statistical skills across the public sector. In addition, the National Institute also has an important role in fostering and developing analytical competencies across government, by providing professional training aimed at all civil servants, organising seminars to foster knowledge sharing and encouraging mobility of analytical staff between line ministries. The scheme, which has been operating since the inception of INSEE in 1946, was part of a set of key reforms aimed at modernising the civil service in the after war recovery period to ensure that the French state apparatus would be well equipped to deal with modern challenges.

Source: OECD (2021[51]), *Mobilising Evidence at the Centre of Government in Lithuania: Strengthening Decision Making and Policy Evaluation for Long-term Development*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/323e3500-en.

Funding policy-relevant centers: Developing knowledge brokers

A complementary way to increase supply of policy relevant evidence is to fund policy-oriented research in specific university or research centres or labs. These actors can be important to supply evidence in rapid contexts often using also secondary research instead of developing original one. Two different but interesting examples come from Belgium and Australia where governments are investing in rapid research to ensure that demand of evidence is satisfied (see Box 3.10).

Box 3.10. Flash research and Rapid reviews in Belgium and Australia

Belgium

To provide quick answers in context of emergency, the Belgian Science Policy Office (Belspo) is investing in so called “flash projects”, i.e. small-scale research projects based primarily on secondary research and systematic reviews (e.g. Rapid Evidence Synthesis) that can give timely responses to urgent demands from Ministers and their administrations.

Australia

The use of rapid synthesis methods and rapid evaluation (or real-time evaluation) is also emerging in Australia. Indeed, the newly established Centre for Evaluation is placing greater emphasis on this approach that can provide quick evidence to policymakers to identify potential challenges during implementation. The common feature of this approach is the expedited implementation timeframes, which generally range from 10 days to 6 months, for situations where a short-term or immediate outcome is expected, or a quick decision is required. In Australia, these methods have been used in multiple settings including public health, emergency management, international development and agriculture as a way to deliver programme evaluation findings quickly to inform decision making, for example in a public health crisis where improvement in infection control is expected to happen within a short timeframe and where particularly used during COVID-19 where new solutions required closer monitoring.

Source: Belgium Diagnostic Report; and (Australian Centre for Evaluation, n.d.[99]).

Key takeaways: There is need to strengthen systematic internal evidence production also by attracting researchers inside the administration and to reinforce capacities of strategic policy-relevant evidence centers

Overall, line ministries suffer from organisational gaps that prevent systematic internal evidence production for policy purposes. For this reason, Latvian ministries need to explore different ways to increase internal capacities both for production and for commissioning. These include thinking more strategically on how to organise analytical function as well as exploring potential solutions to attract analysts and researchers for specific projects and periods. One of the points of the Modernisation plan for public administration is a unified and efficient public administration, given the fragmentation of the Latvian public administration. As part of the Modernisation plan, a Government Centre will be set up in the State Chancellery to provide analytical capacity and strategic management of human resources (State Chancellery, 2023[100]). The Government Centre will co-ordinate national planning and crisis management more effectively and provides analytical support for decision making (State Chancellery, 2023[100]).This will be composed of 4 employees that will support the line ministries and their subordinate institutions based on their expressed needs for policy-oriented analytics. While this is a step in the right direction, a unit of four people will not be able to satisfy the demand of all line ministries and should also be focused on provide general methodological support, guidelines. Regardless, the unit could significantly support the harmonisation and collaboration between different ministries, offer methodological support and guidance. The unit could also support the different ministries with capacity-building training on specific topics. It is useful to note that in the United Kingdom, the Evaluation Task Force in the United Kingdom which from a central position is to support different departments in their evaluation efforts, yet with a very small team, while leaving the bulk of analytical work and responsibilities within the departments.

Together with this, developing a scheme to attract researchers could be a good opportunity to develop internal capacity and create stronger connections with the research word. The example of France could offer an interesting starting point but could be further adapted to the Latvian needs. Indeed, France can rely on several in-built tertiary education systems while Latvia currently does not have the same capacities. For this reason, such a scheme should be developed in close collaboration with universities. The government could propose to cover the cost of a number of Phd students with the agreement that these students will perform some policy-relevant research for a number of years, building on existing schemes that exist within the Latvian civil service.

Finally, investing in some strategic actors (e.g. policy units in universities or in research institutes) able to provide policy-relevant research is a good way to ensure that demand will be satisfied. In the Latvian context, this might mean to ensure sufficient resources to actors that can play this role, either in pre-established university research centres or in particularly good research institutes able to support more rapid evidence needs. These actors could complement the State Research Programme that is able to provide results in longer time frames, but also faces some financial limits.

Inter-organisational gaps and needs

Evidence-informed policymaking requires the ability to work across policy clusters to address complex challenges through a holistic approach. For this reason, policy relevant evidence needs to be produced in a multidisciplinary and collaborative setting.[8] To produce this evidence there is need for collaboration on several aspects, in particular:

- to access data for research purposes across both governmental and non-governmental institutions
- to ensure collaboration across different actors in supply of evidence
- to support multidisciplinary policy-oriented research.

However significant gaps exist in each of these three areas in Latvia, as discussed below.

Access to data is often challenging and time consuming because of burdensome procedures

Availability, quality and access to data to produce analysis is considered a significant issue for people working inside the government. Limited resources for strategic leadership capacity building, lack of high level decision on role of the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) as main data access point within national data ecosystem and a broader framework of data management make it often difficult to locate and merge databases. Because of the very decentralised system of registers comparability of data is often a challenge and data formats are often difficult to use both for researchers and analysts inside the government making analysis considerably time-consuming. It is possible to link data from different registers because personal ID codes are used in main registers, but not always common classifications. To attempt to remedy this, a research data catalogue was created on the Official statistics portal which lists anonymised individual data sets available either offsite or on the remote access system of the Central Statistics Bureau (Official

[8] It is important to note that this is a general statement on evidence informed policy making, which covers many areas. In the health area in particular, broader and holistic approaches are necessary, for example to address the intersectoral linking of health and its social determinants data. This approach already pioneered in the 1980s in Canada for example, through the work of Prof. Contandriopoulos at the Montreal school of public health, is also now reflected in European initiatives such as the new European Health Data Space Regulation and the existing initiative of the Secondary Health Data Finding a right balance here requires a calibrated approach, including attention to patient data privacy.

statistics of Latvia, 2023[35]). However, at the moment the catalogue contains only 10 datasets, all from the CSB. Some line ministries have tried to create internal data infrastructures to simplify data exchange across institutes, as is the case with the Ministry of Welfare.

Another important gap is represented by the way in which access is granted. Indeed, for public entities to share and access administrative data collected by another public entity, there is need to have a mandate (in form of law) allowing the access and explaining the scope. This represents an unnecessarily cumbersome process to access what should be a common good and a shared public asset.

Finally, the overall data governance presents several gaps. Indeed, the Central Statistics Bureau has limited resources and capacity and has an insufficiently strong mandate. In addition, the new role of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development on open data should in theory open up new opportunities in data governance, which would need to be seized beyond what is actually done at the moment.

Inter-organisational collaborations are rare in the government and in the academic world

As it currently stands, evidence supply occurs in silos in Latvia. Line ministries tend to rely on data collected through monitoring exercises, official statistics and specialised sectoral research institutions that are operating at arm's length from them through public procurement. More cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary evidence would benefit policymaking, particularly for the development of strategic plans that affect the country as a whole and that would require for different Ministries to be involved. However, there is almost no budget for cross-departmental work. A recent good example of collaboration is represented by the development of the Energy and Climate Plan where evidence and knowledge from different line ministries was brought together for the development of this long-term vision. (Cabinet of Ministers, 2020[101])

In Latvia, a significant number of advisory bodies exist. These bodies often involve scientists and experts. However, most of them focus on a specific policy domain, while the multidisciplinary councils and bodies that do exist mainly perform co-ordination functions across ministries and do not involve scientists and experts to the same extent. There is a clear need for more spaces for multidisciplinary discussions between ministries and academics.

Finally, evidence production can also benefit from the collaboration of researchers from various disciplines that can bring complementary perspectives and enrich the analyses. Unfortunately, multi-disciplinary approaches and collaborations are quite underdeveloped in Latvia. To fill this gap, the State Research Programme is structured to encourage researchers to collaborate and to develop multi-disciplinary approaches. However, to ensure that this is done well, it is important to also provide sufficient time to researcher to create proposals.

Table 3.4. Summary of inter-organisational needs, gaps and potential interventions

Current Need/Gap Description	Relevant Organisation(s)	Potential Intervention(s)
Lack of clear data governance	State Chancellery Ministry of Education and Sciences Central Statistics Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Economics and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Improve data access, simplify legal procedures, clarify governance
Limited multi-disciplinary collaborations both across ministries and across academic world	State Chancellery Ministry of Education and Sciences	Strengthen multidisciplinary collaborations across universities and research institutes developing multi-disciplinary working groups

International best practices

Creating rules to allow access to data for evidence informed policymaking

The gaps identified above are not specific to Latvia and are common to most OECD countries. Indeed, knowledge silos both within the government and in the academic world are commonly found in many countries. In particular, access to data represents a challenge for many, and particularly in Europe. However, a few interesting examples can show how some countries have tried to solve these issues (see Box 3.11).

Box 3.11. Different strategies for the use of data in EIPM across OECD countries

Systematic strategies and policies to combine, link and reuse data, as well as to connect actors and decisions within and outside the public sector, are necessary to enable administrative data to be used for evidence-informed decision making (OECD, 2019[102]). Thus, some OECD countries have sought to develop EIPM strategies by fostering systematic use of administrative data:

Denmark

In Denmark personal data is stored in registries with personal identification numbers. Statistics Denmark facilitates the use of these micro-level databases for research purposes for approved analysts, universities, research organisations or ministries. Statistics Denmark possess data in 250 subject areas ranging from labour markets, consumption, demographics to transport, agriculture and environment. The data is prepared by the Research Service Division and is accessible remotely and securely through specific internet servers. Analysts can access data in these areas as far back as from the 1970s (OECD, 2023[103]).

Netherlands

As part of the 2018 Dutch Digitalisation Strategy, the government launched the Data Agenda Government, outlining plans to improve the management of personal data, open data, and big data, leveraging analysis and integration for informed policymaking and addressing societal challenges. Implementation responsibilities were shared by central and local governments, with co-ordination by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Government of the Netherlands, 2022[104]).

The Dutch Statistics Agency (CBS) also has a portal for scientific researchers at Dutch universities to access microdata for research purposes. To access the data, which is stored on remote servers after the CBS removes all individual identity description elements, the researchers must follow a multi-step process submitting a proposal for research, which is reviewed by the CBS, before they receive a physical personal token on loan to access the data remotely.

The success of the Data Agenda government saw a follow-up strategy, the *Interbestuurlijke Datastrategie* (IBDS). The programme delivering its implementation – *Realisatie* IBDS - includes projects such as the Advice Function Responsible Data Use, Data Dialogues, Federated Data System, Data Catalog, and an intergovernmental knowledge center. These initiatives contribute to the practical implementation of the IBDS and foster a dialogue on responsible data use in the public sector.

United States

The US has institutionalised government-wide approaches to data analysis, utilising institutional resources and promoting internal champions. They have issued a 10-year Federal Data Strategy centered on ethical governance, conscious design, and a learning culture. This strategy is accompanied by an implementation plan of 40 practices for agency compliance. The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act adopted in 2018 reinforces the government's data approach, mandating the appointment of a chief data officer. The

implementation plan encompasses programmes on "Open Data Access and Management" and "Data Access for Statistical Purposes". (US Congress, 2018[105])

France

In France, the statistics system also facilitates research by giving researchers access to anonymised data through a secure access data centre (CASD). The CASD is a trusted interface between data producers and users, enabling secure data depositing and matching. It has become a reference in the provision of secure and remote access to statistical and administrative microdata. For instance, this centre makes publicly available data from the national statistics institute (INSEE), as well as from the Justice, Education, Agriculture and Finance ministries. The CASD also provides external access to private companies' data for collaboration with researchers, start-ups and consultants. Today, it has secured about 350 data sources and shared more than 200 publications.

Source: (OECD, 2023[103]; Government of the Netherlands, 2022[104]; US Congress, 2018[105]; OECD, 2019[102]).

Together with creating the infrastructures to allow researchers and public servants to access data for analytical works, some countries also saw the need to create a network in the administration able to identify new data available and monitor the state around data needs. In Estonia such a network was established to support the system (see Box 3.12). Together with these, some countries have also developed trainings to ensure the sufficient data literacy skills in the public administration, an example is Lithuania (see Box 3.13).

Box 3.12. Estonia Data Steering Group

The Data Steering Group is composed of around 500 participants and was initiated in 2022 by the Chief Data Officer at the Ministry of Economics and Communication. The Data Steering Group provides feedback on data policies and the use of data to all interested ministries and agencies. In addition, the Data Steering Group focuses on communicating findings and educating/training its participants on the correct use of data and on how to increase the quality of data.

Source: JRC, OECD. 2023. Building capacity for evidence-informed policymaking in governance and public administration in a post-pandemic Europe. Diagnostic report – Estonia. Internal Document.

Box 3.13. Lithuania's Data Governance Agency: improving governance and skills

In January 2023, an amendment to legislation was implemented that requires Lithuanian ministries to justify with data why proposed measures should be applied when submitting draft legislation to government. Furthermore, it turned Statistics Lithuania into the State Data Agency, and made it responsible for the collection and use of high quality data for policy decisions (it was already responsible for their production). This means that all state institutions are now able to carry out analytical tasks in a secure environment without having to invest in installing additional analytical tools in their own systems.

In order to ensure ministries could make the most of this new data source, the State Data Agency incentivises competency trainings in ministries. These training programmes focus on giving participants analytical skills, including using statistical packages such as SPSS and programming languages such as SQL.

Source: Lithuanian Diagnostic Report.

Encouraging multi-disciplinary supply of evidence

To increase the supply of cross-domain evidence, some countries have developed strong advisory bodies able to supply such evidence. The Netherlands makes effective use of such institutions, being able to rely on a variety of different councils which were created often with the express intention of examining issues that are not able to fit into one single policy focus (see Box 3.14).

Box 3.14. Cross-disciplinary advisory council in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has a variety of advisory councils that work across otherwise siloed parts of government. One example of this is the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), which was established in 1972 and advises the government on matters of strategic importance. The WRR focuses on topics which are not linked to a specific policy discipline – recent topics have included the societal impact of AI and migration. The WRR sets its own agenda, meaning it is able to decide of its own accord what topics to research. Its members include directors of various other research and statistical bodies within government, including the Bureau for Economic Analysis and Statistics Netherlands. The government is obliged to respond to WRR reports in the form of a letter to parliament.

The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) is another example, as it is the national institute for strategic policy analysis in the fields of the environment, nature and spatial .planning. A further example is the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) (Social and Cultural Planning of the Netherlands). It takes a sociological, government-wide approach to policy challenges, with recent publications looking at social cohesion and conceptions of citizens in policy. Similar to the PBL, the Institute conducts both *ex ante* analyses and strategic foresight. The organisation is linked to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, but much like the WRR sets its own agenda. The director of the SCP is also an advisory member of the WRR.

Source: Netherlands Diagnostic Report.

Key takeaways: there is need to strengthen cross-disciplinary collaborations both inside the government and across the research world

Considering the gaps identified in the diagnostic report and outlined above, there is need to take several actions to improve the supply of evidence at the inter-organisational level.

Inside the government, there is need to find ways to improve the access to data for analytical purposes. This can occur in different ways, as the above examples show. Firstly, a data committee to map the current available data across ministries, their interoperability and setting clear requirements and procedures for data accessibility could help in developing a complete picture of the situation. In addition to this, the law on access to data should be re-considered to create a more simplified way to access it without the need of a law allowing access to administrative data every time. Also, strengthening the role of the CBS would be essential to enable it to provide a stable solution for cross-sectoral data matching and data transformation (including anonymisation), providing a secure data processing environment that will allow further data analysis for policy planning and data-based decisions in various sectors (e.g. health, education, etc.). Finally, there is also need to better clarify the role of the CBS and the Ministry of Regional Development and Environmental Protection.

In addition, it is important to create more occasions to produce evidence in multi-disciplinary settings and consider additional funds for cross-departmental initiatives. In the academic world, there is also need to strengthen the collaborations across universities. For now, this has been done for example through the State Research Programme, which provides a useful first step, and other programmes promoting

interinstitutional collaboration which encourages consortia of researchers but further systematisation is needed.

Table 3.5. Recap of main needs and gaps identified on supply of evidence

Individual level	Organisational level	Inter-organisational level
Identified gap: Lack of analytical skills in public administration **Need:** Perform a skills mapping to understand current gaps? Develop schemes or job functions to attract new skills Invest in analytical training **Organisations involved:** State Chancellery	**Identified gap:** Absence of analytical units across line ministries **Need:** Explore ways to increase internal supply of evidence **Organisations involved:** State Chancellery and Ministry of Education and Science + line ministries	**Identified gap:** Lack of clear data governance **Need:** Improve data access, simplify legal procedures, clarify governance **Organisations involved:** State Chancellery and Ministry of Education and Sciences Central Bureau of Statistics, the Ministry of Economics and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
Identified gap: Limited Science for policy skills in universities **7Need:** Strengthen science4policy skills by developing specific courses for PhD students **Organisation involved:** Ministry of Education and Science and Higher Education Institutions	**Identified gap:** Absence of schemes to attract researchers in government **Need:** Develop a scheme to attract researchers inside the government **Organisation involved:** Ministry of Education and Sciences and State Chancellery	**Identified gap:** Limited multi-disciplinary collaborations both across ministries and across academic world **Need:** Strengthen multidisciplinary collaborations across universities and research institutes developing multi-disciplinary working groups **Organisation involved:** Ministry of Education and Sciences and State Chancellery
Identified gap: Absence of clear incentives for researchers to work with government on policy-relevant research **Need:** Increase opportunities to work for and with the government ; Explore ways to value policy-relevant research in assessment of academics and researchers **Organisations involved:** State Chancellery, Ministry of Education and Science	**Identified gap:** Limited funding to specific policy-relevant centers **Need:** Increase funding available to some strategic knowledge broker identified also through the new evidence plans **Organisations involved:** discussion with Ministry of Finance and line ministries	

Demand for evidence for policymaking: Current needs and gaps

Ensuring supply of good quality credible evidence is only the first step of evidence-informed policymaking. Indeed, once evidence is available, it is important to make sure that it is used to inform actual decisions. While this seems rather straight forward, this is often not the case. Indeed, in order to make sure that evidence will be used, it is important also to have demand of evidence in place.

At the individual level, evidence users – namely, policymakers – can have difficulties in understanding and interpreting evidence if they do not have the appropriate skills. Policymakers must also have access to evidence in a format that is fit-for-purpose and in a timely manner, in order to use it. This is why organisational strategies to promote demand for evidence, such as publicity and communication, or thinking early about evidentiary needs, through the list of planned research for example, play an essential role in promoting EIPM. At the same time, to ensure that evidence can benefit multiple stakeholders and to avoid the risk of duplication, there is need to share and discuss evidence needs between different actors.

In Latvia, demand for evidence remains a challenge for a variety of reasons. Skills to define and demand evidence for holistic and integrated policy planning are lacking. Often policymakers are not informed about

the values of using evidence for policymaking or – even when they are – do not have the appropriate competences to do so. At the organisational level, interesting practices to promote demand for evidence have emerged, but they require more systematisation and ambition. Indeed, the State Chancellery has elaborated a digital tool, the research and publication database, to inform all actors and the public about public sector research result integration in policy planning. The database has the functionality to trace every research result. However, research rarely reaches the right audience because of insufficient communication of results. However, some line ministries do use their websites to inform the public about seminars showcasing research findings, offering remote participation options. At the inter-organisational level, several actors, both in the executive and outside of the executive, have the mandate to promote the use of evidence across government but there are still insufficient spaces for them to connect and discuss about evidence needs.

This section analyses the current gaps in evidence supply at the individual, organisational and inter-organisational level. The section offers interesting international practices to show how other countries have tried to solve similar gaps. Finally, it identifies which are the current needs in Latvia to move toward the best practices examples.

Individual gaps and needs

Having skills to conduct analysis inside the government is not a sufficient condition in of itself to promote evidence-informed policymaking if there is no interest and common understanding from the people making the decisions to actually use evidence. Unfortunately, there is often insufficient interest at the higher level in using evidence systematically. Moreover, interest in using evidence may not always be sufficient. There is also a need for policymakers to possess the skills to access, comprehend and translate evidence into policy decisions. In Latvia, some gaps at the individual level prevent maximising the full potential of the available evidence (Table 3.6).

Skills to demand and commission evidence are under-developed

In Latvia, the ability to use evidence is very heterogenous across ministries and use of evidence can change considerably with political change. There is a general lack of leadership, with very few positions such as a Chief Advisor either chief science adviser, Chief Economist or Chief Statistician.

In addition, commissioning of evidence presents significant challenges. At the moment evidence commissioned is often unable to impact the policy cycle and be used by policymakers. This issue was identified both when developing State Research Programmes and when commissioning evidence through public procurement. While in some countries, this issue is also influenced by rigid procurement rules, the rules themselves are not the main issue in Latvia, but the way that they are applied. Indeed, the Public Procurement Law provides some exceptions for public service contracts for research and development services facilitating procurement procedures and applications (Procurement Monitoring Bureau, 2020[106]) (Saeima, 2017[107]). The exception applies to fundamental and industrial research and experimental development. This exception to the public procurement rules is intended to facilitate the acquisition of R&D innovations in their pre-commercialisation phase. In order to qualify for this exception, the contracting authority need to show that it does not intend to use the results of the R&D service exclusively for its own purposes, but to share the risks and rewards of developing new innovative solutions with the supplier and other customers (Procurement Monitoring Bureau, 2020[106]). In addition, the contracting authority may waive the application of the procurement procedures provided for in the Public Procurement Law if the estimated contract price of the procurement contract is lower than the contract price thresholds set by the Cabinet of Ministers for Procurement Contracts (EUR 143 000 for public supply and public service contracts). Even if the law allows to apply a certain flexibility when selecting the research proposals, often

civil servants are biased toward the cheapest bid with respect to the one with higher quality. This is considered more a cultural bias rather than a structural issue as the procurement law provides some levels of flexibility in the selection of the option. From discussions with actors, this was considered a risk-avoidance strategy. Indeed, as it also emerged from the OECD project on *Strengthening the Innovative Capacity of the Public Sector of Latvia*, risk aversion, fear of punishment and dealing with errors all came up as challenges for innovation in Latvia (OECD, 2023[108]). Together with this issue, there is often little concrete awareness of the right time needed to conduct certain research and policymakers have often unrealistic expectations. For this reason, there is need to strengthen the policymakers' understanding about quality research and timing and encourage planning ahead with preparing clear evidence plans.

Table 3.6. Individual gaps and needs in demand of evidence

Current Need/Gap Description	Relevant Organisation(s)	Potential Intervention(s)
Lack of commissioning skills inside line ministries	Ministry of Education and Science (Latvian Council of Science), State Chancellery (Latvian School of Public Administration)	Reinforce training on public procurement to include elements on commissioning research
Absence of strategic figures performing a 'science' advisor role, or acting as "evidence champions", such as Chief Economists or Chief Scientists	State Chancellery, Line Ministries	Reflect on potential Chief Science Advisers, Chief Economists or Chief Analyst to ensure some visibility and capacity for EIPM skills at the political to administrative interface

International best practices

Working with evidence requires different skills that are not always easy to find inside public administrations. In addition, there are also limited training available on using evidence for EIPM. Some countries are working to develop their specific courses, but these are still limited. Some interesting examples of trainings on the use of evidence for all civil servants were developed in Canada and Japan (see Box 3.15). Another example is the United States which is currently working on a training on the use of Evidence informed policymaking for senior civil servants. The workshops developed by the OECD and JRC represents an international best practice and can offer a starting point for Latvia to develop a more tailored version for national context.

Box 3.15. Actions taken from Canada and Japan to increase skills in EIPM

Canada

The **Canada School of Public Service** offers several courses which can help civil servants in better using evidence in their daily work. Indeed, courses range from supporting in the design of research, to understanding the basic principles of the scientific method, to exploring bias and uncertainty in scientific research. In addition, a one-hour course provides also some insights on how to evaluate scientific evidence. All the modules are one hour each and can be attended online by all public servants.

Together with these online opportunities, there are also additional series which provide more interactive ways to learn from each other's on other topics that are relevant for EIPM like innovation, data management.

Japan

In 2018, Japan decided to increase its use of "Evidence-Based Policy Making" (EBPM). Part of this required improving the ability of government staff to make use of evidence effectively. This was done in a variety of ways:

- The Secretariat responsible for this programme created a set of training sessions specifically for the dissemination of EBPM-related information.
- Highlighting that not just theory but practical experience was valuable, cross-ministerial study sessions were held, so that different ministries could share practices and experiences in conducting EBPM.
- The Secretariat responsible for this programme conducted joint research with universities and other institutions on EBPM, so that the government could remain at the cutting edge of EBPM practices and disseminate its discoveries accordingly.
- Steps were also put in place to ensure that the efforts of staff to incorporate EBPM into their work were considered in their professional evaluations.

Source: (Government of Canada, 2023[109]; EBPM Promotion Statistics Committee, 2018[110]).

To secure these skills inside the public administration, several OECD countries have also developed specific figures which can help in identifying evidence needs and can communicate evidence to policymakers (see Box 3.16).

Box 3.16. The role of Chief Scientists in different OECD countries

The CSA can play a very important role in connecting evidence to policy by acting as broker and expert navigator between the government and the scientific community also ensuring the proper use of scientific evidence in the government (OECD, 2015[45]).

Chief Scientific Advisers in the United Kingdom

Most government departments in the United Kingdom have a chief scientific adviser (CSA). It is the CSAs role to put mechanisms in place to ensure that policymaking is underpinned by science, and that this science is of high quality.

These advisers tend to be recruited at the senior level (usually either Director or Director General), and have a history as a scientist or engineer with high standing in their field. They provide advice to ministers, discuss and facilitate implementation of policy in science and technology-related areas, and identify and share any good practices. They also facilitate communication on issues relating to science and technology-related policy. Furthermore, they are responsible for developing an R&D strategy for their department, helping to direct their scientific evidence needs.

These departmental CSAs work under the leadership of the Government Chief Scientific Adviser to support each other and resolve issues that do not fall strictly under one department's jurisdiction. This is predominantly done through the CSA network, a forum with weekly meetings chaired by the Government Chief Scientific Adviser.

Chief Scientific Advisers in Estonia

Estonian Research Council (ETAG) supports scientific advisers' positions in Ministries and the Government. The goal of supporting jobs for scientific advisers is to strengthen the Ministries' capacity to handle R&D matters. Any Ministry or Government Office may submit an application to ETAG to request reimbursement for expenses incurred in carrying out the role of a scientific adviser (Estonian Research Council, 2024[111]). Scientific advisers provide advice to Ministries on R&D matters; organise and manage national and international R&D co-operation; create research plans for the Ministry's governing region and carry them out in collaboration with various partners, as well as represent Estonia in international R&D co-operation initiatives (Estonian Research Council, 2024[111]).

Source: (OECD, 2015[45]; The UK Government Office of Science, 2020[112]; Estonian Research Council, 2024[111]).

Key takeaways: Need to strengthen skills to commission and demand evidence

Several options are available to improve the skills to use and commission evidence in the Latvian public administration. Firstly, specific trainings on public procurement dedicated to how to procure and select research proposals could be developed. Indeed, the Latvian School of Public Administration has already developed a training on public procurement. This one could be further expanded to address the issue of procuring research and could benefit from the participation of the Latvian Council of Science. Indeed, the Council of Science is already involved in supporting line ministries in defining their State Research Programmes and could support the School of public administration.

An additional option would be to establish leadership positions such as Chief Scientific Advisor or Chief Economist. This type of champion does not exist in Latvia even if Ministers sometimes rely on appointed advisors for some of these tasks. However, the role of these experts in the Latvian administration is often only technical and they are not consulted on strategic aspects. Such a figure could help in systematising evidence needs and make sure that what is requested is in line with actual needs. In addition, depending

on how this figure is institutionalised, it can help in ensuring some institutional memory and connects the dots across different department in a line ministry.

Organisational gaps and needs

Organisational capacities and efforts are also important to promote demand for evidence in a more systematic and coherent way (OECD, 2020[3]). Moreover, promoting a coherent and common approach to demand and use of evidence is very important to ensure the credibility and trust in advice. Indeed, by making demand and use systematic, there is lower risk of cherry picking and more transparency in how and why some evidence has been used.

Despite recent progress, demand for evidence is not sufficiently institutionalised

In Latvia, attempts have been made towards more a more systematic approach for transparent demand of evidence at the level of Ministries. Line ministries are now requested to present a yearly list of research planned for policy planning and to submit this list to the State Chancellery by the 31st of January of each year (Cabinet of Ministers, 2013[55]). This new provision aims at co-ordinating evidence needs across institutions to avoid duplication of research commissioned for policy planning and increase visibility of findings. In addition, each research commissioned has to show clear connections to policy planning either providing evidence at the early stages of the planning process or informing the monitoring and evaluation of it. However, in practice, this is a list of planned activities which is not developed following some organisational-level strategic thinking about evidence needs and reform initiatives. When the fact-finding mission took place in March 2023 most actors were not aware of the existence of such a list and if aware, they looked at it more as a bureaucratic obligation rather than a strategic and vision-oriented exercise. Indeed, line ministries do not have clear incentives to register planned research and the State Chancellery has often to remind line ministries about this activity. Overall, institutional memory is weak, and some evidence is still produced and used in silos.

Table 3.7. Summary of organisational needs, gaps and potential interventions

Current Need/Gap Description	Relevant Organisation(s)	Potential Intervention(s)
Lack of systematic demand for evidence	Ministry of Education and Sciences, State Chancellery, Ministry of Finance	Transform the current research plans in more strategic documents to foster supply of evidence in relevant areas and ensure that they are appropriately used (maybe link to budgetary allocations ?)

International best practices

In recent years, several countries have invested in ways to systematise demand for evidence. One way to do that is through creating departmental or governmental evidence needs plans. This tool has been used, in different ways both in the United States and in the United Kingdom (see Box 3.17). Overall, developing an agenda on evidence need is an activity which implied limited costs, but that can support the development of a collective and strategic vision around evidence needs and can help identifying areas for potential collaboration across departments (this aspect will be deepened in the next section).

Box 3.17. Thinking strategically about evidence needs in USA and United Kingdom

Learning Agendas in the United States

In 2019, the Foundation for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act came into force in the US, seeking for federal agencies to better acquire, access, and use evidence to inform decision making.

The implementation approach of this Act is co-ordinated and phased, with first phase being "Learning Agendas, Personnel and Planning" concentrates on creating learning agendas, identifying relevant personnel and what their duties and responsibilities are, and arranging activities. The learning agendas are designed to encourage thoughtful and methodical planning of activities that generate evidence. Agencies must determine and establish priorities for evidence creation while developing the learning agendas, consulting with a variety of stakeholders. In order to provide answers to the questions listed in their learning agendas, agencies are required to identify the data that will be needed to produce the evidence.

United Kingdom's Areas of research interest and the Rebuilding a Resilient Britian programme

Every year all departments of the UK government publish their Areas of research interest (ARI). These are statements of priority research areas. In addition, the documents also provide information on the research systems and strategies in each department, the research and data publication policies. The ARIs were established in 2015 to develop a more strategic approach to research activities inside departments. To further increase the impact of these documents, in 2019, two Fellows were appointed jointly by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Government Office for Science (GOS) to promote academic-policy engagement around ARIs. Their role also involved working with departments to understand how ARIs were produced, how they were used, and what resources might be required to optimise engagement with governmental ARIs. Part of this work also contributed to inform, in 2020, the Rebuilding a Resilient Britain which is a programme to further develop government science capability and external evidence base starting from the existing ARIs and understand current gaps in evidence.

Source: (Boaz et al., 2021[113]; Government Office for Science, 2021[114]; Office of Management and Budget, 2022[54]).

Another way in which countries have institutionalised and systematised their demand for evidence is by relying on specific institutions that are translating knowledge and scientific evidence into more actionable and user-friendly products. These figures, also called knowledge brokers, are actors that operate at the interface between science and policy. Depending on the country they can be located in different settings. For example, in the United Kingdom these are quite independent actors which often have independent budgets (see Box 3.18). On the other hand, in countries like Norway, knowledge brokers are often located in research institutes at arm's length of the government and respond to specific request of the policymakers. Finally, in fact champions such as Science Advisors or chief economists are also performing a knowledge broker function.

Box 3.18. The UK What Works Network

The UK government established the What Works Network (WWN) in 2013 with the goal of mobilising and providing decision makers and practitioners with access to the evidence of "what works." It is formed up of 14 independent centres that give recommendations and suggestions while evaluating the most recent evidence in numerous policy sectors. To guarantee the quality of the evidence used in policymaking, the Centres have established criteria for standards of evidence, some of which are developed internally and some externally.

The institutional fragmentation of the policies overseen by many departments is reflected in the presence of multiple knowledge brokers. Therefore, several strategies are employed to promote co-operation and co-ordinated efforts, for example the Evidence Quarter, where nine organisations—some affiliated with the WWN and others not—operate side by side and are urged to exchange concepts and expertise. This facilitates the planning of gatherings at which organisations can exchange best practices for methodology and impact-achieving strategies.

Source: Jacobzone, S. and S. Picalarga (2023[115]), "Mobilising evidence to enhance the effectiveness of child well-being policies: The role of knowledge brokers", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 58, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/faeb9a0d-en.58, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/faeb9a0d-en.

Key takeaways: Need to systematise demand at the organisational level to ensure increase knowledge sharing

Overall, a key first step would be to transform the current list of commissioned research into more future oriented evidence plan/ evidence agenda. These should be used with a more strategic approach and should be discussed across heads of departments and at the line ministry level. In developing these plans considerations on data needs should also be included to make sure that access will be across government actors. The documents could also include a section on the *ex post* evaluations that line ministers are going to conduct during the year.–In addition, to increase the visibility of the planned research list, these documents, the State Chancellery and the Ministry of Education and Sciences could organise some discussions once the documents are received and facilitate the connection across actors to identify potential joint research. Finally, the current research and publication database should be expanded to put all commissioned and finalised research in one single database with limited information registration.

Inter-organisational gaps and needs

A well-functioning EIPM system is composed of several actors, both internal and external, that contribute to the promotion and exchange of evidence. Despite some emerging good practices, there is still need to further systematisation of these exchanges in Latvia.

Evidence needs are not discussed sufficiently across line ministries and impact of evidence is still limited

The creation of a database for research related to policy planning and the collection of a list of planned research in “one point” are initial positive steps toward increasing the use of evidence across the government. However, there is still not sufficient room for discussing these needs and research identified and to create collaborations on shared issues. Indeed, each ministry is only responsible for submitting its own list of research and there are no collective discussion around these topics. While this can be

understood as they are simply list of research commissioned and do not yet have a more strategic function, the situation is far from optimal. To inform all actors about the different research commissioned, the State Chancellery sends to each authorised user an email to communicate the planned research.

Overall, several databases and platforms exist to facilitate transparent access to evidence in Latvia which is a strong and positive practice. This is true also in the academic world where the Open Science strategy has also encouraged an open approach to research results. Without undermining the value of what exists at present, there is however a need to go a step further. Additional attention could be devoted in producing more tailored and synthetic communication materials to increase research use.

In addition, to increase attention to the importance of strengthening EIPM, government should engage with actors outside the executive like the Parliament or the State Audit Office. As previously highlighted in the Diagnostic report, demand for evidence is growing inside the Parliament.

Table 3.8. Summary of inter-organisational needs, gaps and potential interventions

Current Need/Gap Description	Relevant Organisation(s)	Potential Intervention(s)
No systematic network to discuss evidence needs	Ministry of Education and Sciences, State Chancellery, line Ministries	Revitalise past networks or develop a new network on EIPM across line ministries, possibly based on yearly evidence plans
Still limited impact and visibility of evidence across line ministries	Ministry of Education and Sciences, State Chancellery, line Ministries	Engage with the Parliament and other relevant actors to increase interest in EIPM Engage with other Baltic/ Nordic countries to explore potential collaborations in EIPM

International best practices

Several OECD countries have been successful to mitigate issues of cross-collaboration via formal cross-departmental networks. The most interesting very recent examples come from Estonia and Lithuania that have developed specific networks of Science Advisors (see Box 3.19). These networks, although are quite recent and, especially for Lithuania, are difficult to evaluate, provide an opportunity to engage across ministries and increase awareness around evidence and evidence needs.

Box 3.19. Use of Science Advisors: Estonia and Lithuania

Estonia

The Network of Science of Advisors was established in 2017 by the Estonian Research Council (ETAG) and the Ministry of Education and Research (EHTM). This network was created alongside the Estonia's State Research & Development (R&D) programme. The Estonian government now employs eleven science advisors, each working in a separate ministry (Belgium needs and gaps assessment). Science advisors must have a PhD or at least four years' research experience. Their duties include advising ministries on R&D matters, organising national and international R&D collaboration, developing, and carrying out R&D needs plans, and representing on behalf of Estonia in international R&D initiatives (Eek, 2022[116]). The scientific advisors have been included in several advisory groups, including the science policy committee and Horizon 2020 programme committee. While ETAG plays a more informal role by arranging monthly meetings for the advisors to stay up to date on each other's work and developing joint projects, EHTM formally oversees the network's activities and collaborates on

suggestions for research and development as well as input to science policy (Belgium needs and gaps assessment).

Lithuania

In Lithuania, the government and other state institutions mobilise evidence and expertise through advisory bodies. The policy advisory system in Lithuania is defined by a relatively large number of advisory bodies (about 50 established each year), with an average lifespan ranging from 4 to 12 months . In Lithuania's science-for-policy environment, the dominated advisory structures are mixed, including stakeholders from the public, private, non-governmental, and academic sectors, while purely scientific advisory bodies are rarer .

In addition to advisory bodies, with support of the "Next Generation EU" instrument research and Innovation advisers' network (R&IA network) will be implemented until 2026. Lithuania's EIPM is to be strengthened by the R&IA network, which also aims to make it easier for the supply and demand sides of the evidence to link and to plan, organise, and carry out strategic R&D policy initiatives (Lithuania diagnostic report). The Research Council of Lithuania's employed R&IA network co-ordinator will oversee the establishment of 15 adviser roles across all Lithuanian ministries and the Office of the Government (Lithuania diagnostic report). The role criteria for the advisors include a master's degree, at least two years of experience in the R&D sector, familiarity with the Lithuanian governance structure, research and higher education policies, as well as (inter)national R&D financing opportunities.

Source: (Eek, 2022[116]); Lithuania Diagnostic Report.

A rich EIPM system involves also actors that are outside of the executive power. In particular, some countries have tried to increase interest and demand from Parliament by organising events to discuss these issues. An example is France which has promoted the use of evaluations in Parliament organising the so-called *Evaluation Printemps* (see Box 3.20).

Box 3.20. France Evaluation Printemps

Since Spring 2018, at the start each year the French Finance Committee of the Parliament establishes an evaluation programme. This involves each special rapporteur investigating an evaluation theme that they have proposed. They may examine a variety of factors, including the extent to which the policy in question had been effective, whether it had provided value for public money, and whether there were any unintended consequences. All ministers are then interviewed by the finance committee between May and June and questioned on the performance of the public policies for which they are responsible. The questions are examined during a week of checks, and can alter financing decisions. This is an excellent way to ensure that evaluations are brought to bear in political debates and are exposed to concrete political demands.

Finally, interesting collaborations can emerge across countries that share some similar social and economic factors. Relevant collaborations are taking place in the Nordic Region where the Nordic Council of Ministers has developed a dedicated organisation to facilitate co-operation on research (see Box 3.21).

Box 3.21. The NordForsk and the Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic co-operation represents one of the oldest and most extensive form of regional co-operation. It involves Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden as well as the three autonomous areas, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands. It takes place through different channels like the Nordic Council which represents the parliamentary co-operation forum and the Nordic Council of Ministers which is the Nordic governments' co-operation forum.

NordForsk was established in 2005 by the Nordic Council of Ministers with the purpose of strengthening Nordic research. NordForsk is composed of national research councils, universities, and other research-funding bodies. The organisation engages with stakeholders to identify common Nordic priorities and provide funding for research and research infrastructures. Also the three Baltic states, including Latvia take often part in NordForsk research calls.

Source: NordForsk (n.d.[117]), NordForsk website, https://www.nordforsk.org/about.

Key takeaways: Need to engage with a broad ecosystem to increase overall interest in using evidence

Overall, to increase the use of evidence and generate a consistent demand, there is need to develop a wider ecosystem of evidence users. A first step would be to increase discussions across line ministries on the evidence needs and the potential areas for further research. This could be done by organising a working group, as done in the United Kingdom, or a network of science advisors as presented above in Estonia and Lithuania. In addition, there is need to engage with the Parliament to increase the appetite of Parliamentarians for evidence and their request for analysis. A first way to do this is by organising focused events presenting for example the results of State Research Programmes or policy planning research/scientific analysis. Finally, allies can be developed also beyond national borders. Indeed, considering the modest dimensions of Latvia and the current limited number of researchers (considerably below OECD average), developing partnership with the other Baltic countries on EIPM could represent an interesting way to cover a broader range of research topics without hindering the quality of research.

Table 3.9. Recap of main needs and gaps identified on demand of evidence

Individual level	Organisational level	Inter-organisational level
Identified gap: Lack of commissioning skills inside line ministries **Need:** Reinforce training on public procurement to include elements on commissioning research **Organisation involved:** Ministry of Education and Science (Latvian Council of Science), State Chancellery (Latvian School of Public Administration)	**Identified gap:** Lack of systematic demand for evidence **Need:** Transform the current research plans in more strategic documents to foster supply of evidence in relevant areas and ensure that they are appropriately used (maybe link to budgetary allocations) **Organisation involved:** Ministry of Education and Sciences, State Chancellery, Ministry of Finance	**Identified gap:** No systematic network to discuss evidence needs **Need:** Revitalise past networks or develop a new network on EIPM across line ministries **Organisation involved:** Ministry of Education and Science, State Chancellery, line Ministries
Identified gap: Absence of strategic figures performing a 'science' advisor role, or acting as "evidence champions", such as Chief Economists or Chief Scientists **Need**: Reflect on potential Chief Science Advisers, Chief Economists or Chief Analyst to ensure some visibility and capacity for EIPM skills at the political to administrative interface **Organisation involved:** State Chancellery, Line ministries		**Identified gap:** Still limited impact and visibility to evidence across line ministries **Need:** Engage with the Parliament and other relevant actors to increase interest in EIPM Engage with other Baltic/ Nordic countries to explore potential collaborations in EIPM **Organisation involved:** Ministry of Education and Science, State Chancellery, Line ministries

Key decision-making processes: Needs and gaps

Evidence plays a significant role throughout the entire policy cycle: it informs planning and strategic documents contributing to the identification of policy priorities; it can support the development of policies by providing ex ante analysis and evidence on what works and what does not; it can help in assessing the effectiveness and impact of policies. It can also provide an *ex post* feedback loop that can feed into new policy design. Finally, it can provide insights on future needs and increase government preparedness through foresight and anticipatory governance. Countries, including Latvia, are continuously investing to develop and strengthen tools such as strategic planning, regulatory impact assessments (RIAs), *ex post* policy evaluation, as well as foresight.

Overall, in recent years Latvia has done significant progress in the development of tools and frameworks in particular for strategic planning and stakeholders' consultation. These tools have helped in creating common practices across ministries and in channelling evidence into policymaking processes. However, despite progress, the way that evidence is brought to bear in policy processes remains fairly decentralised and as a result heterogeneous; across ministries and relies on the skills and motivation of civil servants. In particular, regulatory impact assessments and *ex post* evaluations still suffer from gaps that limit effective use and impact.

Strategic planning and foresight

Table 3.10. Summary of current gaps and needs to improve strategic planning and foresight

Current Need/Gap Description	Main relevant Beneficiary Organisation(s)	Potential Intervention(s)
Limited skills to systematically use evidence in planning process and perform monitoring and evaluation	All actors performing strategic planning	Provide relevant trainings to policy planners through the Policy Planner Network, School of Public Administration
Limited use of foresight in planning documents	All actors performing strategic planning	Strengthen foresight capacity in line ministries Apply foresight methods to long-term strategic plans Reflect on the potential development of a foresight center

Strategic plans are informed by evidence but should be better evaluated and future-oriented

Policy planning absorbs significant resources and time in the Latvian administration. Overall, strategic planning represents an important process to channel evidence into decision making. Indeed, plans should be informed by evidence and, even if with some differences, this is what is generally done. Even if monitoring and evaluation of plans exist, the quality of such reviews is significantly heterogenous as data is not always available or relevant. In addition, there is also the tendency to develop these plans in isolation and vertically while a more holistic approach would benefit these documents and avoid duplications and inconsistencies.

To be future-oriented and provide concrete strategic direction, plans should also explore different future scenarios and be able to prepare policymakers to alternative options. For this reason, being able to integrate a foresight approach to strategic planning is essential. As identified in the Diagnostic report, foresight approaches are not sufficiently developed in Latvia. Only a limited number of strategic plans used some these approaches. This was also mentioned to be true in the academic world.

To develop their future literacy capacities, some countries have created specific foresight capacities. In particular, Finland has invested for years in developing a strong foresight capacity both within line ministries and outside government and is considered a leader in institutionalisation of foresight. Indeed, Finland has networks within national and regional government, academia, civil society and the private sector who together form a complex anticipatory ecosystem (OECD, 2021[118]). In this context, an important role is played by Sitra (see Box 3.22).

Box 3.22. Capacities for evidence informed policymaking and strategic foresight within Government and in SITRA Finland

Finland has one of the most sophisticated foresight systems in the world. Foresight capacities exist across government, at both national and regional levels, as well as within civil society, academia and the private sector. Many of these capacities combine within the Finnish National Foresight Network, forming a complex foresight ecosystem with a high degree of inclusiveness.

The Finnish National Foresight Network operates under the authority of the Prime Minister's Office as well as SITRA, Finland's independent innovation fund. Originally bequeathed to the Finnish people as a gift by its parliament on the country's 50th birthday, SITRA is tasked with carrying out foresight analysis and promoting economic growth. The body is accountable only to the parliament, and its independence from the executive is ensured by its autonomous funding - the returns of its invested capital. Its assets in funds, invested according to ESG as well as UN Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), attained a value of EUR 941 million in 2022. The five-year average annual return on investments was 6.4% and the average annual real return 3.4% – yielding around EUR 30 million of returns to finance the body's operational costs, and its over 150 staff. The core of SITRA's administration consists of the Supervisory Board, Board and President. The Supervisory Board, appointed by the Parliament, monitors Sitra's management and makes operational decisions.

SITRA has a mandate to "ensure the future wellbeing of Finland" and to "support and challenge" government, often by raising issues that are not always a priority for those in power. More concretely, in the 2021-2024 SITRA's work focuses on three key challenges: finding solutions to the ecological sustainability crisis, promoting a fair data economy and strengthening democracy and participation. Underpinning all its operations, however, is SITRA''s strategic goal of supporting a renewal of the economy by aiming at sustainability and competitiveness. In this respect, SITRA also plays a fundamental foresight function, conducting studies and issuing publications.

Source: OECD (2021[118]), *Foresight and Anticipatory Governance: Lessons in Effective Foresight Institutionalisation*, OECD, Paris, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/programmes/strategic-foresight/foresight-and-anticipatory-governance-2021.pdf.

Foresight structures have emerged also in Lithuania which, in recent years, have invested in foresight and anticipatory governance (see Box 3.23).

Box 3.23. Lithuania's recent advancements in foresights

Lithuania

Lithuania has many active initiatives on foresight. In Lithuania, the Parliament modified the Law on Strategic Governance and established that strategic plans should be based on strategic foresight (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 2021[119]). The Government Strategic Analysis Centre (here after STRATA) was also mandated to organise the development of strategic foresight for the National Progress Strategy and other long-term national agendas.

Outside of the government, the Parliament has established a Committee for the Future which provides the Parliament with reports and studies on projections and strategic modelling of future development of the State and co-ordinate the work of public institutions and agencies in strategic foresight (Parliament of the Republic of LIthuania, n.d.[120]). A pivotal milestone in the development of strategic foresights was the formulation of "Lithuania 2050" a long-term strategic plan developed by the Office of Government, the Committee for the Future, STRATA and University of Vilnius (Lithuania 2050, 2023[121]). To develop this long-term strategy foresight methodologies were used and more than 2 500 stakeholders were involved.

Despite recent progress, there are remaining challenges. A survey carried out in 2020 by STRATA and OECD revealed that there is little expertise in the area of strategic foresight (OECD, 2021[51]). At the moment, to further strengthen their foresight ecosystem, the Office of the Government is implementing a Technical Support Instrument project on strengthening anticipatory evidence-informed policymaking across the Government. At the same time, the Parliament, through the Committee for the Future, and the Office of the Government are preparing a White Book on the future ecosystem development.

Source: (Riigikogu, 2016[122]) (Foresight Center, n.d.[123]) (Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, 2021[119]), (Parliament of the Republic of LIthuania, n.d.[120]) Lithuania Diagnostic Report, (OECD, 2021[51]) (Lithuania 2050, 2023[121]).

Overall, there is a need to strengthen foresight capacities in the public administration. This could be done by providing some trainings on the methods implied by foresight and familiarise policy planners which such methodologies. In addition, researchers and universities could be mobilised to support these analyses. In this context, the State Research Programme could also be used to perform research that has a future-oriented approach and can support line ministries in being prepared to multiple scenarios. In the longer run, the government could also envisage the creation of a more strategic foresight centre where topics that are particularly relevant for the Latvian economy are discussed. Considering the size of the country, some strategic partnership with other foresight centres in the Baltic countries could also be interesting opportunities to maximise capacities. A similar approach has been used by Estonia and Finland in the past which have shared significant expertise in different areas including digital services, foresights and other (OECD, 2015[124]).

Strengthening regulatory management tools to support evidence informed policymaking

Despite progress, there is room for improvement in the development and use of regulatory management tools. Indeed, Latvia scored below the OECD average in its implementation of ex ante RIA, *ex post* evaluation in the 2021 OECD Regulatory Policy Outlook (OECD, 2021[125]). However, it should be noted that Latvia represents a good OECD practice for stakeholder engagement practices, thanks to the

development of the TAP portal in 2021, which has enhanced the transparency and organisation of these processes (OECD, 2021[125]).

Table 3.11. Summary of current gaps and needs to strengthen regulatory management tools

Current Need/Gap Description	Main relevant Beneficiary Organisation(s)	Potential Intervention(s)
Insufficient resources to perform good RIAs for all legislative proposals	State Chancellery with Ministry of Justice (together with other relevant stakeholders)	Develop ways to better implement the proportionality principle Plan ahead which legislative proposals require more advanced RIAs
Absence of skills and relevant training on RIAs methodologies	State Chancellery (Latvia School of Public Administration), Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Economy	Develop trainings on RIAs methods Implement and nurture the network in the area of regulation
There are insufficient mechanisms for quality insurance and control	State Chancellery and Ministry of Justice	Strengthen oversight capacities in the State Chancellery and focus the oversight on high impact regulations
Stakeholder engagement takes place often late	State Chancellery	Engage stakeholders earlier Monitor the use of fast-track procedures to ensure appropriate use
Ex post evaluation of regulation is weak	State Chancellery	Develop an annual list of regulations to evaluate
Ex post policy evaluation is rare outside EU financed programmes	All government	Develop capacities in arm's length institutes to perform evaluations upon demand from ministries Development of guidelines on policy evaluation

The quality of Regulatory Impact Assessments should be strengthened to increase use and impact both in the government and in the Parliament

Overall, the main gaps in the Regulatory Impact Assessment framework are well understood in the Latvian administration. This is evident from the recent report developed by the State Chancellery on "Improving the Impact Assessment System". In addition, concrete measures to enhance the RIA system have been developed in the State Administration Modernization Plan 2023-2027 (State Chancellery, 2023[100]).

At the moment, ex ante RIA is compulsory for all legislative acts in Latvia. Guidance produced by the State Chancellery states that proportionality is one of the principles of the RIA process, although there is little evidence of it being applied to draft RIA documents. The RIA format and the level of analysis tends to be the broadly the same for all draft laws submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers, and there is little evidence of quantification of the potential impacts of draft legislation, beyond the measurement of administrative burdens upon society.

To focus resources on draft legislation with a higher impact, many OECD countries have acknowledged in their RIA guidelines that not every regulation or proposal needs the same level of scrutiny. The costs and time to develop and analyse a regulatory proposal should be clearly outweighed by the positive effect that this has of improved policy decisions or regulatory quality. To ensure this some countries have developed ways to better apply the proportionality principle (see Box 3.24).

Box 3.24. Examples of ways to apply the proportionality principle in OECD countries

In the **United Kingdom**, a de minimis rule has been introduced to ensure proportionality and give departments greater flexibility to determine the appropriate level of analysis to demonstrate the rationale for a regulation. The Better Regulation Executive and the regulatory oversight body, the Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC), have jointly produced guidance stipulating that only measures with significant regulatory impacts (greater than GBP -/+ 5million threshold) are expected to have full RIAs and be submitted to the RPC for scrutiny. However, measures that fall below the de minimis threshold may still be expected to produce a full RIA if they are estimated to have significant distributional impacts; disproportionate burdens on small businesses; significant wider social, environmental, financial or economic impacts; or significant novel or contentious elements. All other regulatory measures are still expected to produce a proportionate level of analysis to support stakeholder and parliamentary scrutiny of the proposal. In addition, departmental Chief Analysts are responsible for ensuring that the analysis used for measures which are under the GBP -/+ 5 million threshold is sufficiently robust (OECD, 2020[126]).

In **Australia**, each submission to the parliament has to be accompanied by a RIA. For the subordinate legislation, a preliminary assessment is conducted to determine if a RIA is required for both primary and subordinate legislation. A RIA is also mandatory for any non-Cabinet decision made by any Australian Government entity if that decision is likely to have a measurable impact on businesses, community organisations, individuals or any combination of them.

In **Denmark** there is a threshold for doing ex ante impact assessments using the SCM-method, which is 4 million Danish Kroner in running costs (OECD, 2019[127]). The threshold was made out of the experience from the baseline measurements and expected to cover at least 95% of the overall burdens. In addition, to assess the consequences to be above the threshold, they rely on external consultants to do a more thorough report based on interviews with businesses.

In **Germany**, the Federal Government's programme considers all legislative proposals irrespective of the anticipated amount of compliance costs for ex ante impact assessments. However, there is an informal rule that a draft with changes in compliance cost below EUR 100 000 is considered a small change. The required level of detail for this kind of draft is, hence, much lower (OECD, 2019[127]).

Source: (OECD, 2015[128]; OECD, 2020[126]; OECD, 2019[127]).

To address this issue in Latvia, there is need to better plan in advance, and select which policies should be assessed ex ante, based on potential impact. Better regulatory planning could also help in performing RIAs before actual legislative proposals are already developed. Latvia already has a forward planning system for new laws and regulations[9], which could be utilised e.g. by the State Chancellery, to identify legislative proposals with potentially high impact. More thorough RIA analysis and consultation activities could be channelled towards these laws or regulations, earlier in the legislative process, where RIA can deliver the greatest added value.

[9] This forward plan is entitled *"The Government Action Plan Government's action plan for the implementation of the Declaration on the planned activities of the Cabinet of Ministers"* and can be found here: https://likumi.lv/ta/id/341317-par-valdibas-ricibas-planu-deklaracijas-par-artura-krisjana-karina-vadita-ministru-kabineta-iecereto-darbibu-istenosanai#

The overall quality of RIAs is weak as there are limited internal analytical capacity. Indeed, assessments are rarely based on hard data or comparative analysis of alternative options. There is little apparent use of more sophisticated RIA methodologies such as Cost-Benefit Analysis, or Cost-Effectiveness Analysis for the quantification of potential impacts. Even if guidance is available on different methodologies and ways to assess certain impacts, there is a lack of comprehensive training offered to officials in RIA. To partially address this issue, from January 2024, the State Chancellery is offering specific trainings on how to calculate the administrative burden as part of RIAs. Despite being an improvement, this might be not enough.

Box 3.25. Networks to improve regulatory quality: United Kingdom and Netherlands

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, government departments with a responsibility for producing regulations have a Better Regulation Unit (BRU) consisting of a team of civil servants that oversee the department's regulatory management processes and advises on the compliance with the Better Regulation requirements. It is at the discretion of each department to determine the scope of the BRU's role, its resourcing (i.e. staff numbers, composition of policy officials and analysts, and allocation of time on this agenda versus others) and position within the departmental structure. However, their functions generally include promoting the use and application of better regulation principles in policymaking, advising policy teams on how to develop a RIA (or post-implementation review) including queries on methodology and analysis, and advising policy teams on the appropriate schedule to submit a RIA to the oversight body (the Regulatory Policy Committee) for scrutiny.

Netherlands

The Netherlands have developed some cross-departmental guidelines for regulatory impact assessment (RIA), the Policy Compass (Beleidskompas). These guidelines were updated in March 2023, to additionally strengthen some identified challenges. To facilitate information exchange across ministries on the use of these guidelines, there is a cross-departmental Policy Compass working group that meets monthly to exchange best practice. Representatives of the expertise teams (see below) from all departments are members of the working group. The composition can change depending on the agenda. The chairmanship and secretariat of the working group lies with the directorate of the Ministry of Justice and Security.

In addition, the working group prepares the agenda of the more senior Policy Compass Steering Group, which meets several times a year and consists of directors of all departments, from policy directorates as well as implementing organisations and supervisors. Furthermore, each department has a team that ensures that there is sufficient knowledge and expertise in the organisation to be able to use the Policy Compass effectively. This team, also known as the expertise team, can support users of the Policy Compass with advice and assistance in applying the Policy Compass.

Source: (Ministry of Justice and Security, 2023[129]); (OECD, 2020[126]); Netherlands Diagnostic report.

To solve these issues several OECD countries have developed training courses on RIA. In addition, to provide an informal space for sharing, some countries have also developed networks to allow people working on RIAs to exchange and build capacity (see Box 3.25). This is also in line with the commitment in the State Chancellery to deliver the following Action by 2027: "*A network of policy planners is being developed, which acts as a platform for the exchange of experience between policy planners of different*

institutions and within which training is organised on current impact assessment issues. At least 70% of policy planners have participated in the training".

Several governmental institutions have a regulatory quality control function in Latvia. These include the State Chancellery which performs a quality check on newly adopted regulations, including the obligation to conduct RIAs or stakeholder engagement, and the Ministry of Justice which is responsible for checking legal quality of the draft regulations. However, the practice suggests that there are relatively few cases in which a draft law is required to be amended because of the poor quality of the RIA, or non-compliance with drafting rules. Statistics on RIA quality are not yet systematically collected, to help the government understand whether quality is improving over time. Crucially, the State Chancellery currently has modest capacity to carry out quality control on RIAs through the Public Administration Policy Department of the State Chancellery which has to monitor ministries' compliance with RIA rules. However, to invest the resources more efficiently, Latvia should consider options for strengthening the regulatory oversight or quality assurance process, with a focus on high impact regulations where the value of substantive review would be highest. Indeed, applying a proportionality principle would allow them to conduct more in-depth quality control on the most important regulations. In some contexts, OECD countries have placed this oversight function in an arm's length regulatory oversight body while others operate from the Centre of Government in the administration. However, given the current context and resources in Latvia, only oversight solutions that are internal to the government can be envisaged (see Box 3.26).

Box 3.26. Regulatory Oversight Bodies in OECD Countries

Australia - Office of Best Practice Regulation

Australia – Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR): The OBPR is located at the centre of government, in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and reviews about 1 500 policy proposals every year. OBPR focuses on two areas: scanning efforts to identify upcoming proposals that require RIA, as well as proactive engagement with ministries on the benefits of RIA. It uses information flows, decision-making processes of government, and its central position to assess if RIA is required for new proposals. However, much more effort is dedicated to the OBPR's capacity-building focus. In 2019-20, it delivered over 2 250 structured training hours to public servants on how to conduct robust impact analysis and evidence-based decision making – in addition to emails, calls and meetings to provide agencies with the support and skills to produce high-quality impact analysis. The OBPR is also developing a bespoke information technology system for RIA aimed at improving workload management related to overall RIA scrutiny as well as the quality of impact analysis advice. In addition to standard consultation processes related to RIA, OBPR meets with stakeholders on a regular basis to gather feedback on RIA processes as well as on policy areas facing challenges in bringing together high-quality evidence or analysis

Sweden - Swedish Better Regulation Council – SBRC

The SBRC is a regulatory oversight body responsible scrutinising (ex ante) and deliver opinions on the quality of impact assessments of proposed statutes deemed to have significant impact on businesses. Its secretariat is located within the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. The Agency, in turn, is responsible for methodological development, guidance and training in regulatory management tools. All the SBRC's opinions on the quality of impact assessments are published on the Council's website, and there are no monetary thresholds for determining whether the proposal has significant impacts on businesses. The Council is independent in its decision making. There is a legal obligation for agencies to refer proposals that may have significant effects on businesses to the SBRC. The members of the Council are appointed by the government and consists of one chairman, one vice-

chairman and three members. They have backgrounds in law, economics, trade union and business stakeholder organisations. Being part of the Council is part-time for all of them and all are appointed for a specified period. The current members of the Council are appointed for two years. Re-appointment is possible but it is the government's decision.

Czech Republic - Regulatory Impact Assessment Board

The Regulatory Impact Assessment Board (RIAB) was established in 2011 to review the quality of submitted RIAs accompanying draft primary and secondary legislation. The RIAB is one of the working groups of the Government Legislative Council (GLC) and its activities are supported by the Office of the Government. The RIAB may also undertake consultation with ministries concerning aspects of RIA during the preparatory and drafting phase; and issue non-binding opinions. It is sometimes contacted by external stakeholders to receive more detailed information on the impacts of the proposed legislation. Based on the evaluation of "Overviews of Impacts" (provided to the drafting authorities in a template), the RIAB issues opinions as to which planned pieces of draft legislation should undergo a regular RIA process. The suggestions of the RIAB are to be approved later as a binding obligation in the Plan of Legislative Work of the Government, respectively in the Plan of Preparation of Decrees and officially published. The opinions are made publicly available (on the website http://ria.vlada.cz). The RIAB is composed of 15 external experts (economists, lawyers, business representatives, etc) who meet once every 3 weeks. The RIAB The RIAB members report potential conflict of interests at the RIAB meetings.

Source: (OECD, 2018[130]; OECD, 2018[131]).

In Latvia, the possibility is to mobilise the structure with responsibility for evaluating the quality of RIAs, in the Public Administration Policy Department, which could provide for review of the quality of the substantive impact assessment for RIAs of major impact

Finally, RIAs are not sufficiently used in Parliamentary settings and are rarely discussed. This is unfortunately common in several OECD countries. However, interesting practices have emerged in Finland and Sweden where the Parliament is performing some of these *ex ante* assessments (see Box 3.27). In Latvia, the Legal Bureau of the Saeima checks the quality of draft laws which are submitted to the Parliament, however impact assessments are not carried out on any amendments that are discussed during the approval process of the draft legislation. A Saeima Analytical Service was established in 2017, which could offer the ability to carry out *ex ante* and *ex post* RIAs, although it has faced little demand from Members of Parliament to use these services and has limited resources. Opportunities exist to create more spaces for discussion around RIAs and to increase the capacities in the Analytical Service to conduct also these assessments.

Box 3.27. Use of RIA in parliamentary settings in Finland and Sweden

The Finnish Economic Analysis Team

In Finland, the Finnish Parliament has manifested interest in the quality of RIAs. Indeed, in 2020, the Audit Committee has commissioned, to the University of Easter Finland, a study regarding the quality of legislations and of impact assessments (Anglmayer, 2020[132]). Furthermore, the Finnish Parliament has set up an *ex ante* impact assessment capacity, the Economic Analysis Team, located within the Parliamentary Research Service. Typically, the Economic Analysis Team's *ex ante* impact assessment work concentrates on assessing the economic impacts of policy changes in social policy, trade, taxation and other economic issues. They also make use of a micro-simulation model developed by Statistics Finland which is used also in governmental departments and agencies, allowing to have comparative analysis. The Finnish model share several similarities with the Swedish one (described below) (Anglmayer, 2020[132]). Indeed, in 2011 the Finnish Parliament performed a pilot project with the Swedish Economic Analysis Service to better understand their long-standing impact assessment practices.

The Swedish Economic Analysis Service

The Swedish Economic Analysis Service dates to the late 1990s and was developed to ensure that opposition parties were able to obtain impartial and comparable economic analysis. The service conducts its own *ex ante* impact assessment mainly for individual Members and political groups from the opposition. The service uses the same computational models as the government, to ensure comparability of results (Anglmayer, 2020[132]).

Source: Anglmayer (2020[132]), Better Regulation practices in national parliaments.

Stakeholder engagement is quite advanced but could be further improved by ensuring earlier engagement and limiting the use of fact-track procedures

Latvia has instituted a transparent and structured process for consulting with social and civil partners. The TAP Portal allows any interested party to take part in the consultations including individuals, companies or NGOs. It is also an excellent tool for internal co-ordination within the administration across the Ministries. Often, ministries tend to consult with stakeholders through formal and informal working groups and networks, sometimes in the early stages of preparation of the draft legislation. However, this is not always the case. Indeed, in most cases stakeholders are involved when a draft legislation is being prepared. However, the RIA document accompanying draft legislation provide too little information to engage stakeholders in a constructive discussion on the impacts of the proposed legislation. Accordingly, it can be said that public or stakeholder feedback rarely alters the substantive content of the RIA.

In addition, there is a tendency to overuse the ‘fast-track’ option which allows the draft legislation to stay more limited time on the TAP Portal. For example, in 2020, 40% of all drafts presented before the cabinet were fast-tracked, an increase from 2018, likely driven by the need to respond to the COVID-19 emergency (Mangule, Auers and Jahn, 2022[84]). Apparently, this urgency procedure is still being excessively used at the moment, despite the fact that the COVID-19 emergency has faded away, thereby limiting stakeholders’ opportunities to provide input to the rule-making process.

Overall, despite the identified gaps, Latvia consultation system still counts as a best practice across OECD countries. Few jurisdictions have more systematic consultations processes, while a good example is represented by the European Union which has a very comprehensive approach to stakeholder

engagement (see Box 3.28). The main aspects that could be further strengthened in Latvia is to engage stakeholders at early stages to ensure that different options are considered and discussed, and to allow sufficient time for receiving feedback. To ensure relevant engagement, stakeholder engagement activities could be structured as part of forward planning process with the aim of ensuring that larger draft laws receive longer periods of consultation (proportionality). To avoid overuse of fast-track processes, the State Chancellery could monitor the use of the Fast-track option and make sure that laws prepared as part of a fast-tracked procedure are subject to *ex post* evaluation after a fixed number of years.

Box 3.28. EU Stakeholder Engagement platform 'have your say'

"Have Your Say" is the European Commission's platform for contributions to its legislative proposals, fitness checks and communications. The European Commission uses the platform to inform citizens about consultations. Stakeholders, including members of the public, businesses, scientific and technical experts, can contribute through the portal to initiatives as they are formed before and after the adoption by the European Commission. The "Have Your Say" consultation portal has several features that enable it to be accessible, comprehensive, user friendly:

- Stakeholders can participate in the Commission's Call for evidence by providing feedback (including on the definition of the problem). This can be done also to ask for simplifications through the "Have Your Say: Simplify!" portal.
- Each initiative has a graphic timeline that indicates what stage of policymaking the consultation concerns to (i.e. Call for evidence, draft, etc.).
- The home page displays a warning message informing stakeholders about the number of days remaining to provide comments in an active consultation. The most relevant consultations are also showcased in the opening page to facilitate access.
- Filters are available to allow stakeholders to search consultations by stage, topic, type of act, and other criteria, which helps them to visualise the consultations more easily.
- Stakeholders can provide their feedback in 24 languages, which makes consultations accessible to a wide range of public.
- Comments and feedback are made public.
- Stakeholders can subscribe to get e-mail notifications of upcoming and ongoing consultations.

Source: (European Commission, 2021[133]; OECD, 2022[134]).

Ex post evaluation is significantly underdeveloped and should be strengthened by committing to evaluate at least some relevant regulations and policies annually

In Latvia, there is no systemic programme on *ex post* reviews of existing regulations besides administrative simplification. Such reviews are carried out on an *ad hoc* basis or in particular areas or for particular type of legal acts, for example, with the aim to identify obsolete legal provisions. Setting up inter-institutional working groups for such reviews is a regular practice. In line ministries, there is no explicit provision in budgets for *ex post* evaluations and ministries are not appropriately equipped in terms of analytical capacities for carrying such *ex post* assessments.

Unfortunately, *ex post* evaluation of regulation is also underdeveloped in most OECD countries. In this area, the EU represents again a good example with its use of *ex post* evaluation and other tools to simplify regulations such as the regulatory fitness and performance programme (REFIT) (see Box 3.29).

Box 3.29. *Ex post* evaluation and the Better Regulation Agenda

Ex post evaluation is one of the pillars of the EU's Better Regulation agenda. The European Commission has invested considerably to make sure that *ex post* evaluations were conducted respecting some quality standards. To this respect the Commission has adopted the Better Regulation Guidelines and its Toolbox which provide a detailed methodology on how to evaluate, and at the same time, they help in explaining all the processes to conduct to perform the evaluations, from planning to ensuring political impact.

A principle that ensures that evaluations will take place is the "Evaluation first" principle. According to this principle the Commission ensures to always evaluate a law before revisiting it. Finally, *ex post* evaluations are also controlled by an independent body within the Commission, the Regulatory Scrutiny Board which guarantees the quality of impact assessments as well as *ex post* evaluations and provide reports on the state of implementation of the Better Regulation Agenda.

Source: (European Commission, 2021[133]; OECD, 2022[134]).

Challenges in systematising evaluation are evident also outside of the regulatory field. With the exception of evaluation of strategic plans and EU programmes, policies are rarely evaluated. Indeed, the practice of evaluation of European funds did not result in cross fertilisation to help develop a richer evaluation system.

Overall, there is need to strengthen an evaluation culture outside of EU programmes. This could be done by issuing guidelines specifically on evaluation of public policies, by including sections on evaluation methods in training to strengthen analytical skills and by using the current annual research plans also as evaluation plans where ministries can signal which policies will be evaluated. The Netherlands is a good example with its Strategic Evaluation Agenda, which helps to promote systematic use of evaluation inside the government to improve the quality of spending (Box 3.30). Finally, as ministries' internal capacities are limited in Latvia, evaluations could be outsourced to research institutes at arm's length.

Box 3.30. The Netherlands Strategic Evaluation Agenda

Dutch Strategic Evaluation Agendas (SEAs) provide an overview of ministry's most crucial policy areas. In addition, an explanation of the necessity of having knowledge in each policy topic, as well as the proper focus and attention for evaluative research and periodic reports (Government of the Netherlands, 2021[135]). According to the SEA, ministries must decide what kind of assessment evidence they will need and when, spanning three to four years, to collect more pertinent data at the appropriate times for learning and accountability (OECD, 2023[103]).

A policy review is one method of gathering evidence; additional methods include *ex ante*, *ex durante*, and *ex post* evaluations. In this sense, it is anticipated that the SEA will foster ongoing improvement and improve knowledge throughout the policy cycle. Every year, the Dutch Parliament receives the departmental SEA, which projects three to four years ahead of time. The agenda is provided for the upcoming year and includes an indication for the years that follow.

Source: (Government of the Netherlands, 2021[135]; OECD, 2023[136]).

Annex A. Additional information on the Latvian evidence ecosystem

The boxes and tables presented below provide additional information on the different actors in Latvia working in the evidence-to-policy ecosystem.

Box A.1. Examples of Knowledge Brokerage/applied research institutions in Latvia

Centre for Disease Prevention and Control – Ministry of Health

The Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (CDPC) is directly subordinated to the Ministry of Health. The CDPC main tasks are implementation of National healthcare policy in patient safety and National public health policy of disease prevention and epidemiological safety. Additionally, the CDPC co-ordinates National health promotion policy and is responsible for the official health statistics. In total the CDPC has 150 employees in different fields - physicians, public health specialists, statisticians, economists, IT professionals, lawyers etc. 90% of employees are females, 4% has PhD, 48% has master's degree, 83% academic and 15% vocational higher education. The CDPC participates in the planning and evaluation of the nationwide health promotion intervention, creation of a situation description of health policy, as well as develops proposals for creating health care and public health policy in the field of epidemiological safety, legislation and development planning documents in the fields of health care, public health, health promotion and disease prevention.

Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics – Ministry of Agriculture

Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics (AREI) is derivative public entity of the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies. Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies is directly subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture. AREI's scientific competence covers areas related to the sustainable use of agricultural resources and the development of rural space. For shaping national policy, AREI is one of the scientific institutions used by the Ministry of Agriculture. Additionally, from 2020 Ministry of Agriculture has attracted experts from this AREI who advise the ministry on Taxonomia issues. In total the AREI has 100 employees working in administration, scientific council, two departments, such as department of bioeconomy, department of field plant breeding and agroecology, two laboratories - laboratory of grain technology and agro-chemistry and pre-selection laboratory-, four centres, as technology transfer centre, agricultural market promotion centre, Stende research centre and Priekuļi research centre.

Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre - Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development

Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre (LEGMC) co-operates closely with the Ministry of Climate and Energy in the climate policies. The LEGMC is under the supervision of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The LEGMC overall strategic objective is to deliver strategically significant, superior services for the country's development in the areas of geology,

hydrology, air quality, climatology, meteorology, and hasardous waste management. The LEGMC has six areas of activity, such as meteorology and hydrology, air quality, geology and hydrogeology, laboratory, chemicals management and climate. The LEGMC has developed an initial flood risk assessment for 2019-2024, which was approved in 2019 by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development. The assessment identified areas where the flood risk is assessed as significant, considering previous floods and climate change. Additionally, within the project implemented by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the LEGMC in 2017 developed climate change scenarios for Latvia until the year 2100 and created a climate change analysis tool.

Institute of Physical Energetics (FEI) - Ministry of Climate and Energy

Institute of Physical Energetics (FEI) conducts fundamental and applied research, contributes to the development and implementation of Latvia's energy policy, increasing the security of energy supply and sustainable energy. The Ministry of Climate and Energy closely co-operates with the FEI based on a delegation agreement. The institutes research directions are smart energy infrastructure research and development planning of smart grids, energy and environmental technological and economic research, research into rational and efficient use of energy resources, research and development of advanced materials and technologies for energy sector. The institute participated also in three State Research Programmes.

Latvian State Forest Research Institute 'Silava' – Ministry of Agriculture

Latvian State Forest Research Institute 'Silava' co-operates closely with two ministries – Ministry of Climate and Energy based on delegation agreement and Ministry of Agriculture. 'Silava' is under the supervision of Ministry of Agriculture. 'Silava' has four research laboratories: laboratory of plant physiology, laboratory of molecular genetics, laboratory of forest mycology, forest environment laboratory. In general, the institute conducts research in ten subfields of forestry and does National Forest monitoring. Institute has 134 scientific employees (e.g. leading researchers, researchers, research assistants).

BIOR – Ministry of Agriculture

Institute of Food safety, animal health and environment "BIOR" is under the supervision of Ministry of Agriculture. Additionally, BIOR co-operates with Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Ministry of Health, as well as with the State Food and Veterinary Service, Disease prevention and control centre of Latvia, Health Inspection and Nature Conservation Agency. BIOR specialises in areas such as food safety, animal health, public health, environmental health, fisheries. Intstitute's researchers are also academic staff in universities (currently 5 professors – 2 in University of Latvia, 2 in Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, 1 – Riga Stradiņš University). Around 50% of Institute BIOR researchers regularly work in a close collaboration with the public administration within the Institutes fields of interest.

Source: Responses from Questionnaire, (Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2023[137]), (Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics, 2023[138]), (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, 2019[139]), (Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre, 2023[140]), (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, 2017[141]), (Institute of Physical Energetics, 2023[142]), (Latvian State Forest Research Institute 'Silava', 2023[143]).

Table A A.1. List of Statistical Institutions

Statistical Institutions Providing Official European Statistics
Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics
The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs
Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
State Plant Protection Service
State Border guard
State Ltd "Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre"
Ministry of Agriculture
Statistical Institutions Providing Official Latvian Statistics
The Nature Conservation Agency
The Information Centre of the Ministry of the Interior
Procurement Monitoring Bureau
Latvian Prison Administration
Ministry of Education and Science
Lotteries and Gambling Supervisory Inspection
Ministry of Culture
Ministry of Welfare
The National Archives of Latvia
National Library of Latvia
Agricultural data centre
Rural Support Service
National Film Centre
The National Health Service
State Employment Agency of Latvia
The Financial Intelligence Unit of Latvia
The Court Administration of Latvia
Administration of Maintenance Guarantee Fund
State JSC “Road Traffic Safety Directorate”
The State Inspectorate For Protection Of Children's Rights
State Labour Inspectorate
State Railway Technical Inspectorate
National Centre for Education
State Forest Service
State Probation Service
State Regional Development Agency

Source: https://www.csp.gov.lv/en/official-statistics-institutions#statistical-institutions-providing-official-latvian-statistics.

Table A A.2. Advisory councils, bodies, committees in Latvia

Name	Institution Responsible	Actors involved	Area of activity	Function
Environmental Advisory council	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	20 environmental organisations in Latvia, e.g. Baltic Environmental Forum Latvia; NGO "Green Liberty";Ķemeri National Park Foundation	Environment	Public participation in the development and implementation of environmental policy
National tripartite Cooperation Council	Cabinet of Ministers	Cabinet of Ministers, Employers' Confederations of Latvia, Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia	Socioeconomic development	Develops and implements a strategy for social and economic issues that would guarantee social stability and increase the level of well-being in the country
National IT Security Council	Ministry of Defence Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, CERT.LV, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Finance, Financial and Capital Market Commission, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Welfare, Bank of Latvia, Latvia State Radio and Television Centre, Military Intelligence and Security Service, Military Information Technology Security Incident Prevention Team (MilCERT), National Armed Forces, Ministry of Transport, Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Ministry of Justice, State Security Service, State Revenue Service, State Chancellery, State Police, Ministry of Health	Information technology security	Co-ordinates the planning and execution of tasks and events related to information technology security in Latvia
National development Council	Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre	Prime Minister, Minister of Education and Science, Minister of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Minister of Economy, Minister of Finance, Representative of the President; Employers' Confederation of Latvia, Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Latvian Association of Local Governments; Representative of the commission responsible for the development planning system of the Saeima	Sustainable and stable development of the country	Plans the long-term development of the country; evaluates the implementation of the national long-term development planning documents; provides recommendations to the Cabinet of Ministers on the priority directions in the country's long-term development planning
Steering Committee on Social Inclusion Policy	Ministry of Welfare	26 committee representatives from sectoral ministries, municipalities, NGOs, Central Statistical Bureau, State Police, social partners	Poverty, income inequality and social exclusion situation in the country	Makes proposals for the development and improvement of policy planning documents and policies in the field of social inclusion, promotes the exchange of information on current issues in the field of social inclusion, examines issues related to poverty, social exclusion and income inequality
Committee on Gender Equality	Ministry of Welfare	Representatives from sectoral ministries, State Chancellery, office of Latvia's representative in international human rights	Gender equality	Provides proposals and information on the implementation of the integrated approach of gender

Name	Institution Responsible	Actors involved	Area of activity	Function
		institutions, social partners, 7 NGOs, office of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Latvia.		equality in sectoral policies; recommends possible development directions and priorities for gender equality policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
Research and Innovation Governance Council	Ministry of Education and Science Ministry of Economics	Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Economics, Latvian Council of Science, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia	Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3)	The aim is to monitor the implementation and management of research, development and innovation policy and RIS3
State Operational Medical Commission	Ministry of Health	National Health Service; Emergency medical assistance service; Riga Eastern Clinical University Hospital; Centers for Disease Prevention and Control; Pauls Stradins Clinical University Hospital; Ministry of Health; State Drug Agency; State Blood Donor Center; Health Inspection; State Forensic Medicine Expertise Center; Children's Clinical University Hospital	Health sector institutions and public health	Makes co-ordinating decisions binding on health sector institutions in emergency medical situations and emergency public health situations; evaluates the collected information after the elimination of the consequences of an emergency medical situation
Economic Council	Ministry of Economics	Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Employers' Confederation of Latvia; Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia; Latvian Association of Local Governments	Entrepreneurship	Promotes formation and implementation of a business-friendly environmental policy, as well as to promotes the implementation of the principles of sustainable economic development in the country

Source: Fact Finding Mission and Questionnaire's answers.

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