

EUROPAL applied research products

EU policy analysis

Aim	EU policy analysis
Background	European Union rules exert an increasingly strong role on national policies and policy-making. Thus, national governments, agencies and subnational governments should feel strongly about the effective representation of their preferences and interests at the EU level. Ideally, their influence spans the entire cycle, from early consideration of ideas to the eventual decision-making, including the substages of the process. Increasingly, public organizations operate in EU-wide or regional administrative networks. Through the exchange of information or resources, these networks play important roles for policy development and implementation. A proper situational awareness should help to understand when and where efforts are best directed to ensure the (sub)national interests and preferences are taken on board. A mapping of the role and importance of such networks in specific fields may also offer an important avenue for obtaining best practices, advice or support.
Description	Depending on the specific needs and operational context of clients, EUROPAL can provide public organizations with a systematic analysis of their position in, and (potential) impact on EU policy making. Using interviews and secondary material, we thereby comprehensively identify and assess how various ‘focal points’ in EU-decision making may be accessed and lobbied, both at the European and the national level. These include, for instance, Commission’s working programmes, EP rapporteurships, and decision-making in the Council. We ground our analyses on an in-depth knowledge of a wide range of fields, among which environmental, migration and agricultural policy. On the client’s request, the analysis can be extended with an assessment of an organization’s formal or informal access to and influence on the aforementioned focal points. Optionally, utilizing social network analysis, we also describe, model, visualize and explain relevant network structures; on that basis, we are able to provide hands-on advice on an organization’s optimal positioning, as well as ensuring that the identified network(s) in the sector is utilized to a maximum effect.
Sample work	We previously delivered EU positional analyses inter alia in commissioned projects for the Dutch Provinces and Union of Water Boards (2014); our work is further embedded in academic studies on these themes. For an overview, see this blog , and for sample network visualizations, see this website .
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Scenario development and group model building

Aim	Anticipating key strategic challenges ahead of time; supporting decision-making processes in complex organizations
Background	In their day-to-day work, administrators and civil servants rarely have time to look ahead and anticipate the major challenges that lurk right around the corner. Scenario development with the aid of EUROPAL aims to help out, by developing and exploring potential avenues in decision/policy-making, and assisting in the formulation of viable and consistent strategic responses in the likely scenarios. When such challenges arise, stakeholders may well be confronted with complex organizational problems. To that end, the Group Model Building training provided by EUROPAL enables them to model or improve existing procedures for dealing with such issues.
Description	When clients request EUROPAL scenario development, the first session (and much of the preparatory work) is traditionally dedicated to the identification of imminent challenges, and the concomitant decision/policy-making problems. The subsequent sessions aim to develop, explore and simulate various scenarios, thus helping clients to develop a better grip on the most likely situations they will be confronted with. When a client formulates a need for group model building, a EUROPAL facilitator will first help to identify and evaluate organizational bottlenecks, using a variety of intervention techniques (e.g. causal loop diagrams or system dynamic models). During the sessions, relevant factors (variables) are pinpointed, causal connections established and feedback mechanisms surveyed with an eye to assessing the dynamics within the client's organizational system as a whole. Intermediate results are shared, and participants provided with workbooks to offer continuous input.
Sample work	When in mid-2016, the United Kingdom was placed on a fuzzy path towards an EU exit, several departments within the Dutch government expressed a desire to better synchronize their positions and align their approaches with external partners, in view of the uncertain road ahead and potential risks for the national interest. EUROPAL organized a training that drew broad participation, mapping key challenges in the negotiations, and how governmental actors could best respond. Group model building was one of the techniques used in a long-term cooperation project with the Dutch national police, which wanted to assess and improve internal procedures for their budget allocations. In three sessions, involving representatives from all the key departments, EUROPAL modelled the current decision-making processes, and helped to formulate enhancements both within and beyond.
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Legal and political feasibility analysis

Aim	Assessing the feasibility of a proposed initiative in the context of the current legal and political environment, pinpointing necessary changes and strategies to achieve them in order to secure a 'best fit'
Background	Public or private organizations may have a particular future policy approach or policy adjustment in mind that may or may not be attainable within the present EU framework. Further research is required to identify possible obstacles and objections that would impede the realization. A mapping of the legal and political context will help place these on the radar and predict which hurdles need to be anticipated and overcome, suggesting specific strategies (also in networking/lobbying appropriate actors) to that end.

Description	EUROPAL can provide organization with a holistic view of the domain(s) concerned, employing legal and political analytical methods to provide a clear-language assessment and readily implementable solutions. On request, additional advice may be offered on the specific strategies to pursue the legal or political changes necessary.
Sample work	EUROPAL delivered legal and political analysis inter alia for the benefit of courts and judges in a series of EU-sponsored training programs. It was equally carried out inter alia in a 2014 study for the Dutch parliament with regard to the embedding of the Early Warning Framework for subsidiarity, set up with the Treaty of Lisbon (2009).
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Legal compliance check

Aim	Assessing the compatibility of a current practices with existing EU law requirements
Background	Public or private organizations may be engaging in practices which have meanwhile been influenced or governed by the ever-changing rules of EU law. It may concern borderline situations where hitherto no 100% clarity could be offered on the (il)legality of measures concerned. In the interest of legal certainty, predictability and risk assessment, an unequivocal assessment is called for in light of primary and secondary EU norms, including the complex jurisprudence of the European Courts.
Description	EUROPAL can perform an integral legal compliance check and deliver the necessary answers, producing an answer in straightforward terms, or pinpointing which elements are still 'up in the air' (potentially offering room for maintaining existing approaches).
Sample work	A legal compliance check was carried out in a study for the Dutch Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Economic Affairs (2016) on the preferable national approaches in the procurement of military tools and equipment vis-à-vis the requirements of EU internal market law. They were subsequently performed inter alia on the request of the Dutch Ministry for Health on the system regulating profit-making by healthcare service providers (2019).
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