Policy advisory bodies in Belgium
Ellen Fobé, Benjamin Biard, Nathalie Schiffino, and Marleen Brans

In Belgium, there are about 250 advisory bodies at the federal level and 46 at the regional level. These advisory bodies tend to be highly integrated into the policy-making cycle. They also seem to rely more on experience-based expertise than on academic expert opinion, which is not surprising in a consensus-based political system with neo-corporatist traits where traditional stakeholder groups possess policy-making powers. This chapter analyses the cross-regional and cross-government variation of the nature and role of advisory bodies. It also discusses how the policy advisory system has become subject of reforms that seek to meet four challenges: restoring political primacy in policy-making, dealing with growing advice competition, addressing the coincidence of expert advice and representative opinion, and securing societal support for policy interventions from groups other than traditional representative organizations.

Expert policy advisory bodies
Jenny Stewart and Scott Prasser

This chapter offers an overview of government established and supported expert policy advisory bodies at the federal level in Australia from the 1970s to 2010. It considers first, why were these specialised bodies established outside the formal permanent bureaucracy? Secondly, what has given these bodies their ‘expertness’? Thirdly, what processes
have they employed and how have these processes contributed both to perceptions of their expertness and their value in policy development? Fourthly, what has been their impact on policy; has it gone beyond the specific issues on which they have provided advice and affected the wider debate and agenda? Last, what do the operations and perceived success or failure of these bodies tell us about the nature of policy development in Australia and the role of expertise?

Policy advisory councils: governmental and departmental advisory bodies
Kateřina Merklová and Kateřina Ptáčková

in Policy Analysis in the Czech Republic
Published in print: 2016 Published Online: January 2017
Item type: chapter

The chapter analyses governmental and departmental advisory bodies as a part of the policy advisory system in the Czech Republic. The main proposition of this chapter is that there are various kinds of advice that the advisory bodies provide the government with as well as different roles they play in the policy-making process. Our analysis is based on the assumption that the role of the advisory bodies is to some degree determined by their formal framework (and especially by some of its missing aspects such as an explicit balance provision, i.e. representation of the widest range of competing public interests). As such, the current institutional framework of the Czech advisory councils seems to comprise several internal paradoxes and in fact gives the government broad leeway for strategic employment of these councils.

The Gezondheidsraad
Wiebe E. Bijker, Roland Bal, and Hendriks Ruud

in The Paradox of Scientific Authority: The Role of Scientific Advice in Democracies
Published in print: 2009 Published Online: August 2013
Item type: chapter

This chapter presents a brief characterization of the Gezondheidsraad (the Health Council of the Netherlands), its mission, and its position in the Dutch political and scientific landscape. The Gezondheidsraad is an independent advisory body tasked with providing ministers and
Parliament with scientific advice on matters of public health. Ministers ask it for advice to ground their policy decisions. The Gezondheidsraad also has an “alerting” function that allows it to give unsolicited advice. Both forms of advice provide scientific support for the development of government policy.

Policy analysis in the Netherlands

Frans van Nispen and Peter Scholten (eds)

The Netherlands is often regarded as one of the strongholds of policy analysis, both in academia and in policymaking. Few countries have such a high density of institutes specialized in policy analysis and in few countries such institutes have played and continue to play such a key role in policymaking as in the Netherlands. Policy analysis clearly is an authoritative factor without which it is impossible to comprehend the dynamics of policymaking and politics in the Netherlands. This is also reflected in the strong presence of policy analysis in research groups and teaching at Dutch universities. The aim of this book is to provide an overview of developments in policy analysis in terms of academic thinking as well as in terms of its role in policy and politics in the Netherlands. It brings together contributions key Dutch scholars in this field as well as from practitioners from institutes specialized in policy analysis. The book captures the diversity of academic thinking and policy analysis practices as evolved in the Netherlands over the last decades. Furthermore, in each of the contributions we will substantiate empirically the role that policy analysis can play in the Netherlands by looking not just at cases from various types of institutes but also from different policy domains, such as financial policies, public management, education policies, welfare state policies, water governance and migrant policies.

Policy analysis and performance audit at the ‘highest level’:

Peter van der Knaap

in Policy analysis in the Netherlands
The Netherlands has developed a relatively extensive and strong system of advisory bodies. A specific phenomenon in the Dutch setting involves the so-called ‘planning bureaus’, a specific form of advisory body that not so much actually plans policies but provides policy-relevant knowledge on developments in society, nature or the economy. In this chapter a reconstruction is made of the origin and development of this system, in order to understand why advisory boards and planning offices evolved as such a powerful factor in the Netherlands and to be able to position the Dutch case in a comparative perspective. Subsequently, attention is paid to the origin and proceedings of four key advisory boards: the Central Planning bureau (CPB), the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), the Social and Cultural Planning bureau (SCP) and the Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL).

Knowledge, Policy, and Expertise
Susan Owens

This is a book about relations between knowledge and policy, focusing on the role of expert advice. From a diverse and extensive literature, it distils four models of knowledge–policy interactions, and shows how advisors are variously represented as rational analysts, political symbols, agents of learning, or skilful users of ‘boundary work’. It takes as its empirical subject one of Britain’s longest-standing advisory bodies—the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution—created in 1970 and abolished in 2011. The policy landscape was profoundly transformed during the Commission’s lifetime, providing rich material for an analysis of policy change. The Commission was seen as authoritative and independent; it delivered thirty-three reports, leaving its mark on British environmental policy, and having influence within Europe and beyond. Often represented as a ‘scientific body’, it was in fact an interesting hybrid, which embodied wide-ranging expertise. In one sense, this book tells the story of a unique institution. But its wider contribution is to derive insights on expertise and advisory practices—and on knowledge–policy relations—from an in-depth, longitudinal investigation of a particular advisory body. It offers a rich and detailed account of authority, autonomy, and trust, of the diverse roles that advisors can play, and of the ‘circumstances of influence’ in which knowledge—including scientific evidence—interplays with politics and policy formation. Above all, it demonstrates the complexity and contingency of these interactions, contributing substantially to a theory
of expertise, and drawing out important implications for the future of ‘good advice’.

Selecting Europe's Judges
Michal Bobek (ed.)

Published in print: 2015 Published Online: April Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198727781.001.0001
Item type: book

The past decade has witnessed changes in the ways judges for the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights are selected. The common aim has been securing greater professional quality of the judicial candidates. For this purpose, both European systems have put in place various advisory panels or selection committees that are called to evaluate the aptitude of the candidates put forward by the national governments. Were these institutional reforms successful in guaranteeing greater quality of the candidates? Might they have any positive impact on the legitimacy of the European courts? Has the creation of the expert advisory panels in any way shifted the institutional balance, either horizontally among the various institutions of the respective international organization, or vertically between the organization and its member states? Above all, however, is the spree of ‘judicial comitology’ as currently applied a good method of selecting Europe’s judges? These and a number of other questions are addressed in this volume in a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective. First, the volume describes for the first time in depth the operation of the new selection mechanisms from different vantage points, including not just academic, but also practitioners’ points of view. Second, having mapped the ground, it critically engages with selected common themes in a comparative way, analysing the new mechanisms with respect to values and principles such as democracy, judicial independence, transparency, representativeness, and legitimacy.