



Search for:
“The Business of
Policymaking”
on your preferred
podcast platform to
listen to the series.

The Business of Policymaking

Series 1

The podcast aims to demystify the world of policymaking, debunk some myths about the evidence-based policymaking process, and shine a light on the impact academic research can have on policy.



In this first series, Dr Jana Javornik spoke to guests from the world of policy to find out more about different areas of policy-related work, and to ask their advice on how academics can collaborate with policymakers and inform policy agenda.



Janez Potočnik

[Episode 1](#)



Sarah Jackson

[Episode 2](#)



Willem Adema

[Episode 3](#)



Louise Scott

[Episode 4](#)



Paul Hayes

[Episode 5](#)



Petra Petan

[Episode 6](#)

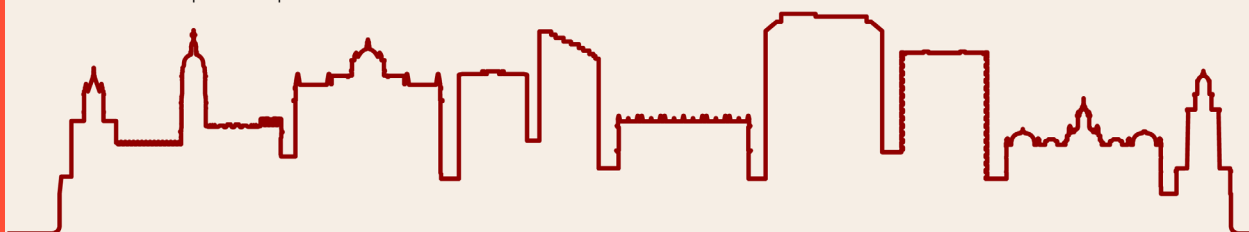
Our guest speakers:

Here are some key points given throughout the series:



Create succinct content in an accessible format: Research does not speak for itself; it needs to be animated and translated. Work with communication specialists and science communicators to create materials in a range of formats that are easy for your audience to understand, engage with and implement.

“ Creating and understanding science does not guarantee that you will be able to share your work in the best and the most understandable and useful way. This requires special skills. - *Janez Potočnik*





Search for:
“The Business of
Policymaking”
on your preferred
podcast platform to
listen to the series.



“ I think what is an outdated or a mistaken notion, is that you are just going to publish your paper in a prestigious academic journal and then policymakers are going to chase you down and invite you to collaborate on their new policy. We are more interested in executive summaries with very clear policy implications or policy recommendations. What is pertinent for the purposes of policymakers who have to respond to very concrete real-life events and solve particular problems is this more policy-applied research. - *Petra Petan*”

Understand time constraints, policy needs, and political cycles: While academic research needs to be rigorous, policymakers do not have the luxury of time to wait for the perfect answer or missing piece. Policymakers operate under significant time constraints, thus concise and impactful communication that responds to the real policy need in real time is crucial. You need to consider “how does my research apply to the problems policy is facing now? What is the big question here?”

“ Academics can be too academic for politicians, because politicians need practical solutions and academics almost always say ‘oh this needs further research’... Politics operates on both fast and slow cycles, and academics should comprehend the nuances of policy development timelines and the demands faced by politicians... You have a very fast electoral and treasury cycle where people are looking for an instant solution – they’re looking for immediate impact... The slow side of politics is it can absolutely take decades to build a case. - *Sarah Jackson*”



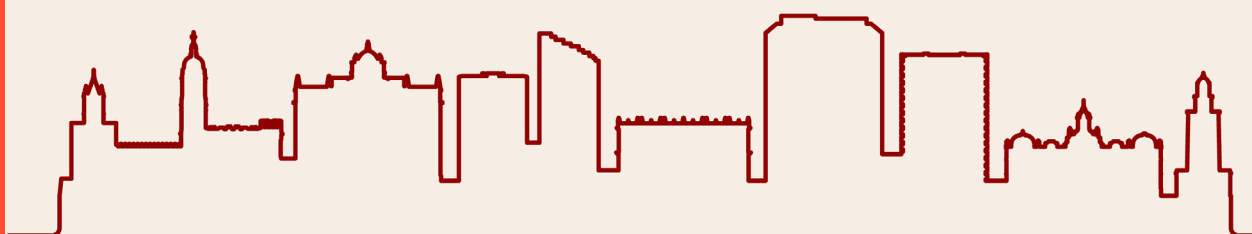
Find out what information from your study will be the most useful: A good understanding of what is useful and what is not to the policymakers is required for effective policy engagement and impact. Policymaking should ideally be based on good knowledge, but the challenge lies in determining what constitutes impactful knowledge.



Understand policy complexity: Policymakers often have their own agendas, including the need to implement manifesto commitments and other political programmes and missions. This may lead to cherry-picking scientific evidence that aligns with specific aims and objectives. Decision-making in government involves multiple factors, including political considerations and power relations. While your research may offer clear solutions, policymakers must navigate a complex landscape of evidence and stakeholder input.



Understand where policymakers are getting their information from: Policymakers receive input from various sources, including academia, business sectors and civil society. While academic research is valued for its unbiased nature compared to corporate research, and public opinion often trusts scientists more than politicians, the responsibility for decision-making ultimately lies with them.





Search for:
“The Business of
Policymaking”
on your preferred
podcast platform to
listen to the series.



Appreciate what perspective you are bringing: Understand the importance of your expertise and perspective in influencing policymakers’ understanding of complex issues.

“ Think of your impact as an influence in the way you’re trying to help policymakers understand this world in which you’re an expert. You have a particular lens on that, you have a particular angle on it that nobody else does. It’s your key perspective. Don’t underestimate how important that is. - *Louise Scott*



Make time for coffee: Influencing policy starts with building relationships with people. A quick conversation can be much more effective than sending lengthy journal articles and briefs. Make the time to build and maintain relationships.



Engage continuously: Building relationships and engaging with policymakers is an ongoing process. Do not be discouraged if your research does not immediately lead to policy changes. Your influence may manifest in various ways over time.

“ Keep going with providing your insight, your research, your evidence, keep talking, keep communicating, because it’s in those conversations, it’s in the margins of your books, in the discussions that you have around your large piece of work that you’re likely to have the greatest influence. - *Louise Scott*



Build your media and social media profile: Engage with people on social media – this means replying to comments and joining in conversations.

“ Having a media profile as an academic... it’s that sort of thing that’s going to get you noticed by policy people. - *Paul Hayes*

“ Academics who are working on topical issues should be sharing their main findings, either with the press or social media, and sooner or later it will be picked up and then we will also get to hear about it. - *Willem Adema*

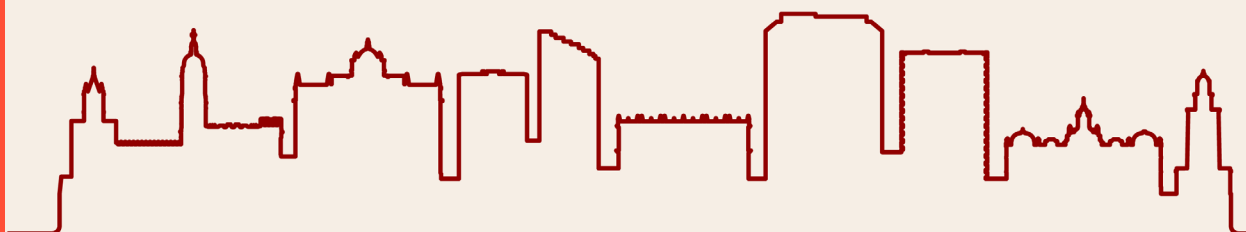
“ [It] is useful to write blog articles based on your papers that you can target to websites that are well-read in the policy community in Brussels. [...] [Websites that] policymakers really read because they distil research and make it very concrete to what we are dealing with. - *Petra Petan*



Utilise communication technology: With the advent of hybrid communication methods, academics can engage with policymakers and organisations across geographical boundaries more easily through various online platforms.



Understand the differences between academia and politics: Understanding the different needs of the policy and academic worlds is key to effective engagement without compromising scientific standards and integrity.





Search for:
“The Business of
Policymaking”
on your preferred
podcast platform to
listen to the series.



Organisation-specific insights

Working with government:

- Decision-making in government is complex and requires consideration of a wide range of evidence and perspectives from different stakeholders. Government operates within a political context, and ministers must make political decisions which may not always align with academic research.
- Influence occurs gradually through conversations, insights, and communication efforts, rather than through direct, immediate changes in policy.
- Academics should continue providing research and evidence, engaging in dialogue, and building relationships to have the greatest influence over time. “Relationships are key to the way government needs to operate”.



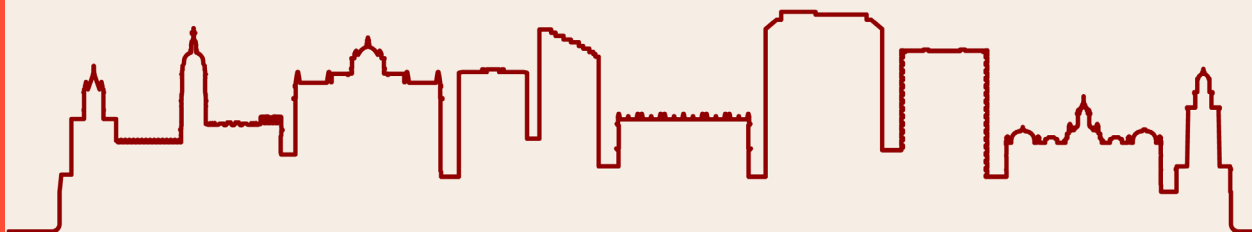
Working with local councils:

- Local government is unique in England in that it must balance its budget annually. (NHS Trusts and Civil Service, for example, don’t have to do that.) Decisions are made based on the annual budget cycle, which means strategic decisions are based on a quick timescale; it is therefore rare to win a multi-year research project.
- If academics want to influence local authorities, it is best to target trade and regional press e.g. The Municipal Journal and the Local Government Chronicle.
- “Find someone to talk to who will open the doors for you”.



Working with the charity sector:

- Academics have a “very specific set of skills and a very specific way of bringing influence into the policymaking arena”.
- Academic research can significantly influence policy development and implementation by providing credible evidence to support lobbying efforts.
- Collaborating with charity or campaigning organisations can help academics translate research into practical solutions and navigate practical timescales effectively. To be involved in the policy world, one needs to build relationships with all the major parties and officials. However, for an academic, this is not a very effective use of time. It may be more strategic to work with a charity with developed relationships, tracking the development of policy, policy threads and interest areas over time.
- Think carefully about the voluntary sector and which campaigning and thought-leadership partnerships you can get involved with, as this is where you may be able to have the most impact.
- Academics can enhance their engagement by joining the boards of charitable organisations or serving as trustees, leveraging expertise to contribute to practical initiatives aligned with research interests.





Search for:
“The Business of
Policymaking”
on your preferred
podcast platform to
listen to the series.



Working with the European Commission:



- It is important to understand the dynamics, rhythms and time pressures of the European Commission’s decision-making process. Policymaking processes, such as the European Semester, operate on set timelines with specific deliverables. Understanding the cycles and timelines can help academics align their research and engagement efforts with relevant policy agendas.
- Familiarise yourself with the structure of the European Commission, including the role of Cabinets and Directorate Generals (DGs). Cabinets consist of close collaborators of European Commissioners, while DGs are responsible for developing policy proposals.
- There are structured ways for academics to engage with the European Commission, such as participating in expert networks, submitting policy briefs, and attending conferences. Additionally, academics can proactively reach out to policymakers in relevant DGs to offer their expertise or engage with the European Commission’s Scientific Advisory Groups. Academics interested in engaging with the Commission should be proactive in demonstrating their readiness to publicly contribute to discussions.
- Academics can track policy priorities and upcoming proposals by accessing publicly available documents such as political guidelines, mission letters, and the Commission’s annual work programme, including the Mission Letters. This enables more effective targeting of engagement efforts.
- Understand the political landscape and the different communities and power dynamics within the Commission to effectively reach and influence different policy audiences.



Working with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):

- The OECD regularly reaches out to academics in different ways, e.g., to help develop questionnaires and methodologies, or to advise on proposed methodologies. Academics are also consulted when the OECD conducts country reviews, to compare their own findings with academic research on particular topics in that region or country. The OECD staff also follows the academic literature on relevant topics.
- “We try to underpin our work with data and evidence, and in my experience, if anyone – academic, or other stakeholder – has got a good story, has got good evidence underneath it we’re happy to listen and engage. It’s as simple as that”.
- The OECD is made up of different committees. Each committee consists of the delegates of all OECD countries, and they determine the work programme. There is a range of committees across the OECD (e.g. the Education Policy Committee, the Environmental Policy Committee, the Economic Policy Committee) served by the Secretariat who produce papers, analyses, data on a wide range of issues.
- “We maintain various databases because we know that if we have data and if we have evidence, we have a much better way of convincing governments to consider certain policy reform”.
- Cultural intelligence is important to understand what is relevant to policy in a particular country. Be aware of how different countries will have different priorities. “You have to be aware of those cultural differences to make any sort of sensible observations on policy in those countries”.

