

### **CONTENTS**

**REFERENCES** 



LDL 12DIN 3/9-37-312/-000-3
doi:10.2816/60610
Guide prepared by Mihaylo
Milovanovitch, ETF expert
$\ensuremath{\mathbb{C}}$ European Training Foundation, 2018
Reproduction is authorised provided
the source is acknowledged

1.	INTRODUCTION		
2.	A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY ANALYSIS		
2.1 2.2 2.3	Key notions The anaytical process Connecting the dots: guidance for good-quality analysis		
3.	AN IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY ANALYSIS	5	
3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4	'Reality check' and consultations  Evidence and common sense  A word on involvement and ownership  Analysis in real-life conditions: typical challenges		
4.	INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION		
<b>5.</b>	THE PRACTICE OF POLICY ANALYSIS: EXAMPLES FROM THE WORK OF PARTNER COUNTRIES WI	TH THE E	TF
5.1	Analysis in support of setting the agenda:		
5.2			
5.3	foresight through the ETF FRAME project for South Eastern Europe and Turkey Analysis in support of policy implementation: assessment of MTDs under the Riga Conclusions in Serbia		
5.4	Analysis in support of monitoring of progress and policy evaluation: the Torino Process in Ukraine		
ΔC	RONYMS		

# **INTRODUCTION**

### What is this guide about?

This guide summarises the experience of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in working with policy analysis, and provides operational guidance to its partner countries on policy analysis techniques and their use at different stages of the policy cycle. It describes a theory and practice of policy analysis that is rooted in the work of the ETF. The guide will be used to develop a range of learning opportunities for ETF stakeholders.

The guide is structured in two parts. The first part (Sections 1-4) outlines the key notions and conceptual framework of policy analysis, and the basics of its application. The second part (Section 5) describes selected ETF projects and their methodology to demonstrate how policy analysis can be applied in support of decision making at key stages of the policy cycle: agenda setting (problem identification); policy formulation; policy implementation; and policy evaluation.

### Why is this guide necessary?

### To promote the use of policy analysis in partner countries in support of policy making and learning

The guide is intended to address requests for help by professionals in partner countries (analysts, practitioners in vocational education and training (VET), administrators, etc.) who are responsible for informing decisions at different stages of the policy cycle through policy analysis.

The need for support emerges because of challenges associated with the task of informing policy making in a reliable and timely manner. Improvement in the area of VET in ETF partner countries is increasingly dominated by complex evidence and developments, the interpretation of which requires knowledge, skill, experience and conceptual clarity. In addition, the stakes associated with

the analytical findings can be high, for instance when they are formulated in support of difficult decisions, in 'uncertain environments' (ETF, 2013a), or in response to socioeconomic challenges, such as youth unemployment, migration, or resource shortages.

This guide cannot resolve the complexities and trade-offs inherent in policy making, but it can help those involved to make the best of the available evidence and policy options, and 'professionalise' (ETF, 2013a) the analytical process. The ultimate goal is to strengthen the ability of VET stakeholders to carry out systematic assessments of policy options and implementation (ETF, 2016b) and move them towards a routine use of policy analysis in decision making.

### To strengthen the quality of analytical contributions by partner countries participating in ETF activities

The activities of the ETF are also influenced by these developments. More and more of these activities encourage partner countries to shift the focus of their involvement away from mere validation of findings formulated by external experts and towards self-directed, independent production of content and authoring of project deliverables. Examples of such projects include FRAME and PRIME, the ex-ante assessments of Riga medium-term deliverables (MTDs) in countries of South Eastern Europe, and the 2016 round of the Torino Process.

Common to all these projects is that they rely on in-depth thematic consultations between national participants in VET and on analytical results prepared at national level by entities in charge of VET policy.

This guide summarises key assumptions, analytical steps and quality standards of policy analysis and offers them as a point of reference to partner countries that wish (or are required) to provide analytical input in the course of their cooperation with the ETF.





The purpose is to offer countries a clear path towards contributions that are reliable, of good quality, and ready for use. For the ETF, the benefit of this effort is the opening of a reliable channel for the proper contextualisation of priorities and analytical findings in accordance with the preferences, traditions and priorities of countries.

### Who is this guide for?

Policy analysis delivers knowledge, which has its producers, beneficiaries and contributors. These can be broadly divided into policy makers (beneficiaries), researchers and analysts (knowledge producers) and stakeholders such as education practitioners, parents and local administrations (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017), who can be beneficiaries, but also contributors of information and insights for the analysis.

In the realm of policy making and implementation, these roles can (and often do) overlap. Policy makers might be deeply involved and might steer or manage the production of analytical knowledge. Analysts might influence policy decisions in ways that makes them the de-facto decision makers. Stakeholders might be a source of vital information for the analysis, or they might have commissioned it themselves and also directly participate in the formulation and validation of its findings.

This guide serves the capacity-building needs of them all, albeit to a varying extent. Its primary audience is the knowledge producers – those in charge of delivering analytical evidence and insight into what has been done and achieved, what could be done next, and how it could be done better. The guide provides them with suggestions on how to make the analysis better and more reliable.

This information could also be relevant for the beneficiaries of analysis, to the extent that they are also the ones responsible for the quality of analytical deliverables. Finally, stakeholders might use this guide as a point of reference on the modalities of involvement in the analytical process.



# A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK **FOR POLICY ANALYSIS**

## 2.1 **KEY NOTIONS**



In its modern form, policy analysis emerged in the 1960s as a product of economic and reconstruction planning for Europe after World War II (Walt and Gilson, 1994), but its roots date back to the 1940s or even earlier. Initially conceived as a way to improve health policies and deal with water resource problems, it has been extended to a number of other public sectors, including education and training (Healey, 2011).

After years of application in the public domain, policy analysis has evolved into a diversified and heterogeneous field with numerous analytical perspectives and frameworks (ETF, 2013a). Describing them in detail is beyond the scope of this guide. Instead, the following sub-sections offer a compilation of notions that are fundamental enough to apply across the board of analytical approaches, and are key to the use of the guide. The compilation might also provide useful guidance for those readers who wish to follow up and gain a deeper knowledge by working on their own with the literature on policy analysis.

### 'Policy'

Policy can be defined as a 'purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors' (Anderson, 1975; ETF, 2013a).

In theoretical terms, it is a process with distinctive (differentiated) stages, each with an activity that enables the next stage, the results of which feed back into the process (Lasswell, 1963). These stages aim to address an issue (programme, problem)

in a systematic way by defining it, developing solutions, implementing the solutions and evaluating the results (Anderson, 1975; Nakamura, 1987; Tewdwr-Jones, 2002).

This process-oriented view implies that the notion of policy goes beyond planning and commitments in laws and strategies to include the implementation of plans and the evaluation of results. In this sense, public policies are one of the main means through which order is established in societies and systems are governed (ETF, 2013a).

### 'Policy analysis'

Policy analysis is the process of systematic investigation of the implementation and impact of existing policy (ex-post analysis), and of options for new policy (ex-ante analysis) (Weimer and Vining, 1999; European Commission, 2004; European Commission, 2014). The ex-post and ex-ante analyses can be complementary and can be (and often are) applied together. The purpose of policy analysis is to facilitate the choice of sound policy with a view to improvement (Ukeles, 1977). It is important to note that policy analysis is not a one-off tool, but a way or culture of handling tasks at all stages of the policy cycle.

The notion of policy analysis is shaped not only by the choice of time (before or after a policy has been implemented), but also by the choice of focus and associated level of detail.



- Policy analysis could be a tool for solving smaller-scale, technical questions, for instance those related to assessing the costs and benefits of actions within a project. This is known as the 'analycentric' approach (Schick, 1977).
- The impact of policy could also be analysed by focusing on a somewhat bigger picture, namely on (policy) processes and stakeholder involvement, by assessing how a change in the power and influence of stakeholder groups might help to implement a policy option (process approach) (Springate-Baginski and Soussan, 2002; Islamy, 2008).
- Finally, policy analysis could be used on the macro-scale to assess how structural factors and the socioeconomic context impact the design and implementation of policies (meta-policy approach) (ETF, 2013a).

In reality, policy analysis usually features a mix of all three levels and focuses on detail, as well as on processes and stakeholders, and on the macro-context of policies.

BOX 1. EXAMPLES OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE

Analytical approaches also find application in the area of project evaluation, but this is not within the focus of this guide.

### 'Evidence'

Evidence<sup>1</sup> can be any piece of quantitative or qualitative information, the source of which is stated and can be independently verified.

### Types of evidence: quantitative and qualitative

Quantitative evidence is objective information about the real world that is mostly expressed in numbers. Qualitative evidence could also be expressed in numbers, but in essence it is mostly a narrative about the qualities of the object of study, and may include subjective information, opinions or judgements about an issue (ETF, 2013b). At times, the distinction between the two types of evidence can appear blurred. Quantitative evidence can be expressed subjectively and qualitative evidence can also be objective. Whatever the type of evidence, it is important to keep track of its sources to allow the user of the analysis to trace back and understand its origins, if need be.





### Quantitative

'Enrolment in our VET school has been declining by 5% annually since 2005.'

'On a scale of 1 to 5, I think that our school scores 3 in terms of attractiveness for students. Some years ago, it would have scored 5.'

### Qualitative

Yes, I have been a teacher at this VET school since 2005.'

'I believe that our VET school is in trouble and might soon be merged with the neighbouring one.'

Source: based on Hodgson (2010).

**Objective** 

**Subjective** 

### Form of evidence: indicators and descriptors

In formal terms, evidence can come in the form of indicators, defined as 'an aggregation of raw or processed data that helps ... to quantify the phenomenon under study and a tool that helps ... to grasp complex realities'. Alternatively, it can be presented in the form of descriptive information, such as case studies, observations, reports, or protocols from focus groups (ETF, 2013b).

### Use of evidence: direct, indirect, negative

In terms of the ways in which evidence is used to answer questions that guide the analysis, the evidence can be direct, indirect (contextual) or negative (Mills, 2011).

Evidence that is directly related to the issues under investigation and offers a direct answer to the specific questions of the analysis is direct evidence.

In other contexts, most of the evidence used in the analysis, while relevant, will probably not be directly related to the issue at hand but to selected aspects of it, and must therefore be combined with other pieces of information before the analysis can lead to a conclusion. Such evidence is indirect, and might inform about the context, help with the interpretation of the direct evidence, etc.

Finally, the absence of evidence for a phenomenon might indicate that the phenomenon does not exist, and this in itself is evidence. Such evidence is called negative evidence.

### BOX 2. EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE USE: DIRECT, INDIRECT AND NEGATIVE

### **Direct and indirect evidence**

Evidence is not direct or indirect per se. It is the way it is used in a particular analytical task that makes it one or the other in the context of that task.

Take statistics on unemployment, for example. If the analysis uses data on unemployment to support conclusions about the labour market situation in a country, the data is used as direct evidence: evidence directly related to the guiding question of the analysis.

If the analysis has a broader focus on the relevance of skills acquired by graduates from initial VET (IVET), their unemployment rate might be used as indirect evidence. In this case, it is indirect because that indicator has been designed to measure another phenomenon (unemployment), and its use for a different purpose (in this case, for conclusions about the relevance of VET) requires the analyst to make assumptions and establish causality. The relevance of VET is only one of many possible explanations for the ease or difficulty with which VET graduates find a job (other possible reasons being lack of mobility, desire to continue to higher education, declining economic growth, etc.). The use of unemployment statistics to corroborate conclusions about that calls for additional explanation.





### **Negative evidence**

In one of his short stories, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tells how Sherlock Holmes solves the mystery of a murder around a famous stolen racehorse. On the night of the murder, the guard dog did not bark, which leads Holmes to conclude that the dog must have known the murderer. The story about the dog that did not bark is about what is known as a 'negative fact' – evidence that is expected to be there to corroborate a statement, but it is missing (negative evidence).

One could imagine a situation – in an annual report or workshop discussions, for instance – in which participants claim that certain VET providers in a particular region of a country offer first-class career guidance or competitive adult education courses in IT. However, recent site visits and desk research fail to deliver evidence of career guidance services in any of those schools, and none of them has IT equipment suitable for training. The absence of evidence can corroborate analytical conclusions about gaps between planning and implementation of policies, weaknesses in monitoring at school level, or problems with corruption. If the analysis refers to the absence of evidence to corroborate some of the analytical findings ('the dog that did not bark'), it uses negative evidence.

When the evidence used in the analysis is available from different sources and is of different types, ideally it should render comparable results and support the same conclusions. If this proves not to be the case, it might indicate that it is necessary to revisit the analysis and its findings.

### 'Finding'

A finding is a statement that presents the final result of evidence analysis.

Every finding is a statement, but not all statements qualify as findings. For a statement to be an analytical finding, it must provide an interpretation (explanation) of evidence provided in the analysis, and identify an issue that can and should be addressed through a policy decision.

A finding could be, for instance, a problem that needs a solution, a new development that creates opportunity for improvement, or a statistical trend that invites further research. Common to all findings is that, if left unaddressed, they lead to a missed opportunity for improvement.

### '(Policy) recommendation'

In general, recommendations are actions proposed on the basis of the analytical findings and aim to prevent a problem, solve a problem, benefit from an opportunity, prepare for future developments, etc.

Policy recommendations are pieces of policy advice to recipients who have authority to make decisions. They are inseparable from the analytical findings and suggest an option for action. In this sense, they are among the key means through which policy decisions are made.





# 2.2 THE ANALYTICAL PROCESS



### The analytical approach

Whether applied for ex-post or ex-ante purposes, the target of policy analysis is technically the same: to break an issue into 'simpler elements' to better understand the underlying details. These details can be a logical structure, basic principles or any other elements (Blackburn, 1996; Beaney, 2016) – anything that can help to understand and explain the issue under consideration, and find ways to influence it for the better.

The breaking of issues into smaller pieces (Beaney, 2016) and the use of results takes place in different steps, which are arranged in a sequence. Depending on how the analysis is conceptualised, the sequence of steps may vary, but in all analytical approaches the first step is to declare the primary focus of analysis; this is followed by a discussion of the problem at hand (Frey, 2011; ETF, 2013a), and then by the framing of solutions for that problem (ETF, 2013a).

The choice of steps in the analytical process may depend on such factors as the conceptual framework, the time available, the profile of participants in the analysis and the target audience. The ETF has settled on a compact but efficient selection, which has been tried and proven in multiple ETF projects. These steps are: framing the issue; collecting and describing evidence; interpreting evidence; and formulating recommendations (see also Figure 4). These steps are valid for the entire range of analytical applications, from ex-post evaluation of completed or ongoing policy actions to the assessment of options for future action, and are described in the following section.

### Steps in the analytical process

### Step 1: Framing and understanding the problem

'Well-defined problems lead to breakthrough solutions' (Spradlin, 2012). Even with less ambitious goals, the careful definition of the issue in focus – identify the problem at hand, recognise it, and define it (ETF, 2013a) – should be the very first step of any analytical exercise. This helps not only to frame the starting point of analysis, but also to gain clarity about what evidence is needed, which policies need to be analysed, and who are the parties concerned that need to be involved.

The questions at this first step in the analytical process can be framed in different ways depending on the purpose, but they are always aimed at understanding what the issue in focus is, what has an influence on it, and who is involved.

Imagine, for example, that a novel policy programme on the inclusion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in IVET is nearing its completion, and that the authorities of a partner country are debating whether to allocate resources to its continuation, or to try to find new and possibly better ways to tackle the problem. The first step is to understand the issue at hand, which means to establish how the project has delivered against certain criteria. These might include achievement benchmarks defined at the start of the programme, custom evaluation criteria, or generic criteria that stem from well-established sources, such as the Development Assistance



Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and that consider the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of deliverables (OECD, 2000). The results of this evaluation are the first step in a broader analytical task of understanding the problem – whether or not the programme has delivered, and why – and from there, what might have influenced its outcomes and what should be done next.

Examples from other countries might include problems that have not yet been addressed, so that stakeholders and decision makers require evidence and analytical guidance on how to design policies that are yet to come. This ex-ante application of policy analysis also starts with a proper framing of the problem. Table 1 presents a selection of typical guiding questions at this stage of analysis, taken from recent and now completed ETF projects that relied on analytical input from partner countries.

Guide to Policy Analysis

TABLE 1. EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS AND TASKS GUIDING THE FRAMING OF AN ISSUE OR A PROBLEM

ETF project	Stage	Frames the issue from the outset?	Questions and tasks
FRAME	First stage (foresight)	Yes	<ul> <li>&gt; Strategic review of a national,</li> <li>regional or sectoral system</li> <li>&gt; Identifying priorities</li> </ul>
PRIME	First stage (problem analysis)	Yes	<ul> <li>&gt; What is the problem?</li> <li>&gt; What is causing the problem?</li> <li>&gt; What is the context in which the problem occurs?</li> <li>&gt; Who is affected by the problem?</li> </ul>
Riga MTDs ex-ante	First stage (background analysis)	Yes	<ul><li>Define what is the problem</li><li>What has been done so far, and how?</li><li>What policies and laws are in place?</li><li>Who is involved?</li></ul>
Torino Process	First stage (formulation of responses around issues)	Yes	<ul><li>&gt; What are the main findings per question?</li><li>&gt; What are the main findings per building block?</li></ul>

Sources: ETF (2014b), ETF (2016a) and ETF (forthcoming).

The proper framing of the problem is a significant first step, irrespective of whether the analysis targets new problems or existing policies, with one important difference. When analysing existing policies, the initial focus is narrower than with the analysis of new problems and solutions, as it is limited by the declared intention of the policies to be analysed, and by their milestones and benchmarks of achievement.

In both cases – existing and new policies to be analysed – the policy challenges can be too complex to be treated and understood as one single problem, so the choice of one perspective over others is sometimes the only way ahead. This is called the 'framing' of a problem. It means to narrow and pinpoint only some aspects or parts of an issue, for instance those that need to be understood and addressed first. There are different ways to achieve this, for instance by purposely shifting perspectives when looking at the problem until the parties involved in the analysis settle on one that seems right to start with (Figure 1).



FIGURE 1.
FRAMING THE PROBLEM BY SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

### **Time shift**

Weeks Ago 

Today 

Months from Now

People shift

Insider Frame 

My Frame 

Outsider Frame

Source: Williams (2014)

The framing of the problem matters for the final outcomes (results) of the analysis because it has an influence on them. Depending on the perspective, the same problem can be framed in different, complementary ways. In any case, different definitions lead to different solutions (Smith, 2005). For example, many partner countries are confronted with youth unemployment, a problem that is commonly perpetuated by numerous factors and could be tackled from various angles. The framing of the problem could start with the insight that a VET degree creates easier access to better paid jobs than a higher education degree,

and continue with another insight – that students nevertheless continue to enrol in higher education and ignore the opportunities offered through VET. Why do young people, despite being aware of their prospects, continue choosing this path? The choice of starting point and questions predefines the approach to the problem, in this case of youth unemployment, by putting VET attractiveness at the centre of considerations. This influences not only the perspective under which the analysis will be carried out, but also the solutions that will be offered

### Step 2: Collecting and describing the evidence

Step 2 in the analytical process comprises the **collection** and **description** of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

The collection of evidence is guided by three considerations – availability, relevance and reliability.

In some ways, the question of relevance comes first. Step 2 commences with a simple question: what is it that we wish to know? This, of course, depends on the results of Step 1 – how the problem has been framed, what factors that influence the problem have been identified, and what the resulting objectives and questions are that require an in-depth investigation. Relevance is about identifying what information provides the answers we seek (ETF, 2013b).

Step 2 is iterative. This means that the work with evidence at this step and the next (Step 3: interpretation – see the following sub-section) might lead to a revision of the initial selection of indicators and sources of information (ETF, 2013b), and to one or more rounds of adjustment until the selection is sufficiently relevant for the analysis.

Regarding availability, sometimes what we wish to know, or should know, might not have been measured or observed, because of cost, the complexity of the issue under consideration, the timing of data collection, or other reasons. In its analytical practice, the ETF is often confronted with either issues that are too new to be measured directly, or issues for which partner countries are not collecting reliable data, or not collecting it at all. Even where available, the evidence on VET might not be comparable between countries (ETF, 2013b).

Where direct evidence is not available, it is permissible to use substitutes (proxies)<sup>2</sup>. These could comprise indirect quantitative evidence, provided that a link between the phenomenon under analysis and the alternative indicators can be established and explained.

When deciding on how to manage questions of evidence availability, it is important to remember that evidence is not limited to quantitative information. Qualitative evidence also serves analytical purposes, and in most cases it can be obtained with relative ease in the form of outcomes from consultations with purposely selected stakeholder groups. Such consultations might take the form of interviews, focus groups, workshops, etc. (ETF, 2016b).





### BOX 3. TWO SOURCES OF QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE FREQUENTLY USED IN ETF PRACTICE

### Site visits

Site visits are a highly adaptable format of inquiry, the direction of which is adjustable in real time in response to information received by interview participants.

Site visits can be a valuable source of guidance on how to contextualise the statistical, narrative (third-party reports) and anecdotal evidence concerning the questions covered in the policy analysis.

Notwithstanding their obvious advantages, site visits can (and should) never be used as a substitute for statistical evidence. The legitimacy and credibility of information is derived from a proper documentation of interview results and a selection of places and interview participants, reflecting the national context in which policies are designed and implemented, to the extent possible. For example, for the regional dimension of Torino Process reporting in 2016 in Ukraine, a geographically vast country marked by regional disparities and problematic decentralisation arrangements, the initial criteria under consideration for the selection of interlocutors and institutions were:

- · geographical distribution of regions to be visited;
- balance of interlocutors coming from the capital, major regional cities and smaller regional cities;
- · regions with different levels of economic development;
- urban and rural providers;

- · well-performing and poorly performing institutions;
- · VET providers of all major types;
- all groups of education participants and stakeholders;
- · various levels of governance (central, regional, local);
- adjacent sectors, where relevant (e.g. employers);
- · international partners;
- · civil society representatives (e.g. students).

### Focus groups

Focus groups are a form of qualitative research that can help to collect information from a specific selection of institutions and groups of individuals directly affected by the issue under analysis or by the policies planned to address it, and/or those in charge of designing and implementing those policies. It is more meaningful to prepare focus groups once the analysis has already revealed what is missing in terms of evidence or areas in which a (deeper) contextual understanding might be of benefit.

Recent examples of ETF-led focus groups include the PRIME project (Projecting Reform Impact in Education and VET) in Jordan, in which focus groups with unemployed women (young graduates, recently married women, and economically non-active women) revealed previously unrecorded cultural and socioeconomic factors, which helped to shed light on their difficulties in starting a business, and the ongoing quality assurance focus group and peer-learning activity for the South Eastern Europe and Turkey, and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean regions.





Finally, if evidence is to play the crucial role in policy analysis that numerous publications assert it should, it must be not only relevant, but also reliable. The reliability of evidence is discussed at length in a dedicated ETF publication (ETF, 2013b), which is recommended reading.

This guide assumes that the reader is already familiar with basic concepts around evidence and evidence reliability, such as 'data', 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' indicators, 'data sources' and 'process indicators'. It is important to note that the reliability of evidence must be not only safeguarded, but also made demonstrable by stating a source of evidence that can be independently verified.

Once the evidence is collected, it must be described before it can be interpreted. Indeed, before one can gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through answers to the question 'why?', one must know 'what' is happening (ETF, 2013b). The description of evidence helps those involved to understand the empirical base of analysis, and ensures that everyone has the same reading of the collected facts.

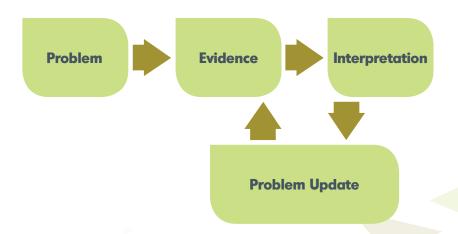
### Step 3: Interpreting (analysing) the evidence

The third step in the analytical process is about preparing the **findings** of analysis.

The findings are messages formulated by interpreting the evidence. They are prepared in response to questions raised during the problem analysis in Step 1. The findings can form the basis of conclusions and recommendations, or can trigger a reassessment of the problem in the light of new insights, help to fine-tune the selection of evidence, and adjust the overall interpretation (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2.

INTERPRETATION OF EVIDENCE AND PROBLEM UPDATE



What is the 'right' way to interpret (analyse) evidence?
There is no failsafe formula for conducting a correct interpretation.
The act of analysing will always remain somewhat of a black box, the internal workings of which are not obvious, and which is judged mostly by the quality of its output. As a rule of thumb, however, the analysis must achieve at least three things.

- 1. It must aim to deliver responses to the problem-related questions formulated in Step 1.
- 2. It must keep these responses limited to what can be corroborated with the evidence described.
- 3. It should include a reassessment of the initial framing of the problem in order to confirm it, or complement it with new insights.

Perhaps the most difficult distinction to keep in mind in the analytical process is the one between description and interpretation of evidence. The description of evidence should precede its interpretation. Without a description, the analysis runs the risk of





delivering results that are difficult to comprehend and easy to refute. In other words, the interpretation of evidence must contain a description of the evidence.

However, the description of evidence should not contain any interpretation. It should be neutral, a basis for further analytical work.

If the description is 'contaminated' with (premature) judgements, the analysis might become biased and its results might lose credibility.

Table 2 summarises some of the distinctions between descriptive and analytical writing that might help the authors of analysis to keep the two apart.



### TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE AND ANALYTICAL WRITING - A COMPARISON

Descriptive writing	Analytical writing	
States what happened	Identifies the significance	
States what something is like	Evaluates (judges the value of) strengths and weaknesses	
Gives the story so far	Weighs one piece of information against another	
States the order in which things happened	Makes reasoned judgements	
Says how to do something	Argues a case according to evidence	
Explains what a theory says	Shows why something is relevant or suitable	
Explains how something works	Indicates why something will work (best)	
Notes the method used	Indicates whether something is appropriate or suitable	
Says when something occurred	Identifies why the timing is important	
States the different components	Weighs up the importance of component parts	
States options	Gives reasons for the selection of each option	
Lists details	Evaluates the relative significance of details	
Lists in any order	Structures information in order of importance [etc.]	
States links between items	Shows the relevance of links between pieces of information	
Gives information	Draws conclusions	

Source: based on Cottrell (2011) and University of Plymouth (2010).

### BOX 4. DESCRIPTION VERSUS INTERPRETATION OF EVIDENCE: AN EXAMPLE

The example in this box shows school enrolment by gender in a hypothetical country for the period 2005–10, as well as the corresponding gross enrolment rate, again by gender.

	Enrolment			
School year	Total	Boys	Boys	% girls
2005/06	301 218	208 634	92 584	30.7
2006/07	346 907	237 456	109 351	31.5
2007/08	359 406	246 156	113 250	31.5
2008/09	421 869	289 092	133 777	31.7
2009/10	471 792	317 654	154 138	32.7

Source: ETF (2013b).

A **description** of evidence is limited to the following three points.

Clarification about which indicators are shown
 In this example, these are enrolment in school education by gender and school year, and enrolment of girls as share of total enrolment by school year for the period 2005–2009.

### Description of the data for each indicator

For example, a description based on the table in this box would say that a total of 346 907 students were enrolled in 2006/07, of whom 109 351, or 31.5% of the total, were girls, etc.

### · Identification of highlights (if any)

Highlights could be outlier values that the author considers are sufficiently different (higher, lower, etc.) to be worth mentioning, or data that will be subsequently used in the analysis. For instance, the table invites an observation that enrolment grew considerably between 2005 and 2009, from 301 218 to 471 792 students, and that the increase was greater for girls (by 66% since 2005) than for boys (by 52% in the same period).

An **interpretation** of the evidence shown in this table would go further than that, for example by focusing on the highlight from the final bullet point. It could enrich that highlight with additional data or information from site visits, or help contextualise the facts, establish causality and draw conclusions. It could also put the seemingly impressive increase in female enrolment into perspective with the help of demographic data that shows how, in the same period, the age cohort of girls has also grown. This would suggest that despite more girls enrolling than ever before, in 2009 a smaller share of the girls in school age had access to education than in 2005. Information from site visits and focus groups could help readers to understand the context of this phenomenon, revealing that most of those who are disadvantaged in terms of access are girls who live in rural areas.





### Step 4: Formulating recommendations and outlining the options

The fourth and final step in the analytical process is devoted to the formulation of recommendations for action. There is no predefined structure for the recommendations, but the following are prerequisites.

- A recommendation must formulate a proposal on how to address the findings. The recommendation might otherwise be deemed incomplete.
- It must explain how the recommended actions matter for the findings. The recommendation might otherwise be considered irrelevant. One way to hedge against this is to outline the theory of change – how and why will the change happen if the recommended actions are implemented.
- It must assign responsibilities for implementation.
   The recommendation might otherwise be ignored.
- If possible, a recommendation must outline the risks that could lead to failure.

Good analytical documents and their recommendations share certain features. Firstly, the recommendations in such documents tend to be **concise**. Indeed, if the primary audience of analytical results are decision makers, they are likely to have limited time to read the outcomes. Conciseness can also be considered during editing the final product: it should not necessarily be the primary concern during the initial formulation of recommendations.

Secondly, recommendations should be **understandable**. Even the most complex of issues must be broken down to proposals for action that are comprehensible, and based on clear and readable ideas.

Finally, recommendations should be **precise**. Those that are too general and that are without a clear focus or a link to the problem will be difficult to implement, and might discredit the rest of the analysis.

The following section provides more detail on recommendations as an aspect of quality of policy analysis.





# 2.3 CONNECTING THE DOTS: GUIDANCE FOR GOOD QUALITY ANALYSIS

# Guide to Policy Analysis

### From findings to messages

Good quality analysis can be defined as analysis that delivers reliable and detailed (Patton and Sawicki, 2016) findings, and recommendations that lead to demonstrable improvement.

This guide has outlined some of the elements of good analysis. It notes, for instance, that each of the four steps in the analytical process ends with a specific deliverable: Step 1 with an outline of the problem, Step 2 with a repository of evidence, Step 3 with a series of findings, and Step 4 with a collection of policy recommendations. It also underlines that it is important to invest every effort in securing the best possible quality of output for each of these steps.

What also matters is how well the analytical work manages to **produce** and **connect** the analytical deliverables that are needed at each of these steps into a single, convincing and well-founded **narrative**. The recommendations should follow from the findings, the findings must be based on evidence, and the evidence

selected must be meaningful for the problem or opportunity under discussion. If one of these links fails, it jeopardises both the reliability of the analysis and the accuracy and impact of recommended actions. In fact, lower-quality analysis tends to take 'shortcuts' by failing to provide deliverables at some of the analytical stages, or by not linking deliverables to each other.

Figure 3 illustrates this point by showing typical failures in analytical coherence with respect to connections. In analysis scenario 1 in Figure 3, a good problem outline and possibly reliable evidence have not been used to formulate findings, and the analytical narrative has taken a shortcut to recommendations without justifying the proposed actions through corresponding findings. In scenario 2 in the same figure, a possibly good-quality analysis based on reliable data concludes without recommending what can be done about the findings. In scenario 3, the recommendations are 'parachuted' without any connection to the preceding problem description and policy analysis results. Finally, in scenario 5 of Figure 3, the analytical report misses its starting point, the problem description (issue definition).



FIGURE 3.

CONNECTING THE DOTS: EXAMPLES OF INCOMPLETE ANALYTICAL NARRATIVES



	1	2	3	4	5
Problem outline (Step 1)	V	V	No issue	V	No issue
Evidence and Findings (Steps 2 and 3)	No finding	V	No finding	V	V
Recommendations (Step 4)	V	No recomm	V	V	V

Analysis scenario 4 is the only one that has all the necessary connections and elements in place. Box 5 features examples of analytical narratives that link and those that fail to link the analytical steps into a coherent and convincing narrative.

### BOX 5. EXAMPLES OF COMPLETE AND INCOMPLETE ANALYTICAL NARRATIVES

The example provided in Box 4 presents data on the school enrolment of boys and girls in a hypothetical country between 2005 and 2009. In that country, enrolment in absolute numbers increased for both girls and boys, but due to a continuing increase in the female birth rate, the overall share of school-age girls in education was declining. Site visits to regions of the country revealed possible reasons. It emerged that schools in urban areas experience capacity shortages and, when forced to choose, give preference to boys. In rural areas, focus groups with families revealed that parents did not consider it necessary for their daughters to attend school after completing lower secondary education.

Reports by donors and the strategy department of the Council for the Protection of the Rights of Young People of the country have recently identified a persistent gender bias in the way education and training authorities are safeguarding the rights of children to education. There are calls from civil society, supported by a newly appointed Minister of Education and Youth, to take action that will bring about tangible results.

Below are samples of possible analysis scenarios that try to describe and understand this situation and propose options for action. The samples reflect the different analytical narratives presented in Figure 3. They differ in the extent to which they manage to identify the problem (Step 1), use evidence and extract findings from it (Step 2), propose options for action (Step 3), and connect all three in a coherent whole. While it is unlikely that in a real-life environment an analytical deliverable will exhibit shortcomings that are so clear-cut, the samples help to illustrate shortcomings that might emerge when moving from findings to messages.

Scenario 1. The analysis in scenario 1 of Figure 3 is missing evidence and findings. The analysis in this scenario reiterates third-party reports that describe the gender bias, and claims that the challenge that needs to be addressed is in rural areas, where culture and tradition are sustaining the problem. Without further detail to prove the claim, it then moves on to providing generic suggestions for action around awareness raising and arguments for the importance of access to education for girls from possibly disadvantaged backgrounds, and quotes from international conventions that concern children rights.

Scenario 2. Scenario 2 in Figure 3 is missing recommendations for action. The analysis in scenario 2 opens with a similar starting point to scenario 1, noting that the gender bias is sustained primarily through problems with access in rural regions of the country. It moves on to provide detailed evidence of gender-based disparities in access to education per region, breaks down the data by age group to determine that girls 'disappear' from school mostly after completing lower secondary education, and determines that families living in the south of the country, in particular certain minority groups, are more likely than others to stop their daughters from going to school. The analysis concludes with a general statement that the evidence calls for 'urgent action', as underlined by the minister.

**Scenario 3.** Scenario 3 is the most incomplete of all scenarios. It opens with a quote from a speech by the minister and a list of references to reports by civil society organisations about the gender gap in general, and jumps to a long and detailed overview of actions that

need to be undertaken to address the problem. Some of the recommendations are generic, others go into detail, and some appear quite promising to the extent that they are directed at the most affected groups and regions. The main problem is that, owing to the absence of evidence and findings, neither the beneficiaries of analysis nor the authors themselves can 'separate the wheat from the chaff' and identify the most promising options for action.

**Scenario 4.** Scenario 4 features all the necessary elements of analysis: problem outline, evidence and findings, and recommendations. After an opening reference to the call for action by the authorities, the analysis quotes the discussion results from a working group, which suggested that that the reasons for the problem might be different in urban and rural areas. It investigates the capacity of urban schools, quoting statistical evidence showing that these are all overloaded, and focus group results suggesting that they give preference to males. It arrives at the same conclusions as scenario 2 about the role of socioeconomic factors in rural areas, and quotes similar evidence. Finally, it concludes with a set of separate recommendations for authorities in urban and rural areas: to change the ways in which school planning in urban areas works and reform the system of admission to schooling, and to design a package of incentives, combined with awareness-raising campaigns, for families in rural areas.

**Scenario 5.** Finally, scenario 5 is comprehensive in the way it uses evidence about the gender gap in the country and connects recommendations to its analytical findings. However, owing to the overabundance of evidence, findings and recommendations, it reads like a random catalogue of statistics and action proposals, without reference to the bigger picture or an indication of a higher objective at which the recommendations are aiming.





It is important to note that the completeness of analysis scenario 4 in Figure 3 and Box 5 is based not on the retention of the sequence of steps, but on the fact that all elements are in place and linked into a coherent whole in a way that allows the reader/user to identify which findings the recommendations address and what the supporting evidence is, and to trace the recommendations back to the specific aspect of the problem that they are supposed to solve. The analytical stages do not always have to unfold in the strict sequence in which they are presented in this guide. For example, the analytical process might go forward and back, and those involved might formulate recommendations, only to realise that the problem analysis needs to be supplemented in the light of new findings, or that the evidence needs updating, or that other action is required. What matters is not the strict order in which the steps are implemented, but the coherence and completeness of the result.

### Outsourcing key stages of the analytical process: benefits and examples

Not only is a good analytical narrative complete, it also relies on good-quality deliverables at each stage of the analytical process: accurate (or at least workable) framing of the problem, a good selection of reliable evidence, convincing analysis and accurate findings, and feasible, targeted recommendations. Naturally, achieving all this is sometimes easier said than done. Problems can be too complex to understand, or they might concern sensitive issues; evidence might not be sufficient for proper analysis, or its interpretation might be plagued by ambiguities; and the recommendations might comprise options to choose from that are far from optimal.

Partly in response to such challenges, countries sometimes opt for collective outsourcing of work at key stages of the analytical process, mostly evidence collection and description (Step 2), but sometimes also its analysis (Step 3), and agree on strict common standards of quality and reliability to justify subsequent conclusions and decisions they take at national level. A well-known example of such collective outsourcing is the OECD's Indicators of National Education Systems (INES) Programme (OECD, 2102) and its annual publication 'Education at a Glance', the data from which the participating countries regularly use for analytical and policy decision purposes. Another example is EUROSTAT, which provides EU Member States with a selection of indicators for analytical purposes (including on education and training) on a regular basis<sup>3</sup>. Finally, some large-scale evidence-collection activities, such as the OECD's triannual Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), not only collect data, but also prepare standard pieces of analysis of this data (but without venturing into Step 4 formulation of policy recommendations). For years now, the PISA analysis has covered specific themes. In 2012 these were quality, equity, student engagement, system context, creative problem solving and financial literacy<sup>4</sup>.

Such collectively gathered and managed repositories of data and 'off-the-shelf', ready-to-use pieces of analysis are usually broader than the focus of analytical tasks, which is typically limited to one problem at a time. Hence, they do not replace the need to choose relevant information from the collective repository, and to use it wisely for the formulation of recommendations and options for policy action. However, such repositories are unrivalled in terms of securing quality and reliability, but also the credibility of analysis that is based on the outsourced deliverables.

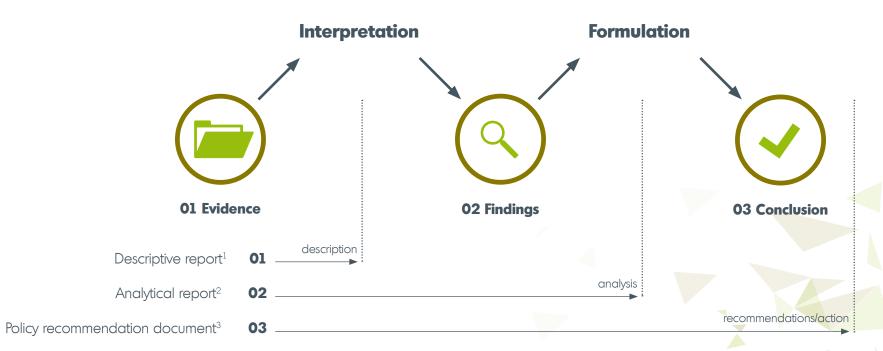




<sup>4</sup>PISA Reports: Volume 1 (quality), Volume 2 (equity), Volume 3 (student engagement), Volume 4 (system context), and Volume 5 (trends in performance). See section 'Full reports and data' at www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm

FIGURE 4. STAGES OF THE ANALYTICAL PROCESS AND DELIVERABLES





### Notes:

- 1. This deliverable can be outsourced. Typical examples of descriptive reports are the OECD's 'Education at a Glance', Eurostat's regular publication 'Data for short-term economic analysis', and the ETF's 'Key Indicators' publication.
- 2. This deliverable can be outsourced. Examples of collectively outsourced analytical reports are the PISA thematic reports.
- 3. This deliverable is not usually outsourced. Policy recommendations are commonly prepared nationally by the author/owner of analysis.



# 3.1 'REALITY CHECK' AND CONSULTATIONS

Guide to
Policy Analysis

Policy processes and their outcomes depend on the people and institutions involved, especially on those who have a stake in the results (ETF, 2012; ETF, 2013a). The dynamics of their involvement is well described by the metaphor of 'networks' (Dowding, 2000; ETF, 2013a) – groups of participating individuals, the interactions and characteristics of which can shape, and even dominate, policies and policy outcomes (ETF, 2013a).

In general, the specific influence that networks of participants/ stakeholders have on a given policy depends on factors such as who is participating in the network, the interactions between network members, including the flow of information, the connections between members, and the priorities of participants and how they align with those of the policy process.

Without a good understanding of the interpersonal, and in particular the professional and institutional, dynamics and interdependence between the people and entities (networks) involved, policy analysis runs the risk of **drifting away from reality** and thus of **failing to factor in the context** in which policy recommendations will be, or have been, implemented. The stakeholder perspective is, indeed, a key element in this respect (ETF, 2012), and one that should be taken into consideration in at least three steps of the analytical process: the framing of the problem (Step 1), the interpretation of evidence (Step 3) and the formulation of recommendations (Step 4).

To facilitate this task at some or all of these three stages of the analytical process, the ETF uses an approach that can be called a 'consultative analysis' – structured, moderated consultations between and within stakeholder group(s) and network(s) comprising a representative mix of participation roles in the VET system: administrators, teachers and trainers, students, parents, etc. The assumption is that the cumulative expertise of a heterogeneous group of practitioners and beneficiaries will be a valuable source of potential solutions, but also that this expertise is likely to be fragmented and requires mobilisation and moderation.

The group discussions can be structured around main deliverables, problem formulation, evidence interpretation and recommendations in a way that transforms the knowledge and experience of participants into a 'collective analytical potential' for the formation of judgements and preparation of policy decisions (ETF, 2016c). The result is a reality check at key stages of the analytical process, performed jointly by those in charge of deciding on policies and those having stakes in their design and implementation.



### BOX 6. SAMPLE FROM GUIDANCE FOR A CONSULTATIVE ANALYSIS SESSION ON OPTIMISATION OF THE VET PROVIDER NETWORK IN UKRAINE

The purpose of the workshop is to help participants produce scenarios for policy action – action that uses the opportunities offered by the new Law on Higher Education and the latest developments in the area of VET that this Law has triggered. The meeting is expected to end with up to three scenarios for action.

The scenario building takes place in two steps.

Step 1 is devoted to setting the parameters (categories) of policy action, such as focus and scope.

Step 2 is devoted to designing policy action that fits these parameters.

The two-step approach was chosen because it can help to structure and focus the discussion and produce concise, well-founded, comprehensive proposals for the authorities that are owned and supported by all stakeholders.

Step 1 (Day 1): Description of the categories for action In the first step the task is to define the action which will guide the scenario building on Day 2. Actions are determined by two elements: the policy area in which they take place, and responses to some guiding questions.

Examples of policy areas include: funding, staff policies, and legislative framework.

The guiding questions are:

- · What are the **objectives** of action in the policy area?
- · What are the **risks**?
- · What are the **principles** to be observed?

Below is an example of how **policy areas** and **guiding questions** are merged into **categories for action**.

	Policy area 1	Policy area 2	Policy area 3
Areas/ Questions	Funding	Staff policies	Legislative framework
Objectives	More autonomy to use revenues	Avoid firing of staff	Prepare a law on VET
Risks	Weaker schools might be disadvantaged	Oversized schools that are financially unsustainable	Lengthy consultations
Principles	Transparency and fairness	Fairness, including advance notice and compensation in case of firing	Comprehensiveness





Please note that the guiding questions remain the same for all policy areas.

### How to define the categories for action

The work takes place in working groups. Each working group will nominate a rapporteur. The working group rapporteurs will work together as a team throughout the workshop.

At the end of Day 1, rapporteurs are responsible for consolidating the categories produced by all working groups into one set of categories that will guide the scenario building on Day 2.

On Day 1 please do the following:

- 1. Choose the policy areas which you think should be addressed in a scenario for action. Please try to keep the number of policy areas to a minimum.
- 2. Fill in the action matrix by responding to the guiding questions for each policy area.

For example, your working group decides that funding should be one of the action categories. It should list: What are the objectives in the area of funding that the action will achieve (e.g. autonomy to allocate resources)? What are the risks that it should help to avoid (corruption, disadvantaging of schools)? What are the principles that will be sustained (fairness, transparency, etc.)?

The rapporteurs will convene at the end of the day to consolidate the output from all working groups into one

set of categories. The unified categories will guide the scenario building on Day 2.

### Step 2 (Day 2): Description of the scenarios for action

Day 2 starts with an overview of consolidated actions for the scenario-building exercise and a presentation of a sample scenario prepared by the ETF. This is followed by in-depth work in working groups on building scenarios through multi-stakeholder facilitation. The end of the day is devoted to consolidation of the scenarios into up to three options for action, and an overview of the way forward.

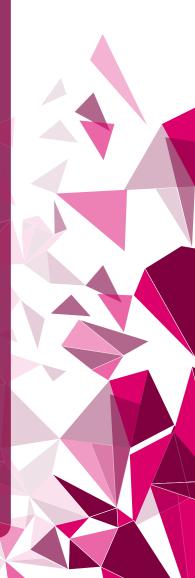
An accomplished scenario should:

- propose concrete action in all (or most) categories agreed upon on Day 1 (funding, staff policies, etc.);
- make it clear how it will
  - · achieve the objectives;
  - · minimise the risks:
  - · safeguard the principles that the group has chosen.

For example, the action in the area of funding has been defined as follows

	Policy area 1	
Areas/ Questions	Funding	
Objectives	More autonomy to use revenues	
Risks	Weaker schools might be disadvantaged	
Principles	Transparency and fairness	





To the extent possible, a scenario for action should provide detail on how you think that autonomy to use one's own revenues should be increased, rather than just stating a general wish to 'increase autonomy'. A scenario is a set of proposals on how objectives can be reached. It is aimed at convincing those who are taking decisions to take the decision that from your point of view as stakeholders will be the right one.

### How to design the scenarios for action

The work takes place in the same working groups from Day 1. You are free to choose your own way of working on this task. Considering its complexity, it might be helpful to:

- 1. start with a general description of what you want to be done;
- 2. add detail to make it relevant for each of the categories for action;
- 3. split the work on each category within your group, to save time.

Source: FTF (2016c)

# 3.2 **EVIDENCE AND COMMON SENSE**



At the beginning of each analytical task, policy analysts are likely to find themselves faced with a 'chicken-and-egg' dilemma. Which comes first, the evidence or the analysis? Without certainty about the problem in the focus of the analysis, there is no certainty about the choice of evidence. Without certainty about the evidence, there is no clarity about the problem.

The 18th-century French encyclopaedist Denis Diderot was one of the many thinkers who have pondered this question over the years. He thought that the problem stemmed from the incorrect but widespread assumption that the chicken has always been a chicken. What folly!', he wrote. An animal's past is as uncertain as its future, and a chicken could have been something else before (Fabry, 2016).

Diderot's message about the ambiguity of relationships is also relevant for the chicken-and-egg dilemma faced by analysts. Evidence can mean different things to different people at different times. Practice shows that common sense can be as valuable as hard facts, and that it is as legitimate a starting point for analysis as is the collection and pondering of large amounts of data. Consider the anecdotal, somewhat absurd example in Box 7, taken from a recent handbook on policy analysis.

### BOX 7. THE 'WICHAHISSIC BITUMINOUS COAL INDUSTRY'

"Suppose, for example, that you are asked to do a policy analysis of "the future of the Wichahissic bituminous coal industry", a subject as remote from your interest or previous experience as galactic spectros¬copy. You might take stock by writing a memo to yourself as follows:

- I was probably asked to do this study because someone thinks the future of the Wichahissic bituminous coal industry is pretty bleak or else because it is looking up.
- The future of any industry depends in part on market demand. The demand for coal has probably been declining, partly due to the availability of substitute fuels.

- Maybe high production costs imperil the health of the industry. Could it be that coal-mining technology is underdeveloped? If so, why?
- There were a lot of miners' strikes a few years ago. Are labour-management relations better or worse now? Are wage demands forcing the companies to go under?
- Coal transportation depends on railroads. So, if the railroads are sick, could coal be well?
- Coal is black and sooty, gives off a lot of smoke and has a nasty carbon footprint. Surely this is an ecological menace. [...]
- Perhaps coal is not sick, just bituminous coal. Maybe the anthracite industry is flourishing. Surely there is a trade association of coal-mining companies with data here. Call up the nearest big coal-mining company and find out its name and address from the public relations office.'

Source: Bardach (2012), p. 80

The story in Box 7 is an important reminder that working with evidence for the purpose of policy analysis is not necessarily the same as working with evidence in an academic setting, and that analysts rarely feel fully competent and informed enough from the outset. Sometimes the success and quality of analytical results depend more on the ability to make compromises, manage severe time limitations and develop an ability to identify data that can be turned into usable information and, from there, into analytical evidence.

A good way to develop this ability is to approach each analytical task and the associated evidence collection with a first outline of a 'story' in mind that this evidence and the analysis might tell, based on prior knowledge, intuition or anecdotal observations. The quotation in Box 7 is a good example. For the purposes of policy analysis, common sense and wisdom can be as valuable as the evidence itself.





### 3.3

# A WORD ON INVOLVEMENT AND OWNERSHIP

Guide to
Policy Analysis

Policy analysis is an intellectual pursuit and, as such, it is always at risk of transforming itself into a pursuit disconnected from reality. The recommendations of analysis that originates in an 'ivory tower' are less likely to be 'owned' by those to whom the recommendations are addressed. They are also less likely to have footing in national and sub-national policy and an influence on it.

The development of ownership by those addressed by the policy analysis is a task that requires an extra effort and that runs in parallel with the analytical exercise. There are various ways to achieve this goal, for instance through engagement of stakeholders and other groups concerned with the analysis.

This can be a sensitive step because if it is not done right, it can easily lead to discrimination and exclusion. Doing it 'right' might mean different things, but as a minimum, it implies that:

- those affected by the analysis are involved in the analytical exercise/process;
- those affected by the analysis are given adequate opportunity to shape that analytical process, as well as its direction and results;
- to the extent possible, the analysis links to existing national and sub-national strategic documents and priorities;
- to the extent it is relevant, the analysis proactively reaches out to groups at risk of exclusion and discrimination with regard to the topic at hand.

### 3.4

# ANALYSIS IN REAL-LIFE CONDITIONS: TYPICAL CHALLENGES

There follows an overview of some of the 'backstage' challenges that are likely to confront the analytical process in real-life conditions. These have emerged as typical challenges to evidence- and analysis-based actions in many of the ETF partner countries. None of these challenges are necessarily detrimental for the analytical outcomes, but they do require attention and appropriate responses.

### **Lack of evidence**

Even after years of supporting countries in making policy and decisions more evidence-based, this is still seen as an area of major weakness by both producers and beneficiaries of policy analysis. A key reason for this problem – in ETF partner countries and elsewhere – is the limited demand for evidence and analysis that comes from the civil service sector, as well as limited capacity on the part of decision makers to use evidence where it is available, and lack of incentives for them to do so. Consequently, lack of evidence is among the most common problems reported by countries participating in the biennial Torino Process reporting (ETF, 2015a).

The extent to which evidence for the analysis is felt to be missing depends on what evidence one is seeking. Often, it is only one specific type of information that is missing, while other types might

Guide to Policy Analysis

be readily available. If it is assumed that all evidence that can be used in policy analysis falls into two categories – evidence from documents and evidence from people (Bardach, 2012) – it is rarely the case that both sources fail to deliver.

If there is no evidence to support a particular aspect of the analysis (this is a very common scenario), then the analytical work must instead generate evidence with the help of the knowledge and insights of people concerned, through, for instance, focus groups (see Box 3), interviews or workshops. Where evidence is missing, the most detrimental course of action would be to overemphasise the importance of one type of information over another (Bardach, 2012) – for example, of data over interviews – and skip the analysis altogether on these grounds.

### 'Parachute' conclusions and decisions

In an ideal world, the analytical conclusions and policy recommendations would emerge from the analysis and would be corroborated by the evidence on which the analysis relies (Figure 3, Scenario 4). In real life, however, priorities for action might have been set in advance (parachuted) on the basis of other considerations (political, humanitarian, third-party interests, etc.), without proper evaluation and verification. Cases like this are particularly common in countries with a strong presence of



donors, donor-driven initiatives and priorities (OECD, 2003), which cash-strapped national authorities are usually quick to accept and slow to evaluate. These cases usually call for a justification of decisions after the fact.

Such situations do not mean that the ex-post analysis of problems targeted by such parachute decisions is necessarily corrupt or impossible. The main issue is that the predetermined outcomes transform the task from one of neutral analysis into one of analytical confirmation. Even so, the confirmation process needs to be credible and sound, which means that it can follow the steps described so far. Nevertheless, such situations are likely to put those in charge of analysis under pressure, affect their neutrality, and increase the risk of manipulation and bias.

### **Reverse flow**

The guidance in the preceding sections might create the impression that policy analysis is a straightforward process that unfolds in a linear fashion, with each step logically following the one before. This impression might be reinforced by the fact that, as with the outcomes of scientific research, the final deliverables of analysis (usually a publication) show only the well-prepared, mature end of a long process. They do not usually capture any of

the difficulties that might have preceded the finalisation of the analytical deliverables – the usual erring, confusion, unplanned discoveries, failures, multiple adjustments and revisions that are typical of intellectual and research endeavours, especially in the field of humanities and social sciences (Merton, 1968).

As shown in Figure 2 and confirmed by the experiences of ETF counterparts in partner countries, for instance those in charge of coordinating and drafting the national Torino Process reports in 2016, the analytical process and preparation of deliverables is rarely (if ever) a straightforward affair. The analysis might start at any of the stages described in the preceding sections, and move backwards or forwards - to the collection of additional evidence, or the projection of new findings, or the re-interpretation of information - over and over until the conclusions feel justifiable and defendable with a certain degree of confidence. In settings marked by competing priorities, missing evidence, parachute decisions and similar issues, retaining a certain degree of flexibility is sometimes the only way forward. What counts in the end is not how straightforward the process of analysis was (something that, as already noted by Merton in 1968, remains largely hidden from view), but how well its results connect to the 'facts on the ground' and to their interpretation (Bardach, 2012).







Policy analysis is a broad notion and field of work. Its purpose and value depend on those who prepare the analytical findings and those who use them. This guide describes just a few of the many legitimate ways to generate analytical value. The notions, processes and applications in this guide were selected and combined in the way presented here because of their proven value in supporting informed decision making, objective tracking of progress with policy action, and the production of pragmatic deliverables. This includes recommendations that are well founded, understandable and owned by those concerned with their implementation.

If anything, the diversity of concepts and applications presented here suggests that, despite the need for the analysis to be clear-cut and reliable, the most important quality of good analytical work is its flexibility and responsiveness to needs and circumstances. Elements of this guide, for instance those covering issues pertaining to evidence, or those discussing how to frame a problem or link recommendations to findings, can also be used as a stand-alone reference, or adjusted in their application to fit the capacity and expectations of the institutions and individuals involved

Most of all, no guide on the theme covered here can ever be considered complete. The analytical process is a learning opportunity, an exercise that with each iteration offers new opportunities for improvement and learning.





# THE PRACTICE OF POLICY ANALYSIS: **EXAMPLES FROM THE WORK OF** PARTNER COUNTRIES WITH THE ETF

When it comes to applying the analytical algorithm described in this guide in 'real life', in response to demand for reliable guidance on decisions in the public policy domain, one could refer to policy analysis as 'public policy creation and implementation' (ETF, 2013a). It is important to make a distinction between some of these notions. When it comes to policy implementation, policy analysis can be a facilitating factor, no more and no less, but its deliverables, no matter how good and convincing, cannot be a substitute for policy action.

The concept of 'policy cycle' can help to draw the division line between what policy analysis can deliver in the domain of public policy creation and implementation, the ways in which the analytical results can be used, and what a difference good, reliable analytical deliverables can make at each stage of the policy cycle: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation.

This final part of the guide provides examples of how the analytical algorithms and practices described in the preceding sections are applied in ETF projects and activities that support a particular stage in the policy cycle of ETF partner countries. Unlike the examples used in the preceding sections of the guide, which were taken or constructed to apply to a national context, the following examples are from projects involving two or more countries. These include:

- an example from the support of the ETF's PRIME project in setting the agenda for action (Section 5.1);
- the ETF's FRAME project in support of policy formulation (Section 5.2);
- the Riga-inspired ex-ante assessments of MTD progress as an example of policy implementation assessment (Section 5.3);
- the Torino Process as an example of support with monitoring and policy evaluation (Section 5.4).

None of the projects presented are confined to only one policy cycle stage. Rather, they all have elements and focus that are broader and that also benefit adjacent policy cycle stages. However, for the didactic purposes of this guide, the projects are presented in a somewhat simplified way.



# 5.1

# ANALYSIS IN SUPPORT OF SETTING THE AGENDA: THE ETF'S PRIME ASSESSMENT OF VET POLICIES FOR FEMALE EMPLOYABILITY IN JORDAN<sup>5</sup>



### **Project background**

In 2013 the ETF developed a methodology for ex-ante assessments of policy options in VET. The methodology, PRIME (Projecting Reform Impact in Education and VET), was based on EU ex-ante assessments, and pursued three objectives. Firstly, it aimed to identify the optimal policy for addressing a specific problem/objective in the field of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Secondly, it initiated a learning process to enhance the capacity of ETF partner countries to take informed decisions and integrate the knowledge into their decision-making routines (ETF, 2016d). Thirdly, it was designed to serve as the basis for follow-up activities, for instance the assessments of actions by EU enlargement countries<sup>6</sup> towards fulfilling the EU Riga Conclusions (MTDs – see Section 5.3 for details).

The Jordanian authorities chose to focus the PRIME assessment in their country on developing options for mobilising VET in support of increasing female participation in employment, a long-standing and difficult policy priority in the country. The activity was implemented in three phases: problem analysis, impact assessment

and operationalisation of the chosen options. A series of structured discussions helped to reach an agreement and prepare the ground for agreeing on an agenda for change and policy options to choose from.

The following sub-section presents an example of the use of policy analysis at the agenda-setting stage of the policy cycle, as applied in the context of the PRIME project in Jordan.

### **Example**

### Framing

The PRIME methodology determines that the proper framing of the problem or issue under consideration is the most important step in the ex-ante analysis. The assumption is that the identification of factors that contribute to the problem is key to designing appropriate responses and selecting which of them should be operationalised (ETF, 2014).

At the beginning of the first phase of PRIME in Jordan, the authorities set up a permanent stakeholder consultation group. True to its conceptual framework, the assessment commenced with a thorough,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This section is based on (and occasionally reproduces) parts of an issues paper prepared during the first phase of the ETF PRIME project in Jordan (ETF, 2016d). <sup>6</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (this designation is without prejudice to position on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence, hereinafter 'Kosovo'), Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

structured process of framing the issue at hand. The main source of results was a stakeholder-driven, consultative analysis of factors that hinder women from participating in employment and that prevent progress in solving the persisting participation challenge.

The first task of the consultation group was to engage in a discussion of the problem of low female participation in employment from the point of view of members of the group and their own experience and competence, and to determine what factors contribute to

the persistent failure of policies to improve the situation, how they contribute, and who is most affected by the problem. There were no limitations on the selection of factors – they could be related to education and training, social issues, the economy and labour market, or other areas.

The initial outcome of discussions helped to prepare a rough outline of ideas (Table 3) that was mature enough to guide a discussion on evidence and its interpretation, and further, more structured framing.



#### TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF INITIAL RESULTS FROM PROBLEM FRAMING BY THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION GROUP

Top 5 factors that contribute to the low female participation in the labour market	How do these factors cause or contribute to the low participation?	Is there a group that is more affected than others?
Mismatch of female labour market demand and supply: Lack of clarity of problem and weak alignment of VET programmes and market needs; weak data and data collection methods	No evidence-based and gender-sensitive career guidance, low skills and competencies in accordance with labour market needs, lack of availability of sex-separated schooling for all the specialisations, lack of role models of female workers in all the sectors, lack of gender sensitivity of teachers and instructors, lack of traineeship/apprenticeships opportunities for women	Young women and women graduates
Conditions of employment and work (transportation, working hours, no flexi time, maternity leave, pay equity, discrimination for promotion)	Reluctance, lack of family support, low accessibility, inconvenience	All women, in particular mothers and those living in rural areas
Social attitudes, perception, family environment	Perception, mindset, culture of shame, expectations, discouragement to find a job	All women, in particular young women in rural areas
Distribution of investments and lack of opportunities	Discouragement to find a job	All equally affected
Lack of supporting services	Lack of retraining and skills up-dating after maternity or longer period of absence from working life for childbearing, lack of access to finance, to mentoring, to networks, lack of nurseries	All equally affected

Source: Gosheh (unpublished) and ETF (2016d).

#### **Evidence: description and interpretation**

The preliminary framing presented in Table 3 helped to steer the discussion in the direction of gathering facts, from data, personal stories, and consensus achieved in working group discussions. The evidence suggested that the efforts to solve the challenge so far were based on two problematic assumptions:

- that the beneficiaries of policy action belong to a homogeneous group of females who are all in a similar situation, with comparable needs and socioeconomic profiles
- that interventions designed in the capital of the country are also applicable to its regions.

As evidence started to amass that the reality of the problem is considerably more differentiated, both assumptions proved to be incorrect. The women most frequently affected by participation challenges belong to one of three distinctly different groups:

- 1. young graduates looking for their first employment;
- 2. married women who leave their jobs to become economically inactive;
- 3. economically inactive women.

Women's situations are also quite different depending on whether they live in rural or urban areas. Further analysis of facts and professional experiences shared in the consultation group suggested that the factors that 'hinder young graduates in finding their first employment, women in employment in staying employed, and those who are not active from re-entering the labour market' (ETF, 2016d) belong to one of the following three groups of factors:

- 1. factors relating to skills supply through education and training, most notably educational and training choices of women and the quality of education and training;
- 2. factors relating to employment, in particular working conditions and attitudes of employers towards women;
- 3. factors relating to cultural attitudes towards female employment.

### Conclusions, recommendations, follow-up

To a varying extent, all these factors limit the prospects of transition to employment of the target groups, and thus contribute to the persistence of the problem under consideration. It is safe to assume that policy measures that start with these groups and factors will be more informed and have a better chance of success in ultimately making a difference. Indeed, an agenda for change is like a 'string of answers to three interconnected questions, namely, what policies, achieving what exactly, and for whom' (ETF, 2016d). The framing of the problem through PRIME in Jordan brought the insight that the extent to which women in the country can contribute to the national economy at any given point in time will depend on how the policies that benefit them can influence three progress variables:

- 1. the number of women of working age who are active;
- 2. the level and/or relevance of skills they possess;
- 3. their rate of employment.

A positive change in any of these three variables (economic activity rate, quality of education and training provision, employability) will be a first sign of success. In the same vein, the variables can become pillars of a simple but robust framework for the monitoring of progress in solving the participation challenge (ETF, 2016d).



### 5.2

# ANALYSIS IN SUPPORT OF POLICY FORMULATION: FORESIGHT THROUGH THE ETF FRAME PROJECT FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE AND TURKEY<sup>7</sup>



### **Project background**

The FRAME project was designed in support of the ETF's mandate to assist the EU enlargement countries<sup>8</sup> in their efforts to develop their human resources. The overall objective was to assist countries in developing the skills of their people in a medium- to long-term perspective, with particular reference to Europe 2020 and the South East Europe 2020 Strategy. FRAME was implemented in 2013 and 2014 and was built around four components: foresight, review of institutional arrangements, monitoring, and regional cooperation.

The objective of the foresight component presented here was to assist the participating countries in formulating a shared vision for skills in 2020, with priorities and a roadmap. It was a joint quest to identify skills that should be develop between 2013/2014 and 2020, and to determine how these can be delivered by the education and training system, comprising initial and continuing VET, higher education, company-based training, and training for unemployed people (ETF, 2014a).

In each country, the foresight process was rolled out in three phases: preparation (pre-foresight), foresight and follow-up. The framing of issues, the analysis of evidence for trends and drivers of change, and the preparation of recommendations for follow-up (in the form of a roadmap towards making the skills vision a reality) took place in the second (foresight) phase. The following sub-section provides a regional summary as an example of the use of policy analysis at the formulation stage of the policy cycle, as applied in the context of the FRAME project in South Eastern Europe and Turkey.

### **Example**

### **Framing**

The rationale of the FRAME foresight approach was based on the need to develop a future-oriented strategy for human resources development (HRD). The key foresight questions that guided the initial framing of the baseline situation ('scanning the horizon') were the same in all FRAME countries and concerned the types of skills that need to be developed by 2020, and how these skills should be developed through the education and training system.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> This section is based on (and occasionally reproduces) parts of the FRAME project and deliverables documentation: ETF (2014a), ETF (2014b) and ETF (2014c).

<sup>8</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

However, within this set of broad questions, the FRAME countries opted for country-specific approaches to the framing within the foresight component. Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina developed alpha/beta/delta scenarios as an input to the visioning process. Serbia introduced a business-/employer-focused panel discussion. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia developed business-as-usual and paradigm-shift scenarios. Albania adapted the approach, embedding foresight within ongoing employment and skills strategy-development processes. Turkey drew on the extensive foresight consultation processes undertaken in developing Vision 2023, the national strategic reference point. Finally, Kosovo used FRAME to involve all stakeholders from higher education, research and VET for the creation of a skills vision for Kosovo in 2020, along with a roadmap for implementation and distribution of responsibilities.

#### **Evidence: description and interpretation**

In all countries, the foresight process included a **series of workshops** that brought together relevant decision makers
and stakeholders, including policy and technical representatives.
The evidence and information was limited to what was already
available, with no extra research or surveys conducted. In each
country, FRAME mobilised around 40 experts representing
different ministries and public and private organisations, including
employers and training centre representatives. The stakeholders'
expertise and insights provided the content for the exercise,
validated the key external and internal drivers of HRD and
skills, prioritised the key challenges and developed a vision
and roadmap.

The evidence collection also included the collection and processing of data into a **common list of indicators for the region**<sup>9</sup>.

The subsequent analysis yielded a number of country-specific results, but also produced findings relating to the region as a whole. At the time of the FRAME exercise, the majority of the economies in South Eastern Europe and Turkey were **undergoing structural changes** in response to economic challenges and the accession drive. Most of the countries had a comparative advantage in terms of **low labour costs**, though they still had to find ways to **sustain this advantage** and introduce **skills promotion as a strategic priority** in developing national competitiveness.

A key challenge in the majority of countries is the high level of unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, and urgent action is needed to increase youth and female employment. Population growth, the informal economy, and social inequalities and vulnerabilities, together with regional diversity, are common concerns in all countries. These concerns require attention through appropriate policies and measures. Investment in research, innovation and technology remains low in most countries (with the exception of Turkey), and there is a need to complement such investments with the related development of capacities, skills and competencies as the means to increase competitiveness and quality of life.





### **Conclusions, recommendations, follow-up**

Among the key project outcomes of FRAME in each country was a definition of a commonly agreed vision and a roadmap for skills 2020, with clearly spelled out priorities and references to the wider HRD context of each country. Naturally, the roadmaps were prepared in response to the guiding questions (analytical Step 1), and were based on the results of consultations and evidence interpretation (Steps 2 and 3). Five strategic priorities emerged as common across the region:

- 1. place emphasis on policy efforts, mechanisms and programmes to target skills development in priority sectors with a view to achieving skills-driven transition, growth and better competitiveness;
- 2. match skills demand and supply, in particular through industry and stakeholder engagement, skills forecasting and anticipation, and improving career guidance and advisory services;

- 3. enhance skills to bring about improvements in society, address societal goals and allow a better quality of life for all by increasing the employability of vulnerable groups, women and young people, facilitating participation in lifelong learning, and investing effort in making the education and skills system more socially inclusive;
- 4. increase and maintain resource investments in developing the skills systems;
- 5. establish a transparent evaluation and monitoring system for HRD policies.





### 5.3

# ANALYSIS IN SUPPORT OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: ASSESSMENT OF MTDS UNDER THE RIGA CONCLUSIONS IN SERBIA<sup>10</sup>



### **Project background**

In 2015 the ministers in charge of VET from the EU Member States, the candidate countries and the countries of the European Economic Area agreed on a new set of MTDs for vocational training for the period 2015–2020. Widely known as the 'Riga Conclusions', these MTDs aim to transform VET both structurally and strategically in order to raise its overall quality, status and impact across the European continent.

In 2016 the ETF began supporting the implementation of the Riga MTDs in the candidate countries, in line with its declared priority to facilitate transitions from policy planning to policy action. The activity takes place within the framework of the ETF's Torino Process. The support comes in the form of ex-ante impact assessments, based on methodologies applied in the EU and piloted in the PRIME exercise, and aims to help the countries make informed choices about policies that are likely to have the desired impact in line with their priorities, while respecting the national capacities for implementation.

The Riga MTD exercise has a circular structure comprising five phases, all of which focus on promoting and facilitating the move from policy planning to policy implementation. In phase one (mapping), each country identifies its most challenging MTD in terms of urgency for action. In phase two, the ex-ante impact assessment identifies the most appropriate policy choices for achieving the MTD with the slowest progress. In phase three, countries are encouraged to collaborate at a regional level and share their findings. In phase four, countries start implementing their policy choices. Finally, phase five foresees the monitoring of progress towards all MTDs. The following sub-section presents an example of the use of policy analysis at the implementation stage of the policy cycle, as applied in the context of the Riga MTD ex-ante assessment in Serbia.

### **Example**

### **Framing**

Like all the countries participating in the Riga MTD assessments, Serbia selected MTD 1 on work-based learning (WBL) as the one

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> This section is based on (and occasionally reproduces) parts of the documentation prepared in the ETF's ex-ante assessment of actions in EU candidate countries towards the MTDs agreed in the Riga Conclusions in 2015: ETF (2015b) and ETF (forthcoming).

that is the most challenging and in need of urgent action. The framing phase included several methodological steps: establish the intensity of the problem, the 'symptoms' of its occurrence, and the trends over time; take stock of policies already in place to address it; examine the legislative framework; and identify the stakeholders concerned and the resources that are already being invested.

The framing of the problem revealed several acute shortcomings, as follows.

- The legal framework is insufficient, and fails to provide adequate or clear direction.
- Employers feel they are not sufficiently involved in all aspects of VET.
- Teachers and trade unions are resistant, as the shifted focus towards in-company student training could influence a reduction in the teaching workforce.
- Companies (even if they show a willingness to participate) are not clear on their possible roles and responsibilities and, thus, on whether they could respond appropriately to demands relating to WBL.

The divergence of views and interpretations regarding the scope, implications and action plans to make WBL reality in the country arose as perhaps the biggest obstacle to progress on MTD 1 in Serbia. This was considered to be the problem that should be addressed first before any other policy actions could follow.

### **Evidence: description and interpretation**

An important part of the analytical effort behind the Riga MTD impact assessment in Serbia were extensive interviews and consultations with a broad range of stakeholders, including representatives of the national ministries, institutions and other bodies from the field of education and the economy, as well as school and company representatives. Interviewees were asked a set of questions covering all the main issues identified in the framing phase and those arising from the general educational context.

The analysis of stakeholder responses suggested that there is, indeed, less clarity and consensus in Serbia on the direction in which the country should and can go regarding WBL. Investment in a joint vision could create a more solid basis for WBL development – including building a common understanding, improving trust, counteracting fears and resistance, and building engagement, commitment and cooperation between different IVET actors on this topic – and subsequently, for the implementation of concrete actions.

### Conclusions, recommendations, follow-up

In consideration of the results presented so far, most notably that stakeholders' views on WBL in Serbia differ significantly, and that the current strategic and legal framework is insufficient, the recommendation of the ex-ante assessment is to develop a common vision for WBL in IVET (practical learning, practice in local terms). Such a joint vision could create a more solid basis for WBL development, including building a common understanding, improving trust, counteracting fears and resistance, and building engagement, commitment and cooperation between different VET actors. This is a necessary step if concrete actions are to develop and gain traction.



# 5.4 ANALYSIS IN SUPPORT OF MONITORING OF PROGRESS AND POLICY EVALUATION: THE TORINO PROCESS IN UKRAINE<sup>11</sup>

Guide to Policy Analysis

Progress is a complex concept, but its monitoring in the context of ETF partner countries can be articulated around two major dimensions: monitoring of progress in the VET system, and monitoring of policy actions at national level. Progress of the 'system' means a focus on the performance of the VET sector in terms of its effectiveness and efficiency. Progress in 'national actions', meanwhile, concerns the quality of solutions to which a country resorts in order to improve the VET system. Both are connected through a causal relationship, but they call for different monitoring criteria and analytical questions (ETF, 2017).

In Ukraine, the Torino Process focused on both dimensions, as described in the following sections.

### **Project background**

The Torino Process is an evidence-based approach to the analysis of VET, based on country ownership and the broad and open participation of stakeholders from the public and private sectors. At the heart of the process is a biennial monitoring of policy

progress that enables ETF partner countries to monitor the implementation of VET reforms and assess progress and reform impact. The Torino Process is founded on the principles of ownership, participation, a holistic approach, and evidence, and these, over the years, have safeguarded the quality, value and legitimacy of its deliverables and monitoring solutions in relation to participants and beneficiaries. These principles are the basis of implementation of the process and are quality assured at national, regional and cross-regional levels.

The Torino Process is normally limited to the monitoring of developments and progress at national level, but in 2016 the authorities of several countries, including Ukraine, opted to extend the reporting to their regions as well. The specific aim of Ukraine was to facilitate comparisons of monitoring results across governance levels, and to engage in a dialogue with regional decision makers and stakeholders around wide-reaching, challenging reforms such as decentralisation, optimisation of the provider network, and funding shortages.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> This section is based on (and occasionally reproduces) parts of the documentation prepared for the 2016 round of the Torino Process and its implementation in Ukraine in that year: ETF (2016b).

The following sub-section presents an example of the use of policy analysis at the evaluation stage of the policy cycle, as applied in the course of the regional Torino Process implementation in Ukraine.

### **Example**

### **Framing**

Unlike ad hoc, tailored analytical tasks, the Torino Process uses well-tested and well-established procedural and analytical instruments to frame the point of origin of analysis and of national (or regional) reporting on progress. At its core is an analytical framework that comprises a collection of questions grouped around major areas of policy monitoring that concern VET planning, provision and management, and responsiveness to external demands. The framework helps participants to take stock of developments in five dimensions of monitoring: vision and VET strategy, external and internal efficiency (understood as responsiveness of VET to the socioeconomic context and needs, including those that emerge within the VET system), and governance.

The analytical framework covers these five dimensions with the help of dedicated questions, organised in building blocks, one for each dimension. The content and structure of the analytical framework equips it for use as a primary source of guidance on how to monitor partner country contexts and VET policy, and how to prepare evidence-based analysis of monitoring findings. The framework helps in the collection and interpretation of qualitative information, the contextualisation of data, and the monitoring of policy developments and progress, including against EU benchmarks (if so desired).

Within this standard set of obligatory questions, countries and stakeholders have a free hand to report on whatever is of significance to them by extracting the messages that deserve closer attention and/or immediate policy follow-up. In Ukraine,

the application of the framework at regional level was enabled through a process of 'regionalisation' in which a representative group of stakeholders from all regions in the country worked on modifications to make the framework more relevant at regional level (for instance, by fine-tuning questions concerning law-making, national strategies for economic development, provider autonomy, etc.).

The framing of issues by regions led to the identification of several shortcomings of VET policy that require deeper analysis and subsequent policy responses at regional level. It was considered that a failure to formulate such responses might have a corrosive effect on the national reform plans to decentralise VET and make its output more relevant.

### **Evidence: description and interpretation**

The evidence to corroborate or refute the initial outcomes of problem framing was collected in the course of preparation for regional cluster meetings that covered all regions of Ukraine. The meetings were hosted by the cities of Lvov, Vinnitsa and Dnipropetrovsk, and commenced with a description of evidence from each region, as a preparation for an in-depth discussion between participants in the regional consultation on the implications and interpretation.

Each region presented key messages from the executive summary of its regional report, and shared questions that remained unresolved, or experiences with the preparation that had been particularly challenging and that might affect the reliability of the information presented. Each collection of evidence on issues raised by the regions was subjected to a cross-check in the form of comments from the other regional participants in the cluster meeting. As a next step, the regional stakeholders engaged in consultative analysis of information that had passed the cross-check by the peers. The purpose was to extract the key findings of monitoring at regional level and prepare them for inclusion in the national monitoring process in the form of a regional summary report.





### Conclusions, recommendations, follow-up

In preparing their report drafts, the authorities, administrators and stakeholders from different regions were in close contact, replicating solutions and interpretations of the analytical framework from each other and effectively creating an ad hoc peer community with a strong sense of legitimacy and representativeness. Thus, one of the key recommendations raised on the basis of regional analysis was to ensure that the consensus of regions about their main messages would be preserved and accurately relayed in the national consultations. Therefore, in order to safeguard the accuracy and legitimacy of regional analytical outcomes and allow for their use as a source of guidance in framing the priorities at national level, the results of regional cluster analysis were documented not only thematically, but also in terms of process.





## **ACRONYMS**



**ETF** European Training Foundation

**HRD** Human resources development

**INET** Initial vocational education and training

MTD Medium-term deliverables

**OECD** Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

**PISA** Programme for International Student Assessment

**PRIME** Projecting Reform Impact in Education and VET

**VET** Vocational education and training

**WBL** Work-based learning



### **REFERENCES**



Anderson, J.E., Public Policymaking: An Introduction, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1975.

Bardach, E., A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis, CQ Press, Berkeley, 2012.

Beaney, M., 'Analysis', The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, [online], Summer 2016 Edition, 2016. Last accessed 10 October 2016 at: http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/analysis/

Blackburn, S., Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996.

Cottrell, S., Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument, 2nd edition, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2011.

Dowding, K., 'Model or metaphor? A critical review of the policy network approach', in Dunleavy, P., Kelly, P.J. and Moran, M. (eds), British Political Science: Fifty Years of Political Studies, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2000, pp. 196–213.

Doyle, A.C., Silver Blaze and Other Stories, Macmillan, London, 2005.

EQAVET, EU Quality Assurance in Vocational Education & Training – Glossary: Proxy Indicator, [online], 2002. Last accessed 2 October 2016 at: www.eqavet.eu/qc/gns/glossary/p/proxy-indicator.aspx

ETF (European Training Foundation), ETF Yearbook 2012: Evaluation and Monitoring of Vocational Education and Training Systems and the Role of Evidence-based Policy in their Reforms, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2012.

ETF (European Training Foundation), Torino Process: a policy analysis approach to supporting policy-making through policy learning, ETF, Turin, 2013a.

ETF (European Training Foundation), ETF Manual on the Use of Indicators, ETF, Turin, 2013b. Last accessed 15 September 2016 at: www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Indicators\_Manual

ETF (European Training Foundation), 'PRIME Launching Meeting Report', ETF, Turin, 2014.

ETF (European Training Foundation), FRAME: Skills for the Future – Supporting a Strategic Vision for Human Resources Development, Project description, ETF, Turin, 2014a. Last accessed 20 October 2016 at: www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/FED98CBE2E204CC1C1257B720050DB20/\$file/01.%20Frame%20-%20Project%20 description.pdf

ETF (European Training Foundation), FRAME: Skills for the Future - Foresight, ETF, Turin, 2014b.

ETF (European Training Foundation), FRAME: Skills for the future – Regional Report, ETF, Turin. 2014c.

ETF (European Training Foundation), Torino Process 2014: A Cross-Country Report, ETF, Turin, 2015a.

ETF (European Training Foundation), Medium-term Deliverables for the Candidate Countries under the Riga conclusions 2015, Leaflet, ETF, Turin, 2015b. Last accessed 10 October 2016 at: www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/92E5FE40C152788EC1257EA700516A97/\$file/Medium-term%20deliverables\_CCs\_Riga%20conclusions.pdf

ETF (European Training Foundation), PRIME Issues Paper: Increasing Female Participation in Employment through Vocational Education and Training in Jordan, ETF, Turin, 2016a. Last accessed 20 July 2016at: www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/PRIME\_issues\_paper\_Jordan

ETF (European Training Foundation), Torino Process 2016–17, ETF, Turin, 2016b.

ETF (European Training Foundation), Optimisation of the Network of Vocational Education and Training Providers in Ukraine: Assessment of Options for Policy Actions, ETF, Turin, 2016c.

ETF (European Training Foundation), Effective Policies for Increasing Female Participation in Employment through Vocational Education and Training in Jordan, ETF, Turin, 2016d.

ETF (European Training Foundation), 'Measuring progress in VET: the European Training Foundation approach', ETF, Turin, 2017.

ETF (European Training Foundation), 'Riga follow-up: the case of Serbia', ETF, Turin (forthcomina).

European Commission, Evaluating EU Activities: A Practical Guide for the Commission Services, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2004.

European Commission, Guidance Document on Ex-ante Evaluation, 2014, Last accessed 10 October 2016 at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional\_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/ex\_ante\_en.pdf

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, Support Mechanisms for Evidence-based Policy-Making in Education, Eurydice report, Publication Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2017.





Fabry, M., Now You Know: Which Came First, the Chicken or the Egg?, [online], 2016. Last accessed 5 May 2017 at: http://time.com/4475048/which-came-first-chicken-egg/

Frey, D.J., Policy Analysis in Practice: Lessons from Researching and Writing a 'Statenote' for Education Commission of the States, Paper 2425, Capstone Collection, 2011. Last accessed 18 July 2017 at: http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/capstones/2425/

Gosheh, H., 'PRIME Jordan: summary of background analysis' (unpublished).

Healey, R.G., The History of Policy Analysis, 2011. Last accessed 4 October 2016 at: https://econ.duke.edu/uploads/media\_items/what-is-the-history-of-policy-analysis-9-2011. original.pdf

Hodgson, P., Quantitative and Qualitative data: Getting It Straight, [online], Blueprint, 2010. Last accessed 9 January 2017 at: www.blueprintusability.com/articlequantqual/

Islamy, I.M., Public Policy Analysis, 2008 (online). Last accessed 6 October 2016 at: www.slideshare.net/manoharlaxmi/public-policyanalysis

Tewdwr-Jones, M., The Planning Polity: Planning, Government and the Policy Process, Routledae. London. 2002.

Lasswell, H., The Future of Political Science, Atherton Press, New York, 1963.

Merton, R.K., Social Theory and Social Structure, The Free Press, New York, 1968.

Mills, E.S., Evidence Explained: Historical Analysis, Citation & Source Usage, [online], 2011. Last accessed 10 October 2016 at: www.evidenceexplained.com/content/quicklesson-13-classes-evidence%E2%80%94direct-indirect-negative

Nakamura, R.T., The textbook policy process and implementation research', Policy Studies Review, Vol. 7, No 1, 1987, pp. 142–54.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), Development Assistance Committee Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, OECD Publishing, Paris, 1991.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2000.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), Harmonising Donor Practices for Effective Aid Delivery, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2003.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), Indicators of Education Systems, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2012. Last accessed 19 July 2017 at: www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/49338320.pdf

Patton, C.V. and Sawicki, D.S., Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning, 3rd edition, Routledge, New York, 2016.

Schick, A., 'Beyond analysis', Public Administration Review, Vol. 37, No 3, 1977. pp. 258-63.

Smith, C., Framing the Problem, [online], 2005. Last accessed 3 October 2016 at: http://core.ecu.edu/engl/smithcath/ppolicy\_book/frame.htm

Spradlin, D., 'The power of defining the problem', Harvard Business Review, [online], 2012. Last accessed 2 October 2016 at: https://hbr.org/2012/09/the-power-of-defining-the-prob

Springate-Baginski, O. and Soussan, J., 'A methodology for policy process analysis', Livelihood-Policy Relationships in South Asia, Working Paper 9, [online], 2002. Last accessed 10 October 2016 at: www.researchgate.net/publication/250662882\_A\_Methodology\_for\_Policy\_Process\_Analysis

Ukeles, J.B., 'Policy analysis: myth or reality?', Public Administration Review, Vol. 37, No 3, 1977, pp. 223–8.

University of Plymouth, Descriptive versus critical/analytical [writing], [online], 2016. Last accessed 13 October 2016 at: www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/documents/description-vs-analysis---learnhigher.pdf

Walt, G. and Gilson, L, 'Reforming the health sector in developing countries: the central role of policy analysis', Health and Policy Planning, Vol. 9, No 4, 1994, pp. 353–70.

Weimer, D.L. and Vining, A.R., Policy analysis: Concepts and practice, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1999.

Williams, P., Better Problem Solving With Framing, [online], Idea Sandbox, 2014.Last accessed 1 October 2016 at: www.idea-sandbox.com/blog/frame-your-problems-to-create-better-solutions/



