

Foreword

Governments are facing growing pressures to deliver public services to citizens and businesses in a complex, fragmented and unpredictable environment. Evidence-informed policy making has a crucial role to play in designing, implementing and delivering better public policies, and thus the potential to improve public sector performance. However, in reality, connecting evidence and policy making remains a constant challenge. Institutional gaps, insufficient skills and capacity, and a lack of an effective knowledge brokering function are common barriers to the use of evidence in policy making. In response to these challenges, many governments are strengthening the 'evidence ecosystem' by investing in strategies to build capacity for policy design and *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluation.

The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) is an integrated cross-government service that supports better policy formulation and implementation across the civil service with economic and analytical skills. The purpose of IGEES is to expand the civil service's analytical capacities for evidence-informed policy making. IGEES has strengthened the analytical capacity across ministries and the Irish Civil Service as a whole. IGEES has built a robust evidence base for better policy and decision making.

This OECD study analyses the institutional features and governance of IGEES in light of international best practices, offering an analysis of its processes, tools and people management. The study's recommendations will inform IGEES' Medium-Term Strategy for 2020-23. It was undertaken at the invitation of the Irish Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which supports the IGEES network, with a view to strengthening evidence-informed policy making in Ireland. At the OECD, this work helps build a comparative understanding of countries' evaluation systems and capacities to promote evidence-informed policy making.

This study is based on the analysis of data collected through qualitative interviews in Ireland with senior civil servants involved in IGEES and related areas of the Department of Expenditure and Reform, current IGEES members based in ministries, and policy officials in ministries. Data was also collected through a questionnaire answered by government departments. Finally, the study draws on examples of existing international practices from OECD work on evidence-informed policymaking and other relevant areas.

This review provides a better understanding of the achievements and remaining challenges for IGEES in putting evidence-informed policy making into action. Linking evidence to ways in which governments can improve performance and better serve their citizens is a fundamental contribution of sound public governance.



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