



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

Waste Prevention and the Challenge of Public Sector Reform

Rory O'Donnell

Rory.odonnell@nesc.ie

www.nesc.ie



Waste prevention as a guide to public sector reform

1. Waste prevention as an example of experimentalist governance in the EU
2. The successes & failures of the EU
3. Ireland's successes & failures in the EU
4. Implications for public sector reform



Experimentalist Governance in the EU

1. Framework goals ('full employment', 'good water quality', 'protection of the environment & human health') & measures for gauging their achievement established by Council & EP
2. National entities (departments, agencies) given freedom to advance these ends as they see fit
3. They must report regularly on their performance & participate in peer review
4. The framework goals, metrics & procedures periodically revised

The successes and failures of the EU

1. The EU has succeeded where it has adopted this approach:
 - Internal market , network regulation (energy & telecommunications), health and safety, **environmental protection**, justice and home affairs, enlargement
2. The EU has failed both where it seeks excessive uniformity, & where its member states refused to buy in to joint goal setting, mutual monitoring & revision of EU and national approaches:
 - Public finance
 - Economic coordination
 - Banking supervision



Ireland has succeeded in the EU where

Our policy system, public agencies & partnership were attuned to effective processes at EU level & have adopted a similar problem-solving approach at domestic level:

- Much of the internal market
- **Environmental protection**
- Food safety
- Animal health
- Employment rights architecture

Ireland has failed in the EU where

- a. EU seen as an intrusion on sovereignty (fiscal policy)
- b. Mere conformity with EU regime (telecoms & energy)
- c. Did not see EU goal setting & monitoring as an opportunity for in-depth review and policy learning (public finance & expenditure, banking supervision, biodiversity, childcare, employment & social inclusion)
- d. Policies not attuned to the disciplines of the euro (fiscal policy & wage bargaining)
- e. Policy/partnership failed to resolve underlying conflicts (aspects of waste management & water)



Conditions for success in 21st century EU

- Requires a national system with greater ability to record, compare, analyse and discuss its policy & service systems at agency, dept., political & EU level
- A minimal condition is *Transforming Public Services*: from input control to outcome focus
- Irish depts involved in less effective EU areas, could learn from those agencies that have mastered the new disciplines of framework goals, decentralised execution, root cause analysis, peer review & learning

Implications for public sector reform

1. What environmental policy takes for granted:
 - Over-arching plan, but recognising implementation as critical
 - Fine-grained measurement in frontline organisations
 - Root cause analysis
 - Reporting, monitoring & peer review of results
 - Open consultation & stakeholder networks
 - Revision of goals, means & metrics

are now key requirements in a range of services (health, education, welfare & training, care, policing) & business sectors (e.g agri-food)



2. Criteria for deciding on organisational re-structuring & rationalisation

View M: *‘department good – agency bad’*
‘official good – community/voluntary flaky’
‘centre good – local suspect’

Alternative view: *judge by reference to ability to: frame policy problem, get key actors in play, create benchmarks, targets & indicators, conduct review of practice, use peer review, learn & revise goals and means*

3. A perspective on ‘partnership’ & participation

- 1997: ‘partnership must reflect a new combination of policy making, implementation and monitoring’
- 2000: ‘partnership might evolve from *high-level bargaining* to *multi-level problem solving*’
- Much policy & social partnership remained stuck in central control & high-level bargaining...
- Environmental protection (generally) shows the way:
 1. Get the *right people in the room & at the right level*
 2. *Identify necessary partners through action*, not by right
 3. Insist that *stakeholders measure and review their practice*
 4. *Centre assists* on data, diagnostics, reporting & learning



References

Re-finding Success in Europe: the Challenge for Irish Institutions & Policy, NESCC, Dec 2010, www.nesc.ie

Ireland at Another Turning Point: Reviving Development, Reforming Institutions & Liberating Capabilities, NESDO, July 2009, www.nesdo.ie