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


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 21\textsuperscript{st} 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, NESC, Dec 2010, www.nesc.ie