

“While Policymakers Teach, they Learn”
Assessing the PROGRESS Peer Reviews

Social Protection Committee
18 April 2013

Bart Vanhercke

European Social Observatory (OSE)

vanhercke@ose.be

OUTLINE OF THE TALK

1. The research: team, scope and methodology
2. Why do they do it? A variety of motivations
3. About tutors and learners (and changing roles)
4. Tracing effects (domestic and EU)
5. Recommendations (pointers)
6. Wrapping things up !

1. The Peer Review Assessment : Team, scope and methodology

- Commission-funded study, conducted by a consortium
 - The Public Policy and Management Institute (**PPMI**) and the European Social Observatory (**OSE**)
- Some 15 experts in 8 different research institutes, incl.
 - Volker Busch-Geertsema, Mary Daly, Romana Careja, Timo Weishaupt etc.
- 1,5 years of research (10' 😊)

1. The Peer Review Assessment : Team, scope and methodology (2)

- We were essentially asked to:
 - Examine the role played by the Progress PR programme in **stimulating innovation** in social policies across the EU
 - Examine to what extent **policy learning** has taken place as a result of PR participation (*from whom, and by whom?*): 10 in-depth case studies (171 interviews)
 - Propose a set of **recommendations** to support the European Commission and the Member States to further improve the PR process

2. Hosting a PR: *Why do they do it?*

- A variety of motivations for hosting Peer Reviews (not mutually exclusive)
 - **‘Showcasing’** (e.g. UK 2004, ‘Rough Sleepers Unit’ and UK 2006 on ‘Sure Start’);
 - **Need to answer EU ‘pressures’** (e.g. CZ 2005 on ‘Field Social Work Programmes’);
 - **Attempts to upload a political agenda at the EU level by MS** (e.g. BE 2005 on ‘Minimum Income’) or **by the EC** (e.g. SK 2008 on ‘Social Impact Assessment’);
 - **Settle internal differences** (e.g. DE 2010 on ‘Achieving quality long-term care in residential facilities’);
 - **Promoting dynamics of mutual learning** (e.g. NO 2009 on ‘Tools for the active inclusion of vulnerable people’)

3. About tutors and learners

- In many cases, it is simply not possible to clearly identify ‘tutors’ and ‘learners’ in a PR
 - **Learning positions change** during the meetings, depending on the specific issue
 - “While policymakers teach, they learn”
- This suggests that genuine (and perhaps surprising) **reflexive learning** is taking place in at least some PR
- Clear examples of policy learning between countries belonging to different welfare regimes (or different practices)
 - **‘Learning from differences’** represents an important ‘opening up’ of perspectives, even if it does not lead to policy transfer

4. Tracing effects (EU)

- **Networking**

- PR sometimes help to build (or reinforce pre-existing) EU level informal networks. However networking effects were often weak (lack of follow-up events or activities after PR)

- **Feeding debates at the EU level**

- EU stakeholders and experts use ideas and documents produced during the PR meetings for their activities/campaigns (dissemination outside formal OMC inner circle)

- **Promoting topics on the EU agenda and keeping attention high**

- Some PR contributed to frame & develop an issue at the EU level (e.g. minimum income, SIA, stakeholders involvement). PR then are a **stepping stone** in a longer process of building European consensus on a topic

4. Tracing effects (domestic)

- **Direct impact on national practices**
 - Some evidence of “direct” impact of individual PR meetings on national practices (4 cases of - procedural - ‘policy transfer’)
 - On-going reforms** at the time of PR significantly increase motivations of peer countries (learning; ‘return on investment’)
- **‘Mirror effects’**
 - Actors often revise their opinions on their own (“best”) practices
- **‘Legitimising effect’**
 - PR sometimes provides outside legitimation for the reviewed national , regional, or local practice (‘on the right track’)
- **Agenda setting**
 - Moved certain (previously known) problems higher on the list of priorities to be dealt with

5. Recommendations (before and during)

The quality of the PR meetings is being judged high

1. Before the Peer Review

- Balancing Member States' *ownership* and Commission activism
- Creating a shared understanding of the aims and content of PR
- Careful selection of participants: decision makers and stakeholders
- Improving informal networking
- Increasing quality control over Comment Papers

2. During the Peer Review

- Working methods
- Language: a difficult trade-off
- Dissemination: intentions and needs

5. Recommendations (after)

3. **After** the Peer Review

- Follow-up on the impact of learning experiences (inexistent)
- Publicising follow-up activities in Member States
- Accumulation of knowledge** (occasionally happens)
- Organise co-financed follow-up seminars (or study visits)
- Organisation of 'dissemination and programmatic sessions' within the framework of existing events**
 - the results of PR meetings do not easily 'trickle down' to a broad circle of domestic or EU policymakers

6. Wrapping things up

- Peer reviews are achieving at least two of the objectives of the programme:
 - To lead to a better understanding of the participating Member States' policies.
 - To facilitate the transfer of key components of policies or of institutional arrangements.
- In view of the important **mirror** effects, the role of the Peer Reviews in **legitimising** reviewed practices, their contribution to **informal networking** and, perhaps most importantly, the finding that they constitute a stepping stone in **European consensus building** on social topics: **PROGRESS** Peer Reviews have a key role to play in the future Social OMC & the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Download the Peer review Assessment, Newsletters and events agenda from

www.ose.be (EN-FR)

Opinion papers

Research papers

Briefing papers



Ose
PAPER SERIES

Cécile Barbier

www.ose.be

rue Paul Emile Janson 13 / 1050 Bruxelles / tel : 32 (0)2 537 19 71 / fax : 32 (0)2 539 28 08 / email : info@ose.be



VIEŠOSIOS POLITIKOS IR VADYBOS INSTITUTAS
PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE



Ose
European
Social
Observatory

www.ose.be

LIST OF THE SELECTED CASE STUDIES

Date	Title	Host country	Peer countries
05/06 -05-2004	The Rough Sleepers Unit	UK	DK- FI- FR- LU- NO- RO- SE
19/20- 05- 2005	Field Social Work Programmes in Neighbourhoods Threatened by Social Exclusion	CZ	AT- BG- RO- SK- ES- UK
07/08- 11- 2005	Minimum Income and social integration institutional arrangements	BE	AT- EE- HU- LU- RO- SK- NL- ES
04/05 -06/2006	Sure Start	UK	FR- HU- LV- LT- MT- PL
13/14 - 09 2007	Freedom of choice and dignity for the elderly	SE	AT- CZ- IE- PT- NL

25/26 - 10 -2007	Multi-regional operational programme for combating discrimination	ES	BG- CY- FI- DE- EL- MT- SI
15/16- 11- 2007	The NAPI Inclusion Social Inclusion Forum	IE	BE- BG- FR- HU- SK- ES- UK
06/07 - 11- 2008	Social Impact Assessment	SK	AT- BE- BG- DE- IE- NO- RO
29/30-10- 2009	Developing well-targeted tools for the active inclusion of vulnerable people	NO	AT- CY- IE- PL- RO- ES- UK
18/19-10-2010	Achieving quality long-term care in residential facilities	DE	AT- CY- CZ- EE- FI- FR- LU- ES- SE