

# European Union Public Policy

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## Lecture 3

**Policy formulation: the policy communities and policy networks models, policy-making uncertainty, expertise and epistemic communities**

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### *Additional source:*

Michalowitz, I. (2007) 'What determines influence? Assessing conditions for decision-making influence of interest groups in the E.U.', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14:1, pp.132-151.

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1. Policy communities model;
2. Policy networks model.

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### *THE CONTEXT*

- a) The development of the E.U. public policy process is still at a *relatively* early stage;
- b) As a result, attempts to develop theoretical models describing that process will not capture ‘whole picture’ – only a few aspects of it.

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- Models allow us to look at the ‘bigger picture’ (to identify the wider factors influencing policy formulation)
- not just the ‘interests’ of individuals and groups
  - BUT*** also to see the role of:
    - *ideas*;
    - *knowledge*;
    - *expertise*.

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- Policy communities model and Policy networks model both focus on sets of '*actors*' (groups and individuals) who are seen as '*stakeholders*' in the policy process.
- These '*actors*'/'*stakeholders*' are influenced in their policy formulation preferences by 'ideas', 'knowledge' and their 'private interests'

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- E.U. public policy process not a '*straight-line journey*'
  - it is a *multi-level, multi-arena 'game'*.
  - lots of processes and factors at work at different institutional and non-institutional levels, and at differing periods in time

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### THE POLICY COMMUNITIES MODEL

- ‘community’ = ‘joint ownership of goods, identity of character, fellowship ... (of interest)
- groups and individuals sharing a common interest – a common policy interest



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### THE POLICY COMMUNITIES MODEL

- Describes long-term and stable relationships (in discussing and developing policy) between groups and institutions in particular policy sectors (i.e. education, health).
- These groups and representatives are fairly tightly defined in their interests

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### THE POLICY COMMUNITIES MODEL

- So, it means '*stakeholders*' in particular policy areas discussing, debating and developing policy arguments and policies relevant to them and their interests
- It suggests a *more consensual style* of policy formulation overall

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### THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

- policy networks '*much more loosely integrated*' than policy communities.
- A (public) policy network is a collection/cluster of groups, institutions, individuals that share a common (public) policy area interest;
- share a common (public) policy area issue;
- share a common knowledge of that issue and (public) policy area

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### THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

- Members of policy networks share a common understanding of how knowledge is gained about a (public) policy area
  - and of how problems are identified in that area and in formulating a policy

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### THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

- Public policy networks are basically groups of various representative bodies and agencies in particular public and social sectors of society (and can also include individual experts/academics in the particular public policy area)

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### THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

For example:

- a) the education sector
  - university representative bodies;
  - lecturers' trade unions and representative bodies;
  - student representative bodies;
  - teachers' unions
  - parents' associations (at schools) and representative bodies;
  - and increasingly now, employers representative bodies
  - education experts

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### THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

For example:

b) the health and social security sectors

- medical associations;
- doctors' associations and representative bodies;
- hospital management bodies;
- nurses and health workers' trade unions and representative bodies;
- social services agencies;
- social services workers' trade unions and representative bodies;
- social security workers' trade unions and representative bodies;
- health and social security experts and academics
- and increasingly, food company representative bodies,  
pharmaceutical industry representatives

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### ***INTERACTION BETWEEN:***

**STRUCTURE                      AND                      AGENCY**

*(Institution*

*- E.U. Commission)*

*(stakeholders groups*

*in policy networks)*



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- E.U. Commission attempts to ensure that relationship between ‘stakeholders’ groups and agencies in policy networks is based on:
  1. recognition of each other as legitimate ‘stakeholders’ in the policy area/issue;

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2. Recognition between  
‘stakeholders’ groups and agencies  
that collaboration is the best means  
of gaining mutual advantage and  
acceptable outcome in policy  
formulation

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3. (ensure) that the ‘stakeholders’ groups and agencies desire negotiated and stable policy environments in preference to continued conflict, instability and uncertainty

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Policy networks will have:

1. A variety of inconsistent and ill defined preferences – a loose collection of ideas;
2. (it will have) to operate in extremely complex and complicated E.U. organisational structures;
3. (it will have) ‘fluid’ participants within it (with varied time and effort)

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### Expertise and epistemic communities

- a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular policy area, who have an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that policy area.

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“members of an epistemic community share intersubjective understandings, have a shared way of knowing, have shared patterns of reasoning, have a policy project drawing on shared values, share causal beliefs, and the use of discursive practices, and have a shared commitment to the application and production of knowledge”

(Haas, P. (1992) ‘Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Co-ordination’, in *International Organisation*, 46/1, p.3.)

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“members of an epistemic community share intersubjective understandings (*common knowledge about policy area*), have a shared way of knowing (*common sources to gain that knowledge*), have shared patterns of reasoning (*common forms of analysis*), have a policy project drawing on shared values, share causal beliefs (*common values and beliefs*), and the use of discursive practices (*common belief in discussion and debate*), and have a shared commitment to the application and production of knowledge (*common commitment to investigation and application of information on policy area*)”

(Haas, P. (1992) 'Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Co-ordination', in *International Organisation*, 46/1, p.3.)

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Factors contributing to E.U. public policy makers  
using experts and epistemic communities

1. The dynamics of uncertainty in policy formulation;
2. The need for specialist interpretation of information/knowledge;
3. Institutionalisation of information and knowledge (in E.U. bureaucracy)