

# **Bridging the worlds of research and policy in European health systems**



Chapter 4

**Knowledge-brokering  
mechanisms and  
models used in Europe:  
website reviews in 31  
countries**

*Cristina Catallo, John N Lavis and the BRIDGE Study Team*

### **European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies**

The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies supports and promotes evidence-based health policy-making through comprehensive and rigorous analysis of the dynamics of health-care systems in Europe.

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#### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare that they have no commercial interests relevant to this chapter. Several authors hold affiliations with one or more of the organizations that are included in the analyses described in the chapter; however, members of the BRIDGE study team who do not hold these affiliations were involved in the coding and analysis of the data. The funder played no role in the research that informed the writing of this chapter.

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## **Key messages**

### ***Using websites to find and describe knowledge-brokering organizations***

- The study team:
  - recruited country correspondents in each of 31 countries who then identified potentially eligible knowledge-brokering organizations, used explicit criteria to assess the eligibility of these organizations, and used a data-collection tool to extract data about their knowledge-brokering mechanisms and models from eligible organizations' websites;
  - identified validators for the eligibility assessments who then reviewed the list of included organizations and the list of organizations that were carefully considered and found to meet some, but not all, of our eligibility criteria;
  - described the organizations according to their geographical focus, scale of operation and target audience, and whether they provided at least some description of their organizational model; and
  - described the knowledge-brokering mechanisms according to their type and, for each organization, the design features of its most innovative mechanism.

### ***Findings from the website reviews***

- Of the 404 knowledge-brokering organizations based in Europe that were carefully considered for inclusion in the BRIDGE study, 163 met our eligibility criteria.
- The organizations were much more likely to make information products available on their websites than to describe interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms. More traditional mechanisms (such as reports and presentations) were more likely than innovative ones to be profiled on their websites.
- Many of the more innovative information products targeted policy-makers specifically (n=123) and were written in accessible language (n=104), but very few were based on a systematic review (n=33) or were accompanied by online commentaries or briefings about the product by target audience representatives (n=6).
- Many of the innovative interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms targeted policy-makers (n=91) as well as other stakeholders who will be involved in, or affected by, decisions (n=106); a fair proportion of them were timed

to relate explicitly to a policy-making process or to requests from policy-makers (n=45); but most involved presentation by an expert (n=74) and few involved true dialogue (n=27).

- Eligible organizations typically provided some (but often very limited) description of their organizational models on their websites (n=144); far fewer described their approaches to monitoring and evaluation (n=41).

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of the approach***

- Working with country correspondents and extracting data from websites proved to be a highly efficient way to identify and characterize knowledge-brokering organizations in Europe. The other strengths of this approach include our use of explicit eligibility criteria, a data-collection tool, validators, and at least two individuals for each step of the process.
- A downside of our approach is that websites may not tell the whole story. Another weakness of our approach is that some data-collection requests had a subjective dimension that made it difficult to ensure that criteria were applied consistently, particularly when websites were in languages not spoken by members of the central coordination team.

### ***Lessons learned***

- There are a large number of knowledge-brokering organizations active in Europe, and they could be helpfully supported to become a community of organizations that learn from one another.
- Some innovative knowledge-brokering mechanisms are in use, but they are not widely profiled on organizations' websites and perhaps not widely used.
- Knowledge-brokering organizations tend not to describe their organizational models in any detail on their websites, despite how helpful this information could be to policy-makers and stakeholders who wish to assess whether they are built for purpose.

## **Knowledge-brokering mechanisms and models used in Europe**

Good health systems depend on well-informed policy-making by governments and decision-making by a range of stakeholders. By **health systems information**, we mean data (on performance and outcomes, among other topics) and research evidence (about policy and programme options to improve performance or achieve better outcomes, among other topics). We consider **data** to be facts and statistics collected together for reference or analysis, and we consider **research evidence** to be the results of a systematic investigation into materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. The results can take the form of conceptual frameworks, primary research studies, and systematic reviews, among others.

**Policy-makers** are the government officials who will be directly involved in decision-making as part of a policy-making process, either as decision-makers themselves (notably politicians) or as advisers working in close proximity to these decision-makers (notably political staffers and civil servants). **Stakeholders** are the individuals and groups who will be involved in or affected by a policy-making process (i.e. who have an interest in it), but not those government officials who will be directly involved in decision-making. They can be drawn from industry, professional associations, and patient groups, among others.

We have defined **knowledge brokering** as the use of information-packaging mechanisms and/or interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms to bridge policy-makers' (and stakeholders') contexts and researchers' contexts. Knowledge brokering addresses the four possible reasons for the disjuncture between information and action: (i) health systems information is not communicated effectively; (ii) health systems information is not available when policy-makers and stakeholders need it, and in a form that they can use; (iii) policy-makers and stakeholders lack the capacity to find and use health systems information efficiently and (in some countries) lack mechanisms to prompt them to use health systems information in policy-making; and (iv) policy-makers and stakeholders lack opportunities to discuss system challenges with researchers.

In turn, we have defined **information-packaging mechanisms** as information products in a variety of media that are focused (at least in part) on health systems information and that are intended to support policy-making. The outputs can take the form of policy briefs, issue notes, research summaries, policy dialogue reports, research reports, presentations, audio podcasts, video podcasts, videos, blogs, impact summaries, newsletters, annual reports, and cartoons and other visual media, among others. And we have defined **interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms** as mediating interactions that are focused (at least in

part) on health systems information and that are intended to support policy-making. The interactions can take the form of policy dialogues, personalized briefings, training workshops, online briefings or webinars, online discussion forums, formalized networks, informal discussions, and presentations.

Knowledge-brokering organizations must organize themselves to undertake their work effectively and efficiently. We have defined **organizational models for knowledge brokering** as the features of organizations that are focused (at least in part) on health systems information and that are intended to support policy-making. These features can relate to the role of policy-makers and stakeholders in governance; rules that ensure independence and address conflicts of interest; authority to ensure accountability to a knowledge-brokering mandate; size, mix and capacity of staff with knowledge-brokering responsibilities; size of budget and mix of funding sources for knowledge brokering; approach to prioritizing activities and accepting commissions/requests; location within another organization or network; collaboration with other organizations; and functional linkages with policy-making and stakeholder organizations.

These definitions, which are critical to an understanding of what we did here and why, are listed and referenced in Appendix A.

### ***Research objective***

The objective of this substudy within the broader BRIDGE study was to identify knowledge-brokering organizations operating within and across Member States of the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and to examine the knowledge-brokering mechanisms (specifically, information-packaging and interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms) and organizational models that they use. Our focus in this chapter is more on appreciating the current breadth of mechanisms and models in use than on understanding how these mechanisms and models work in particular contexts (the focus of Chapter 5) or how they intersect with national policy-making processes (the focus of Chapters 6–9).

In one respect, we are creating a baseline for one of the measures of success for knowledge brokering that are described in Chapter 2 – namely, greater use of knowledge-brokering mechanisms that hold promise, a type of process measure. However, as we also discuss in Chapter 2, the choice and impact of any given mechanism or model will depend on attributes of the national (or European) policy-making context in which the organization is working. We also describe these attributes in Chapter 2. What we identify as promising, therefore, will one day need to be evaluated in different contexts to see whether and where this promise is borne out. For now, we focus on who is doing what.

### ***Using websites to find and describe knowledge-brokering organizations***

To address our research objective, we conducted website reviews in all 31 countries that are members of the EU or the EFTA. We identified country correspondents for each of the 31 countries and supported their:

- identification of potentially eligible knowledge-brokering organizations;
- use of explicit criteria to assess the eligibility of these organizations (criteria are provided in Appendix B); and
- use of a data-collection tool to extract data from eligible organizations' websites about the knowledge-brokering mechanisms and models that they use (Appendix C).

We also identified validators for the eligibility assessments and supported their review of the list of included organizations and the list of organizations that were carefully considered and found to meet some, but not all, of our eligibility criteria. A list of country correspondents for the website reviews and validators for the eligibility assessments is provided in Appendix D.

Country correspondents were encouraged to review the following types of websites in order to identify potentially eligible knowledge-brokering organizations:

- networks operating with the country, subregion or region
- governments
- intermediary organizations, such as the national knowledge centres in Belgium and Norway
- independent research organizations
- universities.

They were also encouraged to contact colleagues to assist with identifying potentially eligible organizations.

Our eligibility criteria focused on knowledge-brokering organizations that:

- fund, conduct or disseminate research;
- focus (at least in part) on governance, financial and delivery arrangements within health systems;
- identify policy-makers as being among the target audiences for their research;
- function as semi-autonomous or autonomous organizations;

- put all (or almost all) products in the public domain (whether or not there is a small charge) in order to advance the public interest;
- add value beyond the simple collection and collation of data; and
- target EU or EFTA Member States, groupings of these Member States or those constituent units of these Member States that are above the level of municipalities (e.g. provinces, counties).

The eligibility criteria meant that we did not include knowledge-brokering organizations that focus primarily on taking political positions or solely on clinical or public health issues (e.g. health technology assessment agencies), or organizations that primarily collect and collate data or that do not consider European policy-makers to be a target audience. We also excluded organizations that do not put most of their products in the public domain. The specific types of organizations that were excluded in our substudy as a result of these criteria are described in Appendix B. We noted repeatedly in our interactions with country correspondents and validators that the eligibility assessment was not an accreditation-type activity or a pronouncement about who does good work, but rather an effort to identify organizations that met explicit criteria.

The data-collection tool covered five domains:

1. the organization itself, including whether it is operating at the pan-European, cross-national, national or subnational level; the scale at which it is operating; and its target audiences;
2. each of the organization's information-packaging mechanisms, including the preparation, packaging and supports for its use;
3. each of the organization's interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms, including the preparation, organization and supports for its use;
4. any descriptions of the organizational model used by the organization; and
5. any descriptions of the approach to monitoring and evaluation used by the organization.

Most of the country correspondents completed their eligibility assessments and website reviews between September 2009 and March 2010, with the remainder completing this work in late 2010 or early 2011. The validators reviewed all eligibility assessments in late 2010 or early 2011, and we updated the list of eligible (and carefully considered but excluded) organizations at that time. However, we did not update the data that we had extracted from eligible organizations' websites.

One and sometimes two members of the BRIDGE study team independently assessed all eligibility decisions and conducted checks on all extracted data.

Differences were resolved by consensus and in discussion with the country correspondents and validators. Three individuals entered the coded data into Microsoft Excel, including two individuals who were not members of the BRIDGE study team and who always entered or checked data independently of the BRIDGE study team member. In so doing they:

- coded each organization according to its geographical focus, its scale of operation and target audience, and whether it provided at least some description of its organizational model; and
- coded the knowledge-brokering mechanisms according to their type and, for each organization, the design features of its most innovative type of mechanism.

One member of the BRIDGE study team conducted descriptive statistical analyses of the mechanisms and models in use, both overall and by geographical focus. When reporting on the design features of an organization's most innovative type of knowledge-brokering mechanism, we counted all products or activities of that type. For example, if an organization published two series of research reports, and these were its most innovative information product, we counted each series as a separate product.

For geographical focus, we grouped countries into four subregions (recognizing that the countries in each grouping may share some geographical, historical, political or cultural features but also that they can be quite heterogeneous).

1. Ten eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia).
2. Ten western European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).
3. Six Mediterranean countries (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain).
4. Five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden).

For type of mechanism, we used the BRIDGE criteria (described in Chapter 2) to code information-packaging and interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms as traditional (fewer criteria met) and innovative (more criteria met). As described in more detail in BRIDGE Policy Summary 7 (Lavis, Catallo, Permanand et al., 2013), we considered traditional information products to include:

- books;
- reports, excluding reports of systematic reviews (this category includes what were called commissioned reports, research reports, technical reports

and working papers, as well as health policy studies, health sector reviews, indicator/country profiles, and policy papers);

- journal articles, excluding articles about systematic reviews;
- systematic reviews;
- presentations;
- newsletters (this category includes what were called bulletins, listservs and newsletters); and
- annual reports.

We considered more innovative information products to include:

- summaries of reports, excluding reports of systematic reviews (this category includes media releases);
- summaries of journal articles, excluding articles about systematic reviews;
- summaries of systematic reviews;
- summary statements;
- compendiums of summaries;
- issue notes (this category includes what were called issue briefs, memos, and other products that start with a policy issue but do not address the full breadth of problem, options and implementation considerations);
- policy briefs (this category includes products that address the full breadth of problem, options and implementation considerations);
- policy dialogue reports;
- interactive databases; and
- visual or multimedia information products (this category includes videos, such as those that organizations post on YouTube, as well as cartoons, podcasts, and TV/radio advertisements).

As described in more detail in BRIDGE Policy Summary 8 (Lavis, Catallo, Jessani et al., 2013), we considered traditional interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms to include:

- presentations to an audience that includes policy-makers and stakeholders (category includes presentations at conferences, meetings, seminars and other forums);
- informal discussions with policy-makers and stakeholders;
- networks to oversee a research programme or project (category includes

working groups, network meetings and research exchanges if they are focused primarily on a research programme or project and not a policy issue); and

- online discussion forums with restricted access (category includes intranet sites and member-only websites).

We considered more innovative interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms to include:

- government working groups (category includes working groups and national support teams if they are focused on a policy issue and not a research programme or project and if this focus is a long-term engagement);
- online discussion forums with open access (category includes blogs, Facebook, Twitter and other online discussion forums that do not restrict access);
- online briefings and webinars;
- training workshops (category includes workshops where the focus is on developing policy-makers' and stakeholders' capacity to find and use health systems information);
- personalized briefings (category includes more formalized face-to-face briefings, including what were called policy briefings, personalized seminars, and policy consultations, and one-off briefings by national support teams); and
- policy dialogues (category includes face-to-face events that address the full breadth of problem, options and implementation considerations).

### ***Findings from the website reviews***

Of the 404 knowledge-brokering organizations based in Europe that were carefully considered for inclusion in this BRIDGE substudy, 163 met our eligibility criteria, of which:

- 62 worked in one of the 10 western European countries;
- 28 worked in one of the six Mediterranean countries;
- 27 worked in one of the 10 eastern European countries;
- 24 worked in one of the five Nordic countries;
- 17 had a Europe-wide focus;
- 4 had a global focus; and
- 1 had a cross-national focus (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1** Number of knowledge-brokering organizations, by scale of operation and target audience

Organization type	All			Scale of operation				Target audiences				Other target audiences <sup>14</sup>	
	Small <sup>5</sup>	Inter-mediate	Large <sup>6</sup>	Not available <sup>7</sup>	National and subnational policy-makers		International policy-makers		International agencies/NGOs		Health system managers <sup>13</sup>	Other	
					Politicians <sup>8</sup>	Civil servants <sup>9</sup>	Politicians <sup>10</sup>	Staff <sup>11</sup>	Advisers and consultants <sup>12</sup>				
Global-level organizations	4	1	0	2	1	4	4	4	4	3	2	0	
European-focused organizations	17	6	5	3	3	16	16	13	12	12	4	7	
Intra-European or cross-national organizations	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	
National organizations													
eastern European countries <sup>1</sup>	27	10	11	4	2	25	25	10	15	15	20	12	
western European countries <sup>2</sup>	62	16	21	19	6	60	59	33	31	24	47	15	
Mediterranean countries <sup>3</sup>	28	6	14	3	5	24	27	8	13	13	27	7	
Nordic countries <sup>4</sup>	24	4	9	9	2	21	20	6	1	2	6	4	
<b>All organizations</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>45</b>	

**Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (n=10).
- <sup>2</sup> Western European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (n=10).
- <sup>3</sup> Mediterranean countries include Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (n=6).
- <sup>4</sup> Nordic countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (n=5).
- <sup>5</sup> <10 staff and <30 published outputs per year.
- <sup>6</sup> >100 staff and >300 published outputs per year.
- <sup>7</sup> The scale of operation could not be assessed from the information provided on the organization's website.
- <sup>8</sup> National and subnational policy-makers – politicians include ministers of health or finance, among others, who take the major health policy decisions.
- <sup>9</sup> National and subnational policy-makers – civil servants include civil servants in health, finance, and other relevant ministries who draft position papers and legislation, oversee reforms and have a significant influence on the decisions of politicians and parliaments.
- <sup>10</sup> International policy-makers – politicians include members of pan-European bodies, such as the European Parliament, who play an increasing role in shaping economic policy at a pan-European level.
- <sup>11</sup> International policy-makers – staff include staff of pan-regional or global bodies, such as the European Commission or World Bank, who directly or indirectly affect policy-making in countries.
- <sup>12</sup> International agencies/nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) – advisers and consultants on health-care reform include individuals who have a direct impact on decisions, particularly when supporting the national policy-makers of central and eastern Europe.
- <sup>13</sup> Health system managers include senior managers with hands-on responsibility for the running of health-care providers, purchasing authorities, sickness funds and other institutions.
- <sup>14</sup> To be eligible for inclusion in the study, an organization's target audiences had to include one of the aforementioned groups and not health system managers exclusively.

The organizations were more commonly of intermediate size (n=60) than small (n=43) or large (n=40) in size; and more likely to target national and subnational policy-makers than international policy-makers and advisers. We provide in Appendix E a list of included organizations as well as those that were carefully considered and found to meet some, but not all, of our criteria.

Organizations used a variety of traditional and innovative information-packaging mechanisms (Table 4.2). Traditional types of information products that were commonly available on the websites of knowledge-brokering organizations included:

- reports (n=235), particularly for organizations based in western Europe (n=88)
- newsletters (n=64)
- journal articles (n=32).

Innovative types of information products were also made available, although less frequently:

- summaries of reports (n=27)
- issue notes (n=23)
- videos (n=10).

Other innovative types of products were used much less frequently.

We examined the most innovative type of information product made available by each organization and found the following characteristics (Tables 4.3 and 4.4):

- a large majority of the information products targeted policy-makers explicitly (n=123);
- the largest proportion were based on a research project (n=98), the smallest proportion were based on a systematic review (n=33);
- the largest proportion focused on a problem or policy objective (n=107), the smallest proportion focused on implementation considerations (n=77);
- relatively few were reviewed by members of the target audience before publication (n=25);
- a fair proportion used language clearly intended to be accessible for their target audiences (n=104).
- few were accompanied by online commentaries or briefings about the product by target audience representatives (n=6).

**Table 4.2** Number of information-packaging mechanisms used by knowledge-brokering organizations, by type

Organization type	Traditional types of information products					Innovative types of information products											
	Books (excluding system-atic reviews)	Journal articles (excluding system-atic reviews)	System-atic reviews	Presentations	News-letters reports	Annual reports	Sum-maries of journal articles (excluding reviews)	Sum-maries of state-ments	Compen-dium summaries	Issue notes	Policy briefs	Policy dialogue reports	Inter-active data-bases (e.g. videos)	Visual media			
Global-level organizations (n=4)	0	10	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1
European-focused organizations (n=17)	2	44	3	0	0	7	7	5	2	1	0	0	4	3	0	4	1
Intra-European or cross-national organizations (n=1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
National organizations																	
eastern European countries (n=27) <sup>1</sup>	2	34	1	0	9	7	10	4	0	0	0	0	7	1	1	0	2
western European countries (n=62) <sup>2</sup>	12	88	17	1	0	36	9	15	0	0	0	1	10	3	0	1	4
Mediterranean countries (n=28) <sup>3</sup>	4	29	9	1	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nordic countries (n=24) <sup>4</sup>	1	30	2	2	3	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
<b>All organizations (n=163)</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (n=10).  
<sup>2</sup> Western European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (n=10).  
<sup>3</sup> Mediterranean countries include Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (n=6).  
<sup>4</sup> Nordic countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (n=5).

**Table 4.3** Characteristics of innovative\* information-packaging mechanisms used by knowledge-brokering organizations (part 1)

Organization type	Targets policy-makers as a key audience (criterion 5)	Origin/source			Primary focus			Reviewed before publication by members of the target audience (criterion 6)		
		Research project (i.e. primary research)	Systematic review (part of criterion 3)	Meeting with policy-makers or other stakeholders	Collation of research-related products and activities	Issue raised by policy-makers	Problem or policy objective (part of criterion 2)		Options for addressing a problem or achieving a policy objective (part of criterion 2)	
Global-level organizations (n=4)	3	2	0	1	2	2	3	3	1	2
European-focused organizations (n=17)	13	8	1	3	6	7	12	8	6	1
Intra-European or cross-national organizations (n=1)	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
National organizations										
eastern European countries (n=27) <sup>1</sup>	21	20	5	9	6	16	19	14	8	6
western European countries (n=62) <sup>2</sup>	51	48	21	19	34	33	50	42	38	10
Mediterranean countries (n=28) <sup>3</sup>	22	7	5	4	20	9	10	15	14	4
Nordic countries (n=24) <sup>4</sup>	13	12	1	0	7	5	12	12	9	2
<b>All organizations (n=163)</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>25</b>

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (n=10).  
<sup>2</sup> Western European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (n=10).  
<sup>3</sup> Mediterranean countries include Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (n=6).  
<sup>4</sup> Nordic countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (n=5).  
 \* Innovative was defined as meeting the greatest number of BRIDGE criteria for information-packaging mechanisms.

**Table 4.4** Characteristics of innovative\* information-packaging mechanisms used by knowledge-brokering organizations (part 2)

Organization type	Uses language that is clearly designed to be accessible (criterion 8)	Packing Follows a graded-entry format with key messages, possibly an executive summary and a full report (criterion 9)	Highlights decision-relevant information explicitly (e.g. benefits, harms and costs of options) (criterion 7)	Supporting wider use Accompanied by online commentaries or briefings about the product by target audience representatives (criterion 10)	Option to sign up for e-mail alert/listserv when new products are posted online (criterion 11)
Global-level organizations (n=4)	4	2	2	0	1
European-focused organizations (n=17)	10	9	4	0	6
Intra-European or cross-national organizations (n=1)	1	1	0	0	1
National organizations					
eastern European countries (n=27) <sup>1</sup>	20	15	15	2	4
western European countries (n=62) <sup>2</sup>	42	37	32	3	28
Mediterranean countries (n=28) <sup>3</sup>	18	19	15	1	6
Nordic countries (n=24) <sup>4</sup>	9	5	4	0	6
<b>All organizations (n=163)</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>52</b>

*Notes:*
<sup>1</sup> Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (n=10).  
<sup>2</sup> Western European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (n=10).  
<sup>3</sup> Mediterranean countries include Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (n=6).  
<sup>4</sup> Nordic countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (n=5).

\* Innovative was defined as meeting the greatest number of BRIDGE criteria for information-packaging mechanisms.

Compared to information-packaging mechanisms, fewer interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms were profiled on the websites of knowledge-brokering organizations in Europe (Table 4.5). Presentations were by far the most common traditional mechanism (n=131), others were used much less frequently:

- networks to oversee a research programme or project (n=9)
- informal discussions with policy-makers and stakeholders (n=4).

A variety of more innovative types of interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms were identified, some of which were used more commonly than some traditional mechanisms:

- training workshops (n=30)
- personalized briefings (n=26)
- online discussion forums (n=11).

Looking closer at the most innovative interactive knowledge-sharing mechanism from each organization, we found the following characteristics (Tables 4.6, 4.7, 4.8):

- a large majority targeted policy-makers explicitly (n=91) or other stakeholders who would be involved in, or affected by, decisions (n=106);
- very few were based on a systematic review (n=14);
- roughly equal numbers focused on a problem or policy objective (n=70), options (n=75) or implementation considerations (n=62);
- a fair proportion were timed to relate explicitly to a policy-making process or to requests from policy-makers (n=45);
- most involved a presentation by an expert (n=74), few involved true dialogue (n=27);
- most involved in-person interactions (n=80);
- few captured the insights from the interactions in the form of products that could be circulated (n=33).

Eligible organizations typically provided some (but often very limited) description of their organizational models on their websites (n=144); far fewer described their approaches to monitoring and evaluation (n=41) (Table 4.9). Because the extracted data are so sparse and difficult to compare across organizations we have chosen not to present any further detail about organizational models in this chapter, but leave this to other parts of this book, most notably – Chapter 5 which describes our site visits, and Chapters 6–9 which present our case studies.

**Table 4.5** Number of interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms used by knowledge-brokering organizations, by type

Organization type	Traditional types of interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms				Innovative types of interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms					
	Presentations to an audience that includes policy-makers and stakeholders	Informal discussions with policy-makers and stakeholders	Networks to oversee a research programme or project	Online discussion forums with restricted access	Government working groups	Online discussion forums with open access	Online briefings or webinars	Training workshops	Personalized briefings	Policy dialogues
Global-level organizations (n=4)	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0
European-focused organizations (n=17)	9	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	4	1
Intra-European or cross-national organizations (n=1)	9	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National organizations	20	1	0	0	0	1	0	9	6	4
eastern European countries (n=27) <sup>1</sup>	68	1	3	0	4	6	1	3	13	0
western European countries (n=62) <sup>2</sup>	20	1	4	0	0	0	0	12	1	1
Mediterranean countries (n=28) <sup>3</sup>	14	1	0	0	2	0	0	5	2	1
Nordic countries (n=24) <sup>4</sup>	131	4	8	3	6	11	1	30	26	7
<b>All organizations (n=163)</b>										

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (n=10).  
<sup>2</sup> Western European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (n=10).  
<sup>3</sup> Mediterranean countries include Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (n=6).  
<sup>4</sup> Nordic countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (n=5).

**Table 4.6** Characteristics of innovative\* interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms used by knowledge-brokering organizations (part 1)

Organization type	Key target audience		Origin/source					Primary focus			
	Policy-makers (criterion 5)	Other stakeholders who will be involved in, or affected by, decisions	Research agenda setting	Research project (i.e. primary research)	Systematic review of criterion 4)	Collation of research-related products or activities	Issue raised by policy-makers	Training needs identified by policy-makers	Problem or policy objective (part of criterion 2)	Options for addressing a problem or achieving a policy objective (part of criterion 2)	Implementation considerations (part of criterion 2)
Global-level organizations (n=4)	2	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	
European-focused organizations (n=17)	7	6	3	2	0	3	4	2	4	3	
Intra-European or cross-national organizations (n=1)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
National organizations	13	17	10	9	2	6	11	9	13	7	
eastern European countries (n=27) <sup>1</sup>	43	47	47	26	9	30	27	11	33	31	
western European countries (n=62) <sup>2</sup>	17	20	6	5	2	6	10	8	11	12	
Mediterranean countries (n=28) <sup>3</sup>	8	12	5	7	1	6	6	5	8	7	
Nordic countries (n=24) <sup>4</sup>											
<b>All organizations (n=163)</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>62</b>

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (n=10).  
<sup>2</sup> Western European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (n=10).  
<sup>3</sup> Mediterranean countries include Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (n=6).  
<sup>4</sup> Nordic countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (n=5).  
 \* Innovative was defined as meeting the greatest number of BRIDGE criteria for interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

**Table 4.7** Characteristics of innovative\* interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms used by knowledge-brokering organizations (part 2)

Organization type	Timing relates explicitly to a policy-making process or to requests from policy-makers (criterion 6)		Preparation		Format		
	Closed list of invitees (part of criterion 7)	Pre-circulation of products (criterion 8)	Rule about whether and how comments can be attributed (part of criterion 7)	Presentation by an expert	Questions and answers targeted at an expert	Policy-maker commentaries on an expert's input (part of criterion 9)	Dialogue where each participant has the potential to contribute equally to the discussion (part of criterion 9)
Global-level organizations (n=4)	2	1	0	1	1	1	0
European-focused organizations (n=17)	5	0	0	5	2	2	3
Intra-European or cross-national organizations (n=1)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
National organizations							
eastern European countries (n=27) <sup>1</sup>	5	1	0	15	14	3	1
western European countries (n=62) <sup>2</sup>	16	2	4	31	23	16	14
Mediterranean countries (n=28) <sup>3</sup>	6	1	3	11	10	4	6
Nordic countries (n=24) <sup>4</sup>	2	2	0	11	7	4	3
<b>All organizations (n=163)</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>

*Notes:*
<sup>1</sup> Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (n=10).

<sup>2</sup> Western European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (n=10).

<sup>3</sup> Mediterranean countries include Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (n=6).

<sup>4</sup> Nordic countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (n=5).

\* Innovative was defined as meeting the greatest number of BRIDGE criteria for interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

**Table 4.8** Characteristics of innovative\* interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms used by knowledge-brokering organizations (part 3)

Organization type	Nature of interactions			Supporting wider use	
	In-person interactions (part of criterion 7)	Online synchronous (real-time) interactions (part of criterion 7)	Online but asynchronous interactions	Products produced based on the interactions (criterion 10)	Option to sign up for e-mail alert/listserv when new interaction-related products are posted online (criterion 11)
Global-level organizations (n=4)	0	0	2	0	0
European-focused organizations (n=17)	6	0	3	3	1
Intra-European or cross-national organizations (n=1)	1	0	1	0	0
National organizations					
eastern European countries (n=27)1	11	0	2	2	0
western European countries (n=62)2	36	1	3	23	16
Mediterranean countries (n=28)3	19	0	2	4	3
Nordic countries (n=24)4	7	2	2	1	0
<b>All organizations (n=163)</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>20</b>

*Notes:*

- 1 Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (n=10).
  - 2 Western European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (n=10).
  - 3 Mediterranean countries include Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (n=6).
  - 4 Nordic countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (n=5).
- \* Innovative was defined as meeting the greatest number of BRIDGE criteria for interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

**Table 4.9** Number of knowledge-brokering organizations providing key description on their websites

<b>Organization type</b>	<b>Organizations providing at least some description of their organizational models</b>	<b>Organizations providing at least some description of their approaches to monitoring and evaluation</b>
Global-level organizations (n=4)	4	3
European-focused organizations (n=17)	15	6
Intra-European or cross-national organizations (n=1)	1	1
National organizations		
eastern European countries (n=27) <sup>1</sup>	21	11
western European countries (n=62) <sup>2</sup>	58	10
Mediterranean countries (n=28) <sup>3</sup>	26	1
Nordic countries (n=24) <sup>4</sup>	19	9
<b>All organizations (n=163)</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>41</b>

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> Eastern European countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (n=10).

<sup>2</sup> Western European countries include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (n=10).

<sup>3</sup> Mediterranean countries include Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (n=6).

<sup>4</sup> Nordic countries include Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (n=5).

***Strengths and weaknesses of the approach***

Working with country correspondents and extracting data from websites proved to be a highly efficient way to identify knowledge-brokering organizations operating within and across Member States of the EU and the EFTA and to examine their knowledge-brokering mechanisms and organizational models (although operational information was less available).

The other strengths of our approach include:

- using explicit criteria to assess the eligibility of these organizations
- using a data-collection tool to extract data from eligible organizations' websites
- involving validators for the eligibility assessments, and
- involving at least two individuals in each step of the process of eligibility assessment, data extraction and data coding.

A downside of our approach is that websites may not tell the whole story. While it would be very unlikely today for a knowledge-brokering organization not to have a website or to profile its information products there (even if only a list of products, such as journal articles where copyright issues may be involved), there may be more interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms in use than

are described on websites. Certainly every organization has an organizational model even if it chooses not to describe the model on its website.

The other weaknesses of our approach include:

- uneven background knowledge among our country correspondents about knowledge-brokering concepts, such as familiarity with systematic reviews;
- some eligibility criteria that were difficult to operationalize, such as whether the organization functions as a semi-autonomous/autonomous organization;
- some data-collection requests that had a significant subjective dimension, such as whether an information product uses language clearly designed to be accessible; and
- data collection that required a degree of generalization across examples in a series, such as whether an information product uses systematic reviews as a source.

The subjective dimension of some data elements made it difficult to ensure that criteria were applied consistently, particularly when websites were in languages not spoken by members of the central coordination team.

Complementary approaches to data collection are needed to better understand the full range of knowledge-brokering mechanisms and organizational models being used across Europe. This is a subject we turn to in later chapters.

### ***Lessons learned***

The key lessons learned from the website reviews include the following.

- There are a large number of knowledge-brokering organizations active in Europe, and they could be helpfully supported to become a community of organizations that learn from one another.
- Innovative knowledge-brokering mechanisms are in use, but they are not widely profiled on organizations' websites and perhaps not widely used.
- Knowledge-brokering organizations tend not to describe their organizational models in any detail on their websites, despite how helpful this information could be to policy-makers and stakeholders who wish to assess whether they are designed for the purpose of knowledge brokering.

### **References**

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