

# Dublin Public Participation Networks

## Understanding and navigating the public policy ecosystem in Ireland

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1. What do we mean by public policy?
2. Different stages in public policy making
3. Understanding public policy making in Ireland
4. Public policy advocacy in Ireland



## What do we mean by public policy?

- Policy as a decision about a course of action designed to achieve stated outcomes or with specific objectives.
- Policy as a series of decisions over time towards the attainment of a goal or objective which initially can be discerned but not defined with clarity.
- Policy as an interactive process of experimentation and learning.

“Public policy is anything a government chooses to do or not to do”  
(Thomas Dye, 1972).



Some examples:



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

## National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta  
National Economic & Social Council

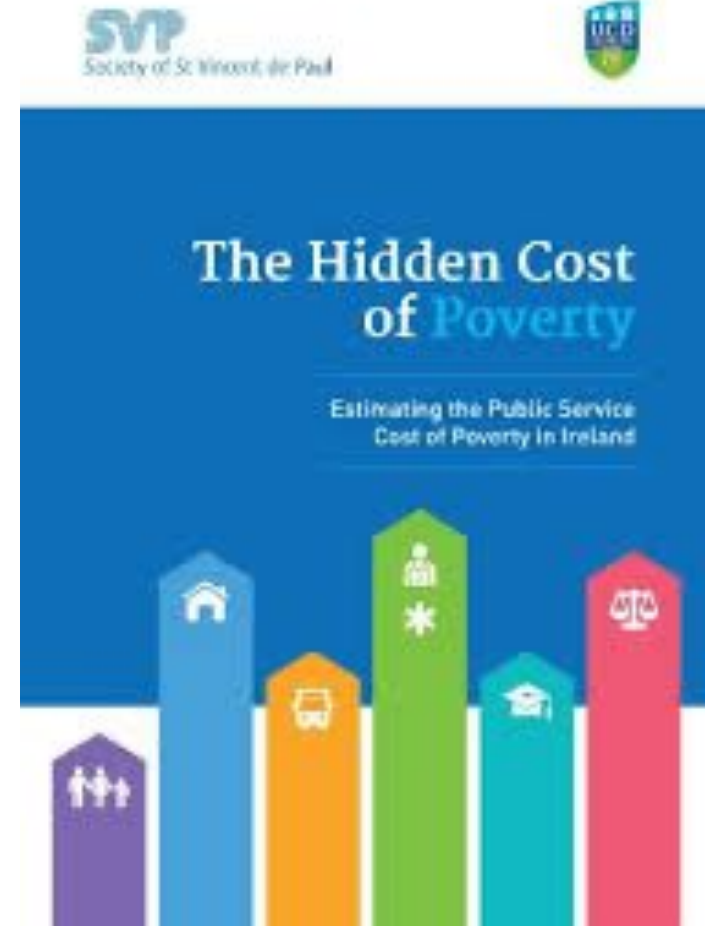


Popular Vulnerability

### NESC Report No. 158 The Covid-19 Pandemic: Lessons for Irish Public Policy



Target Supports

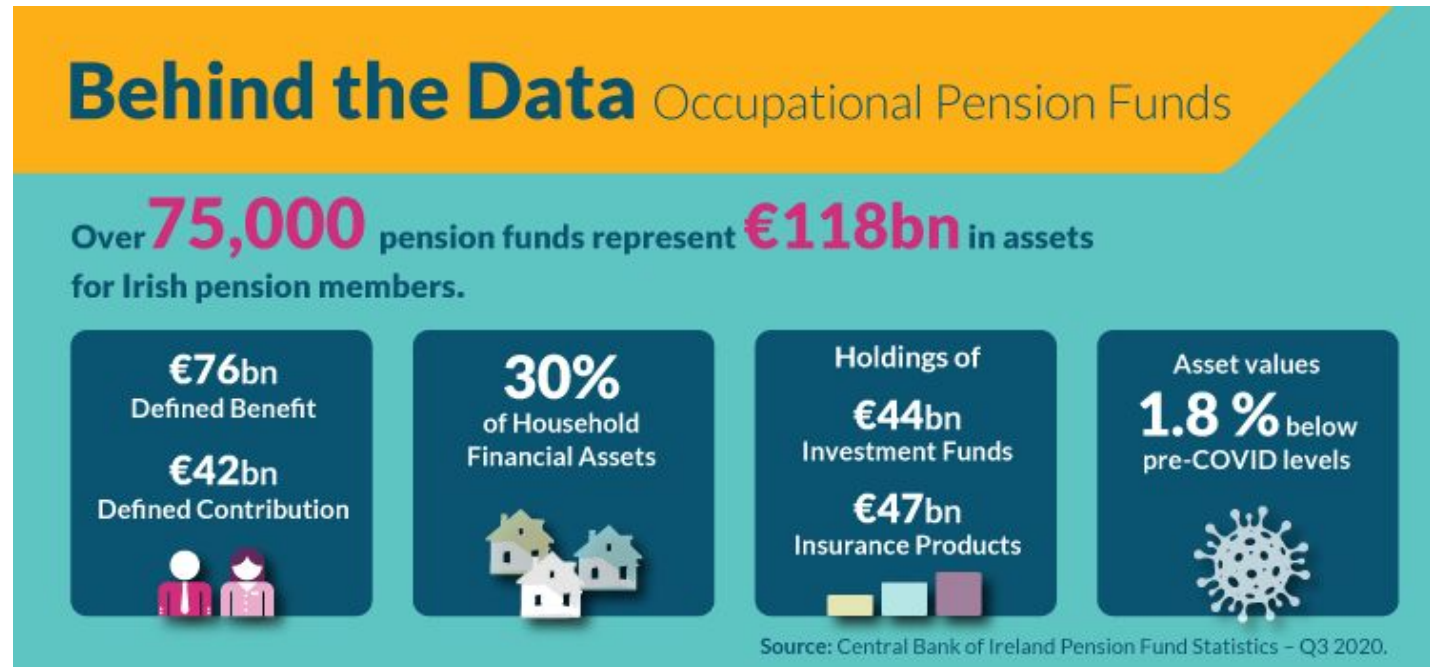


Public policy is a practice and discipline of making tangible written rules that govern a group of people or society at large.

What do you think of this perspective?

# What do we mean by public policy?

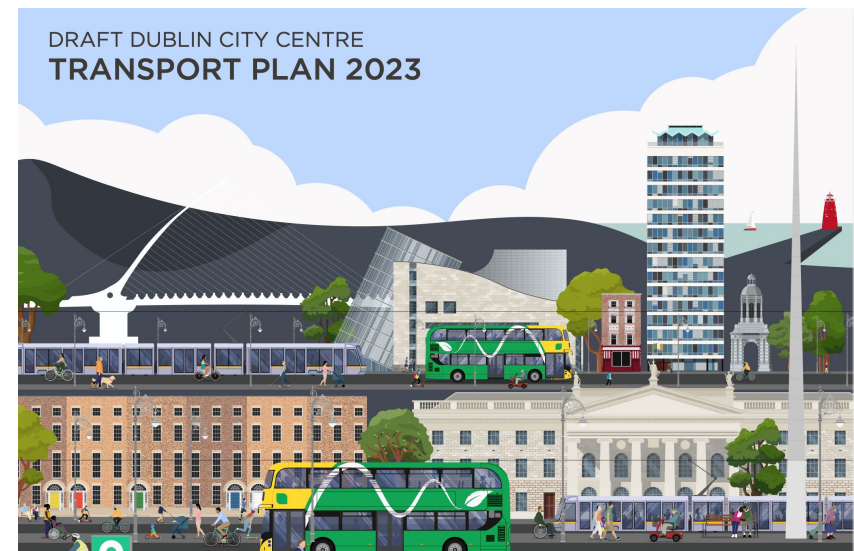
Policy as a complex bundle of problems, plans, ideas, interests, opportunities, threats, challenges and constraints which need to be processed, managed and translated into a response to meet the political needs of the government of the day, and the medium-term interests of the community.







## Public policy in Dublin?



What are we **not** taking about?

What 2-3 contemporary issues that you are interested in, angry about, confused by or actively involved in trying to change?

Are they public policies?



Public policy is normally seen to have a number of key attributes:

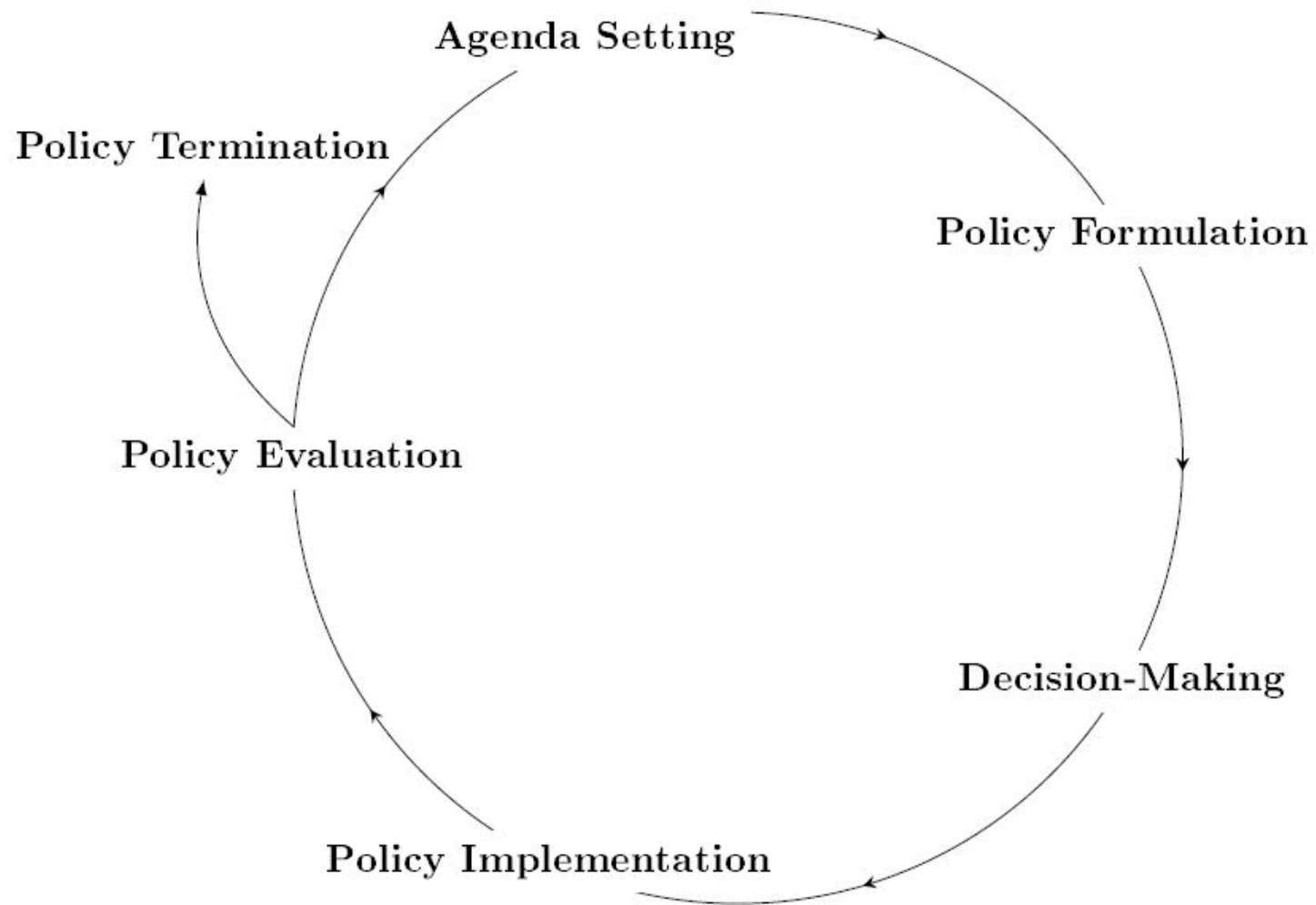
- Policy is made in response to some sort of issue or problem that requires attention;
- Policy is what the government chooses to do (actual) or not do (implied) about a particular issue or problem;
- Policy might take the form of law, or regulation, or the set of all the laws and regulations that govern a particular issue or problem;
- Policy is made on behalf of the "public";
- Policy is oriented toward a goal or desired state, such as the solution of a problem;
- Policy is ultimately made by governments, even if the ideas come from outside government or through the interaction of government and the public;
- Policymaking is part of an ongoing process that does not always have a clear beginning or end, since decisions about who will benefit from policies and who will bear any burden resulting from the policy are continually reassessed, revisited and revised.

**DO THESE MAKE SENSE?**





# Different stages in public policy making



Who does what and when?

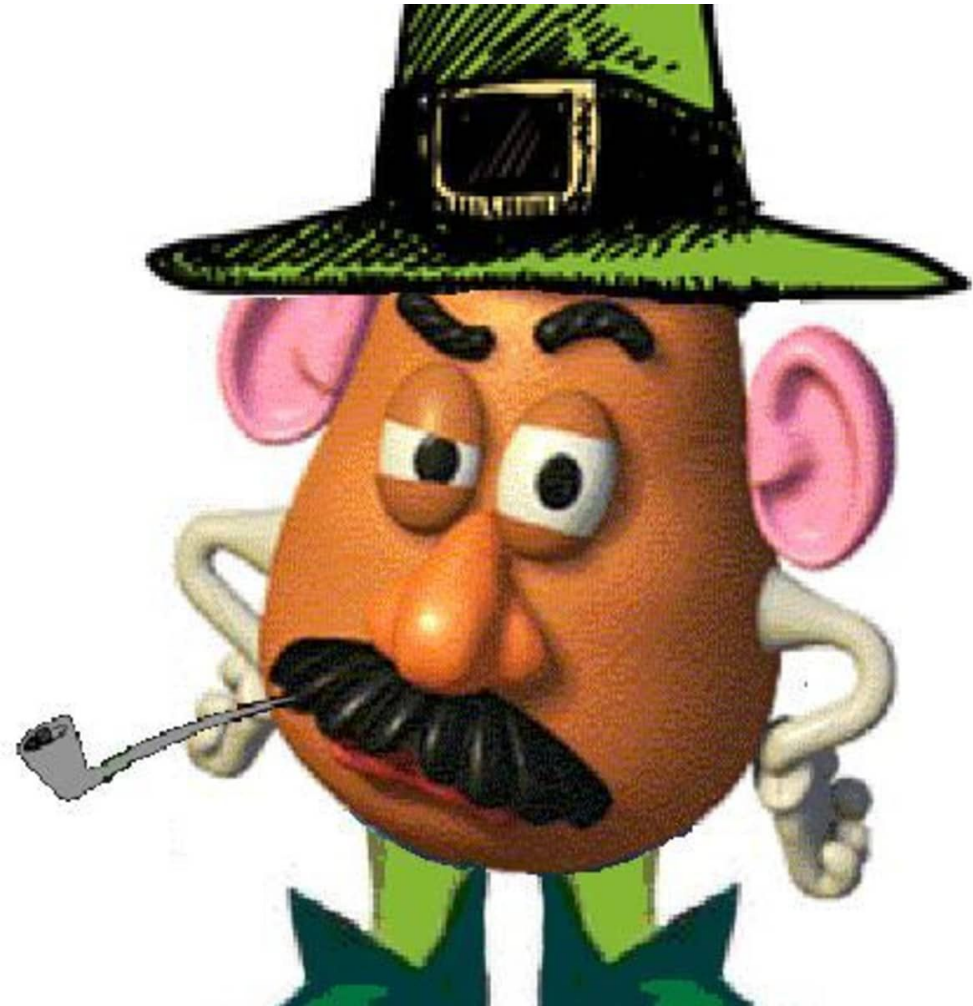
What is involved?

Who is involved?



# Understanding public policy making in Ireland

Ireland is unusual in a number of ways .....



Some features of the Irish system are worth highlighting:

- Very centralised state;
- EU member state;
- Very limited local and regional government competences, very limited powers of locally-elected councillors;
- Variety of arms-length public agencies delivering services?
- **Relatively** strong business (including farmers) and trade union influence and more limited civil society influence on public policy formulation and implementation;
- Variety of structures to facilitate local policy input, e.g. PPNs, SPCs and LCDCs **but** limited scope for local policy development



Advocacy” and “Lobbying” are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, however, they are different.

Advocacy is a general term that can be simply supporting a cause or speaking up for something you believe in.

There is no legal definition used for “advocacy,” however, lobbying is regulated by the Lobbying Act 2015 legislation to provide information to the public about **who is lobbying whom about what**.

#### Advocacy

All activities aimed to influence attitudes and policies ... not only – or even – lobbying

#### Lobbying

A key advocacy tool

... specific activities aiming to make decision makers take a specific stand on a specific issue.

See <https://www.lobbying.ie/> for details



# Public policy advocacy in Ireland .....





# Public policy advocacy in Ireland .....





**Pick up the  
phone and  
ring me  
two years  
ago!**

Some useful resources:

Tom Ferris. 2015. Reflections on the public policy process in Ireland. *Administration*, Vol. 62, no. 4, pp. 87–106. Available at:

[https://www.ipa.ie/\\_fileupload/Documents/PDF/publications/Reflections\\_onthe\\_PublicPolicy\\_Process.pdf](https://www.ipa.ie/_fileupload/Documents/PDF/publications/Reflections_onthe_PublicPolicy_Process.pdf)

Fintan Phelan. 2021. Strategic policy committees: Talking shops or active participants in local policy development? *Administration*, Vol. 69, no. 4, pp. 151-160. Available at:

<https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/admin-2021-0032>

Local Authority Budgets <http://localauthorityfinances.com/>





# Any Questions?