

Preparatory Action for the Creation of a European Community of Practice on Policy Experimentation

Polymaker survey instrument

19 September 2025

1. Introduction for respondents

This survey is a collaboration between the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Technopolis Group and the Innovation Growth Lab (IGL). We are exploring how to provide better support for innovation in policymaking across Europe, and your expertise is essential. Your response will directly shape how the European Commission designs future resources and support networks for policymakers like you.

At the end of the survey you will have the opportunity to see how your responses compare to everyone else who has completed the survey. You can also choose to receive a summary of the findings and get early updates on future developments.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You can pause the survey at any time and return to it later.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. All responses will be **confidential and anonymised**, and the data will be stored securely and used solely for the purpose of this research. You can view the privacy policy [here](#).

If you have any questions about the survey, feel free to contact the study team at policyexperimentation@technopolis-group.com.

This survey is part of a broader initiative supported by the European Commission. More information is available on the [Commission website](#).

	Variable	Question	Response format
1.1	Confirmation of consent	Do you agree to participate in this survey?	Click yes

[End the survey if consent is not provided.]

2. Filter questions

	Variable	Question	Response format
2.1	Country	Which country do you work in?	Select from list, with “other” for non-EU countries or UK
2.2	Policymaker (check)	What type of institution do you work for?	Select: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government body • Public agency • Independent organisation with a public mission • Other <i>[filter out]</i>
2.3	Government level	What is the geographic remit of your institution?	Select: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local/municipal • Regional • National • Cross-national (e.g. EU institution)
2.4	Job function	Which of the following best describe your work?	Select from list (multiple options allowed): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing policies or programmes • Managing or implementing policies or programmes • Evaluating policies or programmes • Providing administrative or technical support for policies or programmes • None of the above <i>[filter out]</i>
2.5	Field	Which of the following policy or programme areas do you work on?	Select from list (multiple options allowed): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and arts • Education • Health • Economic development • Environment and/or energy • Housing • Infrastructure • Migration • Research and innovation • Social services • Technology • Transport • Other (please specify)

3. Preference for policy evaluation

In the following questions, you will see a series of scenarios for evaluating a policy or programme. Each scenario presents two options (A and B) that differ across several features.

Imagine that your institution is planning a new programme with a total budget of €1 million, to be deployed over 24 months.

We will present you with 5 pairs of scenarios for how to evaluate this programme. For each pair, simply choose the scenario you prefer. There are no right or wrong answers.

[Repeat the following text on each page of the conjoint survey.]

Which of these two scenarios would you prefer to evaluate the €1 million, 24-month programme?

[Two options will be presented to respondents, each with attributes randomly selected from among the alternatives listed below.]

- **Purpose of the evaluation**
 - Assess the programme's impact
 - Optimise the way the programme is delivered
 - Deepen understanding of the need and potential solutions
- **Type of evaluation**
 - Asking for feedback from users and stakeholders
 - Monitoring changes in outcomes and performance indicators
 - Participants are randomly assigned to receive different forms of support (Randomised controlled trial (RCT))
- **Cost of evaluation**
 - €50 000 (5% of programme budget)
 - €200 000 (20% of programme budget)
- **Set-up time available for evaluation**
 - 3 months
 - 9 months
- **Evaluation timeline**
 - Results needed in 6 months
 - Results needed in 2 years
- **Technical support on evaluation**
 - Available from external experts
 - None available

[Repeat this process 5 times, with different randomly-selected combinations of the elements shown to respondents.]

4. Perceptions and understanding of evidence, evaluation and experimentation

	Variable	Question	Response format
4.1	Perceived importance of evidence & evaluation	Which of the following do you think are most important to consider in designing policies or programmes?	Select from list (up to three options): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views of those affected by the policy • Budget constraints • Existing evidence on the effectiveness of the policy • Being able to generate evidence on the impacts of the policy • Priorities of management or political leadership • Other (specify) <i>[Randomise the order these items are presented in]</i>
4.2	Purpose of evaluation	What do you see as the main purpose(s) of policy evaluation?	Select all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on policy challenges to address • Identify the most effective policies or programmes • Design policies or programmes (before launch) • Refine the design of policies or programmes after launch • Comply with regulations or funders' requirements • Other (specify)
4.3	Use of evaluation	In your institution, are evaluation findings and/or other evidence currently used to:	Select all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on policy challenges to address? • Identify the most effective policies or programmes? • Design policies or programmes (before launch)? • Refine the design of policies or programmes after launch? • Comply with regulations or funders' requirements? • Other (specify) • None of the above
4.4	Challenges	What are the main challenges you encounter in evaluating policies or programmes?	Select from list (up to three options): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of demand for evaluation from decision-makers • Lack of data • Limited expertise on evaluation methods • Limited financial resources for evaluation • Lack of planning time before launching the policy/programme • Other (specify) <i>[Randomise the order these items are presented in]</i>
4.5	Prior on impact of innovation programmes	Overall, how would you characterise the impact of most publicly-funded innovation programmes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally highly impactful • Generally moderately impactful • Generally of limited impact • Generally of little or no impact

	Variable	Question	Response format
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't know

[Experiment: Randomly vary which form of the next question respondents are presented with:]

	Variable	Question	Response format
4.6	Overall familiarity with experimentation	<p><i>[Treatment group:]</i> In this survey, "policy experimentation" refers to a structured and evidence-driven approach that enables policymakers to test, refine, and improve policy interventions before implementing them on a large scale. This often involves using randomised controlled trials (RCTs) or quasi-experimental techniques to evaluate outcomes.</p> <p>How well do you feel you understand the concept of policy experimentation as defined above?</p> <p><i>[Control group:]</i> How well do you feel you understand the concept of policy experimentation?</p> <p><i>[Inform the control group of our definition of policy experimentation once they have responded to this question.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all • A little • A moderate amount • Very well
4.7	Familiarity with RCTs	How well do you understand what is involved in a randomised controlled trial (RCT)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all • A little • A moderate amount • Very well

5. Attitudes to experimentation

	Variable	Question	Response format
5.1	Perceived acceptability of experimentation among general public	<p>In a 2023 study, citizens from six EU member states were asked whether they preferred experimenting with a policy before launching it, or making it available to everyone at the same time.</p> <p>What percentage of respondents do you think preferred experimentation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter percentage

[Experiment: Randomly vary whether or not respondents are presented with this text before or after questions 5.2 to 5.5:]

In the 2023 study, between 58% and 64% (depending on the scenario) said that experimentation was better than – or at least as good as – making a decision about whether to roll out the policy without testing. Only 9% had a clear preference to make the decision without experimenting first. It did not make any difference if the experiment was presented as a randomised controlled trial or a more informal experiment. [Click here to find out more.](#)

	Variable	Question	Response format
5.2	Own views of acceptability of experimentation in general	How do <u>you</u> feel about institutions conducting experiments before rolling out new policies or programmes at scale?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly against • Against • Unsure • In favour • Strongly in favour
5.3	Own views of acceptability of RCTs	<p><i>Experiment: Randomly vary the form of questions 5.3 and 5.4</i></p> <p><i>[Treatment group:]</i> And how do you feel about institutions conducting randomised controlled trials (RCTs), in which groups of participants are randomly selected to receive different forms of support?</p> <p><i>[Control group:]</i> And how do you feel about institutions conducting randomised experiments, in which groups of participants are randomly selected to receive different forms of support?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly against • Against • Unsure • In favour • Strongly in favour
5.4	Perception of acceptability of experimentation	<p><i>Continue with treatment/control allocation from the question 5.3</i></p> <p><i>[Treatment group:]</i> How do you think those who are served or most closely affected by your policies or programmes would feel about carrying out randomised controlled trials (RCTs)?</p> <p><i>[Control group:]</i> How do you think those who are served or most closely affected by your policies or programmes would feel about carrying out randomised experiments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly against • Against • Unsure • In favour • Strongly in favour

[For the control group (those who were not presented with the statement above about the findings of the citizens' survey), show them that statement now.]

6. Drivers of and barriers to experimentation

	Variable	Question	Response format
6.1	Organisational support for experimentation	To what extent does your institution, through its culture and policies, encourage or discourage the use of policy experimentation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly discourages experimentation Discourages experimentation Neutral Encourages experimentation Strongly encourages experimentation
6.2	Drivers of and barriers to experimentation	In your institution, do the following factors encourage or discourage policy experimentation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitude of management or institutional leadership Funders' requirements Attitude of the general public or service users Organisational attitude to risk and new ideas Availability of resources (e.g. funding or staff time) Access to necessary skills and expertise Perceived complexity or difficulty of conducting experiments Legal, regulatory, or ethical considerations Availability and accessibility of relevant data <i>[Randomise the order these are presented in]</i>	Select for each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly discourages experimentation Discourages experimentation Neutral Encourages experimentation Strongly encourages experimentation [Not applicable]
6.3	Drivers of and barriers to experimentation	Are there any other important factors that either encourage or discourage the use of experimentation within your institution?	Open-ended question

7. Experience with experimentation

	Variable	Question	Response format
7.1	Experience with experimentation	Have you, or has your institution, ever been involved in designing or implementing a policy experiment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, have personally been involved Yes, my institution has been involved in a policy experiment, but was not personally involved No
	<i>If yes (personally involved) in question 7.1:</i>		
7.2	Interventions tested	What type of policy instrument(s) were tested in the experiment(s) you've been involved with?	Open-text box

	Variable	Question	Response format
7.3	Experimental methods used	Did these experiment(s) involve any of the following?	Select from list (allow multiple options): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale piloting • Quantitative data collection • Qualitative interviews and/or focus groups • Comparison to a similar group of non participants • Randomisation of participants into treatment or control groups • A/B testing of specific elements (e.g. comparing two website designs) • None of the above
7.4	External support provided	Did you work with external researchers or technical specialists to design, implement or analyse the results of any of these experiment(s)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, academic researchers • Yes, non-academic specialists • No
7.5	Success of previous experiments	How would you rate the success of these experiment(s) in generating useful learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completely unsuccessful • Mostly unsuccessful • Partially successful • Most successful • Very successful
7.6	Challenges with previous experiments	What were the main challenges you encountered with these experiment(s)?	Select from list (up to 3 options): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty of designing a good experiment • Problems with recruiting participants • Problems delivering the intervention • Problems with data collection • Lack of funding to complete • Changes in political or institutional priorities • Lack of capacity to implement the findings • Results were not convincing to decision-makers • Findings were unclear • Other (please specify) • None
7.7	Demand for policy experimentation	Do you think there should be more or less randomised experimentation (RCTs) in your policy area than there is currently?	Select from list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be a lot less • Should be a little less • About the same • Should be a little more • Should be a lot more

8. Interest in community of practice

	Variable	Question	Response format
8.1	Potential of COP or incentives to encourage experimentation	Imagine that your institution is asking staff to volunteer to work on some new policy experiments. Which of the following would encourage you to take part?	<p>Select from list (up to three options):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to join a community of practice on experimentation with other organisations • Short training programme on experimentation • Opportunity to earn a certificate on experimentation • Opportunity to develop contacts with academic researchers • European award scheme for successful experiments • Opportunities for promotion or career development • Other (specify) <p><i>[Randomise the order these items are presented in]</i></p>
8.2	Interest in COP activities	<p>The European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation is exploring how to strengthen collaboration among policymakers across Europe to develop, test, and scale innovative policy approaches in research and innovation.</p> <p>If there were a European Community of Practice for policy experimentation that offered the following activities, how likely would you personally be to participate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading newsletters • Participating in online discussions • Sharing your own institution's experience • Joining workshops to develop plans for the community of practice • Participating in training or capacity-building workshops • Leading specific activities 	<p>For each:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very unlikely to participate • Quite unlikely • Not sure • Quite likely • Very likely

9. Respondent profile

	Variable	Question	Response format
9.1	Job role	What is your current job role?	Select from list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director, director general or chief executive • Head or deputy head of department/unit • Policy officer/analyst • Research & innovation policy and funding advisor • Programme manager/project coordinator • Innovation project specialist • Monitoring and evaluation specialist • Administrative officer (e.g. grant management officer) • Other (please specify)
9.2	Seniority	How long have you worked in public administration (government or public sector)?	Select from list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 1 year • 1 to 5 years • 5 to 10 years • More than 10 years
9.3	Education	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	Select from list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaving qualification • Undergraduate degree • Master's degree • Doctorate • Professional qualification • Prefer not to say
9.4	Age	What is your age?	Select from list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger than 30 years • 30 to 39 years • 40 to 49 years • 50 to 59 years • 60 or older • Prefer not to say
9.5	Gender	Which gender do you identify as?	Select from list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woman • Man • Non-binary • Other • Prefer not to say

10. Close

	Variable	Question	Response format
10.1	Open question for any additional suggestions	Do you have any suggestions about policy experimentation or the new European community of practice (e.g. its activities or how to get people involved)?	Open-ended question
10.2	Mailing list for COP plans and survey results	Would you like to be kept informed about plans for the European Community of Practice, and/or to receive a summary of the results from this survey?	Select all that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, please keep me informed about plans for the Community of Practice on policy experimentation • Yes, please send me a summary of the results from this survey (expected in late 2025) • Please contact me for another reason (please specify) • No
10.2	Mailing list for survey results	<p>If yes, please enter your name and email address here.</p> <p><i>By providing your details, you are consenting to Technopolis Group and/or Innovation Growth Lab storing them. Your name and email address will be separated from your other survey responses before analysis, ensuring that your survey responses are not linked to you personally.</i></p> <p><i>We will not use your data for any other purpose. You have the right to contact us at policyexperimentation@technopolis-group.com at any time if you would like your details to be removed.</i></p>	Open field to add email address