Assessment of policy relevant research in Ukraine

Supply and demand of policy research

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Executive summary

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The following research was conducted on request of the International Renaissance Foundation in the framework of the Think Tank Development Initiative. The goal was to assess the demand and supply of policy research in Ukraine, review its evolution following the Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan), and provide recommendations for donors on how to effectively support public policy research.

The window of opportunity after the Revolution of Dignity has stimulated the supply of policy analysis. Well-established think tanks have promoted policy research developed during the pre-Euromaidan years. In addition, new organizations have entered the market after identifying a demand for their expertise.

The demand side of the policy process has also evolved. Since 2014, the government has launched largescale reforms in multiple areas such as anticorruption, decentralization, the judicial system, health care and education. Public administration reform has influenced the demand side for policy research the most. The responsibilities of the newly created directorates in selected ministries now include maintaining the full public policy cycle, from identifying needs to monitoring implementation. The procedural regulation[1] updated by the Cabinet of Ministers obliges policymakers to use data in policy analysis, assess all possible options, consult with stakeholders and plan for monitoring and evaluation. Work of the Verkhovna Rada committees and Parliament as a whole has also become more open for discussion and contribution from civil society.

The main challenges of think tanks in policy research include a lack of qualified experts to conduct technical policy research, a weak national system of statistical data collection, and unstable sources of funding. With these factors in mind, think tanks have to find the right balance between timeliness of research, its quality and depth, and costs they spend for research.

Think tanks practice three different strategies to respond to policy makers' demands:

- Those who depend on project-based funding tend to see **policy makers as beneficiaries,** meaning donor priorities suggest the research focus. These think tanks may leave a research topic after the end of a project and wait for another funding opportunity to continue research in this area. In this case, donors ensure the relevance of the research to the policy process.

[1] Cabinet of Ministers, Decree on Approval of the Regulations of Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/950-2007-%D0%BF

- **Through media engagement, advocacy-oriented research institutions see their role as promoting an agenda** that is not fully supported by the government. They may publish shadow reports on government policy implementation or engage policy makers in dialogue based on the results of controversial research.

- Highly specialized organizations play a **consultative role for policy makers,** providing key input into critical policies developed by the government. Policy makers see these organizations as go-to experts, may request them to do ad hoc policy analysis and may invite them to be in working groups on the development of key policies. Some think tanks suggest that policy makers delegate some of their work to them.

Over the past four years, Policy makers have become more accessible and less formalistic. Think tanks often report using informal communication, including communicating with officials at the level of deputy minister and minister via personal messengers. While formal working groups and councils continue to exist, this informal communication is seen as the most valuable. At the same time, these contacts are based on particular individuals and are not fully institutionalized within the policy making cycle. Policy makers now have more research available and often use it in the policy making process. The electoral cycle influences policy makers' behavior, emphasizing the need for quick wins and providing little space for criticism.

Policy makers are thirsty for high-quality products based on reliable data sources. In policy papers, they are looking for comprehensive and balanced executive summaries and detailed recommendations focusing on how to implement suggested actions. To meet their needs, research should look at issues broadly and analyze their impact on different spheres. Policy makers would like to have a cross-country comparison with an analysis of factors that have made policies successful in certain contexts and conclusions on how to apply them in Ukraine.

Policy makers lack awareness of think tank products. They express their needs for analysis either through donors who fund such research, directly in private communications with think tanks or during public forums. The majority of policy makers are not ready to fund external policy analysis, but some mechanisms for this already exist. For example, the Ministry of Culture has launched a competition in the framework of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation to fund research on culture. However, most policy makers still look to international donors to fund the research they need, ether externally (through think tanks or experts) or internally (by supporting research units within government institutions).

Recommendations for think tanks:

- Define your organizational or project theory of change: Think tanks should define their theories of change and determine the best way to influence policy. This will inform their approaches in communicating with policy makers, media and citizens.

- Build dialogue with policy makers: Think tanks should organize stakeholder workshops or individual consultations at the beginning of research (to discuss the research focus and methodology) and at the final stage (before finalizing recommendations).

- Provide comprehensive executive summaries: The executive summary is the most important part of the research, as often it is the only chance to get a policy maker's attention. The summary should include main conclusions and recommendations up front.

- Develop actionable recommendations: The capacity for developing actionable and relevant recommendations is one of the key strengths of Ukrainian think tanks in comparison with foreign consulting agencies. Actionable and detailed recommendations make it easier for policy makers to use the research. Validation workshops with key policy stakeholders should focus on ensuring there is a clear plan for how recommendations from research findings can be implemented.

- Prioritize strategic communication: While high-quality research is important, communicating the results is key for recommendations to be implemented. Each think tank should define key audiences based on its theory of change and should package research for each audience. Think tanks should build media relations and use social networks by offering evidence-based arguments into the public discourse

- Develop reputation as a key asset: Policy makers unanimously agree on the importance of reputation as the main quality criteria for research. Think tanks should emphasize their independent boards, internal codes of ethics, quality control, stakeholder review workshops and other internal control mechanisms to prevent potential reputational losses.

- Ensure balanced analysis: Think tanks should aim to provide in-depth balanced analysis based on research data. This analysis should include critical assessments based on the current situation, without biases toward traditional and accepted schools of thought. Language should be clear, without slogans or manipulations. Policy makers lose trust in research, authors and organizations when they see inaccuracies, radical messages and manipulations in reports.

Recommendations for donors:

- International technical assistance projects should seek to support local systems and structures – including collaborating with existing think tanks in the areas where they work – instead of hiring experts on staff for short-term projects. This will lead to greater sustainability of local systems and project results.

- Understand the limitations of different think tanks' theories of change and match them with funding priorities and streams.

- Understand the context and complexity of the policy research process. Quick wins and attractive media events are not possible without thorough research and innovation. Funding mechanisms should allow flexibility for think tanks to provide ad hoc analysis of issues on the agenda as well as to conduct substantial strategic research.

- Assist in increasing the cadre of local policy researchers through supporting internship and scholarship programs, developing formal educational programs, providing short-term training programs for potential leaders, offering opportunities for international exchange, etc.

- Facilitate open stakeholder dialogues between government, civil society and international donors to define research priorities.

- Continue supporting public administration reform as a key driver of strategic, open and evidence-based policy making. The new directorates are starting to exercise the new policy analysis processes. The full policy cycle should become a systemic practice that will result in policy that is more consistent. With the growing capacity for data analysis within public administration, the attention on external analysis is also growing. Eventually, policy makers will seek opportunities to outsource some of the evidence gathering and data analysis that will be beyond the scope of the ministries' capacities.

- Support open data initiatives and improvement of methodologies for gathering and verifying official data in key reform areas. Multiple donor-supported efforts are already concentrated on creating open databases and registries, but the institutional capacity for data management remains low and limits high-quality data analysis.

- Encourage international partnerships between Ukrainian think tanks and foreign groups to advance research of both sides and ensure that policy recommendations are relevant for the Ukrainian context.

- Consider institutional funding as an effective mechanism for supporting the policy research of think tanks. This funding allows for the growth of think tanks, providing flexibility in planning their research activities and developing their capacity.

1. Policy Environment: 2014–2018

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Background

The following research was conducted on request of the International Renaissance Foundation in the framework of the Think Tank Development Initiative with the goal to assess the demand and supply of policy research in Ukraine. With the large-scale reforms launched after the Revolution of Dignity, the demand in Ukraine for high-quality policy research and recommendations has increased. At the same time, international donors remain the main source of funding for policy research, and think tanks continue to struggle to influence policy with their work.

The key goals of this research are to:

- assess the current supply of policy-relevant research in Ukraine;
- review the evolution of demand for policy analysis since the events following the Revolution of Dignity and examine whether there has been an increase in the volume of independent policy analysis being used by the government and how, if at all, it has shaped official decision-making and policy formation;
- identify the prevailing best practices followed by Ukrainian think tanks and the key obstacles they face in influencing policy;
- review donor activity in the field and provide practical and applicable recommendations for donors on how to more effectively deploy their resources in order to support and strengthen the influence of independent public policy research on official policymaking in Ukraine.

Methodology

This report is based on in-depth interviews with representatives of think tanks, policy makers and policy consulting groups as well as a review of policy reports, websites and other publicly available reports on the work of think tanks and policy makers. From October 2018 through March 2019, a group of researchers conducted interviews with 25 representatives of the supply side (think tanks and consulting groups) and 16 policy makers (representatives of ministries, government agencies and Parliament).

The supply-side respondents included representatives of think tanks and consulting groups working in different spheres, including the economy, anti-corruption, social policy, and foreign affairs. The sample included Kyiv-based organizations as well as regional think tanks. The respondents from think tanks were senior managers. The respondents represented different research areas and had various funding mechanisms and different histories. Think tanks build their relationships with decision makers and their modality of work based on their individual theories of change. Literature defines several models for how to look at the role of think tanks in influencing policy. Stachowiak suggests that defining an organization's own theory of change can provide focus for its activities. While none of the respondents talked directly about their theory of change, they clearly defined distinct approaches and strategies they used in their work. These different approaches to policy influence suggests that these organizations have roots in different theories. Below is a summary of the theories of change defined by Stachowiak and quotes from think tank respondents that seem to support these theories:

	Description of ToC	Quote from respondent
1.	**"Large Leaps" where think tanks question fundamental policies, focus on getting media attention and mobilize more actors through issue definition and agenda setting**	"We would like to move the issue of state funding of policy research. We have been conducting presentations and work on this topic since 2017. We see that this is a complex topic and there is a demand for this from the Ministry of Health and the Health Center. But there are no mechanisms for funding the analytical materials."
2.	**"Policy Window" where think tanks can define the problem through research, framing and monitoring; develop policy options and build further political will for change through coalitions and media**	"I think that there was a window of opportunity in 2014–2016 when everything you brought went into decisions. Policy makers wanted draft laws; there was no time for proper discussions or proper policy processes. If the solution was already developed, then it was taken by policy makers. Things were carried by this inertia until 2017, and since then the demand has decreased significantly."

[2] Sarah Stachowiak, "Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts," Center for Evaluation Innovation, http://www.pointk.org/resources/files/Pathways_for_Change.pdf

3.	**"Coalition" where think tanks should engage in building temporary coalitions with those who are interested in the issue, develop policy solutions and conduct legal advocacy, change public opinion on the issue through research and exchange**	"We are working with the public opinion – when we want to change government policy, when we want them to change their approach, we work on public awareness. We prepare reports, present them publicly: for experts, journalists, civil society. We have to build public opinion and a coalition around it to influence policy change."
4.	**"Power politics", where think tanks tend to focus on a few key influencers in the specific area, develop relationships with them, and are seen by the decision makers as credible partners**	"We talk with people responsible for certain areas of policy development or implementation. We communicate with Parliament, government and business, as many of our initiatives touch their interests."
5.	**"Regime," where think tanks focus on either 1) working within the current regime (becoming part of the regime or influencing members) or 2) developing an alternate regime (alternate coalitions) or 3) aiming to oppose the current regime with the goal to overthrow it**	"All our research is useful for everyone, but not our policy makers. Our topics are not interesting to decision makers. There are enough lobbyists; the policy makers do not want independent think tanks. We are really bothering them with our work, as we are publishing independent reports that assess their work negatively. There are no results of government work in our reports, and they want to communicate their results, but there is nothing to communicate about."

Ukrainian think tanks are choosing their theories of change based on the issues they advocate and their relationships with – and views on the position of – key decision makers. Later in this report, we provide examples of where these theories of change inform the tactics of think tanks in relationships vis-à-vis decision-makers and media.

The demand-side respondents included 16 representatives of various ministries, the Cabinet of Ministers, and committees of the Verkhovna Rada. Unlike think tanks and consulting firms, the majority of respondents on the demand side had a very narrow focus on a particular policy area. Although respondents represented a wide variety of institutions, their individual responses represented the situation in their particular areas of responsibility. Only those who work at the political level were able to provide a broader view on the policy process. Also, in comparison with other respondents, policy makers at the political level (such as members of Parliament) often have less time to digest research and emphasize the need for short, substantial summaries.

Supply Side of Policy Research

The State of Think Tanks after 2014

The events of 2014 had a significant impact on the supply side of policy analysis. For well-established think tanks, it gave a chance to promote their policy research and quickly bring to the table policy recommendations that had been developed for years. At the same time, the opening after 2014 allowed new think tanks and analytical groups to emerge. In addition, a few organizations expanded their work into policy analysis after identifying a demand for their expertise. The research included interviews with various organizations representing different backgrounds that can be loosely organized by the following criteria:

<table>
<tr><th>Criterion</th><th colspan="3">Type of organization and distinctive features</th></tr>
<tr><td>Organization life cycle</td><td colspan="2">Well-established organizations with long histories who have worked with different governments. With the opening in 2014, these were able to significantly promote their policy research and initiatives.</td><td>Newly created organizations, often with a strong mission, vision and approach to policy influence. Their staff comes from different backgrounds and they focus on a specific niche.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Type of funding</td><td colspan="2">Organizations that work purely on donor funding</td><td rowspan="2">Organizations that have other sources of funding: business, government, private donations. They are limited in scope by their customers. Those who rely on government funding tend to be more academic; research that is funded by business tends to be more short-term and practical.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Organizations that have access to institutional funding and therefore have more freedom in their work</td><td>Organizations that struggle for project funds, and therefore are limited in the scope of their research and advocacy</td></tr>
</table>

Key products and activities	Traditional think tanks who are engaged in routine policy analysis and produce policy documents and recommenda-tions and are engaged in legal drafting	Organizations that sometimes call themselves hybrid, where research is not their main activity but supports other work		
		Advocacy and communications	Monitoring and watchdog groups	Focus on a specific research tool (surveys or data mining)
Area of influence	Focus only on national policies	Based in Kyiv but have an impact on sub-national policies	Regional organizations working on national issues	Regional organizations focused on regional agendas; have difficulties finding funding; often rely on outside experts as they cannot keep experts on staff

These criteria and categories influence an organization's approach to policy analysis. With few exceptions, most think tanks do not see themselves as being in competition with each other and often cooperate on research. For example, in the field of economics, think tanks produce joint reports, conduct joint public events and implement joint initiatives to promote their agendas. VoxConnector is one example of such collaboration. The attitude to a competition is positive, as it stimulates improvements in quality of research, a variety of thoughts and public discussion.

Quotes from interviews:

"It is important that research exists. The more, the better. This will create competition not only of ideas but quality. Before the supply was not so wide. Before, if analytical products were on high quliayt, they were taken Now there is a demand for much more details, concrete recommendations and quality. This is a challenge that we need to respond to."

"We are promoting the policy agenda of an open market economy. There are organizations who are against this agenda. We compete with them in terms of ideas."

Think tanks are dealing with a number of challenges. First, they struggle to find qualified experts who can perform high-quality policy analysis. Think tanks often invest in their own staff development by providing internship opportunities, mentorship and guidance. Respondents acknowledge that this takes much effort and often ends with trained staff leaving them. In the job market, think tanks compete with international technical assistance programs and consulting companies who often can pay higher salaries. The expertise that is in most demand includes policy writing, IT, data analysis, economic analysis, cost-benefit analysis and any expertise at the local level.

The second obstacle for think tanks is access to data. State statistics often are unreliable or even absent at the local level. Analysis by one think tank has led to the improvement of reporting of state statistics on GDP. The research identified flaws in calculations, and the State Statistics Service has used international expertise to improve its calculation methods. Another respondent reported that when collecting data on the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine, their results were different from the state statistics by a few hundred thousand. Those who are using data mining and analysis of open data often have to spend much effort on cleaning and validating the data. The state statistics system does not allow for disaggregation at the local level, making analysis at the sub-national level impossible. Data remains closed or is often provided in non-machine-readable format. Progress in this area is slow, with only a few open registries available online (open registries of court cases and registered businesses; a portal that gathers various data sets at data.gov.ua). Think tanks in particular advocate for greater openness and transparency, setting standards for open data in government agencies.

The issue of finding funding for think tanks' research and operations is another challenge that limits think tank activities. Many respondents report that project-based funding continues to limit their activities on the issue they would like to research. Limited by funding and the inability to hire more qualified experts, think tanks cannot further research areas even when they see a demand for such work. International donors remain one of the key sources of funding for independent research. Think tanks often have to balance their organizational goals, demand from policy makers and project-based funding priorities. Institutional funding has helped some organizations to grow professionally, expand their expertise and become more influential in the policy process. There are limited mechanisms to get research funding from the state. The availability of "free" donor-funded research has made the work of think tanks less valuable to the government, as policy makers are not aware of the real value of high-quality research, taking for granted what donors provide them.

About one-third of respondents acknowledge they are struggling with effective communication and advocacy. One of the most challenging tasks for think tanks is to make complex research more readable for the public and media. However, others claim that as long as they have something to communicate, they never have an issue with the media. The skill of simplifying key messages could be improved, especially among well-established think tanks. To create media-worthy messages, think tanks must spend a long time conducting in-depth research. To remain relevant and recognized in the media, one has to produce regular research, which again leads to the issue of continued funding and relevant expertise.

To deal with the above-mentioned challenges, think tanks often have to balance the relevance of research, its quality and depth, and spending on research. Think tanks are ready to expand their activities, methods and topics assuming they have enough resources to do their job.

Existing Policy Products

The think tanks that took part in this research cover a variety of issues and topics, including public finance, corruption, public administration, judicial reform, the economy, political culture and electoral preferences, EU integration, education and health issues. While some of these topics are more popular and have multiple organizations researching them, think tanks often specialize in particular areas within a broader topic. Think tanks tend to have their niche and not to intervene in the same area of research as others. Where some overlap is happening, there is a strong tendency for cooperation rather than competition. For example, organizations that are working on party finance have joined their efforts in monitoring, analysis and promotion of the issue.

The most popular policy areas include:

- Economy –macro analysis, regional economic strategies, legislation on the tax on withdrawal of capital, currency liberalization
- Anticorruption – monitoring of public procurement, tracking the public attitude to corruption, drafting specific legislation for greater transparency
- Education – education as the key productivity factor, civic education, performance-based funding for universities, quality of education and external testing
- EU integration – monitoring attitudes toward EU integration, implementation of the EU association agreement in various areas, harmonization of particular markets with the EU
- Conflict in Donbas – reintegration of Donbas, peacebuilding and attitudes toward the conflict
- Public administration reform – effectiveness of government and payment to civil servants.

The format of the product varies depending on the purpose and demand of the policy makers. The regular practice is to first produce a long version of a report and then develop a shorter policy brief that is more suitable for media and policy makers.

Among the policy products produced are:

- Books and monographs
- Green papers/white papers
- Quarterly and annual digests
- Policy papers
- Policy briefs
- Infographics
- 1–2 page policy updates on demand

Most respondents reported that they conduct internal and external peer reviews. Some have more developed and regulated guidelines for developing policy products; others have informal guidance that all experts are aware of and follow. Finding external reviewers is challenging for many think tanks, as the issues that they research require specific technical expertise.

Think tanks would like to expand their research by providing deeper analysis. The main limitations for think tanks in terms of research are the constraints of funding mechanisms and absence of qualified experts in the areas they would like to expand. The pressure to deliver new research due to project funding and to respond to the policy agenda distracts them from going deeper in certain areas. Deeper analysis would include use of more advanced methodologies and tracking changes over time in the research area.

A lack of qualified experts limits respondents in expanding their research in the following topics:

- E-governance
- Medical reform
- Local economic development
- Cost-benefit analysis of policy proposals

Funding constrains limit research in the following areas:

- Local self-governance and reform at the level of raions (districts)
- State funding of political parties
- International views on the role and perceptions of Ukraine in the world
- Education as a tool for development of human potential and economic growth
- Attitudes of Ukrainians to national minorities including Hungarians and Roma
- Gender roles and perceptions
- Integration of foreigners in the Ukrainian labor market and their overall role in economic development
- Urbanization and expansion of large cities and the disappearance of smaller cities
- Monitoring and implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA)
- Research in military, national security and defense, and the energy sector
- International study on populism
- Ideology of the Ukrainian right and patriotic organizations
- Technologies of the future and their application in Ukraine
- Further research on state funding of think tank research

Besides pointing out areas where think tanks have some limitations, the representatives of think tanks involved in this study had some general recommendations on where policy

research should be expanded in the medium term. Sustaining reform achievements is a key area where think tanks would like to focus. Crucial reforms that were launched after Euromaidan had some legislative improvements but have not reached their end goals. Respondents that were particularly concerned on sustaining the reform achievement, suggested the role of the think tank based on the Policy Window Theory of Change (described above), where think tanks should work on informing public opinion on the implementation of reforms, creating additional public pressure for reforms and therefore increasing the political will to carry them out. Among the reforms where some progress was admitted but further actions are needed, representatives of think tanks named property rights and judicial reform, competitive energy markets, currency liberalization, and reforms to prosecution and law enforcement.

Other critical areas that need more policy research according to representatives of think tanks include:

- Breaking the power of oligarchs in all areas: economy, politics, media, etc.
- Efficiency of government spending
- Judicial and anticorruption reforms
- Health care
- EU integration
- Local self-governance and decentralization
- Electoral law
- Social care and pensions
- Economic development
- National security and defense
- Ecology
- Education
- Public administration

Besides broader topics, respondents had suggestions on how think tanks should do their research. Respondents' recommendations included focusing on the following areas:

- **Gaps and depth:** Identify gaps in the sector where the think tank focuses and deepen knowledge there. Research should provide depth and new knowledge in the area.
- **Systems and breadth:** Provide systemic solutions and strategies in different sectors based on empirical research. Focus on the big picture rather than small policy changes. Think tanks should look more broadly at issues they research.
- **Research horizontal issues with sectoral applications:** Research areas that influence multiple areas and processes across sectors. For example, while sectoral research is produced on the environment, there is lack of discussion on law enforcement in this area with the role of the controlling bodies, public oversight, and punishment for environment-related violations. While this policy issue is critical for environmental organizations, law enforcement is a general reform area important across sectors.

Communication of Think Tanks with Policy Makers

Since 2014, policy makers have become more accessible. There is an influx of people with experience in civil society, business and international organizations holding high positions in the ministries. Policy makers have become more open and less formalistic. Think tanks engage in regular communication with policy makers at different levels and in various bodies, including individual communication with members of parliament, corresponding ministries and agencies. Multiple respondents reported that they easily resolve routine questions with relevant ministers or deputy ministers through Facebook Messenger. Besides informal connections, think tank experts are engaging with policy makers on formal occasions. Representatives of think tanks are taking part in parliamentary committee hearings, working groups within ministries and state agencies, and public and advisory councils. Among the most effective mechanisms for policy influence named by representatives of think tanks are targeted working groups on particular issues and personal cooperation with separate members of the government.

Quotes from interviews:

"We see that decisions are made through personal opinion or in a populist style. But if before 2014 it [cooperation] was 0, after 2014 it is 7–8 on a 12-point scale. The contents of this cooperation vary. Closer to elections there is less room for maneuvering. And cooperation becomes pointless, as they [policymakers] make populist decisions, and our recommendations are not always offering this."

"Comparing to the previous period our cooperation has significantly improved. Government is ready to hear us, listen to our recommendations; there is a demand for analytics. Some work of government is being delegated to think tanks (preparation of drafts), but this existed before too. Parliamentary committees have become open and we work closely with them, taking part in parliamentary hearings."

Respondents work with the following parliamentary committees:

- State Building and Local Self-Governance
- Legal Support to Law Enforcement and Anti-Corruption
- Legal Policy and Rule of Law
- Fuel and Energy, Nuclear Policy and Nuclear Security
- Foreign Affairs

Respondents also work with the following bodies of the Cabinet of Ministers:

- Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
- Office of Vice Prime Minster on EU Integration
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Regional Development, Construction and Utility Services
- Ministry of Education

- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories
- Ministry of Environment
- Ministry of Economy
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Culture

Other government institutions:

- National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine
- National Agency for Preventing Corruption
- Central Electoral Committee
- National Commission for State Regulation of Energy and Public Utilities
- Oblast administrations and oblast councils
- Foreign Affairs Department in the Presidential Administration
- National Security Council
- National Agency for Civil Service
- National Agency on E-governance

Formal coordination bodies where think tanks are taking part:

- Advisory Council with the Ministry of Education
- Expert Council with the MFA
- National Council of Unity with the President of Ukraine
- Working group with the Ministry of Justice
- Public Council with the oblast administration in Poltava

Most think tanks are taking communication seriously and aim to influence public opinion in the area of their research. The think tanks who more actively communicate tend to relate more to three theories of change mentioned above: policy window, coalition, and regime. Where needed, they are taking additional advocacy measures, joining coalitions of likeminded organizations to influence decision makers. Partnership with coalitions such as the Reanimation Package of Reforms and other specialized organizations in research areas makes their advocacy more effective.

Think tanks use traditional communication tools, but gradually are moving to more innovative formats. The most effective communication tools are considered to be public media events, active social media campaigns and providing comments to journalists on particular issues.

Quote from interview:

"One of the most effective tools is the Reanimation Package of Reforms… This is a powerful public mouthpiece not only for think tanks but for civic organizations…. This is a powerful network that has a meaningful positive image and an established mechanism for cooperation with Parliament and central government bodies. This is the most effective center that works with our key ministry, the Ministry of Ecology."

The communication and advocacy component is especially important for think tanks that aim to promote their policy agendas when policy makers are resisting or delaying important decisions. Policy makers have short attention spans on particular issues, and regular strategic communication efforts are helping to maintain their interest. Policy makers report on quick win achievements, such as approval of legislation; but without additional public pressure, implementation will not happen.. Sustained media focus around a policy area provides additional political benefits for policy makers to engage in the process and promote the implementation of the policy changes.

Response of Think Tanks to Policy Needs

The response to policy makers' needs varies depending on the type of think tank, sources of funding, issues the individual organization promotes, and the organization's theory of change. Below is a description of levels of engagement with policy makers:

- **Policy makers as beneficiaries** – Some think tanks have strictly identified policy makers as beneficiaries of their work. The funding for these institutions is coming from international donors and is project-based. These institutions see the need to respond more to the needs of international donors than to policy makers.

Quote from interview:

"We work when we have a project. Our beneficiaries are government, Parliament, and other state institutions… So we give our work to the government…. I don't know if it corresponds to the interests of politicians…"

- **Promoting agendas** – Other research institutions draw their needs from the larger agenda – for example, the need to promote adaptation of legislation in the framework of the EU Association Agreement or to ensure implementation of a concept that was already approved. These organizations have identified a lack of willingness on the part of policy makers to take action with regard to their agendas. Thus, many of their efforts go into imposing their agendas through advocacy. They publish shadow reports to analyze the progress of their agendas and engage with policy makers on particular areas at a lower level. Their research needs are formed by identification of the weaknesses in reform progress.

- **Consulting policy makers** – Some think tanks closely cooperate with particular government bodies or individual policy makers. They are often seen as key experts in particular technical areas and are consulted in the policy process. The policy maker may request an ad hoc analysis of a particular policy area or suggest a particular area of research for the think tanks. There are examples of analytical reports that were produced upon government request and were not publicly distributed, but rather used by the government to develop strategic policies.
  Policy makers delegate some policy analysis work to think tanks that have the support of donors.

Quotes from interviews:

"90% of our research is at the request of policy makers."

"There is a demand for very technical expertise... for example, to calculate the cost-benefit analysis of the decision on the cashier apparatus for business. This is something that they[policy makers] need, but only they can do it, as only they have access to this data. They want someone to do their work. But most of the decisions are moved from the analytical sphere into political debates. The Ministry of Finance can calculate the benefit of introducing a tax, but the decision will still be political."

Most think tanks have not reported about formal feedback mechanisms. They receive feedback mostly through informal communication with key stakeholders, such as through personal meetings and comments on social media. They routinely monitor media and social media discussions to assess stakeholders' reactions. Many of those interviewed acknowledge that it is a good idea to establish more regular feedback loops with policy makers; however, they have no tools for this yet. One mechanism used by a few think tanks is validation workshops or personal meetings with key decision-makers at the beginning of research to review methodologies and validate key findings. This practice is rare, and only four think tanks reported using such mechanisms sporadically. The practice of facilitating feedback depends on the relationships of a think tank with policy makers and its strategy for policy change. If policy makers are open to change and the organization is pursuing a power-based approach to policy influence, then it is more likely to request feedback from policy makers. If an organization is using the coalition or policy window approach in promoting its agenda, then it will tend to focus on feedback from other stakeholders rather than policy makers – for example, media, citizens and other civil society players.

The increased quantity of policy research has provided policy makers with more data to be used for decision-making. There are more and more instances of highly technical policies that are influenced by think tanks. Some policy influence is direct, when think tanks take part in working groups or closely cooperate with particular decision makers on promoting policy decisions. In other cases, the influence is less direct, where policy makers are referring to particular research in justification of their policy decisions or public debates.

Examples of direct policy influence:

- Recommendations for civil service remuneration reform are taken into account in the reform process
- Currency liberalization legislation
- Engagement in development of the legislation on the National Agency on Energy Market Regulation
- Development of oblast-level strategies for SME development
- Design of the Performance Based Budgeting model for universities
- Co-authorship of the draft laws On Environment Impact Assessment and On Strategic Ecological Assessment
- Engagement in development of the Energy Strategy of Ukraine until 2035
- Review of the calculation method for the GDP calculation by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine
- Policy on open data standards in the central government body and at the municipal level

The increased supply of research leads to intensified public debate on issues that are in focus. With increased discussion in the media, the public now has access to a variety of opinions on important policy decisions. For example, media outlets regularly invite representatives of think tanks to comment on important policy issues. Think tank experts use their research to shape public opinion and demand policy change. Decision makers now demand more detailed research, with practical recommendations for implementation. They are also eager to take on ready-made policy solutions and do not want to wait long for research results.

The increased supply of research and increased number of think tanks is creating a more competitive environment. The issue of quality, name recognition of experts, and the reputation of think tanks is important.

Quotes from interviews:

"The more research, the better the quality of the policy. Politicians are not working in a vacuum; they are reviewing the results of research. The more significant political figures have their own expert centers or teams of advisors who work with such expert, scientific and analytical information.... The politicians have their own private interests or external affairs preferences, but larger supply with better quality will make political decisions of better quality. They have to react to the circulation of public ideas; they can't just ignore them."

"The political agenda is dependent on many criteria: on the specific person that holds the position. Some are more interested, some are less... It is also a task of think tanks to push politicians so that they would pay attention to this research and react to it. This is of course done through media and Facebook. If research is spread, then politicians pay attention and respond.... The more research exists, the more chances that government will pay attention."

Demand Side of Policy Research

Changes in Policy Analysis Demand

With the reform process that has been ongoing since 2014, Ukraine's policy process has significantly changed. All respondents who represent the demand side of the policy research market acknowledge that the policy process has become more open and public. In fact, policy makers tend to assess more positively the openness of the policy process than do representatives of think tanks. Policy makers say that most of the information about plans for policy development is public and that drafts are widely shared for discussion. Newly introduced changes to regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers actually require all draft laws developed by the government to be accompanied by a memo outlining the position of different stakeholders and analyzing the data to find the best solution out of possible alternatives.

The directorates created under public administration reform in the selected ministries are the key drivers of change in the policy process. These directorates often employ people new to government, who come from either business or civil society. They focus on ensuring the full policy cycle, which includes analyzing data on the existing situation, identifying alternative solutions, analyzing their impact in key development areas, and ensuring policy monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the Directorates for Strategic Planning and EU Integration created in these ministries ensure that the policies developed are in line with the international obligations of Ukraine and key strategic documents. To further promote a strategic approach in the policy process, the Cabinet of Ministers has initiated a Strategic Committee that will focus on mid-term planning. With wide donor support to specific ministries, Cabinet of Ministers are now adopting results-based management to reform processes, identifying long-term goals for changes. As many of these processes were initiated recently, the results of these institutional changes are yet to be seen. At least one of the respondents working on public administration reform is skeptical of the efficiency of some of the tools adopted for public management, seeing these initiatives as not fully integrating into the Ukrainian reality.

Parliament is slowly changing its practices too. One MP reported that unlike in previous convocations, Parliament has become more open. Before 2014, opposition candidates often were not informed about committee hearings or were not provided a chance to express their opinions during meetings. Now there is more discussion happening in committee hearings – which are broadcast online – and representative of civil societycan attend these meetings. At the same time, the analytical capacity of the Verkhovna Rada staff remains low. Committee staff has to review many draft laws and ensure that these drafts do not contradict existing legislation as well as conduct thorough content analysis.

[3] Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, The Cabinet of Ministers held the first meeting of the Strategic Government Committee, https://www.kmu.gov.ua/ua/news/premyer-ministr-ukrayini-proviv-pershe-zasidannya-strategichnogo-uryadovogo-komitetu

Quotes from interviews:

"For improving governance effectiveness, the policy cycle was extended. The changes to the regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers were made and now all policy proposals should be based on data analysis and should have at least a few options for policy implementation. These options should be discussed with all stakeholders and lead to the best results in changing citizens' livelihoods, improving economic development and international competitiveness, and solving social and economic issues, for which these policies are formed."

"The policy process has become more open; there is more public information about plans and drafts of particular policies. In our ministry, we started to cooperate more with civil society. In each working group, we have representatives of academia, civil society and business."

Unlike representatives of the supply side, policymakers often have a very narrow focus of interests. Their priorities are informed by the positions they hold and policies that their respective government bodies are responsible for. The policy agendas of ministries are formed by strategic documents developed in each sector. Ministries develop operational plans, where they prioritize the policy process in the short term. The new Strategic Committee formed in the Cabinet of Ministers aims to put a mid-term perspective into planning policy development.

The Verkhovna Rada is organized into 25 committees, and their agendas are formed by draft legislation that is registered and brought for their review. The respondents working as staff in these committees define their role as a reviewer, where their interests depend on the interests of individual MPs.

The respondents had the following priorities: cultural policies, innovation and the economic effect of technologies, regulation of energy markets, human rights and justice, pension and social care, public administration, and foreign affairs. Again, all of these policy priorities come from the official posts of the policy makers and their responsibilities.

Products That Policy Makers Seek

Policy makers have emphasized the need for high-quality products based on reliable data sources. The most preferred format is a policy brief or policy memo. Monitoring reports are also useful for tracking implementation of policies. Those who work on focused research areas have an ability to digest any format, as long as it includes reliable verifiable data and thorough analysis. Policy makers who work at the political level have emphasized a need for short executive summaries or briefs based on detailed research. As part of preparation for speeches and public debates, policy makers review a lot of documents. Political actors would like to understand key findings of a report up front; otherwise, they will not look deeper into the report. The executive summary also has to remain balanced, without bold statements that are not substantiated by research. A few respondents mentioned that they often find manipulative political statements in summaries that they do not feel comfortable with. They say that they would like to build their own messages with the research findings and not deliver someone else's statements.

One of the key aspects of analytical reports highlighted by all respondents is the recommendations. Ministry representatives have emphasized the need for detailed recommendations based on an understanding of the current limitations. They have mentioned that sometimes recommendations are not being implemented because bureaucrats see them as something abstract and not possible in the current legislative environment. If a researcher aims to change a specific policy, he or she should provide a detailed plan for implementation. Other things that individual respondents mentioned looking for in reports are cross-sectoral research and analysis, legal analysis and analysis of potential corruption risks, forecast scenarios, and practical use for the research findings.

Policy makers, especially in the new directorates, are also conducting their own policy analysis and are looking for external sources of data to use in this analysis. They are using official statistics, data of international institutions (such as the International Labor Organization and the International Monetary Fund), data generated from state research institutes, and data from public opinion polls. The newly formed directorates are now getting training in how to develop their own policy memos and policy briefs.

Quotes from interviews:

"Some policy documents offer very light recommendations; they are developed without analysis of complicated processes of public service. They recommend actions, but do not say how to implement them. If public servants see this, they don't know what to do with it, as they are very conservative. They say, 'this does not correspond to current legislation; we don't know how to change this.' Also, public servants do not understand a systematic approach; they take some small action, but it does not work, as systemic changes are needed."

"In my work, I really need a short brief. When I prepare for my speech in the parliament, I need some figures and numbers that are supported by in-depth research. So short executive summaries have to be there. There are also many reports that do not come from facts or real research, but rather slogans and statements. Think tanks should not do this. This does not allow us to understand the information presented. Instead of specific information, think tanks are presenting the ready-made speech that politicians should present. I do not want to be someone's messenger."

A few limitations challenge the use of existing policy products:

- Scope of research: A few respondents suggest that there is a lot of research that has a very narrow focus on particular issues and mechanisms. This research does not take a broader view on issues and does not analyze the impact of these issues on other spheres.

- Cross-country comparisons: Some research is missing the international context of the policy field and does not look into the experiences of other countries. Other research that contains a summary of international experience does not provide analysis of why policy decision worked in a particular context and how this experience can be adapted in Ukraine. An international comparison only makes sense when there is an analysis of factors that played into the success or failure of a particular policy solution.

- Recommendations: Often, recommendations provided in the analysis are too general and do not have details in terms of how they could be applied in Ukraine. The bureaucratic nature of ministries does not allow for creative solutions for implementing them. These recommendations are likely to go unimplemented, especially if they do not take into account limitations that exist on the ground.

- Timeliness: Policy makers have specific timeframes when they need policy research to be available. Often, they do not have time to wait for research to be developed if it is not already available in time for policy development.

Quotes from interviews:

"Research should talk about the situation here and now and not about some abstract situation. Recommendations should take into account the political situation. Also, it is good when a report includes comparative analysis with other countries."

"The think tank should have good experts; they should include not only scientists but practitioners who have worked in this area. Theoreticians produce reports that are not always relevant in practice."

"We need analytical memos, information briefs, reviews, documents that contain verifiable data for designing policies and making political decisions. We look at the reliability, source of data, representation of the target group's opinion, and format of representation. Also, the reputation of the researcher is important.."

Most respondents consider the reputation of a think tank as the first criterion when it comes to quality of research. They would like to see the think tank quoted in the media and in various academic papers. Respondents also mentioned the importance of the funding source, where international donor funding is considered a guarantee of independent analysis. Policy makers are also looking for the source of data in the report and the depth of analysis.

Policy makers have acknowledged lack of research in their area and expressed high demand for quality papers. Lack of donor funding, lack of interest in the topic from think tanks, and lack of expertise in the sector are reasons for the absence of analysis in their policy areas of interest. Below is a summary of specific areas where policy makers identify a need for more research:

- Culture: All spheres of culture, ethnic policies

- Education: Innovation and technology transfer, language policies, civic education for adults

- Energy: Forecast scenarios in the energy sector, risk analysis of the energy strategy, risk analysis of implementation of the National Plan on Reduction of Emissions in big industries, assessment of the reliability of the energy system in Ukraine, assessment of thermal power plant competitiveness and prioritization for renovation or closure of certain thermal power plants

- Foreign affairs: Need for constant updates as the situation is changing, need for further research in the area of European security and transatlantic partnership

- Healthcare: Workforce for public health care, medical workers capacity and demography
- Rule of law: Access to justice
- Social services: Data on newly amalgamated communities, shadow economy and its impact on funding for pensions and social care
- Institution building: Risks and problems of newly created/reformed institutions such as NAPC, NABU, National Police
- Public finance and management

The ideal product as described by policy makers is research of 50 to 80 pages in length with a summary of up to three pages. This research should use mixed qualitative and quantitative methods and provide in-depth analysis, not just statements of facts. The report should take into account existing research and use best practices in terms of methodologies and approaches. It should be accompanied by infographics and provide access to data tables for decision-makers. Policy makers advise to conduct wide consultations with key stakeholders, when establishing the focus of the research, its methodology, its findings and its recommendations.

Communication of Policy Makers with Think Tanks

Policy makers are open to cooperation and communication with think tanks. They see the value in external research on the policies they are working on. At the same time, all policy makers mentioned a lack of communication between think tanks and policy makers. They would like to expand their knowledge of existing think tanks, their research and analysis. Policy makers found the most useful way of engaging being during small working groups, workshops or one-on-one consultations with experts. In addition, policy makers mentioned the importance of forums and conferences for public dialogue on important issues. Once initial contact is established, direct communication through Facebook, email and messengers is convenient.

Quote from interviews:

"We do not have any challenges in cooperating with think tanks, but we lack communication. We do not know about areas where they work. If we would have more information about think tanks, we would work with them more and would use their research in our work."

Those who establish communication with particular think tanks understand that their cooperation depends on the funding available for research. Policy makers communicate their policy research needs in different ways:

- Indirectly through donors: Donors support various reforms in Ukraine, either through advisory missions, separate large projects managed by international implementers or civil society engagement. Policy makers often discuss their research needs with donors, and donors choose an appropriate method for supporting these needs. Donor-funded projects may produce analysis themselves, outsource it to a research agency or fund it through a grant to a think tank.

- Directly in private communication: Respondents reported that they sometimes call the think tanks they cooperate with to ask for specific analysis (either existing or new).

- Public forums and round tables: Most respondents suggested that the public discussions that are happening on particular issues should inform the research agenda.

Policy makers emphasized the importance of the communication and advocacy efforts of think tanks. Strategic communication is key to defining the right channels and formats appealing to different audiences. Policy makers mentioned that public opinion and stakeholders' interests are taken into account in the policy process, and therefore think tanks' communication targeting the population is influencing policy approval. Infographics, visualizations and online channels should be considered for targeting citizens at large. Communication is also important to ensure that policy makers are aware of existing research. Policy makers specializing in specific issues prefer to attend presentations and round tables to discuss the results of research with the authors of the study. Others prefer personal communication and consultations with think tanks. For policy makers working at the political level, mentions of studies in the media is important. They tend to use research that is widely known by others and that can be found on the internet or on think tank websites.

Use of Policy Advice

Policy makers lack policy analysis in their sphere; therefore they use existing research and analysis in their work. External analysis is used for framing issues, developing policy alternatives, developing draft legislation and monitoring policy implementation. Respondents mentioned the specific external policy analysis they have used for policy development:

- World Health Organization Analysis of Health Care in Ukraine and Affordable Medicines Program

- Health Index produced by the School of Public Health of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy

- Global Competitiveness Index and Innovation Index of the World Economic Forum

- Joint development with the DiXi Group of legislation On National Commission for State Regulation of Energy and Public Utilities

- Joint work of the Ministry of Energy with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) on renewable energy legislation
- CEDOS report on payment scale to civil servants that framed the debate around salary levels for high-ranking officials
- NGOs' monitoring of the competition to the Supreme Court

Respondents mentioned that they frequently use the research of international donors and advisors. They also mentioned cooperation with certain think tanks in their sphere, including the following:

- Health sector: World Health Organization, School of Public Health of the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy
- Rule of law: Monitoring of the CHESNO Civil Movement, National Bar Association, DEJURE Foundation, Centre of Policy and Legal Reform (CPLR), Anticorruption Action Center (Ant-Ac), USAID projects
- Social policy: USAID projects, International Labor Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Institute of Demography
- Energy Sector: DiXi Group, Hydro Energy Association, USAID, World Bank, EBRD
- Civil society: The National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS), Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research (UCIPR)
- Public administration reform: CEDOS, the Centre for Economic Strategy (CES), IMF, World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), CPLR, New Europe Center
- Decentralization: Association of Ukrainian Cities, National Academy for Public Administration under Presidential Administration, Venice Commission, Council of Europe, SIGMA
- Education: Case Ukraine
- Anti-corruption: Anticorruption Research and Education Centre (ACREC)

The new decree by the Cabinet of Ministers on policy development has provided more space for cooperation with think tanks. However, there are a few obstacles to greater cooperation:

- Lack of research in particular policy areas: Some policy makers who are willing to cooperate more have not found enough supply of research on the market. This includes in the areas of culture, education and health care.
- Pressure of time: While the policy process is slowly transforming to be strategic, Ukraine is at a crisis state in many policy areas and policy makers continue to press for quick solutions. Policy makers would like to engage with think tanks in a more systemic way, but high-quality research takes time. To influence the policy process, think tanks should plan and produce research before it comes on the agenda. While in reality this is difficult to achieve, highly specialized think tanks can anticipate and even set policy agendas. They are also positioned to respond to immediate requests.

Policy makers see as a positive sign the increased production of independent policy research. This allows them to develop better policies with more thorough analysis, taking into account different sides. Available research frames the policy agenda and provides analysis of possible alternatives. The existence of a large pool of research also allows research to be used immediately when the need arises. Policy makers suggested that the policy agenda is changing quickly, and thus they often do not have time to wait for 8 to 10 months for research to be done. Often, systematic cooperation with think tanks starts from initial research that uncovers the need for particular policy development. Then policy makers engage think tank representatives in a working group to develop details of the policy, where think tanks provide expertise in the process and help draft the legislation.

Comparison of Policy Research Providers

Policy makers use research from different sources. The research needs of policy makers are funded through the following means:

- International donors: Some policy makers work closely with think tanks that are funded by international donors such as USAID, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the IRF and others.

- State budget to state research institutes: Policy makers mentioned the Institute for Science and Technical Research, Institute of Demography, and Institute of the Economy and Forecasting of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

- Research centers funded within government bodies: These centers are established within government structures with the goal to raise capacity of institutions and provide high-quality research. They include the Ukrainian-Danish Energy Center, opened in 2015 with the goal to improve data analysis for energy supply and consumption, and the Office of Finance and Economic Analysis in the Verkhovna Rada, supported by the Westminster Foundation and GIZ.

- Grants through special funds: The Ministry of Culture has launched a competition for 10 million hryvnias in the framework of the Ukraine Culture Fund to fund specific research in the area of culture. Funds can be awarded to any research organization.

Funding by international donors is seen as a proof of quality and reliability of research. Policy makers consider that the research quality of Ukrainian think tanks is growing. Limited funding and lack of qualified personnel is one of the limitations for the development of think tanks. Policy makers notice a research bias in think tanks that are funded by other sources such as political parties and businesses.

Ukrainian think tanks that conduct research lack knowledge of the best international practices in particular policy areas. In comparison with foreign groups, however, they can provide advice that is more relevant to the current Ukrainian conditions. On the other hand, foreign groups have an advantage of more systematic research, using methodologies that have already been tested in various contexts. Analytical products provided by foreign groups tend to provide a deeper and more nuanced analysis of the situation. A few policy makers suggested that there should be

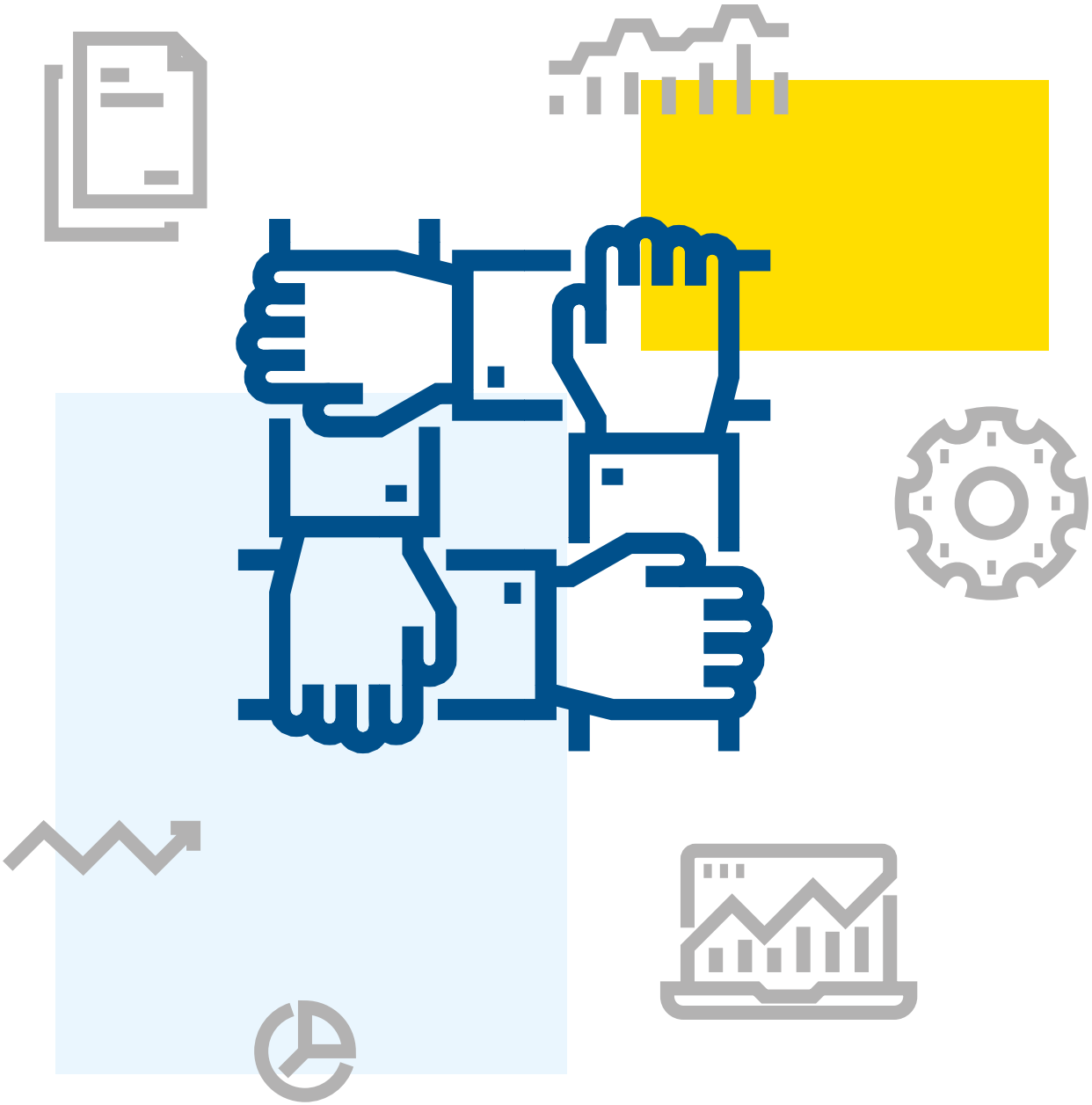
more research partnerships between Ukrainian and foreign researchers to allow transfer of methodologies and a deeper understanding of the local context.

Ukrainian think tanks also need to invest further in development of their brands and reputations so that their opinions will be valued more. In comparison with foreign consulting groups, their names are less recognizable.

Quote from interviews:

"Often, our Ukrainian think tanks do high-quality analysis, but they lack comparison of international practices. And international consulting often brings this international experience, but it might not be fully relevant to Ukraine due to the economy or mentality."

2. Case Studies of Think Tanks' Models of Cooperation



2. Case Studies of Think Tanks' Models of Cooperation

This section aims to illustrate the different strategies of think tanks in terms of policy influence. In the selected examples, organizations demonstrate different approaches to communicating their research results and interacting with policy makers. These different approaches illustrate the different theories of change that organizations choose to pursue depending on their strengths and weaknesses, issues that they research and expertise that they have.

Data Journalism Agency "Texty.org.ua"

The Data Journalism Agency is one of the organizations that has been successful at influencing policy. They consider themselves not a classic think tank but rather a hybrid organization specializing in a specific research method. Starting as an online media outlet with a focus on using big data in journalism, the Data Journalism Agency slowly expanded their policy research. Their success at influencing policy lies in specific technical knowledge of data mining that they can apply in various sectors.

The policy influence strategies of the Data Journalism Agency are two-fold. First, the agency uses data mining to research critical issues in society in various areas including the environment, elections, infrastructure development, extractive industries, and education. To ensure policy influence in these areas, the agency has to work in coalitions with specialized organizations in these sectors or with specific government bodies. The agency can present their findings, but without proper partnerships, policy change does not happen. With their research, the agency often contribute to framing certain policy agendas, defining policy issues and conducting monitoring of certain policy areas.

In the area of open data, the Data Journalism Agency uses different approaches to influencing policy. Since they are experts in using big data in research, they have moved into influencing open data policies of various government bodies at the central and local level. The agency works with ministries, the Cabinet of Ministers, local governments and communal enterprises to develop policies and standards on open data collected by these bodies. In this area, they rely on tight cooperation with key influencers. They have reported on policy research they have produced that was not public but that was used by policy makers for decision-making.

The Data Journalism Agency has a stable audience that visits their website and follows them on social media, including over 20,000 followers on Facebook. The agency reports their most useful communication tools include references to their research by key opinion makers, meetings with stakeholders, public presentations and spreading of the key messages through social networks and mass media. They suggest that effective communications have become more important for influencing policy makers as the policy field has become more open and the policy research supply has increased. According to the agency, public discussion of research findings is actually influencing official policy making more now than in pre-Euromaidan period.

DiXi Group

The DiXi Group is a think tank that has an impact on specific policy processes, as reported both by the organization itself and by policy makers. The group conducts research in the areas of energy, transparency and efficiency of state regulations of the energy market. DiXi produces various research products including regular analytical reports, monthly and quarterly monitoring reports, and larger annual reports. They also produce products at the request of policy makers to provide an overview of important issues on the agenda.

The DiXi Group works closely with policy makers. They engage in systemic work as part of the working group on development of legislation and regulations, and also provide support on the open data. Policy makers report on productive cooperation with DiXi, leading to greater transparency in energy sector. They acknowledge DiXi as a potential source of expertise for the Ministry of Energy. The approach of DiXi to working with policy makers is reminiscent of the power politics theory of change described above.

DiXi uses different channels of communication including social media, personal email, events and direct communication with key decision-makers. They also understand the need for public advocacy to wider audiences and civic education on the issues they advocate, but this is not within their current strategy. In this direction, organization has launched support to mobile app "Energy Online".

Ukrainian Centre for European Policy

The Ukrainian Centre for European Policy is an organization created recently with the main goal of monitoring implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. They conduct research on issues relevant to the implementation of the agreement such as food safety, transportation, and customs regulations. They also monitor the implementation at large. The centre works closely with individual members of Parliament, Verkhovna Rada committees and several sectoral ministries.

The centre relies heavily on communications and public advocacy to encourage better cooperation with key policy makers. The Ukrainian Centre for European Policy experiences certain difficulties in cooperating with policy makers, as their work is focused on monitoring of government progress in terms of reform implementation. The conflicting interests groups around implementation of the Association Agreement and low institutional capacity of the government to coordinate the reforms are the main causes of difficulties in cooperation.

The centre articulates that progress in implementation of reforms is slow and clearly states the gaps, which is not a very popular message among policy makers. Organization is serving as a communication platform for different stakeholders that have condradicting interests in Association Agreement Implementation..

Active media campaigning and public pressure is needed in order to push the organization's agenda forward. With media campaigning, the centre aims at creating policy windows for pushing reforms. At the same time, they find that to sustain a media presence, certain channels

should be used. Media events and conferences do not attract as much media attention anymore, as journalists now find most information online. Building direct links with journalists through trainings and informal media breakfasts allows representatives of the Centre for European Policy to get in the mainstream media more easily. As a result of such cooperation, experts of the centre are providing comments on issues relevant to their work in various news segments and specialized TV programs.

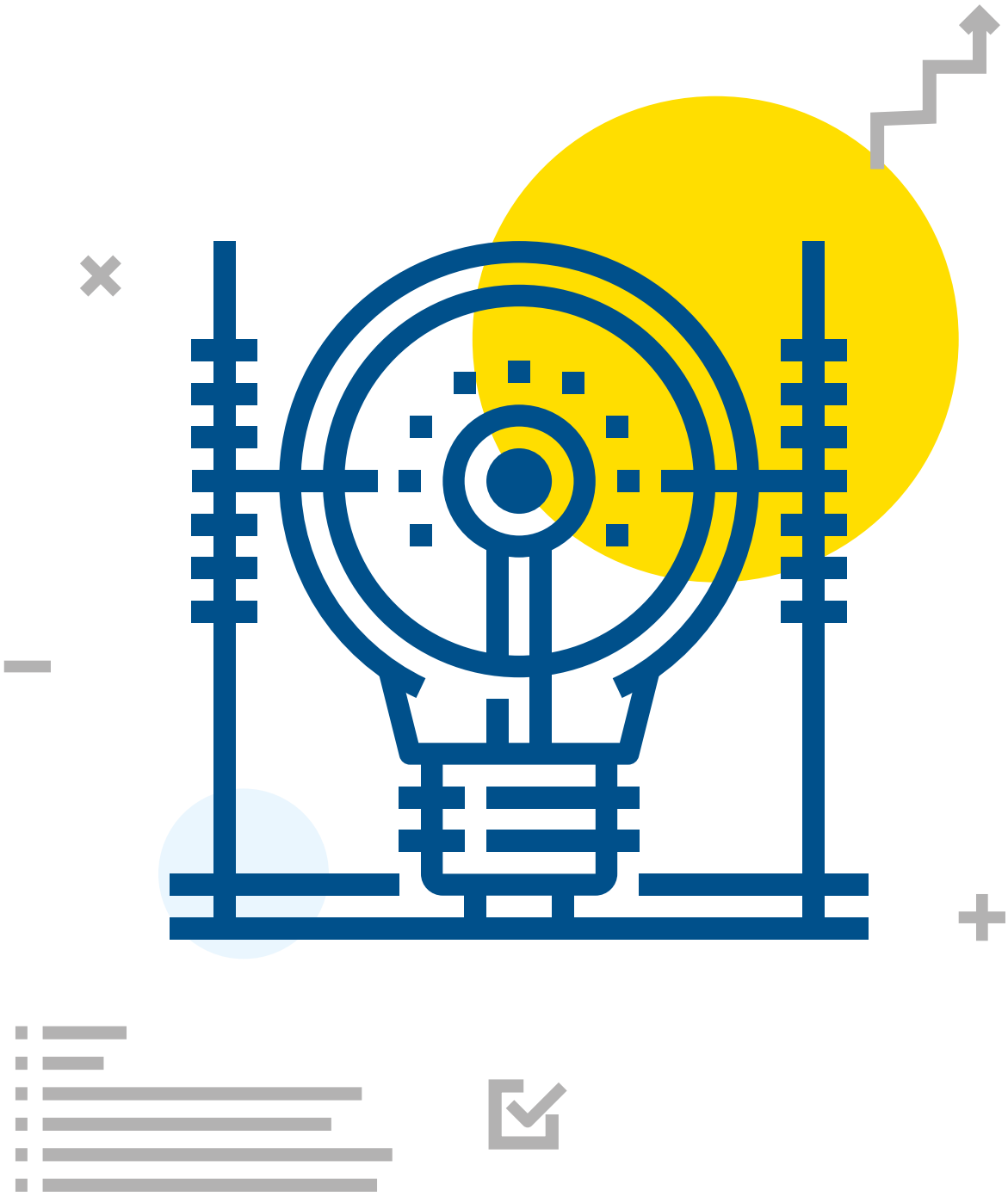
Ukrainian Institute of the Future

The Ukrainian Institute of the Future was created in 2016 with the goal to forecast changes and model possible scenarios for development of Ukraine. The founders of the organization include politicians, businesspeople and civil society representatives. The institute's budget is covered with contributions from its founders, and it does not plan to receive any funds from international donors. The organization produces research in the areas of the economy, internal and foreign affairs, national security, education and judicial reforms.

The Institute of the Future claims that its primary goal is to change the opinion of the society and politicians and not necessarily to work with a specific government agency. They aim to produce strategic documents and policy recommendations. One example of their policy influence is research on the benefit of introducing the tax on withdrawn capital. The institute claims that their calculations are used by the Ministry of Finance and the presidential administration to develop draft legislation. They have also developed recommendations at the request of the Ministry of the Economy on strategic development of key industries in Ukraine.

The institute's approach to promoting policy solutions is two-fold. First, they use policy windows when they see demand for their work. In this case, they develop recommendations and present them to key counterparts. When they see resistance to certain issues that they try to promote, they attempt to expand the policy window by conducting public advocacy. In this case, they work more with media and public awareness campaigning, presenting reports to experts, the media and public. The Ukrainian Institute of the Future seeks to balance remaining neutral in their analysis with having politicians on the founding board. For this reason, they have deliberately decided not to engage in direct policy advocacy to avoid perceived conflicts of interest. The institute's policy influence therefore is either indirect (through changes in public awareness) or on a particular policy maker.

3. Conclusions and recommendations



3. Conclusions and recommendations

The window of opportunity after the Revolution of Dignity has stimulated the development of the supply side of policy analysis. Well-established think tanks have promoted their policy research developed during pre-Euromaidan years. Meanwhile, new organizations have entered the market, identifying a demand for their expertise.

The demand side of the policy process has evolved as well. Since 2014, the government has launched largescale reforms in multiple areas such as anticorruption, decentralization, the judicial system, health care and education. Public administration reform has influenced the demand side for policy research the most. The responsibilities of the newly created directorates in selected ministries now include maintaining a full public policy cycle, from identifying needs to monitoring implementation. The updated procedural regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers obliges policy developers to use data in policy analysis, assessing all possible options, consulting with stakeholders and planning for monitoring and evaluation. Work of the Verkhovna Rada committees and Parliament as a whole also has become more open for discussion and contribution from civil society.

There are certain challenges on both the supply and demand sides of the policy research market that are making cooperation of both sides difficult.

Supply side challenges:

- **Limited financial resources:** Most think tanks are funded by international donors, and the funding is often project-based. Those who have access to institutional funding are usually more flexible in adapting to environmental changes and demands from policy makers.

- **Lack of qualified expertise:** Most representatives of think tanks mentioned the difficulty of attracting and retaining the required expertise. Think tanks often compete for qualified experts with international technical assistance projects and business consulting companies. They have to invest in raising experts who often leave them afterwards.

- **Time restrictions:** Another key resource for think tanks is time. The policy cycle is demanding, and the opportunities for making an impact are short-term. In order to conduct high-quality research on time, when an issue comes to the agenda, one either has to invest a lot of resources or have existing solutions that come out of previous years of research.

- **Innovation challenges:** The reform agenda in Ukraine is rather wide and complicated. The policy challenges that lie ahead require innovative approaches and study of international experiences. A few respondents mentioned that they could not find relevant international experiences to base their recommendations on. Another example of innovation challenge is data mining that is conducted by groups like the Data Journalism Agency, who do not know what they will find when they start working with a particular data set.

Demand side challenges:

- **Electoral cycle and political competition:** Evidence-based decision-making is undermined by competing political priorities. Even when there is an honest desire to implement the recommendations that come out of research, elections and political competition get in the way.

- **Pressure for quick wins:** Policy makers are pressured to deliver quick and visible results. Decision-makers are waiting for quick-win policy solutions from think tanks and are not ready to wait for a long time for research or public discussion. The short attention span of media and the public makes it difficult to implement results fully.

- **Time restrictions:** While think tanks are dealing with finding a balance between high-quality research, time and financing, policy makers are restricted in their timing as well. They often do not have time to wait for research to be ready. The movement to a more strategic approach and long-term planning is a promising trend in the newly created directorates, but it is still a work in progress. In a way, think tanks have to be ahead of the official policy process and develop their research before issues come on the agenda.

- **Lack of research in certain areas:** Policy makers often do not have enough counterparts to work with among think tanks. Policy makers specifically mentioned culture, education and health care as areas where more research is needed. This challenge is rooted in the funding streams that are available for think tanks. There is less donor funding available in the above-mentioned areas. Only the Ministry of Culture has reported on establishing mechanisms for providing funding from the government for research.

In order to further increase their policy influence, think tanks should continue to:

- Define their organizational or project theories of change: Think tanks should define their theories of change and determine the best ways to influence policy. This will inform their approaches in communicating with policy makers, the media and citizens at large.

- Build dialogue with policy makers: Think tanks should organize stakeholder workshops or individual consultations at the beginning of research to discuss its focus and methodology, and at the final stage before finalizing recommendations.

- Develop actionable recommendations: The capacity to produce relevant, detailed and actionable recommendations is one key strength of Ukrainian think tanks in comparison with foreign groups. Actionable and detailed recommendations will make it easier for policy makers to use research. Validation workshops with key policy stakeholders should focus on ensuring a clear plan for how recommendations from findings can be implemented.

- Provide comprehensive executive summaries: The executive summary is the most important part of the research, as often it is the only chance to get a policy maker's attention. The summary should include main conclusions and recommendations up front.

- Prioritize strategic communication: While high-quality research is important, communication of the results is key for recommendations to be implemented. Each think tank should define key audiences based on the theory of change that it follows and package the research for each audience. Think tanks should build media relations and use social networks to introduce evidence-based arguments into the public discourse

- Develop reputation as a key asset: Policy makers unanimously agree on the importance of reputation as the main quality criterion for research. Think tanks should emphasize their independent boards, internal codes of ethics, quality control, stakeholder review workshops and other internal control mechanisms that can prevent potential reputational losses.

- Ensure evidence-based, balanced analysis: Think tanks should aim to provide in-depth balanced analysis based on research data. This analysis should include critical assessments based on the current situation without a bias toward traditional and accepted schools of thought. The language should be clear, without slogans or manipulations. Policy makers lose trust in research, authors and organizations when they see inaccuracies, radical messages and manipulations in reports.

Given the above findings, in order to more effectively support think tank development, donors should consider the following recommendations:

- International technical assistance projects should seek to support local systems and structures, including collaborating with existing think tanks in the areas where they work instead of hiring experts on staff for short-term projects. This will lead to greater sustainability of local systems and project results.

- Understand the limitations of different think tanks' theories of change and match them with funding priorities and streams.

- Understand the context and complexity of the policy research process. Quick wins and attractive media events are not possible without thorough research activities and innovation. Funding mechanisms should allow flexibility for think tanks to provide ad hoc analysis of issues on the agenda as well as substantial strategic research.

- Assist in increasing the cadre of local policy researchers through support of internship and scholarship programs, developing formal educational programs, providing short-term training programs for potential leaders, offering opportunities for international exchange, etc.

- Facilitate open stakeholder dialogues between government, civil society and international donors to define research priorities.

- Continue to support public administration reform as a key driver of strategic, open and evidence-based policy-making. The new directorates are starting to exercise the new policy analysis processes. The full policy cycle should become a systemic practice that will result in policy that is more consistent. With the growing capacity for data analysis within public administration, the attention to external analysis is also growing. Eventually, policy makers will seek opportunities to outsource some of the evidence gathering and data analysis that will be beyond the scope of the ministries' capacities.

- Support open data initiatives, improvement of methodologies for data gathering and verification of official data in key reform areas. Multiple donor efforts are already concentrated around creating open databases and registries, but the institutional capacity for data management remains low and limits high-quality data analysis.

- Encourage international partnerships between Ukrainian think tanks and foreign groups to advance research and ensure that policy recommendations are relevant for the Ukrainian context.

- Consider institutional funding as an effective mechanism for supporting the policy research of think tanks. This funding allows the growth of think tanks, providing flexibility in planning their research activities and developing their capacities.