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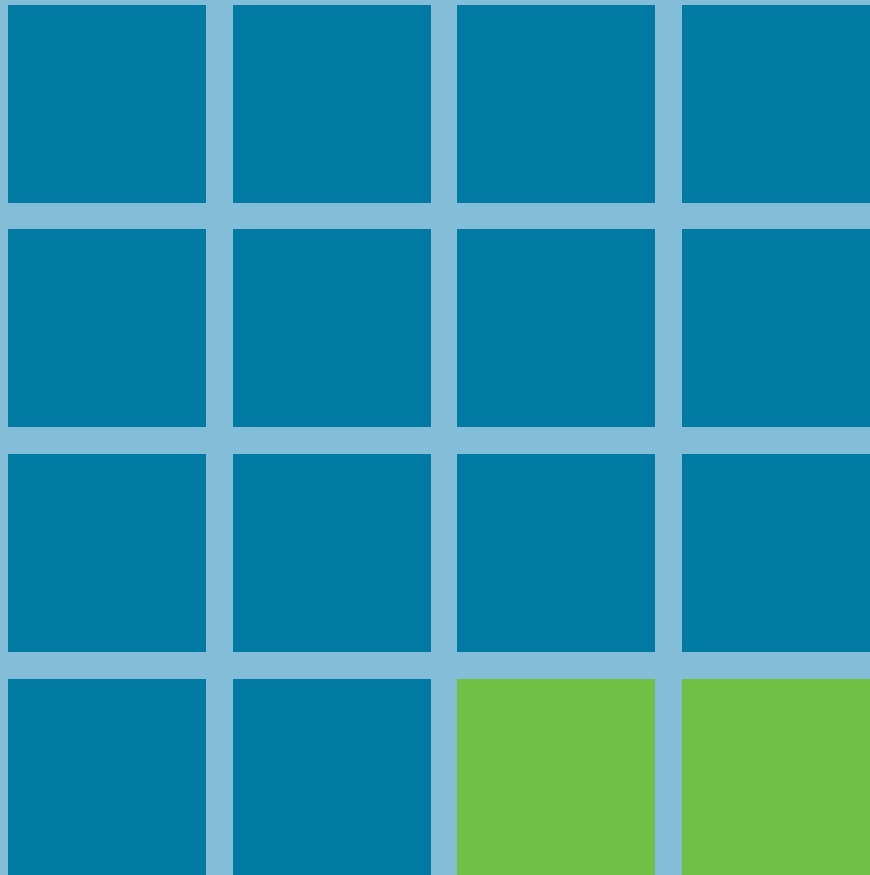


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*International Centre for
Sustainable Development*



IZNE Social Protection Working Paper 14/2

International Policy Learning and Policy Change: Scientific Inputs for
the Dialogue on Social Protection with Global Partners

Insights into the Role of International Policy Networks for International Policy Transfer and Policy Learning in Social Protection

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Second part of the joint research project:

“International Policy Learning and Policy Change:
Scientific Inputs for the Dialogue on Social Protection
with Global Partners.”

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1. Introduction

International interdependencies matter for the diffusion of social policies: Empirical evidence is available showing that decisions in one country are systematically linked to decisions made in another country. This holds across different social protection policy areas as well as for small and large-scale policy changes.¹ Thus, changes in social protection policies cannot be attributed to domestic factors only.²

Empirical evidence on policy diffusion has mainly focused on high income countries. Diffusion can be expected to occur in regions and countries at all income levels. However, a lack of empirical evidence particularly on diffusion in middle and low income countries can be identified. In addition, the impact of institutional and organizational structures on diffusion, respectively, has not been addressed in a meaningful way. The literature mentions the role of ‘policy networks’ or ‘mediated diffusion’, but the fora through which (mediated) diffusion occurs – for example international policy networks – present up to now a “black box”.

To understand better the role of policy networks for the international diffusion of social protection policies, this study addresses the point of view of participants of international policy networks in social protection. It enquires into network participants’ perceptions about the effectiveness of international policy networks in terms of the evaluation of policy transfer facilitated by the network. Further, transfer mechanisms discussed in the literature on policy diffusion, such as learning, emulation, and competition are assessed. The perceived individual roles within the network such as sender and receiver, and types of personal relations induced by the network are analyzed in a next step. The study then assesses the perceived relevance of social protection networks as well as the perceived role of similarity between countries for policy transfer. It also addresses individual preferences on network design/formats.

The survey on the role of international policy networks for policy learning in social protection was carried out by the International Centre for Sustainable Development (IZNE) of Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, in close cooperation with the program “Global Alliances for Social Protection” by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. It is the second part of the joint research project International Policy Learning and Policy Change: Scientific Inputs for the Dialogue on Social Protection with Global Partners. The first part critically assesses the state of the art of policy diffusion studies with regard to the theoretical framework and empirical analyses. This survey is based on the theoretical and empirical findings of the first part. Data collection was carried out with the help of a standardized online survey, which was open for a time period of three weeks. The online survey was sent to government officials from developing countries working in the field of social protection (administrative, technical, as well as policy making staff), who participate in international policy networks. Further, it was sent to associated scientists and other professionals e.g. from NGOs participating in those networks on behalf of a developing country.

The results do not allow for any generalized conclusions as the survey is not based on a random sample. Purposive as well as snowball sampling was applied. Still, as the survey encompasses respondents from 41 different low and middle income countries, it allows for tentative insights into the role of international policy networks for policy transfer based on a multiplicity of country backgrounds. Further, the sample is comprised of an almost equal distribution of network participants working at policy making level and participants working at the technical or administrative level.

2. Theoretical framework

Policy diffusion is generally understood as the process by which policies spread between political units, with interdependence being its defining characteristic. Policy transfer focuses on the description of the transfer process on a micro level, analyzing actors instead of structure. Usually, policy transfer studies apply qualitative methodology.³

The literature on policy diffusion discusses three mechanisms inducing voluntary policy transfer: learning, emulation, and competition. Both learning and competition are viewed as rational mechanisms presupposing rational actors who base decisions about policies on considerations of their performance. Emulation presupposes actors that aim at conforming to their normative environment, relating decisions about policies to their own identity and role. **Learning**, in a nutshell, is understood as an updating of previous ideas, whereas **competition** aims to attract or retain resources in order to improve or maintain their position with regard to other actors. Whereas learning and competition rely on the “logic of consequences”, i.e. in one way or another choosing by evaluating the consequences of alternative actions, **emulation** relies on the “logic of appropriateness”, where action involves evoking an identity or role to a specific situation. Emulation can lead to the adoption of policies widely

accepted and valued highly, and conversely, to the dismissal of policies that might be beneficial but do not enjoy the same acceptance. **Mechanisms do not have to be mutually exclusive.**

The literature discusses policy and problem specific qualities, similarities and proximity among countries, and international embeddedness as **moderating variables** which facilitate or obstruct diffusion processes. Policy specific qualities refer to redistributive vs. regulative policies. Due to a higher potential for domestic conflict of interests, redistributive policies are expected to diffuse more slowly. Also, the intended scope of policy change can impact diffusion. Problem characteristics refer to the degree of intensity and visibility. Similarity can take various forms such as socio-economic similarities (e.g. same level of economic development, similar demographics), cultural and institutional similarities. Cultural similarities refer to a common language, religion, and shared values such as individualism or equality. Institutional similarities primarily refer to similar political institutions. Proximity refers to the geographic location of the countries in question. The literature further maintains that diffusion is positively influenced by the degree to which a country is embedded in international organizations or other communication networks.

¹ For example see Brooks, S. M. (2005). Interdependent and domestic foundations of policy change: the diffusion of pension privatization around the world. *International Studies Quarterly*, 49, 273–294; Brooks, S. M. (2007). When does diffusion matter? Explaining the spread of structural pension reforms across nations. *Journal of Politics*, 69(3), 701–715; Casey, B. M., & McKinnon, R. (2009). Social pensions and policy learning. The case of southern Africa. *International Social Security Review*, 62(2), 81–102; Rasmussen, M., Skorge, Ø. & Stoltenberg, E. (2012). Birds of a feather flock together: The interdependence of pension reforms in 18 OECD countries from 1972 to 2002, Paper presented at Norwegian Institute for Social Research’s Social Assistance Research Conference, November 26.

² For a critical summary of the current state of the art see the first part of the joint research project: Bender, K.; Keller, S. and Willing, H. (2014): The Role of International Policy Diffusion for Policy Change in Social Protection – A Review of the State of the Art.

³ See Bender, K.; Keller, S. and Willing, H. (2014): The Role of International Policy Diffusion for Policy Change in Social Protection – A Review of the State of the Art.

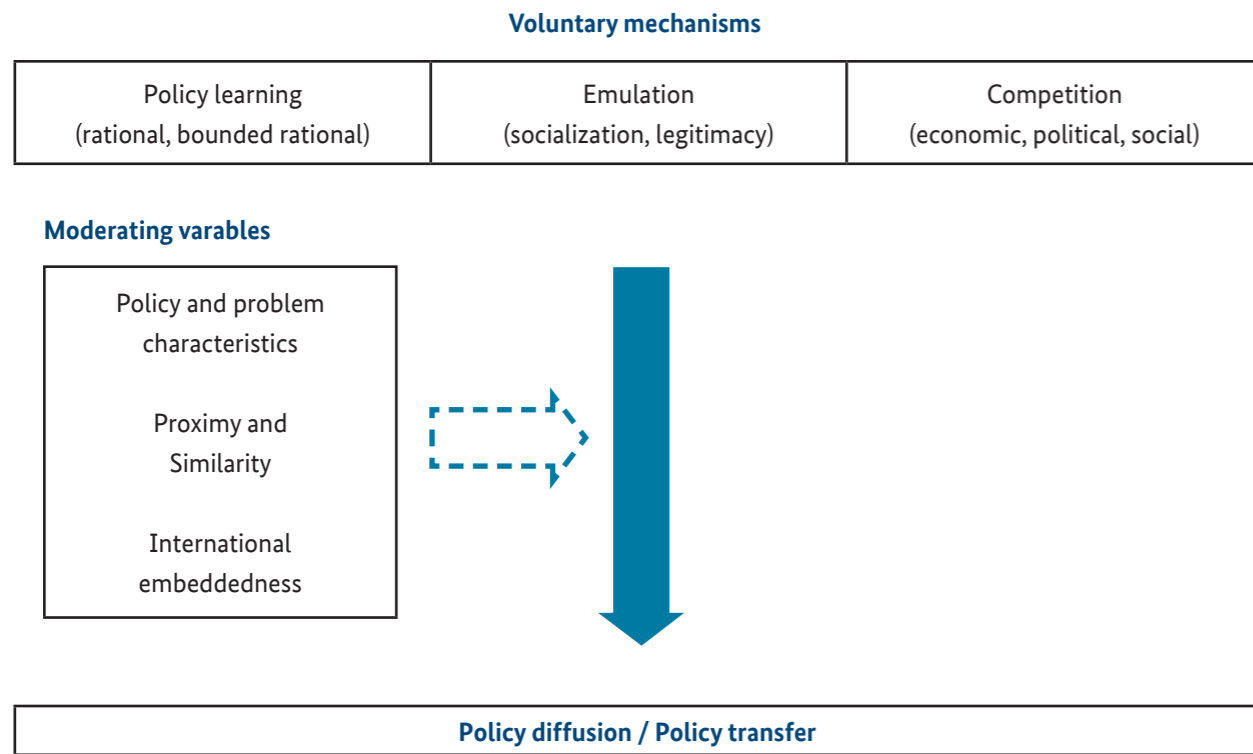


Figure 1: Policy diffusion – Conceptual framework

3. Description of sample

The target groups of our survey were political practitioners and scientists who are on the one hand involved in the field of social protection in developing countries and on the other hand members of an international policy network. The final sample consists of 50 participants aged 30 to 59. At least 76% of our participants finished a tertiary education, with four of them holding a bachelor's degree, 36 a master's degree and ten a PhD. 24% did not indicate their educational background.

We conducted our survey using the membership- and mailing-lists of different policy networks respectively (see figure 2). In our sample the Community of Practi-

ce (CoP), the South-South-Learning-Forum (SSLF), the Joint Learning Network (JLN) and the Providing for Health Initiative (P4H) are represented by more than one member. The biggest group in this category belongs to the SSLF of the World Bank, with 22 participants (44% of the sample) being members of this network, while seven respondents (14% of the sample) identified the CoP, three (6% of the sample) the JLN and two (4% of the sample) the P4H as their most important network. Additionally a few other networks are included in the survey with one entry in each case, amounting to a total number of 6 entries (12% of the sample). Ten participants (20% of the sample) did not specify which network is most important to them.

Question: What is the name of the international network you are involved in?

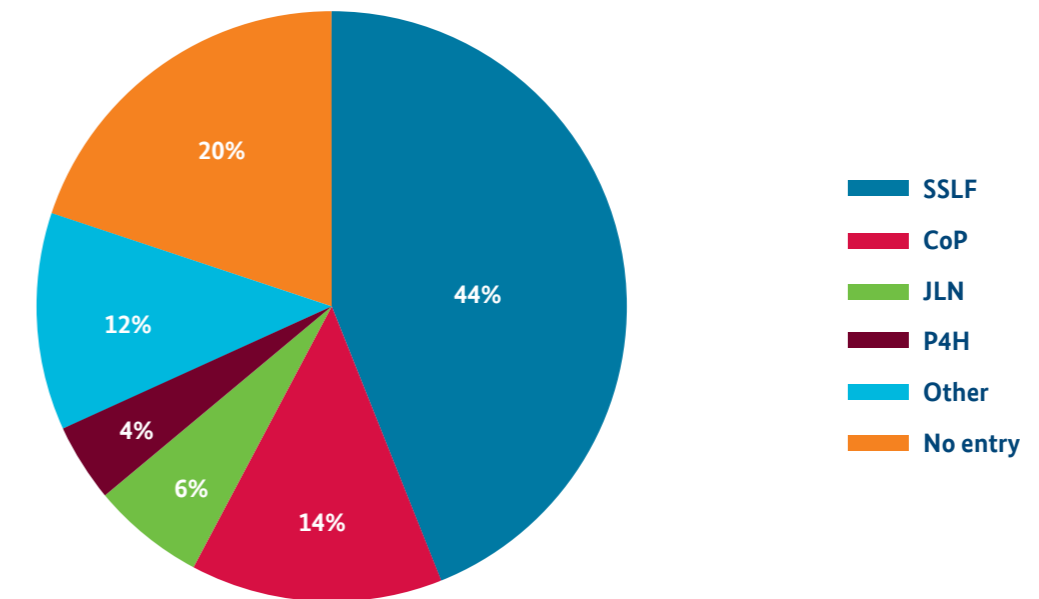


Figure 2: Network

n=50

The participants represent 41 different countries worldwide. Bangladesh, Ghana, Jamaica, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania were the only countries mentioned more than once. The regional

composition of our sample shows that 46% of the participants who took part in our survey are working in an African country, 46% in an Asian country and 8% in Central or South America (see figure 3).

Question: On behalf of which country do you participate in the network?

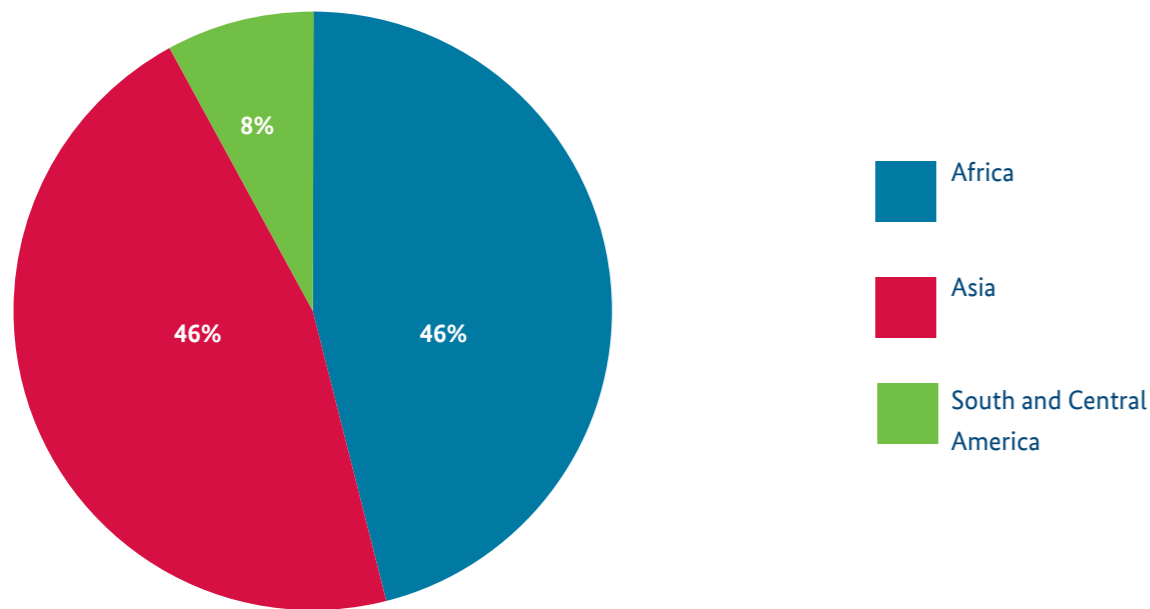


Figure 3: Regions

n=50

A majority of 37 members (74% of our sample) work directly on behalf of the government of a country. All of them are employees of a ministry (see figure 4), largely of a national ministry of social affairs with 15 entries, followed by the ministries for health and ministries of finance with seven entries each. Other members of our sample work for a ministry of international cooperation (4 people/ 8% of the sample), a ministry of labor (3 people/ 6% of the sample) and a ministry of economic affairs (1 person/ 2% of the sample). The remaining respondents work for research institutes/organizations (3 people/ 6% of the sample), an NGO (3 people/ 6% of

the sample), an international agency (3 people/ 6% of the sample) or as an independent consultant (1 participant/ 2% of the sample). Three participants did not indicate the institution they work for.

Almost all of these institutions are operating on a national level, with only three working on a subnational level. Of the 50 participants, 24 or 48% would describe the main focus of their profession as technical, whereas 19 or 38% are mainly involved in policy making. The remaining seven (14% of the sample) are working in administration (see figure 5).

Question: On behalf of which institution do you participate in the network?

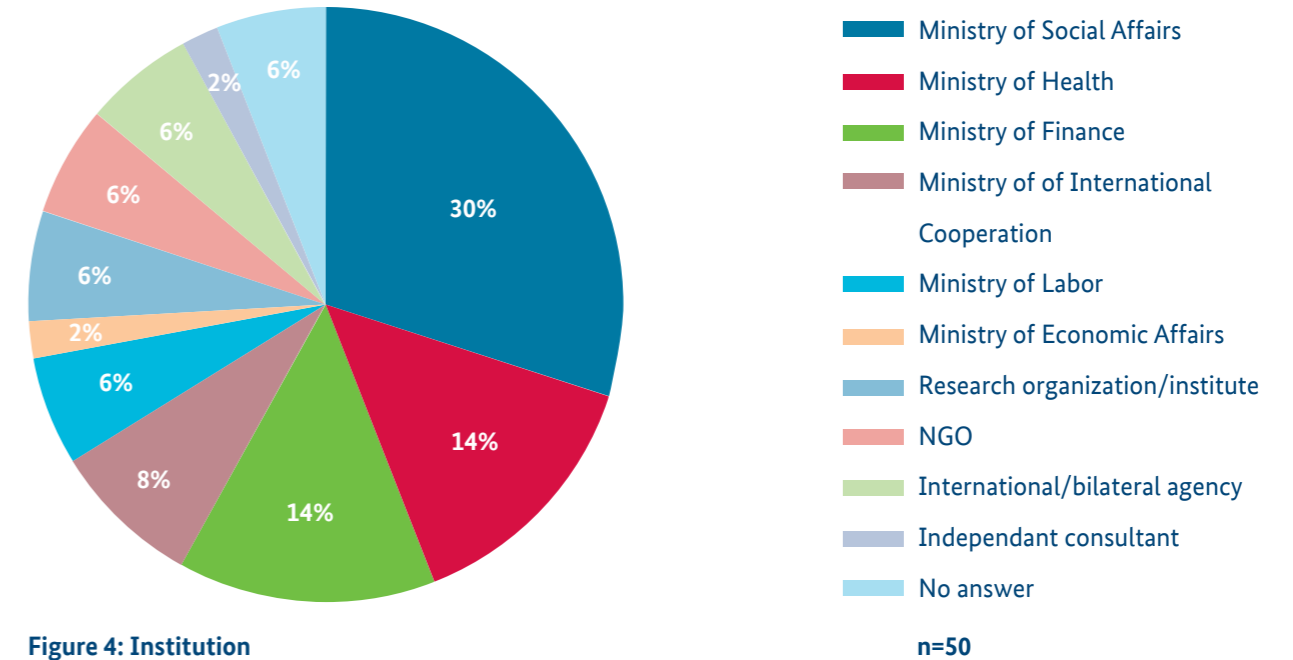


Figure 4: Institution

n=50

Question: What is the main focus of your profession?

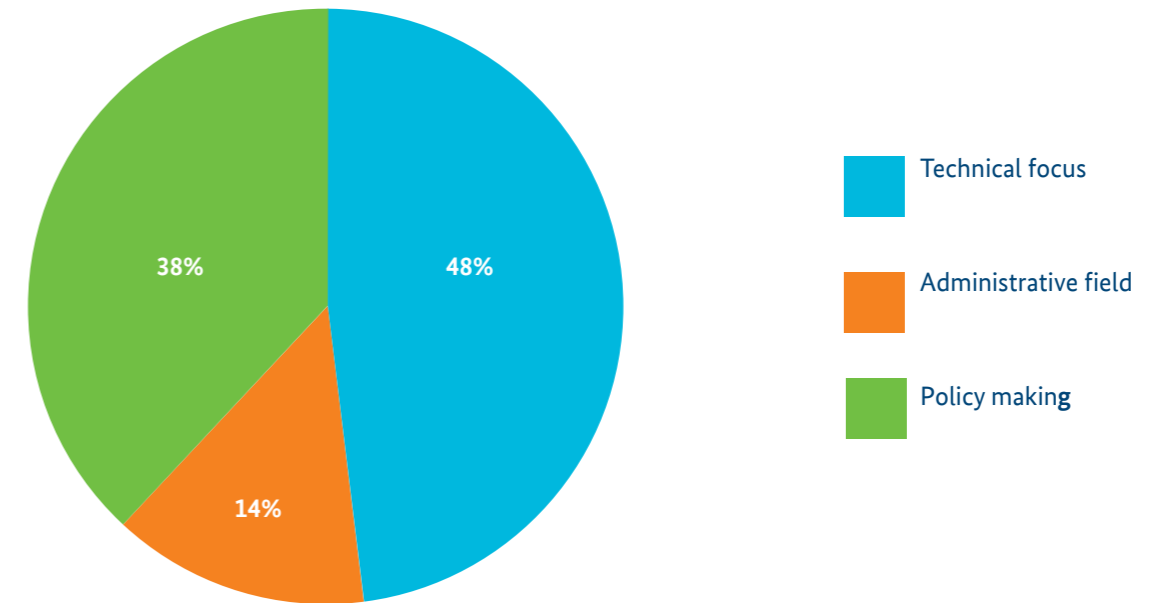


Figure 5: Focus of profession

n=50

4. Policy transfer within networks

4.1 Perceived network effectiveness

In order to understand if ideas derived from international policy networks enter the national policy making sphere at all, and if so, how far they travel within national policy cycles, we created an effectiveness measure assessing the intensity of policy transfer realized. The measure combines direct network output - asking whether any issues and ideas derived from the respective network have been introduced into national policy dialogues - with the different stages of the policy cycle.⁴ We adjusted the policy cycle heuristic to our study, including the following stages: (1) initiating policy dialogue (= agenda setting), (2) piloting new measures, (3) introduction of new laws and decrees (= decision-making), and (4) implementation.

All participants were asked if they introduced an idea derived from networks into their national policy dialogue (receiver), and whether they presented policies themselves during network meetings to their counterparts in other countries (sender). Further, we asked how many and which topics were introduced and which country the policy stems from, or by which countries the policies were taken up respectively.

Those who confirmed to have introduced topics either as sender or receiver were asked if the introduced policies received attention within the respective national dialogues. Again, those who confirmed that their introduced policies received attention were asked if this led to any noticeable changes. Those cases, where introduced ideas led to changes were asked about the type of changes referring to the different stages of the policy cycle, namely a) initiation of a policy dialogue on the subject matter, b) piloting of new measures, c) introduction of new laws, decrees, regulations etc.,

and d) implementation. From this combination we can deduce seven dimensions of effectiveness:

1. No issues or ideas introduced into national policy dialogue (receiver) / No issues or ideas advertised to other countries (sender)
2. Issues or ideas introduced, no attention (receiver) / Issues or ideas introduced, attention unknown (receiver)
3. Attention, no changes
4. a. Attention, initiation of policy dialogue
b. Attention, piloting new measures
c. Attention, introduction of new formal rules
d. Attention, implementation

while 1. shows no direct network effectiveness, 4. indicates the highest level of effectiveness (induced policy change). 4a-d distinguish between different types of changes, thus allowing conclusions for which stages of the policy cycle networks are most effective.

Figure 6 illustrates the effectiveness of policy transfer achieved. 78% of network participants stated that they introduced one or more ideas and issues derived from networks into their national policy dialogue, whereas 22% stated that they did not.

Among those 78% of network participants, 6% stated that the ideas they introduced did not receive any attention. Another 22% stated that the ideas introduced received attention in the national policy dialogue, but did not lead to any changes. Changes occurred in 16% of all cases when initiating a policy dialogue, in 18% when piloting new measures and in 16% of all cases when these were implemented. No cases occurred with changes related to the introduction of new laws and decrees.

Question: Did it receive any attention? Did it lead to any changes in your country that you know of? If it led to any changes, at which level?

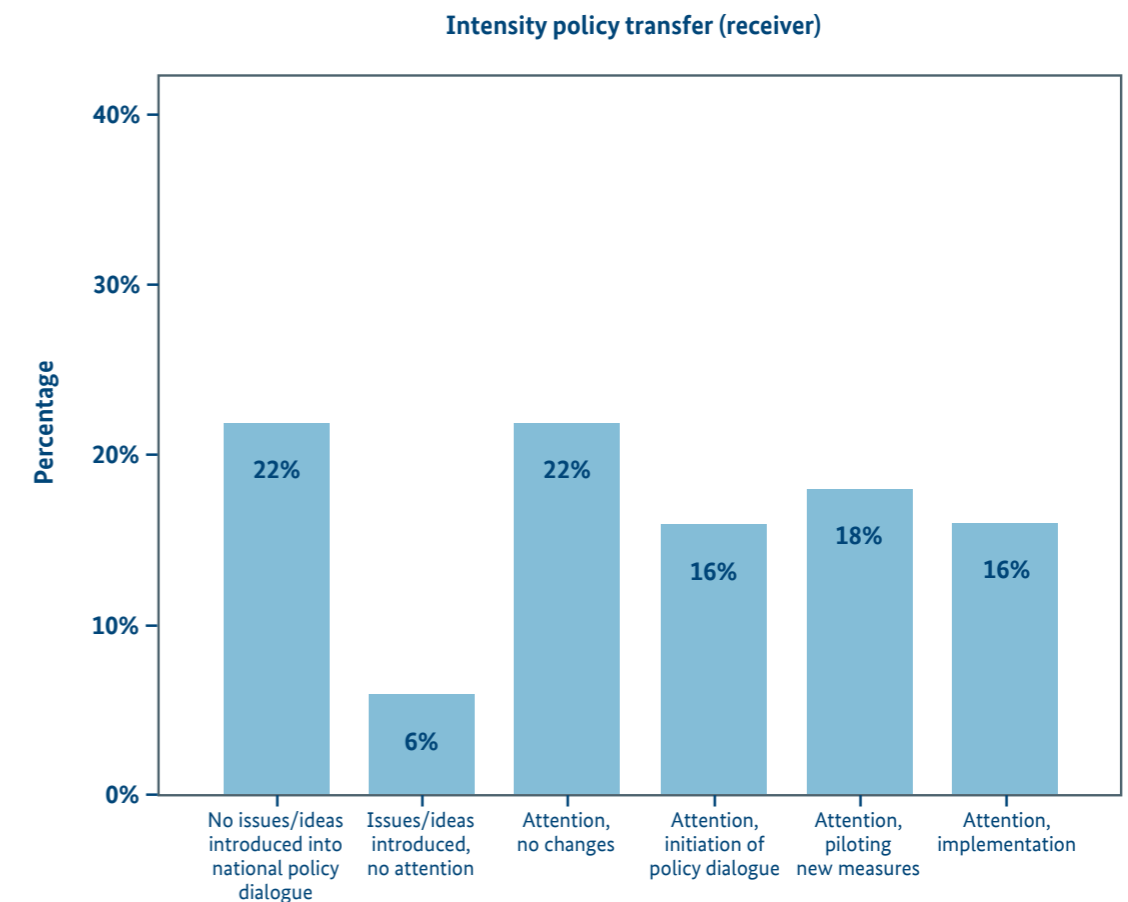


Figure 6: Intensity of policy transfer (receiver)

n=50

Considering the introduction of policy solutions to other countries in the network, figure 6 shows that 62% stated that they presented or advertised their policy solutions to other countries in the network, whereas 38% did not. Out of those 62% that presented their policy solutions to other countries, 32% stated to have presented their policy solutions, but could not confirm that they received attention within the other countries' policy dialogues. 14% stated that their presented topics

did receive attention by other countries, but that they did not lead to any changes that they knew of. Known changes occurred in a total of 16% of all cases, with 2% at the level of the initiation of a policy dialogue, 4% stated that new measures were piloted, 2% named changes with regard to the introduction of new formal rules, and 8% stated that changes occurred at the implementation level.

⁴ Several policy cycles comprised of a different number of stages exist. For example, the policy cycle suggested by Howlett et al. (2009) defines five stages (agenda-setting, policy-formulation, decision-making, implementation, evaluation), whereas the policy cycle of Grindle and Thomas (1991) is defined by three stages (agenda-setting, decision-making, implementation). For an application of policy cycles to social protection see for example Bender and Rompel (2010) or Fox and Reich (2012).

Questions: Have you presented or advertised your policy solutions to other countries in the network? Were any of the issues and ideas you or other representatives of your country presented during the network sessions introduced into national policy dialogues by other country representatives that you know of? Did it lead to any changes that you know of?

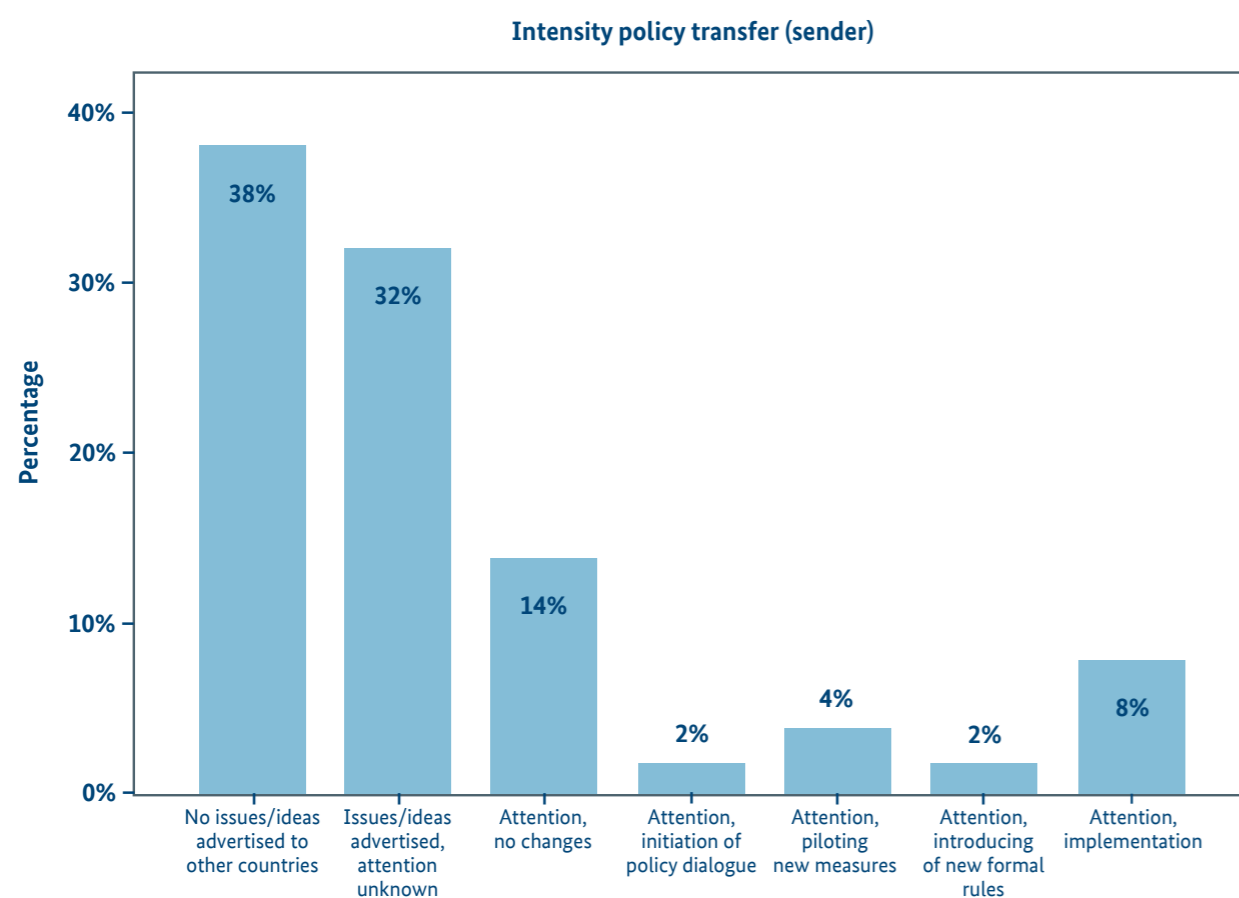


Figure 7: Intensity of policy transfer (sender)

Considering the effectiveness of a policy network from the point of view of the receiver, a majority of 72% of surveyed network participants reported that they introduced topics/policies at home. 50% of participants reported that those introduced topics led to changes in their own country. **These results suggest that policy networks have indeed the potential to facilitate policy transfer between countries.** For explaining policy

change, domestic factors naturally matter as well. The relative importance of both dimensions (international dialogue and domestic factors) cannot be assessed within the context of this study. However, the **relevance of domestic factors** is also clearly illustrated by the fact that 28% of respondents reported that they introduced ideas and issues into their national policy dialogue, but did not receive any attention (6%) or

did receive attention, but no resulting policy changes occurred (22%) (see also chapter 4.3 Obstacles for policy transfer).

The picture is somewhat different when looking at the point of view of the sender: Although a majority reported as well on having introduced topics to other country representatives (62%), the share is lower than in the case of the receiver presented above. Further, and more strikingly, only a minority of 16% reported about resulting changes, whereas 14% reported that the topics received attention, but no changes occurred; 32% were not aware of any attention. These differences between the receiving and the sending point of view allow for two different interpretations:

(a) Due to a high level of **uncertainty and information gaps** about the actual transmission process, sender might simply not be aware of any changes although changes occurred.

(b) If, in fact, the take up rate is low and the results are not induced by uncertainty, then there is obviously a **mismatch between receiver and sender**. Reasons for this result could be for example a mismatch between the topics presented and the topics required, or inadequate formats for presenting issues and ideas.

In the former case, **improving information flows and feedback processes within the network** could reduce this information gap and also serve as a motivational incentive: the motivation to actively take part in the network could increase by presenting ideas and issues to representatives from other countries, if participants have the impression that they could act as 'change agents'. The latter case would require an **investigation into the design of the networks (e.g. mechanisms for topic selection or presentation)**. In any case, the differences between sender and receiver require further investigation.

4.2 Perceptions of transfer mechanisms

The mechanisms of policy transfer and diffusion described in chapter 2 of this paper are relevant both for the sender and the receiver of a policy. In order to assess the perceptions of mechanisms at work, we formulated statements based on the different mechanisms. Each statement could be rated on a quadripartite scale from strongly agree, agree, disagree, to strongly disagree.

- **Learning** is relevant, if participants agree with the statement: "The policies introduced showed a good performance in other countries" (receiver) or "The policy I present performs well and could help other countries achieve good policy outcomes" (sender) respectively. We also included a statement on "Quasi-learning" relating to improving efficiency of national policies by referring to a cost-reduction aspect: "The policies introduced contain important policy innovations that have already been tested in the other country".

- **Emulation** is relevant, if the following statement is agreed with: "The policies introduced are internationally acclaimed and have high prestige" (receiver) or "The policy I presented is internationally acclaimed and has high prestige" (sender), respectively.

- **Competition** is relevant, if the following statement is agreed with: "If other countries adopt the policy I present, the international influence of the country I represent is enhanced" (sender). The receiver of policies was presented the statement: "The policies introduced have the potential to avoid lagging behind other countries".

- In addition, we presented another statement representing more **general strategic considerations about**

relations with other countries: “It is generally desirable to improve and strengthen relations with the other country” (receiver), and “I am particularly interested in policy exchange with countries with which I generally aim to strengthen relations” (sender).

Our survey data show that all mechanisms seem to play a role. However, it is more of interest to look at the ranking of the different mechanisms with respect to the subjective importance attached to them (see figure 8 and 9). In this context, general strategic considerations

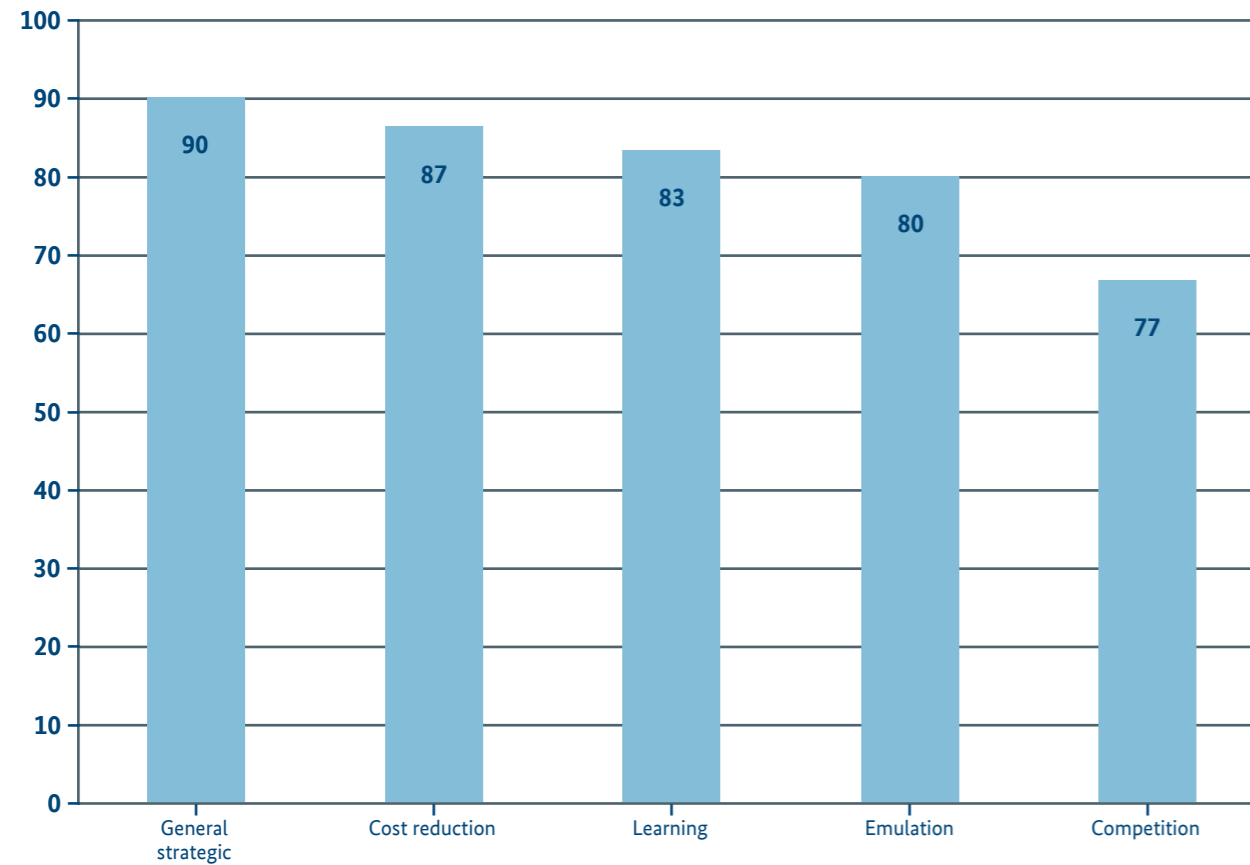


Figure 8: Receiver weighted average

are the most relevant mechanisms both from the point of view of the receiver and the sender. General strategic considerations are followed by quasi-learning in terms of cost reduction and learning (receiver) and learning (sender). It should also be noted that in terms of ranking the mechanisms, no differences between the points of view of the receiver and sender are observed.

These results suggest that policy networks have in fact the potential for inducing mutual learning processes and being a vehicle for policy transfer. Yet, the primary motivation for participating in a network might rather be of a strategic nature: Survey respondents conceived policy networks to be an opportunity for a general exchange with colleagues, offering opportunities not directly related to the topic of the network.

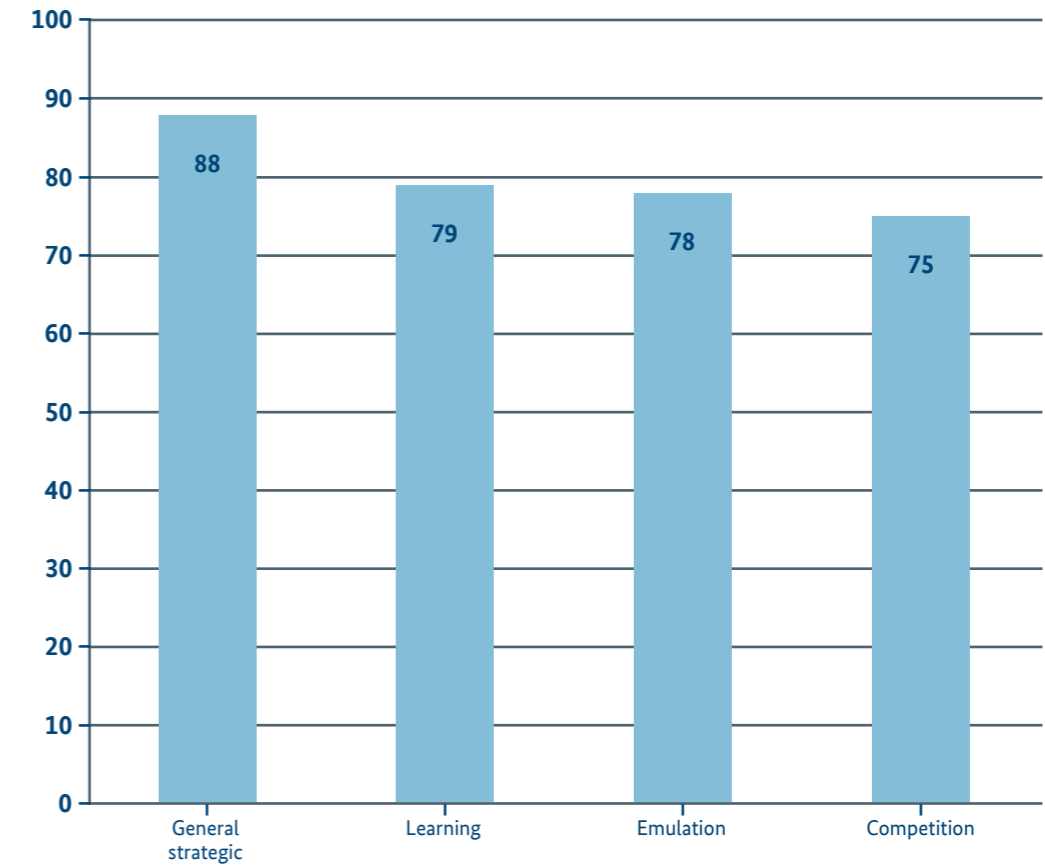


Figure 9: Sender weighted average

4.3 Obstacles for policy transfer

Those who introduced topics into their national policy dialogue and stated that this led to changes were asked about their perception of obstacles for the implementation of policy solutions derived from international networks (see figure 10). Suggested obstacles were obstacles related to party-politics, lack of understanding, lack of political support, bureaucratic resistance, resistance from interest groups, and policy innovations not suitable for institutional set-up.

As per the opinion of the participants, **lack of understanding** is the obstacle mentioned most frequently

for the success of a policy's transfer **followed by a lack of political support** and bureaucratic resistance. **Deficient suitability**, however, is only perceived to be a problem by a minority of respondents, possibly because of the selection process of the transfer agents.

These results point to the importance of strategic knowledge and skills besides technical expertise as the content of learning processes conveyed through networks. It would therefore be advisable to also consider these obstacles network participants confront in their domestic context, and to share experience and best practices on strategic aspects of reform processes.

Question: What would you consider as obstacles to the implementation of policy innovations derived from networks faced at home?

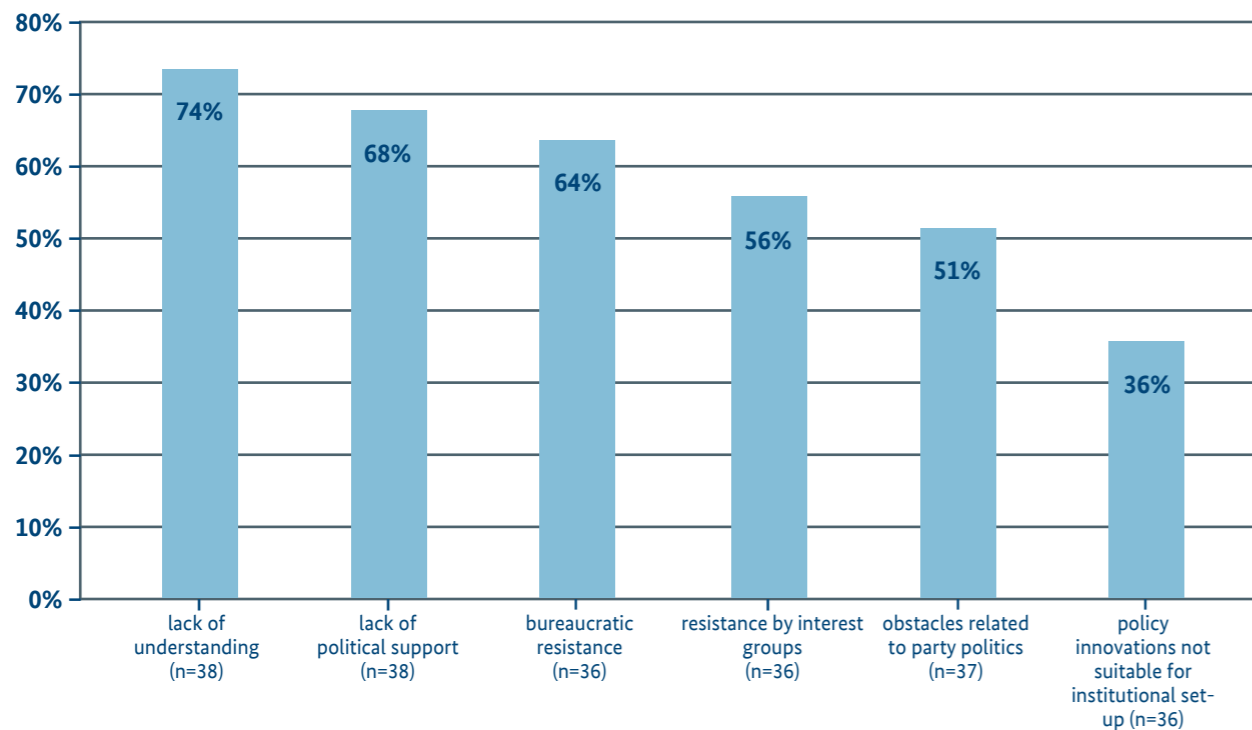


Figure 10: Obstacles

5. Individual roles and personal relations

Individual roles and direction of exchange

One crucial aspect of international policy networks is to facilitate exchange. In order to identify possible preconceptions of participants concerning their respective roles within the network with respect to the preferred direction of exchange, we asked the participants to choose from three different statements the one that they agreed with most. Statements concerned the role as sender, receiver, and the interest in mutual exchange, and thus, both. 54% of network participants stated that they are interested in mutual exchange and thus considered themselves in the role of both sender and receiver. 42% clearly saw themselves in the role of receiver, and a minority of 4% stated that their policy solutions are useful for other countries (see figure 11).

Retrieving and sharing information from networks can thus be viewed as the dominant motivation of network participants, whereas it seems to be less appealing to network participants to only present their solutions to others.

The perceived role within the network is independent of the regional background of respondents. Only a very weak and non-significant relationship exists between regional background and perceived role within the network.

To increase motivation of network participants it is therefore advisable to promote networks as arenas for specifically mutual learning processes and to incorporate this idea into the design and formats of network meetings, as discussed below.

Question: Which statement do you agree with most?

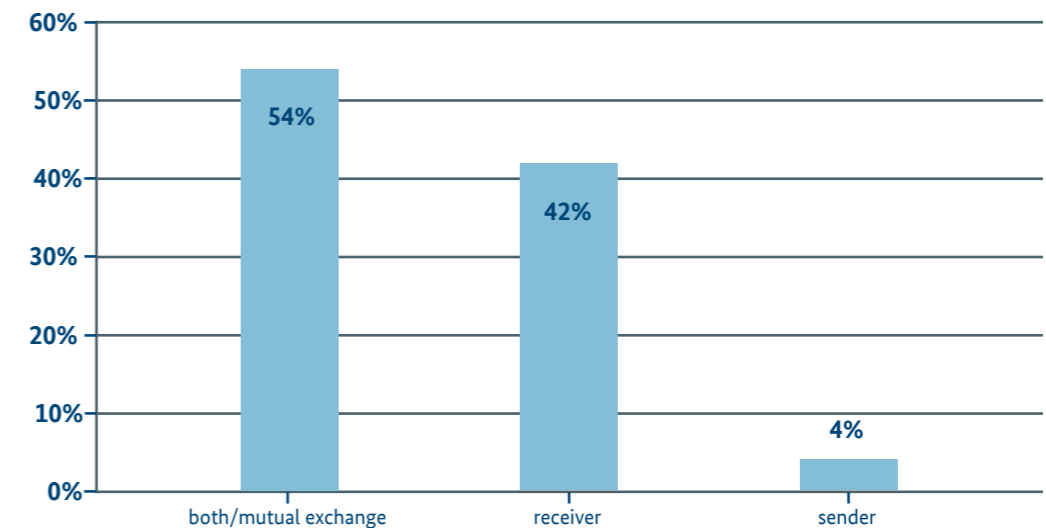


Figure 11: Perceived role

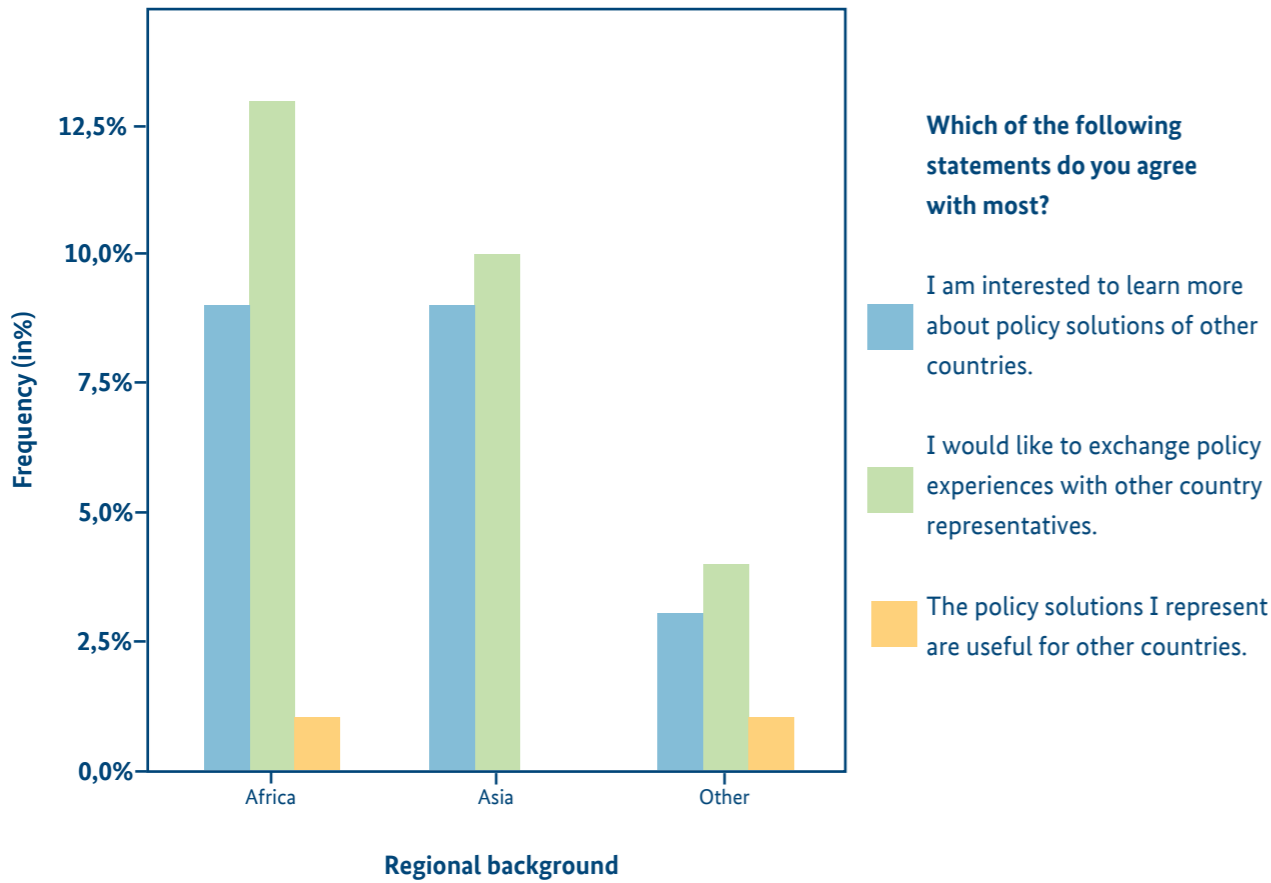


Figure 12: Perceived role and regional background

Personal relations within and across country delegations and network stability

As has been mentioned above, it is one crucial aspect of international policy networks to facilitate exchange with representatives of other countries. Another important aspect is furthermore the facilitation of exchange with colleagues from the same country. Country delegations often include officials working in different ministries and at different levels. Policy

networks thus present a rare opportunity for fostering contacts between officials from the same country, and thus to influence the possibility for reforms. We listed these aspects in the category of network stability.

Our data show that 48% of network participants maintain a regular exchange with participants from other countries. 33% keep up sporadic contact, and only 19% state that their participation did not lead to any follow-up activities.

		Has your participation in the network led to any of the below mentioned follow up activities or contacts beyond the network activities?	The participation in the international network has helped me foster/initiate contact with colleagues of my own country whom I would not have otherwise got in touch with.
Kendall-Tau-b	Has your participation in the network led to any of the below mentioned follow up activities or contacts beyond the network activities?	Correlation Coefficient	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,008
		N	48
	The participation in the international network has helped me foster/initiate contact with colleagues of my own country whom I would not have otherwise got in touch with.	Correlation Coefficient	-,350**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,008
		N	49

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 13: Relationship between country delegation external and country delegation

Regarding country delegations' internal network intensity, we asked whether the participation in the respective policy network has helped to foster or initiate contact with colleagues from the same country the participant would have otherwise not got in touch with. 43% agreed to this, and 37% strongly agreed. Only 2% strongly disagreed, and 18% disagreed. Thus, it can be understood that networks are relevant for multi-dimensional exchange facilitating sustainable exchange between network participants both across countries and within countries.

Interestingly a significant negative relationship between both categories (beyond network and strengthening national contacts) exists (figure 13). This seems to suggest that to a certain extent both types of fostering personal relations are substitutive and not complementing each other.

Further, the impact of network participation on fostering contacts with national colleagues is significantly related to the focus of respondents' profession (see

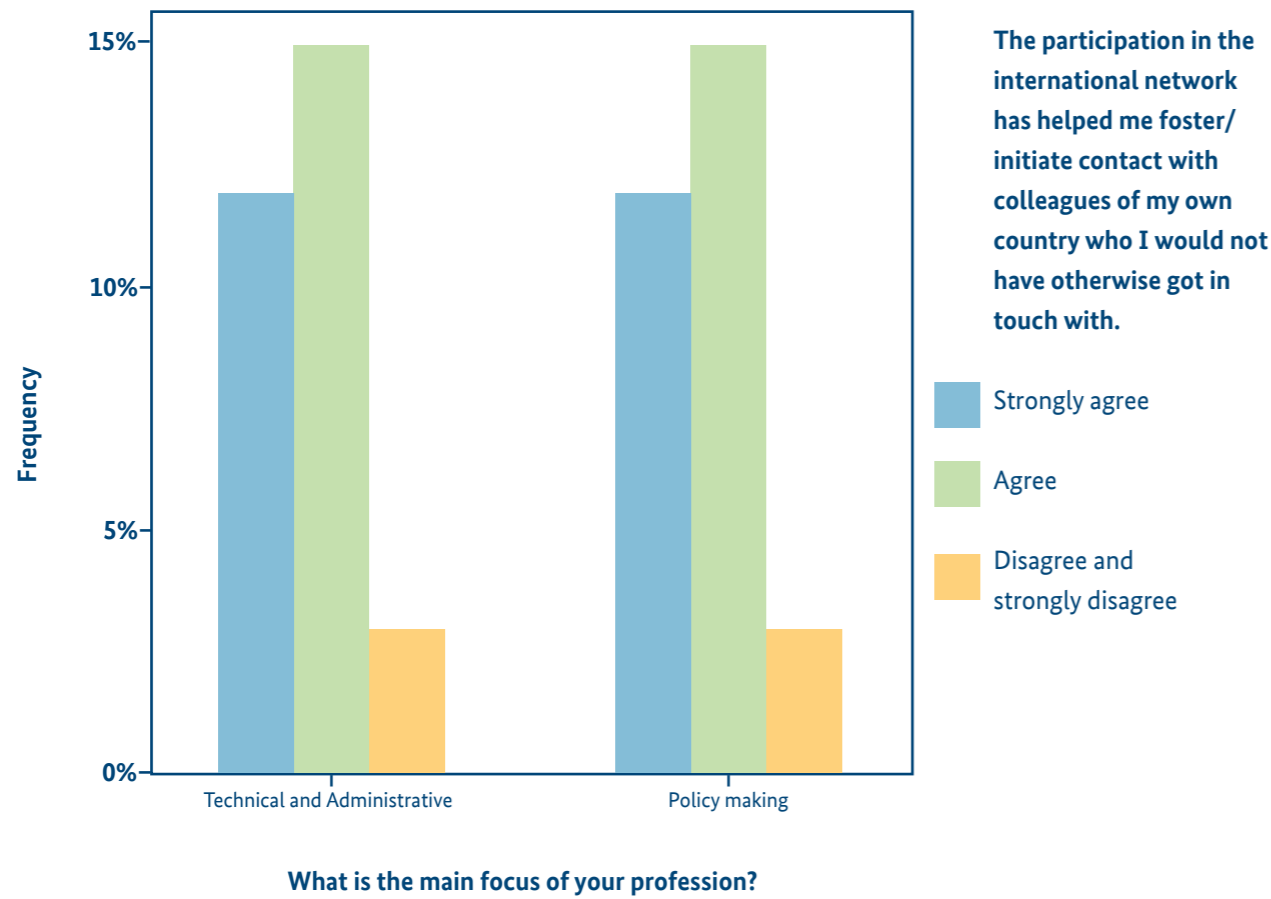


Figure 14: Contacts within countries and focus of profession

figure 13): The impact is more likely if respondents are working at the technical or administrative level. However, no such relationship is found between country delegation external and the focus of the profession (see figure 15). This is probably due to the fact that activities at technical or administrative level are frequently more restricted to the national “home” institutions with – compared to people working at the policy making level - limited interaction between institutions (e.g. ministries).

Further, the impact of network participation on fostering contacts with national colleagues is strongly and significantly related to the perceived relevance of the network and of networks in general. The same holds for the impact of network participation and strengthening contacts with colleagues from other countries.⁶ However, it needs to be stressed that this result does not imply any direction of causality: Improving contacts might increase the perceived relevance of policy networks or those members perceiving

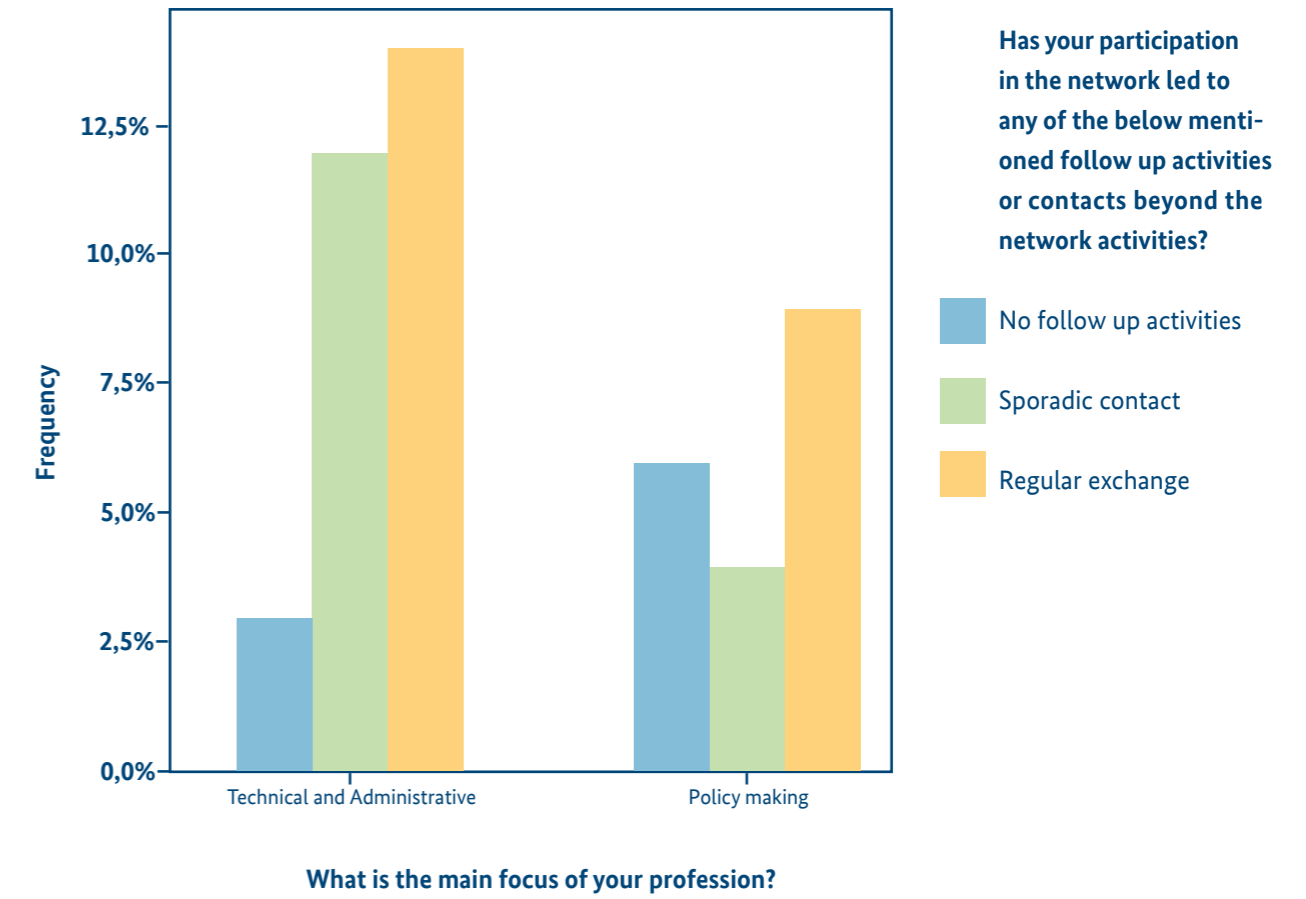


Figure 15: Contacts across countries and focus of profession

policy networks as being of more relevance might be more open a priori to engage in new contacts.

The relationship between either regular participation or embeddedness in other networks and fostering contacts to colleagues from the same country is weak and non-significant.⁷ Similar results hold for the impact on personal relations with colleagues from

other countries. The missing relationship between regular participation and fostering contacts suggests that participation in international networks per se has a positive impact on building relations with national colleagues, whereas the missing relationship between embeddedness and fostering contacts indicates that it is not necessary to induce participation in multiple networks to achieve this effect.

⁶ The relationship was robust over using different correlation measures for ordinal variables as well as for applying measures for nominal variables.

⁷ The value of Cramer-V is 0,19 resp. 0,11. Similar results hold when applying Kendall-Tau-b.

6. Perceived relevance of social protection networks

The survey assesses both the perceived relevance of international policy networks in general as well as of the respective policy network in particular for sharing policy experience. This can allow for conclusions about the perceived quality of the respective policy network, if the two perceptions are put into context. By asking about the regularity of network attendance and the reasons for not participating the survey aims to find out about the priority of international policy networks for government officials and other professionals, and possible obstacles for participation. Further, the survey seeks to shed light on the question of the perceived impact of international policy networks on different aspects and degrees of policy change.

Relevance in both general and specific cases is measured on a quadripartite scale from very relevant, relevant, hardly relevant to irrelevant. We found that a majority of 66% considers their respective policy network very important, and 60% consider policy networks generally very important. Only 3% consider their respective policy network irrelevant (see figure 16).

We conclude that networks generally are widely accepted as a means for sharing policy experience internationally, and that networks are considered beneficial for the development of policies.

Questions: How would you rate the overall relevance of this international policy network for sharing international experience? How would you rate the overall relevance of international policy networks in general for sharing international experience?

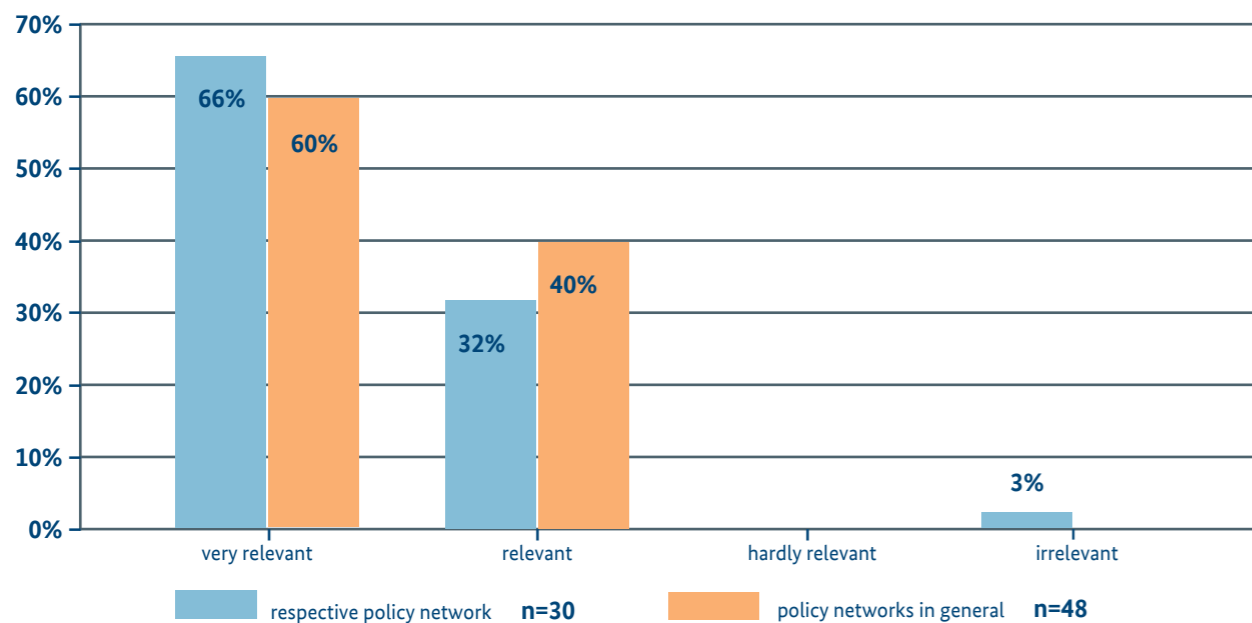


Figure 16: Relevance

Furthermore, there exists a strong positive and highly significant correlation between perceived relevance of policy network in question and relevance of policy networks in general.⁸

Interestingly, when using the number of networks respondents are involved in as control variable the strength of the relationship increases.⁹ **This means that discrimination between different networks is incomplete and diminishes with the number of networks an individual is involved in.**

When asked about the regularity of their network attendance, only 23% stated that they attend network sessions on a regular basis. **Accordingly, a majority**

of 77% do not attend network meetings regularly. Within the sample no relationship between the overall relevance of the network and regular attendance was detected. This result indicates that other obstacles must be relevant for causing irregular participation.

Regarding the reasons for low attendance rates, multiple answers were possible (see figure 17). Of those irregularly attending network meetings, 58% stated “insufficient funds” as a reason, followed by “time issues”, which was stated by 42%. None of the participants stated “no interest” as a reason, only 12% perceived topics not to be relevant. 15% stated that they have insufficient support from their superior.

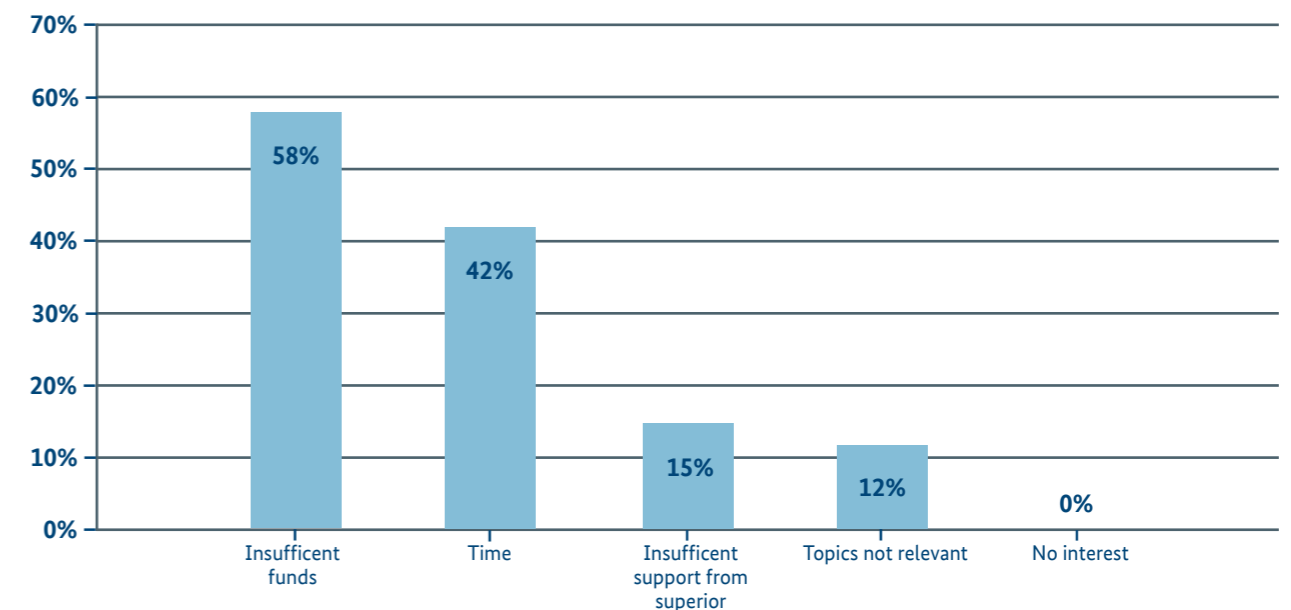


Figure 17: Reasons for not participating on a regular basis (multiple answers possible)

⁸ Kendall-Tau-b was used as correlation measure. The value was 0,672 and it was significant at the 1% level. Kendall-tau-b is a non-parametric measure for ordinal variables which takes compound values into consideration. Other measures (Spearman-Rho, Chi-Square or Cramer's V) also showed a significant relationship between the two variables.

⁹ The relationship was significant at the 1% level and the value of the coefficient increased to 0,798.

To find out more specifically for which aspects networks are perceived to be most suitable, we defined the different aspects as follows: initiation of a policy dialogue in the home country, supporting large-scale or small-scale policy change/reforms in the home

country, improvement of existing policies, facilitating implementation processes, strengthening relations to other countries and supporting agenda setting at the international level (see figure 18).

Question: In your experience, for which aspects do you think networks for learning about policies in other countries are most suitable?

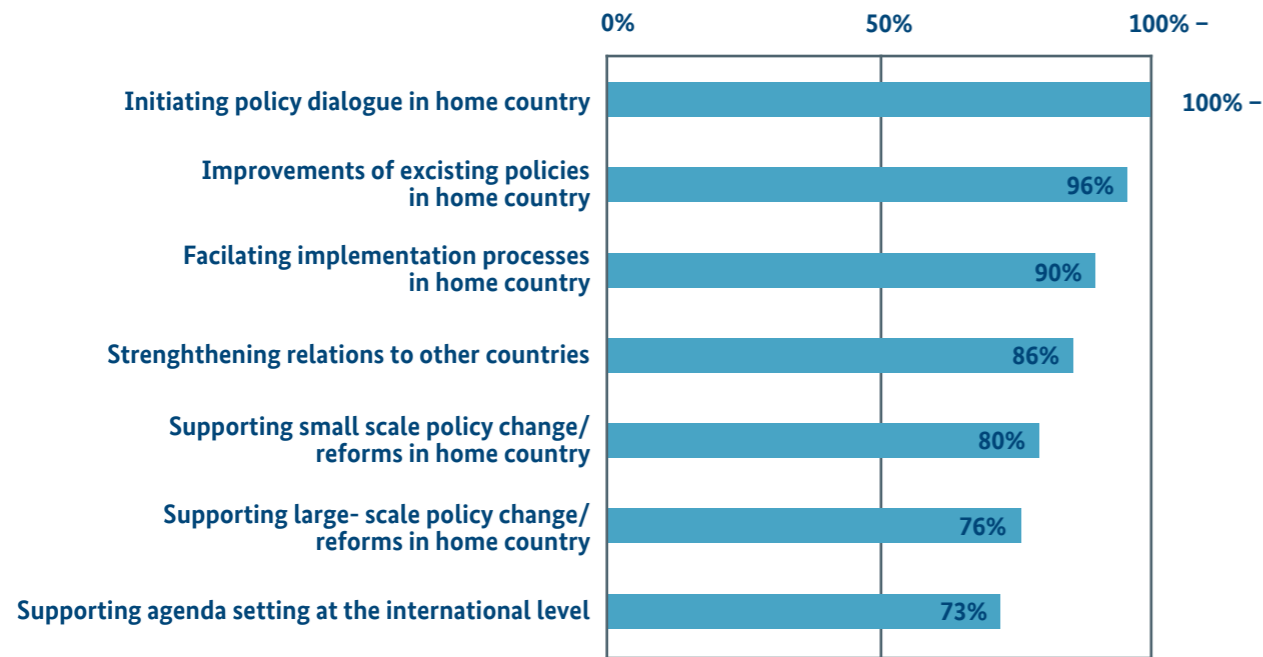


Figure 18: Relevance for different aspects

n=48

International policy networks are perceived by 100% as suitable for the initiation of a policy dialogue in the home country. 96% find that networks are relevant for the improvement of existing policies. Further, 90% consider networks relevant for facilitating implementation processes. 86% think that networks help strengthening relations to other countries, 80% perceive networks to be useful for supporting small-scale policy change/reforms and 76% for supporting large-scale policy change/reforms. 73% consider policy networks relevant for agenda setting at the international level.

Thus, international policy networks predominantly are considered as supporting national policy change at various stages of the policy cycle. The role of international policy networks in supporting agenda setting at the international level ranks last. The utility of international policy networks for contributing to strategic objectives in international relations (i.e. strengthening relations to other countries) ranks in between.

7. Perceived role of similarity between countries

The literature on policy diffusion discusses similarity as an enabling framework condition. Similarity has various dimensions, which we aim to capture in the survey. Similarity in this survey has 11 dimensions: language, geographical proximity, similar values, similar religion, similar political institutions, similar party system, similar economic system, average per capita income, economic growth, poverty level, and demographic structure. These variables could be rated on a quadripartite scale from very important, impor-

tant, less important to unimportant. We weighted the results in order to get a ranking of the different variables, whereby 0 points indicate “unimportant” and 100 points indicate “very important” (see figure 19). We find that similar demographic structure scores highest with 78 points. Second and third are poverty level and similar economic system. We find similar religion and similar party system to be perceived as least important.

Question: How would you consider the importance of the following types of similarity?

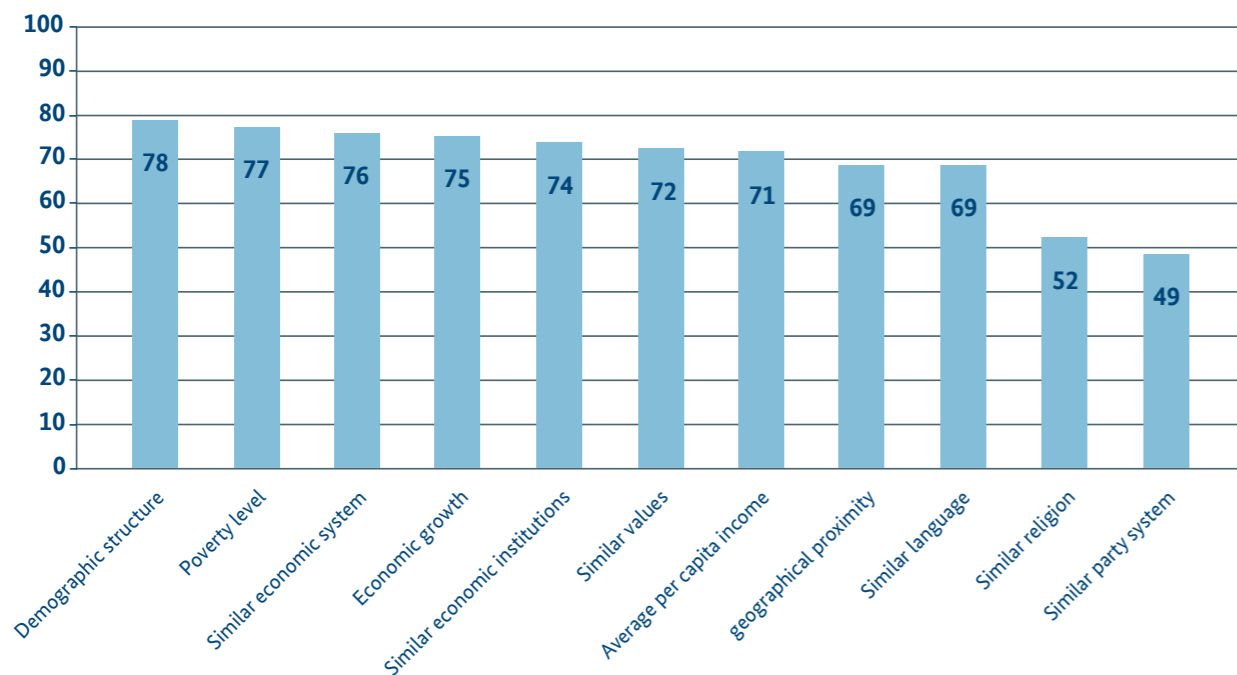


Figure 19: Similarity weighted

n=33

In a next step, we clustered the total of 11 dimensions into three categories. Cultural variables include: language, geographical proximity, similar values and similar religion. Political variables are: similar political institutions, similar party system and similar economic system. Among economic variables are average per-capita-income, economic growth, poverty level, demographic structure.

Among political factors similar party systems are perceived to be of little importance. 40% perceive it to be less important, and 14% to be unimportant. On the other hand more than half of the participants rate similar political institutions and economic systems as important factors. Similar political institutions were

by 33% considered as very important and by 36% as important. The similarity of the economic systems was rated very important by 31% and by 44% as important.

The tested economic factors have a rather similar distribution with no factor considered unimportant. Similarities in demographic structure and poverty level are perceived to have a strong impact, being considered as very important by 29% (demographic structure) and 31,3% (poverty level), and as important by 54,8% (demographic structure), and 43,8% (poverty level). The least relative importance among these economic factors is attributed to an average per capita income: 18,2% perceive it to be very important, and 33,3% to be less important.

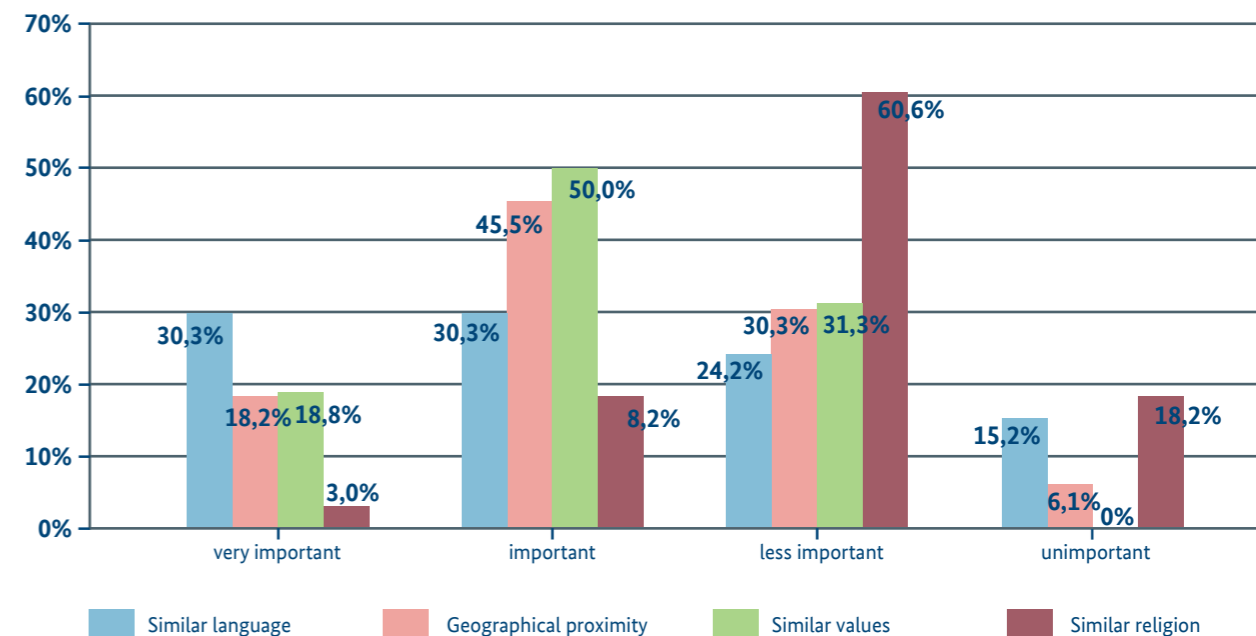


Figure 20: Cultural factors

n=33

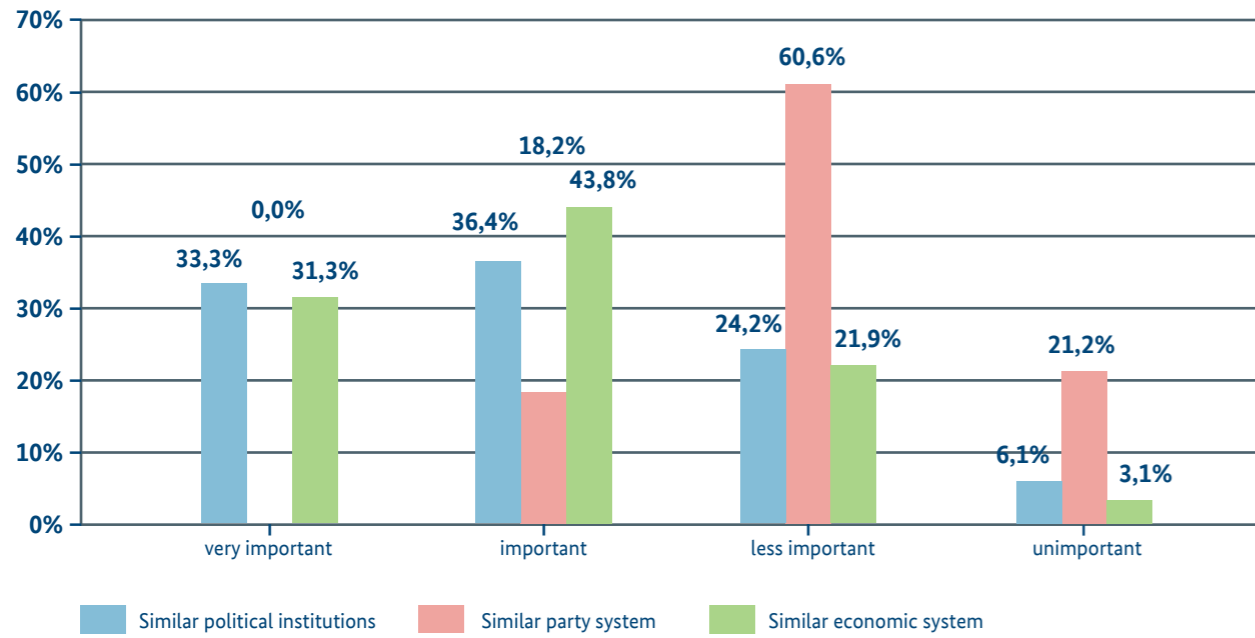


Figure 21: Political factors

n=33

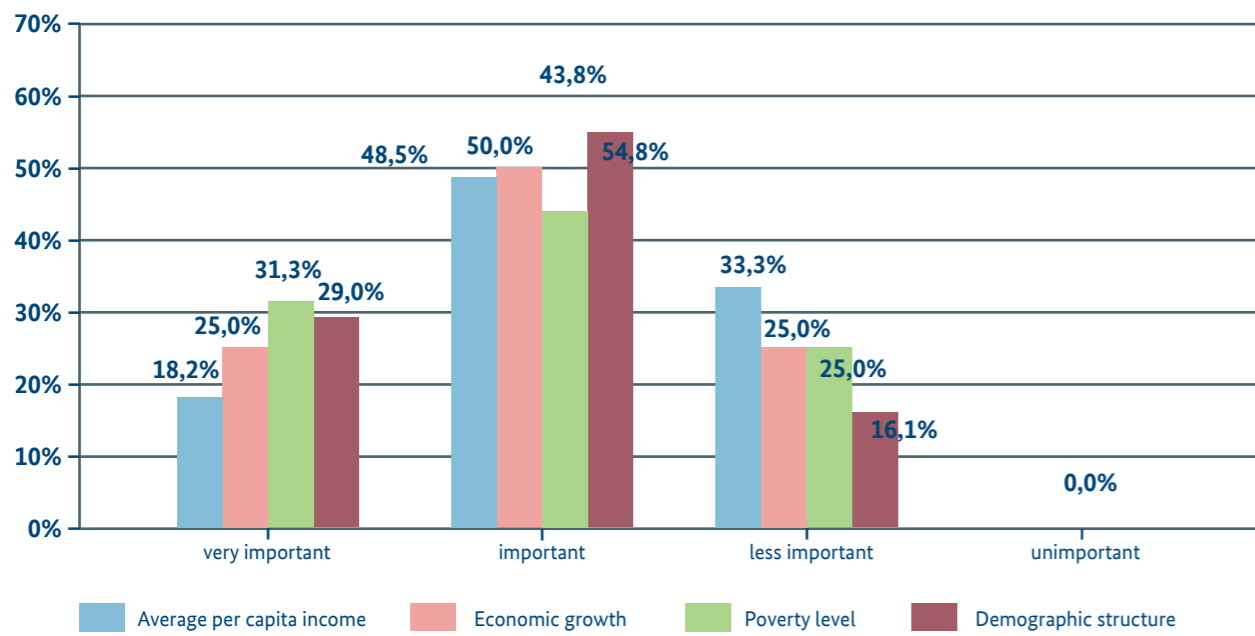


Figure 22: Economic factors

n=33

8. Preferences on network design

To learn more about communication channels and media usage within networks, we asked whether network participants use any of the following channels to exchange information: E-mail, mail, personal meetings, internet fora, phone, Skype or other (VoIP), and video conference (see figure 23). Multiple answers were possible. We found that e-mail is the most popular channel for communication with 92% using it to exchange information. Mail and internet fora appear to be least popular, with 16% usage each. 3% stated to use none of the mentioned channels.

We conclude that personal contacts are valued higher than virtual forms of contacts. This can be related

to our findings on the mechanisms at work, where both sender and receiver perceived policy networks to be an opportunity for a general exchange with colleagues that offer opportunities not directly related to the topic of the network.

Further, the preference for workshops among network participants mirrors our finding that participants aim to retrieve and share knowledge rather than merely present their own experience without having the impression that they can actually learn something themselves. **It is therefore advisable to favour interactive formats of exchange in the design network meetings.**

Question: Apart from meetings, do you use any of the below mentioned channels to keep in touch with other network members? (multiple answers possible)

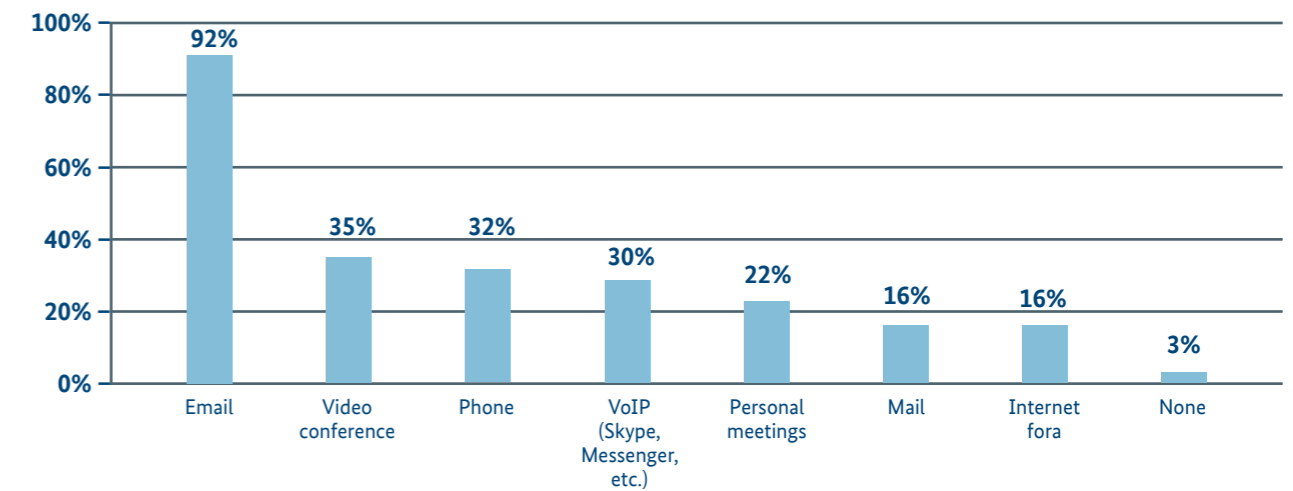


Figure 23: Communication channels

n=35

Question: Apart from meetings, do you use any of the below mentioned channels to keep in touch with other network members? (multiple answers possible)

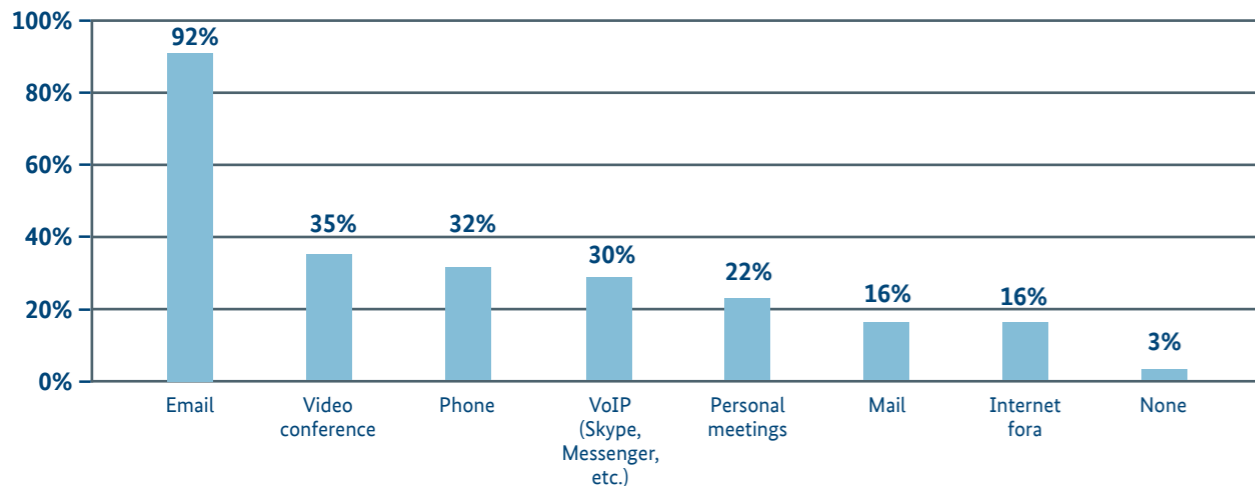


Figure 23: Communication channels

n=35

Question: How would you rate the importance of the following format of network contacts?

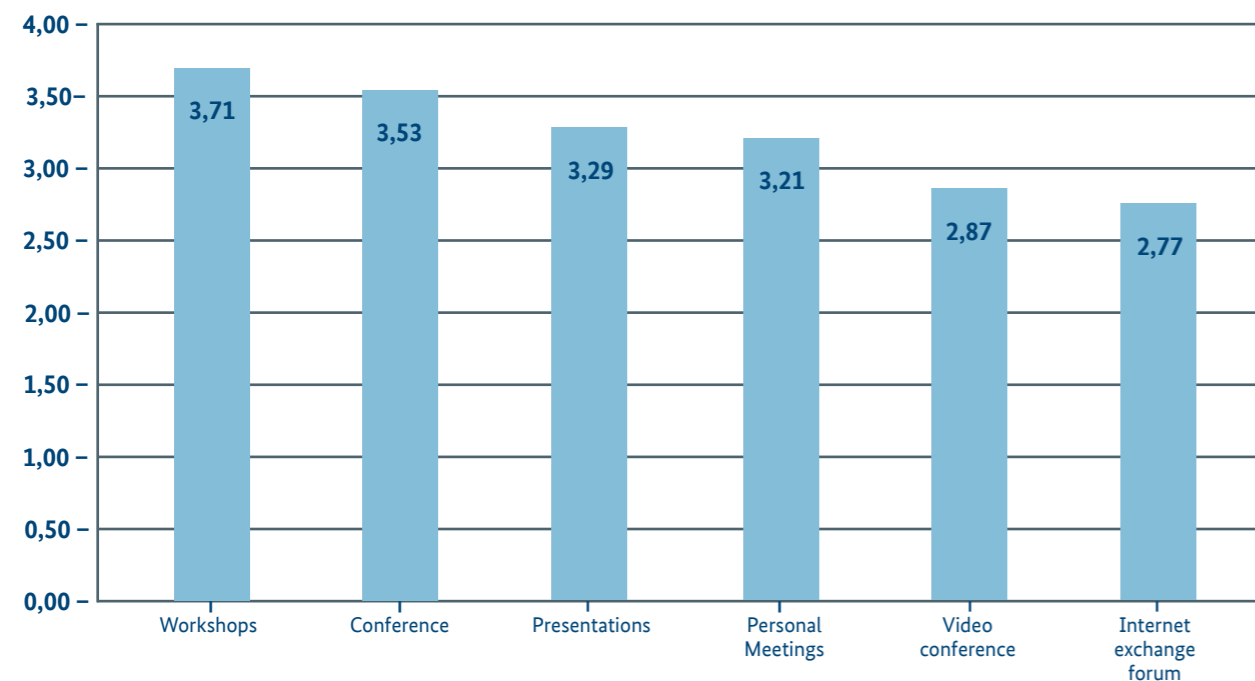


Figure 24: Weighted alternative formats

n=38

9. Conclusion

This study aimed to shed light on transfer processes within international policy networks. Based on an online survey it assessed network participants' perceptions and attitudes concerning the effectiveness and relevance of international policy networks for policy transfer and learning, factors impacting transfer as well as transfer paths and personal relations within these networks. The design of the survey was built on insights from the literature on policy diffusion and transfer as elaborated in the first part of the research project.

Our study suggests that **networks are perceived to have the potential to contribute to the transfer of policies**. Changes induced by networks include different stages of the policy cycle: initiation of policy dialogue, piloting of new measures and implementation. However, no cases occurred with changes related to the introduction of new laws and decrees. Differences with regard to **network effectiveness** between sender and receiver could be observed. These differences can either be due to an **information gap** between sender and receiver, or a **mismatch** between receiver and sender with regard to topics presented and topics required. Moreover, these results point to the importance of obstacles faced in the domestic policy context.

Concerning these obstacles, lack of understanding is mentioned most frequently as impairing the success of a policy's transfer, followed by lack of political support and bureaucratic resistance. Thus, an option for strengthening the effectiveness of policy networks could be to **focus on strengthening the strategic skills** of participants in order to effectively present topics and facilitate change processes in their respective home countries. It is also interesting to note that deficient suitability of policy innovations, however, is only perceived to be a problem by a minority of respondents, possibly because of the selection process of the transfer agents.

With regard to **mechanisms** at work within international policy networks, our results show that general strategic calculations and learning are most prominent among both sender and receiver. This suggests that international policy networks are perceived as **arenas for a more general exchange** that opens up various avenues for learning.

The importance of **facilitating mutual exchange** is also reflected by our finding that interest **in international policy networks appears to be low if participants perceive themselves as senders only**. **Retrieving information from networks** appears to be the dominant motivation for participation of network participants within the exchange process. This is also mirrored by our finding that **workshops seem to be the most popular formats for sharing knowledge**. Also, concerning modes of communication channels, a **preference for personal meetings** over virtual channels of communication can be observed.

The **exchange process within international networks** appears to be **multi-dimensional**. Delegation external as well as internal contacts are established in a large number of cases. Thus, it can be concluded that networks do not only facilitate contacts between **participants from different countries, but also between members of the same country delegation**. However, we find that both types of fostering personal relations are substitutive and not complementing each other.

Fostering contacts with national colleagues is more likely between colleagues working at technical or administrative level. A strong relationship also exists between the impact of the policy network on fostering contacts and the perceived relevance of the network. Our results further suggest that **participation in international networks generally has a positive impact on building relations with national colleagues**, and

that this effect does not depend on the regularity of participation or the number of networks the attendant is involved in.

Concerning the relevance of international policy networks our results suggest, that **supporting national policy change at various stages of the policy cycle** is viewed by respondents as the **most important role of international policy networks**. All respondents consider international policy networks as relevant for the initiation of policy dialogues at home, followed by the improvement of existing policies in the respective home country and the facilitation of implementation processes at home. **Supporting large-scale policy**

change as well as **agenda setting at the international level** rank at **the end of the scale**. **Strengthening relations to other countries** ranks in **the medium range**. However, **high acceptance of international policy networks does not ensure regular participation**. Observed major obstacles for participation in international policy networks include **insufficient funds and time issues**. With regard to the **perceived importance of similarity** our results suggest that similar socio-economic factors, namely demographic structure, poverty level, economic system and economic growth matter most. Least relevant are similar language, religion and party system.

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