Working with Evidence - Course Overview

This document presents a course overview outlining the relationship between content blocks and learning modules.

To effectively navigate the course structure, it is important to understand that the learning process will be **divided into classroom learning modules** and **self-paced learning modules.** Modules are distributed jointly and complementarily in thematic blocks:

- **Classroom learning modules** are those in which we'll collectively work during the 3 training days of the course. Here, you'll engage with your course colleagues and be led by course instructors, with a significant focus on performing practical exercises, both in groups and individually.

- **Self-paced learning modules** are those in which participants independently access the course platform's asynchronous material at their own pace. These modules are hosted on the EU Academy Platform, under **the dedicated course area**.

While the focus of the training experience is concentrated in the classroom sessions, self-paced learning modules serve as a vital complement to each block, enriching and/or delving deeper into the contents of this course. It is important to read and familiarize yourself with the platform and the asynchronous materials. Moreover, we expect you to read the Introduction to the Course section before the first training day, to familiarize yourself with the course structure and the practical cases we will use in our exercises.

The course is organized into **three thematic blocks**, with **seven asynchronous modules** (self-paced learning) and **nine classroom modules** (distributed over the 3 training days):

- In **Block 1**, we'll introduce the course, learn fundamental concepts for working with evidence in public policy, and begin to deeply consider working with evidence and identifying needs for evidence-informed policy. This block contains 3 classroom modules (1,2,3) and 3 asynchronous self-paced modules (I,II,III).

- In **Block 2**, we'll broadly consider evidence needs and their interrelation with different types of policy interactions, learn about various methods of gathering evidence for public policy, and connecting to experts and knowledge holders, and think ahead to understand the impacts and implications of policy choices. This block contains 3 classroom modules (4,5,6) and 2 asynchronous self-paced modules (IV, V).

- In **Block 3,** we'll learn about evidence assessment and how to navigate conflicting evidence, by applying key the key concepts and critical thinking skills that are essential for evidence-informed policy. This block also marks the closing of the course, thus combining the main learning of the course to see how they integrate and complement each other. This block contains 3 classroom modules (7,8,9) and 2 asynchronous self-paced modules (VI, VII).

BLOCK I: **Introduction to evidence & policy. Foundational concepts & Defining evidence needs.**			
CLASSROOM modules – Day 1, Block I			
Module	**Topic**	**Contents**	**Learning Goal**
Module 1: **The role of evidence in policymaking.**	Introduction to the course & Evidence-informed policy	This course uses the combination of competences from the JRC competence cluster "Work with Evidence" and a vision on the policy cycle to provide a structure for learning about approaches, tools and skills for working with evidence in public policy. This module will introduce this approach by: • Explaining what evidence-informed policymaking is and why working with evidence is important. • Key steps and principles for working with evidence. It will introduce three lenses which help to deepen each of those steps: thinking deep, thinking broad and thinking ahead.	Participants know the trainer and introduce themselves. Participants are provided with an introduction of the 3-day training sequence, including the session flow for the first day. Become familiar with the course approach to evidence & policy, and its connection with the JRC Competence Framework. Understand the notion of evidence-informed policy and why it is important, and the link between the policy cycle and the stages of working with evidence.
Module 2: **Introduction to evidence & working with evidence.**	Fundamental concepts for working with evidence	This module dives deeper into understanding what is evidence and introduces fundamental concepts for working with evidence, types of scientific evidence. It explores different types of scientific evidence: • Quantitative and qualitative. • Descriptive and causal. • Other forms of (non-scientific) evidence.	Participants are familiar with the JRC concept of evidence and its importance for evidence-informed policymaking. Understand fundamental categories of scientific evidence and gain insights into other forms of evidence.
Module 3: **Policy problem definition & defining research questions.**	Learning to define the policy problem & identifying evidence needs	This module works on skills for <u>understanding the policy challenge</u>. It is important to define your policy problem and ask the right (research) questions. For this we explore: • Thinking Deep: Introducing and applying the Iceberg model. • Work through the iceberg model to gain deeper insights into their policy challenge. Following the introduction of the iceberg model, we introduce good practice for <u>defining policy problems.</u> • Developing the right questions regarding a policy problem, a problem statement and evidence base. • Fundamental concepts for developing research questions (causality, independent/dependent variables).	Participants understand the importance of understanding their challenge (case) by applying the iceberg model. Understand the thinking deep approach to identify and define a policy problem as the basis for the subsequent evidence gathering process. Develop questions to identify possible ways to work with it (options) from an evidence-informed perspective. Participants understand how to identify evidence needs based on their ability to formulate the right questions.

SELF-PACED modules of Block I			
Module	**Topic**	**Contents**	**Learning Goal**
Introduction to the Course	Introduction	Welcome to the course on working with evidence in public policy. Introduction to the course, its structure, and its purpose. • Framing of the course: combination of literacies, tools, and skills (link to JRC Competence framework). • Detailed overview (participant version) • How to use policy examples	Be familiar with the overall structure, goals and conceptual approaches of the course. Understand the competencies and types of literacies that structure the course.
Module I: Why is evidence important for public policy	Introduction to the course	Why is evidence important for public policy? What do we mean by evidence? • Core concepts for working with evidence. • The role of evidence at different stages of the policy cycle The importance of taking a holistic view: • A systems approach to working with evidence: thinking deep, thinking broad, thinking ahead. • Three types of complexity (optional reading).	Understand the importance of evidence for public policy and the role of evidence at different stages of the policy cycle. Understand the importance of taking a holistic, systems approach to evidence gathering to understand the policy challenge. The importance of thinking "deep, broad, and ahead".
Module II: What is evidence?	Fundamental of working with evidence	Introducing the golden rules for working with evidence, and types of evidence: • Quantitative versus qualitative. • Descriptive versus causal. • Correlation is not causation. Research methods: what different studies can and can't tell us. • There is no hierarchy between methods.	Be aware of different types of evidence and their unique strengths and weaknesses. Understand the difference between correlation and causation. Be familiar with different kinds of research methods and why there is no hierarchy between them.
Module III: Thinking Deep about evidence.	Introduction to Understanding your policy challenge	Thinking deep for identifying evidence needs • From linear to circular causality Introducing a Thinking Deep tool as a basis for identifying evidence needs: • The Iceberg Model Connecting with the first classroom session of the course	Be familiar with the difference between linear and circular causality. Use the iceberg model as a systems approach to evidence and a tool to help you think about the root causes and evidence needs of a policy challenge.

		BLOCK II: **Identifying evidence needs, gathering evidence & connecting with knowledge holders.**	
		Classroom modules – Day 2, Block II	
Module	**Topic**	**Contents**	**Learning Goal**
Module 4: Identifying evidence needs	Identifying evidence needs & Understanding policy interactions	This module will start to explore how to identify your evidence needs. It will use the "thinking broad" viewpoint of the course to help use this perspective as a basis to broaden our perspective on evidence needs. Part 1: Thinking Broad - introduction to policy interactions: • Tensions, trade-offs, and synergies: why do they matter? • Applying Thinking Broad through the 5 dimensions tool Part 2: Connecting causality vs correlation when looking at interactions between policy options: • what additional evidence needs can you identify?	Learn about different types of interactions between policies and their role for evidence-informed policy. Discern trade-offs from tensions and understand the importance of identifying synergies for working towards better policy outcomes. Applying systems tools for working with policy interactions and causation.
Module 5: Gathering Evidence	Gathering evidence & knowledge holders	This Module 5 will take us to the next step and work on different sources of evidence and ways of gathering evidence from a policy perspective. Part 1: Core concepts for gathering evidence: • Options for gathering scientific and non-scientific evidence. • Sources of evidence and mapping of tools for sourcing evidence. • Sourcing evidence, EU context. Part 2: Connecting to experts and knowledge holders: • Knowledge ecosystems for Evidence-Informed Policy. • Collaborative approaches between research & Policy. • Knowledge holders and the type of knowledge they bring. Knowledge holder engagement plan: Where to find knowledge holders? How to gather evidence from them?; What potential forms of bias?	Discern different sources of evidence, and ways of gathering evidence for evidence-informed policymaking. Identify additional methods to gather evidence for policy through specific procedures, such as calls. Introduce JRC resources for evidence gathering. Understand the role of the two communities of researchers and policymakers, and the importance of bridging the gaps. Identify types of knowledge holders and the types of knowledge they bring (empirical, theoretical and experiential) and how this can be translated into evidence gathering processes.
Module 6: Evaluating Impacts	Evidence for understanding & assessing the impact of your policy.	This module will address the importance of thinking ahead about evidence for evaluating policy impacts, with a focus on the policy formulation stage: • Impact Assessments, purpose and types. • Methodology and preliminary steps of an Impact Assessment: relevance analysis and delineation. • Connecting Impact Assessment with practical challenges. Other approaches and tools for thinking ahead: • Why do we need to think ahead in evidence-informed policy?	Understand the role of Impact Assessments for Evidence-Informed Policy, and the overall methodology to be applied. Explore how working with evidence in the development of impact assessments can help understand future impacts of policymaking. Learn tools and techniques for how to think (ahead) about the long-term implications of your policy option, and apply these tools for exploring the impact behind policy decisions. .

SELF-PACED modules of Block II			
Module	**Topic**	**Contents**	**Learning Goal**
Online Module IV: Thinking broad about policy interactions	Thinking broad about policy interactions	Thinking Broad about policy interactions, and the types of policy interactions to consider when working for evidence-informed policies: • Policy tensions • Policy trade-offs • Policy synergies Working with relations between policies and applying thinking broad for better policy outcomes: • Applying the 5 dimensions tool (sectoral, territorial, distributional, temporal and goals dimensions). • Exploring leverage points to maximize policy synergies.	Deepening into the different types of policy interactions, and the difference between tensions, trade-offs and synergies. Be equipped with an approach of 5 dimensions to think broad about interactions and how this is linked to diverse types of evidence: sectoral, territorial, distributional and temporal, as well as well as the multifaceted goals that policies try to achieve. Learn about how policy interactions can both strengthen policy implementation and impact, or they can also be regressive.
Online Module V: Thinking ahead for about evidence for policy impacts	Thinking ahead for about evidence for policy impacts	The importance of assessing the impacts of policy decisions: • Discerning policy evaluation and Impact Assessments. • Types of Impact Assessments. • Thinking Deep, Broad and Ahead in Impact Assessments. Introducing uncertainty, anticipation, and foresight: • EU context on Better Regulation and Knowledge4Policy. • Practicing anticipation: En-ROADS.	Understand different approaches for assessing policy impacts, and their role in Evidence-Informed Policy. Be aware of the role of Impact Assessment in the policy cycle. Have an overview of foresight tools and other elements and available resources for thinking ahead and explore policy impacts.

		BLOCK III: **Navigating conflicting evidence and practicing assessing evidence.**	
		Classroom modules – Day 3, Block III	
Module	**Topic**	**Contents**	**Learning Goal**
Module 7: Navigating conflicting evidence	Navigating conflicting evidence & introducing how to assess evidence	In this module, we will dive into key concepts for assessing evidence and how they can help us to navigate conflicting evidence, including: • Mental models • Research methods • Data and indicators This step on assessing evidence and conflicting evidence is critical for understanding "my-side bias" when working with evidence. Here will apply learnings from Day 2. Throughout this process we will develop an evidence assessment checklist & review this with the trainer and their peers: • Develop an Evidence Assessment checklist.	Get a comprehensive vision of the different approaches, angles and layers for assessing evidence. Understanding why studies disagree, and how to navigate conflicting evidence while acknowledging "my-side bias". Understand what indicators can and cannot tell us, and how data and indicators can influence research findings. Connect "the dots" (of the course) to assess evidence, by building an evidence assessment checklist structured in layers: data, methods, mental models.
Module 8: Evidence Assessment	Practicing assessing evidence	This module will connect the Evidence Assessment Checklist structure with learnings from the course. We will use a trainer version checklist, including points for reflecting critically (and assessing biases) on: • Questions regarding mental models underpinning evidence. • Questions regarding methods to collect and analyse evidence. • Questions regarding use of data & indicators. Mock Policy Brief: Practice assessing evidence with a mock policy brief. • Apply Evidence Assessment checklist.	Receive a trainer-version of the evidence assessment checklist, containing relevant questions and concepts that are connected to core learnings of the course. Practice assessing evidence in relation to the teaching case (example) and understand how to critically scrutinize evidence.

BLOCK III: **Navigating conflicting evidence and practicing assessing evidence.**			
Classroom modules – Day 3, Block III			
Module	**Topic**	**Contents**	**Learning Goal**
		• Reflect on evidence, biases and "uses of evidence".	Discerning evidence from "uses" of evidence and being critical about their applicability to different questions.
Module 9: Closing the loop	Applying the learnings of the course	In this final module we will "close the loop" of this course, once we have completed our step-by-step learning sequence for working with evidence. This closing the loop final step will include: • Working with Evidence Toolkit • Working with Evidence at different stages of the policy cycle: linking tools with stages of the policy cycle (agenda setting, formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation) Final reflection on working with evidence at different stages of the cycle, and what learnings from the course can help throughout the process.	Closing the loop and look a critical angle about working and dealing with evidence for evidence-informed policy. Summarizing main practical tools of the course (with a Working with Evidence Toolkit), in relation to the different steps of working with evidence. Understanding how to apply tools and learnings of the course throughout the different stages of the policy cycle.

SELF-PACED modules – BLOCK III			
Module	**Topic**	**Contents**	**Learning Goal**
Module VI: Making sense of models	Making sense of models	Introduction to models as simplified abstraction to reality, and their role in relation to working with evidence. • What is a model? • Model development • Types of models: top-down/bottom up; optimization/simulation. Interpreting model results: • Being aware of model assumptions • Model uncertainty and sensitivity	Understand what models are and their purpose, how they are developed and the different types of models that exist. Be aware of key things to look out for when interpreting model results. Understanding how the iceberg tool can also help to understand model assumptions, as well as its structure and results.
Module VII: Assessing Evidence	Compilation of fundamental	This last module of self-paced content contains the key concepts and theory for assessing evidence.	Learn about the three overarching reasons for why studies may disagree, based on their underlying mental models or theories, the methods used, or the data and indicators that were included.

		SELF-PACED modules – BLOCK III	
Module	**Topic**	**Contents**	**Learning Goal**
	concepts for assessing evidence	For broadening our previous approach to navigating conflicting evidence, covered in the training sessions, this module provides theoretical input on: • Overarching reasons for why studies disagree: mental models or theories, method, and data and indicators. This module will also include theoretical input relating to key aspects of evidence gathering for evidence-informed policymaking: • Collaboration between policymakers and researchers • Knowledge holders and the type of knowledge they bring.	Understand the importance of working with researchers when assessing (conflicting pieces of) evidence. Be aware of the importance of fostering collaborative approaches between the scientific community and the policy community for evidence-informed policymaking, and how this is also connected to the need of working with a diversity of knowledge holders.