



NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

POLITICAL PARTIES, PUBLIC POLICY AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY



CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTY PROGRAM

Working for democracy and making democracy work

NDI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that has supported democratic institutions and practices in every region of the world for more than two decades. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to establish and strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

NDI produced this manual with the financial support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Opinions expressed herein are the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NED.

This document was prepared by Shannon O’Connell on behalf of the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The author would like to thank Ana Radicevic, Sef Ashiagbor, Natalie Hill and Ingrid Habets for their invaluable guidance and assistance. Special thanks to Angela Wilkins, Rob Thomas, Daisy Meyland Smith, Olle Burrell, Mark Thiessen, Terry Murphy, and Jean Delalandre for being so generous with their time and vast knowledge, and for their vital contributions to this project. Gratitude as well to Ana Kadovic, Maja Nenadovic, and Antoine Ripoll for their help.



Copyright © National Democratic Institute (NDI) 2011. All rights reserved. Portions of this work may be reproduced and or translated for noncommercial purposes provided NDI is acknowledged as the source of the material and is sent copies of any translation.



POLITICAL PARTIES, PUBLIC POLICY AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

How Internal and External Consultation Helps
European Political Parties To Develop Responsive
Public Policy

A Study of Party Statutes and Practices



Working for democracy and making democracy work



455 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20001-2621
p: 202.728.5500 f: 888.875.2887

www.ndi.org
www.twitter.com/ndi
www.facebook.com/national.democratic.institute

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman

Madeleine K. Albright

Vice Chairs

Harriet C. Babbitt

Thomas A. Daschle

Marc B. Nathanson

Secretary

Patrick J. Griffin

Treasurer

Eugene Eidenberg

President

Kenneth Wollack

Bernard W. Aronson
Elizabeth F. Bagley
Richard C. Blum
Donna Brazile
Joan Baggett Calambokidis
Robin C. Carnahan
Howard Dean
Sam Gejdenson
Shirley Robinson Hall
Rachelle Horowitz
Peter Kovler
Robert G. Liberatore
Kenneth F. Melley
Vali Nasr
Molly Raiser
Nancy H. Rubin
Elaine K. Shocas
Bren Simon
Michael R. Steed
Maurice Tempelsman
Lynda L. Thomas
Richard Verma
Randi Weingarten
James D. Wolfensohn

Counsel

Frank M. (Rusty) Conner, III

Chairmen Emeriti

Paul G. Kirk, Jr.
Walter F. Mondale
Charles T. Manatt
(1936-2011)

SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

William V. Alexander
Michael D. Barnes
John Brademas
Bill Bradley
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Mario M. Cuomo
Patricia M. Derian
Christopher J. Dodd
Michael S. Dukakis
Martin Frost
Richard N. Gardner
Richard A. Gephardt
John T. Joyce
Peter G. Kelly
Paul G. Kirk, Jr.
Elliott F. Kulick
John Lewis
Donald F. McHenry
Abner J. Mikva
Charles S. Robb
Esterban E. Torres
Andrew J. Young

The National Democratic Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to support and strengthen democratic institutions worldwide. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to establish and advance democratic institutions and practices by building political and civic organizations, safeguarding elections, and promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

With staff members and volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies. Deepening democracy so it can deliver tangible improvements to people's lives is an overarching NDI objective.

Citizen Participation – Making democracy work requires informed and active citizens who voice their interests, act collectively and hold public officials accountable. NDI helps citizens engage vigorously in the political process and serve as a link between citizens and elected officials.

Elections – NDI engages with political parties and civic organizations in voter and civic education, electoral law reform and monitoring all phases of the election process. The Institute has worked with more than 300 citizen groups and coalitions in 74 countries, engaged with hundreds of parties promoting electoral integrity and organized over 100 international election observation delegations. NDI has also played a leading role in establishing standards for international election observation.

Political Party Building – NDI works with its partners on political party building – from internal democratic procedures and candidate selection to polling, platform development and public outreach. The Institute helps parties promote long-term organizational development, enhance involvement in elections, establish codes of conduct, mitigate political conflict, and participate constructively in government.

Democratic Governance – NDI works with legislatures around the world to help strengthening committees, legislative oversight, rules of procedure, public access to information, caucuses and constituency outreach. The Institute also helps government ministries and the offices of prime ministers and presidents to function more efficiently, improve public outreach and be more responsive to the public at large.

Women's Leadership - Since 1985, NDI has organized programs across the globe to increase the number and effectiveness of women in political life. Institute programs have supported women civic leaders, voters, candidates, political party representatives and elected leaders in the belief that as more women become politically involved, institutions will become more responsive to the needs of all citizens. At any given time, nearly 75 percent of NDI country programs have a dedicated component addressing women's political participation – in legislatures, political parties and civil society for leaders, activists and informed citizens.

WORKING FOR DEMOCRACY AND MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK



REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTY INITIATIVE

Democracy Challenges and Opportunities

In supplying government leaders and determining public policy, political parties in the Balkans exercise much power, and need to use that power in leading their countries toward the European Union (EU). This means becoming more inclusive organizations, modernizing decision-making, developing visionary policies based on clear values, and connecting across borders to work with like-minded parties. Political parties in the region can learn from colleagues elsewhere in Europe to produce policies in pursuit of their visions.

NDI's Democracy Support Program

With funding from the National Endowment for Democracy, NDI has helped parties in the Balkans clarify their identities along contemporary Social Democratic, Liberal and Center-Right ideologies, and develop coherent policies consistent with European integration. NDI works with approximately 30 parties, and partners with British, Dutch, German, Greek, Slovenian, and Swedish party foundations to convene regional seminars and foster cross-border exchanges between parties with similar values.



Young conservatives across the Balkans draw on traditional values to build modern conservatism at a regional gathering hosted by NDI.

Through the initiative, political parties have strengthened their internal structures – such as the creation of policy development bodies in the Independent Liberal Party in Kosovo, the formation of a women's forum and its policy platform in the Social Democratic Party of Serbia, and the creation of a training center in the National Liberal Party of Romania. New connections are being made across the region on policy development. For example, the Democratic Party provincial branch in Vojvodina (Serbia) shared its approach to small business loans with leaders of the Socialist Movement for Integration in Albania.

NDI has supported the Liberal Network of Southeastern Europe (LIBSEEN), which has founded a permanent office and formal decision making board to present a common liberal voice from the region in relation to the EU.

The informal connections forged through the regional program are becoming more formal networks of party activists of similar background throughout the region. Center right parties founded a loose regional network of youth forums. Social democratic women created a steering committee to link women activists. Through this regional exchange, parties dedicate increasing effort to opening the policy development process, learning from their neighbors' experiences, in the region and in the European Union. EU parties and foundations are responding to these initiatives by investing increasing time and energy into their sister parties in the Balkans.

For more information on NDI's regional political party initiative, please contact Ana Radicevic, based in Sarajevo, at aradicevic@ndi.org, or Kent Fogg in Washington at kfogg@ndi.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part One: Introduction and Context.....7

Part Two: Overview of Participatory Policy Development.....12

Part Three: Political Party Case Studies.....16

 Labour Party, United Kingdom.....16

 Conservative Party, United Kingdom.....22

 Social Democratic Party, Sweden.....26

 People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, Netherlands.....30

 Fine Gael, Ireland.....32

 L’Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, France.....34

Part Four: Recommendations on Policy Development.....36

Part Five: Resource List.....38



PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The challenges for any system of policymaking are great. . . In the modern world policy issues are complex and proposed solutions increasingly technocratic; debates move swiftly and decisions are required quickly. At the same time there is an increasing and understandable desire for consultation, transparency and feedback in a world where we are becoming less the passive consumer and more the active contributor.

**Review of UK Labour Party Policymaking
2010 Party Conference**

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide political parties are shifting towards more participatory models of policy development. Participatory models of policy development are those in which a broad population, such as party officials, members, supporters and even external groups, have influence in policies proposed and advocated by a particular party. These can include a wide range of topics, from the national budget and economic development to education and health care; from infrastructure and transportation to childcare and parental leave; from private sector development and jobs programs to even a party's core values and beliefs.

In some systems the move towards participatory or consultative policy development is an initiative of party leaders trying to keep members more engaged and deliver policy which is more meaningful to voters. In other cases, the movement towards participatory policy development is coming from the members themselves, or even from external organizations with a special interest in policy who are demanding that political parties become more open and inclusive in their policy development.

Whether the shift to participatory policy development comes from a party's leadership, its members or from external pressure, the outcomes for parties themselves are almost universally positive. Participatory and inclusive policy development processes have direct, long-term benefits to political parties and to systems of government. These include more sustainable policies and stronger, more competitive political organizations.

This paper examines the policymaking structures and practices of six political parties in Europe, representing a wide spectrum of ideological and structural approaches. The purpose of this exercise is to offer specific participatory models for political parties seeking to adopt more inclusive practices. This paper is particularly, but not uniquely, directed to political parties in countries having or seeking membership in Europe-wide institutions.



The party models outlined in this paper are from the following political parties:

PARTY	COUNTRY	EUROPEAN GROUP	PARLIAMENTARY
	Labour Party	United Kingdom	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
	Conservative Party	United Kingdom	European Conservatives and Reformists
	L'Union pour un Mouvement Populaire	France	European People's Party
	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	The Netherlands	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
	Fine Gael	Ireland	European People's Party
	Social Democratic Party	Sweden	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

A case study for each party is offered below, including a brief summary and introduction, a review of the party's statutes, and an examination of the party's policy development practices.

In this paper, the terms participatory, consultative, and inclusive policymaking are used interchangeably as a means to describe policymaking processes which canvass or include the opinions of political party members, supporters, civil society organizations and, in some cases, broader cross-sections of society.

WHY CONSULT ON POLICY?

Political parties adopt inclusive models of policy development for a variety of reasons. Some parties cite values or ideologically based reasons for including members and citizens in policymaking. Others are more practical, pointing to the fact that consultation often delivers stronger, more relevant policy options. Policies on health care, for example, which have canvassed the opinions of experts and practitioners in medical services, along with those of health care consumers, are more likely to be realistic, meaningful, and able to be implemented.

Public Consultation on Policy is Becoming Standard in Europe.

The trend towards participatory policymaking is particularly strong in Europe as party members are demanding a greater say in the decisions made by their respective political parties. And, as voter turnout and party membership decline across the continent, political parties are using participatory policymaking processes to keep themselves relevant to voters.¹

¹ For the 2009 European elections [footnotes suggest examples. LMM] the Party of European Socialist ran a Europe-wide internet consultation on its manifesto, with a particular focus on getting young people involved. See, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/eu-elections/european-elections-outlook-2009/article-174694>



Public consultation is becoming a universal standard in European governance. European governing bodies have an obligation to consult publicly on policy, particularly the European Commission (EC), which drafts and implements European Union legislation. According to EC regulations, using public consultation to develop policy and legislation ensures that “policy proposals are technically viable, practically workable and based on a bottom-up approach. In other words, good consultation serves a dual purpose by helping to improve the quality of the policy outcome and at the same time enhancing the involvement of interested parties and the public at large.”²

Political parties which seek a greater profile in Europe may therefore find a smoother and easier transition into the politics and legislative process of European governance if they are already practicing public and/or party member consultations in their own countries.

There is currently a trend among parties within European political groupings to pursue common campaigns for European elections with, for example, Green Party candidates from all countries running for election on the same or a highly similar platform. Political parties in countries that aspire to join the EU will find it easier to integrate into this system if they share similar internal cultures and processes with their European counterparts, including whether or not they consult on policy.

Outside of European standards and trends, there are also highly practical reasons for inclusive policy development. Such practices tend to build stronger parties and parliamentarians with better legislative and policy skills, and which are therefore more likely to get (re-)elected. Additional reasons to engage in consultative policy development are outlined below.

Inclusive policy development can benefit a party operationally.

- Consultations strengthen the skills of the party’s legislators and officials to deal with major policy issues and legislative matters. Consultations on policy can be good training ground for a party’s members of parliament on how to work with the legislative process.
- Democratic and participatory internal processes make stronger political parties, more capable of dealing with negotiation, debate, and coalition-building. Consultation processes also help build stronger relationships between parties and their members and/or supporters.
- Policy development creates opportunities for political parties to include women, minority communities, young people and under-represented social and economic groups in decision-making.

Consultation on policy can help a party build its profile and increase support.

- Policy consultation can be an exciting and engaging process. It generates debate within the party, and therefore can be highly motivating for members to participate.

²European Commission communication COM(2002)704, “General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission,” http://ec.europa.eu/civil_society/consultation_standards/index_en.htm#_Toc46744739



- Involving party members in policy development can help get campaign efforts started early, and help the party organize support and publicity around its legislative agenda outside the official campaign period.
- Participatory policymaking can be a good news story and an opportunity for press and media coverage on issues relevant to the party.
- Inclusive policy development begins the process of gathering public support for a party's manifesto or program for government, making it easier to promote and implement policy.
- Technology is rapidly affecting what information is available about political parties. Inclusive processes give political parties the chance to define themselves and the issues on which they want to focus, rather than letting this be done through traditional and new media.
- It answers the questions “What do we do to keep party members involved and engaged?” and “How do we attract new members?”

Stronger policy development structures mean that a party is more likely to deliver better policy.

- Inclusive policy development creates opportunities for ensuring there is gender balance at the decision-making table. Research shows that women are more inclined to advance key development policy in such areas as health, education and infrastructure.³ Higher levels of women as decision-makers are associated with governments being able to deliver an advanced standard of living for their populations.⁴ This creates an electoral advantage for parties who incorporate gender parity in policymaking.
- The policy a party creates using consultative processes is more likely to be based in the reality and experience of voters, and may therefore have a higher degree of public support.

Even as technology and the complexity of social and economic issues demand faster and more technical responses, the need to ensure that party members are involved in decisions remains. Democratically-oriented parties are now seeking new ways to deal with a more demanding policy environment, while still maintaining strong, inclusive internal processes. Technology, which is speeding up the pace at which issues come to light and shortening the available response time, is also proving to be an asset in the efforts to include stakeholders on policy.

CHALLENGES TO POLICY CONSULTATION

Consultative policy development offers a wide spectrum of benefits to political parties, but this does not mean it is easy or without complications. Policy development can be a complex process under any circumstances, and involving more stakeholders often makes this even truer.

³ The evidence on this point is extensive. See, Chen, Li-Ju (2008) “Female Policymaker and Educational Expenditure: Cross-Country Evidence.” Research Papers in Economics 2008: 1 Stockholm University, Department of Economics, revised, Feb 27, 2008. [http://ideas.repec.org/p/hhs/sunrpe/2008_0001.html], and Svaleryd, H. (2007) “Women’s representation and public spending.” [Was original lower case? LMM] IFN Working Paper No. 701, Research Institute of Industrial Economics: Stockholm, Sweden, or UNICEF (2006) “Women and Children: The Double Dividend of Gender Equality.” [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11_12_06SOWC2007.pdf].

⁴ Ibid.



Political practitioners looking to implement consultative policy development processes should be aware of the following challenges:

- Inclusive policy development processes take time, which must be planned for. Some policy issues move so quickly they do not allow for a deliberate consultation process to take place, so not every decision can be taken using broad consultation.
- In addition to being participatory, consultative policymaking can also be combative as different stakeholders within the party compete for dominance on policy outcomes. This is a natural tension which must be expected and managed.
- Overly academic or cumbersome consultation processes can lead to ‘consultation fatigue’ in which stakeholders are less eager to participate because the work is too burdensome and boring, or is not rewarding.
- The outcome of consultation processes can sometimes be unclear when stakeholders have no firm view on a policy, widely disparate views, or insufficient information.

None of these is a reason not to engage in participatory forms of policy development, but they are important pitfalls and challenges to keep in mind while planning the process.



PART 2: OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATORY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN PARTY STATUTES

There are a variety of options for how a political party addresses policy development in its official rules, which typically take the form of statutes, bylaws or a constitution.

Most party rules begin by defining the values on which the party's approach to policymaking are based, such as the right of individuals to make their own choices and have a say, or a commitment to internal democratic practices, or affirmation of the congress or convention as the supreme decision-making body. Some statutes explicitly guarantee a role for members in developing party policies.

From there, party statutes tend to take an approach in which one of the following structures dominates policy development, which can very loosely be described as offering a low, medium or higher degree of detail on the process.

1. **Statutes designate who has the authority to be involved in policy and to what degree, but do not outline a specific process (lower detail).** Both the People's Party of Freedom and Democracy in the Netherlands and Fine Gael in Ireland have statutes which assign responsibility to specific groups within the party for policy development, but elaborate very little, if at all, into what the policy development process should be.
2. **Statutes establish specific bodies with the responsibility and authority for policymaking and a general sequence for the process (medium detail).** Both the Labour Party and Conservative Party in the United Kingdom have established distinct forums through which the policy development process is both driven and filtered. Other stakeholders are involved, but the policy development body plays the key role. The general sequence for policy development and how it flows through this body is outlined to a degree in party statutes.
3. **Statutes define a general process by which policy is made and assign a specific role for each stakeholder, including the national party leadership, any policymaking body, local party branches and individual members (higher detail).** The constitution of the Swedish Social Democratic Party offers a more detailed example of a policy development process in which the role of each potential stakeholder is defined, from the party leadership to the local branches.

The party statutes examined for the purposes of this paper follow these models but, it is important to note, generally leave the exact steps of the policymaking process itself somewhat vague. **Even the parties whose statutes go into greater detail about how policymaking works tend to leave the specifics of day-to-day policymaking more general.** This provides flexibility for the party to adapt as issues change and emerging technologies alter how parties communicate. This also allows party leaders to practice accelerated decision-making when issues are urgent or when elections are imminent.



CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

Most policy consultations start with a draft document on a particular issue or issues. This document briefly puts the subject matter in context by giving a little bit of background on the issue and providing any relevant information on how the party may have handled it in the past.

The consultation document will then outline the current debate around the issue and options for how the party might proceed and what actions it might take. These may include but are not limited to:

- specific policy options for the issue (e.g., do nothing, form a new agency, reorganize a government department, change the way the issue is funded, etc.), typically based on research or evidence;
- how much of a priority the issue should be for the party, the government or opposition;
- who within the party, government or opposition should be involved in taking leadership on the issue;
- which government department(s) should be responsible for implementation and/or oversight;
- how much money or other resources should be invested; and/or,
- how progress should be measured.

Finally, the document will include open-ended questions that it would like stakeholders to answer on the issue. Without including specific questions, consultations may receive such a disparate array of responses that it may be difficult to identify common themes or findings.

Consultation documents should be as short, simple, and direct as the relevant issue will allow. Plain language is vital.

Documents which are overly academic, legalistic, or simply too large can be a deterrent to stakeholders who may have some very good ideas, but not the time to trudge through volumes of paper and impenetrable language.

Party policy experts say that, if time and resources allow, it is valuable to offer members a variety of different sources of information to provide a comprehensive representation of the issue at hand. This might include diverse briefing documents or background information, or special meetings with experts who deal with a particular subject matter on which the party is consulting.

Links to examples of consultation documents can be found in the Resource List in the final section of this paper.



GETTING THE WORD OUT ON A POLICY CONSULTATION

Consultation documents are often distributed to stakeholders via email, post, or at a meeting. They can also be placed on a party's website for individuals to download or respond to online. Notices of policy consultations are placed in party newspapers, magazines, newsletters, email lists, websites, blogs, and other relevant notice boards. Often, ad hoc policy groups or standing policy committees are responsible for ensuring adequate distribution of consultations.

In political parties where the general assembly or congress has the final say on policy, draft policy documents are distributed to those with the right to vote at the meeting well in advance. Depending on a party's structure, member-only or even public meetings may be held to discuss consultations.

INCORPORATING NEW MEDIA IN CONSULTATION

The internet, social media websites, and text messaging are increasingly being used as a means to facilitate policy consultation processes.

For example, in preparation for the UK general election in 2010, the Liberal Democrats established two separate websites: one allowed any interested individual to respond to consultation documents on specific policy areas;⁵ the other was a restricted site for party members only to provide input on the party's manifesto for the upcoming election.⁶

Other parties are using e-newsletters to update members on policy consultations and provide a feedback mechanism via email. Text messaging and email alerts are being used to notify party members and supporters of an upcoming policy consultation.

A number of parties maintain specific blog sites for the discussion of policy and internal party issues.⁷

FULL PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

Some political parties, particularly those in government, are finding it useful to expand policymaking beyond their own membership and, on some issues, to include the country's entire population in a consultation.

For example, in 2003, after more than six years in government, the British Labour Party launched a national consultation called the Big Conversation.⁸ A 77-page consultation document focusing on 13 broad themes was made available to all UK citizens--regardless of party or political affiliation--who were invited to submit their opinions on these issues to the government. The Big Conversation was launched in several locations around the UK and had its own website through which citizens could access the document and respond to questions.

⁵ <http://consult.libdems.org.uk/>

⁶ <http://manifesto.libdems.org.uk/>

⁷ See, for example, blog.conservatives.com of the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom.

⁸ See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3245620.stm



The Canadian Conservative Party launched a similar initiative in 2010 and 2011 on the national budget. Faced with shrinking public funds, the party organized public consultations in local constituencies to gather suggestions from voters on what programs or expenditures should be cut and what should be saved to help the country emerge from the global recession.⁹

National policy consultations create good media opportunities for the political parties involved. But organizers of these large initiatives warn that they must be carefully managed to ensure they are also meaningful. Full public consultations are such big events that it can be difficult to ultimately connect people's suggestions with the policies that emerge out of the consultation. Without this connection, larger consultations may have the appearance of a political stunt rather than a sincere sounding of public sentiments.

⁹ See, <http://www.loisbrown.ca/riding-news/mp-brown-hosts-pre-budget-consultation-january-27> or <http://earldreeshen.ca/riding-news/budget-2011-consultation-with-canadians>



PART 3: POLITICAL PARTY CASE STUDIES

LABOUR PARTY, UNITED KINGDOM



BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The Labour Party in the United Kingdom was founded in 1900 by an amalgamation of trade unions, social democratic organizations, and socialist societies. For much of its history the party's policies were established almost entirely by conference, the large annual gathering of party members, internal groupings, and officials with the authority to vote on party decisions.

By the 1980s this process had become combative and chaotic. Policy proposals emanated from all levels of the parties, and various stakeholders battled to dominate the process. The antagonistic nature of the process meant that many people were left out, and policies produced were not always marketable to a broader audience.

In 1997, under the leadership of Tony Blair, the Labour Party adopted a system called Partnership in Power (PiP), which attempted to reform this process and created several key policymaking institutions. This system and these institutions filter and manage proposals before conference and give the party more flexibility to make policy decisions outside of conference.

PiP was intended to improve the previous process and to produce policies which could make the party more competitive in elections. With general election victories in 2001 and 2005, supporters of PiP say that it has done so. However, there has also been a significant debate within the party about whether or not PiP is sufficiently inclusive. There have been some modifications to the process as a result, which have increased the influence of party stakeholders, but the process remains contentious. A party-wide consultation and review of PiP was launched in 2010; the results are expected to be announced at annual conference in autumn 2011.

Policymaking institutions are clearly defined in the Labour Party's statutes, but the policymaking process itself is not. This has allowed for a certain amount of flexibility, revision, and review of how PiP is implemented.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN PARTY STATUTES

The UK Labour Party is governed by the Labour Party Rule Book. The first 10 chapters of the Rule Book outline the constitutional rules of the party and affect how the party makes policy. It involves both a rolling program of policy development which leads to the party's next election manifesto, as well as a year-round cycle of work on current issues. Several institutions were established to implement this process, including the National Policy Forum (NPD), the Joint Policy Committee (JPC) and six Policy Commissions. Of these, the NPD is responsible for overseeing the overall policymaking process.



Clause V of the Rule Book defines how the party determines its program. This clause guarantees that, “*members, elected representatives, affiliated organizations and, where practicable, the wider community are able to participate in the process of policy consideration and formulation.*”¹⁰

This section of the rule book also states that party conference determines “*what specific proposals of legislative, financial or administrative reform shall be included in the party program,*” but under the amendments which created PiP, conference’s choices are now “*based on the rolling program presented to conference by the National Policy Forum and shall be subject to approval by an ‘One Member One Vote’ ballot of the eligible membership once in each Parliament.*”¹¹

To be included in the party program, a proposal must receive the support of at least two-thirds of the recorded votes at conference.

Clause V further outlines who in the party will decide which party policies will be included in the manifesto, i.e., the plan presented to the voters in an election year as the Labour Party’s proposals for government.

- When the party is in government, this body includes the party’s executive members as well as representatives of five other leadership bodies within the party, including the Cabinet.
- When the party is in opposition this panel is much smaller, including just the executive members, representatives of the party’s legislative caucus, and the chair and two vice-chairs of the National Policy Forum.

Clause V also gives these ad hoc bodies the authority to, “*define the attitude of the party to the principal issues raised by the election which are not covered by the manifesto.*”¹²

POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE

The Labour Party Rule Book dictates the structures and authorities responsible for policymaking within the party. These are the National Policy Forum, the Joint Policy Committee, and the Policy Commissions.

While policymaking institutions are clearly defined in party statute, the policymaking process itself is described in much more general terms, guaranteeing an inclusive process for members, but not stating definitively what that process will be. This has allowed for a certain amount of flexibility, revision, and review of policymaking within the party, arguably allowing it to adapt to whatever its electoral situation might be.

The end product of the PiP process is a policy manual, which is used as a party document. In advance of an election, the leader’s office produces the party’s manifesto as a campaign document. Clearly, the two documents must be compatible, but it is not always the case that what the party wants and what the leadership needs are the same.

¹⁰ The Labour Party Rule Book 2010, Chapter 1, Clause V.1, pg. 10;
<http://www.leftfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Labour-Party-Rule-Book-2010.pdf>

¹¹ Ibid., Chapter 1, Clause V.2, pg. 10.

¹² Ibid., Chapter 1, Clause V.3, pg. 10.



National Policy Forum (NPF)

The NPF is one of the key institutions of the PiP process and is responsible for overseeing policy development work in the party. This includes managing consultations with party members and stakeholders on specific issues and pulling together the findings from consultations. Under the party rules, the NPF is formed by the party’s National Executive Committee (NEC), which is Labour’s national leadership body.¹³

The NPF meets regularly to discuss documents produced by the party’s six Policy Commissions. It then submits consultative, final policy documents, and annual reports to conference.

The NPF is composed of 194 members representing all the major stakeholder groups in the party. The party rules outline how many representatives each division in the party will have on the NPF. The NEC is given the authority to decide how each group will select its members, but the party rules establish minimum levels of participation for women and young people.¹⁴

A recent amendment to the Rule Book provides for individual members of the party to elect representatives to the NPF through a postal vote of all party members, ideally allowing the grassroots of the party to feel that it has more of a direct connection with policy decisions. The current breakdown in members of the NPF is the following:

Division	Number of NPF Members
Constituency Labour Parties	55
Regions	22
Trade Unions	30
Members of Parliament	9
Members of the European Parliament	6
Members of the House of Lords (Peers)	2
Government / Shadow Cabinet	8
Socialist Societies	3
Labour Students	1
Cooperative Party	3
Welsh, Scottish & Northern Ireland Policy Forums	9
Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic Labour	4
Local Government	9
National Executive Committee	33
TOTAL	194

¹³ Ibid, Chapter 1, Clause VIII.3.I, pg. 12.

¹⁴ Ibid., Chapter 4, Clause C.1, Subsection D, pg. 25.



Joint Policy Committee (JPC)

The JPC is designed to provide strategic oversight of policy development. It is chaired by the Party leader and is composed of members of the cabinet (when the party is in government) or shadow cabinet (when the party is in opposition), the party's National Executive Committee (NEC), and the NPF. The JPC serves as a steering group on policy, directing the NPF's work and setting priorities and debates.

Policy Commissions

There are six Policy Commissions in the Labour Party which draw up policy reports for discussion by the JPC and the NPF. They meet several times a year and are responsible for considering policy submissions from all sections of the party. They have a responsibility to ensure the party is engaging on relevant issues and must also ensure that there is constant dialogue between the party and the cabinet/government or shadow cabinet.

Each policy commission has 16 to 20 members representing the Government or Shadow Cabinet, the NEC, and the NPF. The six commissions are:

- Britain in the World
- Creating Sustainable Communities
- Crime, Justice, Citizenship and Equalities
- Education and Skills
- Health
- Prosperity and Work

All policy submissions are reported to the appropriate Policy Commission(s) and are used to help draw up policy documents and to inform the commissions' priorities, work programs, and discussions. The commissions produce a report on their work in their Annual Reports to Conference each year.

Conference

Whatever is produced by the NPF is ultimately submitted to Conference for agreement or approval. Therefore, what Conference is able to debate is largely determined by the priorities established by the NPF, JPC, and policy commissions. The exception to this is that each Constituency Labour Party (i.e., local party organization), is entitled to submit one resolution to Conference on a policy issue not covered by the work of the NPF.

The party conference must be convened annually, but can be called more frequently if deemed necessary.



Policy Development Cycle

The PiP process develops the Labour Party's manifesto in a rolling cycle.

1. The first stage produces either a single, broad document or several small documents which present the key issues or themes the party expects to have to address as it develops policy towards the next election.
2. At the second stage, documents are produced which outline the policy choices on key issues, i.e., options for how the party might deal with each issue.
3. At the third stage, final policy documents, once produced, are considered for amendment at a meeting of the National Policy Forum. Through their NPF representatives, each party unit is entitled to submit amendments to policy documents at this stage. Following amendment and agreement at the NPF, the policy documents go forward to Annual Conference for approval. Once agreed, they form the party's policy program on which the manifesto for the next election is based.

On paper, this process happens over a three-year cycle. However, because early elections were called in 2010, in practice the timeline has had to be more flexible to match political and electoral realities.

Current issues which require attention outside the more deliberate three-stage process are filtered and discussed through the Policy Commissions. Policy Commissions are responsible for engaging party stakeholders on these issues.

Connecting Party Members to Policymaking

Since the introduction of PiP in 1997, the Labour Party has struggled with how to keep its members fully involved and up to date on policy decisions, while at the same time produce timely, technical, and competitive policy proposals to the electorate. Advocates of the PiP process argue that it has produced two election-winning manifestos. However, there has been strong and enduring opposition to the process from stakeholders within the party who argue that it centralizes power and decision-making on major policy issues, and dilutes the input of ordinary members.

The party leadership continues to try to strike a balance between inclusion and efficiency. In 2008, individual party members were invited to submit specific textual amendments to final stage policy documents; the NPF was overwhelmed by the volume of amendments it received.

Other techniques and tools used by the Labour Party to encourage and maintain the participation of individual members and stakeholder groups in party policy include:

- A newsletter entitled "Dialogue--The Partnership in Power Newsletter," which is emailed to every local party organization at intervals. Past issues are available to party members via the party's website.



- Each of the six Policy Commissions maintains its own website on which it posts updates on its work. Party members can also get in touch with the commissions directly through email or post. Policy Commissions are specifically responsible for engaging party members and organizations on topical issues.
- At the 2007 conference, the party amended its rules to allow all affiliated organizations and local constituency parties to submit one contemporary issue to conference which is not substantially addressed by reports of the NEC or NPF to conference, allowing the grassroots to influence the party's policy agenda.
- The party has also committed to creating clear, concise, and engaging policy documents as well as holding smaller group meetings to discuss policy development so that more people have the chance to participate in the discussion.

It is worth noting that PiP enables the party to consult on policy with external organizations, such as local residents groups, civil society organizations, professional bodies, etc. This allows the party to benefit from technical expertise it may not have internally, helps the party better connect with voter-based organizations, and has arguably promoted a more outward-facing culture within the party.



CONSERVATIVE PARTY, UNITED KINGDOM



BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The Conservative Party in the United Kingdom is a center-right party with roots stemming back to the 1600s. The official name of the party is the Conservative and Unionist Party, but it is most frequently known as the Conservatives or “Tories”- an historical nickname.

The party’s structure is highly decentralized. Local party associations dominate the election of party leaders and the selection of local candidates. The Conservative Party Board is the national leadership body and is responsible for all operational matters.

The Conservative Party has a fairly long history of member involvement in policy development. The Conservative Political Centre (CPC) was established by the party in the 1940s as a way to facilitate two-way communication on policy between members and the leadership. The CPC was replaced in 1998 by the Conservative Policy Forum (CPF), which shared the same objective as the CPC but introduced a new structure and processes.

The extent to which both of these bodies influenced the outcome of policies is a subject debated within the party. Many members argue that what the CPC was viewed as effective, the CPF failed to inspire high levels of participation and that, in the end, policy was largely formed by the party leadership.

After the 2010 general elections, Conservative Party leader and Prime Minister David Cameron announced the revitalization of the CPF.¹⁵ The focus of the renewed CPF is to begin to build policy towards the 2015 general elections with the input and recommendations of Conservative Party members.

The CPF also provides a means for the Conservative Party to distinguish itself on policy from its coalition partner in government, the Liberal Democrats.

The role, purpose and structure of the CPF at the national and local level are clearly defined in the Conservative Party Constitution, but the policy making process itself is not. This allows for flexibility in the way that the policy development process is implemented and the manner in which the party organizes and incorporates member feedback.

POLICYMAKING IN PARTY STATUTES

The Conservative Party Constitution requires the party leader to consider the views of members and the Conservative Party Forum when making decisions about the political direction of the party.¹⁶

¹⁵ After the general elections, the Conservative Party went into coalition government with the Liberal Democrats.

¹⁶ Constitution of the Conservative Party, as amended July 2004, Part III, Line 11, pg. 6.



The constitution also establishes the CPF, “*the principal functions of which shall be to encourage and co-ordinate the formulation and development of policy ideas and initiatives within the Party, particularly the Constituency Associations*”.¹⁷ The CPF must also determine a process for receiving policy ideas and initiatives and, significantly, for ensuring a response is made to them.

The constitution instructs the CPF to consult on policy and to incorporate specialist input where necessary, but it does not pre-determine how the body must carry out these duties.¹⁸

The constitution outlines the operational structure of the CPF, which is managed by a council, constituted annually. The council is led by a chair, appointed by the party leader, and would normally be cabinet or shadow cabinet minister. Local constituency associations have three elected representatives on the council. There are up to five individual policy experts appointed, as well as one representative of the Scottish division of the party and a senior director of the party. No elected member may sit on the council for more than three years.

There is also a director of the CPF, appointed by the Conservative Party Board, the party’s national leadership body. The director oversees the operational activities of the CPF, including coordinating the policy work of the local constituency associations and CPF groupings formed at the local level. The council of the CPF must meet with the party leader at least twice a year to discuss policy ideas and membership opinion in relation to these ideas.¹⁹

Within each level of party association, from the largest to the smallest unit of party organization, the Conservative constitution provides for one person—typically the deputy political chairman—to have responsibility for “*the formulation and development of policy ideas and initiatives*”.²⁰ This ensures that there are structures down to the most local level for the generation of policy ideas which can be fed back to the party leadership.

POLICYMAKING IN PRACTICE

The Conservative Political Centre was established in the years after World War II. The CPC’s work was organized around a discussion program in which groups of party members would meet to discuss a topical brief issued by the party’s central office. Each group would appoint a leader who would write a report representing the group’s findings and ideas on the subject matter. The party’s central office would review the written reports received and submit a summary of the contents to the relevant Minister or Shadow Minister.

There were CPC seminars and regular conferences, known as the Summer School and Winter School, during which prominent Conservative officials and policy experts would offer their vision on relevant issues.

The CPC was replaced in 1998 by the Conservative Policy Forum as part of a package of reforms to revitalize the party after an electoral defeat in 1997.

¹⁷ Ibid, pg. 13.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., pg. 14.

²⁰ Ibid, pg. 30, 44, 47.



The CPF was a more ambitious project, which attempted to bring in more members through larger policy events and a broader structure. However, there was little consistency in the way the CPF was managed and it did not achieve the level of participation or success that had been anticipated. The reformation of the CPF in 2011 was an effort to respond to continued demand within the party for participatory policy development, combined with the recognition that the previous structures were not meeting this need.

After the 2010 general elections, the Conservative Party went into coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, a party with Liberal policies. The revitalized CPF also meets important needs in this regard: to create a clear and distinct Conservative Party conception of policy for the 2015 general election and to protect the identity of the party while in government with such an ideologically different party. Therefore, the CPF does not work on current policy issues but focuses solely on constructing policy for 2015.

At an event to officially re-launch the CPF, party Co-Chair Baroness Warsi stated that the CPF *“makes clear to every Conservative Member that no matter who you are, where you live, or what your experience of politics is, in our Party you will have a strong voice about the issues that matter for Britain – and your voice will be heard and will count. . . Thanks to the new CPF structure, there’s a straight line which goes from your constituency to Conservative Ministers in Government.”*²¹

The reconstituted CPF set out a list of general themes on which it would request feedback on an ongoing basis, as well as a regular schedule of topical papers which it would issue for consultation on a monthly basis. Some of the issues on which the party is seeking advice include:

- an ageing population
- new security challenges
- changes in technology and innovation
- increasing pressures on natural resources
- challenges from emerging economies
- the causes of poverty
- ensuring higher employment rates
- delivering more affordable housing
- eroding income inequality and child poverty
- protecting natural capital
- reducing the scale of central bureaucracy

Party members were asked to form their own local policy groups in order to respond to these and to generate their own ideas on policy outside of these set topics. Local CPF groups were assigned the following mandate and process:

²¹ <http://conservativehome.blogs.com/thetorydiary/2011/01/baroness-warsi-explains-what-she-has-done-for-party-members-since-becoming-chairman-as-she-re-launch.html>



- CPF groups will contribute to the campaigning strength of the local Conservative Party association;
- CPF groups will meet throughout the year;
- CPF groups will report back to the center;
- CPF groups will be encouraged to reach out to the rest of their communities to discuss their ideas; and
- A compendium of the views on the set papers on future challenges will go to the relevant Conservative Minister who will then respond.

Local groups and individuals are encouraged to respond to consultations by email.²² The CPF also maintains its own website, separate from the party's website, from which members can download all current policy papers and find a local CPF in their area.²³ CPF staff regularly use Conservative Party blogs to announce and promote consultations on specific policy ideas.

In a process similar to that used by the old CPC, submissions to each paper are then read by the national CPF team and collated into a summary. This summary is sent to the relevant Minister who then responds. That Minister's response is then distributed to members.

These monthly discussion briefs form the backbone of the CPF's work, but there are additional opportunities for feedback and consultation as well. The CPF organize events at the party's conferences, as well as their own CPF Winter Conference. Other activities include panel discussions, an annual lecture and even informal discussions for members with the party's Ministers and Members of Parliament on topics relevant to their portfolios.

²² cpf@conservatives.com

²³ <http://www.conservativepolicyforum.com>



SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, SWEDEN



BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP) was founded in 1889 and is the oldest and largest political party in Sweden. The SAP uses a highly-participatory model of policymaking which allows almost all levels of party organizations--from the executive and local branches to individual members – to participate in the process.

The party is governed by a constitution which designates the congress as the highest decision-making body within the party. In the years in which the congress does not meet, the constitution establishes a National Board to make strategic decisions. The constitution also establishes a Program Commission, which deals largely with motions affecting the party's core values. The National Board manages decisions on the party's policy commitments and proposals. Policy proposals made by both bodies must be approved by congress.

In practice, the SAP develops policy for three distinct purposes: Party Program, Political Guidelines, and Party Manifesto.

In the year before a congress is held, the National Board circulates consultation documents on party policy, which are discussed in local meetings and online thematic discussion groups. Party branches, clubs, and individual members submit their feedback to the National Board, which uses this information to guide and direct the policy proposals it submits to congress.

POLICYMAKING IN PARTY STATUTES

The Swedish Social Democratic Party is governed by a constitution. The constitution designates the congress as the supreme decision-making body of the party.²⁴

The constitution stipulates that congress is held the year before a general election. Elections in Sweden are scheduled and are held every four years, which means the SAP's Congress is also held once every four years. Extraordinary congresses can be called outside of this cycle to discuss major issues, such as the selection of a new party leader.

The congress consists of 350 elected delegates. Some of these seats are set aside for various party organizations, but the majority are distributed among the party districts according to levels of membership.

The party may convene a smaller conference, called the Party Council, in all other years in which the congress does not meet. The Party Council is comprised of 120 delegates and can be called on an ad hoc basis to deal with matters that arise, but it must be held at least once a year and is always summoned to select the nomination committee to congress.

²⁴ The Constitution of the Social Democratic Party, Section 2 (Organisation), Clause 3, http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/upload/Internationellt/Other%20Languages/SAPconstitution_eng.pdf



Whenever congress is not assembled, the constitution gives authority to the National Board for decision-making. The National Board is elected by Congress and has 33 members. The National Board plays a key role in the party's policy development and strategic decision-making.

The constitution gives to all party members the right to move a motion on policy at congress. An individual must first submit the motion to the executive of his or her local branch. The branch then decides whether the motion should progress and, if so, submits it to the district level. The district then decides whether to adopt the motion as its own and forward it to congress, to allow the motion to proceed to congress without endorsement, or reject the motion altogether. Motions with an endorsement receive priority consideration at congress.

A number of other groupings are given authority by the constitution to put motions before congress as well, either in their own capacity or through delegates. They are as follows:

- National Board
- Parliamentary Group
- European Parliamentary Group
- Program Commission
- Chair of the Party Districts
- Representatives of County and Municipal Council organizations
- National Federation of Social Democratic Women
- Swedish Social Democratic Youth
- Swedish Christian Social Democrats
- Swedish Social Democratic Students

Any motion affecting the Party Program, which is a statement of the party's core values and beliefs, must be submitted to the Program Commission in advance of the congress. All motions affecting party policy are reviewed by the National Board. The Board responds to all of these motions, as well as forwarding its own proposals, by submitting a document to all local branches, party districts, and delegates at least six weeks before the congress. This document outlines the Board's position on all motions.

The constitution sets similar rules for developing policy at the county council and municipal level. Prior to an election, the congress of the party district draws up the policy program, which forms the policy guidelines for the party's elected representatives.

The constitution obligates elected members to work closely with party members so that they are aware of their opinions on policy issues. It also asks party members to accept that all details of party policy cannot be decided at meetings (i.e., some policy decisions will be made without the presence or consultation of ordinary members), and to understand that not all elected officials will take the same stand on a policy issue.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., Section 7 (The National Board of the Party), Clause 1.

²⁶ Ibid., Section 4 (Party Congress), Clause 12.

²⁷ Ibid., Rules for the Co-operation Between the Elected Representatives and the Party Organisations.



POLICYMAKING IN PRACTICE

In practice, the SAP develops policy for three main areas.

Party Program - This is a statement of the party's vision and core values. It is largely developed through the Program Commission and the congress.

Political Guidelines - This is a document outlining the party's general policy commitments and goals over a four-year electoral cycle. It is largely developed by the National Board but must be endorsed by the congress.

Party Manifesto - This is the party's policy offerings to the voters in advance of an election. It is a much more detailed document than the Political Guidelines and includes analysis on the costs and projected outcomes of implementing proposed policies. The manifesto is generally released about a month before an election and is developed by the National Board.

In the year before the congress is held, the National Board drafts consultation documents on policy issues, which are then distributed within the party. These documents include a summary of the issues under consideration and specific questions that need to be addressed.

The aim of these documents is to generate interest within the party on policy issues and stimulate a discussion at a local level, which can be fed back to the National Board or Policy Commission. Meetings are organized at different levels within the party to discuss the consultations. The party has also used online thematic discussion groups to facilitate a national dialogue on relevant issues and make it easier for members to participate without having to travel. Party members may respond either as a group (e.g., a local branch or internal caucus), or as individuals.

The response the National Board receives to the consultation documents directs and guides the policy proposals which the Board presents to the Congress.

The Executive Committee, which is responsible for daily management of the party, must ensure that the commitments made in the Party Program, Political Guidelines, and the Party Manifesto are all complimentary.

The Program Commission, which is responsible for developing and drafting the Party Program, is chaired by the Party leader, who is also head of the party's Parliamentary Group. This ensures that the needs of the party's elected officials are represented in the Party Program, and also that the elected officials are fully briefed on the contents of the platform when developing a legislative agenda for the party in parliament.

Motions to congress which are proposed by party branches or individual members are divided into political/policy motions which affect party policy, and organizational motions, which affect how the party operates. All motions are filtered by the Program Commission or National Board in advance of the congress.

Like many political parties, the SAP experiences regular tension between the Parliamentary Group and the National Board on issues of policy development and decision-making. The Parliamentary



Group meets weekly and, because it has legislative responsibilities within the parliament, is resourced to act on policy issues. The pace of politics and demands of the legislative calendar can push the Parliamentary Group into acting without consulting the National Board or other relevant bodies within the party.

The SAP has dealt with this dynamic by giving the Party leader the critical role of mediator and manager, working to keep the interests of all relevant bodies within the party in consideration when it comes to policy development. The party also insists that meetings between the Parliamentary Group and National Board are held in the party headquarters rather than parliament buildings, reinforcing the message that decision-making on policy is a party responsibility and does not just belong to elected officials.



PEOPLE'S PARTY FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY, THE NETHERLANDS



BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) in the Netherlands was founded in 1948 as a continuation of several Liberal movements.

The rights of individual members are enshrined in the party's statutes. All party members have the right to speak and vote in the General Assembly, which is the party's highest decision-making body.

The VVD uses a committee structure to make policy. Issue-based committees are formed and run by party members to research and propose policy options for the party. These are then submitted to the General Assembly for amendment and approval.

The statutes of the VVD establish the decision-making structures of the party and assign specific rights and authorities to individual members, local branches, and the party leadership.

In 2004, the VVD held a consultation exercise to construct a new Liberal Manifesto. A special commission was formed to engage with party members and leaders to define the core values of the party and its vision for the future.

POLICYMAKING IN PARTY STATUTES

The VVD is governed by a set of statutes and bylaws. The statutes establish the General Assembly as the highest decision-making body within the party. The General Assembly is convened at least twice a year. All party members have the right to participate in and speak at the assembly. Each party member also has the right to vote at the assembly. Member votes are personal and non-transferable.²⁸

The party's official policy program is decided by the General Assembly, which amends and approves or rejects the work of the party's policy committees. The General Assembly can also take decisions on political matters.

The VVD's statutes also provide for a Party Council which offers direction and decisions on political matters. The Party Council is elected by members in meetings of the regional branches. It also administers advice to the Party Board, which handles the daily affairs of the party when the General Assembly is not convened. However, the statutes also make clear that the General Assembly has primacy over the Party Council. The General Assembly retains the right to contradict the policies endorsed by the Council, at which point the decision of the General Assembly becomes the party's official policy.²⁹

²⁸ Statutes of the VVD, Article 16, <http://www.vvd.nl/over-de-vvd/detail/19/partijreglementen>

²⁹ Ibid., Article 28.



POLICYMAKING IN PRACTICE

The VVD uses a committee system to develop policy for the party. Issue-based committees are led entirely by party members; neither parliamentarians nor members of the party leadership are involved.

Immediately after national elections, committees are constituted to manage specific policy areas such as health care, security, education, etc. The committees are composed of party members who are experts or highly experienced within the assigned topics.

Committees meet about once a month to discuss and formulate policy on behalf of the party. They can also form sub-groups if necessary to break down a larger topic into manageable parts.

The committees produce draft policy papers, which are submitted to the party's General Assembly. These are also distributed to local party branches in advance of the twice-yearly assembly meeting. Policy proposals are debated and amended by the assembly and are not considered party policy until they are endorsed by the General Assembly in a One-Member-One-Vote system. Most amendments or modifications to policy proposals are discussed and negotiated at a local level in advance of the General Assembly.

A similar system exists on the local level to prepare policies for municipal and local elections. In advance of the 2004 elections, the VVD also took the initiative to formulate a new Liberal Manifesto. The purpose of this exercise was to update and reaffirm the values and vision of the party, beyond its electoral platform and policy program.

A special commission was formed to lead a consultation on the new Liberal Manifesto. The commission consulted with party members and stakeholders to discuss what should be in the documents. Suggestions and critiques were taken by email, fax, letter, and in person. The party also held a "Day of Ideas" event to generate suggestions and feedback.³⁰

The commission ultimately produced a document which identified freedom, responsibility, tolerance, social justice, and equality of opportunity as its core principles. The VVD continues to refer to this Liberal Manifesto as its vision statement and one of its core foundation documents.

The special commission on the Liberal Manifesto also reported back on the importance of maintaining an open culture within the party, in which the public exchange of thoughts, ideas, and opinions is encouraged, and where there is room for the initiatives of individual members.³¹

³⁰ Ibid., link to Liberal Manifesto.

³¹ Ibid.



FINE GAEL, IRELAND



BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

Fine Gael is a center-right political party in the Republic of Ireland. The party was formed in 1933, emerging out of the country's post-colonial civil war from the pro-treaty movement led by Michael Collins, as well as other similarly-minded political forces and organizations.

Fine Gael's constitution and rules give the lead on matters of policy to the Parliamentary Party, which is composed of those elected to the national parliament and the European Parliament. The authority of the Parliamentary Party is subject to the approval of the party's main governing body, the *Árd Fheis*. However, the *Árd Fheis* is only required to meet at least once every two years.

Front Bench parliamentarians, or frontbenchers, are encouraged to set up groups of specialists with particular expertise or interest in the issue areas for which they have responsibility. Front Benchers use these groups to keep themselves informed on key issues, and also to avail of the technical expertise of specialists in the groups.

Policy proposals are otherwise based heavily in research. Public consultations do not play a significant role in this model, and members are brought into policy development only on an ad hoc basis.

POLICYMAKING IN PARTY STATUTES

Fine Gael's constitution and rules give the lead on policy matters to the Parliamentary Party caucus.³² The Parliamentary Party is composed of all those elected to the *Dáil Éireann* (lower chamber of parliament), Seanad (upper chamber of parliament), and European Parliament who have taken the party whip.

The authority of the Parliamentary Party is subject to the approval of the *Árd Fheis*, which is the main governing body of the party.³³ The Parliamentary Party must provide a statement of current party policy to all party branches and executive bodies in advance of any *Árd Fheis*, and must present a consolidated statement of party policy to each *Árd Fheis*. However, because it is such a costly and time-consuming event, the *Árd Fheis* must only be convened once in a 24-month period, and may be further postponed under exceptional circumstances, which gives the Parliamentary Party a fair amount of independence.³⁴

POLICYMAKING IN PRACTICE

Although Fine Gael's constitution gives responsibility for policy development to the entire Parliamentary Party, in practical terms it tends to be determined by the party's Front Bench (i.e., Cabinet Ministers while in government, and Shadow Cabinet while in opposition).

³² Fine Gael Constitution and Rules, (April 2010), Party Council, Part V, Rule 38 (i), pg. 25.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., *Árd Fheis*, Part XI, Rule 54 (i-ii), pg. 42.



Each Front Bench member is responsible for researching and developing their own policy area. To strengthen this process, the party has worked to develop the research, policy development, debating, and legislative skills of its parliamentarians. The party has also appointed a number of policy staff to professionalize the process.

Front Benchers are encouraged to set up groups of specialists with particular expertise or interest in the issue areas for which they have responsibility. These may be business people, academics, civil society organizations, etc. Some may be party members, but this is not a requirement. Front Benchers use these groups to keep themselves informed on key issues and also to avail of expertise. Otherwise, the party relies heavily on regular research for policy development. Qualitative and quantitative research are routinely used to develop policy ideas, test options, and fine tune positions.

Formal consultations with members on policy are conducted on an ad hoc basis. The most recent example of a large consultation was in November 2008. Following the general election in 2007, in which Fine Gael was defeated, the party leader set up a number of policy commissions on major issues. As part of the process, a special session was arranged during a national conference where proposals were presented and debated by party members. Significant policy positions emerged from this process, including the FairCare policy on health.

**L'UNION POUR UN MOUVEMENT POPULAIRE, FRANCE****BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY**

The Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) in France was formed in 2002 by former French President and Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, as an alliance of several center-right political parties.

In advance of national elections, the UMP organizes large consultations on policy and the content of its platform. For example, in preparation for the 2007 presidential and legislative elections, the UMP launched the Project for France, which generated more than 500 policy proposals. With elections scheduled for spring 2012, the UMP has unveiled a similar initiative called Project 2012, which is canvassing the opinions of broad populations, including party members and supporters, think tanks, professional associations, elected officials, and even voters who are neither members nor supporters of the UMP.

The UMP has engaged in large and inclusive consultation exercises on policy since its earliest days. However, these are not based in party statutes but rather have emerged for more pragmatic reasons, primarily the need to unify and mobilize the diverse coalition of political parties and movements that make up the UMP.

POLICYMAKING IN PARTY STATUTES

The UMP is governed by a set of statutes and internal regulations. The statutes guarantee members the right to engage in debate within the party and to vote at congress.

The congress is composed of all party members in good standing at the time it is held. The congress, “deliberates on the general actions and political orientation of the party. It chooses the supported candidate by the party when the elections of the president of the republic take place.”³⁵

Political motions can be submitted to congress, but this must be done through the factions within the UMP rather than by individual members. Political motions must first be submitted to the Political Bureau of the party.³⁶

The Political Bureau meets regularly and is responsible for the daily management of political issues. The Political Bureau is overseen by the National Council, which meets twice a year and is charged with taking decisions on the political orientation of the party whenever congress does not meet.³⁷

³⁵ Statutes and Interior Regulations of the UMP (NDI translation), The Congress, Article 14.

³⁶ Ibid., Article 17.

³⁷ Ibid., Articles 20 and 24.



POLICYMAKING IN PRACTICE

The UMP has developed an extensive and highly inclusive form of policy development. The party attempts to reach out to as broad an audience as possible to gather feedback, expert advice, and opinions on its policy proposals. This massive exercise has been conducted in the years preceding national elections and is overseen by the UMP's Secretary General.

For example, in advance of the 2007 presidential and legislative elections, the UMP held a far-reaching consultation exercise on policy, known as the Project for France, with the slogan "Let's Build the Platform of the Future: One Platform, One Team." Because the UMP is an alliance of several political parties and movements, it was important that the UMP achieve a policy platform supported by all its members.

Policy committees were established, composed of the party's legislators. The work of these committees led to eighteen separate conventions on specific themes or topics. At the conventions, experts from a variety of different backgrounds were invited to speak. Reports were developed by the conventions and posted on the UMP website for debates that were held from March 2005 until October 2006. Many of these conventions and debates were broadcast live over a website established by the party.

Additionally, the party issued a special magazine to members in which they were asked to participate in a survey by ranking a list of policy areas from most to least important. Party members could also vote online or in branch offices. In the end, more than 500 policy proposals were generated. An ad hoc Platform Committee, chaired by the party leader, assembled the policies into a proposed platform, which was submitted to the National Council. The National Council reviewed and amended the proposal and approved a final version, which was put to a vote of all members at party branch offices during a one-week period.

The final policy platform was based around the following five principles:

- Work and merit
- Security and respect
- Justice and equity
- Personal responsibility and accountability
- Trust

The UMP is organizing a similar exercise in advance of the 2012 presidential and legislative elections, called Project 2012.



PART 4: RECOMMENDATIONS ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The political parties examined for this guide carry a wide variety of political ideologies and approaches to policy development. There is no single way of conducting policy development and each political party must come up with a model to suit its needs and circumstances.

However, the stories of the parties examined here, as well as the party experts interviewed for this paper, offer some specific advice on policy development in both statute and practice.

In statute:

1. A political party should know what its values and ideological orientation are before it starts to develop policy. Parties that are unsure about this should have an internal discussion on their core principles, vision, and political beliefs before starting to develop policy options.
2. Consider some form of filter mechanism for motions on policy going to conference so that conference is debating only what is genuinely relevant to the party and the political environment, and so that similar themes are not duplicated.
3. Provide a supportive structure and process, but avoid putting too much detail in statutes so that the party has flexibility and options if new or unforeseen circumstances emerge. The type of policy development a party needs will change depending on whether or not it is in government or opposition, what the political environment is, etc., and the details of statutes need to be flexible enough to accommodate any variety of situations.
4. Statutes which guarantee members the right to participate in policy development should be specific about which stage or stages of the policy development process in which this is possible. It is helpful to party members to have a clear understanding of when they can and should get involved so that they can prepare, and also so that they do not expect to be able to intervene in policy decisions that have to be taken at the executive level.
5. Statutes must also be flexible enough to accommodate geographic and constituency-based differences. In most countries, political party membership will be strong and active in some areas but less so in others. Policy structures must be able to adapt to the level of engagement and demand in stronger areas while not putting too much of a burden on weaker areas which may not have the same capacity.
6. Ensure that there is structural support for the research and engagement (i.e., membership and recruitment) bodies within the party to work closely together on consultation exercises.

In practice:

7. There will almost always be a degree of tension between what the party membership wants and what the party leadership decides or needs to do, particularly when the party is in government. Prepare to work constructively with this tension by keeping the lines of communication open, and making it clear when consultation is possible in decision-making and when it is not.



8. The pace of decision-making on policy is quickening as the media defines the daily political agenda more and more. In this environment, it is critical to have clear decision-making processes in place as well as a sound document on the party's core values, which can be used by all decision-makers to provide direction when new and urgent issues emerge.
9. Clearly determine which part of the party will be the policy engine and ensure it is well resourced and structured to move quickly on emerging issues.
10. It is acceptable and sometimes preferable to develop systems for making policy over time. The structure a political party starts with does not need to be the one it permanently adopts, especially if it is not working well. Do not be afraid to amend or revise the process until one develops which fits the needs and values of the party. Keep statutes and bylaws broad enough so that they may be changed later if necessary.
11. Ensure that members of any policy commission or policymaking body are appropriately trained and have the resources they need to do their job properly.
12. Do not be afraid to consult outside the party and include the general public, but be cautious with consultation processes that are so big nothing of value ever comes out of it (i.e., good ideas can easily slip through the cracks if a process is too big).
13. Feedback and follow-up are key to good policy consultations. If an individual or organization proposes a policy idea which the party adopts, make sure they know this.
14. Diverse representation can contribute to good policy. In addition to having topical experts involved in policy development, gender, minority, and regional balance can make a difference in the value of what is actually proposed.
15. How questions in a consultation are worded can make a difference in the quality and clarity of the answers received. It can be useful to get advice from researchers or pollsters on how to ask good open-ended questions.
16. Practitioners also advise that when organizing a consultation, a party should not ask questions that it does not want to know the answers to. If an issue is highly sensitive or controversial, consider whether there is another platform for discussion within the party that is more appropriate than a consultation. Similarly, a consultation cannot just be a meaningless exercise. If a party is going to engage in consultation, it must be prepared to going through the process sincerely and genuinely respond to any outcomes.



PART 5: RESOURCE LIST

Labour Party, United Kingdom

Partnership into Power, Annual Conference 2010: Review of Labour Party policy making, <https://www.gmb.org.uk/pdf/2010%20NPF%20Review%20Document.pdf>

Labour Party Rule Book (2010), <http://www.leftfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Labour-Party-Rule-Book-2010.pdf>

Labour Party Website on Policy Consultation, <http://www.labour.org.uk/havingyoursayinshapingpolicy>

Conservative Party, United Kingdom

Conservative Policy Forum Website, <http://www.conservativepolicyforum.com/>

Conservative Party blog on Conservative Policy Forum (including link to consultation document on the economy), <http://conservativehome.blogs.com/thinktankcentral/2011/04/the-conservative-policy-forum-wants-to-know-your-views-on-what-will-be-the-uks-main-industries-and-e.html>

Conservative Party Constitution available through NDI

Social Democratic Party, Sweden

Discussion Paper, “A Sweden for Tomorrow,” to Review and Update the Party Program and Party Structure (2011), <http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/upload/Internationellt/Other%20Languages/2011/A%20Sweden%20for%20tomorrow.pdf>

Swedish Social Democratic Party Constitution (English), http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/upload/Internationellt/Other%20Languages/SAPconstitution_eng.pdf

People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, the Netherlands

VVD Regulations and Liberal Manifesto, <http://www.vvd.nl/over-de-vvd/detail/19/partijreglementen>

L’Union Pour Un Mouvement Populaire, France

UMP Statutes and Rules of Procedure, <http://www.u-m-p.org/notre-parti/organisation>
Project 2012 Website, <http://www.projet-ump.fr/>

Fine Gael, Ireland

Fine Gael Party Values, <http://www.finegael.ie/your-fine-gael/values/>

Fine Gael Constitution and Rules available through NDI



Additional Materials

European Standards on Consultation, http://ec.europa.eu/civil_society/consultation_standards/index_en.htm

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guide on Consultation in Policy Making, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/24/34/2384040.pdf>

UK Liberal Democrats Policy Consultation Website, <http://consult.libdems.org.uk/>

