



## **Expert Workshop**

# Science, Numbers and Politics

European Parliament, Brussels 20-21 May 2019





## Introduction

- 1. Science and Politics
- 2. "Working Numbers"
- 3. Workshop Objectives and Organization





### 1. Science and Politics (I)

## The Relationship of Science and Politics:

- Growing complexity and diversity of modern politics
- Scientization (Verwissenschaftlichung) of politics parallel to increasing rationalization of society in general
- Claim for fact- and evidence-based decision making
- Additional legitimation of value judgements by a rational component
- → Numbers and Quantification





### 1. Science and Politics (II)

#### **Numbers and Quantification:**

"I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind: it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely, in your thoughts, advanced to the stage of science, whatever the matter may be."

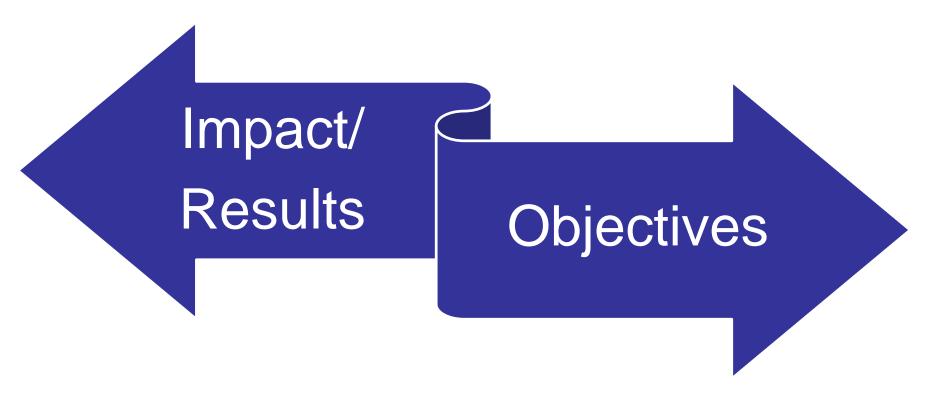
William Thomson, 1. Baron Kelvin (1824-1907)





### 1. Science and Politics (III)

#### **Dimensions of Quantification:**







#### 1. Science and Politics (IV)

### **The Appeal of Quantification:**

- "Measurability"
- Claim for objectivity
- Verifiability
- Transparency
- Expert knowledge for generalists
- Numbers as common language
- Scope for interpretation





### 1. Science and Politics (v)

#### **Limits of Quantification:**

- Fallibility of statistics or benchmarks
- Number as an end in itself
- Neglect of qualitative aspects
- Technocratic understanding of politics
- Tendency to unambitious policies
- Need for specialized knowledge
- Political "alienation"
- Diverging logics of science and politics





#### 1. Science and Politics (VI)

#### **Politics:**

Increase and preservation of power and legitimacy

#### Science:

- Increase and preservation of systematic knowledge
- → "Power" vs. "truth"





#### 1. Science and Politics (VII)

### **Challenges for Politics:**

Merely implementing scientific-technocratic rationality

### **Challenges for Science:**

Instrumentalization and Politicization





#### 1. Science and Politics (VIII)

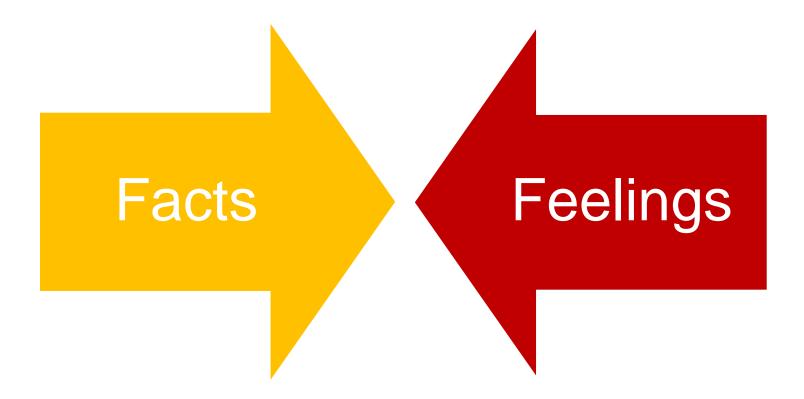


"WHILE DOING THE RESEARCH, KEEP IN MIND THERE ARE ONLY TWO KINDS OF FACTS... THOSE THAT SUPPORT MY POSITION... AND INCONCLUSIVE."





## 1. Science and Politics (IX)







Truth	Post-truth
I think therefore I am	







## 2. "Working Numbers" (I)

### The Concept of "Working Numbers":

- "Numbers" as a connecting device between science and politics
- Active and conceptual understanding of "numbers"
- → "Working Numbers"





## 2. "Working Numbers" (II)



Science Numbers Politics





### 2. "Working Numbers" (III)

#### **Production:**

- Under what types of conditions are numbers produced?
- What are the most predominant motives and interests behind the production of numbers?
- What kinds of methods and data are used, and how were they decided upon?





## 2. "Working Numbers" (IV)

### **Transfer/Translation/Migration:**

- How is the intersection between production and use of numbers (institutionally) laid out?
- Which players provide numbers for decision-makers?
- Which channels do they use to bring numbers into politics?
- Which communication strategies and "languages" do they apply to transfer numbers into the political realm?





### 2. "Working Numbers" (v)

#### Use:

- Who requests the production and supply of quantitative evidence?
- How do decision-makers use numbers in political discourses?
- În what ways does numerical evidence affect political agendas?
- Are numbers getting transformed during political-argumentative use?
- Do numbers have a true steering function, or are they mainly used to legitimate decisions that are ideologically underpinned?





### 3. Workshop Objectives/Organization (1)

### **Objectives:**

- Focus on European Union context and the European Parliament in particular
- Raising awareness of the difficult relationship between science, numbers and politics
- Foster dialogue between academic scholars and practitioners of scientific policy advice
- Open format





### 3. Workshop Objectives/Organization (II)

#### **Structure:**

- Panel I: Scientific Evidence and Policy Making
- Panel II: Numbers in/for Policy Making: Uses and Abuses
- Panel III: Effective Communication of Science and Numbers to Policy Makers





# Let's get started...



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