

# **‘Based on the Best Advice Available’ – Challenge and Change in Ireland’s Policy Advisory System**

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**\*\*\*FIRST DRAFT\*\*\***

## **ABSTRACT**

The concept of the policy advisory system was devised to study the diverse range of actors involved in the policy formulation process from a system level. The concept has developed over two ‘waves’ of research showing the nature of policy work in different advisory systems and how they have changed over time. While Westminster systems have been central in this research, the case of Ireland is under explored. This paper presents findings and discusses features of the Irish policy advisory system with specific reference to the budgetary policy domain within the context of reforms and actions introduced to respond to the economic and fiscal crisis. The research finds that while new structural and institutional arrangements created a more contested space for policy advice this did not upend embedded characteristics in the Irish policy-making environment. Political demand pressures from ministers (both personal and electoral) can drive elements of politicisation within the civil service such that policy advice is weighted or discarded based on ministerial preferences.

**KEYWORDS:** Policy Advisory System; crisis; budgetary process; Ireland; public administration