

Policy design in Latvia: the interplay of politicians, advisers and administrators

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Abstract: This article delves into the role and impact of political advisers within Latvia's executive branch, focusing on their influence, transparency, and interactions with key policy players—politicians, advisers, and administrators—over the period from 2019 to early 2024. It examines how advisers, appointed with few formal criteria at the discretion of ministers and political parties, fit into Latvia's relatively low-politicisation framework but also raise questions around patronage, oversight, and their actual power in policy-making.

In Latvia, the appointment and responsibilities of political advisers are left to the discretion of ministers and their political parties, with minimal formal criteria. This setup has led to debates about potential patronage, limited oversight, and the impact these advisers have on policy-making processes. Given the public perception that advisers might act as conduits for political parties to access bureaucratic resources, the article likely seeks to shed light on whether these roles contribute to or detract from government accountability and transparency.

The study also aims to empirically analyze appointment patterns across different government ministries, tracking trends in adviser roles and their engagement in the policy cycle, especially during design stage of policies. By examining whether advisory practices and power dynamics remain consistent across different administrations or shift with governing parties, the article seeks to provide a nuanced perspective on Latvian governance and identify areas where transparency or formal structures could be improved.