

Bridging the gap

Case study: The European dimension of eGovernment for national policy executing organisations in the Netherlands



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Centre of Expertise



- ▶ Foundation, established by Dutch Cabinet in 1988
- ▶ Mission: helping government with ICT
- ▶ Activities:
 - consultancy,
 - auditing,
 - management,
 - training
- ▶ Clients from central/regional/local government and other public sector organisations
- ▶ +/- 300 projects every year
- ▶ Independent private sector organisation
- ▶ Since 2006 separate European Unit

What's the problem?



- ▶ Policy executing governmental organisations (pego's) are front-runners in eGovernment; they use ICT intensely: tax agency, land register etc.
- ▶ The further European integration has a growing impact on national government organisations and their information systems; this demands clear input from pego's in EU-policy cycle;
- ▶ the Dutch institutional context has a rather strict separation between policy making and policy execution; this gap makes it hard for pego's to deliver their input.

Definition pego



- ▶ *Pego*:
 - Government organisation which has a role in policy executing, but is not a government department. It operates to a greater or lesser extent at arm's length from a minister.
- ▶ Central elements:
 - Mission aims at *services* for citizens and businesses;
 - *Autonomy* in business management;
 - *Planning and control-cycle* with the department.
- ▶ Variations:
 - Pego's can be part of a department, then they have an *internally autonomous status*;
 - Pego's also can be separate organisations, Then they have an *externally autonomous status*.
- ▶ *Synonyms*:
 - NDPB: non-departmental public body
 - Quango: quasi autonomous national government organisation

Background eGov/ICT in the Netherlands



- ▶ Coordination of eGovernment is mainly a *decentralised activity with central encouragement*.
 - Due to decentralised governance structure with highly autonomous provinces (12), municipalities (458) and pego's (about 500).
- ▶ Main focus on national level on *effectiveness and efficiency*:
 - Political goals formulated on better services for citizens and reduction of administrative burden for businesses;
 - eGov-programs mainly pointed at infrastructure
- ▶ *No comprehensive strategy* for transformation of government by use of ICT
 - eGovernment gets a 'silver bullet'-approach

The playfield: EU policy flow



Preparation (Commission)

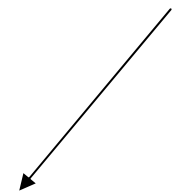
→ Decisionmaking (Council and EP)

→ Elaboration (Committees)

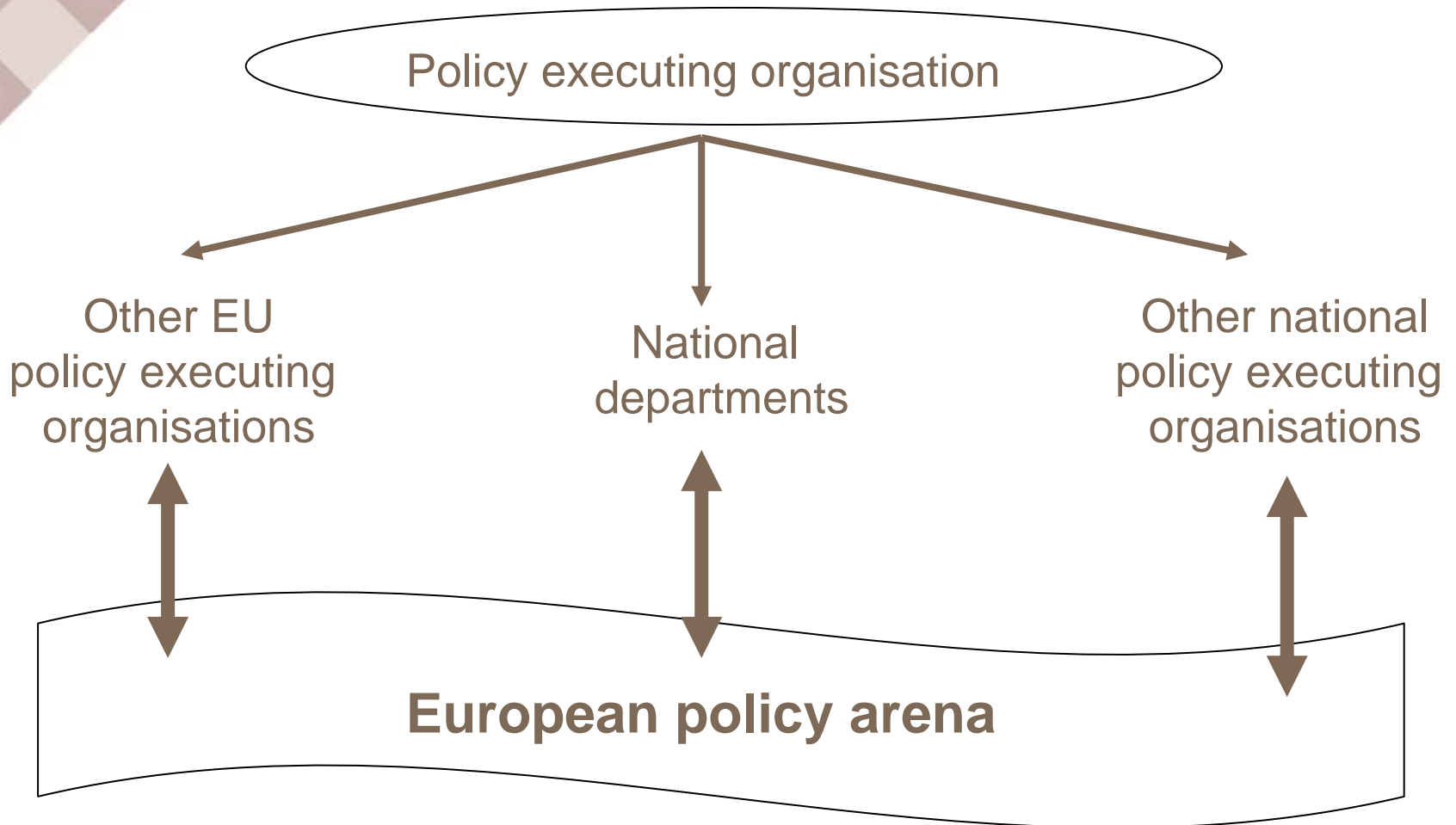
→ Implementation (Member states)

→ Correction (Court)

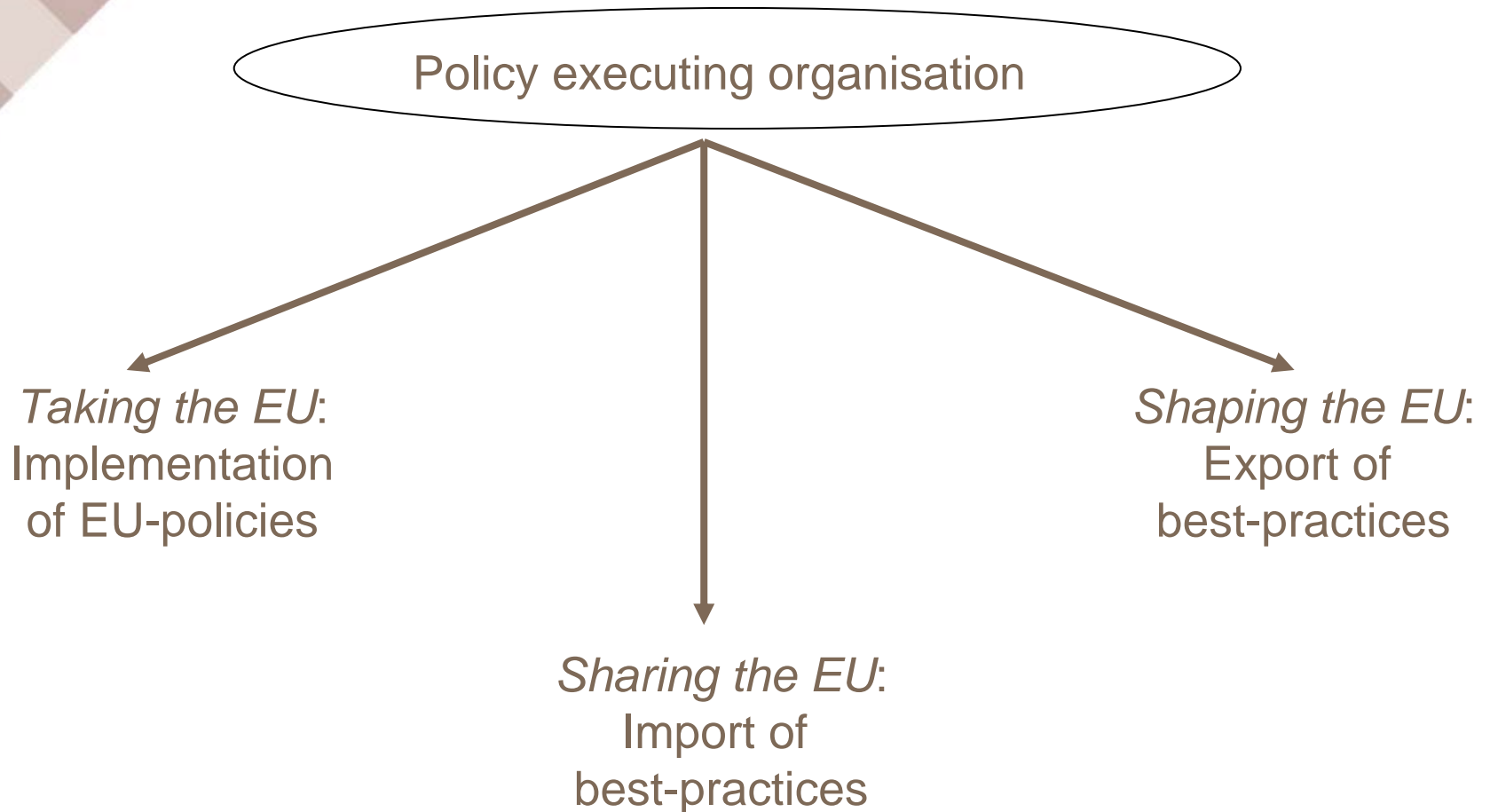
*This is where
pego's usually
come in sight*



The playfield: EU-influencing



The playfield: EU-interests



ICT in EU-policies



- ▶ *Information society and “embedded”*
 - Information Society: actionplan eGovernment
 - Embedded: Point of single contact in directive on Services

- ▶ *Hard and soft regulation*
 - Hard: directives
 - Soft: actionplans, benchmarks, pilots

- ▶ *General and specific regulation*
 - General: directive on Public Sector Information re-use
 - Specific: Inspire, Infrastructure on Spatial Information in Europe

Results (1)



- ▶ Embedded ICT in EU-policies seem to have a bigger impact on national ICT systems than eGovernment policies.
 - Legal framework is binding and works as a leverage for national programs
 - ICT is just a small part of a much bigger picture and therefore gets less attention in the preparation-phase, where the effects show up in later phases.

Results (2)



- ▶ Coordination of European eGov/ICT-policies is a challenge:
 - In a climate of *Euro-sceptis* by politicians and public it is hard to give the EU enough priority;
 - ICT-effects of EU-policies are *not always visible*; often only in later stages effects become clear;
 - The EU policy-flow is *not very transparant*, especially the preparation phase (Commission) is hard to monitor;
 - *Strategic behavior* of departments and their *lack of expertise* of policy execution sometimes frustrate coordination
 - EU policies effect usually a *large range* of national government organisations; this coordination is (time) costly;

Results (3)



- ▶ How to bridge the gap between pego's and the EU?
 - General improvement of the *awareness* of the impact of EU policies on national organisations and systems;
 - professionalization and emancipation of Dutch pego's in the European arena;
 - Better *collaboration* between Dutch departments and pego's in EU-dossiers;
 - Further structuration of the *national coordination and information flow* of EU-policies;
 - Improvement of the *awareness* of EU-policymakers of the importance of pego's, now the focus is (too) much on regional and local governments.

Conclusions



- ▶ EU policies have more and more impact on national information systems
- ▶ Pego's are front-runners in the use of ICT and feel the growing impact of the EU
- ▶ In the Netherlands pego's don't have a natural role in the proces of EU policymaking

- ▶ Bridging the gap means twoway action:
 - Pego's make their move to (EU-)policy makers
 - (EU) policy makers make their move towards pego's

- ▶ Further research relevant:
 - Best-practices of EU policy implementation in MS
 - Involvement of policy executing in EU decision making

More information?



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