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## THINK TANKS IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE QUALITY OF THEIR POLICY RESEARCH

### INTRODUCTION

*“For a long time, old guard American think tanks were defined as universities without students; at present, Central and East European think tanks might be described as public policy research institutes without research. This cannot go on for much longer”*

(Krastev 2000, p. 290)

Writing in 2000, Ivan Krastev – one of the most prominent think tankers and policy analysts in the region,<sup>2</sup> identified the need for the influential think tanks of the time to “return to social science proper” (2000:290). He identified, in other words, the risks think

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1 The views expressed in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Think Tank Fund or any other program of the Open Society Institute.

2 This paper addresses the issues in the following three sub-regions: east new member states of the European

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tanks were subjecting their nascent credibility to by failing to raise the standards of their policy research, and by continuing to prioritize values over hard data in their analyses. In a similar vein, Ionita (2003) laments the little attention think tanks give to the communicating of their results to the outside world. According to him, this negligence is due to the fact that many think tankers are academic researchers who perceive the value of ideas as self-evident and assume that they are worth listening to by default. Avramov (2007) bemoans the tendency of the economic think tanks in the region to shy away from economic theory. His comparative study reveals that these organizations are rarely, if at all, inventors or promoters of new theories and paradigms.<sup>3</sup> While he identifies the lack of “critical mass” and “intellectual weight” behind think tanks as the central reason for such trends, his study does not scrutinize the type and quality of policy research undertaken by the think tanks. By contrast, this is the problem that this paper focuses upon – the often poor quality and standards of think tanks in the CEE region.

Raymond Stryuk is probably the only author who has explicitly dedicated some attention to the quality of policy research carried out by the CEE think tanks. For example, he dedicated an entire chapter to the quality control of policy studies in his – by regional standards --seminal book (Stryuk 2006: 49-62). However, most of the advice in this textbook is normative in nature, emphasizing the importance of quality control and describing the practical process of undertaking such efforts within a think tank. Similarly, his other article on Bosnian think tanks (Stryuk and Miller

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Union (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, and Bulgaria), Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and selected countries of the former Soviet Union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). Given the different political and societal circumstances for operation of think tanks, the Russian Federation, Belarus and central Asian republics are not encompassed with the analysis in this paper.

- 3 Avramov here mostly follows the logic of McGann’s definition of role of think tanks “... to link the two roles, that of policy maker and academic (2005:12)”. By emphasizing the second dimension, Avramov has an explicit expectation of economic think tanks to engage in economic theory. While this is certainly not a Western standard where academic centers dominate the field of economic theory, this reasoning could be explained by the lack of good research in the academic circles in CEE. It should be noted that the sample of Avramov included several centers linked to Universities. I could also speculate that Avramov’s expectation think tanks to fill in the gap is based on the assumption that they are better equipped researchers given their direct exposure to and involvement with their western peers (see discussion on lack of competition for policy research in Krastev 2003).

2004), and the report of the state of Azerbaijani think tanks (Stryuk and Stobetskaya 2006), while identifying many weakness in the quality of research, do not offer the kind of qualitative, systematic overview that would help reveal national or even regional trends.

Were the prospects really so grim, or did the above authors have too high expectations for the quality of policy research carried out by the region's think tanks? This dissertation aims to shed more light on this aspect by providing an overview of the quality of policy research carried out by six selected think tanks (case studies). Furthermore, it will contextualize the quality of the work performed by think tanks within three broader theoretical frameworks -- pluralism, elite theory and knowledge regimes – and explore how quality plays out in each of those settings.<sup>4</sup> This paper will argue that while some think tanks in the region have improved their research/methodological and communication standards somewhat, the majority still cannot match the more rigorous standards of their Western peers. In other words, to paraphrase the opening quote: Public policy institutes in CEE are still to achieve quality research.

### **Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe**

Before defining the specific problem and stating the purpose of this paper, it is necessary to present the definition of a think tank, applicable to this region, and a brief overview of the existing literature of scholarly and practitioner analysis pertaining to this region. Defining a think tank has never been an easy task. The global scholarly community has suggested various concepts with no agreed upon definition (Stone 2004; Abelson 2002; McGann 2000). Given that the idea and practice of policy research evolved out of the Anglo-Saxon political tradition and took root in central Europe only in the 1990s, defining an independent think tank is even more challenging.<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, I adapt Stone's definition (2000a: 3) and define think tanks as,

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4 It should be noted here that the original purpose of these theories in the context of think tanks has been to explain their impact. The main concern of this dissertation is quality and standards of think tanks that often could be linked to influence. While the two issues are connected, for heuristic and analytical reasons, I will separate them in order to come up with a different slant on considering the relevance and effectiveness of these organizations. As some of the evidence will later show, under some circumstances, quality and standards not always to be prerequisites for influence.

5 For example, Krastev (2003: 77) rejects some of the Western definitions and typology of think tanks as inappropriate for this region.

“independent (and usually private) policy research institutes containing people involved in studying a particular policy area or a broad range of policy issues, actively seeking to educate or advise policy makers and the public through a number of channels.”

With the above definition in mind,<sup>6</sup> the forthcoming analysis pertains only to those organizations that are registered as NGOs or private, not-for-profit institutions.<sup>7</sup> The paper’s scope does not extend to university-based policy centers, state-controlled research institutes, political party think tanks or for-profit consulting agencies. According to the latest estimates,<sup>8</sup> there are approximately 200 independent policy centers that operate like NGOs across the region at the moment.

In the last ten years, the continued proliferation of think tanks has generated interest among academics and practitioners who are defining and analyzing this emerging “proto-field.”<sup>9</sup> Donor support, the main engine behind the emergence of think tanks in the 1990s, has not abated. As the complexity of reforms grew in the 2000s, many governments and public administrations were weak and unable to competently analyze the myriad issues they were rapidly responding to. While the rest of civil society was focused on service provision and capacity building, and deemed inept to address the challenges of complex EU and NATO accession processes, think tanks and advocacy organizations ascended to prominence.<sup>10</sup> As such, research about them also grew.

The discussion of think tanks in Central and eastern Europe has followed world trends by either focusing on the way they are organized (Weaver 1989; McGann and Weaver 2000) or viewing “think tanks as a vehicle for broader questions about the policy process and the role of ideas

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6 Unlike Stone who ‘avoids identifying think tanks as a sub-category of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)’, this dissertation particularly studies the think tanks that act as part of the civil society sector and are independent from the state and interest groups.

7 In only a few countries in regions such as Azerbaijan and Ukraine, it is easier for these organizations to register as private institutes or companies, but those still operate as an NGO.

8 Comparing the think tanks listed in the Freedom House Directory (2006) and the documentation of the OSI’s Think Tank Fund.

9 The term ‘proto-field’ is taken from Medzihorský (2007).

10 It is important to note that think tanks did not become ubiquitous phenomena in all countries of the region. For example, a few think tanks were created in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Croatia, all of which had limited effect on particular policy areas.

and expertise in decision making” (Stone 2004:2). Authors have addressed the genesis of think tanks and their roles in different countries (Kimball 2000; UNDP 2003); identified their place within the broader political system and civil society (Sandle 2004); tried to assess the impact of think tanks on the reform processes (Meseznikov 2007), and raised awareness about the risks to their sustainability (Boucher and Ebélé, 2003; Buldioski 2009).

UNDP sponsored a comprehensive volume that addressed different aspects of work by and with think tanks in the region (2003). Within this volume, the only specialized collection of essays on this subject in the region, Andjelkovic (2004) looked at the position of think tanks in Serbian society, openly questioning their place within the NGO sector. Following the concept of think tanks “as vehicles for broader ideas”, Pippidi (2003) described the current policy practices in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), identified the position and potential roles of elites, and demonstrated the weaknesses of think tanks in the region. Additionally, Krastev (2003) compared the think tanks to other providers of policy-relevant research such as government-supported institutes, university-based research centers, political parties, consulting agencies and business lobbyists. In the absence of a better source for policy research, and provided that think tanks would address some internal weaknesses, Krastev saw an unprecedented opportunity for think tanks to create a market of ideas and to flourish within.

More individual case studies surfaced. Following the functionalist tradition Schneider (2002) examined think tanks in the Visegrad countries and Stryuk (forthcoming) mapped think tanks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Two studies used various political concepts to contextualize think tanks in Hungary (Reich, 2009) and Slovakia (Medzihorský, 2007).<sup>11</sup> The region’s think tanks were featured prominently in two edited volumes analyzing the global proliferation of think tanks (Stone and Denham, 2004; McGann and Johnson, 2005). Freedom House produced the third edition of its Think Tank Directory (2006). In sum, a considerable effort has been put into mapping out think tanks; there has been some qualitative analysis of their functions, and a few authors have tried to gauge their impact on policy processes.

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11 The last two are unpublished theses of former students at the Central European University.

## The research question

The existing literature notwithstanding, issues such as the quality of research carried out by think tanks, have been somewhat ignored. From one country to another, or across various policy areas, it is hard to pinpoint what constitutes a quality<sup>12</sup> think tank in this region. It is also difficult to identify the quality of said think tank analysis, as well as how effectively their ideas are communicated and how they subsequently impact the policy-making process.

This paper argues that while think tanks developed basic in-house capacity for policy research, they have largely failed to undertake appropriate measures to improve the quality of their own policy research and the manners how they communicate it. By analyzing the practice of six think tanks in four countries, the paper detects some trends, then discusses future challenges ahead of think tanks and thus identifies potential topics for future in-depth research on the subject.<sup>13</sup>

The Research methodology<sup>14</sup> of this paper relies primarily on a qualitative analysis based on primary and secondary data. The secondary data consists of relevant literature from books, academic journals and other publications, such as texts from practitioners' journals and materials published by regional think tanks, as well as information from special evaluation and consultancy reports on think tanks<sup>15</sup> from the Open Society Institute's collection.

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12 Quality is an elusive term subject to different interpretations. While the debate of defining quality is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to highlight that in this paper, quality is result of an objective evaluation. For example, the evaluation reports and the review of 36 papers provide generic assessment that reflects the styles and forms of the analyzed papers/studies and for some of those the contents of the papers. Additional discussion on the choice for quality standards is provided in Chapter 3 in explaining the rational behind the choice of RAND (2010) standards and RAPID model (Court and Young, 2006).

13 In doing so, the paper focuses only the supply side of policy research (carried out by think tanks) and not the demand side. While equally important, the demand, the political will and competences of policymakers to understand expert/policy advice is a subject for another study and falls outside the scope of this one.

14 Detailed description of the Research methodology can be found in the full version of this document, Buldioski, G. (2010). Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe and the Quality of Their Policy Research, Skopje: MCIC.

15 All these reports share same guiding principles that are explained in Appendix 1 to this paper.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Three theoretical underpinnings**

The influence<sup>16</sup> on policies and policy debates has been a paramount issue in the debate around think tanks. While not central to this paper, it is important to consider this issue when placing the quality of policy research in the wider political and policy environments in which think tanks operate. Stone provides an excellent overview of “different approaches to the role of think tanks in policy making” (2004:10-15). Her analysis canvases a wide array of theoretical lenses such as elite theory, pluralism, Neo-Marxist interpretations, discourse construction, and touches upon the neo-Gramscian framework, listing various network theories (knowledge networks, epistemic communities, advocacy coalition frameworks and policy entrepreneurship). Each theoretical framework makes certain assumptions about the role of ideas. Given that policy research is key step in analyzing, presenting and advocating for those ideas, the same assumption extends to the role of (quality) policy research.

### **Pluralism (interest groups)**

Originally developed to describe democracy in the United States (Dahl 1961), pluralism refers to a system based on multiple centers of power. As such, the system includes checks and balances between various interest groups, branches of government and legislative bodies, which result in an open process of policy formulation and policy-making. In the U.S., the pluralist democracy theory put the groups and associations representing citizen’s interests on the map and acknowledged their role in policy-making (Ainsworth 2002). After the fall of the Berlin Wall, many politicians and donor agencies from the West promoted pluralism in the post-communist societies as part of the democratization and development of a market economy in Central and Eastern Europe. Even though there are various takes on the success of exporting this model (Shopflin 2001), today several countries boast of vibrant civil society sectors and interest groups. In the absence of strong labor unions and domestic business associations that would dominate the social dialogue such as it is in the corporatist societies of Central Europe and Scandinavia, the following definition concisely describes the type of pluralism that operates in parts of CEE.

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<sup>16</sup> Stone (2004:10) provides concise discussion on methodological problems in determining influence of think tanks.

“Interest group pluralism can be recognized by the [following] characteristics: a multiplicity of small interest groups, the absence or weakness of peak organizations, little or no tripartite consultation, and the absence of tripartite pacts.” (Lijphart 1999:172)

Within pluralist theory, think tanks operate as one of many voices among non-governmental organizations and interest groups. They would aim to produce relevant analyses and make their voice heard in a democratic (open) process of policy deliberation; they would produce recommendations for various policies. This puts a particular pressure on the quality of their policy research and the way they communicate to policy-makers. Operating in a competitive market for ideas, think tanks have to ensure that their analysis stands out and is noticed by policy-makers. Ideally, knowledge and evidence-based analysis is respected and accepted by various policy makers. In the pluralist frame, quality is argued to arise via the competition of ideas and advocacy/communication which supposedly ‘weeds out’ bad ideas. While think tanks are essential for the functioning of the democratic process, are they also relevant and recognizable among the many actors who compete for clout as relevant stakeholders in the policy process? Is quality of their work instrumental in this process?

### **Elite theory (interest groups)**

The elite theory was developed as an antidote to the pluralist democratic theory. Instead of sharing power among many small interest groups, the elite theorists, such as C. Wright Mills, claim that power is unequally distributed in all societies. The power is vested in those who control the largest organizations and institutions.

“The national elite is composed of those individuals who formulate, manage and direct the policies and activities of governments, corporations, banks, insurance and investment companies, mass media corporations, prestigious law firms, major foundations and universities, and influential civil and cultural organizations.” (Rye 2001:3).

Only those who have access to resources such as money, prestigious education and status can be part of the elite and thus participate in the policy-making process. While this type of decision-making is not necessarily undemocratic, sometimes elites can act to advance narrow, self-serving goals rather than following the interests of the masses. In Central and Eastern Europe, the democratization period was characterized by diffused



elites: from transformed communists to dissidents to liberals to elites – the winners of privatization. Literature suggests great circulation and power games among these elites played out through the 1990s (Higley and Pakulski 2000). Looking at elites that were crucial to the transition process, Ionita highlighted the development of “linkage-elites” in finance ministries and national banks – “who speak the conceptual language of their Western colleagues” (2003:152). Similar analogy could be made for many experts within the think tanks that become the key ‘translators’ of the reforms inspired by the Washington Consensus to the local elites. All these examples support the case for employing the elite theory for the analysis of some, if not all, think tanks in the region.

When applied to think tanks, the elite theory suggests that those that strive to exert influence over the policy-making process must either belong to an elite class or have immediate access to it. Pertaining to policy processes that rely on technical knowledge, Putnam argues that, “the development of technical and exclusive knowledge among administrators and other specialist groups is a mechanism by which power is stripped from the democratic process and slipped sideways to the advisors and specialists influencing the decision-making process,” (1977: 385). With the dearth of technically competent people, (especially in social and political fields), across the region, some think tanks could occupy a privileged place in the policy-making process. In a different vein more specifically related to think tanks, Stone dispels the myth that they represent the interest of the general public (Stone 2007). Applied to this region, Krastev and Pippidi (UNDP 2003) singled out the role of liberal elites in the formation and maintenance of its think tanks. When they possess technical expertise, and/or belong to particular elite and do not represent the general public interests, think tanks can be easily analyzed against the normative basis of the elite theory.

### **Knowledge Regime**

This theory, unlike elitism and pluralism, is not based on the power of interest groups. The knowledge regime, a relatively new concept, looks at the institutions and organizations that create and advance relevant policy research instead.

“A knowledge regime is a set of policy research organizations, such as private think tanks and government research units, engaged in policy research. It consists of three dimensions: a structure that is, a set of relationships among the organizations involved; a set of processes

by which these organizations compete, cooperate and coordinate their activities or not; and a set of institutions (e.g., formal and informal rules, norms and understandings) that governs these interactions.” (Campbell and Pedersen forthcoming: 4)

The key functions of knowledge regimes are the production of data and research, the suggestion of new theories, policy recommendations and the floating of ideas to influence the policy-making and production systems.<sup>17</sup> According to its proponents, knowledge regimes are an important source of social innovation and change. For example, some authors highlight their crucial role “in developing and disseminating neoliberal ideas -- the notion that reducing taxes, regulation, and government spending is the cure for what ails national economies” (Fourcade-Gourinchas and Badd as cited in Cambell and Pedersenn: forthcoming).

The very definition of knowledge regimes hints at how quality is interpreted and understood. That is, that quality is not about objective or ideal standards but emerges contextually from relationships, informal rules and social understandings of the organizations and actors involved. Building on this premise, the quality of think tanks in CEE could be tested at least against two settings: national and international knowledge regimes. The national knowledge community in each of the region’s countries is small; it would be important to identify to what extent the think tanks’ policy products have differed from academic research and what has been their role in influencing their respective policy-making regimes. Moreover, if think tanks were part of the knowledge regime, the scholarly community in the country would accept the products produced by the think tanks. Using the example of Bulgaria and the countries of the Western Balkans, Krastev (2003) and Buldioski (2009) demonstrated that think tanks have a competitive advantage when compared to other producers of policy-relevant knowledge in realm of social sciences (universities, governmental research units, political party think tanks and consulting firms). In societies with few outlets capable of producing evidence-based research, Ionita (2003) and Buldioski (2007) have noted that one of the key roles for think tanks is to act as a depository of knowledge (waiting for an open window to change

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17 “Policymaking regime includes the state, political parties and other political actors and their surrounding political institutions. ...Production regimes, in turn, are comprised of firms, employer associations, trade unions, other economic actors and the institutions that govern them” (Campbell and Pedersen forthcoming: 4)

the policy in question).<sup>18</sup> In conclusion, under national knowledge regimes, this paper will analyze the quality of the research produced by the think tanks, namely whether completed studies have benefited from the above competitive advantage, and whether think tanks have become key players within the emerging new knowledge regimes.

These three theories would further help to not only contextualize the work of the previously analyzed think tanks, but also to analyze the quality of their production, keeping in mind the specific role that think tanks play within each of these specific frameworks.

### **Quality of Policy Research and its Communication – What Does Evidence Suggest?**

*Selection of the think tanks – case studies:*<sup>19</sup> The six selected case study think tanks draw upon the diversity of the region and include: the Economic Research Center (ERC) – Azerbaijan; Analytica – Macedonia; The Institute for Public Policy (IPP) – Romania; The Romanian Academic Society (SAR); The Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) – Slovakia; and the Slovak Institute for Economic and Social Reform (INEKO). The selected think tanks operate in four countries with differing political systems – from a consolidated authoritarian regime (Azerbaijan) to a consolidated democracy (Slovakia), as measured by the scale of Freedom House.<sup>20</sup> The six think tanks are also at different developmental stages, from the inexperienced (Macedonia) to the reputable (Slovakia).

The table below provides an overview of the characterization for each of the examined think tanks.

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18 This role of think tanks at global level is explained in Stone (2000:54)

19 The data collection process and the used methodology tools are in details given in the full version of this document, Buldioski, G. (2010). Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe and the Quality of Their Policy Research, Skopje: MCIC.

20 Regime type as defined in the Nations in Transit 2010, Freedom House accessible at [http://www.freedomhouse.hu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=321:nations-in-transit-2010&catid=46:nations-in-transit&Itemid=121](http://www.freedomhouse.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=321:nations-in-transit-2010&catid=46:nations-in-transit&Itemid=121).

**Table 1:** Selected think tanks – case studies

Think Tank	Country	Think tank scene	Size of the think tank	Reputation in the country	Well known for	Appropriate framework to analyze
Economic Research Center (ERC)	Azerbaijan	Underdeveloped (3-4 organizations constitute the field)	Medium 7 employee 5 regular collaborators	Medium/High	Alternative economic analysis to gov't policies  Non-elite TT but with some access to elites	Knowledge regime  Elitism
Analytica	Macedonia	In development (5 to 10)	Small 4 employees 3 interns	Low	Regular newsletter  Non-elite TT	Pluralism
Romanian Academic Society (SAR)	Romania	Developed (small size, 5 to 10)	Medium 11 employees 10 regular collaborators	High	Political analysis (Sometimes accused for supporting liberal elites and political parties.  Access to liberal elite/ also some cooperation with NGOs)	Knowledge regime  Pluralism  Elitism
Institute for Public Policy (IPP)	Romania	Developed (small size, 5 to 10)	Small 5 employees 10 regular collaborators	Medium/High	Technical analysis / use of freedom of information law  Non-elite TT but with access to elites.	Knowledge regime  Pluralism
Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)	Slovakia	Developed (big size, more than 10)	Big 12-20 employees 20 regular collaborators	Medium/High	Political commentaries, Big books.  Belongs to liberal elite. Elite TT.	Knowledge regime  Elitism
Institute for Economic and Social Reform (INEKO)	Slovakia	Developed (big size, more than 10)	Small 5 employees 30 regular collaborators	High	Macroeconomic Analysis  Access to liberal elites. Still not perceived as elite TT.	Knowledge regime  Elitism

The studied think tanks are engaged in highly complex, political, economic and social problems that impact their own countries or the region as a whole. Analyzing quality across such a wide range of analytical products and events requires the definition of certain aspects of the work done by think tanks that can be universally assessed. This section first looks at how organizations identify their policy needs, map problems and design their research and then analyzes how a think tank's findings and recommendations are communicated to policymakers and shared with other stakeholders.

### Identification of needs, mapping problems and quality of research design

Every think tank, from its onset, must be able to identify societal problems, be motivated to address these issues, and possess robust theoretical and practical knowledge about the subject matter or the policy processes (Panel Discussion 2010). The evaluation reports tell us that the case study think tanks identified the problems in their societies with relative ease. It has been much harder, however, for all of them to transform the issues they

consider important into policy agendas. Policy agendas are overwhelmed by multiple strategies set by governments and various international organizations assisting these governments.<sup>21</sup> This leaves very little space for think tanks to introduce new ideas in a systematic manner.

Second, the market for funding is dictated by donors that usually set their own thematic foci upfront.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, donor communities rarely interact with researchers who are in the process of deciding their priorities (CRPM 2008). Although think tanks are not the principle agenda setters anywhere in the world, in developed countries governments engage with different stakeholders when defining national strategies. In CEE, predictably, the selection of research topics is extremely limited. This situation seriously impedes a think tank's ability to work on issues that may not be recognized by the mainstream agenda setters, but that are equally important. Another negative aspect is that think tanks carry out research based on the assumptions of other actors -- not always a scientifically precise undertaking.<sup>23</sup>

Individual studies do not come up against the same barriers. On the contrary, once a topic is defined with or without interference of the donor or the governmental body, the think tanks enjoy relative freedom to use the methods of their preferred choice. While almost all think tanks (with the exception of Analytica), approach research in sophisticated ways, their theoretical framing of the issue is often unclear. In his evaluation of Romanian think tanks, Nelson (2008) notes: "One difficulty that recurs across these organizations is a failure to adhere to strict standards of social science inference." For example, SAR's challenge has been to avoid a

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21 For example, the Macedonian government reports that it is currently implementing more than 50 different national strategies [Information taken from the official web-site of Government of Macedonia: [www.vlada.mk](http://www.vlada.mk) [accessed on June 20, 2010]. Almost as a rule, none of these strategies are properly budgeted.

22 Not surprisingly the European Commission, national governments and private or public international donors/organizations have imposed severe limitations on the thematic priorities for their funding.

23 For example, Igor Bandovic (2010) from the European Fund for the Balkans and Scott Abrams (2010) from the Open Society Institute acknowledge that donor organizations cannot have expertise on all of the research projects they underwrite. Instead, they count on the reputation of the prospective grantees and some feedback from the policymakers to ascertain the value of the supported projects. While evaluations are regularly carried out, they cover only a small number of projects representative of the grant-portfolios. The OSI's Local Governance Initiative has a network of external experts that provides peer reviews of technically challenging themes.

political agenda imposing itself on the analysis (Nelson 2008:23). IVO's research designs are built according to models common for political or social sciences; however in some of the analyzed studies the evaluator points to the continued repetition of the same combination of methods (mainly qualitative methods and surveys). Analytica usually correctly identifies the problems, but fails to provide a suitable analytical framework or theory to check their findings against. It is their lack of field research and their focus on elites in the capital that severely limit their research designs. While this tendency is not present in the other five think tanks, it is unknown to what extent similar think tanks across the region resort to such ill-conceived and limited practices (Hozic 2010:4).

The policy studies of ERC and INEKO, the economic think tanks in this sample, offer the clearest framework that conforms to the tenets of economic theory. Their studies often attempt to explore and prove causal relationships. Yet, despite ascertaining inference in their studies based on usually known economic models, the economic think tanks reveal a different weakness. While able to devise unique analytical tools for their research, none of these organizations has engaged in theoretical innovation. The leaders of both organizations point to the absence of a competitive scientific environment and the absence of an impartial, home-country, peer review system as the main reasons for the lack of innovation. These statements relate to the theoretical frames at the macro-level: the lack of competition, for instance, clearly suggests limits to the pluralistic model. Peer review is a tool associated with the elites. Combined, they create the social norms and practices of a knowledge regime. The evidence from these economic think tanks suggests that there is a limit to competition and thus to pluralism in the countries where peer review is seldom practiced and where the domestic knowledge regimes are in infancy.

Additionally, the literature identifies a genuine lack of incentives to stimulate such work in Central and Eastern Europe. The two economic think tanks in this sample confirm Avramov's thesis of 'theoretical parochialism' applied to the CEE economic think tanks according to what "Western economists are the source of theory and methodology (a fiercely competitive area with no chance for outsiders), while Easterners are confined to applied economics (a more friendly and universal sphere" (2007:13). In sum, these examples do not question the ability of think tanks to properly identify the needs for policy research, but rather identify their limitations when selecting and addressing their initial research topics. Notwithstanding their compliance to the basic standards in identifying research topics, think tanks in general shy away from theoretical innovation, and repeti-

tively resort to established models for policy research. In some cases, as noted about SAR, there was also the fear that political (and ideological) bias would affect the quality of the research design and shift the analysis toward a pre-determined solution.

### **Quality of published material: policy studies, papers and briefs**

Once the research is carried out and the evidence collected, the demanding task of writing begins. Writing good policy papers is more of an art than a science. The shorter the format, the greater the challenge is to balance a mix of evidence, spot-on analysis and sound recommendations. Even the most complex policy solutions have to be explained in comprehensive language. Today, think tanks and individual researchers alike may successfully carry out a research project only to then damage its impact with technical and tedious language. By comparing the findings of four evaluation reports that examined 36 sampled policy studies, papers and briefs, this section provides a summary of the observed trends,<sup>24</sup> and further analyses them based on the selected methodology.<sup>25</sup>

#### *1. Use of data*

Of the six think tanks, IPP and INEKO excel in their use of data. IPP Romania certainly leads in the region in forcing its government to release data that it attempted to keep from the public. To do this, IPP uses the Freedom of Information Act, a tool that few think tanks in the region use. By using the court system, IPP has generated momentum for this method of accessing public information (Nelson 2008:14). But this momentum would not exist if it weren't for IPP's capacity to analyze and use the statistical data. IPP has gradually "become a 'data collector' and 'data translator' on matters of public policy -- a role otherwise filled inadequately in Romania" (Nelson 2008: 15).

INEKO has taken a different path but achieved similar success. Faced with a snowball of unrealistic populist policies promoted by the government, the institute has used data to expose the unfulfilled promises and

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24 The publications greatly vary in terms of their purpose and quality across the six think tanks. SAR – Romania is the only think tank in this sample of organizations that publishes a peer reviewed Journal. The quality of the Journal articles has not been part of the forthcoming analysis.

25 For details see: Buldioski, G. (2010). Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe and the Quality of Their Policy Research, Skopje: MCIC.

discredit statements by politicians that were not backed by evidence. To ensure the credibility of the effort, they have gathered a large network of economic analysts – from the state, and for-profit and not-for-profit sectors to analyze available statistical data. Other centers have turned out to be more cooperative with the government. For example, IVO has created a database of information about Roma communities in Slovakia, which served as a source of information for state institutions, donors and organizations involved in carrying out or supporting projects in Roma communities (Blagescu 2006). Both IVO in Slovakia and IPP in Romania have developed an in-house capacity to undertake public opinion surveys.

Despite these successful examples, the use of data and its interpretation is fraught with challenges. For example SAR “does not necessarily aim to replicate the academic rigor expected in most Western journals or faculties. Still, the center makes a conscious effort to produce statistically-relevant studies and establish a factually-based foundation for the analysis of trends and predictions.” (Nelson 2008:9). ERC quantitative analysis, while accepted by Azerbaijani stakeholders, fails to reach the universally accepted standards of economic research (2010 Panel discussion). Analytica, on the other hand, is the only think tank in this sample that exclusively bases its research on secondary data. Some of their fellows “were reluctant to venture into the real world, whether to conduct non-elite interviews, conduct original survey research, or visit localities beyond the capital” (Hozic 2010:14). These sample organizations reflect think tanks across the region: there are a few who have excelled in the collection and processing of data sets, however a lot of new and upcoming organizations are still struggling to meet professional standards.

## *2. Clarity of writing, selection of language and targeting specific audiences*

While the collection of data and the ability to interpret it can occasionally meet the RAND standards, the quality of writing is beset by more serious problems. The think tanks in the region publish a lot of their analytical papers in their national language and in English.<sup>26</sup> Producing in English serves three purposes: it communicates directly with donors/sponsors;<sup>27</sup> acts as a source of legitimization among international and sometimes domestic audiences; and addresses international policymakers. The evidence gathered from the six sample think tanks and the available evalu-

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26 Note: This paper analyzes only those studies, papers and briefs published in English.

27 These by default are not direct users of the policy advice.



ation reports unequivocally express criticism. Among the comments are statements such as: “Several papers are ‘marches through data’” or “the paper is descriptive ... conclusions are either weak or missing” (Stryuk 2009: 23), and “...there are very few literature citations” (Stryuk 2009 and Hozic 2010).

Froitzheim notes the style of several researchers: “overall, their arguments are understandable, but often their desire to sound fluent and clever frustrates their ability to be clear, precise and persuasive.” (2010:5). Even more experienced analysts such as IVO researchers are prone to write long, cumbersome papers -- interesting only to experts (Blagescu 2006). INEKO, whose materials in the Slovak language are praised by the local public, fails to have the same effect in their English materials. SAR has a superior English production compared to other think tanks in the sample. Yet it has a predicament with the identity of its production in English. Namely, SAR leaders regularly publish their analysis as individual peer-reviewed articles in Western journals (e.g. *Journal of Democracy*) rather under their organizational brand.

The cited examples underscore three types of challenges think tanks face when publishing their research in English: First, there is a lack of rigorous scientific education and training;<sup>28</sup> Second, there are academic researchers who do not have the skills to translate their findings and recommendations into language understandable to those outside of expert circles; The last challenge involves the introduction of systematic quality control. Regrettably, despite reviewing some solid policy studies, only a few of the case studies meet the rigorous standards. Therefore this last challenge merits further attention.<sup>29</sup>

### *3. Systems of quality control*

According to a recent study, the absence of quality control does not seem to jeopardize the perception of quality by stakeholders in local markets (CRPM 2008). One possibility for such a response is that in the absence of better analysis providers, the work of think tanks is welcomed and taken at a face value (Krastev 2003). However, the situation changes when the same reports are presented at the international level and subjected to greater scrutiny. Out of the six examined think tanks, only SAR has a basic

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28 This also reflects the scarcity of young talent to be recruited by these organizations

29 The first too are part of the context and too big to be analyzed in this short paper. They deserve a separate study.

system for quality control<sup>30</sup> of their published materials. ERC has formally employed an internal quality control manager, but he does not vet the papers of senior researchers, which basically leaves half of the production unchecked. IPP does not have a standard protocol for the systematic reviewing of policy papers and methodologies. The other think tanks, if they have any control, employ an ad hoc system based on collegiality rather than on a set of professional standards.

At the regional level, PASOS,<sup>31</sup> the biggest network of think tanks in CEE, has identified the poor quality of its members' work as one of the reasons for their failure to inform European policy makers. The network recently launched a series of internal debates that should lead to the introduction of a "Seal of Excellence for Policy Centers." This quality control stamp was the most debated element in standards debates (Panel Discussion 2010). This leads us to an interesting conclusion: At the national level, it seems that the absence, or the presence of, systems of quality control have little impact on politicians and policy makers (who may not be competent enough to recognize quality).<sup>32</sup> At the European level, however, access is more difficult, and quality assurance enables think tanks to access top civil servants and politicians.

#### *4. Policy recommendations*

Policy recommendations are considered to be the "holy grail" of policy papers. The think tanks in the sample are praised for making concrete recommendations when compared to the rest of civil society (e.g. Hozic 2010). However, once evaluators probed deeper to isolate instances when the concrete recommendations by think tanks translated into policy measures or laws, the picture blurred. For example, "IVO's purpose within Slovak society is to promote ideas and induce 'deep thinking' on certain issues," (Blagescu 2007). Sometimes this is literally illustrated by the absence of recommendations in some of their reports. The organization sees itself more as a provider of knowledge and analysis, influencing the policy processes indirectly, rather than providing direct advice. In Azerbaijan, recommendations are built directly upon the evidence developed by the

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30 All SAR publications are vetted by two leaders with the occasional involvement of a board member as a peer reviewer.

31 PASOS stands for Policy Association for Open Society.

32 This could be comfortably stated for all countries outside the European Union. In the European Union, the quality of policymaking process has increased along with the competence of the policymakers (e.g. Estonia is an excellent example of a healthy political and policy process where the civil servants and the politicians are very competent.)

analysis of only a couple of reports. Most reports, however, “state recommendations in a highly compressed fashion leaving it up to the policy-maker to convert them to specific actions,” (Stryuk and Stobetskaya 2006). In Macedonia, where there is heavy political pressure on think tanks, the evaluation report finds instances of self-censorship: “It becomes quite obvious that the quest for ‘political neutrality’ may have taken Analytica to the extreme of avoiding politics at any cost” (2010:6).

From the macro-perspective of the three theoretical lenses, pluralism explains the actions of IPP. This think tank enhances its analytical savvy by using democratic tools (the Freedom of Information Act) to tease out additional data from state bodies. IVO, on the other hand strives to become an independent hub/depository of information and knowledge – a pole in the Slovak knowledge regime. The elite theory could be a good lens through which to understand the controversial insertion of quality control. At national level, the quality of policy studies is not a key factor for the impact the think tank makes on elites. However, at European level, this becomes a key criterion for entry. Due to their unique blend of academic and policy research, SAR is the best example a think tank’s successful entry into the regional and EU policy spheres.

### **Quality of communication and advocacy**

Independent think tanks have tended to perceive communications as an optional, marginal activity. However, the creation of a comprehensive annual communications strategy is becoming integral to the activity of any think tank. Every organization requires a communications strategy to maximize its work’s impact, but technological advancement and the perception that there is abundant information and analyses at policy makers’ disposal<sup>33</sup> complicate the task of choosing appropriate channels of communication.

The think tanks examined here have lagged in accepting this reality and failing to develop comprehensive communication strategies for their ideas and advocacy. With the exception of ERC, all other think tanks in this sample do not have an overall organizational communication strategy; instead they focus simply on communicating their projects’ results. This is not to say that they aren’t aware of such strategies, but most of their ef-

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<sup>33</sup> Even though this statement is correct for Western European democracies, even in a region such as the CEE where research and analysis is not so common, the number of providers and would-be providers of policy analysis is increasing.

forts look scattered and exclusive of larger plans. None of the think tanks except INEKO have successfully used new media and technology to establish innovative channels of communication with stakeholders and new constituencies.

Within this sample INEKO and SAR make the most elaborate efforts to communicate and advocate their recommendations related to specific research projects. For example, INEKO used its access to the business elite to deliver 20 presentations about pension reform benefits to Slovakia's largest companies (Blagescu 2006). INEKO also enticed Slovakian economic affairs journalists to the Slovak Press Watch— a blog designed to influence journalists' practices by improving their understanding of economic affairs. These two examples show INEKO's strength: approaching specific stakeholders and exerting influence via direct communication. Simultaneously, they also reveal the weaknesses of INEKO in areas where they cannot establish direct communication channels. For example, with EU policymakers in Brussels they have had little leverage and are unknown to European policy makers who could otherwise benefit from INEKO analyses.

SAR has taken a different approach. While advising the Romanian liberal political elite and becoming regular commentators to national and local media, they have nurtured a community of stakeholders in Brussels and other European capitals. SAR has achieved this position by associating its brand with the reputations of Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Sorin Ionita as prominent researchers and public figures. SAR has also built its profile via conscious product diversification including op-ed, newspaper, and peer-reviewed journal articles. While praised by many, this approach has also been criticized by those who believe that SAR strayed from the role of activist think tank to that of partisan advocate in the early 2000s (Nelson 2008).

IVO is regarded as an "intellectual den" (Blagescu 2006:8). In part this reputation has led them to become what Stone (2000:53) defines as an information and expertise clearinghouse. As such, they have assumed the passive role of analysts and observers regularly contacted by journalists for expert opinion, but rarely taking their own initiative. IVO has also remained faithful to traditional media and standard publishing formats, mainly books and lengthy reports, contributing to a shrinking audience. For example, over the past 13 years IVO has produced their annual flagship publication "The Global Report on Slovakia," but has failed to modernize their approach. With over 700 pages, this publication is an extremely valuable resource in keeping abreast with Slovakia's political and economic

developments. Yet the report's sheer size, its lack of shorter policy backgrounders, and the lack of author interviews made available as podcasts on IVO's web site,<sup>34</sup> make the publication unappealing to a majority of the policy-relevant audience.

The think tanks examined here reflect the trends and challenges of the wider think tanks population. A recent PASOS survey showed that only one in seven think tanks surveyed has a full-time communications professional; while only one in three think tanks attracts international media attention more than once or twice a year. That communication skills need to be built across the sector is made clear by the fact that only one in three think tank directors have received communications training.<sup>35</sup>

It becomes apparent that in terms of communication work, think tanks in this region are often doing too little too late. With two exceptions, the examined think tanks do very little planning at the outset of their research projects. Aside from not developing concrete communication tools and making critical choices in their approaches, think tanks often embark on new policy research projects without having a clear methodology for achieving their desired change. Sometimes this undermines their credibility more than the quality of their analyses, since it makes the impression that they have not considered structural obstacles and concrete strategies toward gaining key stakeholder support while achieving policy change.

The quality of communication matters differently under each of the theoretical frames discussed in chapter three. If think tanks would like to outclass the competition in pluralist societies, their analyses should be presented in the manner most appealing to their target audiences. As INEKO demonstrates, an organization can present excellent products domestically and still remain unnoticed in the more competitive international market. Analytica reveals even more weakness due to improper analyses of different audiences. Some of their products simply never reach the intended audience because Analytica has not utilized effective channels of communication and has been crowded out by competitors.

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34 Several Western think tanks have developed excellent communication channels by using new formats. For example: the European Council on Foreign Relations records short interviews with the authors of its policy briefs; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace posts the speeches from their conferences as podcasts to be downloaded individually or integrally; DEMOS-UK broadcasted their flagship lectures online thus increasing their audience tenfold. However none of these practices have made headway in Central and Eastern Europe.

35 The study was carried out in 2010 and encompassed 33 think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe (not limited to PASOS members).

Entrance to informal corridors and direct access to policymakers has been the key ‘communication tool’ in influencing national elites. Products exuding intellectual prowess and technical ability have been the main magnets for the international donors and policymakers. Combined with media savvy, IVO, INEKO and SAR built a reputation of ‘linkage elites.’<sup>36</sup> While successful with donors, this image had negative consequences on the public opinion about these organizations. Regardless how cooperative they were with other NGOs, their communication channels and styles led to general public perceiving them as elite think tanks. Finally, communication is harder to track under the knowledge regime since the quality of communication depends on the contextually from relationships, informal rules and social understandings of the organizations and actors involved in the creation and dissemination of knowledge. INEKO’s platform for monitoring of socio-economic reforms has managed to ‘translate’ some of the messages developed within their knowledge regime and successfully communicate them to the general public. This practice is however an exception to the rule of ‘unsuccessful transition of ideas’ between knowledge regimes and policymaking and production regimes.

## **Conclusion**

### **The role quality of think tanks within different contexts and need for improvement**

The previous chapter provided an overview of the evidence pertaining to the quality standards on research design, identification of problems, published materials, networking and communication and advocacy strategy. In each of these aspects, evidence was tested either against the RAND standards or RAPID models and then compared to the expectations set by each of the theoretical frames. This chapter will canvass the broad findings about the state of quality standards under each of the theoretical frames based on the collected evidence. Then, the chapter examines the questions posed at the beginning of this paper and concludes with a list of challenges that think tanks in CEE need to address in order to improve quality of their work.

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36 As defined by Ionita (2003) and discussed in Chapter 2.

### *1. Pluralism*

IPP and SAR Romania, by nurturing specific niches,<sup>37</sup> make a good use of the pluralist features of Romanian democratic system. While most of their analysis in the Romanian policymaking environment is appreciated and respected, the main distinguishing characteristics that lead to their popular success are outside the research domain – they are rather actions against the government. Both SAR and IPP have made strides to back up their dissent on some governmental policies with good policy products. The quality factor that seems missing in both organizations is a developed communication strategy targeted to particular constituencies.

On the contrary to the Romanian think tanks, Analytica's aspiration to become a policy voice from minority perspective has completely faded. As expected in the pluralist framework, their weak analysis and inappropriate messaging has been 'weeded out' by other more competitive think tanks and NGOs in the advocacy stakes. With the advance of new technology, social media and various possibilities for interaction on the internet, the pluralist field for policy advice is become leveled. Think tanks in this sample are lagging behind these developments. Their new communication strategies have to take into consideration these modern channels; otherwise these institutes would risk losing out to a more visible competition. The evidence confirms that quality of the policy products and their communication, as suggested in chapter 3, are decisive factors for the success of think tanks that operate in pluralist policymaking environment.

### *2. Elite theory*

The presented evidence and case studies point out an interesting duality about the role of quality when a think tank operates within the elites. At national level,<sup>38</sup> once a think tank is accepted by the elites, it seems that the quality of its work will not stand a big scrutiny until their reputation remains intact. ERC in Azerbaijan vis-à-vis the donor community and IVO in Slovakia in front of intellectual liberal-minded elite are good examples.<sup>39</sup> This is not to claim that the quality of their products is low, but

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37 IPP – strategic litigation and FoI Law to get data and prominence; SAR – Coalition of various stakeholders

38 I have to acknowledge that this conclusion is more relevant in Macedonia and Azerbaijan than in Slovakia and Romania, where the national elites have become increasingly competent and able to is more relevant

39 INEKO in Slovakia for example provides an example of other type: a high quality product and access to the elites. The necessity for professional respect is due to the economic professions. However, this observation cannot be extended to other think tanks in the region.

rather to ascertain that it is not the key criterion for being able to inform the particular elites. At the level of EU policymaking (EU integration, European Neighborhood Policy and other policies relevant for the work of the regional think tanks), the access could be achieved in various ways, but is maintained only by producing high quality relevant analysis.

SAR is probably the best example among the examined think tanks for pursuing successful strategy towards European policymakers. Unfortunately, this is a rare successful story among the think tanks in the region. As the PASOS network shows, access to European policy makers has always been considered important, but most of its member-organizations failed in gaining access to consistently provide policy advice to Brussels-based policymakers. While sufficient to entice national policy makers, the quality of presented analysis has been deemed insufficient to make an impression at the European market of ideas. To remedy this deficiency, this network of 40 member-organizations has started to develop ‘a seal of excellence for think tank quality’ aiming at improving the quality standards of its members. In conclusion, reputation still trumps quality of analysis as a key criterion for access to national elites; however at the level of European policy-making, the quality of CEE think tanks has to be leveled with those of their Western peers so that the newcomers from the East would stand a chance of access and success.

### *3. Knowledge regime*

The presented evidence shows that the Slovak and Romanian think tanks have become part of nascent national knowledge regimes. INEKO has created a specific knowledge regime related to economic knowledge and policy in Slovakia that has successfully counteracted the policymaking regime and made tangible influence on various economic policies. IVO has become a depository of knowledge, scholarly articles, books and expert literature and thus complemented, if not replaced, universities in Slovakia. IPP has become a reference point for collection and interpretation of data, a clearly acknowledge position within the scholarly and policymaking circles in Romania.

All these examples show think tanks as part or hubs of knowledge regimes that have produced new data or innovatively interpreted old data, have recommended policy and floated ideas that have affected the policy-making regime – exactly in line with expectations knowledge regime aspires to fulfill. However, it should be noted that while some policy change has been made, think tanks and the knowledge regimes they have contributed to are yet to become an important source of social innovation. Finally,



it is important to mention that this theoretical lens has its own limits and not all think tanks could be explained through it. In countries such as Azerbaijan and Macedonia, even if they had tried, think tanks would have probably failed to create anything similar to knowledge regimes. The intellectual and analytical scene alongside the state of policymaking and production regimes is too underdeveloped for accommodating such a development.

### **The quest for improved think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe: challenges ahead**

Ten years have passed since Krastev quipped “Central and East European think tanks might be described as public policy research institutes without research” (2000:290). This paper has shown that the appreciation of quality standards of research and ability to communicate these results largely depends on the frameworks in which think tanks operate. The quality of written production and the ability to stand out among the competition have been paramount for those think tanks that operate in pluralist environments. For think tanks operating within the national elites, it became apparent that once the access is secured, the quality of analysis could be mediocre as long as the organizational or personal reputation remains intact. Under knowledge regimes, the quality standards became a crucial tenet in the construction of the system: think tanks are expected to first design and develop and then aspire to achieve high quality of research for the pursuit of knowledge and policy impact alike. The analysis in this paper shows that some think tanks have advanced their research and cannot be accused today for the same ills as they were rightfully so by Krastev (2000) a decade ago. In the meantime think tanks have made contributions to reform processes and have yielded ‘a good return’ for the modest investments of their international (and rarely) local supporters and donors. Several of the think tanks analyzed in detail in this paper have become hubs for data analysis and evidence-based recommendations in their respective countries.

These positive developments, however, have not been systematic in all aspects of the think tank work and across the field of the 200-odd different think tanks in the region. Neither individual think tanks nor networks such as PASOS have determined a set of quality standards for the policy research and the dissemination of research results and recommendations. Some think tanks, as explained through the elite theory, have managed to enter the ‘corridors of power’ and as part of the elites provide advice to policymakers, but regrettably without backing it by compelling evidence. Their nice façade has been stripped down when think tanks endeavored to influence the EU policymaking using the same analysis and approach. Oth-

er think tanks have become contained by their achievements locally and have not put any effort into producing the same quality papers in English and thus failed to extend the influence of their research across borders. The list of weaknesses is probably topped by an immediate need for addressing the way how most think tanks communicate their results.

These drawbacks are repairable. “Think tanks are perpetually squeezed between the Scylla of quasi-democratic governments and the Charybdis of overbearing donors.” (Hozic 2010:18). One of the challenges they need to address in their work is identify the problems and needs beyond the limits posed by governments and donors. In a region as politicized as Central and Eastern Europe, politically and policy relevant research means rich ethnography, focus on localities or sectors which are indicative of broader trends in politics or political economy; there are plenty of opportunities and swathes of under-researched subjects. The region, after all, knows very little about itself. In order to do so, think tanks need to go beyond their usual practices and look for new methods of data collection and ways how to interpret it; search for new theories of change and have to be daring in suggesting models for social innovation and change. Setting standard of quality in their work is one step in the right direction. While far from being comprehensive models, RAND standards and RAPID model could be a first stop in the quest of PASOS for ‘a seal of excellence for think tanks’. The practice of policymaking advances in parallel with the ability of researchers to influence it. The think tanks inevitably will have to secure high quality of their research and successful communication of their policy ideas to stand a chance of impact within all three political contexts analyzed in this paper.

## Abstract

The think tanks of Central and Eastern Europe have been often praised for their ability to influence governmental policies and less so to analyze various policy alternatives. The literature to date has looked in the impact of these organizations assuming that it is backed by a quality of research. This paper will show that the appreciation of quality standards for policy research and ability to communicate policy recommendations largely depends on the frameworks in which think tanks operate. Analyzing the work of six think tanks in four countries through the lenses of pluralist democracy, elite theory and knowledge regimes, this paper identifies the need for individual think tanks or their networks to develop a set of quality standards for the policy research and the dissemination of their research results and recommendations.

## Резиме

Тинк тенковите во Централна и Источна Европа често добиваат пофалби за нивната способност да влијаат на владините политики, а помалку да анализираат различни политички алтернативи. Досегашната литература го разгледуваше влијанието на овие организации под претпоставка дека тоа е поддржано од квалитетни истражувања. Овој труд ќе покаже дека почитувањето на стандарди за квалитет во истражувањата на применети политки и способноста да ги комуницираат своите препораки во голема мера зависи од рамките во кои тинк тенковите функционираат. Анализирајќи ја работата на шест тинк тенкови во четири држави низ призмата на плуралистичката демократија, теоријата на елити и режимите на знаење, овој труд ја идентификува потребата поединечни тинк тенкови или нивни мрежи да развијат стандарди за квалитет на истражувањата на применети политки и на дисеминацијата на резултатите и препораките од нивните истражувања.

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