

## Panel I: How regulatory scrutiny helps

Panel moderator Nils Bjorksten of the RSB opened the session by presenting RSB scrutiny as one intermediate step in informing policymakers' deliberations. The RSB plays a dual role. It provides a neutral assessment of the quality of Commission impact assessments/evaluations, and it coaches Commission services to deliver higher quality reports. The panel presented upstream and downstream perspectives on how this process has worked.

Commission Deputy Director General John Berrigan described a cultural change taking place in Commission services. He found RSB scrutiny to be a valuable aid in the policymaking process that has added good discipline. He praised RSB openness to upstream discussions with teams some weeks before reviewing draft reports.

John considered that planning and political validation should better take into account the production process of impact assessments. At times, tight time constraints have gotten in the way of collecting and analysing data and stakeholder feedback.

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) Director General Anthony Teasdale described recent EPRS findings of rising quality and consistency in Commission impact assessments. Problem definitions were better, reports examined a wider range of options and were more upfront about impact assessment limitations. Anthony expressed concern that impact assessments had sometimes been poorly aligned with associated legal proposals. Another area of concern was the proportion of legal proposals without impact assessments. There is also time pressure in Parliament. A large fraction of legislative proposals are bunched towards the end of a Commission mandate.

Deputy Secretary General Kai Härmand of the Estonian Ministry of Justice provided a Member country perspective. She called for clearer problem analysis by member state. This would make it easier to justify taking appropriate action in countries where the scale of the problem appears small or the causes of a problem may differ from elsewhere. It would also be helpful to do more to investigate digital solutions while also taking an approach that is technologically neutral and permits experimentation.

The panel unanimously agreed that RSB scrutiny has led to higher quality final reports, and that policymakers increasingly pay attention to impact assessments and RSB opinions. That said, many impact assessments seem to have suffered from time pressure. They have arguably also overemphasised economic impacts and underplayed economic and social impacts.