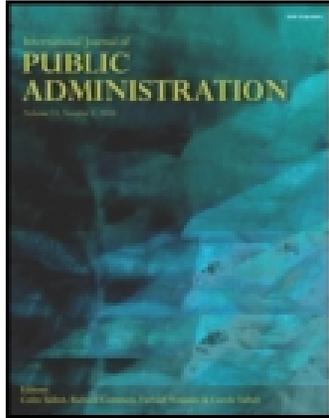


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Athanassios Gouglas<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Public Governance Institute, Faculty of Social Sciences, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

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# Greek Ministerial Advisers: Policy Managers, Not Experts?

Athanassios Gouglas

*Public Governance Institute, Faculty of Social Sciences, KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium*

This article investigates the policy-making role of Greek ministerial advisers. This is achieved by classifying those actors using typologies developed in empirical studies of political staff in Westminster systems, according to policy roles, nature and dimension of policy advice activities, and the policy cycle. This small N comparative study locates the Greek ministerial adviser in the ministerial cabinet tradition and argues that this agent fits best the role of a coordinator and policy manager, who vertically steers policy and networks with other political staff across a fragmented executive core government.

Keywords: political advisers, policy advisers, ministerial cabinet systems, policy advisory systems, ministerial advisers

## INTRODUCTION

Scholarly attention concerning ministerial advisers has grown steadily in recent years. This is hardly surprising, given their embedded but controversial role. According to Shaw and Eichbaum (2013), the dominant orientation of research to date has been empirical, focusing primarily on issues of accountability, intra-executive relations, and classification of political and policy roles. While this is most definitely the case of research on ministerial advisers in the Westminster tradition, empirical investigation of ministerial advisers in ministerial cabinet systems lags further behind. The literature focuses on the cabinet structure, as well as on politico-administrative relations (Brans & Steen, 2006; Carcassonne, 1986; Di Mascio & Natalini, 2013; Gaffney, 1991; Göransson, 2008; James, 2007; Quermonne, 1994; Schrameck, 1995; Schreurs, Vandenabeele, Steen, & Brans, 2010; Sotiropoulos, 1996, 1999, 2007; Suleiman, 1974; Vancoppenolle, 2011). However, crucial areas such as advisers' policy-making roles and involvement in the policy process, as well as accountability, remain understudied, with certain country cases featuring very superficially in the literature.

The case of Greece is illustrative. Review of the existing material on Greek ministerial advisers reveals that the

particular field of study has been seriously under-researched. Despite public concern over their actions, little attention has been paid thus far as to the roles, background, expertise, and policy activities these actors perform as a collective. What we know, we learn primarily from studies on the transformation of the top civil service (Tsekos, 1986), from studies on the evolution of politico-administrative relations (Sotiropoulos, 1996, 1999, 2007; Spanou, 2001, 2008), and to a lesser extent from studies on the roles of experts in various specific policy fields (Ladi, 2005, 2007).

In view of this, the question is raised as to the role of Greek ministerial advisers in policy-making. Our aim is to investigate the policy-making role of those actors. Our overall objective is to add a new empirical case in the literature. We achieve this in two ways. First, we contextualize advisers' work by describing the Greek ministerial cabinet system and presenting similarities and differences with other such systems. Second, we assess and classify Greek ministerial advisers' involvement in policy-making, using existing typologies from the relevant literature.

We designed a single-country, small N, comparative study, collecting data through a survey questionnaire on 28 ministerial advisers from two ministerial cabinets under two different Ministers for Development in two separate office terms in the period 2010 to 2013. In order to triangulate our data, we also interviewed the people advisers mostly frequently work with: the two ministers and four senior civil servants.

We present our material as follows. First, we describe the institutional habitat in which advisers operate: the ministerial

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Correspondence should be addressed to Athanassios Gouglas, KU Leuven Public Management Institute, KU Leuven, Parkstraat 45 BUS 3609, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. E-mail: [athanassios.gouglas@soc.kuleuven.be](mailto:athanassios.gouglas@soc.kuleuven.be)

cabinet. Second, we present the main findings of our survey and construct our typologies. Third, we conclude with revisiting our research question and providing an overview, as well as a discussion of our findings, also providing leads for future research.

## THEORY AND METHODS

### Theory

Much like numerous researchers of the adviser phenomenon in the Westminster tradition have done, we, too, seek to classify the different policy roles that ministerial advisers play in the policy process. The use of classifications allows us to escape the fallacy of a non-comparative, “atheoretical” study. Classification is a “necessary component of systematic comparison,” though, of a higher level than contextual description, since “it seeks to group many separate descriptive entities into simpler categories” (Landman, 2003, pp. 4, 34). In the present study, we classify advisers according to two typologies and the policy cycle.

#### *Policy cycle stage*

Linking advisers’ activities to the policy cycle stages is a way to achieve a first systematic interpretation of their policy advice activity. Where in the cycle are they most active? In the present study, we use the five stages of the policy cycle presented by Howlett, Ramesh, and Perl (2009): (i) agenda setting, (ii) policy formulation, (iii) decision-making, (iv) policy implementation, and (v) policy evaluation. However, in order to go deeper into what advisers actually do, we need to gather relevant data and construct typologies.

#### *Policy advisory roles*

According to Connaughton (2010a, 2010b), there are four types of advisers based on policy advisory roles. Type I is the expert who is a specialist, is politically passive, and works on a specific policy field using knowledge, the impact of his work being expertise. Type II is the partisan who is responsive to the minister’s mission, highly political in all dimensions, and closely associated with the minister, his impact being political dominance. Type III is the coordinator who is a generalist, politically variable (active or passive), provides oversight to the government program, and acts as a fixer, his impact being management. Type IV is the minder who is a generalist but also responsive to the minister. Unlike the partisan who is a “party apparatchik,” the minder is the minister’s bodyguard (Connaughton, 2010a, p. 63) who is politically active and who “looks for issues potentially harmful” to the minister (Connaughton, 2010b, pp. 351–352). The impact of the minder is mutuality.

#### *Dimension and nature of advice*

Craft (2011, p. 16), in what was an early but interesting attempt at classifying adviser policy-making activities, has argued that one important “step towards greater specificity” would come from classifying political advisers according to substantive/procedural lines. The substantive dimension refers to the nature of policy advice activity, and it may be discerned between technical/administrative and partisan advice. Administrative advice refers to “traditional rational, technical and evidence based policy making” and partisan refers to “electoral, media and public relations aspects” of advice (Craft, 2011, pp. 16–17). The procedural dimension refers to the actual dimension of policy advice activity. This can be vertical, within the department, referring to a traditional hierarchical command and control activity. Or it can be horizontal, more cross-departmental, and collaborative, referring to the steering type of activities. Based on the substantive/procedural dimensions, policy advice-giving activities were classified into four main categories (Craft, 2011):

- Type I: the administrative/horizontal type refers to advice that is technical in nature and across departments and across ministries in dimension
- Type II: the partisan/horizontal type refers to advice that is political in nature and across departments and across ministries in dimension
- Type III: the administrative/vertical type refers to advice that is technical in nature and intradepartmental in dimension
- Type IV: the partisan/vertical refers to advice that is political in nature and intradepartmental in dimension

Beyond typologies, we also need to pay attention to institutional context. In contrast to Westminster systems for which the above typologies were created, Greek ministerial advisers work in ministerial cabinets. As James (2007) has argued, it is not possible to treat advisers in isolation. Their work is conditioned by the functions of the civil servants alongside whom they work. Three models have been suggested (James, 2007; OECD, 2011): (a) advisers work alongside a neutral civil service (Westminster systems, Sweden, Denmark and The Netherlands), (b) advisers work alongside a civil service, where the bureaucracy’s top tier is also politicized (Spain and the Slovak Republic), and (c) advisers work in ministerial cabinets (France, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, increasingly Spain, and the European Commission).

### Methods

We designed our study as a single-country, small N, comparative study. It is comparative because it uses classifications,

which are the necessary components for systematic comparison, seeking in this way to make larger inferences as to the policy-making activities of ministerial advisers in ministerial cabinet systems (Landman, 2003). As such, single-country studies like the present in hand may be “considered as part of the larger comparative public administration research enterprise” (Brans, 2003, p. 425).

Our country here is Greece and the period under investigation 2010 to 2013. The target population is Greek ministerial advisers in civilian non-corps organized ministries, employed since 2010. As there is no sampling frame for this population and for reasons of convenience, we applied non-random purposive sampling. We focus on advisers employed at the Ministry for Development, which in the period under investigation merged with three other ministries, creating a mammoth ministry of the real economy. Given that from October 2009 to June 2012, there have been five different Ministers for Development and four different governments, from which one is a technocratic and one is a caretaker, we focus on the cabinet advisers under two political, non-technocrat ministers, whose appointment was not the result of pre-electoral emergency.

We collected data through a 28-item survey with both forced-choice and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was distributed in the beginning of February 2013 to advisers, not administrative support staff, in two ministerial cabinets headed by two different Ministers for Development, who both served at different intervals during 2010–2013. In the first cabinet, comprising 63 staff, the questionnaire was distributed directly to 44 advisers through an e-mail list provided by the chief of cabinet. In the second cabinet, the actual number of which was not disclosed (official maximum 58), the questionnaire was distributed via the chief of cabinet. Overall, we received completed questionnaires from 28 advisers ( $n = 28$ ). We received 23 out of 44 responses in the first cabinet and 5 out of 21 in the second, the response rate being 52% and 23.8%, respectively. The response rate in the second cabinet was lower than expected, as is the number of advisers to which the questionnaire was distributed. The advisers surveyed were predominantly male (67.8%), in their thirties (57.1%), with a postgraduate level of education at master level (67.8%) and drawn from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds. A quarter of the interviewed advisers stated they have already been working as political advisers before moving to the ministry, while a little less than half stated they had experience from working in a ministerial cabinet in the past. In order to take as many perspectives as possible on the phenomenon under investigation, we also conducted six semi-structured interviews with the officials with whom advisers work most closely: the two ministers and four senior civil servants at the level of director general and director. The interviews from which we took detailed notes took place in February 2013 in Athens, Greece.

## THE MINISTERIAL CABINET: THE INSTITUTIONAL HABITAT OF THE GREEK ADVISER

The Political Offices of the Minister in Greece (hereafter ministerial cabinets) form part of a core executive government that has been described as fragmented and suffering from a “deep rooted problem of coordination,” with the prime minister seen as “*primus solus* in a setting of PM centrism,” individual ministers enjoying a considerable degree of operational independence built on the imperative of their signature, and top civil servants being passive, “mere observers of the policy process” (Featherstone & Papadimitriou, 2013, pp. 524, 525). Keeping this setting in mind, we proceed with locating Greek ministerial advisers within their institutional habitat, the ministerial cabinet.

### Institutionalization

Unlike the older and most representative ministerial cabinet systems of France and Belgium, which go back in the nineteenth century, the Greek one was developed only recently, in the 1980s. However, much like France during the Restoration, and Belgium, which tried to emancipate its political class from monarchical influence, the Greek system was developed under particular political and historical circumstances, in the 1980s, following the first change of government in the period after the restoration of democracy in 1974 (Metapolitefsi). The new government of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) increased the number of advisers, reorganized political staffs, and established ministerial cabinets along French lines. The aim was to circumscribe the administrative hierarchy and establish political control over what was perceived as a hostile senior civil service to the aspirations of the new government (Sotiropoulos, 1999, 2007; Tsekos, 1986). As with France and Belgium, the Greek ministerial cabinet system developed on a body of legal provisions that go beyond minimal regulation found in Westminster systems. These are codified in Presidential Decree 63/2005 (2005), which regulates organization, staff status, qualifications, employment framework, and wider roles. However, as is also the case with the French *Décrets* (i.e., amended Décret n°48-1233 du 28 Juillet 1948) “legislative restrictions are frequently overridden by politically accepted norms of behaviour” (James, 2007, p. 9).

### Adviser's Status

The designation special adviser (*Eidikos Symvoulos*) refers to a specific category of ministerial cabinet staff that unlike most of their colleagues is appointed to a special position and gets paid at the highest possible pay scale. However, members of the cabinet, such as special associates (*Eidiko*

*Synergates*), scientific associates (*Epistimonikoi Synergates*), revocable fixed-termers (*Metaklitoi*), and seconded civil servants (*Apospasmnoi*), can be considered advisers so long as they are assigned to perform “advisory” tasks by the minister and not “administrative support” duties. This is confirmed by our research findings, whereby only five of our advisers have the legal status of special adviser, three enjoy that of special associate, while the majority are scientific associates (seven), fixed-termers (six), and seconded civil servants (seven). We observe a similar divide between the *Membres de Cabinet* and the *Fonctions Support* in French ministerial cabinets. While not rooted into law, the divide figures in official state documents like the *Annex Au Projet De Loi De Finances pour 2013: Personnels Affectés dans les Cabinets Ministeriels* (Ministère de l'économie et des finances, 2013).

### Cabinet Size

An important characteristic shared with all cabinet systems is big cabinet size. PD 63/2005 envisages cabinets of minimum 24, 28, and 44 staff according to ministry size and competencies. Size can vary, though, as the law provides for an open number of staff according to the minister's needs. Research on the Ministry for Development, one of the biggest ministries in the country, which resulted from the merging of three former ministries, revealed that from 2009 to 2012, as the ministry grew, the official cabinet size increased from 33 in 2009 to 40 in 2011 to 58 in 2012. Yet, our research showed that the actual cabinet numbers were even bigger, with one of the cabinets numbering 63 staff, out of which 44 performed advisory duties. This, however, is a fraction of the French cabinets. In 2012, a comparable real economy ministry like the *Ministere d'Écologie, développement durable et énergie* counted 204 staff, out of which there were 28 advisers and 176 administrative support staff, despite the official limit set at 15 (Ministère de l'économie et des finances, 2013). Despite functioning on a similar logic, in respect of size, Greek ministerial cabinets are arguably more comparable to Belgium before the Copernicus reform, where advisers reached up to 100 members, and Belgium today, where a comparable real economy ministry like the *Minister de l'Économie, des Consommateurs et de la Mer du Nord* employs 33 staff (Portail Belgium, 2014).

### Relations with the Civil Service

After a confrontational start in the 1980s, when some civil servants resorted to the supreme administrative court in order to keep political advisers at bay, the 1990s saw a new form of coexistence among politicians, political staff, and civil servants (Sotiropoulos, 2007). Spanou (2001, pp. 109–110) coined this a “symbiotic relationship,” where top civil servants offer political submission and wide policy discretion to the political executive in

return for taking the civil service's view into account, especially in personnel and management issues. Arguably, this relationship has somewhat evolved during the last two decades (Sotiropoulos, 2007).

On the positive side, the role of certain experienced civil servants has been strengthened, while the law made it explicit that advisers shall not have executive powers and they cannot command the administration. Some civil servants see even benefits to advisers.

Of course they are useful. The minister needs advisers with specific knowledge and expertise, for example in European Affairs. Can he take this knowledge from the civil servants? Not always. [Respondent 4]

Without co-administering the state and without co-deciding with the administration, the adviser enriches the policy process bringing in new ideas and views. [Respondent 1]

However, as Sotiropoulos (2007) rightly pointed, despite the political elite being increasingly forced to take the views of the civil service into consideration, it has never really lost the upper hand. Cabinets still dominate the policy process in Greece, working as a “mini-public administration.”

Given the particular problematic conditions of the Greek public administration advisers play a bigger role than in other European member states . . . They form a mini-public administration doing the job that the normal public administration cannot do. [Minister B, own translation]

The situation is comparable to Belgium, where the new ministerial cabinet rules, after the Copernicus reform, were implemented in such a way as to “re-invent mechanisms of political control over the administration” (Brans & Steen, 2006, pp. 77–78).

In addition, advisers appear to issue instructions or manage civil servants, especially in view of the timely completion of policy projects. About 32.1% of the respondents in our sample of advisers claimed to be managing civil servants as one of their primary job functions. This is consistent with a major characteristic of ministerial cabinet systems, according to which advisers interfere in the chain of command issuing instructions and giving orders, exposing “civil servants to pressures to breach their political neutrality” (James, 2007, p. 9).

As a result, despite perceived benefits, advisers are also sources of politico-administrative friction.

The role of the adviser is controversial and questionable . . . Why does a minister need advisers? The minister must have a personal opinion and own view on policy. There have been so many negative consequences from advisers' wrong advice. [Respondent 2]

Friction though, while a bigger danger in ministerial cabinet systems, is not always the only game in town. It has been

argued that in France, the presence of high numbers of very highly qualified senior civil servants from *École Nationale d'Administration* (ENA) in the ranks of ministerial cabinets, along with an institutionalized culture of accepted politicization at the top, is creating a constant politico-administrative “osmosis” that very often leads to a “bureaucratization of the Cabinets” and “the presence of a technocracy at the top of the state apparatus” (Göransson, 2008, p. 18). This is consistent with Peters’ (1997) observation that France may be positioned in the village life type of politico-administrative relations. In our sample of advisers, only one came from the National School of Public Administration, the Greek ENA.

### INSIDE THE CABINET: ADVISERS AND POLICY-MAKING

In the following section, we are going to indulge into the details of the advisers’ involvement in policy-making. We start by using the stages heuristic to locate advisers’ activities to the discrete stages of the policy cycle. We then proceed with classifying advisers according to Connaughton’s (2010a, 2010b) policy-making roles and Craft’s (2011) dimension and nature of advice. We conclude by deriving a new typology using substantive and procedural criteria in relation to policy roles and activities.

#### Advisers and the Policy Cycle

Advisers were asked to locate the exact policy cycle stage where they thought their activities were most important. Greek ministerial advisers see themselves as having extremely important roles in the front end of policy-making, with 74.9% considering their role in recognition of problems and agenda setting important and very important, followed by 71.4% in proposing solutions and formulating policies. The results confirm Sotiropoulos’ (2007) observation that ministerial advisers in Greece enjoy extensive political leverage to set agendas and formulate policies. An important finding, in line with what we would expect to find in ministerial cabinet systems, is that a chunky 35.6% appears to have what Howlett et al. (2009, p. 140) described as “voice” in the decision-making process. Moreover, 60.6% of advisers in our sample appear to have an important or very important role in putting solutions into effect, while 53.5% seem to play an important or very important role in monitoring results.

The above results show that beyond dominating the front end of the policy process, Greek ministerial advisers see themselves as having important roles in all stages of the policy cycle. This is consistent with a central feature of ministerial cabinets in France and Belgium, while also Spain is seen as moving along this path (James, 2007). Cabinets enjoy a central role in the “design, formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policy” (James, 2007, p. 17). Moreover, this observation is also consistent with the past

findings, according to which ministerial cabinets in Greece tend to play a central role in policy-making (Spanou, 2008).

#### A Classification of Policy Advisory Roles

We now proceed in classifying Greek ministerial advisers according to four policy advisory roles suggested by Connaughton (2010a, 2010b): the expert, the partisan, the coordinator, and the minder. We achieve this by using collected data on policy expertise, primary job functions, frequency of activities undertaken, and frequency of tasks performed in order to describe the main characteristics of advisers’ roles, suggested as important by the typology: profile (specialist, generalist, or responsive), politics (active, passive, or variable), communication (technical, political, or both), policy-making (knowledge, politics, or fixer), and impact (expertise, political dominance, management, or mutuality). Where appropriate, we triangulate our data with interview material.

##### *Profile*

Is the profile of the Greek ministerial adviser that of a specialist, a generalist, or is it simply responsive to the minister’s mission? As the typology suggests, a specialist is a qualified expert in a specific policy field relevant to a ministry’s competencies, not a technical expert in a certain domain of competence. In view of this, we asked advisers to describe whether, according to the work they do in the ministry, they felt they fit in more appropriately to the role of a generalist or that of a specialist. Based on their answers, specialists and generalists seem to be balanced, with specialists (15) marginally overtaking the generalists (13). In order to better understand advisers’ self-perception as specialists, we asked them to define their exact area of specialization. From the advisers who stated they are specialists the majority, six (40%), stated that they specialize in a ministry portfolio, four (26.6%) in law, and another four in media and communication, while only one (6.6%) stated s/he specializes in generic public policy. Furthermore, in the open comment section of the stated question, five (33.3%) advisers stated that they specialize in a second field too. Two of them described a ministry portfolio-related specialization. What the above results tell us in relation to the real level of policy expertise is that within the sample of 28 advisers, there are only eight experts (28.57%) in some particular departmental policy-related field. Thus, while our advisers appear to be technical experts in various areas of competence, their work profile in relation to the ministry’s competencies can be argued to fit that of a generalist.

##### *Policy making*

Is the Greek ministerial adviser a fixer, facilitating the oversight of the ministry’s agenda? Does the policy role of this actor rely on knowledge or politics? Or is the Greek

ministerial adviser policy passive, simply minding the minister? In order to understand this, we asked advisers to point to their primary job functions, as well as state the time spent in certain activities and tasks. The data in hand reveal beyond doubt that Greek ministerial advisers are highly policy active.

In order to shed light into advisers' policy-making activities, we begun by asking them to point to one or more functions, which they considered as their primary job functions. As advisers usually carry out multiple and overlapping functions, the objective here was to reflect this very reality. "Administering projects and project management" was selected as a primary job function for 71.4% of respondents. Following this, 42.8% selected formulating policy measures, 39.2% providing strategic advice, 35.7% providing advice on political considerations, and 32.1% coordinating relations with stakeholders, while an equally high percentage selected management and administration of civil servants as their primary job functions. Finally, 28.5% appear to share communication and media as their primary job function. We observe here that what Greek ministerial advisers do ranges from managing projects, coordinating relations with stakeholders, providing strategic, and communication advice to indulging with the nuts and bolts of policy. This is in line with the observation of Schreurs et al. (2010, p. 19) according to which ministerial cabinet advisers, beyond being experts, also play an "important role in developing policy strategy, coordinating relations with stakeholders, media and interest groups." However, the finding of importance here is that the primary job function most selected by the majority of advisers is "administering and managing projects" (see Table 1).

Following primary job functions, we asked advisers to indicate the frequency of performing certain activities and then tasks. According to their answers, 50% of the advisers in our sample appear to coordinate and manage policy work, the cabinet staff, or civil servants on a daily basis. A smaller, yet significant percentage, 35.7%, appears to perform policy technicalities such as drafting or processing laws, researching, and formulating solutions on a daily basis (see Table 2).

The data on frequency of tasks performed also show that Greek ministerial advisers appear to be focused on steering

TABLE 1  
Advisers' Primary Job Functions (%),  $n = 28$

<i>Job function</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
Giving strategic advice	11 (39.2)
Coordinating relations with stakeholders	9 (32.1)
Advising on political considerations	10 (35.57)
Providing media and communication advice	8 (28.5)
Formulating policy measures	12 (42.8)
Managing projects	20 (71.4)
Managing civil servants	9 (32.1)
No answer	1 (3.57)

tasks, as well as the nuts and bolts of policy-making within their department. As Connaughton (2010b, p. 358) argues "these are tasks that the ministers would do themselves if they had the time or would not be inclined to delegate to an apolitical civil servant." On the steering side, advisers appear to frequently and very frequently meet departmental officials (78.5%), as well as attend meetings with civil servants (67.8%), ask officials to provide memos or advice (67.8%), monitor the implementation of policy (35.67%), and meet advisers from other ministerial cabinets (74.75%). On the more technical policy side, advisers appear to read and comment on departmental advice (64.2%), analyze and evaluate implemented policy (50%), prepare policy files and memos (42.77%), and produce evidence and facts in support of policy-making (42.8%).

Our data reveal that there is definitely a strong technical policy side to the work of the Greek ministerial adviser, which should not be downplayed. However, the policy steering dimension of those actors' work is arguably stronger. Interviews with the two ministers and the senior civil servants revealed this very reality.

According to Minister A:

The adviser is a gear, a timing belt in the government machine. His basic function is policy acceleration, monitoring and supervision. He is neither an agenda setter, nor a policy formulator. [Own translation]

Referring to his expectations from advisers, Minister B stated:

TABLE 2  
Frequency of Activities Undertaken by Advisers (%),  $n = 28$

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>A couple of times per year</i>	<i>Once a month</i>	<i>Once a week</i>	<i>Every day</i>
Policy technicalities (drafting or processing laws, researching, formulating solutions etc.)	6 (21.4)	2 (7.1)	1 (3.57)	5 (17.8)	10 (35.7)
Coordination and management (of policy work, the cabinet staff, civil servants)	2 (7.1)	2 (7.1)	1 (3.57)	6 (21.4)	14 (50)
Politics (party, MPs, minister's electoral district, networking)	7 (25)	7 (25)	4 (14.3)	5 (17.8)	2 (7.1)
Media and communication	5 (17.8)	6 (21.4)	3 (10.7)	3 (10.7)	9 (32.1)

I want advisers to monitor the development of policy in a particular field. I want them to provide input and then monitor the evolution of policy. Ideally they should be able to formulate policy too, but in this, the role they can play here depends on their individual capabilities and knowledge. [Own translation]

The importance of policy steering has sprung up in one of our interviews with top civil servants. According to respondent 3:

Advisers are involved in the implementation of policy too. Whereby implementation means supervision, timeline, project management, monitoring of deadlines. [Own translation]

Not disregarding their involvement with technical policy tasks, we can safely conclude at this point that advisers in our sample are “fixers,” who mend, monitor policy, and intervene (Connaughton, 2010b, p. 365).

### *Politics*

Is the Greek ministerial adviser’s political role active, passive, or variable? The questions asked above on primary job functions, as well as on the frequency of time spent in differing activities and tasks, contain data on advisers’ political role too. Based on this, we argue that the Greek ministerial adviser’s political role is variable.

To begin with, 35.7% of advisers appear to provide advice on political considerations as one of their primary job functions. However, what is impressive is how little time Greek ministerial advisers seem to spend in overt political activities, with only 7.1% stating that they do this on a daily basis. In addition, the time spent on overt political tasks shows that the majority never or rarely maintain relations with the electoral district of the minister (67.8%), or the grassroots support of the minister (85.7%), while they also never or rarely meet with party officials (78.57%) or with Members of Parliament (64.2%). While this is not the case with the Irish advisers (Connaughton, 2010b), it appears to be the case with those in New Zealand (Eichbaum & Shaw, 2007). More importantly, the above results are puzzling, given the politicized nature of ministerial cabinets, as well as the fact that 35.7% of our sample’s advisers provide advice on political considerations.

Is the Greek ministerial adviser apolitical? The data reveal that s/he is definitely non-partisan in the sense of being a “party apparatchik.” We may at this point suggest an explanation. “Advice on political considerations” is rightly understood by advisers of our sample as advice related to the public interest aspects of policy-making. On the contrary, politics in the above-mentioned question refers to party politics and the political executive’s electoral fortune, which in this respect relates to partisan politics. In Greece, overt political work of the partisan type, for example elections, maintaining support for the minister and relations with the

party, is mainly outsourced to the political-electoral office (*Vouleftiko Grafείο*) that the minister maintains as a Member of Parliament. This office is staffed under a different statutory framework and follows different political needs. To illustrate this point a bit further, it is often the case that the two offices (the ministerial cabinet and the political office of the member of parliament, both belonging to the same politician) antagonize each other, at times even exchanging criticisms for being apolitical technocrats or over-politicized party partisans, respectively. It is only at times close to an election that the cabinet staff may reorientate their focus to more partisan tasks.

Despite not being overtly partisan, though, Greek ministerial advisers, who advice on political considerations (35.7%), do also seem to perform certain political tasks. About 32.1% state that they frequently and very frequently represent the minister in departmental meetings. About 28.57% raise new policy initiatives with the minister, 21.4% receive external delegations on the minister’s behalf, and 28.4% broker meetings with interest groups. However, as we previously saw in relation to their policy-making roles and will analyze in respect of their communication ones, the main political roles of the interviewed advisers are confined within policy steering and communication functions and tasks, such as conveying the minister’s wishes, meeting departmental officials, and advisers from other ministries.

### *Communication*

The question then is raised, whether the communication role of the Greek ministerial adviser reflects political or technical characteristics, or maybe both? Advisers’ answers on primary job functions and the time spent on tasks show that the way those actors communicate is policy focused involving both technical and political content considerations. On the more political side, we already saw advisers’ role in directly managing civil servants as part of their primary job function (32.1%). Additionally, most advisers appear to convey or clarify the minister’s wishes (57.1%), meet departmental officials (78.5%) to ensure that policy remains on track, as well as meet advisers from other ministerial cabinets (74.75%) in order to deal with cross-cutting issues that transcend the ministry’s boundaries. A smaller yet significant number of advisers appear to be involved in writing press statements (32.1%) and speeches (21.3%). On the more technical side, advisers appear to frequently and very frequently ask officials to provide memos or advice (67.8%) and attend meetings with civil servants (67.8%) to talk about the nuts and bolts of policy, while as we saw when analyzing their policy-making role they spend time reading and commenting on official departmental advice (64.2%).

### *Impact*

In the end, we may argue that the impact of the adviser of our sample is primarily on management, rather than expertise,

PROFILE	POLITICAL	COMMUNICATE	POLICY-MAKING	IMPACT	ROLE
Generalist	Variable	Both political and technical	Fixer	Management	Coordinator

FIGURE 1 Classification of Greek ministerial adviser according to policy role.

Policy advice ↑ Policy formulation implementation ↓ steering? POLICY STEERING	EXPERT	PARTISAN
	Greek Ministerial Advisers	MINDER
COORDINATOR		
Technical/management ← Communication → Political BOTH verging slightly toward technical/managerial		

FIGURE 2 Classification of Greek ministerial adviser according to policy role.

political dominance, or mutuality. Advisers in our sample fit the picture of fixers within the policy-making process, who are not overtly partisan, but are politically aware, concentrating primarily on managing the ministry’s program and ensuring that policy output remains on track.

In Figure 1 we can see a summary of the characteristics of adviser roles. It is evident that the Greek ministerial adviser fits best in the coordinator type.

Figure 2 depicts the positioning of the Greek ministerial adviser along the two axes of Connaughton’s (2010b) typology matrix.

**A Classification of Policy Advice Activity**

Following the suggestion of Craft (2011, p. 14), “a further step towards greater specificity” may be taken by examining the nature and dimension of policy advice along substantive (administrative-partisan) and procedural (vertical-horizontal) lines.

*Nature of advice—substantive*

Is the Greek ministerial adviser’s policy-giving activities partisan or technical/administrative?

Remapping the above collected data along the new classification needs, we see that Greek ministerial advisers appear not be involved in any significant overt political partisan activities, given that these are mainly the task of the ministers’ *Vouleftiko Grafeio*. However, they do not fall within the technical/administrative category either. Despite

an important technical aspect to their policy work that should not be downplayed, their policy role does not fit the rational, evidence-based policy-making contributions that this typology associates with technical/administrative advice-giving activities. The data in hand tell us that the Greek ministerial advisers’ policy-making activities comprise important technical elements, but are predominantly of the steering nature. As a result, the nature of advice is not adequately captured by this typology.

*Dimension of advice—procedural*

Moving now to the dimension of policy advice, we may argue that Greek ministerial advisers work mainly along a vertical dimension. Advice giving appears to focus more on intradepartmental command and control type of activities, rather than those of a horizontal steering nature. The vertical focus of their work is reflected mainly in the time spent meeting with departmental officials, asking officials to provide memos or advice, attending meetings with civil service (CS), and conveying/clarifying minister’s wishes (see Table 3).

This finding is then strengthened by the much less time spent liaising and networking with political stakeholders (who never or rarely meet party officials and MPs) and civil society stakeholders (who never or rarely broker meetings with interest groups). As a result, we cannot argue that the horizontal dimension of our advisers’ activities is “germane to investigations of governance” as the typology suggests (Craft, 2011, p. 16).

TABLE 3  
Tasks Undertaken by Greek Ministerial Advisers and their Frequency (%),  $n = 28$

Tasks	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Very frequently
Ask officials to provide memos or advice	0 (0)	1 (3.57)	7 (25)	13 (46.4)	6 (21.4)
Assist with budgetary matters	14 (50)	6 (21.4)	4 (14.2)	2 (7.1)	0 (0)
Attend meetings with civil servants	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (28.57)	12 (42.8)	7 (25)
Broker meetings with interest groups	4 (14.2)	5 (17.8)	10 (35.7)	4 (14.2)	4 (14.2)
Convey or clarify minister's wishes	1 (3.57)	0 (0)	10 (35.7)	10 (35.7)	6 (21.4)
Maintain relations with the electoral district of the minister	12 (42.8)	7 (25)	5 (17.8)	3 (10.7)	0 (0)
Meet with MPs	11 (39.2)	7 (25)	6 (21.4)	2 (7.1)	1 (3.57)
Meet with party officials	14 (50)	8 (28.57)	3 (10.7)	3 (10.7)	0 (0)
Analyze and evaluate implemented policy	4 (14.2)	5 (17.8)	3 (10.7)	13 (46.4)	1 (3.57)
Meet advisers from other ministerial cabinets	0 (0)	1 (3.57)	5 (17.8)	15 (53.35)	6 (21.4)
Meet with departmental officials	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (17.8)	12 (42.8)	10 (35.7)
Write press statements	7 (25)	5 (17.8)	4 (14.2)	6 (21.4)	3 (10.7)
Raise new policy initiatives with minister	5 (17.8)	7 (25)	6 (21.4)	6 (21.4)	2 (7.1)
Read and comment on official departmental advice	2 (7.1)	4 (14.2)	3 (10.7)	13 (46.4)	5 (17.8)
Represent minister at departmental meetings	5 (17.8)	7 (25)	7 (25)	6 (21.4)	3 (10.7)
Write speeches	12 (42.8)	5 (17.8)	4 (14.2)	4 (14.2)	2 (7.1)
Receive external delegations on the minister's behalf	5 (17.8)	8 (28.57)	8 (28.57)	3 (10.7)	3 (10.7)
Prepare policy files and memos	8 (28.57)	2 (7.1)	5 (17.8)	8 (28.57)	4 (14.2)
Monitor the implementation of policy	8 (28.57)	6 (21.4)	4 (14.2)	8 (28.57)	2 (7.1)
Maintain relations with the grassroots support of the minister	14 (50)	10 (35.7)	3 (10.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Produce evidence and facts in support of policy making	7 (25)	6 (21.4)	2 (7.1)	9 (32.1)	3 (10.7)
Other (please specify)					1 (3.57)
					Support departments do their work

However, one finding should not go unnoticed. The majority of the interviewed advisers (74.75%) appear to meet very frequently or frequently with their colleagues from other ministries. This is in line with findings in both ministerial cabinet and Westminster systems. In relation to the former, James (2007) observes that cabinets facilitate inter-ministerial policy coordination, thanks to the formation of a strong network between cabinets. Referring to France, he points to the fact the cabinet staff settle inter-ministerial disagreements. In Belgium too, cabinet staff serves as conduits of negotiating important policy decisions between ministers. In Westminster systems, Maley (2011) observes that advisers also develop relationships with other political staff, forming networks within the executive. As such, they can enhance coordination in a segmented executive core government like the Greek one.

In the end, the questionnaire data point to the direction of classifying the Greek ministerial adviser in the Administrative-Vertical category. This, however, is a classification we need to be wary about since it does not capture what the Greek adviser's policy advice activity is, but rather what it is not. It is not partisan and definitely not horizontal in the governance way. However, our sample's adviser is not detached from politics, while networks with political staff across the core executive government. To argue that as a result of Greek ministerial adviser's policy advice activity is technical and fully vertical is not supported by the data in hand either.

### Rethinking Classification of Policy Advice Activity Along Substantive and Procedural Lines

The main merit of the typology developed by Craft (2011) is that it highlights the substantive nature and procedural dimension of policy advice-giving activities. However, it is arguably a classification with limitations. Focusing on the dichotomous logic of technical versus partisan and vertical versus horizontal advice-giving activities, it misses out on a whole category, that of policy management or less overt partisan ones. As a result, while we are able to highlight the aspects of the phenomenon in hand, we have not yet taken a step forward toward greater specificity. Staying within the limits of policy advice-giving activities in terms of nature and dimension of advice, the typology could be improved along the following lines. We reconstruct the substantive dimension so as to reflect Connaughton's (2010a, 2010b) policy-making roles: from the pure expert (technical/administrative nature) to the coordinator, the minder, and finally the partisan. Moreover, we reconstruct the procedural dimension of policy advice-giving activity using Maley's (2013) three arenas where the policy work of political advisers appears to be more prominent: (a) working within the department, (b) working with other ministers within the core executive government, and (c) working with stakeholders. The once vertical/horizontal dimension of advice is now substituted by three new types: vertical silo, vertical with coordination, and governance. In this respect,

Procedural (dimension of policy advice activity)	Substantive Nature of policy advice contribution	
	ADMINISTRATIVE	PARTISAN
HORIZONTAL	Type I Administrative—Horizontal	Type II Partisan—Horizontal
VERTICAL	Greek Ministerial Adviser  Type III Administrative—Vertical	Type IV Partisan—Vertical

FIGURE 3 Classification of Greek ministerial advisers’ policy advice activity according to the nature and dimension of advice.

Procedural (dimension of policy advice activity)	Substantive Nature of policy advice contribution			
	Administrative /technical (expert)	Managerial/Steering (coordinator)	Political (minder)	Partisan
Vertical silo (working exclusively with the department)	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
Vertical with coordination (working also with other ministers within the political executive)	Type V	Type VI  Greek ministerial adviser	Type VII	Type VIII
Governance (working with stakeholders)	Type IX	Type X	Type XI	Type XII

FIGURE 4 Twelve types of policy advice-giving activity.

we derive a typology with 12 types of policy advice-giving contributions (Figure 3). Despite losing in simplicity, we gain in capturing what Maley argued to be a “highly variable and highly contingent” nature of policy work (Maley, 2013, p. 3). We still retain the merits of classification though, especially the ability to use the different types for meaningful cross-country comparisons, as well as hypothesis generation. In relation to the latter, based on the suggested typology, we would expect advisers’ type of policy advice-giving activity to vary according to a set of factors both contextual-structural and agency based: the institutional setting in which their work is organized (ministerial cabinet, Westminster model

etc.), the field of policy, the minister’s needs, but also their background and expertise (see Figure 4).

### CONCLUSION

In the present study, we investigated the phenomenon of Greek ministerial advisers in the policy-making process. We described the institutional habitat of those agents, the ministerial cabinet, highlighted the policy cycle stage where their work is more prominent, and classified their policy work according to typologies focusing on policy advisory

roles, as well as on the nature and dimension of their policy advice-giving activities.

Greek ministerial advisers belong to ministerial cabinets, which form part of a fragmented core executive government, characterized by prime minister centrism, independent ministers, and a passive bureaucracy. In this respect, it has been argued that Greek executive core government reflects more the “solitary centers” in central Europe that resist the imperative of coordination (Featherstone & Papadimitriou, 2013, p. 523). Yet, when we look into advisers’ institutional habitat, the ministerial cabinet, in Greece, we see that it shares fundamental similarities with the older and more representative ministerial cabinet systems of France and Belgium.

- It is institutionalized in particular historical and political circumstances associated with the first period of the restoration of democracy in the 1980s.
- Despite been grounded into law, legislative restrictions are often overridden by widely politically accepted norms. This is the case as to who performs advisory duties. Special advisers as well as political staff in administrative support contracts and scientific associates often play an advisory role. This is even more the case with ministerial cabinet size, which can vary according to need.
- It forms a “mini administration,” the staff of which apart from advice also attempts to manage the civil service, and this may be a source of a constant friction among members of the ministerial cabinet and civil servants.
- It dominates policy-making at all stages. Examination of advisers’ location in the policy cycle revealed that while they appear to deal predominantly with the front end of policy-making, agenda setting, and policy formulation, they also enjoy a “voice” in decision-making, while a much bigger number is involved in the back end of the policy-making process, in particular implementation and evaluation.

Yet, important differences especially in comparison to the French *Cabinets Ministeriels* do exist. To begin with, Greek ministerial cabinets are a much more recent phenomenon. In terms of size, they are significantly smaller than the French ones, much closer to those we find in Belgium. Moreover, relations between advisers and civil servants may be characterized “symbiotic,” but in no case do they reach the “village life” type of no confrontation and osmosis found in France. Last but not least, advisers in ministerial cabinet systems are thought to fit the type of technical experts in comparison to strategic advisers found in Westminster systems and media aides or political assistants found in countries such as The Netherlands (James, 2007; Schreurs et al., 2010). Contrary to the idea of ministerial cabinet technocracy, classification revealed that the Greek ministerial adviser:

1. **Belongs to the “Coordinator” type.** He is predominantly a generalist with a main focus on management of the government program. This project management aspect of the Greek ministerial adviser’s job is a significant finding. First, it shows that Greek ministerial advisers do not fall within the traditional partisan political adviser category. It is not elections and the minister’s constituency they most deal with, since this is dealt by the political executive’s office as an MP (*Vouleftiko Grafeio*). Second, despite predominantly dealing with policy projects and while they seem to be involved to a great extent with policy technicalities, they are not the technical experts that we would expect to dominate in a traditional cabinet system. One explanation for this is related to the personal styles of the two ministers under examination, who place great emphasis on acceleration, management, coordination, and an understanding of policy as made of single projects that need to be designed and implemented as such. Another might be the simple reality that policy-making in Greece is highly political, with reform time always trying to catch up to political time, therefore characterized by a lack of technical, rational, and evidence-based policy-making activities while in constant need for immediate swift action and results. We may argue that the literature on the role of experts in policy-making in Greece lends some support to this explanation (Ladi, 2005, 2007; Monastiriotis & Antoniadis, 2009; Spanou, 2008).
2. **Does not perform policy advice-giving activities of a partisan nature, nor of a governance-type horizontal dimension.** In order to positively classify advisers’ policy advice-giving activities along substantive and procedural lines, we reconstructed Craft’s (2011) typology, retaining its general philosophy, but synthesizing insights from Connaughton’s (2010a, 2010b) policy roles and Maley’s (2013) policy arenas to reach a map of 12 types of advice-giving activities. The new typology reveals that the Greek ministerial adviser is a policy manager who liaises primarily with colleagues and peers within the core executive government, but to a lesser extent with political and civil society stakeholders.

Finally, in view of the findings presented in the current research, we need to be careful before claiming that they may be generalized to the broader population of Greek ministerial advisers in civilian non-corps organized ministries. Arguably, at a first level, the existing empirical gap was closed. The Greek ministerial adviser works within a ministerial cabinet context and appears to fit best the role of a coordinator and a policy manager, who vertically steers policy, as well as networks with other political staff across ministerial cabinets that form part of a fragmented executive core government. However, our results would need to be put

to the test. Future research on Greek advisers can expand its scope to investigate more and different ministerial cabinets in different time periods and using different research methods. In respect to the conceptualization of advisers' policy making roles, attempted through the use of classifications, the new typology we presented above may have the merit of a more exhaustive synthesis along substantive and procedural lines but begs for further elaboration and fine tuning. More substantively, future research needs to address a paradox. Given that our investigation inside the cabinet reveals a lack of technical expertise in policy-related issues, it would be interesting to investigate where this expertise might be coming from, if at all, within the broader Greek policy advisory system? In addition, the work of advisers' with other ministries, as well as with non-core executive stakeholders, needs further exploration. To conclude, on a more practical tone and if we may suggest a course of action to Greek ministerial advisers, this would be to become more active in the horizontal coordination of external sources of policy advice, whether these are found in academic, professional, interest group, and civil society expertise or in political institutions such as the Parliament and political parties.

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