

## **Aren't public policy created by politicians? What is the role of experts and who can participate in public policy-making?**

Decisions on the state intervention (or absence thereof) in addressing problems in the public interest are made within the political bodies - government, assembly, local authorities. They are political in nature. Although they are political decision makers, the interest of policy makers themselves should be used as objective an analytical tool as possible. In practice, decisions are ultimately in the domain of political responsibility and are political, but once there is a political determination, direction or principled resolution to solve a particular problem, politicians have at their disposal a number of actors who formulate and implement a given public policy. These are, first and foremost, the state apparatus that includes professional services, but also a network of institutes and think tanks (which are very often turned to more or less specific political ideas). Their role is to put the concrete decision into practice, to ensure that it produces the desired effects (i.e. minimizes the negative effects on those affected social groups) and that it has legitimacy.

Strategic decisions (i.e. public policy) are naturally made in the conditions of uncertainty and concern the planning of changes in an economy and society that are complex and which the government can only indirectly influence through its instruments. In such circumstances, data analysis, predictions and impact assessments help make the best possible decision and reduce uncertainty and risks. There are usually tensions from different groups concerning most decisions in society. As a rule, public policy changes the status quo. Some groups are more suited to the status quo and others more suited to the change. That is why public policy analysis is useful from the perspective of decision makers and in order to look at the consequences, to understand the possible resistance and to make the decision feasible and applicable.

For example, the official policy expressed in the Prime Minister's exposition to the Assembly may be that active employment measures can help reduce unemployment. However, politicians do not have a clear picture of what these measures are, what skills and profiles are lacking in the labor market. What shortcomings can be corrected by organizing counseling and training and for which groups i.e. labor market profiles? Are there missing workers in some municipalities, are there any redundancies in the neighboring labor force? For all this there are expert services in the Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Economy. There are also sections of the National Employment Service that are currently implementing measures and have labor market data that can help them better understand their needs.

Most people have prejudices about the state administration as an impersonal bureaucracy. It has numerous tasks: administrative functions, i.e. conducting administrative procedures (issuing various decisions, registers and extracts from registers, assignment of rights, etc.); inspection functions (ensuring that regulations are

consistently applied through various forms of verification and control); normative functions (preparation of regulations to regulate particular areas), and various ancillary tasks. But, in addition to this, as a very important and perhaps the most important function in its structure, public administration has a role in policy making. Modern administrations often also include special units for analysis, planning, assessment of the economic effects of regulations introducing regulation, drafting strategies in various areas of public administration.

Public policy planning is inextricably linked to governance in the state administration. Governance or management is a necessary function in every organization that is responsible for achieving the goals of the organization. By the end of the twentieth century, the old hierarchically organized bureaucratic administration (the so-called Weberian state) changed with the advancement of information technology, the strengthening of the civilian sector, and an increasing mistrust of the state. In the meantime, the agenda before public policy makers has become increasingly complex. In these circumstances, the idea of a new mode of governance, framed in the concept of "the new public management" (NPM), has been born.

This concept implies greater transparency of the work of the state administration, participation and its greater responsibility (for spending common budgetary resources). The work of the state administration introduces the measurement of results in a manner similar to that of large corporations. Unlike corporations, where success indicators are defined in relation to contributing to the company's goals of which profit is most important, in the public sector, indicators are derived from public policy goals. Thus, for example, in the field of public health policy, the number of hospital beds or patients per a doctor, the number of examinations, etc., the number of successful surgeries, the percentage of diagnosed diseases with cure of the total incidence of a disease are measured. In the next step, this is compared to the impulses, i.e. money spent throughout the territory, part of the territory or at the level of an individual health care institution. In this way, the management i.e. mechanisms used to ensure the effective fulfillment of the very purpose of the state administration - directly relied on the planning system i.e. public policy making. This planning system serves to set goals, design instruments, and develop indicators that would provide monitoring of effects and subsequent evaluation, i.e. evaluation of a concrete state intervention.

In recent years, again in the spirit of global changes in the society - deregulation, further advancement of technology, strengthening the roles of large global corporations and the civil sector - the perception of the role of the state has changed. Some people advocate the so-called deliberative democracy, and the administration itself is shifting towards an even more participatory and flexible structure with greater involvement of the non-governmental sector, both in public policy making and in the delivery of certain public services.

All the mentioned changes in the organization of the public administration are accompanied by increasing demands regarding the qualifications of the employees, as well as the trend to transform from a culture of inviolable rules and impersonal

bureaucracy to creative open organizations that, much like private corporations, rely more on individuals, their knowledge, and the opinions on specific issues of concern to citizens. The citizen is increasingly in focus and the care is taken of the quality of service for the citizen. Instead of public administration, the term "public service" is increasingly being used. Decision-making is less and less procedurally defined, and it is increasingly relying on committee evaluations, supported by expert reports, objective indicators and the like. Adequately educated staff needed to implement a "new", increasingly flexible framework for public policy planning is therefore a key resource. Leading universities in the world are booming educational programs in public administration and public policy that attract talented individuals, not lagging behind the attractiveness of similar programs designed to work in business administration.

In the light of these trends, in order to find the most effective solutions for the public policy, new ways are explored and methods from other disciplines are borrowed. Some of them are design (to design public services for the user) or psychology (to use psychologically known decision-making mechanisms for individuals to more effectively achieve a common goal - as an alternative to the rigid traditional methods on which regulation is based - prohibitions and punishments).

Due to the advancement of technology, large administrative databases for alternative use are increasingly available, as well as various other data that is not necessarily created for public policy purposes, but can be creatively used to understand the will of citizens or to obtain feedback or improve the quality of public services. Thus, for example, data on the use of mobile phones are used, with the help of new analytical methods in the field of Big data (including machine learning and artificial intelligence), to optimize public transport, because they can monitor the loads of individual zones and routes and adjust accordingly the frequency public transport vehicles. Another type of use of new technologies to meet the common needs more democratically and securely is the use of blockchain technology already used in some cities to vote in local elections, and in some countries (Estonia) used for the public register of property ownership - cadastre.

It is clear that technological advances will change the existing role of the state, offering new opportunities for participation and provision of public services. In this respect, it is important to understand the role of the state in the creation and implementation of public policies, i.e. taking into account the methodologically framed public interest, policy objectives that should be within the available resources (primarily budgetary resources) and a range of measures that can influence desired social change. Innovation serves as an upgrade to well-designed public policy and provides the opportunity for more effective outcomes, on the one hand, or encourages a change in existing public policy if conditions change and technology addresses some of the problems that once required public intervention.

For example, digital public transport platforms are being developed today for citizens to evaluate drivers who can easily navigate city streets thanks to GPS systems. They turn out to be an effective substitute for the former public policy of regulating public taxi

transportation by requiring taxi drivers to pass (and pay for) a city-wide exam. On this basis, they would obtain a license to operate a taxi. This created an artificial monopoly (by limiting the total number of taxi drivers), and therefore an extra income for those with a license to pay for investment in learning and appropriate vehicles and equipment (which in the meantime became far more affordable). These technological changes today raise many tensions of existing taxi drivers and newcomers on "digital platforms" and force city and state governments to rethink public policy in the field of public transport for citizens.

It is clear from the foregoing that an effective public sector governance system based on the concept of public policies requires greater reliance on people, their knowledge, judgements, communication, and less on the detailed procedures that anticipate each step in the administration's actions. This implies a greater level of expertise in the administration itself, but also in the general public, which is interested in monitoring the effects of public policy on their own well-being. It is a matter of expertise, both for particular areas of public policy (domain knowledge in education, health, social care, security, etc.), as well as knowledge of methods for assessing the effects of particular factors and possessing analytical skills to judge and isolate the influence of factors that are relevant from e.g. force majeure, sudden events and the like. For this reason, it is especially important to enhance the links between experts and decision makers, as well as to improve educational curricula in those programs that educate future participants in public policy-making.

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