



Annual Regional Cooperation Project

Sixth Annual Summer Public Management Institute on „Policy planning: necessity, institutional framework and tools”

Latvia, August 23 - 27, 2010

Intended Outcome

The intended outcome is to improve the knowledge and skills of mid- and high level civil servants, academics and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGO)s in the region in policy planning, with particular emphasis on the relevance of policy planning in the context of economic downturn, stagnation and uncertainty regarding the future. For the intended outcome to be achieved, the target group will be trained on a number of issues affecting or related to policy planning, i.e., theoretical perspectives; various justifications for planning; type and nature of the required institutional frameworks; the role of the Centre of Government; practical application of policy planning; crisis planning; long-term planning; planning and budgeting; performance management, etc. The intended long term outcome of the Summer Institute is to increase the participants' motivation for change. In other words, to provide an incentive to becoming change agents and increases their commitment to public administration reform in their home countries. Knowledge gained from the training and the subsequent implementation of ideas in the local context is expected to contribute to the development of more effective tools for policy planning. A third outcome is the strengthening of professional networking and sharing of experiences and best practices between mid- and high-level civil servants and leading academics in the region.

Background and context

There are various concepts, closely related to each other, which are used to denote the process of searching for solutions to the problems of socio-economic development and decision making – policy analysis, policy planning, policy formulation, policy impact assessment, partially also evidence based policy, etc. Some scholars make a distinction among these concepts; however, these concepts broadly can be used as synonymous, with the exception of the policy planning and impact assessment concepts. Policy planning as a specific discipline applied to functional activities of public administration is relatively new in the Eastern European region countries, but in the Western countries, procedures for policy analysis were introduced as early as in the 1950s.

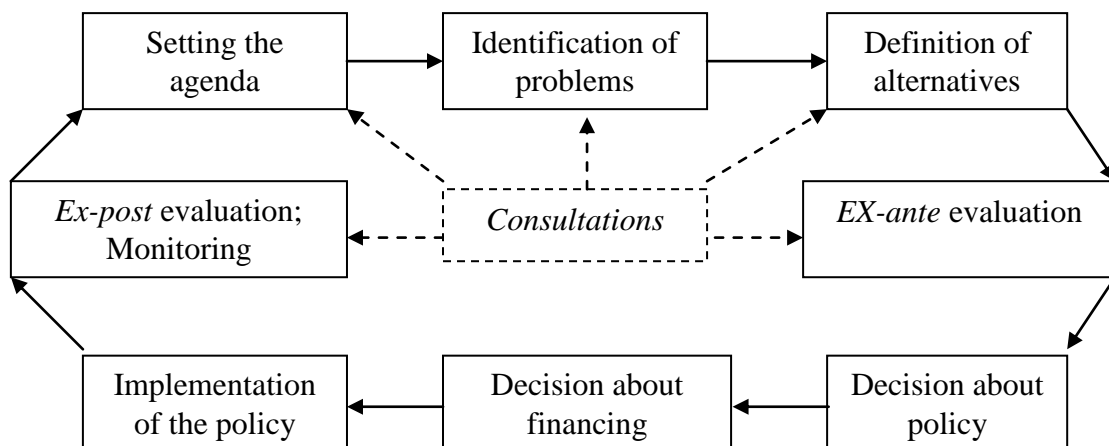
In order to better understand the role of the policy planning process in public administration, an important distinction must be made between the concepts policy and politics, where: *politics* in a democratic society mean the complex set of rules and procedures adopted to provide lawful representation and harmonization of interests through the mechanisms of representative democracy; on the other hand, *public policy* involves reconciling conflicting priorities and risks through analysis to arrive at the best option, and to determine the management mode required to implement and maintain policies over the long term, so that sustainable human development outcomes can be achieved.

There are two basic approaches to policy making:

End driven policies – concerned with high level strategic issues or policy areas as a whole. These policies usually address broad and complex issues, and usually they define medium or long term developmental objectives. Obviously, several institutions may be involved in the development and implementation of such strategies. Examples of such policies are: *National Development Plan; Sustainable Development Strategy; Poverty Reduction Programmes; Rural Development policy etc.*

Problem driven policies – concentrate on some specific problems or issues which have to be resolved within a given policy area. As a rule, the specific focus of such policies is already included in the title of a given policy document, i.e., *development of the system of university licensing; minimizing the unemployment rate; solving problems with kindergartens in the newly built sections of the city, etc.*

In practice, policy makers describe the policy planning cycle as a process which consists of four main stages: agenda setting, policy creation, decision-making and policy implementation. Nevertheless, more detailed steps in the policy cycle may be established, as depicted in the diagram below.



In reality, the policy cycle never unfolds in such a simple way as it appears in the chart. Every stage may demand repeated efforts in order to arrive to a satisfactory result. It is also worth mentioning that in many cases of broad sectoral policies, the policy planning is a “never ending story”. Following the end of the policy cycle, that is the *ex-post* evaluation process, a new round of agenda setting begins, and the process of policy planning is initiated again.

To encourage implementation of an effective public policy process, clear definition of the roles and competences of all actors involved, as well as ensuring sound cooperation among them, is considered crucial. The main roles civil servants and politicians should assume in the process are listed below:

<p>Civil servants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collect information - Do analyses - Prepare solutions - Evaluate impacts - Design proposals - Consult stakeholders, target groups, public administration institutions - Present argumentation - Do planning - Ensure implementation - Control the process and results - Organize evaluation - Reporting - Possess professional responsibility 	<p>Politicians:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set the policy agenda - See the big picture - Set priorities - Assess the policy proposals - Make political analyses - Lead political discussions - Consult society / target groups / electorate - Make decisions - Assign tasks to administrators - Assume political responsibility
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Policy planning is a technical and professional service, provided by civil servants, specialists of public administration, as well as independent researchers in order to ensure comprehensive and structured argumentation, substantiation, and collection and review of all available information connected with possible alternatives and decisions. Policy can, and should, be seen as an unbiased tool that helps the politicians to reach explicit goals. For this reason, policy analysis and planning is the competence of professional civil servants, who must possess specialised and professional knowledge and skills in the particular field. The quality, objectivity and accuracy of analysis represent the professional responsibility of civil servants and specialists working in civil service.

The “Policy planner” title must be considered a profession committed to life-long learning, in which formal training could only be the starting, but never the closing point. The development of professional skills is broadly dependent on learning from practical cases and experiences, both on the national level, as well as from other countries. Collection of a wide range of information; keeping up with relevant professional trends and literature; participating in public discussions and conferences; actively participating in professional networks; and possessing an awareness of changes in political and legislative realms, may be defined as the standard of the professional life of a policy analyst.

For ethical reasons, the position of a policy planner strictly requires that the analyst remain within the field of analysis and do not engage in decision making. Although policy planners are not usually directly involved in the decision making process, the analysis and recommendations provided will inevitably have some impact on the decision making process. For this reason, policymakers should make sure that they maintain a good level of objectivity and impartiality at all the stages of analysis, by carefully checking assumptions, evaluations and interpretation of data.

In the context of the region of Central and Eastern Europe, it is possible to conclude that the countries in the region have made significant steps towards improving their legislative framework, and their policymaking and coordination practices. However, despite this progress, political and institutional challenges remain an obstacle in the effort to reform the policymaking area, such as:

- Institutional legacies of the Soviet policymaking system;
- Lack or limited high level political commitment to reforms of policymaking and coordination;
- Weak capacity for strategic planning processes and practices;
- Laws often drafted before policy decisions are made;
- Limited capacities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be effectively involved in the consultation process on public policies, etc.

In order for the policy planning, coordination and policy impact assessment exercises to have any meaningful importance in the decision-making process, and to prevent the inefficient use of human and financial resources, the necessity to perform qualitative policy planning and policy impact assessment must be recognized. Precise tasks and responsibility levels for the institutions involved have to be established. However, following the economic downturn experienced in the very recent years, virtually all countries in the region are faced with additional challenges affecting central policy planning mechanisms, augmented by the challenges mentioned above. In times where uncertainty about the future is prevalent - in particular with regard to the availability of financial resources, and often ad hoc political decision making, more often than not in

direct conflict with previously planned activities - senior civil servants may not see the significance and utility of policy planning, both in the short and long term. It is therefore essential for public sector managers to understand, and be motivated to engage in policy planning and drafting, which may:

- Include explicit qualitative and quantitative assessments of outputs, outcomes and impacts;
- Provide a foundation for regular monitoring and impact evaluation, i.e. result-oriented policy making, supported by a framework of indicators;
- Be realistic and feasible, but also inspiring and transformative;
- Be (in) directly connected with performance budgeting.

Consequently, it is crucial – taking into account the current situation - to strengthen the capacity and expertise of senior civil servants in the region by addressing the following questions: Why to plan? How, and when to plan? Plan for what? Furthermore, by looking at conditions which need to be in place, to ensure successful implementation, monitoring and evaluation of plans, by providing training, lectures, and practical workshops conducted by acknowledged practitioners - from the public sector and academia.

Outline of the event

Topics covered in SI

Day	Thematic blocks	Responsible
Monday	Policy planning and justification for planning	State Chancellery, Latvia
Tuesday	Institutional framework and policy makers	Supporting partner 1
Wednesday	Long term and crisis planning	Supporting partner 2
Thursday	Planning and budgeting	Supporting partner 3
Friday	Future challenges and discussion on following MCA's	State Chancellery, Latvia

Roles and responsibilities

The project proposal and activity plan is drafted by the State Chancellery of Republic of Latvia in close co-operation with UNDP Regional Centre for Public Administration Reform (RCPAR).



From the organizational aspect, the State Chancellery of Republic of Latvia is responsible for the overall coordination and organization of the International Summer Public Management Institute for the year 2010. At the same time, other interested parties – such as relevant institutions in other countries of the region - will be invited to engage in the co-organization of the event as supporting partners.

All administrative and financial matters will be handled by the State Chancellery of the Republic of Latvia in cooperation with the RCPAR.

The State Chancellery will also make an effort to mobilize the support of other organizations - foreign embassies in Latvia and/or international organizations – in order to attract additional financial resources. It is also expected that some participants will cover the cost of their own participation.

Supporting partners

As already mentioned above, other interested parties such as relevant institutions in the countries of the region will be invited to engage in the co-organization of the event as supporting partners.

Supporting partners will be requested to assume various responsibilities ranging from preparing and moderating one or more sessions or workshops during the Summer Institute; assisting in the identification of suitable speakers, etc. The partners may also organize individual follow-up events, as separate and distinct multi-country activities¹ implemented in the framework of the RCPAR Project, if interest on a particular topic is high and the Summer Institute can be used to mobilize participants and resources for the follow-up.

Supporting partners will be jointly selected by RCPAR and State Chancellery, on the basis of short written outlines describing the partner's motivation for participation, ideas/focus for the specific session(s) or workshop(s) of interest, and resources required.

Participants

All participants will be selected through an open, competitive “Call for Applications”, which will be published on the websites of the RCPAR and the State Chancellery, and will be distributed widely via email. Interested participants will be asked to submit their applications online by a specific date. Applications via email will only be accepted in exceptional cases.

¹ For more information on multi-country activities, see http://www.rcpar.org/contents_en.asp?id=70

Profile of participants (key selection criteria):

- at least 5 years of work experience in public administration institutions at the central level (for academics – relevant experience in research on policy planning and public administration issues, for NGOs – relevant experience in co-operation with central state institutions on policy planning issues, for example through stakeholder consultations);
- involved in policy planning;
- occupy mid or upper level position in the institution;
- good working knowledge of English and/or Russian;
- strong motivation.

Composition of participants:

A number of places will be reserved for the partners involved in the organization of the event:

- up to 10 participants from the State Chancellery, Latvia;
- 2 to 3 participants from each of the supporting partners.

In addition, the RCPAR will fund up to 25 participants from the countries in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. In order to achieve a balanced representation, the maximum number of participants per country will be limited to 3. Overall, it is anticipated that RCPAR will cover the cost of up to 25 participants fully and it will also cover partially the cost of another 20. Another 10 participants from the region will be financed from other sources. It is expected that up to 55 participants will attend this event.

Activity (action) plan

Time line	Activity	Responsible institution
June 1 st	Announcing SI	LV / RCPAR
June 1 st	Identification and selection of speakers start	LV / RCPAR
July 9 th	Application deadline “Supporting countries” selected.	LV / RCPAR
June 10 th	Approval of draft agenda	LV / RCPAR
July 15 th	Participants selected	LV / RCPAR
July 30 th	Speakers selected Final agenda approved	
July 15 th – August 15 th	Technical and logistical issues	LV / RCPAR

	finalized	“Supporting partners”
August 23 rd – 27 th	Summer Institute takes place	LV “Supporting partners”
August 30 th	Electronic evaluation form launched	LV / RCPAR
September 30 th	Participant feedback evaluation	LV
October 31 st	SI Event report	LV
February	Evaluation meeting and final evaluation (SI and follow up MCA’s)	LV / RCPAR

Funding sources

UNDP/RCPAR	25 participants fully 20 participants partially
Government	In-kind contribution by: State Chancellery, Latvia Supporting partners, RCPAR
Other Funding	<i>Soros Foundation</i> <i>Embassy of Ireland in Latvia</i> <i>Embassy of Netherlands in Latvia</i> <i>Embassy of USA in Latvia, etc.</i>