Organising the delivery of policy advice

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Introduction: The role of policy advice in public administration

The pressures of the modern economic dynamics and increasing interdependence of national politico-economic structures have resulted in significant self-transformation processes at both national and supra-national levels. Throughout time two directions of public administration reform have emerged:

• change in the philosophy of governments towards more integrated and humane systems, and

• further development of managerial aspects of public administration (Dror, 1997)

Both transformations are taking place simultaneously and render policy planning and policy advice increasingly important to the development of the administrative capacities of governments and supranational bodies alike. In the case of post-soviet countries adequate policy planning capacities are especially important. Besides the administrative and managerial structures of governments, societies themselves are undergoing a process of radical shift in value systems. The imminent integration into the European Union and membership in international organisations and alliances such as NATO puts additional pressure on countries to speed up the development of outstanding policy planning capacities. At the same time analyses of the current state of government capacity development in post-Soviet countries show that the development of policy formulation and implementation mechanisms is one of the most problematic areas in institutional development for these states.1

Decision-making, policy-making and policy development are interrelated activities, influenced and defined by many factors ranging from institutional structures, organisational and administrative cultures to personnel policies. In order to achieve significant results in policy planning process and capacity development different tools and various courses of action are available. One of the elements within the policy formulation process, which may make a difference in the way CEE country administrations carry out their business, is the development of new mechanisms for the delivery of policy advice. The significance of a sound policy advice in the
decision-making processes is beyond As Parsons argues, ‘The rise of power based on knowledge, in the form of experts or technocrats, has been a key feature of the analysis of policy-making in the post-war era’ (Parsons, 1995, p. 153).

Throughout time the various modes of policy advice delivery emerged. Machiavelli and Bacon would be good historic examples of hired ‘inside’ policy advisors. Think tanks, or social research institutes are a more modern idea and did not appear in the policy-making scene until the end of the 19th century. Finally, professionals clearly have maintained an important role in the production and dissemination of knowledge and in the interpretation and implementation of policy at ‘street level’ (Parsons, 1995).

The establishment of a multitude of various types of advisory organisations and think tanks in the mid-20th century only emphasises the growing demand for sound policy analysis and demand for innovative and diverse ideas. Modern governments draw their legitimacy from and base their decisions on information, knowledge, facts, advisers, and experts. (Parsons, 1995).

The purpose of this paper is to review current practices and experiences in the area of policy advice delivery in the western countries and to explore the role of advice in decision making mechanisms in Central and Eastern European countries. The first section of the paper describes the various modes of policy advice provision: advantages and disadvantages of contracting out, the role of ‘think tanks’ and the role of civil servants in the policy process. Some strategies for the development of policy planning capacities within administrations will be reviewed as well. The second section focuses on the analysis of the current situation in CEECs as reflected in the country reports on politico-administrative relations, SIGMA civil service reviews and Center of Government profiles. Finally some possible directions for the development of policy advice delivery in Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) will be discussed.

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1 The problem of policy mechanisms is identified as one of the weakest points in the administrative capacity development in most CEECs in SIGMA evaluations and was subsequently reflected in regular European Commission assessment in 1999.
Provision of policy advice: some definitions and concerns

While analysing policy formulation mechanisms in a comparative perspective, it is very important to recognise the distinction between policy advice and political advice, as well as between policy planning and political planning. The distinction is rather clear in English. However, many languages do not clearly express the difference between the two. Here we discuss policy advice and policy-planning mechanisms, referring to the sets of decisions, which are tailored to bringing about changes in socio-economic systems, as opposed to politics, which is focused on power.

Dror defines policy planning as ‘exploring alternative goals and preparing them for choice by elected politicians, estimating salient environmental dynamic, inventing and designing novel options, evaluating possible and probable long term consequences of main options with the help of uncertainty – sophisticated approaches and methods, mapping feasibility constraints and seeking ways to make them less rigid so as to make the desirable possible, considering various policy domains within an overall systems perspective, arriving with the help of all these at preferable main policy and grand-policy recommendations, and doing all of these while engaging in constant learning” (Dror, 1994). This paper examines issues related to this particular type of policy advice, as opposed to party-political advice.

Academic literature on public policy draws a clear distinction between two types of policy advice – strategic and operational. However practice shows that activities listed above in practice tend to be closely interrelated and interdependent. According to Boston, “good strategic policy advice requires solid research evidence. Likewise, good operational advice is impossible without a detailed knowledge of the relevant operational matters and institutional factors” (Boston, 1994). Therefore the boundaries between strategic and operational policy advice are extremely fluid. He continues:

“Equally important when a government seeks advice on a particular area of public policy, like education or health care, it is not simply interested in purchasing a certain number of individual outputs, be they briefing papers, back-ground reports, or drafting instructions, it also wants a well-integrated and competently coordinated
servicing capacity. This will include the day-to-day provision of oral advice, assistance with the business of negotiating policy trade-offs and selling policy proposals to the various interested parties (both inside and outside the government), advice on implementation issues (including subsequent monitoring, review, and policy adaptation), advice on how to deal with anticipated and unanticipated problems, the capacity to transact business with foreign governments and sub-national governments, and so on” (ibid.).

This discussion is important to us as it shows the main implications of the ‘diverse and carefully managed servicing capacity’ for the provision of advice:

1. Desirability of close working relationship and mutual trust among senior policy advisers and their immediate political master (e.g. the president, Prime Minister, cabinet minister, junior minister, etc.).

2. Necessity for adequate vertical and horizontal coordination of policy formulation mechanisms. (Ibid.)

These two factors are especially important when one analyses the role of the ‘external’ policy advice provision mechanisms, such as ‘think tanks’ and policy research institutes or private consulting companies.

The next section is devoted to the description of the various, although somewhat overlapping, mechanisms for the delivery of policy advice and a discussion of the ways to improve policy planning capacities within administrations.

**Possible modes of provision of policy advice**

*Contracting out policy advice*

Public administration reform has two directions. The main aspect of public administration reform at the current time is the improvement of management capacities in government, in an attempt to make sluggish government bodies function more effectively and efficiently (Dror, 1997). One of the main tools to achieve this is privatisation. In relation to the ‘privatisation’ of policy formulation, one possible option is contracting out the provision of policy advice. The various options in this case range from the development of the internal competitive ‘market’ where the
various departments of government would offer their services in this area, to contracting through an open competition to any public or private organisation which suggests the best terms (Boston, 1994).

At the first glance such suggestions might seem alluring due to the implied diversity of the opinions provided, possible independence and non-partisanship of advisors, and last but not least important – savings. However contracting out can have some negative side effects as well. The decision as to what extent policy advice should be subject to competitive tendering therefore should be based on the assessment of advantages and disadvantages in relying on governmental structures or market forces. A deeper analysis of contracting out policy advice practices raises some important concerns, which relate back to the two factors raised in the previous section – the need for mutual trust and good horizontal and vertical co-ordination.

In assessing the idea of contracting out policy advice, one should assess the various options against several criteria such as the characteristic of the market, the nature of the transactions involved and the degree of uncertainty. One of the most important issues is the fact that the work as well as the product of advisory agencies/consulting companies is quite specific. Two important interrelated assets the companies must possess in order to work successfully with governments in policy advice provision are expertise and trust.

In case of the expertise, the difficulty arises due to the need to combine a “knowledge of the strategic issues within the relevant policy domain; the day-to-day problems of implementation and administration; the key actors, international as well as domestic; the policy making process; the history and evolution of public policy in the relevant domain; the inter-face between the policy domain in question and related areas; particular techniques of policy analysis; and how to organise and manage the relevant transactions, including dealings with individual policy makers” (Boston, 1994, p.15).

It is rather difficult to accumulate in one particular company human resources with wide expertise in specific policy domains (e.g. defence/military, macroeconomics and others, which is likely to require high wages), and balance it out with adequate investment into supporting infrastructure (data bases, libraries, etc.). Together, this
means that the requirements for high quality of advice provided are not very likely to be met.

These problems might be partially resolved by splitting contracts into smaller sections and present them for bidding separately in order to attract several advice providers with required specialised expertise. However such an approach might appear to be more time consuming and more costly (each separate contract requires staff time and funding in order to organise bidding process, etc.). Reliance on shorter-term contractual relationships as well as limited scope of the contract may result in lesser number of competent bidders, discourages partners to devote adequate attention to long-term issues. Limited perspectives for future contractual relations are serious disincentive for companies to make longer-term investments as well, as there are no guarantees of return on those investments. This leads us back to the problem of adequate support and expertise.

Contracting out the delivery of policy advice creates some other obstacles as well:

1. Lack of diversity in policy advice provided, as governments prefer advice from a larger range of theoretical and ideological perspectives;

2. Those who presented the best bid may not be acceptable to the political leaders, which again is a pre-condition to successful co-operation;

3. Possible conflicts of interest – independent experts are not always as independent as they might seem, besides high quality policy advice requires certain degree of confidentiality, while very often public procurement mechanisms do not allow for confidentiality;

4. Problems of co-ordination, both horizontal and vertical.

In other words, even though contracting out policy advice delivery may bring some of the benefits of market competition, it also brings in the usual problems related to the nature of public procurement processes. As Boston puts it “the fact [...] that the use of competitive tendering for the purchase of policy advice by governments has generally been kept within relatively limited bounds is not without good reason.” (Boston 1994, p. 28)
Strategies for improvement and the role of think-tanks

If contracting out for policy advice is not a panacea, and governments do and will continue to receive the bulk of policy advice from internal sources in the foreseeable future, then the development of internal policy advice mechanisms as well as personnel must be a priority task for any modern administration. Dror provides an innovative new model of high-quality policy development, which could be created through (Dror, 1997, p.62-67):

1. Establishment of post-graduate schools for policy professionals, including policy planning, and

2. Regional co-operation in setting up postgraduate professional public policy schools, to be shared by a number of countries that are similar in certain basic respects.

As second best possibilities to upgrade policy-planning professionalism Dror lists (ibid.):

1. If not a permanent possibly regionally based educational institution then at least sets of intensive workshops and courses in policy planning should be organised. Such activities should be initiated urgently, with regional and international co-operation and support.

2. Policy planning professionalism should be introduced into personal staffs of top politicians, both through accelerated training of present advisors and the injection of qualified professionals, who are politically and personally acceptable.

3. A unified professional central policy planning unit, working for the head of State or government and the cabinet as a whole, should be set up

4. National Policy R&D organisations have to be created.

5. Decision-making processes should be restructured so as to provide policy planning professionals with opportunities to work on critical choices and to input their products into actual choice processes.
6. Careful surveys of decision-making realities should serve as the basis for custom designs, fitting actual conditions of policy planning, professionalisation and institutionalisation.

7. All senior civil servants should become familiar with the fundamentals of policy planning and be encouraged to co-operate closely with policy planning professionals and units.

Dror’s suggestions focus on the two directions (a) upgrading institutions (restructuring decision-making processes and establishing new units or institutions) and (b) upgrading personnel (developing skills in policy analysis and planning). However, some of the suggestions are not as novel as it might seem, e.g. the creation or Research and development organisations. Despite the concerns raised by Boston regarding policy advice provision by external actors, a number of research institutes or ‘think tanks’² have been established across the world in order to meet the increasing need for research and analysis, and remain traditional providers of the background information as well as comprehensive and strategic policy proposals.

An interesting analysis of various institutions of the above type was carried out by van Kempen (van Kempen in *Mosterd bij de maaltijd*, 1995). His main conclusions are the following:

1. The need for think tanks dates primarily from the 1970s and this need arose simultaneously in a relatively large number of Western countries. Only a few think tanks predate 1940 and none before 1900.

2. It is unknown how many institutions formed and have disappeared until now, however the survey shows a continuing growth in the number of think tanks, and has accelerated in the last few years.

² “Public policy research institutions are non-profit, non-governmental organisations, that generate policy-oriented research, ideas, analysis, and formulations on domestic and international issues. For the most part, these organisations are not affiliated with academic institutions and do not grant degrees. A substantial portion of the financial and human resources of these institutions is devoted to commissioning and publishing research and policy analysis in the social sciences, economics, political science, public administration and international affairs. The major outputs of these organisations are books, monographs, reports, policy briefings, and informal discussions with policy makers and government officials. In addition, these institutions often act as a bridge between the academic and policy communities, translating applied and basic research into a language and form that meets the needs of busy policymakers.” (McGann in *Mosterd bij de maaltijd*, 1997).
3. Although think tanks occur all over the world, their institutional position varies from region to region, depending on the political culture of the government.

4. Think tanks differ from country to country in terms of institutional background as well: some were founded by government, others are separate from the government however are entitled to tax breaks or receive budgetary subsidies, others were established based on private funding (ibid.).

A review of the experience of currently existing institutions shows that think tanks continue to be useful in exploring the future and helping governments in policy formulation. At the same time the need to achieve the right balance in relations with the government if crucial if policy research institutions are to be sustainable. The main elements of a balanced relation with government are:

1. The need to maintain independence while building close working relationship with policy-makers;

2. Human resources with broad (horizontal) understanding of general trends and deep expertise in specific (or several) policy domain;

3. Achieving a balance between applied policy-oriented and scientific research.

**Civil servant: an instrument vs. active participant**

The main alternative to policy advice delivery by outside sources or specially trained policy analysts is making use of professional knowledge of civil servants. This alternative could be regarded as quite controversial, especially if one is a strong believer in the classical understanding of public administration neutrality. Indeed, the development of public administration as a field of study started from the efforts to define what public administration is and what processes and actors is the focus of analysis in this field. These initial developments led to the creation of the classical approach to public administrators as professional implementers. An orthodox strict politico-administrative dichotomy served its purpose and was very useful in the beginning of the development of the new field of study. It allowed identification and separation of a specific object of study for the sake of scientific inquiry. This classical approach is still potentially useful today for the purpose of defining the activities and
lines of accountability in civil service and subsequent search for more efficient, effective, innovative methods of work, new human resource strategies and managerial patterns, thus providing a basis for the reforms in public sector, especially while implementing civil service professionalisation measures.

However the context of public administration is a bit different from the classical ideal dichotomy. Svara’s politico-administrative complementarity model provides a broader perspective for the analysis of the interface among politicians and political appointees and career civil (public) servants. He writes “the complementarity of politics and administration holds that the relationship between elected officials and administrators is characterised by interdependency, extensive interaction, distinct but overlapping roles, and political supremacy and administrative subordination coexisting with reciprocity of influence in both policy making and administration. Complementarity means that politics and administration come together to form a whole in democratic governance.” (Svara, 1999) Professionals have various forms of power over policy making process: in the policy-making process itself, where they have an input into policy-making, the power to define needs and problems, the influence on the allocation of resources, power over ‘clients’ and the power to control their own work. Professionals, argues Wielding ‘gain power and influence as experts who are technically and politically useful to governments.’ (Wielding, 1982)

Hojnacki believes that it is impossible to have a successful public career within civil service without participating in activities with at least some political profile. Even though most governments create various mechanisms for prevention of civil service politicisation (e.g. regulations for communication with lobbies, restriction on participation in the activities of political parties or serving on boards of NGOs), still in “virtually all countries some involvement of high-level civil servants in the creation of policy initiatives is considered, under most circumstances, to be appropriate due to their professional expertise in their field of work” (Hojnacki in Bekke, Perry and Toonen, 1996).

At the same time, countries vary in the extent to which civil servants are able to exert influence on the substance of public policy, by influencing the selection of policy makers or directly influencing policy process by lobbying for one or another proposal, and the degree of the discretion public officials have in implementing adopted policies
(power-brokering, negotiations, compromises, etc.). In most countries the line what is an appropriate degree of civil service involvement in policy formulation is not very clear. Most often civil servants may draft policy proposals if they are asked to do so by the political appointees, as opposed to initiating this themselves. In addition, countries differ in the depth of political control exercised by the executive branch. For instance, in the UK and Japan policy initiatives usually are negotiated only between the top civil servants and political appointees, while in the US this negotiation process may include civil servants up to four levels down in order to secure their loyalty and support to the policy proposal. In conclusion, Hojnacki sets out two categories of politico-administrative interface. The first is the classical type, which includes all features of ideal bureaucracy as defined by Weber (civil service as an apparatus for the implementation of the decisions made by political elites). The second category is the independent civil service; a professional institution possessing the necessary power and tools to establish and implement political agenda. (Ibid.)

Most developed countries have established special units (planning units, advisory councils, general technical offices, etc.) within their administrative systems for the development of policy proposals. These structures are either located directly in the centre of government, or have specialised in various policy areas and are located in the line ministries. Summarising policy advice provision mechanisms in various countries Boston argues “most policy makers in democratic countries currently secure much of their advice from public bureaucracies”. Boston labels these bureaucratic units as “relatively specialised governance structures”, which are frequently characterised by “distinctive employment contracts and industrial relations provisions, a diverse and complex pattern of internal relations (generally of a non-market kind) well-developed codes of conduct, a distinctive ethos and organisational culture, and a unique relationship with policy makers.” (Boston, 1994) He also describes policy advisers in most bureaucracies as “career public servants employed on a more-or-less tenured basis, although recently there has been an increasing reliance in some countries on short-term performance-based employment contracts. On the whole the provision of policy advice is disaggregated with various departments and agencies having responsibility for a defined set of policy issues.”(Ibid.)
Policy advice mechanisms in Central and Eastern European states

Central and Eastern European states (CEECs) have created various mechanisms for strategic policy formulation and policy advice. These mechanisms can be internal (planning units within ministries, advisory boards, political advisers, inter-ministerial committees, expert committees, etc.), as well as external (contracting out to private companies, engaging think tanks or academic research institutions, and notably, experts of international bilateral or multilateral programs in some cases). Analysis shows that “policy development is still predominantly carried out outside the administration in many Central and Eastern European states […]” (Verheijen and Rabrenovic, 1999).

Institutional aspects

The development of improved policy-making mechanisms in Central and Eastern European countries should be an important part of an overall administrative capacity development strategy. However, it has proved to be one of the most difficult elements of the administrative development process due to the inherited highly centralised system of political control and administrative oversight. Goetz and Margetts present an interesting comparative analysis of both the OECD country experience based on the OECD/PUMA Profiles of Centres of Government prepared in 1996, and the evolving arrangements in post-Communist countries, as described in Profiles of Centres of Government in CEES compiled by SIGMA in 1998. The authors argue that several key tasks can be identified as shared by the majority of COGs. Among others they include:

1. administrative and political support and advice for the head of government;

2. administrative and political support and advice for the Council of Ministers (also referred to as Cabinet or Government);

3. policy planning and development;

4. monitoring of policy implementation. (Goetz and Margetts, 1998)

They argue that Centres of Governments (COGs) are usually the bodies that serve as strategic policy formulating units and gatekeepers for the head of the government and
the cabinet in those cases when policy proposals reach the cabinet from lower levels of government. However, the structure and exact tasks of COGs vary from country to country. Generally COGs provide not only technical-administrative support but also policy-political advice to the head of the government and the whole cabinet, especially since many of the ministers in analysed countries are leading party politicians and often MPs. Thus often “support and advice to the Prime Minister are not restricted exclusively to his executive role, but will generally extend to the party-political and parliamentary spheres.” (Ibid.)

On the basis of their analysis of the CEECs, Goetz and Margetts conclude that generally COGs in countries of transition play a role in policy planning in the some significant areas such as “economic liberalisation, marketisation and privatisation; foreign and security policy; European integration, in particular relations with the European Union; and institutional reform, notably of public administration.” (Ibid.)

In areas not covered by COGs (in some cases in overlapping areas as well) line ministries or other central agencies are responsible for formulating policies in their specific areas of responsibility (SIGMA COG profiles, 1998). Policy development work remains mainly the task of the minister (or head of an agency) and top political appointees with the assistance of political advisers. Bodies with varying titles, such as inter-ministerial commissions, advisory councils, boards, committees, and working groups, etc. were formed in order to prepare some of the more important policies.

However despite efforts to form new policy formulation and co-ordination systems, policy-making in CEECs remains top heavy. Strategic policy formulation, decision making and implementation co-ordination continues to be reserved to the top political figures, and policy advice is mainly secured from party-political advisers or by civil servants in the very top of the ministerial hierarchy. (Verheijen and Rabrenovic, 1999, Verheijen, 1999) Often the above mentioned special bodies for policy planning and co-ordination exist only on paper or are inefficient due to slow policy co-ordination and negotiation processes and inter-ministerial rivalries. In some countries, e.g. Poland and Hungary, (Verheijen, 2000) the attempts to reform the policy process have been more substantial, while some others only recently started laying the foundation
for rationalisation of policy processes. However, the reluctance of the politicians to carry through de facto reform of policy making systems may create additional obstacles to institutionalisation of adopted legal norms (Verheijen, 2000).

*The role of civil servants*

Besides institutional arrangements for policy making the role of professionals should be analysed as a reflection the degree of decentralisation in administration as well. The SIGMA reports on Civil Service and State Administration systems in CEE show, that practically in all reviewed countries it is common practice that such advice is provided by professional civil servants in the form of draft statements and other documents drafted by the request of political appointees.

Moreover, reviews of legal civil service framework show that often laws stipulate that administrators’ suggestions on how to make administrative process more efficient and effective are welcome. However, innovative proposals coming from civil servants outside of the circle of political appointees and advisers, or provision of strategic policy advice are neither generally encouraged nor sought for. Despite this general trend there are some exceptions to this rule, although those exceptions are limited to specific institutions, rather than governments. For example, in Estonia case an agency established an annual prize for the most innovative idea (while at the same time there are known cases when civil, servants were fired for suggesting new ideas to the management), while the Romanian analyst stated that innovative ideas can be presented in professional publications or seminars. Unfortunately it remains unknown how many of such ideas and suggestions are considered as worthwhile in policy planning process as most experts in SIGMA review indicated that there is no direct data on civil servants participation in policy advice provision (SIGMA CSSA reviews, 1999).

Two countries, not included in SIGMA reviews but analysed in the studies of politico-administrative interface are Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and Russian

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3 The adoption of the Law on Public Administration in Bulgaria in 1998, defining the type of institutions that can exist in the state administration, their inter-relations and functions, adoption of a similar law in Lithuania in July, 1999 and current efforts to re-define the administrative organisation of the state in Latvia are the examples of such effort.
The Russian civil service seems at first glance to be an independent system able to set political agenda and implement it. However, professionalism and protection from undue political influences are absent, thus making majority of Russian public administrators unable to suggest innovations, express opinions or influence policy development process otherwise. The Russian situation is quite distinctive from other countries where politico-administrative interface was analysed, and remnants of autocratic tradition are more obvious there than in other post-Soviet states covered by this study. Despite of the declared reform direction towards neutral and professional civil service the situation in Russia remains much the same as in Soviet times especially since many of former Communist party members entered civil service or simply remained there. Therefore it is likely that in the future reform attempts will focus on separation of politics and administration, ‘restoring’ mutual trust. The development of policy planning capacities within the administration will remain in second place at best. (Kotchegura in Verheijen, 1999).

Sevic and Rabrenovic argue that in Serbia, at least up to 1998 elections, despite apparent convenience for civil servants to migrate between politics and administration and to use this to promote their political agenda, in real life administrators did not have much influence on strategic policy planning. They write that ministers create their own ‘management team’ of political appointees, while civil servants hardly have a chance to work closely with ministers. Generally policy negotiation is limited to the top layers of civil service and policy advice provision is reserved for the political appointees and party-policy advisers. Sevic and Rabrenovic argue that some of the political parties not only disregard civil service problems but are even hostile towards the civil service. (Sevic and Rabrenovic in Verheijen, 1999)

Four factors appear to have a significant influence on the degree of participation of civil servants in policy planning process and therefore are important for the development of the quality of policy planning systems:
1. Protection from undue political influence (including protection from possible consequences if suggested ideas/innovations/policies are not in line with personal preferences of political leaders).

2. Existence of proper incentives to suggest innovations and participate in policy formulation/advice provision.

3. Existence and type of mechanisms through which civil servants can suggest ideas/innovations/policies.

4. Existence of special professional development and educational programmes in policy analysis and planning.

The first condition has been fulfilled to some degree, through the adoption of civil service legislation. The second and third pre-condition are fulfilled only on a declarative level or dependent on the personality of the political heads of institutions. The fourth pre-condition is largely unfulfilled beyond some capacities at universities or other academic institutions. Thus it is not surprising that often it is easier to look for policy advice outside the administration due to lack of policy analysis and planning competencies of public administrators, as well as their unwillingness to take initiative in suggesting innovations and modernisation of the administrative and policy processes.

Services of various consulting companies, research institutes and notably advice coming from international consortiums within bilateral or multilateral programmes (e.g. PHARE, UNDP, World Bank, British Know-How Fund, etc.) are readily available to CEE governments and are used by them. Examples of such use are participation of PHARE projects in Lithuanian institutional building planning as well as Civil Service Law drafting, the role of STRATEGMA and Center for the Study of Democracy in key policy areas in Bulgaria and the activities of the Polish Academy of Sciences Committee “Polska w XXI Wieku”. However, the use of external resources in CEECs can be and is rather complicated. The two pre-conditions for contracting-out policy advice delivery, set out by Boston and discussed in the beginning of this paper, are often not met and public procurement process in this area are still not well organised.
**Horizontal and vertical co-ordination**

The first condition set out by Boston is well-developed horizontal and vertical co-ordination mechanisms. In reality the development of horizontal and vertical co-ordination is a key problem in CEE states. Even though COGs are nominally responsible for policy co-ordination, in reality this remains little more than a formality. High turnover in governments as well as personnel, a high degree of factionalisation and rivalry among the members of coalition governments, competition and *turf battles* among strong and weak ministries, as well as absence of general *esprit de corps* are some of the main obstacles in guaranteeing levels of co-ordination necessary for successful policy advice ‘privatisation’ (Verheijen in *Verheijen*, 1998).

**Mutual trust**

As regards the second condition formulated by Boston, it is rather difficult to speak of mutual trust in CEECs where relationships between government and academia or government and consultants are concerned. Research shows that often public officials are unwilling to provide complete and unbiased data to outsiders, on the other hand often policy proposals suggested by the outsiders frequently are considered as inept or too idealistic and impossible to implement. Evaluation of PHARE programmes in the areas of public administration reform and European Integration showed that quite a few policy proposals and documents, although drafted by the request of the national governments, are still gathering dust on the shelves in government offices (Evaluation of PHARE programmes, 1999).

In addition to these problems – public procurement systems in CEE countries are not functioning as well as they should in order to guarantee successful contracting out procedures, while problematic situations and transitional pains do not allow for long periods of time necessary for proper research and policy advice development. To make things even more problematic – a lack of internal capacity within administration to manage such contracts poses serious threats to timeliness and quality of policy advice provided by the outsiders.
Clearly long-lasting mutual distrust, a lack of balance in policy advice provision, and excessive centralisation of policy planning efforts only aggravate already existing problems:

1. Insufficient preparation and co-ordination of governmental decisions, especially in those cases where inter-ministerial committees and other bodies responsible for policy drafting and co-ordination among interested parties exist only on paper. Poor co-ordination among the ministries and other concerned agencies further delays policy implementation to a point when the suggestions made by the advisers become obsolete.

2. Cabinet and COG overload, partly as a result of the inadequate preparation of decisions, and in some countries partly due to the fact that COGs are 'rowing, not steering'. At the end of the day governments end up reacting to crises, instead of focusing on forecasting and prevention.

3. Weak inter-sectoral integration and lack of co-ordination, including rivalry between departments and committees depending on the political affiliation of their heads, which is especially acute under coalition governments, i.e. majority of CEECs.


In the end this results in strongly felt lack of strategic as well as operational policy advice, and as a consequence in the lack of long-term approach in policy planning, continuity in policy implementation and general weakness of policy formulation systems in many of the CEECs. This is confirmed by the SIGMA baseline assessment, where policy formulation and co-ordination systems stand out among the most problematic areas in the horizontal administrative capacity development in CEE. However, internal and external pressures as well as current budgetary conditions may force governments to devote more attention not only to adoption of new laws and professionalisation of civil service, but also to the creation of well-balanced systems
of politico-administrative relations, including well-designed mechanisms for provision and use of policy advice.

Conclusions

For a long time western scholars considered professionalism and clear limitation of the role of civil servants to implementation of policies to be the main pre-conditions to efficient, effective and transparent bureaucracy. Analyses of politico-administrative relations in Central and Eastern European states lead to the conclusion that post-Soviet governments are infatuated with the idea of classical politics-administration dichotomy. However such an infatuation seems to be based mainly on the inherent distrust among politicians and civil servants. Some of the reasons for this mistrust are the alleged lack of skills on the side of the professionals and the inclination to put undue political pressure on the side of the others.

This a lack of confidence in relations between politicians and administrators resulted in a situation, where politicians are more inclined to rely on their own advisers or contracted policy analysts and consultants to provide policy advice, instead of using expert knowledge accumulated by civil servants in their institutions (Verheijen and Rabrenovic, 1999). In addition, the attempts to draw a clear line between political and administrative activities often are limited to the restriction of civil servants involvement in policy formulation. In most countries public administration reform efforts focus on the protection of civil servants from undue political influences, without considering the nature of the equilibrium between the administrative and political components of government.

In their quest for better policy advice and more efficient policy formulation CEE governments should consider strategies set out by Dror and summarised in this paper. Obviously such changes, if recommendations were to be implemented in their entirety, would mean a significant shift in policy planning mechanisms, strong political and top civil service support is absolutely necessary, especially since long-term policy implementation requires higher initial investment than ‘putting down the fires’ (which is current practice especially in CEECs) method of crisis resolution. Political costs of such shift are rather high thus making such a support rather complicated. Some other concerns in relation to such radical changes exist as well.
One such concern is the prevailing political culture in CEECs, which will have to change quite significantly before these suggestions can be implemented.

In the mean time governments should make the best use of the capacities which already exist in their countries or region. More attention should be given to policy proposals and policy advice drafted by the existing research institutes, especially as regards long-term development tendencies, global social and economic trends, in order to improve government capacities to forecast crises and attempt to prevent them instead of constantly ‘putting out fires’

Contrary to what political appointees might believe, professional expertise and experience in policy implementation often are the best basis for providing advice as to what course of action should be taken. On the other hand it is absolutely necessary to devote more time and resources for the development of policy planning capacities within the government, since whether policy advice is received from the external or internal sources, still highly qualified personnel will be necessary in order to assess viability and relevance of advice provided.

Finally, despite the quality and expedience of policy advice provision mechanisms, without significant improvement in policy co-ordination mechanisms general policy planning capacities will not reach necessary level in most Central and Eastern European Countries.
References


Legal acts and other documents


