

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS: SPAIN, PORTUGAL, CANADA

Mihaela PĂCEȘILĂ

*Department of Public Administration, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania,
pacesilamihaela@yahoo.com*

Abstract

The paper focuses on the specifics of public policies process in three countries: two of them are European Union members - Spain, and Portugal - and the third is located on the American continent - Canada. Choosing the three countries is due to the fact that the issues presented have a common point: they focus on the procedures for the transmission of documents in the framework of the process rather than on the activities of the ministries for public policies development and analysis.

The last part of the paper examines comparatively the three countries described above (Spain, Portugal and Canada), highlighting similarities and differences between them. The specific elements of the public policies process of these countries are also described here, which could be used also in other countries in order to improve the process and to better meet citizens' needs and problems.

Keywords: initial draft of the public policy proposal, agenda setting, internal and external negotiation, evaluation culture, re-examination of public policy.

1. PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS APPROACH IN THE INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

The public policy process is a complex one and implies dimensions mechanisms and actors within a network of interrelations. One of the more known means to make it easier to understand is to divide the process in several distinct stages and sub-stages. The cycle of a policy is the succession of these stages of the implementation process of that policy. The idea that we can realize this cutting up of the process of any policy comes from the early papers dedicated to the analysis of policies. In general, it is not accepted at present anymore; but often we resort to it in order to make the presentation of the process more intuitive and easier. (Moldoveanu, G. and Păceșilă M. 2008; Păceșilă, M. 2009).

In practice this process is not as simple and does not meet the same sequence of steps as in theory. Often those involved in this process need to make repeated efforts to reach satisfactory results. There are also situations where planning is continuous: once concluded the public policies cycle, finalized by the ex-post evaluation, it sets a new agenda and the process is resumed (General Secretariat of the Romanian Government, 2006).

In the specialized literature of international and national level, there are several approaches of the public policies cycle and of the stages which compose it. Of these, in the present study, the most significant are presented for organizing our understanding of what is happening and what not. It should be noted however that such approaches do not represent processes applicable to any problematic situations. In fact, these models are not necessarily found in all real cases, because in the society there is a plurality of actors, situations and problems.

An example of model of the policies which is not based on stages is the one of the **black box**, proposed by Easton (1965).

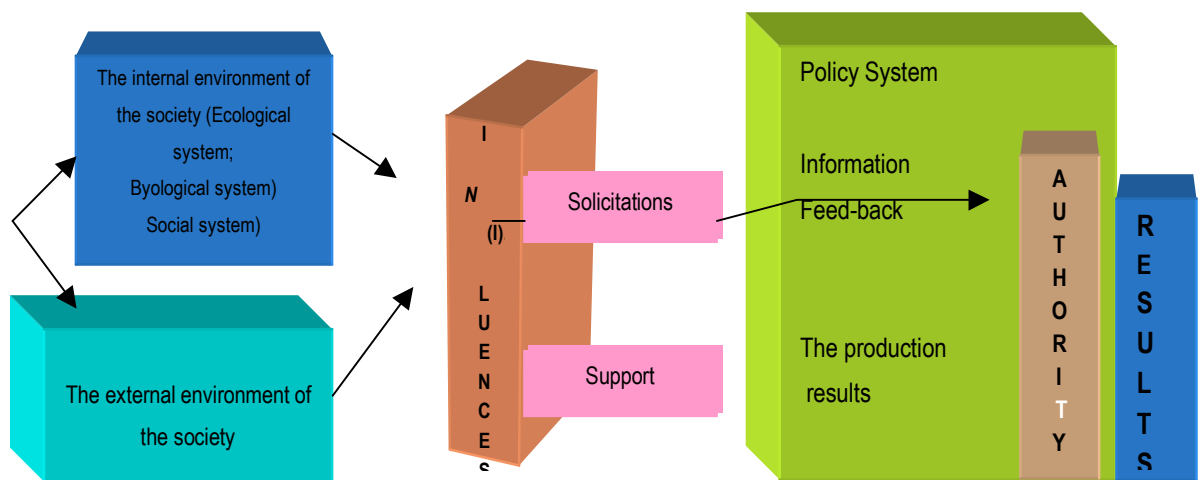


FIGURE 1 - THE PUBLIC POLICIES CYCLE – EASTON'S MODEL

In this model the process of the policies in its interrelations with the environment in which it evolves: Easton discusses the influences (inputs) which came through various channels (parties, mass media, groups of interests); processes inside the political system; the conversion of these inputs into results. (Miroiu, A. 2001; Păceșilă and Profiroiu, 2006; Păceșilă M., 2008).

Another conceptualization is the one issued by Brewer (Brewer, 1974) which comprises the following stages:

- Initiation of the policy
- Estimation of the alternatives
- Selection of the option
- Implementation of the policy
- Evaluation of the policy
- Finalization of the policy.

The public policies process was given also other conceptualizations: For instance, according to Hogwood and Gunn (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984) the stages of the cycle of public policy are the following:

- (1) To decide to decide (identifying the problems or establishing the agenda)
- (2) To decide how to decide (or filtering the problems)
- (3) Defining the problems
- (4) Forecast
- (5) Establishing the objectives and priorities
- (6) Analyzing the options
- (7) Implementation, monitoring and control of the policy
- (8) Evaluation and revising
- (9) Maintaining, succession and finalizing the policy.

According to Howlett and Ramesh, a principle of solving the problem corresponds to each stage of the process. (Howlett and Ramesh, 1995).

Principles of problem solving

1. Problem recognition
2. Proposal of solutions
3. Choice of a solution
4. Application of the solution
5. Monitoring the results

Stages in the cycle of public policy

1. Formulation of the agenda
2. Formulation of policy
3. Making a decision
4. Implementation of the policy
5. Evaluation of the applied policy

According to this model, *formulation of the agenda* refers to the process in which the problems get to the attention of the governors; *formulation of policy* refers to the process in which the policy options are formulated by the governors; *making a decision* refers to the process in which the governors decide to act in a certain way (or not to act); *implementation of the policy* refers to the process in which the governors apply the adopted policy; *evaluation of the applied policy* refers to the process in which the results of the policy are monitored both by the government institutions and the society. (Chirițoiu and Pinteș, 2005)

2. THE ROLE OF MINISTRIES IN THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE

2.1. *The general framework for public policy process at central level*

In Spain the public policy cycle places ministries in a principal position. The public policy making process contains various phases in which ministries are present in one way or another. These phases are the followings: **the policy initiative phase, the development of the initial draft of the proposal, the negotiation with other ministries, the approval of the Council of Ministers.** In the end, the ministries are responsible for the monitoring and the evaluation of the approved public policy.

*„At the beginning of the **policy initiative** phase, it is the leadership of the minister that determines the category of proposal put forward as a solution to a specific problem. The leadership capacity of the minister outside the ministry depends on his/her political influence and on the relative weight of the ministry within the government as a whole./.../ Throughout the definition process of public policy and the shaping of a legislative proposal, it is the opinion of the Ministry of Economy and Finance that is most listened to and which normally brings about major changes to a proposal. /.../ The initial policy proposal may originate from the minister, his/her cabinet or other ministry officials. The cabinet of the minister, together with the cabinets of the secretaries of state, constitute the “first line” of advice for the minister. Besides these cabinets, ministries have their own analysis and recommendation structures”.* (Lopez, 2006).

The development of the initial draft of public policy proposal becomes the responsibility of the secretary of state after the minister's decision on supporting or promoting a particular public policy proposal. The Secretaries of State establish the stakeholders' objectives regarding the particular public policy proposal in order to focus on its important aspects. The definitive public policy proposal is then negotiated with other ministries. This process takes place in the presence of General Commission of Secretaries of State and Undersecretaries. After the Council of Minister approved the proposal, this will be presented to the Parliament. If additional parliamentary support is needed for the approval of the proposal, ministry officials advise the parliamentary group that supports the government during the negotiation process.

2.2 Functions of ministries in the public policy cycle

Ministries involved in the public policy process exercise the following functions: initiative, negotiation and support.

The function of initiative includes the following activities: identification of the problem, setting options, preparation of the legal documentation. **The function of negotiation** includes the consultation of interest groups and the negotiation with other ministries and the Centre of the Government. **The function of support** refers to the dissemination campaign concerning the importance of the public policy proposal and to the preparation of recommendations to the parliamentary group supporting the government.

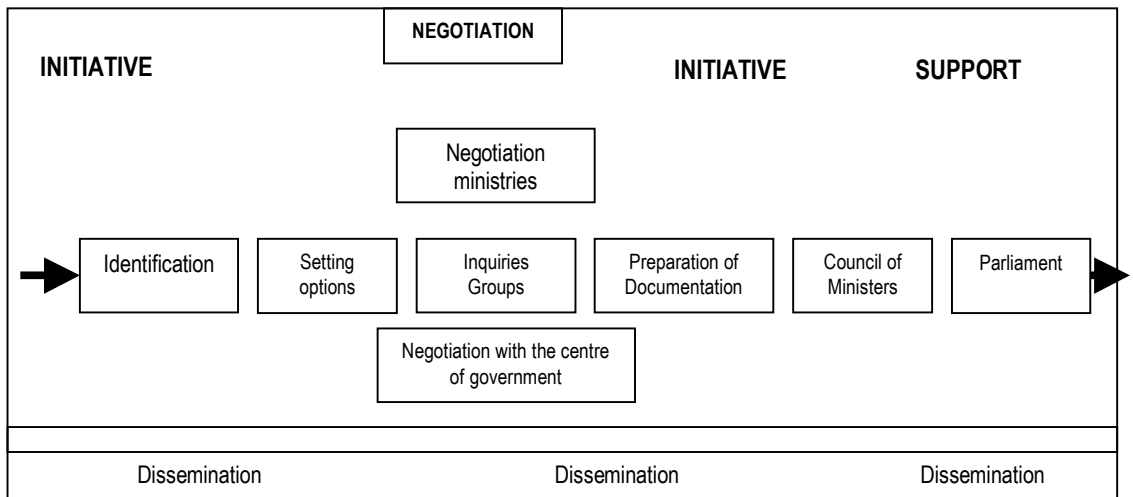


FIGURE 2 - FUNCTIONS OF MINISTRIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC POLICY IN SPAIN
 Source: Lopez (2006).

The function of initiative

The problem identified comes usually from a government program, which is an executive summary of the electoral program. This one takes shape in a legislative calendar, namely a comprehensive document prepared by the Centre of the Government in coordination with the ministries. The other sources of problem identification are public opinion and international agreements. Once the problem was determined, the presentation of the alternatives and the selection of a particular option depend on two factors: the compromises to the government program and the costs of the alternatives.

After the negotiation with the interested parties, the problem takes shape in a normative proposal. This proposal must be accompanied by an explicative memorandum as well as an economic memorandum which are obligatory.

The function of negotiation

„The function of negotiation is exercised as much within the ministry as outside it. Within the ministry, inquiries are made among the various secretaries of state. /.../ Parallel to these negotiations/internal agreements, external negotiations are carried out. These negotiations/inquiries are made partly with interest groups and partly with outside specialists. The inquiries have a regulated part – the obligation to make the information public – and another part that is discretionary for the ministry. The Internet is of great assistance in these external inquiries. Through their official web pages, ministries are able to show citizens their proposals or reports on a particular issue. This system also allows ministries to collect citizens' suggestions, but this possibility is for the moment infrequently used by ministries”.(Lopez, 2006).

The external negotiation is carried out with other ministries and with the Centre of the Government through the President's Office. Members of the cabinets of ministers and secretaries of state establish working groups with members of the President's Office in order to analyze the public policy proposal.

Negotiation with other ministries is carried out in two phases. In the first phase, during the preparation of the initial draft of the public policy proposal and after assuming the minister's position, this negotiation is accomplished by request. The technical general secretary of the ministry answers to other ministries' observations regarding the proposal. If other ministries' observations are not taken into account, this thing must be explained to be understood by these ministries. The second phase is carried out through the General Commission of Secretaries of State and Undersecretaries. In its regular weekly meetings, the Commission analyzes all the public policy proposals. Usually, a policy proposal needs three weeks to be approved by the Commission, before the Council of Ministers' decision.

The Commission officially meets on Wednesdays under the direction of the Prime Minister. It functions permanently as a 'Virtual Commission. The "Virtual Commission" is a computer application that allows ministries to comment on particular proposals. After the meeting, the Commission establishes two indexes. The red index collects all proposals where no agreement has been reached. These problems can be postponed until the following meeting, abandoned or maintained.

The green index is the second index developed by the Commission. It is composed of those proposals approved by the Commission. Having reached an approval in the Commission, the Council of Ministers approves them without discussions. The Council of Ministers has the authority to reexamine a proposal that has already been approved by the Commission and even to reject it.

„The economic aspects of all proposals are negotiated in an interministerial manner. The Economic Affairs Delegate Commission analyzes the impact and relevance of a proposal from the point of view of rationality and control of public expenditure. /.../Except for emergency reasons, no issue that has budgetary or

economic repercussions can be dealt with in the General Commission of Secretaries of State and Undersecretaries if it has not been previously reviewed by the Economic Affairs Delegate Commission. In fact, if the review of a proposal is planned, the Delegate Commission meets in the week preceding the meeting of the General Commission" (Lopez, 2006).

By presenting the proposal, they want to obtain the support from the interest groups. The fact that it is the minister who heads these meetings increases the chances of success. A similar situation occurs in the interministry negotiation. The degree of involvement of head of department has a significant impact on chances of success. In this case, the relative importance of the ministry and its political weight determine the level of authority of the ministry in achieving the objectives.

The function of support

„The function of support covers an entire series of activities that are difficult to classify. Among the many diverse functions, two are of particular importance: explanation of the policy proposal and recommendations during the parliamentary proceedings to examine the proposal. Explanation of the policy proposal covers all activities that are bound to define the proposal and provide the reasons that have motivated the administration – including the reason why it has opted for one solution as opposed to another”. (Lopez, 2006).

Monitoring and evaluation

This function do not yet have a well-development in Spain. Many ministries rely on statistical monitoring entities: there are two institutions which provide up-to-date socioeconomic data to officials responsible for policy-making - the National Statistics Institute (under the Ministry of Economy and Finance) and the Centre for Sociological Research (under the Ministry of the Presidency). The government has created a Public Policies Quality Evaluation Agency, under the Ministry of Public Administration, collaborating with officials and professionals from several sectors. (Păceșilă, M. 2008).

3. THE ACTUAL PROCESS OF PUBLIC POLICY MAKING AT CENTRAL LEVEL IN PORTUGAL

The framework for public policies is established in three documents:

- The Government Programme: The Prime Minister is responsible for its preparation, establishing for this purpose a special task force comprising mainly the members of government at the centre of government.
- Major Options of National Plan: define the objectives and main actions that must be carried out in the medium term (five years).

- State Budget: defines in detail the financial resources allocated for public policies development.

Under the umbrella of these main instruments each minister is responsible for the development of public policy (initiative, planning, drafting, negotiating, monitoring and evaluating) in the area of competence. However, we cannot underestimate the special role of the Minister of Finance and Public Administration.

“Ministers act on their own to develop sector policies, for which they assume the responsibility. This competence includes the right/duty to draft legislation and the leadership of the entire process up until the Centre of the Government includes the draft proposal on the agenda for approval by the Council of Ministers (the ministry therefore ensures internal negotiations with other ministries and external negotiations with social partners or other interest groups). Ministers are politically accountable to the Prime Minister, parliament and, of course, the citizens for activities within their competence”. (Nabais, 2006).

In these circumstances, ministers have to interact with the Secretaries of State, asking their cabinets and services of the ministries to prepare the initial draft of public policy proposals. During the legislative process, the Minister must inform the Centre of the Government in order to ensure the proposal submission for approval by the Council of Ministers and, depending on the case, to also prepare its submission to parliament. When the initial proposal is ready, the Minister begins negotiations with other ministries. After the minister reached agreement with other concerned ministries - or at least has managed to avoid misunderstandings at the political level - he will discuss the proposal with social partners and other interest groups.

After negotiations and consultations with various stakeholders, the proposal will be reviewed and then will be sent to the Centre of Government in order to be included on the agenda of the following a meeting of secretaries of state (where each minister is represented). The proposal is then included on the Council of Ministers agenda, in accordance with its procedures (Resolution 82/2005 of the Council of Ministers currently defines these procedures).

The proposal sent to the Centre of Government in order to be discussed must be accompanied by an introductory memorandum explaining the objectives, the proposed solution, the compatibility of the proposal with the government program and European regulations, the financial and human resources that are available, the consultations carried out and their results, and expected impact. A press release on the subject may also be included.

The ministries may present their formal comments or request additional information on the proposal. These comments are sent to the Centre of Government and to the Minister responsible for the proposal. Finally, the Centre of Government may conduct meetings with representatives of various ministries for final

reexamination of the proposal. Then, the proposal will be presented for preliminary evaluation in the secretary of state meeting and subsequently submitted for the decision by the Council of Ministers.

During the discussion and approval of the proposal, the minister plays an important role in defending it and responding to questions. If the public policy proposal needs parliamentary approval, the minister should talk to lawmakers, either in plenary sessions or special committees. At the end of each meeting of the Council of Ministers, the government holds a press conference in order to communicate the decisions adopted.

TABLE1 - THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS IN PORTUGAL

Phases	Action	Actor
Studying and drafting	Initiative	Minister
	Initial draft	Service of the ministry and/or Minister's Cabinet
	Negotiation (1 st phase with horizontal ministries and external negotiation)	Minister
	Revised draft	Minister
Decision-making	Agenda setting	Centre of the Government
	Negotiation (2 nd phase: internal negotiation)	Centre of the Government and Minister
	Discussion in Secretaries of State meeting	Centre of the Government
	Final draft	Centre of the Government and Minister
	Discussion and approval in the Council of Ministers	Centre of the Government and Minister
Implementation	Discussion in Parliament	Minister
	Communication	Minister
	Monitoring and evaluation	Services of the ministry

The source: Nabais (2006). The role of ministries in the public policy cycle in Portugal. SIGMA: Support for Improvement in Governance and Management. A joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union, principally financed by the EU

Monitoring and evaluation of public policy

„The system of monitoring and evaluating public policy is weak, and governmental responsibility for its development is with ministers, each in his/her respective area. An increasing interest in this activity has resulted, on the one hand, from a growing perception of the importance of monitoring and evaluating policies as a way of increasing the quality of governance (by designing, adjusting and reviewing public policy) and, on the other, from the need to report on progress to citizens, the media, international organizations (e.g. OECD) and supranational bodies (e.g. EU, UN). Parliament is also stressing the need to monitor and evaluate public policy because MPs, through various parliamentary means (such as monthly debates with the Prime Minister and requests addressed to the government), are demanding more and more information about the policies that are being implemented and the achievement of expected results”(Nabais, 2006).

In order to assure the activities of monitoring and evaluation of public policies, the ministers have special services or units that provide prospective and evaluation studies. Ministers are using the information obtained from these studies and statistics (for example the National Statistics Institute) or even from university

research centres. They are also signing contracts with private companies and evaluators in order to carry out evaluations of specific public policies or programmes. (Profiroiu, Profiroiu and Păceșilă, 2008).

4. PARTICULARITIES OF PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE IN CANADA

4.1. Aspects of public policy process in Canada

The public policy process places the federal and provincial level of government in a principal position. The civil service has also an important role, because it is responsible for designing the options that will come back to Cabinet. The figure no. 3 presents the Canadian public policy cycle. This diagram points out the iterative nature of public policy making process between political actors on the one hand and the bureaucratic actors on the other hand.

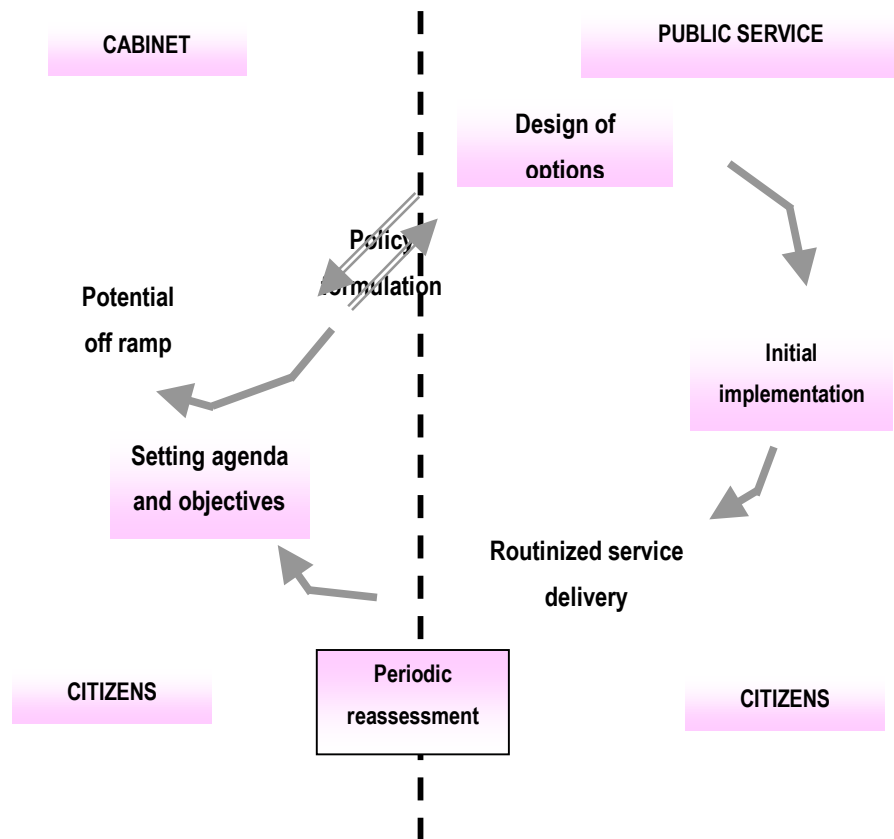


FIGURE 3 - THE PUBLIC POLICY CYCLE IN CANADA

The source: Marchildon (2001)

Setting the agenda and the identification of the public policy objectives are the responsibility of the cabinet. The civil servants develop options that will be sent back to Cabinet that will establish more specific public policy objectives. The process often involves a constructive tension between the two actors necessitating compromise on both sides in order to produce workable policy options and to achieve the original objectives

of Cabinet. And often two or three iterations between the civil service and Cabinet are necessary before ministers accepting one or another policy option. Although the diagram does not mention it, the parliamentary committees are involved in this process and they approve the public policy. (Păceșilă, M. 2007).

The public policy cycle is “incremental, continuous and hopefully as systematic as possible. In most contexts, these qualities are its strengths. But they can also become its weaknesses if circumstances suddenly change or if long held assumptions underpinning a set of policies, no longer hold, or are perceived to be fundamentally flawed, either by the electorate or the elected members sitting in the cabinet room. In such situations, the policy cycle can be punctuated by a major, and often discontinuous, shift in political agenda setting” (Marchildon, 2001).

4.3. Monitoring and evaluation of the public policy

The monitoring and evaluation process is well developed in Canada. The Cabinet has the main role in monitoring and evaluation of the policy approved. The existing evaluation culture in this country and the evaluation associations (for example Canadian Evaluation Society has 1200 members) represent a real progress in the public policy process. They publish essays, theoretical papers and take part in scientific conferences, etc. (Profiroiu, Profiroiu and Păceșilă, 2008).

4.4. Instruments used in public policy process

When governments have concluded that a fundamental re-examination of public policy is necessary, they will try to focus on new approaches. In these circumstances, governments are often tempted to neglect the decisions of the most important actors in this process: the Cabinet and the Public service. Often the parliamentary government is constrained both by partisans pursuing their own interests and by political opponents and that is why governments, in reviewing any public policy, rarely use parliamentary committees. (Păceșilă, M. 2008).

„There are also times that government will want the review completed by an entity with fewer or no ties to the status quo policy and by a person or organization that is seen to be independent of the entire government and therefore “objective.”/.../. There are a number of potential vehicles available to governing parties at the federal and provincial levels, each with different attributes. /.../. Each has its advantages and its disadvantages. No one instrument is inherently superior to the others. More importantly, the very structural characteristic that is strength in one set of circumstances can become a weakness in a different set of circumstances”. (Marchildon, 2001).

- 1. The permanent external advisory bodies** are specialized organizations with a lengthy tenure, independent from government. Their reports are made public although they are addressed for those

people that are directly affected by their recommendations. One of their strengths refers to the fact that they provide long-term advice to governments. Their weakness is that interest in the body's work can decrease with time because the general practice consultation could become a priority. On a more negative note, some permanent external advisory bodies could be influenced, or even captured, by the powerful interest groups.

2. **Departmental or ministerial task forces** are temporary **external advisory bodies** appointed by the minister of a department or by the first minister on behalf of the minister of the affected department. For example, we can mention at least four recent provincial health "commissions in Canada – *the Sinclair Commission in Ontario, the Clair Commission in Quebec, the Fyke Commission in Saskatchewan and the Mazankowski Task Force in Alberta*" – all these are ministerial task forces for health. (Marchildon, 2001).
3. **The Royal Comissions** are either public policy commissions or investigative commissions of inquiry. The former has "to research and develop policy options with public input on wide-ranging issues", and the latter has to "investigate individual or institutional misconduct". The most important recent federal commissions of the policy type are "**the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) of the early 1990s and the Royal Commission on Canada's Economic Union and Development Prospects (Macdonald Commission) of the early 1980s**". As for provincial royal commissions, there have not been too many during the last two decades and three of them had dealt with aspects of health care reform in the 1980s: "**the Quebec Commission on Health and Social Services (the Rochon Commission), the Newfoundland Royal Commission on Hospital and Nursing Homes Costs and the Nova Scotia Royal Commission on Health Care**". (Marchildon, 2001).

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE THREE COUNTRIES IN THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS

Tacking into account the variability of approaches, the information presented can be very useful. It varies enormously in terms of focus, describing the overall structure of government and ministries or only the cabinet.

The choice of examples is difficult and can distort the meaning or the definition of the selected item in the global context. However, the aspects presented have a common point: they focus on the procedures for the transmission of documents in the framework of the process rather than on the activities of the ministries for public policies development and analysis. This is due to differences in approach and policy-making capacity

in the various ministries. These entire things make the presentation of the process difficult. Besides all these, information about normal practice is difficult to obtain.

Both in Spain and in Portugal the public policy cycle places the ministries and their units in a principal position. In **Canada**, the most important actors in this process are the Cabinet and the Public service at federal and provincial level of government.

An important difference between these countries refers to the **level of the public policy making process**. In Canada, the public policy cycle is incremental, continuous and hopefully as systematic as possible, involving two actors - political actors (the Cabinet) and the bureaucratic actors (the Civil Service). Comparative to the European countries, here we can speak of two levels: federal and provincial level of government. In Spain and Portugal, the public policy making process places the ministries and their units in a main position, but we can speak only of one level. This situation is due to the Canadian federal political system, where decisions are made both at federal and provincial level. In Spain, a regional state, and in Portugal, a unitary state, there is one level, namely the central level.

There are also other important differences regarding **the stages of the public policy cycle**. We can notice that in all these countries the most important stages of the public policy process – **elaboration, implementation and evaluation** – are presented.

In Spain, we can talk about **four phases** in the **elaboration process**:

- The policy initiative phase
- The development of the initial draft of the proposal
- The negotiation with other ministries
- The approval of the Council of Ministers.

After the Council of Ministers approval, the proposal is presented to the parliament. **The proposal will be implemented only after the parliament's approval**. If additional parliamentary support is needed for the approval of the proposal, ministry officials advise the parliamentary group that supports the government during the negotiation process. In the end, the **ministries are responsible for the monitoring and the evaluation of the approved public policy**.

In Portugal, the public policy cycle has **three phases** and each of them are divided in other subphases:

- **Studying and drafting**: initiative, initial draft, negotiation (1st phase: with horizontal ministries and external negotiation), revised draft.

- *Decision-making*: agenda setting, negotiation (2nd phase: internal negotiation), discussion in Secretaries of State meeting, final draft, discussion and approval in Council of Ministers
- *Implementation*
- Discussion in Parliament
- Communication
- Monitoring and evaluation

If the public policy proposal needs parliamentary approval, the minister should talk to lawmakers, either in plenary sessions or special committees.

The stages in the Canadian public policy process are the followings:

- *Public policy formulation*
- Setting agenda and objectives of the public policy
- Design of options
- Potential off ramp
- *Public policy implementation*
- *Periodic reassessment of public policy.*

Both in Spain and in Portugal, the initial draft of the public policy needs two types of negotiations: the negotiation with the ministries and the negotiation with the Centre of the Government. In Canada the situation is different, because we cannot talk about the negotiation with the ministries. The public policy making process requires two or three iterations between the civil service and Cabinet (or cabinet committees) both at federal and provincial level before ministers are comfortable with one or another policy option.

Another important aspect refers to the fact that the two European countries focus on developing a detailed and documented exposures of the proposal sent to the Centre of the Government. In Spain this exposures takes shape in an explicative memorandum that must be accompanied by an economic memorandum. These are obligatory for all normative proposals.

In Portugal the proposal is accompanied by an introductory memorandum explaining the objectives, the proposed solution, the compatibility of the proposal with the government program and European regulations, the financial and human resources that are available.

In Canada, similar to Spain and Portugal, the public policy proposals are examined by parliamentary committees, requiring approval from parliament. It should be noted however that in all three countries, not all the public policy proposals need to be approved by parliament, because this step is necessary only for certain acts.

Compared to the other countries analyzed, in Canada the government parties can rely on a number of potential tools at the federal and provincial levels, each with different attributes. If governments consider that a public policy needs a fundamental reexamination, due to a deep resentment of the Cabinet or of the citizens, they may use these tools: the permanent external advisory body, departmental or ministerial task forces, and royal commissions. The governments rarely use parliamentary committees in reviewing the fundamentals of any public policy. These reexaminations can come at a high political price that is why the Canadian public and media accept them less than in the past.

The monitoring and evaluation process is well developed in the three countries. Comparative to the European countries, Canada is more advanced. There is a culture of evaluation that values professional standards, independence, learning from experience and evidence based policy.

In Spain the ministries rely on statistical monitoring entities for policies in this area. There are two centres that provide up-to-date socioeconomic data to officials responsible for policy-making: the National Statistics Institute and the Centre for Sociological Research.

In Portugal many ministers have special services or units that provide prospective and evaluation studies. The situation is not quite different in Spain, where ministries are using information provided by national institutions (for example the National Statistics Institutes).

6. IDENTIFICATION OF THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE THREE COUNTRIES THAT CAN BE TAKEN AND IMPLEMENTED IN THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS OF OTHER COUNTRY

The development of the public policies can be a complex process, often requiring the skills of a multidisciplinary team consisting of economists, sociologists, financial experts and lawyers. The aspects presented show us that ***the abilities and skills needed in the public policies process*** are well developed in the ministries from these countries.

In this stage all tasks are carried out by the ministry that develops the initial draft of the public policy. In each of these countries the development of policy proposals places the ministry in the main position.

We can remark, especially in Spain and Portugal, ***the main position of the ministry not only in the policy making process but also in parliamentary debates***. This one has to explain and defend the public policy

proposals in parliamentary debates and parliamentary committees. If the Parliament proposes substantial amendments, the ministry is prepared to analyze and evaluate them and also to give different answers and bring arguments.

Monitoring and evaluation process is well developed and we can speak of a culture of evaluation, especially in Canada. Ministries and other central public authorities, institutions that coordinate the implementation of public policies, have a crucial role in monitoring and evaluation activities. These are the main entities that can provide the necessary information for the monitoring activity. They are also the main beneficiaries of monitoring and evaluation activities.

Spain and Portugal are not less important in these activities. In these countries a Quality Assessment Agency ensures cooperation with other structures. This agency collaborates very well with the autonomous communities in order to eliminate problems and deficiencies in the public policy making process at national and local level.

Another important aspect of the public policy process in Canada refers to the **reexamination of the public policies**. The Canadian Government has a number of potential tools at the central level. The most important are the followings: **the permanent external advisory body, departmental or ministerial task forces, and royal commissions**.

If the government considers that a public policy area needs a fundamental reexamination because of dissatisfaction expressed by central government or by citizens, he may initiate major changes in policy using these tools.

However, governments should pay great attention to the development of these tools that could be used in the reexamination of public policies. Taking into account their independence and the time factor, these instruments could provide valuable support for governments, especially when it requires a temporary deviation (not necessarily short) from the normal life cycle of public policy. However, in some cases, their use could be extremely costly for countries, whose resources can not be compared with those of the Canadian state.

REFERENCES

- Brewer, G.D. (1974). The Policy Science Emerge: To Nurture and Structure a Discipline, *Policy Sciences*, 5, p. 239 – 244.
- Chiritoiu, M., Pinteă C. (2005). *Understanding administration's actions*. Retrieved August 2006, from <http://www.policy.hu/chiritoiu/brospolpubl.pdf>.
- General Secretariat of the Romanian Government (2006). *Manual of Methods Used in Public Policy Planning and Impact Evaluation*. Project PHARE RO 2003/IB/OT/10 Strengthening the Romanian Government's

Capacity for policy management and coordination and for decision-making. Retrieved November 15, 2007, from http://www.sgg.ro/docs/File/UPP/doc/manual_metode_impact.pdf.

Hogwood, B.W., Gunn, L.A. (1984). *Policy Analysis for the Real World*, Oxford: University Press.

Howlett, M. and Ramesh, M. (1995). *Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lopez, J.G.A. (2006). *The role of ministries in the public policy cycle in Spain*. SIGMA: Support for Improvement in Governance and Management. A joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union, principally financed by the EU. Retrieved August 16, 2007, from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/59/3/35935999.pdf>.

Marchildon, G.P. (2001). *Royal Commissions and the Policy Cycle in Canada: The Case of Health Care*. Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy. Retrieved September 17, 2007, from <http://www.uregina.ca/sipp/documents/pdf/ssgm.pdf>.

Miroiu, A. (2001). Introduction to public policy analysis. Retrieved August 2006, from <http://www.spidd.ro/carti/analiza%20politicilorpublice.pdf>.

Moldoveanu, G., Păceșilă M. (2008), Public policy cycle – theoretical and methodological approaches, *Supplement review Quality – access to success*, no. 94, pp 1-15.

Nabais, J. (2006). *The role of ministries in the public policy cycle in Portugal*. SIGMA: Support for Improvement in Governance and Management. A joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union, principally financed by the EU. Retrieved August 16, 2007, from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/59/52/35935851.pdf>.

Păceșilă, M. (2009). *Improving public policy cycle in Romania*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest.

Păceșilă, M. and Profiroiu, A. (2006). Recent evolutions concerning the study of public policy. *Management and Public Administration Review*, no. 7, pp. 56-63.

Păceșilă, M. (2007). Public policies cycle in Canada. *Proceedings of the International Symposium Management, managers and organizations, the Workshop Urban management in the knowledge management society*, pp. 52-58.

Păceșilă, M. (2008). Particularities of Public Policies Cycle in Spain, *Calitatea acces la success*, no. 94, pp 1-6.

Păceșilă, M. (2008). Theories and models concerning the public policies cycle at national and international level. *Theoretical and empirical researches in urban management*, no. 6, pp. 17-30.

Păceșilă, M. (2008). The Royal Commissions and their role in the Canadian health public policies. *Theoretical and empirical researches in urban management*, no. 6, pp. 55-68.

Profiroiu, M., Profiroiu, A. and Păceșilă, M. (2008). *Comparative study of the experience of developed countries in the public policy making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process*, Bucharest: Academy of Economic Studies Publishing House.