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COORDINATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING INSTRUMENTS ROMANIA CASE STUDY

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Abstract

If improved public administration can be characterized as “doing things right” then the policy making process might be described as determining the appropriate things to do, so that government is “doing the right things”.

In Romania as in other transition economies, public action through government has been restructured to meet the needs of modern “market economies”. Aware of its policy-making weaknesses, Romania’s government has pursued various reforms in the last few years. The reforms introduced followed among others the strengthening of the government to create the system and mechanisms for horizontal coordination of public policies. The reasons are numerous and various, including the need to manage and maximize the efficacy of limited resources, intermission between international policies and public policy areas.

Solving the problems in a coherent manner require efficient coordination, improving cooperation between ministries and involving citizens in planning. The quality of public policy depends on a large extent on the activities of consultation and coordination, developed on one hand inside the public institutions belonging to the executive power, and on the other hand between public institutions and representatives bodies, group of interest, and the strategic planning.

Therefore, an important role in the public policy process is played by the strategic planning; its various elements can contribute directly to the understanding and formulation of policy priorities and goals. Strategic planning may be though as a “way of knowing” intended to help policy makers and managers to discern what to do, how and why.

Moreover, the institutional and legislative approach of the public policies is based on one side on the institutional management, by using instruments such as: planning of the resources or the strategic planning, and on the other side the adaptation and actualization of the necessary legislative framework.

In Romania, according to the strategy of improvement the elaboration, coordination and planning system of the public policies at the level of central public administration, the strategic planning is introduced in two stages: the management component of the strategic plans and the program budgeting component. The strategic plan plays the role of an instrument that promotes coherent public policies, ensures quality and the right justification of the public policies, and backs up the main policies to be financed.

Using the theoretical, analytical, and empirical framework, described by various scholars and by strategic documents carried out by Romania, this paper aims:

- to explore the conceptual dimension of policy instruments and strategic planning;
- to identify the mechanisms and institutions involve within strategic planning process and public policies coordination;
- to achieve a progressive analysis of the efforts made by Romania to improve the public policy process, outlining the using of strategic planning within public policy making;

The conclusions will reveal the progresses made by Romania to use the strategic planning and the possible inconsistencies and weaknesses within public policy process.

For achieving the aims of the actual paper we have used bibliographical research and study of legislation applied to domestic public policies as well as the study of procedural and strategic documents carried out by Romanian authorities for supporting the public policy-making.

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Introduction

In democratic states, the importance, role and purpose of public sector efficiency arises from government action, accountability and transparency of public institutions¹. These elements have changed the approach namely, if in 1980, 1990 the governmental activities focused on the reform objectives and management, the today governmental agenda objectives are much deeper and aim to improve the quality of regulations and to develop coherent public policies². Actions coordination in order to solve problems finds its place in public policies sphere, but in this case, when we talk about the governmental arena, the problem of coordination and coherence is more sensitive.

Factors such as organizational fragmentation, complexity of public policy, lack of resources, sectoral interdependence, conflicting values, competitive interests, increased specialization, and policy makers overloading influence the degree of political cohesion, the consistency and coherence of administrative actions. Moreover, the increasing complexity of public policy issues and of their interdependence, and also of their solutions has amplified the pressure on policy makers for their coordination.

In this general context we can frame the challenges within the national public policy system. The Romanian Government was forced to rethink the policy making process. Among the measures taken by this Government in order to address the need to coordinate public policies, we find the introduction of strategic planning that is to say the object of this paper.

1. Analytical Perspectives on Public Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning

1.1 Conceptual Delimitations and Factors of Public Policy Coordination

Coordination of decisions and resulting activities represent the basic task of any economic and social system. Although at first glance the meaning of coordination concept seems to be clear, it loses its simplicity when we try a firm conceptualization. In these circumstances it is not surprising the different domains of social sciences theorists concern to identify an unequivocal and free of uncertainties definition that goes beyond intuitive understanding.

Theorists' reflections committed to study this topic are not new. They have as a starting point earlier research of scholars that attempted to develop heuristic tools in order to find answers about this issue. An example is Painter's³ definition that presents an instrumental definition for policy coordination, making use of its specific objectives: (1) avoid or minimize duplication or duplicity, (2) avoid inconsistency, (3) minimize both bureaucratic and political conflict, (4) the need for coherence and cohesion and for an agreement regarding prioritization, (5) promoting a comprehensive perspective of the government as a whole. The concept of coordination has been also understood as creating a set of activities by various individuals and institutions in order to have consistent social results⁴. Also, part of SIGMA⁵ publications appeal to Cambridge dictionary definition of coordination concept. According to this definition, the coordination represents "the manner in which [it is possible] to do many different things to work effectively as a whole".

Public policies coordination resonates with other common concept in public administration and public policy, namely the coherence and correlation concepts. From the authors' perspective, these concepts are not synonymous. Consistency is understood as the approach result (coordination process, correlation process). Therefore, in order to get consistent public actions it is necessary to develop and implement formal mechanisms to coordinate governmental initiatives. Coordination of public policies aims the general interrelation of different aspects of public policies.

The need to coordinate public policies was determined by several factors including: (1) cross-public policy issues - many public policy problems that governments face, they cross the boundaries of a sector. It is impossible, for example, to talk about education without taking into account competitiveness and labour market issues, (2) globalization and increasing international interdependence – they create strong pressures for harmonization of national legislation and

¹ Matei Lucica. 2007. Globalization and Public Policies. Transnational actors' involvement, available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1372064>, p. 8.

² Matei Ani and Tatiana-Camelia Dogaru. 2011. Instruments of Policy Analysis. The Impact Assessment development by public authorities in Romania. Case Study", p. 2, NISP Acee 2011, Varna.

³ Painter in Dietmar Braun. 2008. Organising the political coordination of knowledge and innovation policies, *Science and Public Policy*, 35(4), pp. 227–239.

⁴ Chilosi Alberto. 2004. Coordination, cooperation and the extended Coasean approach to economic policy", available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=496169, p. 2.

⁵ SIGMA. 2004. Coordonarea la nivel Guvernamental central: Funcțiile și organizarea Cabinetului Guvernamental", SIGMA, no. 35, trans into Romanian, Public Administration Training Department, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, coordinator, Lucica Matei, p. 14.

policies of different countries, (3) budgetary pressures - linking resources with government priorities requires knowledge of policies and programs beyond the scope of a structure (a ministry), (4) to avoid overlapping and duplicity, (5) fairness and equal treatment - fundamental values of public administration that differentiate public actions from private ones, (6) decentralization of public services, (7) changing the paradigm of public policy generation - from top-down approach towards a system, network approach⁶.

In this context, coordination of public policies aims to: (1) resolve conflicts arising from overlapping programs, policies, (2) finding common priorities, (3) introducing a global perspective on public policy making process as opposed to sectoral perspective⁷.

Taking into account the definitions given to the concept of coordination of public policies and its objectives, the literature⁸ distinguishes between (1) vertical coordination and (2) horizontal coordination. *Vertical dimension* refers mainly to the hierarchical structure of public administration that ensures coordination of public policies. Despite its rigidity, vertical public policy coordination is essential especially in the priorities-setting and implementation stage of public policy. The *horizontal dimension* of coordination corresponds to the process of ensuring a framework for institutional and/or interdepartmental debate and negotiation that allows formulating coherent public policies so that they better reflect the positions of different actors involved in public policy making⁹.

In this paper we operate with the following definition of the concept of public policy coordination: “the ability to take public policy decisions with strategic characteristics and to ensure the unity feature of how public policies” are formulated (procedural perspective)¹⁰ and it aims to analyze the steps taken by Romania to coordinate sectoral and intersectoral public policies. Sectoral and inter-sectoral coordination can be defined both as process and as a state. Seen as a process, sectoral/intersectoral coordination generally refers to the organization and reconciliation process of different processes and activities taking place simultaneously and consecutively. From the perspective of public policy, intersectoral coordination refers to policies and programs reconciliation in different sectors. And sectoral coordination refers to linking policies and programs the same sector. In the definition of sectoral/intersectoral coordination as a state, it refers to a situation where a sector or different sectors policies and programs are characterized by a minimum degree of redundancy (initiatives concerning the same thing, regardless of each other), by incoherence (different objectives and requirements) and by the gap between policies¹¹.

1.2. Tools for Public Policy Coordination

Public policy approaches, and especially the institutional and normative one, are based on the one hand, on institutional management, using tools such as resources planning (human, financial, material and administrative), and development of institutional effective models that lends expertise from private sector. And on the other hand, we have the adoption, modernization and updating the necessary normative framework¹².

1.2.1. OECD tools for Public Policy Coordination

Various theoretical studies were not limited to outline a clear definition of the concept of public policy coordination, but also aimed to build mechanisms for implementation and evaluation of policy coordination. A reference tool in this sense is public policy coordination scale” developed by Les Metcalfe in 1994, followed several years later by “scale on the coordination capacity” improved Metcalfe and OECD¹³.

In its first version, the scale enumerated the available options for governments involved in intergovernmental negotiations for the achievement of national coordination. In the adapted version, the scale is used as a comparative evaluation tool of the degree of states coordination at national level in order to effectively participate internationally. The proposed levels of this scale are:

⁶ Pierre Judith and Goran Peters. 2000. *Governance, Politics and the State*. London: Macmillan, pp. 7-13.

⁷ Bakvis Herman and Luc Juillet. 2004. *Le défi de l'horizontalité: ministères responsables, organismes centraux et leadership*, Ottawa: École de la fonction publique du Canada available at http://www.cspse-fpc.gc.ca/pbp/pub/pdfs/P124_e.pdf.

⁸ Pelkonen Antti, Tuula Teräväinen and Suvi-Tuuli Waltari. 2008. Assessing policy coordination capacity: higher education, science, and technology policies in Finland, *Science and Public Policy* 35, pp. 241-252.

⁹ Bondar Florin. 2007. *Reforma formulării politicilor publice între schimbarea premiselor și schimbarea presupuzițiilor*, in Bondar, F., (2007) “Politici publice și administrație publică”, Ed. Polirom Collegium, p. 108.

¹⁰ http://www.sgg.ro/docs/File/UPP/doc/coordonarea-pp-Florin_Bondar.pdf, accessed on March 10 2012.

¹¹ Høgl Karl. 2002. Background Paper on Inter-Sectoral Co-ordination, COST-Action E19, p. 1.

¹² Matei Lucica. 2007. *Globalization and Public Policies. Transnational actors' involvement*; available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1372064>, p. 9.

¹³ Metcalfe Les. 1994. *International Policy Co-ordination and Public Management Reform*. in *International Review of Administrative Sciences*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, Sage, vol. 60, pp. 271-290; Metcalfe Les. 1996. *Building Capacities for Integration: The Future Role of the Commission*, *Eipascope*, no. 2, pp. 8-9; OECD (1996) *Globalisation: What challenges and opportunities for governments?*, p. 8.

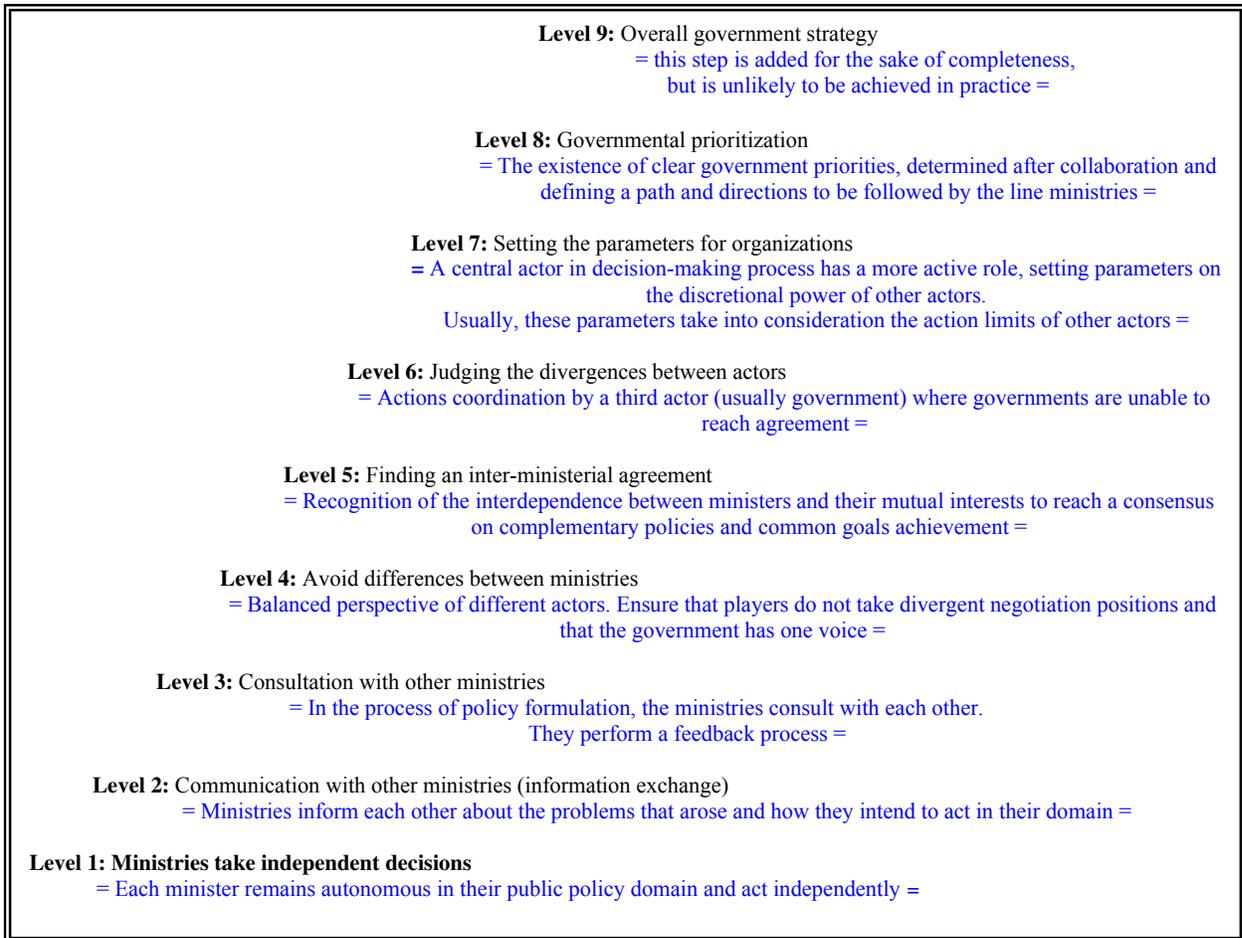


Figure no. 1: Public Policy Coordination Scale

Source: adapted from Metcalfe (1994) “International Policy Co-ordination and (...)”, OECD (1996) “Globalisation: What Challenges and (...)”

Following the deepening of research on the coherency policy, the OECD has identified a number of tools, namely: (1) informed decision making - as the main instrument of coherence, (2) Commitment to political leadership - a necessary precondition to coherence and a tool to intensify it, (3) establish a strategic framework for public policies - help to ensure that individual policies are consistent with government goals and priorities, (4) decision makers need advice based on a clear definition and accurate analysis of problems, (5) the existence of a central perspective and coordination capacity is essential to ensure horizontal consistency between policies, (6) mechanisms to anticipate, detect and resolve political conflicts since the beginning of the process helps to identify inconsistencies and reduce incoherence, (7) decision making process must be organized to achieve effective reconciliation between political priorities and budgetary imperatives, (8) implementation procedures and monitoring mechanisms must be designed to ensure that policies can be adjusted in the light of progress, of new information and changing circumstances, (9) administrative culture that promotes cross-sectoral cooperation and systematic dialogue between different policy communities contributes to strengthen the public policies coherence¹⁴.

1.2.2. Strategic Planning - Tools for Policy Coordination

Quality of public policies depends largely on coordination and consultation activities, developed, on the one hand, within public institutions belonging to the executive power, and on another hand, between public institutions and interest groups and their strategic planning. Thus, strategic planning has an important role in public policy process; its different features directly contribute to understanding and formulating public policy priorities and goals.

¹⁴ PUMA.1996. Building Policy Coherence: Tools and Tensions, Occasional Papers no. 12 in OECD. 2005. Policy Coherence for Development. Promoting Institutional good practice, OECD Publishing. p. 44; OECD. 2004. Institutional Approaches to Policy Coherence for Development, OECD Policy Workshop.

In general terms, strategic planning refers to the processes by which a community, an organization or individual establish the goals, the objectives it wishes to achieve and the necessary steps to achieve them. From a historical perspective, strategic approach is originated in the military domain, although in administrative science area it is a fairly modern concept and it attempts to combat the image of a chaotic decision-making at the level of administrative system¹⁵. Dean Acheson provides a useful definition for understanding strategic planning, saying that it means to “look forward, not to a too distant future, but beyond the decision-makers vision caught in the current crises battles; far enough to see those things in progress and to highlight what should be done to materialize or to predict”. Complementary to these, Acheson believes that policy makers must constantly reassess existing policies¹⁶.

Strategic planning can be seen as “a way of [intended] knowledge” to help policy makers to discern what to do, how to do and why to do it. According to GD 1807/2006 concerning the approval of the management Component within the Methodology on a medium-term strategic planning of public administration institutions at central level, strategic planning is a management tool consisting in planning the following activities: institution mandate, vision, institutional values, and analysis of internal and external environment, medium-term priorities and key activities to achieve them.

From an institutional perspective, strategic planning is understood as a process that describes the general direction of an institution in the future. The process helps an institution to decide what it wants to achieve and what the main actions to be undertaken in future are¹⁷. At EU level, strategic planning is used even in the functioning process of various institutions to coordinate its policies. Commission decisions are based on Annual Policy Strategy, a strategy that includes the priorities of the following year and the foundations of human resource and financial allocations.

The following aspects are aimed through strategic planning, (1) to improve performance, (2) to create more relevant institutional structures, (3) to enhance the institutional, departmental and individual responsibility, (4) to improve transparency and communication between management, employees and stakeholders, (5) establishing priorities for allocating efficiently and effectively resources¹⁸. In order to be effective, strategic planning involves both short and long term planning. It also helps decision-makers in planning budgeting¹⁹.

2. Case Study - Introducing Mechanisms of Public Policy Strategic Planning in Romania

In the past decade, international bodies such as OECD, European Commission and World Bank have developed a series of studies on the evaluation of public policy management system in Romania. The conclusions of these studies have revealed the presence of weaknesses in the policy making process in Romania²⁰: (1) mostly legalistic approach to policy making process, (2) insufficient budget-policy coordination and correlation, (3) insufficient coordination between central and local level in public policy development; limited capacity for policy formulation, (4) lack of a gradual and phased approach in implementing public policies, (5) evaluation of policies has not yet become a method of learning and correcting policies and process in implementation phase or the policies to be pursued, (6) the lack of correlation in the budget design and policy planning, (7) Romanian academic field involvement is still limited; all these determine the content of recommendations to address, among others, the need to streamline the coordination of public policies.

Since 2001, the Romanian Government has taken the first step in this direction by launching “The Strategy on accelerating public administration reform”. It aims to reform the three priority areas, including “improving policy formulation”²¹ and establishing the conditions for the General Secretary of the Government, through the Department of public Policy, to become the main actor involved in the reform process of public policy formulation. General Secretary of the Government has developed various stages of this reform, and their content is summarized in the achievement of the following objectives:

¹⁵ Hințea Călin and Cristina Mora. 2003. Management strategic în administrația publică, Transylvanian Review of administrative Sciences, IX, p. 25; Young Richard. 2001. Perspectives on Strategic Planning in the Public Sector, p. 2.

¹⁶ Acheson Dean. 1969. Present at the Creation, Ed. W.W. Norton, New York, p. 214 in Drezner, D. 2009. The Challenging Future of Strategic Planning, Avoiding Trivia, vol.33:1, p. 14.

¹⁷ General Secretariat of the Government. 2009. Strategic Planning Guideline, available at <http://www.sgg.ro/docs/File/UPP/doc/manual%20de%20planificare%20strategica.pdf>, p. 27.

¹⁸ General Secretariat of the Government. 2009. Strategic Planning Guideline, available at <http://www.sgg.ro/docs/File/UPP/doc/manual%20de%20planificare%20strategica.pdf>, p. 29.

¹⁹ Browne Murray, Lanine Jeanine and Katheryn Deo. 2006. Strategic Planning and Policy Development, available at http://www.woodwardandcompany.com/media/pdfs/Strategic_Planning.pdf, p. 3.

²⁰ http://www.mie.ro/_documente/politici_publice/informatii_utile/elaborare_pp.pdf, accessed on March 14 2010.

²¹ Government Strategy for strengthening the public administration reform (2001 - 2004), available at: <http://www.gov.ro/upload/articles/100008/reforma-admin-public.pdf>, Strategy for a better regulation at central level (2008 - 2013) available at: http://www.sgg.ro/docs/File/UPP/doc/proiecte_finale/Strategia_BR_varianta_finale_aprobata_de_Guvern.pdf, accessed on May 20 2009.

- to fundament government initiatives by providing a mechanism for vertical policy coordination; in other words, formalization of public policy documents;
- to ensure horizontal coordination mechanism of public policy by reforming committees and ministerial committees and by the introduction of strategic plans;
- to create a mechanism for correlating policy priorities to the budget.

Polymaking process in Romania is guided by the following principles: (1) the principle of participation and transparency, (2) the principle of continuity and coordination, (3) the principle of accountability, (4) the principle of good governance, (5) the principle of subsidiarity; (6) the principle of cooperation and coherence²².

2.1. The coherence of Public Policy Development Framework

When talking about the first objective, the first steps in the standardization process of public policy making and formalization of policy documents have been made in 2005, with GD no. 775/2005 approving the Regulation on procedures for drafting, monitoring and evaluation of public policies at central level. And also in 2006 by GD no. 870/2006 that approves the Strategy for improving the development, coordination and planning of public policies at central government level.

According to these regulations, public policy documents are: (1) public policy proposal, (2) strategy and (3) plan. *Strategy* is defined as a medium and long term public policy document that defines, in principle, the Government's policy on a particular area that requires a decision on a wide range of issues. The *plan* is that public policy document designating to detail the strategy or policy proposals implementation. Public policy *proposal* is a document designed to resolve specific issues where there are several possible options to solve. On the other hand, it can offer a conceptual agreement on the substance of legal regulation²³ if the case requires it.

The second objective involves the horizontal coordination of public policies. To achieve this objective, two main actions have been considered. That is to reform commissions and ministerial committees and to develop a strategic planning mechanism. To ensure a certain fluidity of this study, we will first analyze the aspects of strategic planning, because in this context we find elements that refer to the introduction of strategic plans. The next step is then to analyze the aspects of the committee and ministerial committees' reform.

Thus, according to the strategy focused on improving the design, coordination and planning policy system of the central level, the strategic planning is introduced in Romania in two stages: through management component of the strategic plans introduced by the GD no. 1807/2006 and by programs' budget planning component approved by GD no. 158/2008. Strategic planning is used at the Romanian administration level to meet in a single management framework aspects of organizational planning, setting priorities, planning and budgeting policy.

The strategic plan acts as an instrument to promote policy coherence, to ensure the quality and proper justification of public policies and to support key policies to be financed. Strategic plans aim to order activities in order to be possible to link what a ministry aims to develop in terms of objectives and activities to achieve them, and the amount of resources involved. The legislation distinguishes between strategic plans and policy documents mentioned above, defining them as a "management and budgetary programming document". Strategic plans include, on the one hand, the development measures set out in policy documents on medium and long term, in certain policy areas, providing a clear overview of that public policy. And on the other hand, they take into account the priorities defined by the Govern, thus facilitating the identification of public policy areas, as well as their directions that the Government considers most important. With these analyses, the ministries can base budget proposals.

The main elements of strategic plans are: the medium and long term vision, the internal and external environment analysis, to identify key stakeholders, the analysis of available resources, the production of measurable objectives and their correlation with the financing requests²⁴.

²² Zomorrodian Asghar and Lucica Matei. 2010. Program Evaluation: Its Significance and Priority for Shaping and Modification of Public Policies: A Comparative Analysis, available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1715642, p. 13.

²³ GD no. 870/2006 that approves the Strategy for improving the development, coordination and planning of public policies at central government level, pp. 11-14.

²⁴ GD no. 870/2006 that approves the Strategy for improving the development, coordination and planning of public policies at central government level, p.33.

2.2. Inter-ministerial consultation on public policy proposals

The quality of public policy depends largely on consultation and coordination activities carried out within public administration institutions and between public institutions and civil society (NGOs, interested organizations, independent research institutions and other alike). The coordination of strategic planning and public policy at central level is part of the General Secretariat of Government competence through Public Policy Directorate. The procedures were adopted by HG 870/2006, which describe the methodology for strategic planning and strategy structure (the two components, management and budget planning). There have also been created in each ministry, public policy units designed to facilitate the introduction of strategic planning and coordinate sectoral strategic plans to strengthen the link between public policy planning and budgeting.

In addition to institutional framework, there were established other advisory bodies for policy coordination between ministries and between public institutions and other social actors. We refer to social dialogue committees established within ministries, the Superior Council for Public Administration Reform, Public Policy Coordination and Structural Adjustment, and permanent inter-ministerial councils. Strategic Planning Board plays a special role among ministerial councils and has the following tasks: (1) establishes and coordinates the priorities derived from strategic documents for achieving the Government in collaboration objectives with relevant ministries, (2) correlates governmental policies with the commitments and the conditionality undertaken by the Executive in relation to international organizations, (3) plans multi-annual fundamental strategic priorities and links them with medium-term budgetary planning, and (4) relates policies to be implemented with budgetary funds allocated to short and medium term²⁵.

The consultation process is carried out through several steps governed by laws that distinguish between the overall consultation and ministerial consultations. Various stages of consultation comply with the stages of public policy development and are graphically as follows²⁶:

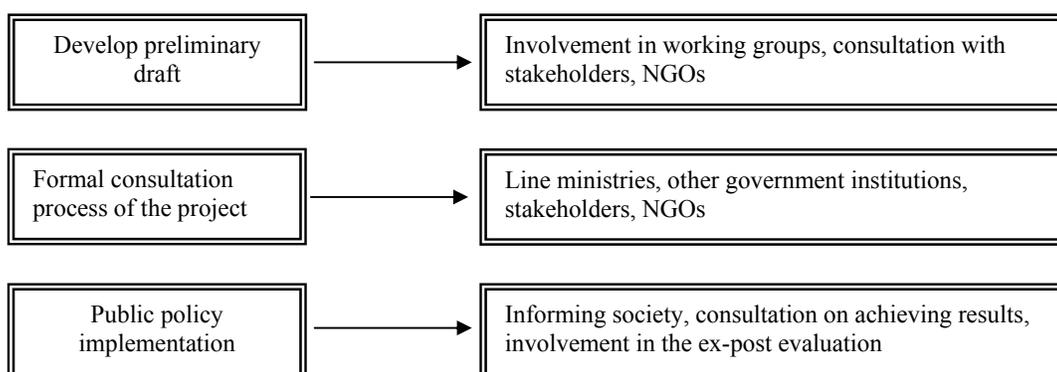


Figure no. 2: Consultation in various stages of policy formulation

Source: Government Decision no. 870 of 2006,
Matei, L., (2008) "Representing the Local Interests (...)"

Sketched an interim conclusion, we outline that the implementation of strategic planning at central level, reveals the following:

No. crt	Ministry	Strategic Plan			Kind of Component
		yes	no		
1	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure	✓	2009-2013	-	Management Component + budgeting Component
2	Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection	✓	2011-2013	-	Management Component
3	Ministry of Justice	✓	2007-2009	-	Management Component + budgeting Component
4	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	✓	2008-2011	-	Management Component
5	Ministry of Administration and Interior	✓	2010-2013	-	Management Component + budgeting Component

²⁵ Art. 2 align 2 GD.no.750/2005, regarding the Creation of Permanent Inter-ministerial Commissions, published in O.J. of Romania no. 676/28.07.2005.

²⁶ GD no. 870/2006 that approves the Strategy for improving the development, coordination and planning of public policies at central government level; Matei Lucica. 2008. Representing the Local Interests in Governmental Policy Making. The Romanian Experiment, *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, no. 8 (525), p. 56.

6	Ministry of National Defence	✓	2010-2013	-	Management Component + budgeting Component
7	Ministry of Culture and National Cultural Heritage	✓	2012-2014	-	Management Component + budgeting Component
8	Ministry of Economy, Trade and the Business Environment	✓	2010-2013	-	Management Component
9	Ministry of Public Finance	✓	2010-2013	-	Management Component + budgeting Component
10	Ministry of Environment and Forests	✓	2007-2009	-	Management Component + budgeting component
11	Ministry of Health	✓	2008-2010	-	Management Component + budgeting Component
12	Ministry of European Affairs	-	-	✓	-
13	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	✓	2008-2010	-	Budgeting Component
14	Ministry of Communication and Information Society	✓	2007-2009 2008-2011	-	Management Component (2007-2009) + Budgeting Component (2008-2011)
15	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	✓	2010-2013	-	Management Component
16	Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports	✓	2007-2009 2008-2010	-	Management component (2007-2009) + Budgeting Component (2008-2010)

Table no. 1: Strategic Planning at central level
Source: The authors based on qualitative research

We note that from a total of 16 ministries (at the time being) only 5 have institutional strategic plans that covering the current and future perspective and that meet the methodological norms regarding the application of strategic planning in the public administration structures, meaning that they have carried out documents for the both components of strategic planning, management and budgeting component. For a more detailed analysis has been selected as research unit, the Ministry of Administration and Interior.

2.3. Strategic Planning within Ministry of Administration and Interior

The process of public policies coordination and elaboration within the Ministry of Administration and Interior is structured into two processes correlated with the activities for subtending the public policies, respectively for strategic planning. Monitoring and assessing of these are tasks of Public Policy Unit. The Public Policy Unit has been established and works within the Ministry of administration and Interior since 2005, and according to the Organization and Functioning Statute, approved by the Minister Order no. 283 from 18.11.2009 it has the following tasks:

- improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies documents and of strategic and budgeting planning, carried out by the ministry;
- correlating the activities for planning the public policies documents with those of strategic planning, as well as with the documents for planning the budgeting based on programmes;
- implementing the all methods and procedures for designing the public policies documents;
- developing in collaboration with the sectoral working groups involved in the process of making the Strategic Plans for the ministry's activities, the final form of Sectoral Strategic Plans and Action Plans for their implementation;
- fostering the communication between structures during the process of analysis, elaboration and implementation of public policies documents; so on²⁷.

Therefore, we can see that among the duties and responsibilities of Public Policy Unit of Ministry of administration and Interior are found and strategic planning issues.

The Order of Minister no. 285/2009, for approving the Methodology regarding the strategic planning and programme-based budgeting within the Ministry of Administration and Interior and for approving the Public Policies Guideline from Ministry of Administration and Interior has been elaborated to complete the current legislation on strategic and budgeting planning from Romania, more precise, for completing the provisions of Government Decision no. 158/13.02.2008 regarding the approve of the budgeting component of the Methodology concerning the strategic

²⁷ Art. 10, art. 11 Minister Order no. 283/2009, for approval the Organization and Functioning Statute of Public Policy Unit.

planning on medium term of the public administration institutions and GD. No. 1807/13.12.2006 regarding the management component of the same.

The working methodology for approving the Methodology regarding the strategic and budgeting planning within the Ministry of Administration and Interior introduces a new procedure for developing the institutional strategic plan. In this context, in order to meet the requisite for transforming the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Administration and Interior into a real tool of management have been elaborated and approved at its level seven strategic plans for each area of ministry activity: (1) public administration reform; (2) prefect institution and deconcentrated services; (3) local community; (4) public order and safety; (5) Schengen and European cooperation; (6) prevent and combat corruption, internal protection, control and internal audit; (7) support²⁸.

Thus, basing on aspects of simplifying the process of strategic planning, it has been created two kind of strategic documents within Ministry of Administration and Interior: Institutional Strategic Planning (ISP) and Sectoral Strategic Plans (SSP). It is worth to note that, within the Ministry of Administration and Interior we find a particular situation related to the elaboration of strategic plan, in the sense that, the making process of strategic plan has a dyadic structure in accordance with the organizational structure of it, the public administration component and public order and safety component. This situation allows us to represent the process as shown below:

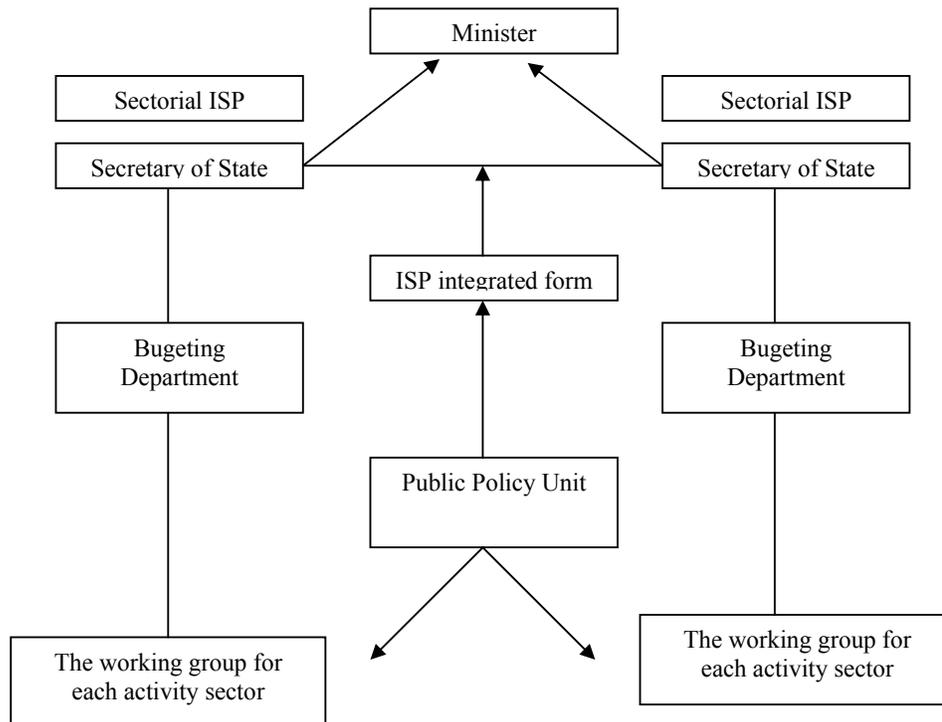


Figure no 3: The process of making the Strategic Plan within MAI
 Source: Strategic Plan MAI 2010-2013

Currently, at the ministry level we can find the Strategic Plan for 2010-2013 period, document that brings together in one framework issues such as: public policies planning, budgeting development, setting priorities and organizational planning and has as general goal the streamline of the decision making process from central level in fulfilling the tasks regarding the implementation and coordination of public policies and programmes budgeting, as well as regarding the monitoring of how these are applied at level of specialized structures of ministry. For the mentioned period, the activities proceeded by the specialized structures of the Ministry of Administration and Interior are grouped in the following directions: (1) public administration; (2) public order and safety; (3) specialised advice.

For each direction has been made an analysis of the current situation and the future prospects. To illustrate in this paper has been selected “public administration” direction. Regarding this component we note the following situation of public policies documents:

²⁸ General Secretariat of Government, The Methodology for monitoring and assessing the strategic planning and budget-based programme documents within Ministry of Administration and Interior, approved through Minister Order no. 269/2010.

Elaborated Public policies Documents		Planning public Policies Documents	
Strategies	Public policy Proposals	Strategies	Public policy Proposals
1. National Anti-Corruption Strategy for vulnerable sectors and local public administration for 2008-2010 period	1. Simplified procedure for managing mild injury that has a European approach – Amicable Established	1. The strategy of civil service	1. Consulting the local authorities in the public administration reform process
	2. Car registration procedure, more simpler, safer, efficient, and more sustainable		
	3. An effective way to integrate public managers in the overall of civil service system		
	4. The Romanian insurance disaster		
	5. training of civil servants in Romania		

Table no. 2: Public Policy Documents within MAI

Source: Strategic Plan of MAI 2010-2013

“Public administration” direction is financed through “Public Administration” budget Programme, which is both a programme of public policy and an operation programme. The legal framework of the budgeting programme is the Government Decision no. 158/2008 for approving the budgeting component of the Methodology concerning the strategic planning on medium term of the public administration institutions. The syntactical view on budgetary allocation toward Ministry of administration and Interior is the following one:

Year	Sum – thousand RON	Perspectives
2010	10408491	▲
2011	8820070	▲
2012	8106572	▲

Table no. 3: MAI Budget for 2010-2012 periods

Source: <http://www.mai.gov.ro/index25.htm>

Comparing the requirements mentioned in the Methodology concerning the strategic planning on medium term of the public administration institutions with the strategic plan content carried out by the Ministry of Administration and Interior we notice that have been accomplish and addressed all the mandatory requirements set out by the methodological documents. Therefore, the structure of the strategic plan is the classical structure, having the following sections: (1) term; (2) vision; (3) common values; (4) analysis of internal environment; (5) analysis of the external environment; (6) medium-term priorities; (7) action courses and (8) budget that support the objectives and the activities proposed. Moreover, the strategic plan carried out by the Ministry of Administration and Interior has attached an action plan for its implementation.

3. Conclusions

There is no question that Romania made important steps to bring public policies planning, budgeting, setting priorities and institutional planning under one management framework, but there is still need to strengthen the using of strategic planning instruments. Government Decision no. 870/2006 for adopting the „Strategy for improving the development, coordination and planning of public policies at central level” is really meant to boost the use of strategic planning in ministries and other public institutions. Moreover, the „Methodology for developing the strategic plans of public institutions” is a very useful guideline for the stakeholders involved in the strategic planning process, because it describes in detail how to develop strategic plans for a public institution.

Although, there is a National Plan for Development, designed for 2007-2013 period, at the time being, in Romania there is a need for a strategic document in order to guide the setting of long-time priorities and development of all public policies. This necessity proceeds from the narrow filed of action of National Plan for Development, only on some public policies documents. In this sense, the Government Programme is seen as the most relevant document for outlining the main directions for the policies from all sectors. Despite this advantage (notes to all policy areas), the Government Programme has some “scarcities” namely, the political prints and the planning during a government election.

We can conclude that in Romania there is a public policies coordination system, but unfortunately it has a formal rather than practical character, focused more on procedural dimension of public policy formulation. However, there is a mechanism for consultation and cooperation between institutions, the communication is still weak because the procedures do not provide sufficient conditions for the involving all stakeholders and analyzing all opinions and observations carried out to amend the public policies proposals.

It is worth to note that, at central level there is already a series of manuals (guidelines) and supporting documents which contain both, methodology and concrete examples regarding the way in which the strategic planning can be implemented, respectively, program-based budgeting within public administration.

Also, we have to consider and to keep in mind that the process of public policies coordination, for achieving their consistency has some limitations, such as²⁹: (1) governing in pluralistic and multi-actor political systems necessarily involves a degree of incoherence; (2) no single governance system can guarantee improved policy coherence; (3) the lack of a single recipe to achieve public policies coherence. Furthermore, public policies coordination requires a significant investment of resources of all types (human, financial, information, material) and may determine an attenuation of the organisation's autonomy, since it can not take unilateral decisions within its area of activity, being forced to collaborate with other institutions for identifying some common and coherent solutions.

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