

# Public Policy: how we can influence it.

Краткий конспект/Spoiler (кликните, чтобы прочитать/click to read)

- *Authoritative government action*

Public policy is action implemented by the government body which has the legislative, political, and financial authority to do so.

- *a reaction to real world needs or problems*

Public policy seeks to react to certain problems of a society or groups within a society, for example, citizens, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), or government bodies.

- *goal-oriented*

Public policy seeks to achieve a particular set of elaborated objectives that represent an attempt to solve or address a particular need in the targeted community.

- *a course of action*

Public policy is usually not a single decision, action, or reaction but an elaborated approach or strategy.

- *a decision to do something or a decision to do nothing*

The outlined policy may take action in an attempt to solve a problem or may be based on the belief that the problem will be solved within the current policy framework, and therefore, takes no action.

- *carried out by a single actor or a set of actors*

The policy may be implemented by a single government

representative, or body, or by multiple actors.

- *a justification for action*

The outlined policy usually includes a statement of the reasoning behind the policy.

- *a decision made*

Public policy is a decision already made, not an intention or promise.

Pay attention to two main factors:

- *Designing solutions for real-world problems*

The applied nature of public policy and its difference from academic research.

- *Presenting value-driven arguments*

After the comprehensive analysis of all available data, you should make some value-driven judgments about the outcome that would best address the specific problem. It is not just the cold empiricism of data analysis, but more importantly, the ability to convince your audience of the suitability of your policy recommendations; the ability not to show what should be done, but to persuade people to do what they know should be done.

### *Step 1. Problem definition/Agenda setting*

As a starting point in the policy-making process, a problem is usually identified by a group of people in a particular society. It is important and necessary to get it onto the government's political agenda or make it a higher priority issue if it is already on the agenda. In order to do this, it is necessary to convince both the relevant government agency and the broader policy community that a real problem exists and requires government action.

In order to achieve this, you will need to present a suitably persuasive and comprehensive argument that details the causes, effects, and extent of the problem based on a wide variety of sources. This will require your time and effort.

### *Step 2. Constructing the policy alternatives/Policy formulation*

Once the nature of the problem is sufficiently detailed and the issue is on the government agenda, the first step is to elaborate on the possible ways it can be solved. To do this, you will need to consider what is currently being done, what options others are suggesting as well as your own suggestions. You should try to make the different options mutually exclusive, i.e., avoid options that are simply variations of the same idea. It is important to understand that it will be difficult to find the perfect alternative, so you should try to search for the most feasible and realistic policy alternatives for the context.

### *Step 3. Choice of solution/Selection of preferred policy option*

A preferred policy option to address the particular problem is then selected based on a set of evaluation criteria. This process not only allows you to choose a suitable alternative, but it will also form the basis on which you can authoritatively argue for the legitimacy of your policy option. Commonly used criteria in this process are as follows:

- *Effectiveness*: to what extent will this alternative produce the desired outcomes, i.e., solve the current problem?
- *Efficiency*: based on a cost-benefit analysis of both money and social impact, how will this option affect the target groups?
- *Equity*: is there a fair distribution of costs and benefits?

- *Feasibility/Implementability*: is there a suitable political, administrative, and legal framework in place to allow for the effective and efficient implementation of this option?
- *Flexibility/Improvability*: does this option have the flexibility to be changed to suit other possible situations or allow for improvements?

Some useful advice: use causal modelling approaches and try to be realistic rather than optimistic about the possible outcomes of alternatives. When you have evaluated all your alternatives, compared the outcomes, and weighed up the differences, you need to decide which is the best outcome.

#### *Step 4. Policy design*

Once you have selected your preferred policy option and presented it to the relevant government agency, and assuming that they also accepted it fully or modify your proposal, it becomes public policy. The government agencies must now decide how they can most effectively implement the policy.

In order to elaborate an effective policy design, the agency must choose a policy instrument mix (legal, organisational, or network empowerment) and a delivery organisation mix (governmental or non-governmental, public or private) to provide the services or products outlined in the policy.

#### *Step 5. Policy implementation and monitoring*

A balance between good policy design and effective implementation usually leads to the most effective outcomes. Also, an ongoing process of monitoring and analysis needs to be conducted. It is also important to publicly share and discuss the outcomes as it has a direct effect on the quality of policy outcomes.

#### *Step 6. Evaluation*

In designing a policy evaluation plan, government agencies and delivery organisations need to consider how the policy objectives can be accurately and effectively measured and how the evaluation data collected will be used as a basis for decision-making.

This process consists of looking at the particular public policy in practice, both in terms of objectives and means employed for all interested stakeholders.

It is important to remember the circular and iterative nature of the policy cycle: the issue may be put back on the agenda, to another stage of the process, or may continue to be implemented in the same way.

The most powerful tool to influence public policy for analysts and researchers is a policy paper. The policy paper is a decision-making and communication tool. It provides a comprehensive and persuasive argument justifying the policy recommendations presented in the paper and therefore, acts as a decision-making tool and a call to action for the target audience. The policy paper is an applied work, not a theoretical one. The problem and its solution are the basis of the policy paper.

In preparing to write your policy paper, consider the following questions:

#### *Purpose and audience*

- What is the purpose of your paper?
- What do you/your institution want to achieve through the writing and publishing of this paper?
- Who is the primary audience for your paper?
- Who are the secondary audiences for your paper/policy ideas?

#### *Writing and publishing your paper*

- Are you the only author of the policy paper? If not, have you decided how you are going to approach the writing of the paper with your writing partner(s)?
- Do you and your partner(s) have the same understanding of what a policy paper is?
- Who will be the publisher for your policy paper? Do you know what the publisher's expectations for the paper are?

### *Sum up your idea*

- Imagine that you are talking to a taxi driver, and he/she has just asked you about your current project. Sum it up clearly and concisely in three sentences.

### How do I start?

You can start by describing a problem. It is important to understand what the problem is and answer the following questions as you develop your argument:

- How does the problem affect society?
- Who are the stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the problem?
- What are the components of the problem?
- What adjectives/phrases would you use to describe the problem?
- What are the key questions or controversies associated with the problem?

The problem description in the policy paper identifies, defines, and elaborates the nature of the problem: its actors, conditions, causes, constraints, conflicts, interests and values, roles and responsibilities, outcomes, and impact. The problem description needs to convince the reader that the issue in focus requires government action. The description must present an undeniably comprehensive and convincing argument for a problem that needs to be addressed with government action.

If you want to influence public policy, it is also important to understand and consider the following aspects:

- *Which stage(s) in the policy-making process are you trying to influence through your policy paper?*
- Which stakeholders have been/are involved at each stage of the policymaking process? Who are you targeting (politicians, NGOs, citizens)? Why do you want to communicate with them about the policy issue? How involved are they in the issue? What do they already know about the issue?
- *It is important to identify a clear problem to address. Can you summarise it in two sentences? Is your paper's title effective?*
- Do you have sufficiently comprehensive evidence to support your claim that a problem exists?
- Have you outlined and evaluated the possible policy options that could solve this problem? What evaluation criteria did you use?
- Have you decided on a preferred policy alternative? Which option did you choose and why? What are the positive and negative aspects of this option?
- Do you have sufficient evidence to effectively argue for your chosen policy alternative over the others? Have you included sources that are authoritative enough to support your argument?
- Choose an effective communication strategy: what will you say, how, when, and why? What would be the most effective way of communicating your message to the target group (personal briefings, group presentations, press releases/conferences for the media, roundtable discussions)?

Most useful links and sources:

- Young, Eóin & Lisa Quinn (2012) *Making Research Evidence Matter: A Guide to Policy Advocacy in Transition Countries*, [making\\_research\\_evidence\\_matter\\_in\\_russian\\_-\\_icpa\\_-\\_sfk\\_-\\_2016.pdf](#) (icpolicyadvocacy.org)
- Young, Eóin & Lisa Quinn (2002) *Writing Effective Public Policy Papers*, [https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/writing\\_effective\\_public\\_policy\\_papers\\_russian.pdf](https://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/writing_effective_public_policy_papers_russian.pdf)
- Sungurov, A. Yu. (2005) *Public Policy as a Process of Interaction and Decision-Making*, [Sungurov\\_publ\\_pol\\_kak.pdf](#) (civisbook.ru)