



A Beginner's

GUIDE TO ADVOCACY

in Albania



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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”

Margaret Mead



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Foreword



A Beginner's Guide to Advocacy in Albania is an instructive guide to policy advocacy initiatives. Public policy experts at Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development have drafted this guide targeting a wide audience with both the professionals and non-professionals in mind. This includes new think tanks and research institutes, NGOs, academics, associations, coalitions or interest groups, but also individuals, policy analysts and government advisors. In short, every individual or organization, that wishes to influence the policymaking process in Albania or in the international arena, may use this guide as a starter on how to raise an issue for public debate, how to make an impact on a current policy or how to join efforts to bring about desired change in their area of interest.

The guide also provides a concise, practical introduction to the intricate process of public policy making in Albania and the ways advocacy can be used to influence it. While there are several manuals that are meant to guide users on how to design and implement a public policy influencing event, or project, the added value of this guide is that it builds on Albanian cases of policy processes. This is useful as it provides an overview of the national policy context, which helps the users adapt their efforts and strategies to Albania's contextual exigencies.

The guide starts by introducing us to advocacy and the public policy arena. In the second chapter, a simplified theoretical framework introduces the different types of public policy and advocacy approaches that might fit each type. Chapter three narrows down to public policy making in Albania, and looks at the process from both the institutional (legislative and executive) and civic contexts. Following background information on public policy in Albania, the relevant actors and the political environment, we move on to how public policies are developed. Chapter four presents the policy cycle, a conceptual framework for understanding how policies develop via a stage-by-stage model and the implications of each stage for advocacy.

Finally, Chapter 5 introduces an advocacy cycle that can be used to plan and implement advocacy initiatives.

Examples and case studies play an important role in this guide. Different scenarios and approaches are illustrated with initiatives from the Albanian and international policymaking arena, to give the reader a feel of the challenges and efforts it normally takes to achieve policy influence.

We hope that think tanks, civil society organizations, research centres as well as individuals and volunteer groups can use this guide as a first step into policy advocacy. In looking to make an impact in policymaking, advocates are also advancing their interests while fostering the active engagement of the Albanian civil society in decisions that frame public life.

Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development aims to further improve the quality and quantity of its policy-relevant research and increase the related impact on various policies in Albania and the Western Balkans. ***A Beginner's Guide to Advocacy in Albania*** is the first in a line of engagements and publications by Co-PLAN to pursue this objective and contribute to a democratic and deliberative policymaking environment in Albania.

I. Policy Advocacy in Today's World



Advocacy refers to the action of requesting a change in the current state of affairs. In simple terms, to advocate for something means to raise an issue, to make it visible to the public and call for action by pointing to a specific path for change. Whether we seek to express a concern, increase accountability, raise funds or directly affect the policymaking process, advocacy is at the heart of change initiatives.

In most countries, it is public policies that regulate the different areas of public life. Public policies set the rules of the game and often the only way to assure real, sustainable change in a society is by bringing about a change in policy. For this reason advocacy usually refers to any activity by a person or organization that aims to affect public policies to bring about change in a specific area. In this guide, we refer to **advocacy as a political process by an individual or group, which aims to influence public policy.**

o Advocacy: A Broad Perspective on Types and Purpose

We advocate in our everyday lives, often without realizing it, from informal conversations to legal advice; but advocacy can also be very organized. This is what we refer to as independent advocacy, the act of calling for change through formal advocacy methods such as: calling for demonstrations or petitions - mass advocacy, organizing a lobbying campaign - interest-group advocacy or publishing a policy paper. As change is pursued in different ways, there are also many forms of advocacy. Thus, different forms of advocacy represent different approaches to bringing about change in a society.

Advocacy may try to influence policymakers directly - direct advocacy - or indirectly by getting their constituents to exert pressure - indirect advocacy. A good example for the first would be direct lobbying, which aims to influence the decisions of government officials by exercising group pressure upon them. Examples of indirect advocacy may be grassroots lobbying focusing on awareness raising particularly at the local level; or activism aiming to promote or prevent change through a wide range of methods such as public letters, boycotts, rallies, street marches, strikes, etc.

Advocacy can be pursued by everyone and for everyone. Any individual or group may raise its own concerns - self-advocacy - or advocate on behalf of others, to help others have their views, opinions and concerns heard - representational advocacy. In the second case, advocacy does not mean to act on behalf of disempowered individuals

or groups in what are perceived to be their best interests. Rather, advocates are the ones who stand to support these groups, and make sure their own voice is heard.

In this context, policy advocacy also acts to publicize issues - issue advocacy - that may not be visible to the public and place them on the agenda of politicians. Policy advocacy may be used to prevent research findings, different perspectives or simply great ideas from getting lost amidst never ending public debates. It helps to bring them into light in an organized way, in the eyes of both public and policymakers, thus providing different groups with an opportunity to influence public policies. In this way, policy advocacy may not only serve disempowered groups but researchers, think tanks or civil unions can also use it to mobilize their views and findings, in order to affect change in policy.

We take from the experience of Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development and mention here some examples illustrating the above different types of advocacy.

A case of direct lobbying would be representatives from Co-PLAN and civil society at wide working together to raise NGO taxation issues with the Albanian government. In 2003 Co-PLAN took active part in the creation of a representative body for more than 80 NGOs, which would coordinate the work between the non-profit and public sector while protecting NGO interests. The group lobbied in several levels of the decision making system and even directly with the Prime Minister. For example, in 2010 representatives from Co-PLAN and other NGOs met with the Prime Minister to discuss changes to legislation on NGO taxation practices.

Co-PLAN's advocacy initiatives include also several policy papers, like the one published recently on regional development, which aims to impact regional development policies in Albania, as well as policies on regionalization.

For a case of representational advocacy, in 2005 Co-PLAN prepared a platform for territory administration, which touched upon various issues including that of legalizing informal settlements. Through this platform, Co-PLAN advocated with political parties on the settlement phenomena thus actively participating in the shaping of the new law, subsequent informality studies, the process for self-declaration, etc. In the years 1995 – 2005, Co-PLAN worked also directly with inhabitants of these areas to improve living conditions and engage them in the process of formalization and legalization. In 1998, the first area, that of Bathore, was publicly recognized, which marked an achievement for Co-PLAN's grassroots lobbying advocacy.

Additionally, to illustrate a case of issue advocacy, we mention Co-PLAN's efforts to introduce the concept of a new type of territorial development that balances public and private interests. The efforts to raise this issue with the government and the public aimed to tackle problems with infrastructure and services, that can be traced back to unbalanced land development formulas still used today by many development practitioners and farmers.

o Outlining Approaches to Policy Advocacy

The Overseas Development Institute provides a useful way of illustrating different approaches to advocacy in its handbook for researchers Tools for Policy Impact (Start and Hovland 2004). As the handbook points out, initiatives for change may follow the cooperative track, or confrontational track. This means we can distinguish between organizations that aim to build consensus vs. organizations that outright denounce the current state of affairs. The handbook also differentiates between arguments based on rational evidence and scientific research vs. value interest or interest-based arguments. That is to say, initiatives for change may take impetus from and build their arguments around constructive findings to problematize a policy and suggest solutions. But, they can also be simply based on a group's interests or values, which are not being served by the current policy. For example, think tanks tend to operate by proposing change based on research, while activism strategies often seek to obtain change via group pressure and seek to point out problems rather than offer solutions (Start and Hovland 2004, p.5).

The Open Society Foundations have adapted this model in their guide Making Research Evidence Matter, to present the advocacy roles of different types of organizations (Young and Quinn 2012). Their illustration is presented below:

Figure 1: The advocacy roles of different types of NGOs (source: OSF 2012)



As you may see in the figure, the two axes differentiate between different types of initiatives according to their policy advocacy approach: cooperative vs. confrontational and evidence-based vs. interest/value-based.

To take an example: Greenpeace International has built its reputation on strong activism to change attitudes and behavior on environmental and peace related issues. Its website claims: “We exist to expose environmental criminals, and to challenge government and corporations when they fail to live up to their mandate to safeguard our environment and our future”. This claim illustrates the relatively confrontational approach of the organization that bases its advocacy initiatives on clearly defined values. Thus, as seen in the figure, organizations like Greenpeace usually fall under the category of Activism.

Of course, rarely does an organization fall neatly into only one category. The writers offer the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) as an example of an organization whose advocacy initiatives intersect different approaches, as seen in Figure 1. ECFR often uses media campaigning to pressure governments, but its efforts do not include street protests or petitioning. “The type of advocacy approach used by ECFR is mostly inside-track evidence based supported by publications, discussions, conferences and lobbying, but the value dimension is also there with what they call “European Values” dominating their advocacy messages” (Young and Quinn 2012, p.29). As stated in most of its publications, the main objective guiding ECFR’s advocacy is to conduct research and promote informed debate across Europe on the development of coherent, effective and values-based European foreign policy. To achieve this objective a number of tools and approaches are adopted.

To illustrate the kind of debate this pan-European think-tank advocates, we offer in Figure 2 an excerpt from one of their widely discussed publications from 2012, “The periphery of the periphery: The Western Balkans and the euro crisis” (Bechev 2012), where the impacts of the euro crisis on the Western Balkans are discussed while highlighting the perils of Europeanization without deeper transformation.

Figure 2: An excerpt from the ECFR policy brief “The periphery of the periphery”

summary

The euro crisis has not killed enlargement but it is relegating the region to the outermost circle in a multi-speed-Europe – the periphery of the periphery. With Balkan economies beset by low or negative growth rates and rising unemployment, it has exposed the limits of the EU’s growth model and undermined the narrative of convergence between the EU and the Western Balkans, Greece, once one of the region’s models, is now a warning about the perils of Europeanisation without deeper transformation. EU membership is still popular in the Western Balkans, but more often than not elites talk Europe’s talk but do not walk the walk. The euro crisis further reinforces the temptation that already existed in the UE to pursue a “wait-and-see” approach to the Western Balkans. But the apparent stability of the status quo could prove deceptive. While the violent conflicts of the 1990’s are unlikely to re-emerge, stagnation within the region erodes the UE’s influence and encourages competitors. To make enlargement work and reclaim its soft power, the UE must shift its focus from a narrative based on security to one based on the economy. The UE needs to deploy strategically its scarce resources, together with other international actors such as the IMF, to avert an economic meltdown and assist growth.

Despite the euro crisis the European Union continues to expand into the Western Balkans: in July 2013, Croatia will become its 28th member. But beneath the surface, the UE’s relationship with the countries on its doorstep is changing as a result of the crisis and the way it is transforming the EU. Integration is a double-edged sword for the Western Balkans: in good times. The European core exported its prosperity towards its south-eastern periphery; but now, at a time of crisis, it is exporting instability. European policymakers and analysts still casually speak of the EU as the cure for Balkan pathologies – as if the crisis has never happened. But the truth is that a disintegrating EU could also be a curse for them. The EU is now facing with what Timothy Garton Ash calls a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” situation: is it doesn’t the Balkans will be left out in the cold with little external support for their modernisation and democratic consolidation. Either way, the crisis is relegating the region to the outermost circle in a multi-speed Europe – the periphery of the periphery. A Greek exit from the eurozone would send shockwaves through the Western Balkans, with whom it has developed extensive trade, investment and human links over the past two decades – exactly as Brussels hoped it would.

In conclusion, organizations may use one or different approaches to carry out policy advocacy initiatives. More often than not, organizations resort to different tools to advance their advocacy goals, but mixing various methods comes with experience. For the beginner advocate, it is important to know that the most successful advocates are those who clearly identify their convictions and approach before going into action, and so **planning is crucial to a successful advocacy campaign**. Inexperienced individuals, or organizations that wish to plan and carry out any kind of advocacy, need to build their line of action according to their strengths and weaknesses as well as clarify their core values, before actually drafting policy advocacy activities.

Public policy advocacy, or initiatives that aim to affect public policy, are especially open to different types of approaches. As we will see in the following chapter, public policies differ greatly in type and objectives and thus advocacy initiatives are also tailored to the policy they aim to influence. For this reason, new advocates should be flexible enough to build their advocacy initiative around public policies and the environment in which these develop. For this, a well-grounded knowledge of policies and the political environment is crucial.

The following chapter starts by introducing a simplified theoretical framework in which different types of public policy are introduced accompanied by advocacy approaches that might fit each type. Chapter three then narrows down to public policy making and the political environment in Albania.

II. Portraying Public Policy

“The whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents. It is not at all a matter of the rational implementation of the so-called decisions through selected strategies”
Edward Clay

To beginners in the policy advocacy field, public policy might seem like an overly complicated ordeal and tackling such a process might seem like an impossible challenge. This is because of traditional notions that present policymaking as a well-structured process (linear or cyclic) of consecutive stages of planning, drafting and implementation. This view presents policymaking as a set of impenetrable procedures and often creates the impression that unless included in the early stages when a policy is still in the making, an actor will have very low chances of influencing the process.

However, it may be easier than it seems, to find an entry point into the policy making process if one carefully devises their advocacy strategy. It may also be the case that a later inclusion into the process is more successful, especially when resources are limited and advocates can only afford a short but decisive action (for example when preliminary stages such as feasibility assessments or evaluations are extensive and require ample resources). In fact, as the quote at the beginning of this chapter points out, it is often the case in reality that policy is the result of multiple dynamics and relationships that transcend the established ‘stages’ model. Recognizing this, and thus the opportunities for influencing policy at any stage is the first step for any advocate.

o Public Policy: An Introduction

Different political science schools have offered various models that represent the complexity of policymaking processes. It is important to emphasize that none of these models is universal and the way one looks at political reality very much depends on their background and worldview. However, for practical purposes in this chapter, we offer some common definitions of public policy from some of the more famous theories that have ventured models outlining the intricate realities of policymaking. This will serve as background knowledge for the beginner in policy advocacy.

One of the more practical definitions of public policy may serve as a good starter. Anderson (2003) defines public policy as: *“a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern”*. Public policies are developed by governmental bodies and officials in response to certain policy demands. Some important characteristics according to Anderson (2003) are listed below.

▫ **Public policies are purposive**, i.e. differ from random behavior and are goal-oriented. For example, support for the privatization of entities previously owned by the state, has been an on going policy of Albanian governments. Results from this policy are consecutive privatizations, like for example, the privatization of the energy distribution sector in Albania.

▫ **Public policies emerge in response to policy demands made by other actors**. These demands may simply call for intervention, or specify the action desired. For example, in the last years the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection has declared building of rural roads to be a policy priority¹. This public policy aimed to address the present detachment of farmers from markets and was a response to requests by communes and municipalities, as well as European partners. Another example is the transposition of the entire Albanian legal framework on Agriculture and Environment in line with the implementation of the Stabilisation Association Agreement (SAA) and EU integration requirements.

¹Declaration of the Minister of Agriculture Food and Consumer Protection, Genc Ruli, 25 Oct 2012

□ **Public policies involve what governments actually do**, not merely what is stated in strategies and legislation or what officials declare they will do. An example would be the Albanian experience with intellectual property rights. In 2005, after long discussions, the Albanian government passed the Law nr.9830, date 28.04.2005, On the Right to Authorship and other Related Rights. It declared the state would pursue a policy of protecting rights to authorship and other related rights in activities of creative, productive or commercial nature. However, only recently have we started to experience some actual steps with regards to the implementation of this law. In the first years after this legislation was passed, due to several difficulties in implementation, the actual government policy in the field of intellectual property rights had difficulties matching the declared policy and resulted more in the non-regulation of the sector and these rights. What we are experiencing recently, is shift towards a more proactive policy in this regard.

o **Public Policies and Advocacies: An Effect-Oriented Typology**

There are different types of public policy and the methods for approaching each type naturally differ. For the beginner advocate, it is important to realize that advocacy is an initiative that requires a great deal of planning². Most of this planning involves identifying and clearly pinpointing the policy we aim to impact. This is because most policies require a tailored approach in order for advocacy to achieve its goals. For example, we may deal with issues where there is a distinct lack of knowledge and capabilities throughout the audience. In this case, an advocacy approach that starts by addressing the information or capability gap through presentations and training sessions is much more likely to succeed in drawing the attention of the target audience. On the contrary, issues that involve well-defined but clashing interests might require a more aggressive campaign such as lobbying. In this way, advocacy for a particular policy will require a certain type of strategy and resource allocation that might not prove optimal for another type.

Policies can be divided by sector i.e. education, security or health policies; or by authoritative powers i.e. legislative, judicial or executive policies. For instance, policies in Albania are often presented along strategic lines in the form of sectoral strategies.

For example, the Sectoral Strategy of Public Finances 2008 – 2013 covers: (i) macroeconomic and fiscal policies, public budget administration, financial administration and control; (ii) tax income administration; (iii) customs income administration. This strategy reflects the Government's program, Albania's obligations under international agreements such as SAA or NATO, public investment priorities as well as foreign aid (SSPF 2008).

Given our focus on advocacy for change, we have chosen below an effect-oriented typology elaborated by Theodore Lowi. Lowi (1968) elaborated four main categories of public policy – **constituent, distributive, re-distributive and regulatory** – under the assumption 'policies make politics' portraying the different ways governments seek to control society. Why is this relevant to advocacy? His typology "differentiates policies based on their effect on society and the relationship of those involved in their formation" (Anderson 2011, p. 11) and for this reason it is crucial to identifying important entry points to influence policy making, which is the starting point for any policy advocacy plan. We list these categories below while at the same time illustrating them with examples and what are considered optimal approaches to advocacy for each type³.

Constituent Policies

Constituent policies (involving government constituents i.e. involving composition or components of government) refer to policies that are concerned with the establishment of government structure, rules or procedures for its conduct, rules that distribute or divide power and jurisdictions within which present and future policies might be made. Thus, constituent policies also deal with the redistribution of power and jurisdiction among government entities. In some countries they are also referred to as "state-building" policies.

In December 2005, the Albanian Council of Ministers formally established the Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination (DSDC) as an integral part of its organizational structure. This was an important milestone in the policy for modernization. DSDC was aimed at ensuring that fragmented strategic planning and budgeting processes of the Government were coherent and effectively managed and the external assistance was targeted towards national priorities⁴.

²An advocacy initiative, just as public policies, goes through various stages from the identification of the issue to the final monitoring and evaluation. Various instruments are used in each stage for different purposes and the advocacy cycle itself can be initiated at any stage of the policy cycle (see for more details Chapter 5).

³For a detailed crosscutting scheme you can refer to an article by Lowi (1972) "Four Systems of Policy, Politics and Choice" in the Public Administration Review.
⁴Council of Ministers website, DSDC section

Because constituent policies also involve procedural issues, the beginner advocate should know that, especially in highly bureaucratic systems, these are many times used to delay or prevent action. Also, these policies deal directly with the distribution of political power and for this reason are highly salient for political actors. To illustrate:

In 2010, in line with the implementation of Law Nr. 10119, date 23.4.2009, “On territory Planning”, a national agency on territory planning was created. The law placed this agency under the supervision of the Prime Minister and it was attributed many of the responsibilities previously held by the Directorate of Planning in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. But at the same time, a Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) placed it under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Affairs with regards to administration structure and budget. The process of strengthening this institution, crucial to planning policy reforms, started in 2010 and has been facing multiple challenges. These challenges are not only technical but often political and interest-based.

Generally, due to their particular intricacies regarding the relationships between institutions, laws and resources, constituent policies might prove daunting for the public. Attempts to change these policies directly interfere with established powerful structures and advocacies need to be very aggressive or very convincing (or possibly both). For this reason, resources should focus towards well-planned lobbying activities, policy research, or ultimately constituency building as a last resort.

Policy research is a good first step in this direction. This phase is about advancing an alternative based on substantive, comprehensive research and expertise, which will result in a better policy. A **lobbying campaign** can then be built around the alternative advocated and unite the interests of enough actors to enforce change. The more powerful the actors supporting a cause, the more likely an advocate is to succeed. **Constituency building** can also be used to mobilize support among the electorate who then is entitled to elect a representative that will fulfil their requests.

Distributive Policies

These policies allocate resources, services or benefits to particular or large segments of the population. These may target very specific beneficiaries or may direct public funds to larger segments or the common public good assuming the population in its entirety will benefit from the policy.

An expression of a distributive policy was the **Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, passed by the United States Congress in October 2008**, also known as the “bail-out” bill. It amounted to a \$700 billion bailout to buy mortgage-backed securities that were in danger of defaulting. By doing so, the state wanted to take these debts off the books of the banks, hedge funds and pension funds that held them. Of course, the bill helped more than just banks and it was part of a nation-wide policy to soften the effects of the financial crises on both banks and customers holding risky mortgages. On broader policy perspective, this bill initiated an important shift in financial and monetary policies on a national and international scale: an important dose of state intervention was injected into what had so far been a largely deregulative approach. Debates continue to this day on whether governments should adopt more bank regulation, in those countries where investment was a largely laissez-faire sector up to a few years ago.⁵

For an example of distributive policy in the Albanian context that also extends to wider segments of the population, we can look to social services or the welfare policies of the Albanian government.

In the **Strategy for Social Inclusion 2007 – 2013**, the Albanian Government increased subsidies for energy payments from 9% of the price, to 36%. It was declared around 270.000 families in need will benefit from this scheme as well as those employees who earn less than 35.000 Lek/month but are the only ones employed in their families as well as the only ones benefiting from the scheme (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities 2007). These efforts were part of a poverty reduction policy that aimed to provide some relief to the poorest families in Albania. According to the World Bank, without these social services, the poverty level would have been around 11% higher for the population in general and 20% higher for beneficiaries (World Bank 2006, p.16)⁶.

Attempts to influence distributive policies often relate to the principle of distributive justice and they are likely to draw widely from shared public or group belief systems on what is a just distribution of a country’s wealth. Most distributive policies are about how public funds are allocated, where they are invested, how they are invested and which portion of the population they are directed to. As these funds are largely made up of tax money, advocacies may call upon the public to support initiatives that make the best use of their money (or to end initiatives that may be using public funding for purposes perceived as harmful, like war or pollution).

⁵Emergency Economic Stabilization Act 2008 (US Congress)

⁶MLSEO (2007) Strategy for Social Inclusion 2007-2013

Budget Advocacy is an interesting direction, especially when the policy involves large use of public funds. This type of advocacy refers to an increased participation and analysis of civil society organizations in appreciating and influencing budget and budgetary decisions ⁷. These initiatives are based on key principles like transparency, accountability, participation, adequacy, priority, progress and equity. An example would be the work of “watchdog” kind of organizations that track the way taxes from each individual are invested into projects or services. In many countries, Albania included, taxes are collected and then re-distributed for various investments. Thus it is particularly difficult to know how different taxes are used by the government. For example, it is difficult to tell whether the building tax goes into the improvement of infrastructure or is simply used for other purposes. Budget advocacies often aim to address these shortcomings, by informing citizens or by going one step further and attempting to reform particular systems ⁸.

Re-distributive Policies

As the name suggests, re-distributive policies handle the re-distribution of wealth (in the form of income, property, resources, etc.) from some individuals or groups to others. This is done through various mechanisms. Some of the most active debates in economic and social policy revolve around re-distributive policies, their ethical dimension and the effects on different groups. Because re-distributive policies relate to principles of equity and social justice, re-distribution is often taken to mean policies that aim towards equity or towards giving back to unprivileged communities. While this is true, re-distributive policies may also include taking from communities like, for example, the nationalization of private land.

Taxation is one of the mechanisms governments use for wealth redistribution. Examples of re-distributive policy debates are debates on the **flat vs. progressive tax**. Progressive taxes aim to lighten the effect of taxes on persons with a lower ability to pay and shift this effect in a disproportionate way on persons with a higher ability to pay. Such a debate is currently on going in Albania where political forces argue on what groups will carry the weight of each taxation system and what the effects will be on economic growth.

These types of policy debate are highly sensitive as they discuss taking from some to give to others. Re-distributive policy debates rest upon assumptions that call to (often clashing) core values and beliefs about how societies should be built. For this reason, re-distributive policy advocacies can easily arouse strong public interest.

⁷Budget Advocacy as defined by the Social Accountability Curriculum

⁸For an examination of the expanding contribution of civil society organizations to public budgets in developing countries, you can refer to a paper by Krafchik “Can civil society add value to budget decision-making: A description of civil society budget work”

Another example of a particularly sensitive re-distributive policy is the legalization, urbanization and integration of informal settlements, which deals with land redistribution. This policies address the quick development of informal settlements in Albania in the last two decades. Even though in the last decade informality has been recognized as an obstacle to development and legislation or institutions have been devised to address it, debates continue to problematize the issue and view proposed solutions as socially unjust. Legalization is often perceived as a process subsidized by the society at large for the benefit of a limited group of people in informal areas. Therefore, it is still difficult to forego the costs of the process in light of long-term benefits for the country’s development.

These particular qualities can be used to the advocate’s advantage if the right strategies are adopted. But because strong interests are at play when these policies are changed, the advocate needs to find the right interest groups to support the cause.

Re-distributive policies are delicate cases and the advocacy approach should be very pro-active while at the same time being backed by strong evidence. A combined strategy is a good solution in this case. Carefully crafted **communication strategies** that boost public interest can be combined with a **lobbying campaign** to assure interest group support. It is very likely that fierce debates will take place and **policy papers** may be used to back up the campaign with substantive research. These can serve to articulate the alternative we are advocating for, as well as provide the theoretical and empirical evidence to support it.

Regulatory Policies

As the name suggests, regulatory policies are focused on regulating behavior and activities. These policies impose restrictions, limitations or obligations on individuals and groups (Anderson 2003). Most of them decrease the freedom of different actors by highlighting prohibited acts or obligations to act. A typical example of a largely regulated field is the extensive regulation of criminal behavior.

A word of caution here on differentiating between legislation or rules and the policy they serve: while rules may be easy to spot, this is not always the case with public policy. Thus, we emphasize that regulation-related policies may not always be easy to identify. Since they usually relate to written rules and legislation, these policies tend to be perceived

as clearly defined and easily identifiable. As with all public policy, this is not always the case. The lack of government articulation of specific rules for certain behaviors, i.e. the lack of regulation, may often be a purposive course of action. Let us refer back to the example of the bail-out bill in the United States:

The “**bail-out**” bill marked a shift in financial and monetary policies: an important dose of state intervention was injected into what had so far been a largely deregulative policy.

In other words, regulation-related policies can have a regulative or deregulative nature. In both cases we deal with attempts to shape behavior and actions. What is crucial for the beginner policy practitioner or the beginner advocate, is to be able to identify and tackle a policy not only by government activity but also by inactivity/inaction. Often the lack of a clearly specified policy, is the policy in itself. For an example of regulatory policies in the Albanian context, we can point at any legislation focused on regulating a certain area of public life.

An example of a recent regulatory policy in Albania is the policy aiming to regulate the gambling sector. This policy was articulated by the **Law nr. 10 033, date 11.12.2008, On Gambling Games, Amended**, as well as by successive decisions of the Council of Ministers on the matter. Recent declarations by the Mayor of Tirana on moving all gambling activities in a designated area outside the capital may point to a future policy of tighter regulation. However, so far, there are no practical actions or new legislation initiating any actual policy .

Due to their nature and purpose, regulatory policies are most likely to be articulated in legal and official documents. For this reason, they might prove very resistant to change. Let us take the example of the relatively new territory planning policy in Albania.

Though its nature is not only regulatory, the Albanian territorial policy largely aims to regulate the behavior of different actors with regards to the territory. These actors include development practitioners, national and local planning authorities as well as citizens. The policy is aimed at a wide target group and covers an ample sector with a multitude of issues. As a result, it includes a multitude of rules and regulations created through various DCMs and directives. A great part of these rules are rather complex as they also introduce new concepts on land management. In the last three years since the policy has been approved, resistance towards these regulations remains high.

These policies usually target particular groups in a society, who are directly affected by the resulting regulations. Thus, successful advocacy initiatives in the area of regulation are usually focused at targeting the specific affected groups.

Regulatory Advocacy often starts by regularly monitoring government regulatory activity. Interested groups conducting the monitoring, also discuss the impact of current and new legislation on different areas of public life and/or different subjects. Based on this activity, changes are determined and suggested, backed up by evidence from their monitoring. Findings may be published as **policy research** or **policy papers**. Once the necessary public consensus has been generated, a change in legislation may be requested by following the legal pathway (calling for a **parliamentary commission, referendums**) or through **lobbying** if the change in policy benefits powerful interest groups.

The typology presented above is one of many public policy typologies. Depending on the purpose, the public policy advocate might find it useful to differentiate between substantive and procedural policies (what will be done as opposed to how it will be done and by who), material and symbolic policies (allocating tangible benefits as opposed to appealing to shared values such as peace or social justice) policies involving collective goods vs. policies involving private goods (Anderson 2003), and so on. Depending on the advocacy’s subject, purpose and audience, the opportunities for intervention also differ greatly.

With experience, the public policy practitioner often discovers that theoretical categorizations and definitions often intersect in reality and model-solutions need to be adapted and often combined. What is important for the beginner advocate is to be able to develop a critical eye that allows for identifying and dissecting various public policies as well as looking beyond them to discover the actors, power relations and opportunities for intervention. This will also facilitate the customization of advocacy methodologies to each particular initiative.

III. Albanian Public Policy in the Making

In this section, we provide a picture of the actors that, according to the Constitution, determine public policy in Albania. The aim is to introduce the reader to the institutional set-up, procedures and actors that determine official policymaking in the Republic of Albania. At the same time, this section acquaints the reader with the political environment in Albania, which they will need to navigate to achieve advocacy goals.

o Albanian Political Actors: Legislative and Executive Context

Public policy encompasses a wide range of systems, different tools and a multitude of actors. For this reason, it is often difficult for the beginner practitioner to identify and outline a specific public policy unless this has been articulated in a strategy or specific law. With experience, one is able to pin down a specific policy by combining official documents, public declarations, party programs and many other (possibly conflicting) expressions of political will on a certain issue. But initially, legislation and legally-binding executive acts remain easily identifiable expressions of public policy.

It is just as difficult, if not more, to identify the participants in a given policymaking process. Main actors such as Members of Parliament (MPs) or members of the Council of Ministers (CoM) may be more visible, but interest groups, lobbying partnerships, networking agents, etc. may be much more difficult to spot. This is something perfected over time as advocates extend not only their knowledge but also their contacts and connections.

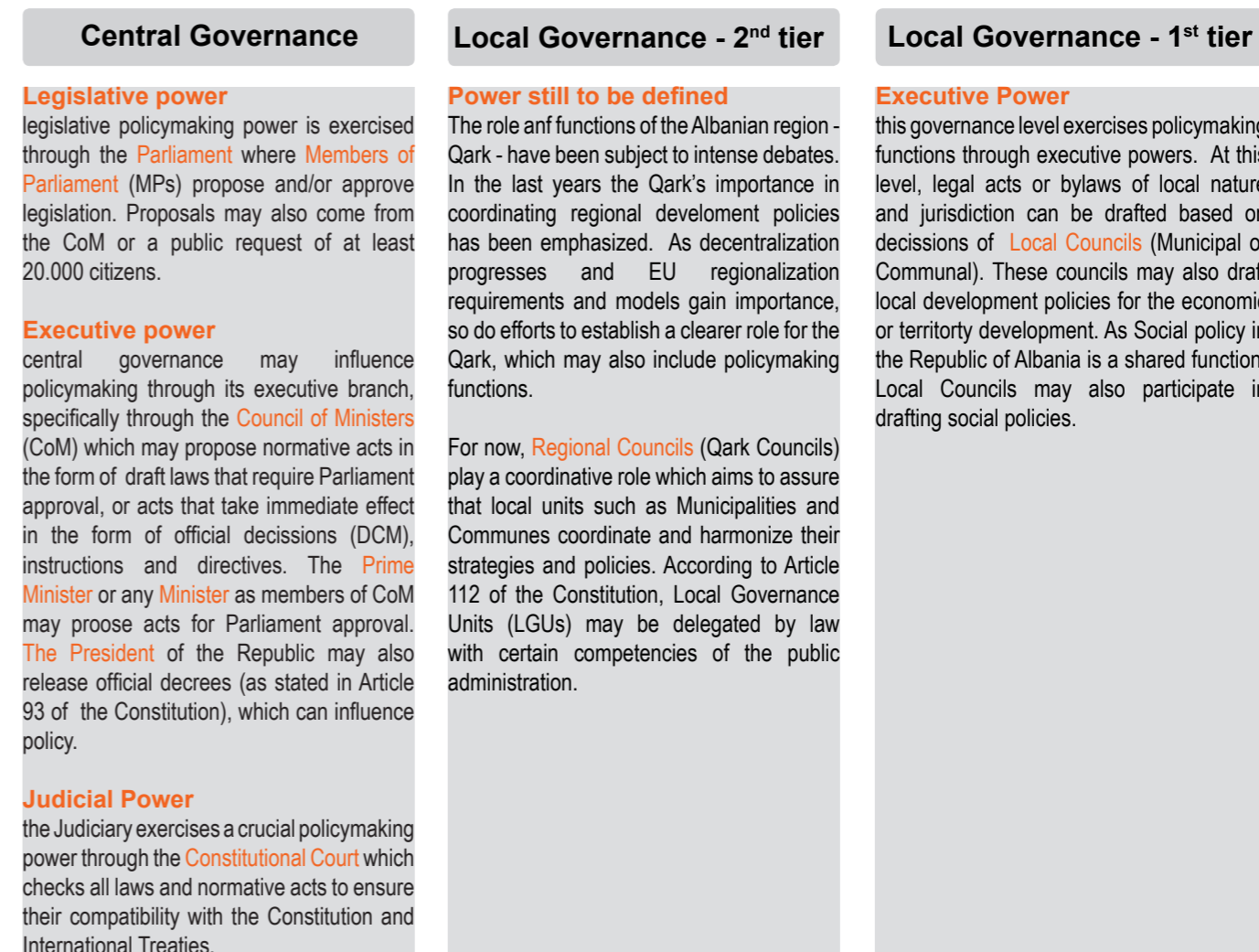
That being said, something that greatly contributes to overcoming these challenges is an extensive knowledge of the official ways to enact policy in a country. By acquainting ourselves with the official processes and actors we have a chance to not only understand the legal way of interfering in a policy, but also recognize who the most powerful actors are and how their power is exercised and legitimized. Laws, norms and regulations are only some of the expressions of public policy. However, the legislative and executive decision-making system presents a good first step into the policymaking process in any given system.

Before describing the process a policy goes through and the actors that shape its development, we offer below a schematic representation of the division of powers in the Republic of Albania. The purpose is to show how responsibilities are divided between legislative, executive and judicial functions thus assuring their independence from each other and providing a system of checks and balances. The independence of these functions is also stated in Article 7 of the Constitution, which states “The system of governance in the Republic of Albania is based on the division and balancing among legislative, executive and judicial powers”. Additionally, we illustrate the role of local governance in policymaking. This role is guaranteed by Article 13 of the Constitution, which states: “Local governance in the Republic of Albania is based on the decentralization of power and is exercised according to the principle of local autonomy”.

Thus, political power in the Republic of Albania is divided among central governance (legislative, executive and judicial) and local governance. Both these levels play part in policymaking. With decentralization efforts in the last decade, a second level of local

governance resembling regional governance has been gaining importance as efforts continue to strengthen the role of Qarks in the Republic of Albania. The rest of the chapter goes on to explain in detail how the institutions in the scheme use different instruments to develop policies.

Figure 3: Governance and Policymaking in the Republic of Albania (own elaboration)



Legislation as Policy

Normative acts, in the form of legislation or official decisions, are some of the most obvious expressions of a public policy. Normative acts of the CoM and acts of the ruling organs of central institutions are applicable to the whole territory of the Republic of Albania within the sphere of their jurisdiction. Legal acts released by Local Governments are only applicable within the territorial jurisdiction of the respective Local Government. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, Article 116, there are four types of normative acts in the territory of the Republic of Albania:

- a. Constitution
- b. Ratified International Treaties
- c. Laws
- d. Normative acts of CoM

Legal advocacy would generally be concerned with how to change or revoke any of these acts. Let us take a look at them one by one.

a. Constitution

The Constitution itself is an expression of national policies. For example, Article 10 of the Constitution declares that there are no official religions in the Republic of Albania. This is an expression of a national policy of non-discrimination on a religious basis, and of the preservation of secularity in Albanian institutions and policies. To get a grip of how difficult it is to amend the Constitution, just imagine the kind of support that would need to be built to change secularism and state policies towards religion in Albania. In fact, as Article 116 of the Constitution determines the hierarchy of norms, the Constitution is the first in line, before even international treaties. Thus, the Constitution preserves its superiority towards all other normative acts.

However, there have been a number of amendments to the Constitution and beginner advocates can familiarize themselves with the procedure, regulated under Article 177 of the Constitution: Reviewing the Constitution. Under this Article, the initiative for amending the Constitution belongs to no less than one-fifth of MPs and the amendment has to be approved by no less than two-thirds of all MPs. By request of, at least, two-thirds of all MPs, constitutional draft-amendments may be subjected to an approval by referendum. Unlike other draft legislation, the President of the

Republic does not have the right to return the draft-amendments for review to the Parliament.

b. Ratified International Treaties

The Constitution divides international treaties in two main categories, as specified in Article 121:

1. International treaties that are ratified or denounced by law from the Parliament
2. International treaties that are signed by the CoM and do not get ratified by law.

Before all approval, the treaty undergoes a constitutional review. If the treaty has to be approved, but it is not in line with a constitutional article, the Constitution has to be amended first. Advocates may use international treaties to support their cause.

For example, if a country is signatory to an international convention on guaranteeing child rights, advocates may strongly denounce child labor as not only inhumane but also in breach of international law. Issues that deal with breaches of international treaties rally a great deal of international support and may serve as the basis of strong partnerships and joint initiatives between advocates in different countries. Based on safeguarding international conventions, advocates should strive to build partnerships with sister organizations abroad advocating for the same issue. This can serve for information sharing purposes but also often leads to successful joint initiatives.

c. Laws

Not all public policies need parliamentary approval. Nor are they all articulated into legislation. Nonetheless, major policy reforms and all new legislation will need the approval of the Parliament. Concerning laws, Article 81 of the Constitution states that the right to propose legislation in the Republic of Albania belongs to “the Council of Ministers, any Member of Parliament as well as an electorate made up of at least 20.000 citizens”.

Proposed legislation in the form of draft laws is reviewed and debated in the Parliament by the Parliamentary Commission responsible for that area and/or any other Special Commissions that may be assembled for the specific issue at hand. For example, each draft law is examined by the Constitutional Commission to assure its compatibility with the Constitution. Parliamentary commission meetings are mostly open to the public. Often, members of the CoM

and invited experts attend these meetings and may be asked to present their views. Decisions in these commissions are taken with a majority of votes⁹. According to Article 77 of the Constitution, upon the request of one-fourth of all MPs, the Parliament also reserves the right to raise special commissions for investigating specific cases. The resulting reports are not compulsory to Courts, but they may be sent to Prosecuting bodies that evaluate them in line with the legal procedure.

With regards to approval, Article 81 of the Constitution lists several key legislations, which can only be approved by three-fifths of all MPs. Examples of these are legislation on nationality, state of emergency or referendums. Concerning all other legislation, Article 78 of the Constitution states that the Parliament approves acts by majority of votes when more than half of MPs are present. If approved by the Parliament, the draft legislation is sent to the President of the Republic for approval. The President may approve it, or return it for further review. In the following page, you may find a representation of the organizational structure of the Albanian Parliament¹⁰.

d. Normative Acts of CoM

Normative acts released by the CoM are:

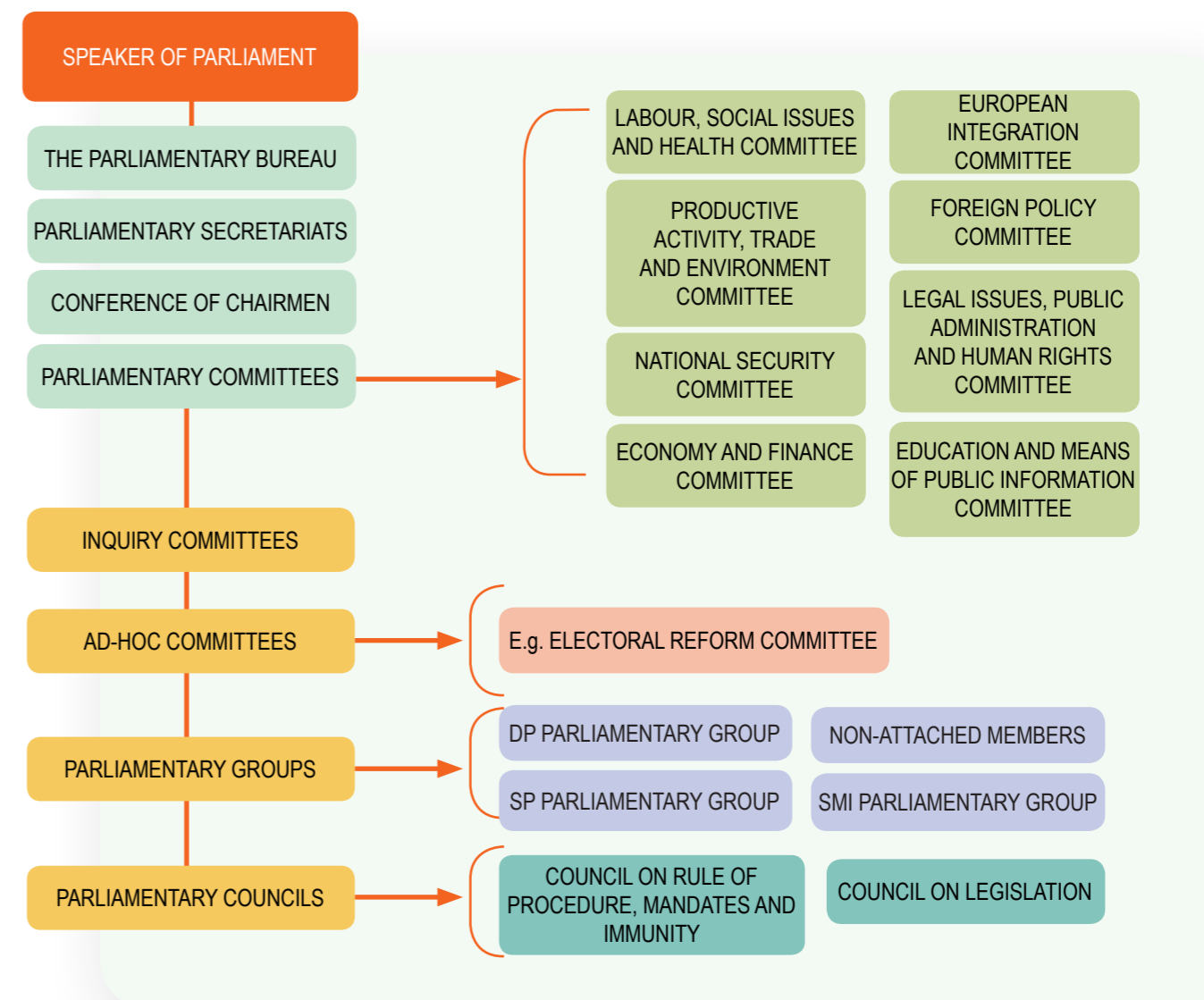
1. Normative acts, which upon Parliament approval turn into laws (as specified in Article 116)
2. Decisions
3. Instructions and Orders

A later act on a certain issue may disempower previous acts. For example, if a piece of legislation initially enters in force in 2010, the law of 2012 on the same subject may affect the previous legislation by amending some of its Articles, or by completely revoking the previous legislation.

⁹According to Article 78 of the Constitution, the Parliament makes decisions with a majority of votes (simple majority) with more than half of MPs presence required, except in those cases when the Constitution specifies the requirement for a "qualified majority".

¹⁰To keep up to date with new Special Commissions created, you may refer to the official website of the Albanian Parliament: <http://www.parlament.al>

Figure 4: The current organizational structure of the Albanian Parliament (source: Albanian Parliament official website, own elaboration)



Advocacy Approach

The better acquainted an advocate is with the legislative procedure in a country, the easier it will be to find entry points into the process and influence the decision. In this regard, identifying the right time for intervention and the right actors to influence is just as important as the advocacy methods. There are two ways to affect the policymaking process through intervention into the legislative procedure:

- (i) identify and make use of entry points in the process when a policy/law is being discussed or
- (ii) rally support and propose a new legislation.

For the first method, it is important to be able to identify **discussion phases**, such as preliminary discussions or parliamentary review, as opposed to crucial **decision-making points**, such as parliamentary approval or approval by the President. Draft legislation is more prone to change in the discussion phase, which is why many advocates raise their issue with the members of the responsible commission as they are in the process of discussing the matter. The choice of advocacy methodology will depend on many variables. For example, **Policy Research** or Policy Papers may be used to influence the discussion of legislation, while **Lobbying** can be used to influence the voting process.

For the second method, the Constitution identifies the three bodies that may present new legislation in the Republic of Albania (as mentioned above CoM, MPs as well as 20.000 citizens). There is no space in the Albanian legislation for proposal by interest groups or civil society directly into the parliament. However, with the right methods, it may prove easier than it looks to gather the support of 20.000 or more citizens or to **convince an MP** to present the new legislation.

Executive Policy Making

According to Article 95 of the Constitution, the CoM is made up of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers. Article 100 specifies: “The Council of Ministers determines the main directions of general state policies”. This task is a responsibility of the Prime Minister (Article 102). The CoM has the legal power to approve acts that are proposed by the Prime Minister or by a Minister. These acts are in the form of regulations and bylaws necessary for the implementation of laws passed by the Parliament. In case of an emergency, the CoM can issue normative acts that have the same juridical position as that of laws. However, these normative acts have to be approved by the Parliament within a period of 45 days or they are nullified (Article 101).

State policies initiated in the executive branch originate from political party programs. Political parties conceptualize their political program before the electoral campaign. After the elections, the political program of the winning party/coalition eventually becomes recognized as state policies. Within 10 days of the appointment of the Prime Minister, the political program and the CoM composition are sent to the Albanian Parliament for approval.

Advocacy Approach

Understanding the dynamics of campaigning and election processes is crucial to choosing the right timing and tools for advocacy. For example, if CoM is identified as a target for the advocacy, you may want to start the initiative before or during the campaign. Generally, politicians are more attentive during an electoral season and it would be advisable to start an advocacy campaign before the electoral year. This gives an advocate sufficient time to try and influence the political programs of competing parties. Tools such as **communication strategy** and **constituency building** should be engaged as early as possible before election season. These will serve to inform the public and build support for a cause but, most importantly, as leverage for future negotiations with politicians. It is always easier to convince a future Minister or government official if you can show that your cause is supported by the public i.e. electorate. At the start of the electoral season, **lobbying campaigns** and **policy papers** can be used to influence the political programs of competing parties. Traditionally in Albania, the chief of the executive branch - the Prime Minister - has been the leader of the party who secured the majority of votes. For this reason, in addition to the powers vested to her/him by the constitution, the Prime Minister has considerable power to influence the course of state policies during his term. Therefore, when it comes to enacted national policies, lobbying activities targeted towards the future chief of the executive will enhance your chances for success.

Local Government Policies

The Constitution grants Local Governments (LGs) in Albania with the right to pass local policies and regulations. The elected body of LGs, the local council, has the power to issue by-laws, which are often representative of specific local policies. Local councils also have the power to mandate new taxes¹¹ on their citizens, for as much as this is allowed by the legislation on local taxes. These policies and by-laws comply with national legislation in that sector and/or all related administrative and constitutional acts. With these legislative and fiscal tools, LGs affect economic development, territory planning, public services and the environment. Therefore, the powers conferred to LGs by the Constitution and the legislation on local government, have a huge direct effect on the lives of citizens living under their territorial jurisdiction and for this reason; they are a valid target for advocacy groups.

¹¹In Albania this is so only for temporary taxes. The other taxes and their base and limits are set by law, and LGs may only administer these taxes, or at best, change the values within the legally set limits.

Advocacy Approach

Advocacy efforts focused on Local Government Units have their pros and cons. For starters, affecting local policies is much easier than affecting national ones, due to the size of the populations and due to the proximity of local council members with their electorate. In this regard, limited advocacy resources can still achieve considerable results. The ability of Local Governments to enact policies in Albania is often limited by national legislation and financial resources. But in any case, taking up the issue with LGs and seeing what can be done on a local level, is a good first step.

Concerning national policies, LGs may still be an important agent for change. According to the Constitution, Article 113, LGs may engage in initiatives to raise a local issue with the legally responsible authorities. Advocates may use this opportunity and, in cooperation with a LG, raise an issue that is particularly important for a specific region with central authorities.

Referendums as Tools for Change

Articles 150, 151 and 152 of the Constitution regulate the right of Albanian citizens for referendum in the Republic of Albania. The Constitution states: “The People, through 50 thousand citizens with a right to vote, have the right to referendum for revoking a legislation, as well as to require that the President of the Republic announces a referendum on matters of particular importance”. This right is also granted to the Parliament in the Constitution: “The Parliament, by proposal of no less than one-fifth of MPs or by proposal of the CoM, may decide that a matter or a draft law of particular importance undergoes a referendum”. An example of a referendum in the Republic of Albania is the matter of re-establishing the Monarchy upon return of Leka Zogu in the country. On 29 June 1997, for the first time after the fall of communism, there was a referendum in Albania on the form of government with the alternatives: “Republic” and “Constitutional Monarchy”. The result was declared on 13 July 1997 as the “Republic” form of government won by 904.359 votes or 66,7% (Nohlen and Stöver 2010).

Advocacy Approach

Referendums are probably the least used method of intervention in the Albanian legal system but this does not mean advocates should set it aside. Civil society organizations especially, may use the referendum as a tool for advocacy if they manage to raise enough awareness and rally extensive support throughout the public.

A successful example is the 64.000 signatures collected by the Alliance Against Waste Imports (AKIP), who filed a request for referendum against the legislation for waste imports in Albania. This led the government to reduce the list of wastes that can be imported from 56 to 25 materials (Likmeta 2012).

o Albanian Political Environment: Civic Context

The political environment in a country is the multitude of actors, relationships and dynamics that carry with them a political dimension. This includes government and its institutions, legislation, public and private stakeholders domestically as well as internationally. These interact with each other and directly or indirectly influence the political system.

This is a relatively simple description of the political environment where different policies operate. There are many different conceptualizations of the political environment originating from different schools of thought and perspectives. Depending on the purpose of your advocacy, you may choose to approach the political environment where a certain issue is settled from different angles. In any case, whatever your theoretical approach, it is important to thoroughly know and monitor the political environment in which your advocacy will operate. This because changes in the political environment (for example, new risks and opportunities or different reactions from individuals and institutions you are targeting) can greatly affect your advocacy strategy and the range of activities you may need to conduct.

In line with our intention to provide you with some background information of Albanian policy-making, this guide offers also an overall description of the Albanian political environment. While the previous section dealt with the institutional and legislative context of policy-making, this one deals with aspects of political culture, socio-economic factors and auxiliary actors in public policy making. Even though the political environment encompasses countless actors and dynamics, we have selected these three variables as they may greatly affect advocacies, and should be taken into consideration since the first phases of planning your advocacy strategy.

Political culture includes some of the tacit knowledge that persists in Albanian institutions and should interest future advocates. Socio-economic factors provide a necessary initial background of Albania for those advocates who are not familiar with the country. Finally, other actors who influence governmental policies are briefly mentioned. The relationships between institutions, political culture, socio-economic factors and background actors should provide the beginner advocate with enough background knowledge to start their activity.

Political Culture in Albania

Culture is an umbrella term that encompasses beliefs, values, behaviour and products that are part of a given society or specific organization. The political culture of a country is a direct product of that country's overall culture and history; it is the context into which all processes and actors interact. Though it is in constant evolution, political culture in a country determines important patterns and often limitations for policy-making and it should be taken into consideration when one plans advocacy strategies. Culture is largely a result of a people's history. A detailed analysis of the historical development of the Albanian political culture is beyond the scope of this guide, but perhaps a short overview of recent history may provide an initial background for the beginner advocate.

Recent History:

Albania, known to its nationals as Shqipëri, is certainly not the typical case that comes to mind when thinking of developing countries. The country has a peculiar history of 40 years of near total isolation from the international political arena and global markets during what was one of the most repressive communist dictatorships in Europe; its history as detached from the European Union (EU) as it was from the developing world. When the economic and political system collapsed in 1990, the state vowed allegiance to democratic values and market economy. What followed in the next years was less a democratization process and more a period of social, economic and political transition.

Needless to say, it has been difficult. A failed pyramid scheme in 1997 caused numerous Albanian families to lose their savings plunging the country into an economic, social and political crisis (Jarvis 2000) and in 1999, during the Kosovo War, a still fragile country sheltered almost half a million Kosovar Albanians as displaced refugees (Kondaj 2002). The political arena has suffered continuously from clashes among different political parties over election results and corruption charges. Despite these setbacks, governments have one after another taken decisive steps to reform the country's economic, legal and political system. In the last decade, the country has managed to stabilize and has established its path to development by committing to European Integration.

Albania started negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in 2003 after being officially recognized as a "potential candidate country". The SAA was agreed and signed on 12 June 2006, representing a successful completion of the first major step towards full membership in the EU (SAA between Albania and the EU 2006). The country applied for EU membership on 28 April 2009 and has recently seen the application of a visa free regime with the Schengen Area after a long and frustrating period of restrictions placed on the movement of its citizens (Council of the European Union 2010)¹²⁸.

Critics often cite a missed step in Albania's development: after the fall of the communist regime, Albanian society and the ruling elites could not engage in a process of analysing and learning from the past. As transition years rushed in, the mistakes of communist regimes have yet to be defined. Even though some academics and NGOs have highlighted the erroneous strategies and methods of the past, this movement did not encompass the large numbers of the population, who faced the challenge of adapting to the new system. In this way political culture in Albania still carries along patterns from the communist path, which heavily affects public policies and all other political processes. The leadership cult, the heavy centralization of power and even a considerable degree of micromanagement in the public sector are expressions of this phenomena.

Combined with a largely feudal system, which accompanied Albania well into the 20th century, the communist era cemented a cult of leadership present to this day in Albanian culture and institutions. This is reflected, for example, in efforts for decentralization in Albania, which have not lived up to the ambitions and expectations of the decentralization reform adopted in the year 2000. What in the past were part of explicit government policies, today have become implicit, almost incontestable norms.

A clear example of such implicit norms is the use of important positions in government institutions as means to increase political leverage, by awarding such positions only to trusted individuals. For example, ministerial positions are often swapped with little regard for professional background or experience. By focusing power only in the hands of loyal political representatives, experts and technocrats have been heavily marginalized to the point of being pushed to the margins of Albania's institutions.

¹²⁸Excerpt from Dhima, S. (2011) "Albania's Journey into the Bologna Process: Europeanizing Higher Education Policies and the role of Epistemic Communities"

Implications for Advocacy

Albanian political culture might prove quite challenging for both domestic and foreign advocates, and for this reason many advocacy initiatives that import ready-made models often fail to make any real impact on the ground. One of the main problematic features for successful advocacies is the abovementioned cult of leadership still dominating Albanian governance and decision-making. The prevalence of leadership, which is dependent on political affiliations, often undermines informed decision-making and prevents decentralization of power. Thus, it is quite challenging for advocates to interfere by informing the decision-making process, or by influencing the outcomes

In trying to identify entry points into the policymaking process, the beginner advocate will soon experience first-hand the limitations resulting from Albanian political culture. Most of the key positions in Albania's institutions are politically related to the party/coalition in power. Thus, the people with the power to engage public resources in order to achieve certain advocacy goals are in fact mainly motivated to increase their political leverage. Additionally, there is a crucial limitation concerning expertise in the Albanian public policy sector. Low salaries, high politicization as well as enhanced favouritism and nepotism, have pushed experienced un-politicized experts away from the public sector.

The implications for advocacy are enormous and they vary from carefully selecting the target audience to shaping the message in a language that is appropriate. For example, it may be the case that, in order for the advocates' message to resonate with his target audience (usually consisting of politically mandated functionaries), they should refrain from being overly technical and present their case in terms of augmented political leverage for the functionaries involved. In these cases, lobbying campaigns, depending on the judgment of the advocate, might turn out to be more effective than detailed policy research.

There are multiple dimensions to political culture, and they all heavily affect advocacy strategies. Often left aside, political culture should be counted as an important factor in any advocacy initiative, especially in the planning phase.

Albania's Socio-Economic Factors

Any advocate aiming to influence public policies, must first understand the socio-economic context in which these develop. This is particularly true of countries in transition where statistical data on macroeconomic and social indicators is only partly reliable. Thus, we briefly introduce the Albanian socio-economic landscape. The decades of communist legacy and the last 20 years of mixed economy have prompted in Albania a dynamic blend of free spirited entrepreneurs and adapting governmental institutions, which interact in an arena of relatively stable macro-economic factors. Such a political environment provides enough space for both domestic and foreign advocates to influence public policy making. However, there are accentuated social and economical disparities that any advocate has to account for. These heavily affect advocacies on a local and national scale.

According to a recent UNDP study on regional disparities in Albania under the framework of the "Integrated Support for Decentralization" project, in the last 20 years there has been continual population pressure towards Tirana (UNDP 2010). Apart from changing the urban landscape, the population movements deeply changed the social and economic dynamics of the whole country. The "Regional Disparities in Albania" study concludes that, in the last years, the population movements towards Tirana have reached their zenith and are now subsiding. There is a possibility that, in the next five years, Albanians start moving towards other urban centres.

Based on poverty level, access to healthcare and education services, the study evaluated Social Cohesion, where a division was identified along natural barriers (coast-centre-mountains) and among qarks (UNDP 2010):

- **Tirana** – best situation with a low number of people under poverty line and a relatively small percentage of families relying on social assistance, high enrolment in secondary education, easy access to best healthcare facilities and very low infant mortality rates, although there is insufficient number of teachers and possibly schools as well as hospital facilities due to very high population increase;
- **Kukës, Dibër, Lezhë, Shkodër, and additionally Berat** – worst situation with high incidence of poverty and wide reliance on social assistance (21% of families in Berat and Lezhë up to 71% in Kukës), relatively good availability of basic education and health facilities due to decreased total population;

- **Remaining qarks** – mixed situation in terms of social cohesion with varied and not unidirectional changes, high intra-qark disparities along geographic (low land and mountains) and economic(urban and rural) divisions.

In terms of economic development, the study again identified in Albania certain divisions among qarks (counties) along natural barriers (coast-center-mountains). Economic ranking of qarks takes the following form (UNDP 2010):

- **Tirana – the national economic growth centre** – highest GDP per capita, strong economic structure with highest employment share in non-agriculture sector, the same for the number of active and newly created enterprises and also foreign enterprises, and credits to business.
- **Durrës and Vlora – secondary growth poles** – high economic indicators, weaker than for Tirana but significantly above other qarks. Durrës seems to be more advantaged due to its proximity to Tirana with which it constitutes the economic ‘engine’ of the country (together they generate almost half of total GDP).
- **Dibër, Kukës – worst economic performance** – almost uniformly weak on all indicators (with reservations made about registered unemployment situation).
- **Remaining qarks – mixed economic performance** – Lezhë, Shkodër and Berat are considered to be at the bottom of the group.

The social indicators are inextricably connected with the level of economic activity in the respective Qarks. According to the study, in 2009 Tirana accounted for 37.9% of the GDP, while the total GDP percentage of worst performing regions was 15.1% (UNDP 2010). Naturally, in the most developed regions of Albania we see not only higher levels of economic activity, but also a higher percentage of employment in highly productive sectors. Over the years, the structure of the Albanian economy has changed with the public and agricultural sectors losing ground to the private and non-agricultural sector. These structural changes are also reflected in changes in employment figures over the years. For example, INSTAT surveys show that in the last decade, employment in the public and agricultural sectors has steadily eroded giving ground to the private non-agricultural sector.

Table 1: Employment in Albania by Sector (source: UNDP 2010)

Years	Public Sector	Private Non-agricultural	Private Agricultural	Total
2001	20,5 %	22,3 %	57,2 %	100 %
2008	18,1 %	37,8 %	44,2 %	100 %
2009	16,6 %	39,8 %	43,7 %	100 %

Other INSTAT indicators show that Albania’s economy is dominated by enterprises with 20 or more employees. However, in 2009, approximately 92% of all enterprises were very small ones with 1-4 employees and public owned enterprises continue to have a strong effect (INSTAT 2009). In 2012, trade with the EU countries comprised 64%. The main trade partners remain Italy and Greece. Trade with Italy stands at 35.5% and with Greece at 10.6% (INSTAT 2012).

Due to Albania’s statist past, politicians are vested by the public with considerable power and are often involved in questionable relationships with big businesses. During the 90s, in the midst of an institutional and legal vacuum, trading companies would use their links with customs officials to import their products with lower taxes. Corruption of public officials by businesses greatly increased. During the last decade, corruption during public auctioning procedures (“tender”) was also a widespread concern with reports of businesses influencing public officials. The privatization of public assets is also lately an on-going debate, with several complaints for irregularities. Even though attempts have been made to fight corruption, it still seems to be a pervasive problem with the media often denouncing it.

Implications for Advocacy

Just like any other initiative, advocacies require a great deal of planning. Gathering constructive information on a country /region's socio-economic indicators is a crucial first step. Any advocate needs to first get acquainted with the social and economic context, which will affect both subjects and outcomes of an advocacy. The socio-economic data is usually a reliable initial representation of the political environment, which complements information from research, meetings and experience. Awareness of a country's peculiarities early in the process may offer great insight or warn of potential roadblocks before considerable resources are invested.

For example, reading the socio-economic data on Albania, we see that small businesses are a major part of the Albanian economy – 92% of all enterprises. Any advocacy aiming to change business or trade legislation through lobbying should see this group as a major lobbying force, and possibly seek their advice during the planning phase. Alternatively, any initiative concerning trade legislation should pay special attention to the interests of businesses trading with Greece and Italy, as these are the top two destinations for exports.

parties hold much of the political power and mostly set the debate agenda. After twenty years of democratic rule, the parties still have ambivalent political ideologies that most times coincide with one another. For this reason, they are described as centre parties.

Despite their similarities, we can discern an important difference between the two parties' history that has serious implications for determining their current base of supporters. As the first new party after 45 years of communist regime, PD served as the voice of the opposition towards the regime. For this reason, the party attracted a considerable number of citizens that had been abused or alienated by the communist regime. Many of its supporters came from the Northern regions of Albania, which were often neglected by the communist regime. On the other hand, PS, as the reformed Labour Party, initially became the party of the groups that had more interest in the previous status quo. This resulted in an interesting development with regards to the parties' ideologies. After the fall of the regime, groups that had generally been better off and more connected with the previous status quo, were better prepared to compete in the newly created market and were more successful in establishing the first private initiatives. Thus ironically PS, in itself a left party, became more connected to the interest of business. On the other hand, the right-wing PD became associated with the disaffected and poorer masses. Nowadays, linkages to businesses are strong for both parties but, given their prevalent role in Albanian policymaking, it might be useful for the beginner advocate to gain some insight into the history and networks of support for each political party.

It is important to note that Albanian parties are still in the process of consolidating their identity in an effort to appeal to both younger audiences and Western countries. However, most of the debates, especially on an ideological level, mirror similar debates in the West and parties often have difficulties adapting their programs to the local context. An example is the current debate on fiscal policies. While PS is advocating for progressive taxation to relief the businesses in times of economic hardship, PD is smearing these policies of the left as "Marxist" and advocating for a flat tax as the only way out of the crisis. This debate mirrors similar debates in the US and other western countries. Thus, advocates may want to familiarize themselves with current ideological discourses in the West to pre-empt similar debates here in Albania.

Auxiliary Actors in Albanian Policymaking

Official policymaking institutions such as the Parliament or CoM are only a part of the actors involved in policymaking. Even in those countries with very rigid policymaking procedures or with a high democratic deficit, there are groups that are able to initiate and influence public policies. Advocates should consider these when planning their strategy, especially when choosing their target audience and when forming partnerships. In Albania, political parties play an overwhelming role in this regard, but mainstream media and civil society have also experienced growing importance.

Political Parties:

Political parties are pervasive institutions in the Albanian society. The numbers of registered political parties in Albania is well over thirty though only six of them hold seats in the parliament. Political power in Albania is concentrated in the hands of two parties: the centre-right wing Democratic Party (PD) and the centre-left wing Socialist Party (PS). In the last years, there have also been third parties holding a considerable amount of power, like the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI), but they have only been able to exercise this power in coalitions with one of the main two parties (like the coalition with PD). Established in 1990, PD is the first opposition party of the post-communist era. PS was formed in 1991 out of the reformation of the Albanian ruling party during communism, the Labour Party. These two political

Implications for Advocacy

The abovementioned features of the main political parties in Albania are only a fraction of the overall public debate. As a crucial part of political culture, this debate greatly affects the way different policies are shaped and implemented. Most importantly, Albania being a parliamentary republic, political parties are in most cases where a certain policy originates, before it is debated in Parliament. Albanian activists have long recognized this and it is a widespread practice for advocates to take up their issues with one of the parties in power. Lobbying activities are also often directed towards party members.

This opens up a wide debate on the different ways an advocate can influence a political party. Many advocates in Albania have even found that a group must openly join or support a political party before they can raise an issue. Alternatively, interest groups often heavily support political parties during electoral campaigns, either financially or by participating in campaign processes. Whatever the method, securing the support of a political party or some of its members for a legislation or cause, is one of the most secure ways of taking the issue up for parliamentary discussion or for guaranteed media exposure.

regardless of their political system, as mainstream media has grown increasingly dependent of funding and thus subjective to groups that finance it or subjective to groups that may obstruct it. In fact, the dependency of media on politics and the high costs to be faced by advocates when cooperating with media, are two important drawbacks of media as an advocacy medium. In this regard, the Internet has become increasingly important in advocating alternatives to the current social, political and economic status quo.

Implications for Advocacy

Regardless of the overwhelming bias, mainstream media remains a powerful tool at the hand of advocates. Its power to shape public opinion can be used to rally support for a cause, or force politicians into a corner. For issues that heavily challenge the status quo, initial support for an issue may be gathered via an **internet campaign**.

The beginner advocate must understand that mass media craves and flourishes on attention, so if an issue raises public attention, the media will publicize it, one way or another. For optimal exposure, an initial **media analysis** may help to identify, which channel is more appropriate for raising a certain issue.

Mainstream Media:

Mainstream media plays an important role in presenting as well as interpreting most public policies. What's more important for the beginner advocate, mainstream media also greatly affects political agendas by influencing which policies will be prioritized at any given time. According to the agenda-setting theory, media can influence the "salience" of topics on the public agenda (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Iyengar 1990). For instance, an issue that is broadcasted or covered by the press frequently and prominently, will most likely be perceived as of higher importance by the public. Understandably, the implications of this for policy agendas are enormous. There is also a branch of studies of growing importance: Critical Media Analysis, which aims to deconstruct the different representations of issues in the media and assess their impact on public opinion, public policy and on policy legitimization.

Most of the mainstream media in Albania is comfortably entrenched with one of the major political parties. There are various political and economic reasons for this. Due to the pervasive power of Albanian politics on shaping public discourses but also economic opportunities, most actors find it easier to ally with either the government or the opposition. Most debates are presented within frameworks, supplied by the two parties, and attempts at unbiased analysis (sometimes attempts at analysis altogether) are often missing. This, of course, is true in many countries

NGOs, Think tanks and other CSOs:

Developing the western model of the liberal democratic state has been a daunting task for many post-communist countries. To aid the adoption of this system of government and the development of a politically active civil society, Western countries heavily funded the activities of civil society organizations (CSOs). In the last two decades, NGOs, think tanks, and other CSOs have proliferated in Albania and countless projects were aimed at assisting democratic initiatives.

There are widespread critiques that claim Albanian NGOs lack a clear ideological basis or that they have failed to make any real impact on the ground with donor-funded projects. Nevertheless, these projects initially tackled some of the most widespread poverty symptoms in the country, as well as helped to lay the foundations for minority rights and gender equality. The work of CSOs is especially difficult in former communist countries where a rather apathetic public opinion means that advocacy groups still face an uphill battle.

A particularly relevant phenomenon in Albanian civil society initiatives is that most CSOs operate detached from the public sector and mostly coordinating their work with foreign donors. This is largely due to international donors failing to make their aid conditional upon cooperation with the government; but also because the highly politicized environment and lack of stability in the public administration makes cooperation very difficult. To this day, many international donors select local partners that cooperate with businesses, academia or society at large but not necessarily with the government. This may also be because the government may put enormous pressure on the CSOs and deviate their project results into fully fitting with its agenda.

The latter has two sides of a coin: it can be positive as it ensures integration of donors and CSOs support with government efforts and policies; it can be counterproductive as the government policy may not be shared or supported by the donors and the CSOs. This results in a considerable number of unsustainable projects dependent on continuous foreign aid. However, the Government of Albania still plays a crucial role in coordinating social and economic initiatives and in incorporating positive outcomes in official frameworks. Therefore, cooperation of positive advocacy of donors and CSOs with or towards the public sector is of great benefit for the sustainability of policy reforms.

There is also another reason why cooperation with the government would improve CSOs role in Albania's reforms. Because of a typical relief profile of international aid in general and the difficulties in cooperating with the public administration, CSOs work in Albania have focused mostly on advocating for better living conditions and an improved social status for different marginalized groups. There has been little substantial work on the side of civil society on addressing power inequalities, the democratic deficit, economic rights, governance strengthening, or comprehensive legal reforms. Such types of advocacy, that tackle economic and political inequalities, i.e. the official framework of public life, require by definition significant restructuring and thus a close and continuous cooperation with the public sector.

Implications for Advocacy

Post-communist countries experience a heavily weakened third sector, which has been further undermined by the increasing dependence on foreign aid. By being assured funding, Albanian CSOs had little incentive to advocate for substantial change and rather applied readymade model-projects, which had little impact in the long term. As funding from international donors is naturally decreasing, CSOs will need to advocate for change by influencing the legal and economic frameworks of the country.

Empowered or not, the third sector remains crucial to advocates. **Civil society provides the mechanism for people to effect change by collectively advocating for that change.** Thus, advocates must get familiar with all other initiatives in their area of interest, identify rooms for cooperation and possibly start to build partnerships with CSOs. In this framework, joint ethical principles and shared goals may result in a more effective message delivery.

As foreign aid for ready-made project decreases, Albanian CSOs have to prepare themselves for the EU regulations on funding. It is very likely that the most comprehensive and relevant projects will be those that include the government as a key actor. It is time for CSOs to start and **build bridges with governmental structures**, regardless of the many difficulties. These bridges can be used to influence legislative and executive policymaking, while allowing for more comprehensive and sustainable projects.

IV. Advocacy throughout the Policy Cycle

The previous chapter dealt with the legislative, institutional and civic context to public policymaking as well as their implications for advocacy. The purpose was to underline the importance of thoroughly knowing your political system. Advocates can easily identify opportunities for intervention if the whole process is clear. Having been familiarised with the nature of public policies in general and the particularities of the Albanian context, we move on to the actual policy making process and the ways an advocate can influence it.

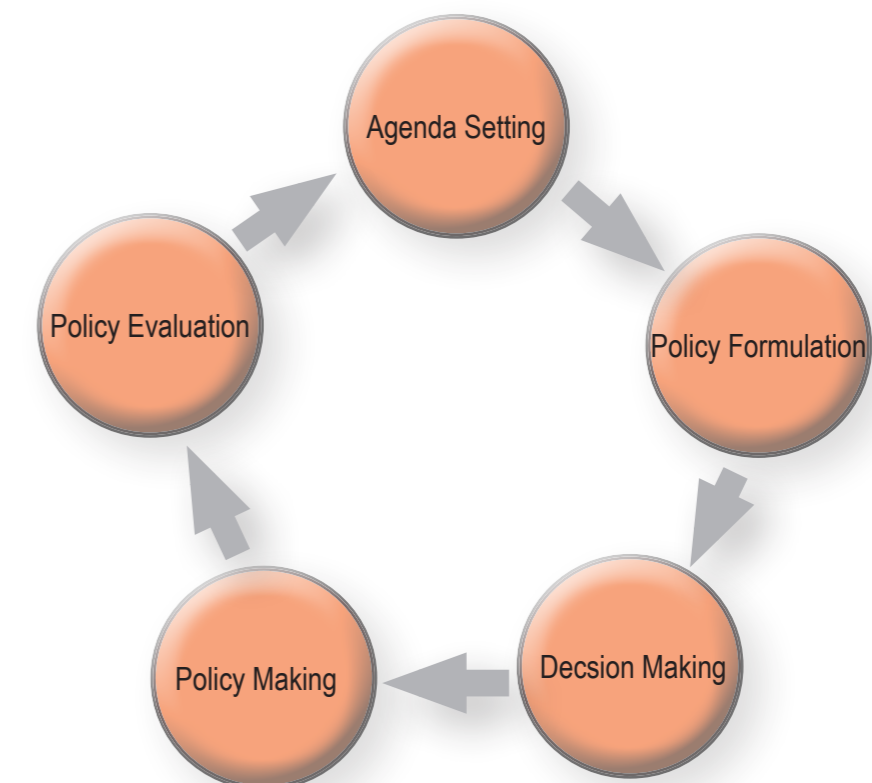
There are multiple conceptual and analytical frameworks for understanding public policy. None of them is universal and policy practitioners might select any model that seems most appropriate or combine different approaches to make sense of the process (in fact, some do not even identify policymaking as a process). Having said this, because this guide is aimed at beginners, we will not engage in all the different theoretical frameworks that aim to explain the way policies are conceived, agreed upon and implemented. Rather, we have selected a widespread conceptual model, that of the policy cycle, to present policymaking as a stage-by-stage process while identifying entry points for advocates that aim to influence it. This is a well-known conceptual model and many policy analysts use the policy cycle as a framework to understand the process of how policies come about.

o The Stage-by-Stage Model and the Policy Cycle

The policy cycle describes how an issue moves from its conception through to implementation and finally towards evaluation via sequential policy stages and outputs produced. We have selected the five-stage cycle as it is a rather widespread model and particularly relevant to advocates. There are other elaborations that define only three stages (policy development, implementation and evaluation) or that divide the process in eight stages (from issue identification to evaluation). Some do not mention agenda setting but rather focus on problem identification. Whatever the case, the policy cycle can be adapted to the public policy at hand and it is a flexible tool for guiding the policy process rather than a rigid model. What is important for the beginner advocate is to define between major various phases in policy cycles and to be able to differentiate between conceptually different approaches employed in different phases. For example, an advocacy approach to interfere in the planning stage will differ greatly from the advocacy approach tackling the decision phase.

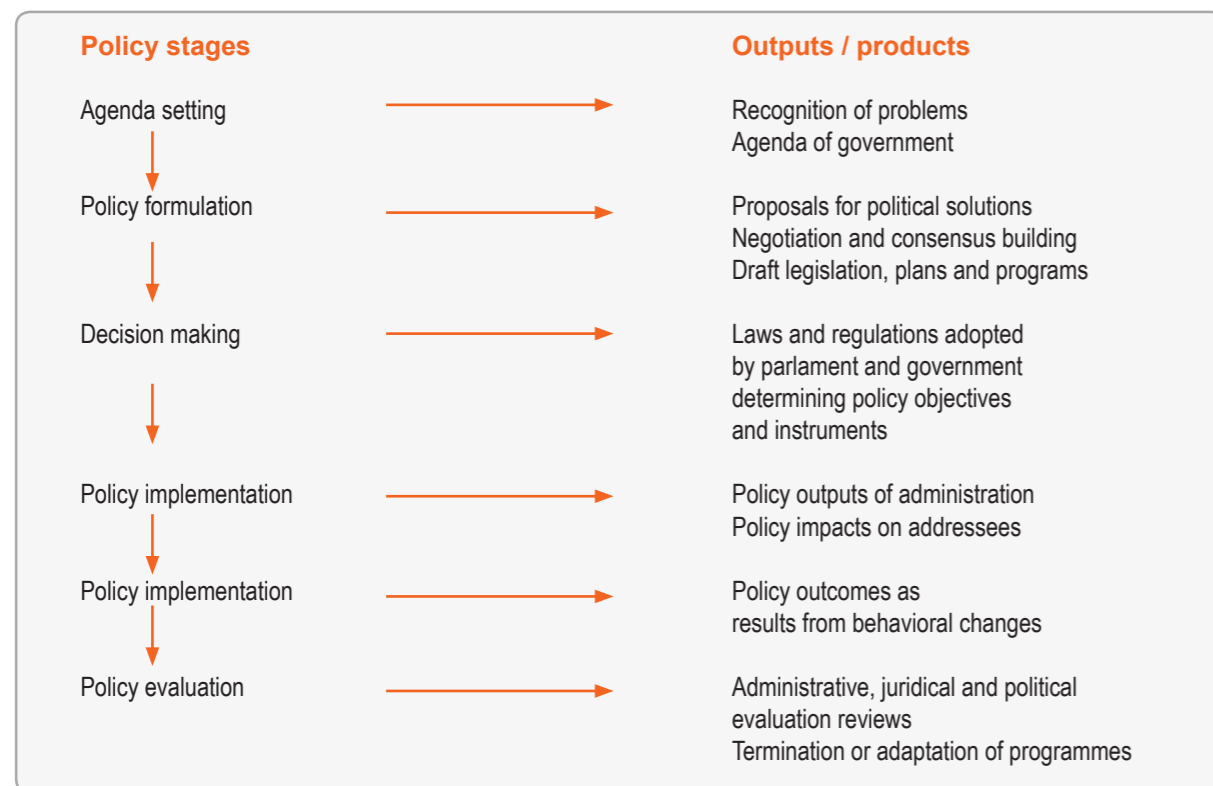
We have selected the five-stage policy cycle presented by Howlett and Ramesh (1995). Figure 5 displays a graphic representation of the policy cycle. Figure 6 presents each stage and, respectively, the relevant outputs. Each stage of the policy cycle corresponds to a contextual phase of applied problem solving and so this model is particularly useful in tackling a specific need or a problem.

Figure 5: The policy cycle according to the five-stage framework (source: own elaboration)



¹⁵See for example Bridgman and Davis 1998

Figure 6: Five stages of the policy cycle (source: Howlett and Ramesh, 1995)



o Agenda Setting: Making an Issue Visible

We mentioned the importance of agenda setting when describing the role of mainstream media in policymaking. During this stage, public policy makers recognize the range of problems that will be tackled for a specified period (e.g., an electoral mandate). This stage is particularly important for advocates. It is always much more difficult to introduce an issue when the agenda has been settled. For example, if the budget of a ministry for the coming year has been more or less settled, it is very hard to propose any unpredicted initiative that might require additional funding.

Political scientists differentiate between two basic types of agendas: systemic and institutional. Systemic agendas represent the overall policies of governments. For example, currently in Albania, EU Integration is an integral part of the systemic agenda. The systemic agenda is likely to be comprised of issues that have high public awareness.

The institutional agenda usually relates to the plan of work and objectives for specific institutions. These are usually not widely discussed in public and include talks on state budget, official appointments or proposals for new sectoral legislation. The prime goal of policy advocates is to get their issue on the agenda of individuals, groups or institutions that have the power to affect change. This is an intricate task as advocates have to compete with other groups in order to attract the politicians' attention. In Albania, numerous socio-economic problems mean that there are countless groups trying to bring their issues to the attention of politicians or public, often adopting very aggressive advocacy approaches. Therefore, in a way, agenda-setting is a process of competition for the attention, time and resources of lawmakers, stakeholders and the wide public.

Policy agendas may appear to have a very rigid content with no room for flexibility or new entries. There is almost always a group of policies considered a priority. And grand strategies will often determine which new policy proposals will be welcome by the government and which are not in line with strategic objectives. For example, in the last Albanian governments, any issue that runs against the EU Integration imperative will most likely be rejected. However, there are rooms for intervention if an advocate is familiar with current discussions and main agenda-setting actors. In order to know what policies are being discussed at any given time, and therefore determine the room for intervention or joint initiatives, close attention should be given to the Prime Minister's speeches, party leaders, electoral promises and overall political discussion in the media.

There is no one clear-cut path to having an item reach the agenda of legislators and different mechanisms apply to different contexts. However, getting acquainted with the literature on agenda-setting theory can be a helpful first step (there is ample literature on agenda setting in Western democracies, especially from the United States). For example, Kingdon (1995) talks about the notion of a **policy window**, which is an important part of agenda-setting theory. A policy window is when the opportunity arises to change policy direction. Policy windows can be created by triggering or focusing events, such as accidents and disasters, as well as by changes in government and shifts in public opinion. A policy window offers opportunities to any group able to mobilize support for a particular set of policies (Kingdon 1995; Beder 2002). To make room for a policy window advocates should focus their efforts on three main streams of action:

- **The politics stream:** identifying issues on which policy players are trying to secure action. In this line of work, advocates may use lobbying activities to convince public officials of the importance of the issue by presenting the political benefits, historical importance and merits of the policy.
- **The proposal stream:** crafting proposals for solutions to the problem they want to present. Legislators are not likely to talk about issues that lack a solution, a clear strategy and an action plan. These may be transmitted through policy proposals or problem analyses reports.

- **The problem stream:** assuring public recognition of their issue or gathering public support. A communication strategy and constituency building can be used to secure public awareness.

For an example of a major advocacy initiated during the agenda setting stage, by making use of a policy window created, we can have a look at how environmental policies were first introduced in the United States government's agenda in the late 1980s.

Neoliberal environmentalists in the United States finally managed to get their issue into the government agenda when a policy window was created in the late 1980s. The opportunity was a result of the increase in environmental issues coverage by the media in the late 1980s, combined with the publication and United Nations approval in 1987 of the Brundtland Report. This window was used to put environmental policies onto the policy agendas of many governments (Beder 2002).

An example from Co-PLAN's experience with regards to agenda setting is the work carried out with informal settlements in Albania before an actual public policy was devised to address the issue. Co-PLAN intensively worked in areas like Bathore in the years 1995 – 2005 to push for urbanization and inclusion. These initiatives were among the first drives for what would be the new Albanian policy for planning and urban development.

o **Policy Formulation: Framing and Building Consensus**

Once the agenda has been settled, the next stage in policy cycles is Policy Formulation. This is when a problem is clearly framed and proposals for political solutions are developed. This stage includes planning and programming as well as the preparation of action plans and draft legislation. There are two main requirements during this stage: (1) Field expertise and (2) Consensus building. Both of these greatly affect the role of potential advocates in this stage of the cycle.

Field Expertise:

The policy formulation stage deals initially (and most importantly) with problem and policy framing. The way a problem is framed and presented will no doubt affect the policy formulated. This is a crucial stage for the inclusion of "outside" actors into the policy making process,

no matter how rigid and undemocratic the process may be. The reason is that a high degree of expertise will be required in this phase to describe the issue, evaluate outcomes and ponder the costs and benefits of each discussed solution. Official actors in policy making such as politicians or lawmakers need field experts to prepare during this phase. Thus, regardless of whether politicians will want to make the process inclusive or not, there is room for experts to greatly affect the process from the very beginning during the stage of policy formulation. It is true that the knowledge groups that manage to become part of the process are rarely unbiased and chances are certain criteria will be applied to the selection of expertise. For example, studies have found that in Albania politicians are much more likely to select field experts that share their political beliefs, their party's ideology or that are in line with and do not oppose dominant strategies such as European Integration (Dhima 2011). Nonetheless, the policy formulation stage is probably the stage that offers most space for inclusion of different knowledge groups, epistemic communities or groups of expertise into the official channels of policy making. This is where the deliberation process takes place and therefore this is probably the most important stage for certain advocacies, where a mental shift in problem framing may be required.

Let us take the example of the preparations for Albania's Higher Education Reform which introduced the Bologna Process to Albanian universities. This is recognized as one of the reforms with the highest participation of academic staff into the formulation phase, precisely because it involved a sector where politicians were unable to craft a policy unaided by field experts. Though the reform eventually succumbed to the "integration imperative", with the government bypassing many complaints by working groups of experts in the name of Europeanizing higher education, experts still exerted a very strong influence on the reform.

Consensus Building:

Because the formulation stage precedes the decision making stage, a great deal of importance goes into consensus building. Consensus in both politicians and the public facilitates voting and the eventual implementation of the policy. But it also legitimizes the policy itself, which remains a crucial aspect to political groups aiming re-election. Thus ample negotiations take place covering a broad range of topics with regards to the policy at hand. Some of the fiercest negotiations usually take place between different stakeholders, especially when these have clashing interests. Consensus building can be quite challenging at this stage because of the very different knowledge and background of the groups involved. Political and ideological differences also make this a very delicate process.

While governments at times superficially take part in the process (and later adopt a policy regardless of discussion results), advocates have to take the formulation stage and the debates that come with it very seriously. In the policy

cycle, this is the one stage widely open to deliberation and thus chances to affect the process are bigger at this point. This is especially important for advocacy initiatives originating from civil society movements or rather unofficial channels. This is their opportunity to enter an otherwise official and rigid procedure.

During the consensus building process, beginner advocates should be careful not to legitimize the very policy they are trying to affect. Participation does not necessarily mean your voice is being heard or accounted for and wide participation may be used by political forces to justify and legitimize a certain policy without actually making use of the process of deliberation. This is often the case with policy reforms that have a pre-determined ideological or strategic basis.

As we mentioned above, the deliberation that took place prior to the adoption of the Albanian higher education reform, was not used to conceptualize the reform itself. The Bologna Process had already been chosen by the Albanian government as the path of Albanian higher education. Rather, the voice of academics and other experts went into structuring the various methodological elements of the reform and into adapting it to the Albanian context.

An example from Co-PLAN's experience with regards to policy formulation would be the Policy for Territorial Development drafted in 2005 and presented to political parties before election.

o **Decision Making: Leverage Advocacy**

This is the third stage in the policy cycle. The parliament and/or the CoM adopt laws and regulations, policy objectives are clearly determined and instruments are developed for reaching these objectives. An official decision is made on a preferred policy option based on the government's overall priorities but also based on the presentation of alternative proposals in the previous phase, their costs and benefits as well as their feasibility.

In Albania, major policies are approved by the Parliament while decisions regarding minor policies or amendments are left to the CoM, which adopts them through an executive decision. There are countless variables that influence the decision making process from the ethical to the financial. What is important for the beginner advocate is to know the official decision making process and to be able to approach decision makers appropriately and on a timely manner.

The "individual" dimension to policymaking becomes particularly relevant at this stage and it is no longer opportune to

present lengthy research papers or policy proposals. The advocate will no longer be facing assessment commissions or groups of experts. Rather, it is the politician in Parliament or in the executive that takes charge. This is not to say that there is no room for intervention in the decision-making stage. Each and every phase of the policy cycle is susceptible to influence, if only this comes with the right arguments, and most importantly, the right leverage.

This may be the time to make good use of your networking and to display what public support you have gathered so far on the alternative at hand. Many politicians will not approve controversial policies, unless these are backed by a considerable number of citizens. This is how they assure re-election and each alternative presented to decision makers should be expressed in terms of political capital. Bargaining the support during elections in exchange for a certain policy is a widespread advocacy method at this stage.

In all cases, the advocate should be very clear on who the key decision makers are. Especially in Parliamentary systems, parties will vote in relative unison on a certain issue. It may be the case that very few individuals are responsible for how an entire group is going to vote in Parliament. The advocate needs to determine who these individuals are and then develop the right method to approach each of them.

In Albania, an example of strong public influence in official decision making was the reversal by the Constitutional Court of the agreement on Maritime waters with the country of Greece. The request for constitutional review was pushed forward by the opposition, in unison with various experts from the field of History and International Law and Albanian civil society representatives.

o **Policy Implementation: Affecting Results and Damage Control**

The policy Implementation process is concerned with putting decisions into effect. Though it sounds as if less discussions will take place at this stage, implementation processes are not as easy as one might think. The success of implementation often goes beyond the accuracy with which pre-defined action-plans are carried out. This is why, in the planning phases of a policy, different scenarios are developed to increase the control over potentially unpredictable variables.

Policy implementation deals with the policy product but also with how this product will affect various stakeholders. Thus there are two dimensions to implementation, each carrying great challenges for the process. Firstly, policy implementation entails changing habits and ingrained ways of doing things. Failure to achieve this change is one of the

most widespread causes for policy failure or, as the term goes, policies that remain “on paper” and make little impact on the ground. Examples are the attempts to regulate waste management in Albania in recent years, which have shown how resistant to change some established practices can be. Secondly, policy implementation may affect various groups differently. For example the construction of a river dam which increases electric energy production would benefit the population of a country overall. However, if population displacement has been planned to make room for the dam, particular groups will be severely damaged by the project. In this way, **policy implementation often amounts to a struggle to achieve the best possible results with the least amount of damage**. For this reason, policy implementation is not only concerned with outputs but also, and most importantly impacts.

Opinions differ on why some policies succeed and others fail and debates on what went wrong may continue long after a policy has been scrapped. In fact, there is often a degree of uncertainty among decision makers on whether a policy will accomplish its goals, until the implementation phase starts. It is often the case that a policy, which makes perfect sense on paper, has insurmountable implementation problems.

In Albania, one of the more problematic laws that suffered from unintended consequences in the implementation phase was the Albanian Law nr. 9481, date 3.4.2006 on Legalization, Urbanization and Integration of Illegal Constructions, as amended. Due to unforeseen implementation difficulties, this law had to be amended three times by the Parliament (in 2007, 2008 and 2009), while in 2009 some acts were declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. These amendments have impacted the effectiveness and legitimacy of the law.

Regardless of the already fragile nature of implementation processes, there is ample room at this stage to affect implementation. Many advocacies in fact target precisely the implementation phases of various policies trying to ensure a just and equitable process for what they believe to be agreeable policies. These advocacies aim to become active part of the implementation to avoid any irregularities or deviations. On the other hand, it is more difficult for advocates that did not initially agree with the policy, to change the course of implementation. These are groups that might have advocated an alternative policy but failed to get it approved. Nonetheless, these advocacies too get involved in the implementation phase, usually to make sure the least possible damage is infringed upon their interest groups.

Looking back at our example of a dam building project: If the project has been agreed upon and displacement of people will indeed take place, their advocates will sometimes continue to be fully involved in implementation phases. Their aim will be to assure minimum damage on the population in the area, and to negotiate somehow favourable terms of displacement. Therefore, if displacement is unavoidable, the advocate would now aim to reduce its impact on the population to a minimum.

o Policy Evaluation

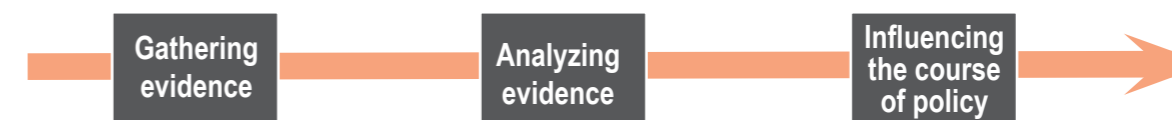
Policy evaluation is presented here as the fifth stage of the policy cycle. Most public policies will be subjugated to various evaluations, both internally and externally. These may result in policy adaption or policy termination (due to achievement of goals or because of highly negative result). Each actor conducts evaluations with a specific purpose in mind, and often one may need to see various evaluations to determine whether a policy has indeed achieved its objectives. Evaluations also look at side effects and unpredicted outcomes of a policy, especially when these do more harm than good, they look at who gains and who loses because of a specific policy, what risks are involved and how do these materialize. Evaluation is a continuous process, which occurs continuously throughout the policy process as well as finally before a policy is terminated. Especially in long-term projects, evaluations are used to feed into the next stage and to adapt the policy when this is needed. Therefore, evaluation is conducted both throughout the cycle and as the last stage of the policy process.

Evaluation as Monitoring throughout the Cycle

Though placed as the last phase of the cycle, policy evaluation in fact occurs at various stages of the policy process. This can be observed when looking at one specific policy process separate from the wider policymaking arena. Apart from very short-term initiatives, which usually are expressions of a wider policy rather than policies in themselves, all policies are evaluated at continuously during the process. Evaluation may occur before implementation, to see if goals are being reached or if any changes are needed. At any stage, evaluation processes provide an account of the situation and allow for reflection and change.

This is in line with the cyclic nature of the policy process whereby continuous evaluation may lead to adaption, reassessment or even reframing. For example, when a policy is evaluated before being implemented, attempts are made to predict its effects upon adoption. These periodical evaluations are also known as **monitoring**. Policy monitoring is about gathering evidence on a policy while it is being implemented and then using your findings to influence future courses of action. There are three components of policy monitoring work: gathering evidence, analysing evidence and influencing the course of policy.

Figure 7: Policy monitoring steps (source: own elaboration)



Advocates are particularly active in monitoring and they face multiple challenges throughout all of these stages. In these cases, a detailed monitoring plan is necessary with clear objectives and well-developed indicators. This alone may require a great deal of time and resources. When gathering evidence, access to policy information and gathering policy documents can be particularly challenging (what is also referred to as information gap). Analysing the evidence may require a great deal of expertise and resources (or so-called capability gap). And influencing the course of policy requires careful timing.

To illustrate only one of these challenges in the Albanian context, we can have a look at data gathering, which can become a particularly challenging process for advocates, researchers or any policy practitioner. The information gap grows wider in countries with newly established democracies that suffer the lack of transparency, or generally the lack of databases open to public. In Albania, this role is fulfilled by INSTAT, which is the only official channel for government statistics. An alternative channel that would make for comparative data is still lacking in Albania. Only recently have research institutes started to fill in this gap.

To address the lack of public data or the low reliability of data available, multiple advocacies in developing countries are turning to qualitative methods of research and data gathering. Interviews or focus groups, for example, are increasingly being used to make up for the lack of official statistics or to address the need for alternative perspectives.

As we said, it is much easier to feed results into the process if a policy is still in planning phases. On the other hand, incorporating evaluation results later in the process will require a very proactive approach since the path of implementation has already been determined. This is why evaluations of different scenarios usually take place when a policy is being planned, to pre-empt results and advocate a different course of policy before the decision making stage.

Evaluation as a Final Stage

Policy evaluation is also conducted when a certain project and policy are near to completion. This typically occurs to look back at the effects of a certain policy. Policy evaluation, as a final stage of the policy cycle, includes acts of administrative, judicial or political review that aim to assess the products and impacts of a policy. After the final evaluation, policy programs may be terminated or adapted to assure future sustainability.

Public policy evaluations usually scrutinize four areas: effect on the problem targeted, overall effect on the society, short-term and long-term implications as well as economic costs. The process is particularly important to advocacy,

especially to beginner advocates, who need to get acquainted with past policies and their results before they can start to plan their own campaign. Government agencies often engage in evaluations, since this is also a required step of any policy process. But the most interested actors in this stage are usually non-governmental actors from media, academia and civil society. CSOs, scholars, research centres, institutes and public-interest groups perform policy evaluations to foresee the impacts of similar policies in the future as well as assess their efficiency. In fact, most advocacies start their activities by evaluating relevant policies at different times, in different countries or simply in different contexts. These evaluations form the basis of policy research, as one of the most widespread tools to initiate an advocacy plan.

An example from the Albanian context would be the Monitoring for the Stabilization and Association Agreement Report, which aimed to monitor the progress and fulfilment of Albania's engagements with regards to the Stabilization and Association Agreement. This initiative was undertaken by Open Society Institute and it covered the period between Jun 2006- Sep 2007.

Eventually, the purpose is to evaluate whether the policy, given its costs and benefits, was a worthy initiative as well as to draw lessons for future public policies. Evaluations from specific policies feed into planning for future policies. In this way, the public policy process is a continuous cycle where the results of each policy are used to improve future policymaking.

V. Policy Advocacy Cycle and Instruments

Having offered a broad picture of the political environment in Albania and some background on public policies and the policy cycle, we lay down in this chapter some key steps that can help to guide a successful policy advocacy campaign as well as some tools at the advocate's disposal. These can serve as the basis for organizing our efforts into a structured initiative or simply to convey our message clearly and to the right audience.

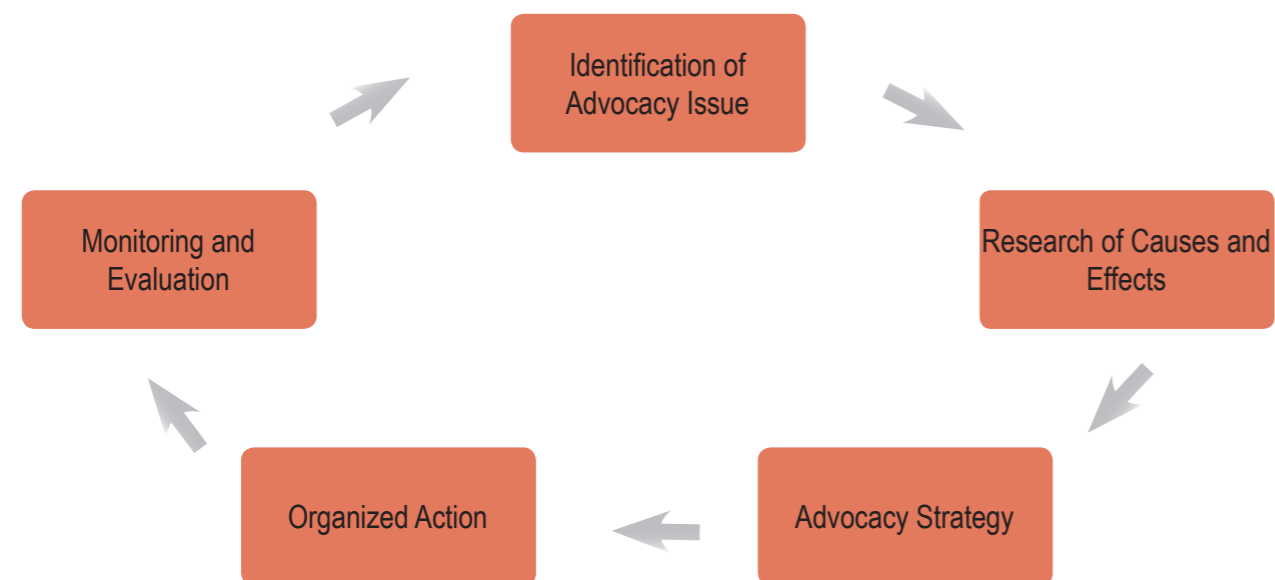
o The Policy Advocacy Cycle as a Framework for Advocacy Initiatives

Just like every initiative, advocacy campaigns too go through a number of phases starting from identifying the issue to evaluating the entire campaign. As with policy development, there are a number of ways to go about when organizing a policy advocacy campaign and no one way is the best one. Various approaches may apply depending on external conditions or resources available. Interventions may be organized ahead of time (for eg. working with parliamentary groups to shape a certain law) or come down to prompt spontaneous action (for eg. a protest in response to a certain policy).

It is important to remember that context is everything when it comes to advocacy (Carden 2005, 2009) and “advocates should be very careful when transferring “best practice” advocacy approaches from one context to another” (Young and Quinn 2012: 53).

As with all other initiatives, proper planning and a clear idea of the stages a process is about to go through helps a great deal with bringing a successful campaign to life. In fact, policy advocacy campaigns usually differ from impromptu actions in that they are organized in advance, involve a degree of planning and follow a structured development. Taking from Co-PLAN’s experience we offer in this chapter the policy advocacy cycle as a framework composed of five key stages that may serve to guide our initiative. This approach should help to organize our efforts into a policy advocacy campaign.

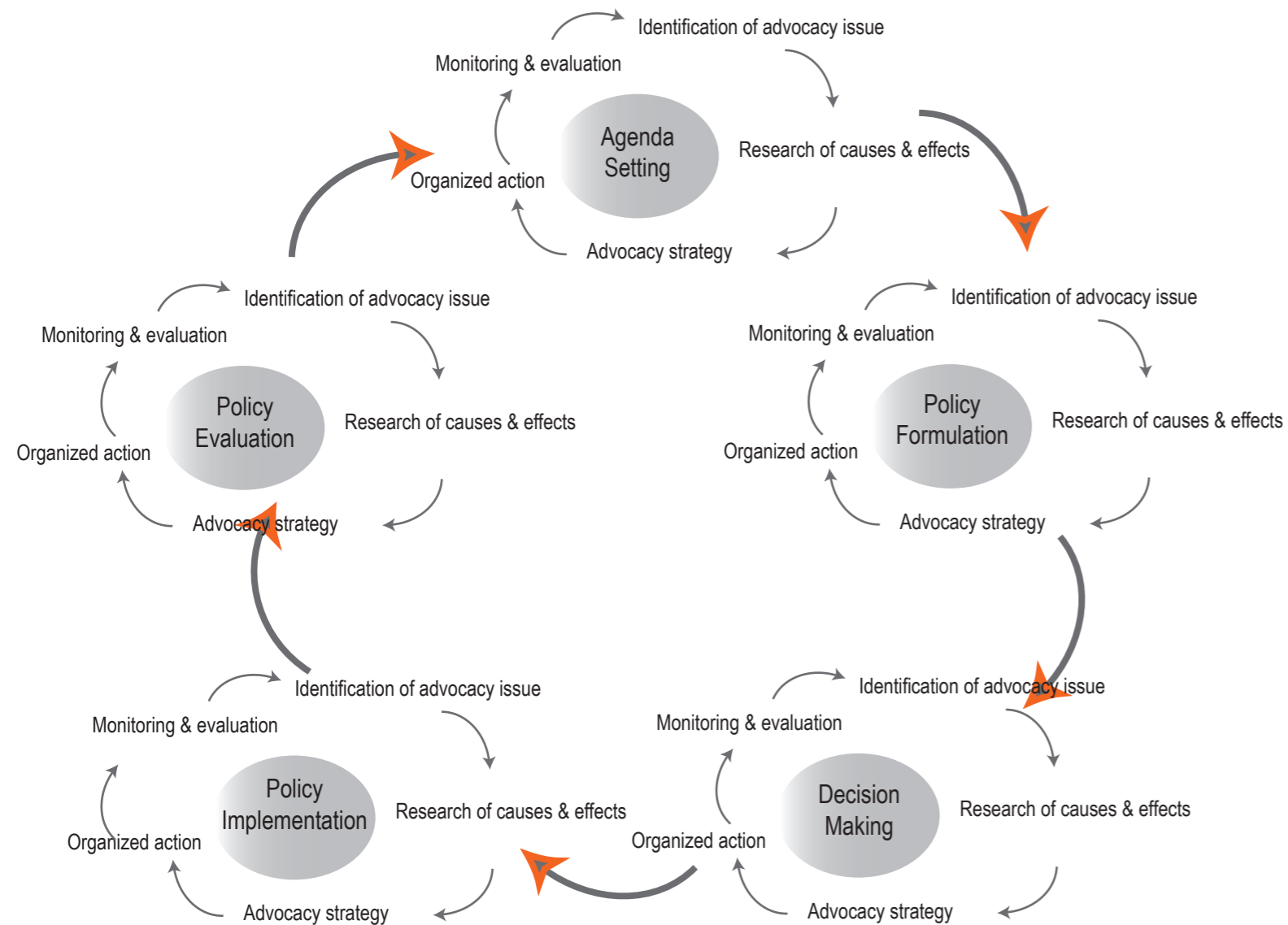
Figure 8: Policy Advocacy Cycle (source: Co-PLAN elaboration)



The policy advocacy cycle should not be interpreted as a process that has to start only in the early phases of policy making. An advocacy campaign may in fact be initiated at any stage of the policy cycle, as long as we are able to adapt our approach and tools to that stage. For example, lobbying may be a good approach for influencing the agenda setting stage. Or, if we aim to influence a certain policy from its conception, political inclusion into official lawmaking structures such as parliamentary groups may be an advantage. On the other hand, interfering in the implementation phase may require a great deal of technical expertise.

It is important to keep in mind that there are approaches and tools available for any stage of the policy cycle and a policy advocacy cycle can be initiated at any of these stages. This is also depicted in Figure 9. As shown, the policy cycle is a natural process through which projects, strategies or planning initiatives undergo. Depending on our interest as well as the context in which we operate or the requirements resulting from said context, we choose in which stage to initiate or political intervention. This eventually defines our policy objective, which may include one or more goals such as actively participating in policy framing, influencing decision-making, influencing implementation, etc.

Figure 9: Policy Advocacy Cycles throughout policy development (source: Co-PLAN)



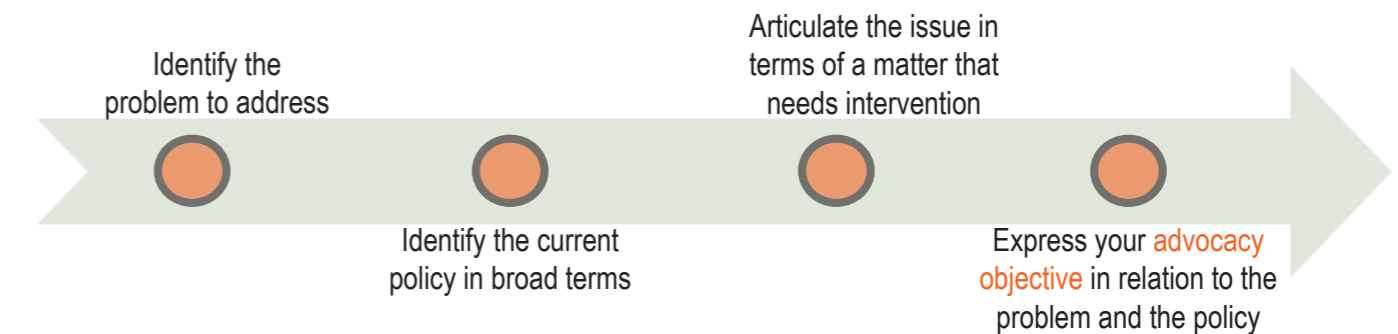
o Stages and Tools of Policy Advocacy Cycles

As emphasized in the previous chapters, planning is probably one of the most important phases of advocacy campaigns. Three out of five stages in the advocacy cycle – Identification of advocacy issue, Research of causes and effects and Advocacy strategy – deal primarily with different forms of planning that can feed into an ultimate action plan. This action plan or strategy will then guide our campaign into the fourth stage – Organized action – and serve as an etalon against which to measure and evaluate our results in the fifth stage – Monitoring and evaluation. Let us go through these stages one by one.

Stage 1: Identification of Advocacy Issue

What seems to be a logical initial step in every process may in fact be one of the most delicate tasks in constructing an advocacy campaign. This stage starts with (but involves much more than) identifying the issue to be tackled and the policy we aim to influence. Thus, one of the first steps in every advocacy initiative is identifying our advocacy objective concerning a problematic area and a specific policy. There are various necessary steps in this process:

Figure 10: Identification Phase (own elaboration)



Identification starts with looking at the basket of “problems” and picking which one we can best address. There may indeed be countless interventions needed in a certain area. But focusing on what is feasible given our interests, expertise and resources as well as narrowing down to a clear objective, subsequently expressed in goals, is the best way start to constructive change. Qualified practitioners who have made of advocacy their profession may develop with experience the ability to tackle a range of very diverse issues.

However, for the beginner advocate, an issue that is “at heart” would be a good start and assure the advocate will remain motivated throughout the process. Resources are also to be accounted for from this initial stage. This does not only involve financial resources, but also expertise as we can hardly tackle as beginners an area outside our know-how and capabilities. The purpose should be to put our efforts into a goal that is at heart as well as realistic at the same time.

Once the issue has been pinpointed, there is a need to identify in broad terms the policy dimension. This will be detailed in the following research stage but it is important from the start to be clear on the policy at hand. Policy advocacy deals primarily with influencing change in policy. Thus, it is crucial to identify not only the issue we will tackle, but also policies concerning said issue and how we wish to influence these policies. We can then clearly articulate our advocacy in terms of a matter that needs intervention.

The most important outcome of this stage should be our advocacy objective, expressed in terms of both the issue at hand and the policy that surrounds it. The objective should be clear and easily broken down into specific goals. For the beginner advocate, the more realistic the objective is, the higher the chance of success will be. With experience and more resources, ever more ambitious policy objectives can be tackled.

Instruments for the Identification of advocacy issue stage:

Initial meetings: These sessions can help to harmonize values within the group and make sure all members are motivated by the need to bring about change with regards to a certain advocacy issue. These sessions should pin down the issue and underline the core motivation behind the campaign.

Research working group: This group will identify the current situation and policy surrounding the issue in broad terms. A certain degree of research may be needed from this stage. This group will be responsible for delivering a clear account of the situation with enough details to feed into the policy advocacy objective

Self –evaluation sessions: A realistic evaluation of the advocacy group’s capital will most likely be needed. This capital includes skills, expertise, capabilities as well as resources in terms of finances and time available. At the end of the Identification stage, a clear account of what the advocacy group can invest into the campaign should be ready. This will also help to pin down a realistic objective and avoid future frustration.

Stage 2: Research of Causes and Effects

This stage sets a solid foundation for grounding our advocacy strategy not just in good intentions but in facts and context as well. Building on the initial broad research conducted in the first stage, we get to the core of the problem to discover the cause and effect relationships that determine the current situation as well as the current policy. Starting with extensive research and going deeper into analyzing our findings, the purpose should be to firmly ground and contextualize the issue, identify the biggest challenges and also underline our strengths and weaknesses. This stage should primarily assess the degree of efforts that will be needed to pursue a certain policy advocacy objective. This assessment should take into account at least three main dimensions that answer several questions:

- **Context:** What exactly is the issue at hand? What cause and effect relationships determine the problem we aim to address? What are past and present policies dealing with the issue? What is the nature of the policy and field environment in which we will be operating?
- **Actors:** Who are the main stakeholders in the issue? How is each of them affected by the current situation? How is each of them affected by our policy advocacy objective? Who is our target audience? Whose behavior or stance do we aim to change and what is the best way to do this? How to best approach our audience?
- **Challenges and Potential:** What is stopping the policy process from moving into our desired direction i.e. what are the obstacles? What are the challenges to having our proposal accepted? What is our advantage? What is our leverage?

These and many other questions should be answered before we begin our campaign. In fact, our advocacy strategy and the design of the campaign itself will be based on these answers. Figure 11 offers a graphic representation of this process.

Apart from intensive research, this stage also requires a great deal of analysis. This involves critically assessing the findings and reflecting on potential scenarios. Some of the most widespread analysis tools are listed below and there is extensive freely available information on how to utilize them in planning or implementation.

One word of caution (!): in many cases, analysts fall victim to rigid approaches and take the results from these analysis tools as objective truths upon which to base their decision making. It is important to remember that, as all instruments, these tools too have their limitations and results should always undergo a process of critical reflection.

Thus, we advise the beginner advocate to approach these tools as just that: instruments that can shed light on certain aspects of the realities surrounding a certain issue, to be used critically and in combination with other tools.

Another reason for familiarizing with these instruments is that they are widely used in public policy analysis by lawmakers or decision makers. Often decisions on whether a policy should be implemented or not are subject to these analyses, whose results are then used to justify or legitimize a certain policy. Therefore, **advocates should be familiar with not only these key instruments but also their shortcomings** and the criticism surrounding the rigid use of such tools. In this way, advocates can trace back the logic underlying decision making processes that resulted in a certain policy, which makes it easier to ultimately alter or contest it.

Instruments for the Research of Cause and Effects stage:

Problem tree analysis: This is one of the most widespread planning tools. It breaks down the problem into manageable and definable chunks. This enables a clearer prioritisation of factors and helps focus objectives. In challenging contexts, this tool can provide a clearer picture of the cause and effect relationships that underlie a certain problem

Stakeholder analysis: This is widely used to determine who holds what stakes in a certain issue. Individuals or groups that are likely to affect or be affected by a proposed action are identified and sorted according to their impact on the action and the impact the action will have on them. This analysis is especially useful in conflict resolution situations or when advocating in an environment where strong interests clash.

Cost-benefit analysis (CBA): This tool involves a process for calculating and comparing benefits and costs of a certain policy. The purpose is to evaluate whether a policy brings more benefits than costs, thus whether it is worth pursuing. The CBA is one of the most widely used instruments for policy analysis but it is also one of the most debated. It's been especially criticized for being used in environmental policy, social policy or policies with considerable social impact to wrongly quantify variables such as loss of human life or environmental damage. Advocates for social justice, human rights or environment issues especially should familiarize themselves with the criticisms surrounding this tool as it is often presented to legitimize the policies they aim to challenge. Used correctly, the CBA can also help in the planning of advocacy campaigns.

Scenario analysis: this instrument involves a process of analyzing possible future events by considering alternative possible outcomes. It can serve to plan for different scenarios ahead of time while still in the research phase of our advocacy campaign. It can help to pre-empt challenges and better prepare for them.

Stage 3: Advocacy Strategy

The purpose of this stage is to gather all the reflection, findings and analyses of the previous two phases into one advocacy strategy, which will be used to organize action and maintain focus during the campaign. A good advocacy strategy should be aimed towards the advocacy objective pinpointed in the first stage and can be built around the findings and analyses developed in the second stage.

- ✓ An advocacy strategy should initially serve as a clear representation of what you stand for and what you aim to achieve. Thus, it should contain at least one mission statement, key objectives and targets.
- ✓ Secondly, it should organize resources and capabilities into real actions in the most efficient way. This includes developing a detailed account of expertise available, budget and other resources.
- ✓ Thirdly, an advocacy strategy should serve as a guide for the next phase of organized action, which is ultimately where all the preparation and planning are translated into efforts. Thus, it should contain action plans, approaches and instruments to be used.

Instruments for the Advocacy Strategy stage:

Mission Statement: This determines the general profile your advocacy campaign will have. It usually takes the form of a general declaration of intent and serves to guide the long-term activities of advocacy organizations.

Objectives: Advocacy objectives should resemble specific goal oriented statements that will be at the core of your organization's activities. These should serve to achieve the overall stated mission. As a rule of thumb, a good set of objectives needs to have SMART attributes. Smart is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound. Good objectives are clearly defined, have realistic prospects and are accompanied by a schedule of activities.

Targets: Depending on objectives, your organization may set different targets in the short-term, mid-term and long-term. These targets help to organize actions and facilitate the evaluation of the campaign, in which we will ultimately measure target achievement against a specific schedule.

Resources Inventory and Budget: An inventory of resources can include all tangible and intangible assets that your organization will use in order to achieve its mission. A careful budget can include detailed information about financial resources and their allocation to specific objectives. These can help in setting realistic objectives and drafting action plans that match the advocate's or the organization's capabilities.

Action Plans: Action plans resemble strategic plans in a much smaller scale and serve to guide the advocate into the forth stage of the advocacy cycle - Organized action. There are different methods to draft action plans. An inexperienced organization might consider assigning each objective a separate action plan. The more detailed the action plan is, the less probability there is for confusion in the next phase. Action plans play a key role in assuring an efficient use of resources.

Approaches and Instruments: This part of the strategy is particularly important because it will determine the nature of your action. How to approach a certain audience, what kind of action to take, and what instruments to use for better achieving you goals, are all part of this stage. These approaches and tools need to be harmonized with the objectives, targets and resources at hand.

Stage 4: Organized Action

The forth and possibly most proactive stage of the policy advocacy cycle is the Organized Action stage. This is where all the planning and reflection translates into real action to influence a certain policy and bring about change. This stage is where the intersection with the policy cycle becomes crucial.

We mentioned in the previous session that policy advocacy initiatives can be initiated at every stage of the policy cycle. That being said, it is crucial to identify this point of entrance from the beginning. The policy phase where our advocacy will enter into action greatly affects the chances for success of different approaches and instruments. In other words, an advocacy can be initiated at any stage but approaches or courses of action should be tailored to the specific policy stage we are interfering in. To make an example, extensive research and publications may be valuable in the Agenda Setting or Policy Formulation stage but are not the best approaches in Policy Implementation or Policy Evaluation. Or, to make another example, lobbying rather than publications, may be a better approach to the Decision Making stage.

In this way, the approach and instruments selected shape our organized action but also often determine our chances for success. Adopting the right approach or selecting appropriate instruments may be the key to achieving your objectives. Advocacy tools differ greatly in scope and scale. For example, communication strategies and constituency building have a broad scale and are concerned with engaging support from the general public. These can be successful instruments in raising awareness to bring an issue to the public agenda. On the other hand, lobbying plans and policy papers usually target legislators and decision makers, which makes them useful in negotiations, voting or general decision making. There are countless instruments that may shape our organized action. We list below some tools that may be used in specific phases of the policy cycle.

Instruments for the Organized Action stage:

When interfering in Agenda Setting: In this stage, the prime goal of policy advocates is to get their issue on the agenda of individuals, groups or institutions that have the power to affect change. A carefully crafted media campaign can sometimes help to publicize an issue. Many advocates also choose more aggressive instruments such as staging a protest, rally or a march. Strikes are also used, especially by individuals or groups with little power and resources, to call to the attention of the public and lawmakers. Research papers and policy papers can also help to pinpoint a certain issue in need of a policy shift.

When interfering in Policy Formulation: This stage is when a problem is clearly framed and proposals for political solutions are developed. There are two possible dimensions where the advocate can attempt to exercise influence: (i) field expertise and (ii) consensus building. An example of an advocacy instrument in this stage is legal expertise, which can be used to influence how a new law is framed.

When interfering in Decision Making: In this stage the policymaking process moves away from early debates and becomes more formal. It usually includes voting on a certain policy. Research or policy papers may be less useful in this stage as the advocate is no longer facing assessment commissions but rather politicians and lawmakers. Networking or organized lobbying may be used to influence decisions at this stage.

When interfering in Policy Implementation: This stage is concerned with implementing a certain policy and the effects of implementation. Advocacies in this stage often aim to influence implementation so that it brings about a desired outcome. An interesting tool used for this purpose is impact assessment analysis, which assesses implementation to evaluate the impact of a certain policy on a group, the society as a whole, the environment, etc. In case of negative impact, advocates often make the results public hoping to gather support for stopping or changing implementation.

When interfering in Policy Evaluation: Monitoring campaigns are some of the most widespread policy instruments in the last years. They usually monitor the achievements of a certain policy with regards to initial objectives and determine potential for improvement.

Stage 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

Just as the policy cycle, advocacy cycles too reserve a stage for monitoring and evaluation. In this stage progress is monitored periodically and results are measured against the advocacy objective, targets and strategy. Monitoring and evaluation is probably the most neglected phase in many advocacy initiatives. This is often due to the fact that results from monitoring and evaluation are perceived as the ends rather than the means. In truth, these self-assessment processes should be reflected on critically and taken as signs for improvements needed. This stage can serve to adapt our advocacy campaign and move away from unproductive practices. It can also help to plan better advocacy campaigns in the future.

Instruments for the Monitoring and Evaluation stage:

A monitoring and evaluation plan: An effective monitoring and evaluation plan is required to determine how well the advocacy campaign meets its objectives. Periodical monitoring according to an agreed upon schedule will avoid wasting resources and assure transparency of the actions. This plan will accompany the advocacy all throughout the cycle. For this reason such a plan is devised at the beginning of the initiative.

Indicators: Identifying indicators for measuring the progress against advocacy objectives can be one of the most challenging tasks of the Monitoring and Evaluation stage. The development of good indicators is something that comes with experience. The beginner advocate should not struggle to build an intricate list with countless indicators. Instead, it is important to keep these indicators simple, functional and measurable.

Framework for collection of data: Monitoring and Evaluation are reflective processes and they constantly need to be fed with data that has been collected periodically and responsibly. For this, a framework can be devised detailing how and when data collection should take place, where and how this data is stored and processed, as well as who is responsible for the collection and analysis.

The instruments above illustrating each stage should be used critically and creatively. Many of them can be employed in different ways and used in various stages. For example, a monitoring and evaluation plan works best if devised from the beginning rather than just in the final stage. Just as with the policy cycle, the stage model presented in this chapter should not be approached rigidly. Rather, it should be taken as a guideline to planning successful advocacy strategies.

VI. Concluding Remarks

This introductory guide was aimed at facilitating the beginner advocate's first steps into policymaking. It serves as an introduction to policy advocacy as well as the public policy making environment in Albania.

Various advocacy approaches and tools have been mentioned in this guide, to illustrate different scenarios and different takes on influencing public policy. However, the beginner advocate must keep in mind that the best advocacy is a tailored advocacy. As you will soon discover, when striving for change, context is everything and ready-made models rarely make a difference unless adapted to the context at hand.

Background knowledge on different methods and various examples in this guide, should help beginner advocates to eventually craft their own individual approach to advocacy. This is something that is perfected over time, and initially standard toolkits and strategies can prove very useful. But as actors, political environment and culture vary incredibly from one country to another, a successful advocacy approach will be one that goes beyond standard models and is embedded in local practices. This is not to say that advocates must employ the very practices they aim to change, in order to achieve results. Rather, it means that a thorough knowledge of the actors and methods involved in a country's policymaking system is the first step towards improving this system.

We hope that think tanks, civil society organizations, research centers as well as individuals and volunteer groups can use this guide as a first step into policy advocacy. One should remember that in looking to make an impact in policymaking, advocates are also fostering the active engagement of the Albanian civil society in decisions that frame public life, which is in itself a noble goal for every initiative.

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