

### **Deliberation as an Integral Public Policymaking Mechanism - popular science summary**

An ever-increasing number of global challenges require social innovation, and the development of new technologies means that although deliberation is beginning to gain in importance, it does not easily coexist with public policies. However, it is an indisputable fact that 'commonised knowledge' and digital tools can ensure that more voices are heard than ever before.

Recent years have proven that we are living in an era of reform, which can be easily noticed locally as well as internationally. However, reforms and public policies programmed and implemented, even if they respond to global challenges, gain little social legitimacy. This is due to the fact that the public sector is characterised by a conservative approach in the operating rules of institutions, which eliminates the doctrine of 'philosophy/politics of change.' For this reason, many areas of the public sphere elude structural transformation, but if it cannot be avoided, decision-makers reach for traditional methods – procedural-institutional or prescriptive ones – enforcing adaptation to change using the law. This creates a wall of distrust between government and society.

The rules of creating public policies have been studied for decades. In Poland, the process of programming public policies and implementing reforms is based on enacting normative acts (soft ones: strategies and policies; hard ones: laws and regulations). This process is formalised and regulated by law. However, highly professional (autonomous) fields, such as higher education, the judiciary, the economy, and social affairs, among others, need to take into account the opinions of stakeholders of change. But even if this does happen, formally, these consultations often tend to be fake.

Embarking on research on deliberation and its place in the public policy cycle results from the observation that, in crafting reforms, policymakers have developed the principle of 'influencing behaviour.' This is evident in the deep social rift that separates public policymakers from society at large. Consequently, it is worth exploring the possibilities of a broader inclusion of innovative public participation models in public authority decisions, especially since the realistic model of deliberation presupposes a shift from description to action with an emphasis on encouragement and participatory roles in socio-economic and political transformations.

An issue related to the participatory-deliberative model of creating changes in the public sphere is knowledge-based policy. It reflects the call to do away with the carefree attitude of the authorities willing, in exchange for voter support, to implement policies and programmes that threaten, on the one hand, the stability of public finances and, on the other, reinforce the paternalistic dependence of citizens on the state. Striving for a balance between the costs of policymaking and its socio-economic effects in the context of diversity of social life requires that decisions and actions be informed by reliable and useful knowledge. In Poland, the extent to which this approach is used in the public sector is still unsatisfactory; moreover, it seems to have further declined in recent years. Conversely, rational arguments increasingly often tend to be replaced by purely ideological reasons and driven by strong social emotions.

Perhaps that is why in Poland deliberation has never figured prominently in the strategic plan of reforms or programmed public policies, since broad social consultations, even when supported by specialist knowledge, were rarely pursued by administration or policymakers. This is also encouraged by the centralised model adopted in public institutions, which, even within the framework of democratic principles, due to its highly politically sensitive content, led to fake public participation in consulting on changes.

In view of these phenomena, deliberation should gain in importance, because although it envisages formalised social participation, it is actually quite broad and real. Moreover, it is fostered by the diversity of policy practices and the increasing number of challenges and issues that require innovation as well as new approaches in order to overcome the logic of confrontation between government and the social environment affected by change. Deliberation strengthens the sense of empowerment inasmuch as it permits the social preferences to be identified beforehand. The participation of those whose lives are affected by decisions increases their legitimacy, acceptance, and consequently efficiency, which may lead to breaking the deadlock of distrust and the logic of confrontation between government and society.