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THE CIVIL SOCIETY AS AN INNOVATION PARTNER IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING: CO-CREATING THE GREEK NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON OPEN GOVERNMENT

Research full-length paper

Track - New Directions for Digital Governance: Towards Government 3.0

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Abstract

Formulating governmental policies for the wider public cannot be an internal process. Embedding openness and participation principles in the policy formulation process can lead to initiatives that respond to the real needs and address the real challenges in a policy domain.

This paper presents an overview of participation approaches in policy formulation and analyses the structured co-creation process applied by the Greek government to develop the National Action Plan on Open Government. The analysis of the bottom-up participatory approach reveals new insights into the new role of government 'as a platform' towards the development and evolution of Government 3.0. The new communication channels, innovative collaboration procedures and digital tools that enabled the active participation of the relevant actors in the policy formulation process suggest a co-creation approach which can be of wide applicability to other policy domains.

The paper also addresses the important but under-estimated challenge of actively involving the relevant actors in the implementation of a co-created public policy. The analysis suggests an approach according to which civil society organizations are effectively engaged in the full life cycle of a public policy and take an active role within its implementation.

Keywords: open government; co-creation; public policy formulation; participation

1 Introduction

Open government is recently becoming a key policy priority to reform the public administration at a global level. Formulating and promoting public policies to empower citizens, enhance transparency and promote integrity are central to government efforts for administrative reforms. Definitions of open government refer to innovate in collaboration with citizen, to share resources that were previously closely guarded and thus harness the power of mass collaboration, as well as drive transparency (Lathrop and Ruma, 2010). Open government platforms aim at providing an online setting, where citizens and the public administration can mutually gather information, evaluate and discuss existing content or focus on the development of new ideas, concepts, and best practices (Lee et al., 2012). One of the key principles of open government is that of participatory governance. Governments promote the dialogue and exchange between policymakers, civil society actors, stakeholders and any interested party for policymaking and problem solving.

Over the last decades, policymaking and public service delivery have been gradually evolving towards more inclusive governance models. New approaches related to citizen participation and the design of deliberation practices have started spreading in many countries (Fischer, 2006; Bingham et al., 2005). While governments initially focused on co-designing public services, they have gradually adopted innovative approaches to involve relevant actors, stakeholders and interested parties in the participatory formulation of public policies. (Peña-López, 2001; Gerston, 2014). The involvement of the relevant actors and stakeholders in policy formulation aims at gathering and analyzing the viewpoints of the policy beneficiaries with a view to improve the effectiveness of the policy and address the real needs of the users. The emergence of open government activities is closely connected to the advancement of new technologies and interactive tools (Piller and Walcher 2006a).

During the past decade, many international, European and national initiatives have been formulated with a view to assist the governmental efforts to promote horizontal policies on open government and innovation in public administrations. One of the most notable initiatives to support the global open government agenda is Open Government Partnership (OGP), a multi-stakeholder platform launched in 2011, which brings together over 70 countries and 15 subnational governments that have committed to making their governments more open and accountable. Recognizing that the process of formulating open government policies involves a wide network of actors, stakeholders and policymakers, OGP promotes effective collaboration between governments and civil society organizations to support the development and implementation of national open government priorities and ambitious reforms. Every two years, each participating country delivers a National Action Plan (NAP) which is a product of a co-creation effort between the government and the civil society to develop concrete, time-bound and measurable open government commitments. The OGP Articles of Governance state that “OGP participants commit to developing their country action plans through a multi-stakeholder process, with the active engagement of citizens and civil society.”

A challenge in the co-creation process is to empower the government officials, civil society, and other stakeholders and interested parties and to provide the mechanism and technology tools that enable all parties to actively participate in developing the NAP. Such mechanisms include the establishment of open and participatory processes for proposing national commitments and for agreeing the commitments to be included in the NAP. OGP provides clear and specific guidance on effective mechanisms that can be applied by governments to co-develop a NAP but the challenge to involve the actors in the implementation of the NAP is not adequately addressed.

The research objective of this paper is two-fold. The paper analyses the co-creation process that has been applied for the development of the NAP on Open Government and aims to define a structured process for the co-creation of horizontal public policies by governments through a bottom-up participatory approach with the active involvement of relevant actors and stakeholders. The co-creation process, coupled with the technology tools used, can be applicable in a wide variety of policy domains and can support the new role of government ‘as a platform’ towards the development and evolution of

Government 3.0. In addition, although the research related to co-creation of public policies have been the target of influential research, the engagement and active involvement of the actors in the implementation of the formulated policy has not received much academic attention yet. This paper goes one step further and analyses the process according to which Civil Society Organisations that participated in the co-creation of this public policy are also involved in its implementation. The main objective of this analysis is to introduce an approach for effectively engaging relevant actors in the full life cycle of a public policy so they can take an active role not only within its formulation but also its implementation.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the research methodology for this paper and the research limitations which may indicate directions for future work. Section 3 provides a literature review in the domain of participatory policymaking approaches and presents the relevant initiatives that have been introduced by the Greek government. Section 4 elaborates on the participation processes involved in the development and implementation of the Greek NAP on Open Government. Finally, section 5 summarizes the conclusions of the paper and provides recommendations for future work.

2 Research methodology and limitations

The first step of the research methodology for this paper aims to study the literature and background research related to participatory approaches in policymaking. Based on this study, the second step focuses on the open government ecosystem in Greece. The research is based on studying and evaluating existing open government initiatives that have been introduced by the Greek government and analyses the implementation of the participation principle in these initiatives.

The third step of the methodology focuses on reviewing and analysing the process used by the Greek government to co-create the OGP NAP. The main sources for this step have been the three OGP NAPs that have been submitted by the Greek government to OGP and the OGP independent progress reports for the two first Greek NAPs that have been published by OGP. Further information for this research has been gathered and analysed from sources published by the Open Government Team (Greek Project Team for Open Government, 2017), which operates in the Hellenic Ministry of Administrative Reform under the coordination of the national representative to the OGP. The team is responsible for coordinating the development and the implementation of the third NAP and in general for promoting open government policies in the central government, the local authorities and the Greek Parliament, in cooperation with the civil society organisations.

The last step of the research methodology covers the analysis of the key characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of the studied approaches with a view to reveal new insights into co-creation of horizontal public policies through a bottom-up participatory approach. Specific focus is given in the involvement of relevant actors in the formulation of a public policy but also in the approach to further engage the actors and actively involve them in the implementation of this co-created policy.

One of the limitations of the research approach is related to the limited sources of information about the impact assessment of key participation initiatives in Greece. Allocating further research efforts to assess the impact of these participation approaches can define in more detail the strengths and weaknesses of these initiatives and provide further insights and more recommendations for the promotion of relevant approaches. Another limitation of the research approach is the fact that the OGP independent progress report for the third Greek NAP is not available yet. Once the implementation of the third NAP is completed and OGP publishes the progress report, its analysis can provide further insights on the efficiency and effectiveness of the co-creation process. In addition, information related to the completion of each one of the third NAP commitments will be of value for further analysing the effectiveness of the participatory methods and practices and the contribution of the civil society actors to the implementation of this governmental policy.

3 Literature review of participatory policymaking approaches and the open government ecosystem in Greece

3.1 Participatory processes in policymaking

According to the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA), defining public participation refers to the involvement of individuals and groups that are positively or negatively affected by a proposed intervention (e.g. a project, a programme, a plan, or a policy), are subject to a decision-making process, or are interested in it. The engagement of the affected and interested public into the decision-making process is an important means to foster justice, equity and collaboration.

Participatory approaches in policymaking have spread in many countries with a view to involve civil society actors, policy domain stakeholders or end users in the policy formulation. Such processes mainly aim to activate citizens in public affairs and involve them in the policy formulation process in order to influence political decisions directly. Since the 1970s, participatory approaches have started to experiment with public audiences, town meetings, participatory planning and participatory budgeting. In such processes, civil society actors and the wider public can contribute to shape public decisions. Successful participatory policymaking approaches are considered those that manage to involve a large number of citizens and to transmit a strong voice to the political authorities (Smith, 2009).

Participatory approaches focus on enabling direct confrontation between political representatives and citizens and address the challenge for direct democracy (vote and referendum) in order to clearly show majoritarian opinions on public decisions. Relevant approaches include deliberative processes which aim to create public spaces of discussion, between various actors and the wider public, in order to take decisions in a constructive and inclusive way. From this perspective, participatory processes in policymaking are not mainly introduced to involve active citizens, but to create the conditions that allow citizens to listen to other viewpoints. This allows discussion of arguments and reasons, questioning of preconceived opinions and to formulate decisions that satisfy different needs and interests (Cuppen, 2012). For this reason, deliberative processes pay more attention to the balance between different voices, than to the detection of a majoritarian voice in civil society; to the quality of the dialogues, than to the quantity of participants; to the search for a consensual agreement, than to the empowerment of the most representative opinions (Mansbridge et al., 2010; Steiner, 2012).

The main principles in the deliberative processes include assisting the dialogue between different voices in order to take into consideration all the viewpoints and interests on a particular issue; favouring the construction of reasoned decisions and opinions through the access to balanced information and rational argument; empowering the relevant actors, experts, stakeholders and the wider public and provide the tools to enable effective interactions between them in order to reach consensual decisions. Deliberative processes are usually structured and involve the relevant actors and citizens in strictly regulated environments. From the 1990s onwards, experiments in several deliberative processes have been conducted, such as citizen juries, consensus conferences and 21st century town meetings. (Fung and Wright 2001; Dryzek, 2010). Participatory processes for the formulation of public policies may also be coupled with deliberative approaches to mix more open and unstructured forms of citizen involvement with smaller, more structured and dialogue-based initiatives that gather relevant actors, stakeholders and the wider public (Ravazzi and Pomatto, 2014). Crowd-sourcing approaches are also applied in decision making in order to harness the creative solutions of a distributed network of individuals and mine opinions and ideas from large numbers of individuals (Brabham, 2008). The public sector has started making steps in this direction by introducing citizen-sourcing in their policy making processes (Androutsopoulou et al., 2016). In order to address the increasing complexity of social problems and the need to effectively inform policy analysis, management and decision-making, the physical participation processes are coupled with information technologies and computational modelling methods, processes and digital tools (Androutsopoulou et al., 2017).

3.2 The open government ecosystem in Greece

As the case of Greece shows, the economic and social crisis has increased perception of corruption and mistrust among the Greek public, and reinforced long-standing tendencies to cynicism, civic disengagement, and disillusionment as citizens feel estranged towards the current public policy making model (European Commission, 2015). This fuels corruption and diminishes participation, which in turn makes the citizens feel even more alienated. Greece is currently trying to change radically, fast and in various policy areas. This process includes reforming the government processes, changing the rules of governance and developing new solutions for the public. The decision makers in the Greek government have gradually come to realise that open government can become a powerful tool towards recovery and an enabler of reform. It is recognized that citizen's participation can overcome obstacles to reform, marginalise resistance and boost civil society morale and engaging citizens to the elaboration of policy solutions to real life problems.

Greece has recently introduced a set of public policies and activities to promote the principles of open and participatory government (Greek Project Team for Open Government, 2017). The implementation of transparency initiatives and the use of new collaboration models further empower the public and involve the civic crowd in policy formulation. The strategy to open the Greek government focuses on making the government more transparent, effective and accountable to civil society. A key factor towards this goal is to empower the citizens and engage them in formulating and implementing public policies.

Transparency initiatives

The Transparency Program has been the Greek government's flagship open government initiative since 2010 (The Transparency Programme initiative, 2010). A digital online platform, the Clarity portal, provides access to all government documents, decisions and public spending information, thus achieving the goal for proactive and real time transparency (Ntalakou, 2017). According to the legislation of this initiative, decisions are not valid unless published on the Clarity Portal. The Clarity portal allows any interested party or citizen to see how the government budget is spent and opens up the space for political and public debate on previously untouchable areas of government expenditure. Citizens are allowed to investigate in depth any issue of their interest, rather than leaving public monitoring to the media. In addition, citizens and interest parties are able to participate by providing their comments on each published decision or act.

From October 2010 to June 2018, over 4.600 public authorities have published over 28 million administrative acts and decisions on the Clarity Portal platform¹ (The Clarity Portal of the Greek Government, 2014). The Clarity Portal has, in 2018, at least 30.000 visits per day. An open data API offers the opportunity to find decisions and administrative acts published in the Clarity portal, by using open data standards. All data acquired from the system are available under a Creative Commons License. This type of licensing means that anyone can use, reproduce or modify these data without any restrictions, except for the obligation to state their source and to explicitly state as different any secondary data, derived from the original data. Civil society initiatives re-use this data source and attempt to scrutinize government spending (Karamagioli et al., 2014).

A dynamic nationwide human network of 4.600 Project Task Forces corresponding to the public entities involved contributed to the rapid spread of the new values of transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation and collaboration (Ntalakou, 2011). The Leaders of the individual Project Task Forces form a Joint Central Task Force which supports this network, focusing on strong cooperation, solving common problems, sharing best practices and collecting feedback. This initiative has a silent but profound impact on the way officials handle their executive power and is considered an in-

¹ www.diafgeia.gov.gr

cremental reform in public policy making in Greece (Ladi, 2013). The compulsory uploading of the decisions and acts on the Internet leads to the reinforcement of responsibility and accountability on the part of the bodies exercising public authority. The direct accountability brought upon the administration by the radical transparency, leaves considerably less room for corruption, and exposes it easily when it takes place since any citizen and interested party enjoy full real time access to questionable acts. Such a collective scrutiny can be extremely effective, since it allows citizens directly involved or concerned with an issue to scrutinize it in depth, rather than leaving public scrutiny to the media. The Transparency Program makes politicians and public servants more self-conscious of their actions and less vulnerable to external pressures, because they know that all decisions and acts will have to be published as open content. Such a system, radically fights corruption, and substantially reduces the costs of anti-corruption action.

The Transparency program opens the Public Sector Information, sharing, as a result, the decision making power with citizens and leading to a new government model moving government from the hierarchical model to a network model. Open and free access to Public Sector Information constitutes a vital component of the effort to ensure citizens' participation to social, economic and political life as well as the Information Society. The Clarity portal guarantees wide publicity and access to information, progressively contributing to a culture change in the whole of the Greek public administration. Citizens have increased possibilities to enjoy their constitutional rights, such as the right to be informed and to participate in the Society of Information (Gritzalis et al., 2017).

Information is a prerequisite for any type of citizens' participation in the decision-making process. The implementation of the Transparency Program guarantees to the citizen that the Public Sector Information made available will not be partial, limited, or tailored to the public entities' perspective. The citizens can get a full view of all decisions and acts in their sphere of interest and can provide feedback with comments and accusations that are directed to the entity responsible to take relevant action. This results to making decision makers accountable for their actions to the civil society and redefines, inevitably, their overall decision making approach.

The international recognitions received by the service support also its value as a leading Open eGovernment Service at European level. However, the Transparency program would benefit from the development of strong reporting tools, the standardization of published public documents as well as the creation of a single public authorities' registry, complete with contact details and important collective administrative and financial information (Galasso et al., 2016).

Public Sector Information (PSI) open access and re-use

The open government data policy constitutes a priority in the Greek Public Administration. The policy on the re-use of public information serves two main purposes: first of all, to enhance transparency and accountability of the public sector by making public sector data available and easily accessible and second, to boost the economic growth by contributing to the creation of new jobs and encouraging investment in data-driven sectors, by using open government data as raw material to develop value – added service. According to an analysis of 60 indicative but reliable open public data sources (Alexopoulos et al., 2013), most data sets are simple and traditional public sector sources. The analysis indicates that there are no data aggregators and OGD catalogues in the Greek landscape and that there is no common policy for license issues as the license for use and reuse of data significantly vary if it exists at all.

In October 2014, the Greek government put into force Law 4305/2014 to introduce the provisions on open government data policy and further use of public sector information, thereby adopting the principle of “open by default”. The proposed bill also harmonized national legislation with the provisions of the Public Sector Innovation Directive (EC Directive 2003/98/EC), long before the transposition deadline (18 July 2015). According to the law - but for special cases of sensitive personal data, issues of national security, protection of IP rights etc. – government data should be promptly available online, in open format and common standards. Thus, an ecosystem of open, inter-operable services for sharing and re-using public information has been gradually established.

Until recently, the available public datasets were scattered on different public websites, and in various formats that usually do not permit re-use. The open government data policy aims to create a new set of services and delivery models on open government data, through a centralized public repository, *data.gov.gr*, which consolidates all sources of public information available on a single website, which is the focal point of concentration and distribution of public data. Since the rate of government data sets has significantly increased to address the promise of open government for citizens' awareness and participation in the institutions of governance, there is an emerging need to organise and categorise the available data sources (Alexopoulos et al., 2013). Under this repository, datasets are available with open licenses, allowing further use according to the open government data policy. In terms of data quality, the studies for Greece indicate a stable position in publishing data in not machine-processable formats (.pdf, .rar and .html instead of .csv, .json and .xls). The recent developments, after the launch of the Greek open data portal, are characterised by a small increase towards machine-processable formats (Alexopoulos et al., 2017).

The platform also provides a mechanism for the citizens to pinpoint and vote for datasets that are of value to them but not yet publicly available. Citizens' proposals are forwarded to the competent public bodies and the relevant datasets are published with priority.

The management of data sets on *data.gov.gr* is gradually being undertaken by public bodies. The Line Ministries are responsible for ensuring the availability of datasets that fall under their jurisdiction, giving priority to those with high value and benefit to citizens and businesses. Relevant studies highlight that legislation, IT platforms and codes are very good, but need to be matched with a culture that supports the presumption to release data (Ubaldi, 2013). The decentralized implementation model of the open government data policy includes the challenge to ensure the effective engagement of all the actors and the efficient involvement of the civil servants to perform the tasks required.

Participation

Another initiative in the agenda is "opengov.gr", the open digital and recruitment platform of the Greek public administration serving the principles of transparency, deliberation and public engagement in decision making. Addressing the citizens' need for timely information as well as for their participation into public affairs is the central objective of the opengov.gr project. The online platform includes two basic initiatives: Open calls for the recruitment of public administration officials, and digital, open-deliberation for participatory rule making.

Open deliberation for the submission of policy suggestions contributes to the development of transparency and the design of better policies, while simultaneously facilitates the dynamic relationship between interest groups and the state, thus elevating the relationship between citizens and the government. As a necessary element of a participatory democracy, open deliberation embraces and integrates citizen opinion and requests, as well as those made by social institutions, in the decision-making process.

Under this online platform, openings for top level and mid-level positions in the public sector are published and any interested person can apply on-line. In addition, draft legislative acts and governmental policy initiatives are posted to a blog like platform for deliberation, prior to their finalization. Citizens and any interested party can post their comments, suggestions and criticisms. Online public consultations have a life cycle comprising four successive phases i.e. preparation, collecting public comments, editing conclusions, completion (Tambouris et al., 2015). All submitted comments are collected and processed by the relevant authorities and are in many cases incorporated in the final text that enters the Greek Parliament. Important outcomes that need to be assessed for maximizing the effectiveness of this initiative include increasing the level of participation, including new societal groups in it, identifying concrete effects on the decision-making process as well as impacts on citizens' trust in government (Karamagioli et al., 2014). The platform also includes an experimental attempt to engage corporate and non-corporate users into generating sophisticated and immediately applicable ideas for crowd-sourced policy making in the field of ICT. This module is an open innovation web laboratory that

brings together experts from the technological community and institutions that manage information technology projects for the public sector and citizens.

Greek civil society organizations are also taking initiatives to empower the citizens. An example is Vouliwatch², a Civil Society organisation with an ambition to bridge the gap between citizens and their political representatives (Karakiza, 2015). This organisation introduced a digital platform to serve as a direct channel of communication established between Members of Parliament and citizens. The organisation aims to enhance participation in the political process. Citizens can submit their concerns and claims, influence legislation, and contribute to increased political accountability. Citizens have the opportunity to influence their elected representatives, draw their attention to specific issues and problems as well as call them to act upon them. As a result, Members of Parliament can use this as a crowdsourcing tool to gather first-hand information from citizens and take appropriate action when possible. In the case of VouliWatch, the theory of change suggests that availability of the platform coupled with the publication of the collected information is enough to trigger change (Berdou and Shutt, 2017). This theory is based on the assumption that after key stakeholders, such as citizens and Members of Parliament, engage, then other intermediaries, such as journalists, will step up to further disseminate or take actions on the basis of the collected information.

4 The development process of the Greek National Action Plan (NAP) on open government

The values and principles of open and participatory governance constitute a clear priority in the administrative reform strategy of the Greek Government³. According to this strategy, openness, participation and accountability represent fundamental principles, which constitute the cornerstone of drafting and implementing national policies. Since 2012, the Greek government is actively participating in the international cooperative initiative of Open Government Partnership (OGP) thus adopting its values, through drafting and implementing two-year NAPs on open government. Three NAPs have been submitted by the Greek government to OGP so far. Civic participation is a core component of open government, and an essential but also mandatory element of the formulation of an OGP NAP. This requirement reflects the fact that the collaboration of citizens, civil society, political and official champions and other stakeholders is essential to developing, securing and implementing lasting open government reforms.

The first two NAPs, submitted in 2012 and 2014, mainly focused on the qualitative upgrade of the public services through citizen participation and everyday interaction with the public sector along with the efficient management of public resources (Karamagioli and Gouscos, 2015). At present, the Greek government is in the process of implementing the 3rd NAP covering the period from July 2016 to June 2018. Focus is given on important policy domains such as administrative reform, justice, economy and development, environment and energy, culture and education.

In the third NAP, special focus is also given to the establishment of open governance principles at local level, by integrating specific commitments at regional level where the relationship between the citizens and the public administration is stronger.

For the development of each one of the three different NAPs, the Greek government applied different approaches and used different digital tools. During the development process of the first two NAPs, civic participation was mainly limited to the submission of comments or suggestions, with the use of a digital deliberation platform, when the government commitments were already finalized by the com-

² Description of the Vouliwatch initiative <https://participedia.net/en/cases/vouliwatch-greece>

³ Administrative Reform strategy for the Greek government, http://dimosio2020.gov.gr/?page_id=1597

petent public authorities. The development of the third NAP Greece's third action plan was based in an improved co-creation process which is analysed in detail in the following.

The following table provides information about the main characteristics of the process to develop each one of the three National Action Plans.

Greek National Action Plan (NAP) on open government	NAP 1 2012 –2014	NAP 2 2012 –2014	NAP 3 2016 –2018
Developing the NAP – Defining the key policy domains to be addressed in the NAP			
Public authorities are involved in defining the policy domains covered in the NAP		X	X
Relevant actors and stakeholders are involved in defining the policy domains covered in the NAP			X
The wider public is involved in defining the policy domains covered in the NAP			X
Development of the NAP – Formulating concrete commitments to be included in the NAP			
The competent public authorities are involved in developing NAP commitments	X	X	X
Relevant actors (CSOs, NGOs, Associations etc) are involved in developing NAP commitments		X	X
Digital tools are used to involve the wider public in developing NAP commitments	X	X	X
Implementing the NAP commitments			
The competent public authorities are implementing NAP commitments	X	X	X
Relevant actors (CSOs, NGOs, Associations etc) are also implementing NAP commitments			X
Relevant actors (CSOs, NGOs, Associations etc) assist in the implementation phase and contribute to the implementation of government NAP commitments			X

Table 1. Basic characteristics of the co-creation approach that have been applied to develop the three Greek National Action Plans on open government

4.1 The co-creation process to develop the third National Action Plan

The development process of the third NAP adopted an open, innovative procedure for its “co-creation”, through a structured, cooperative process of consultation between public administration entities and Civil Society Organizations. The government used communication channels and cooperative procedures and worked together with various actors and stakeholders to define specific policy areas in which open governance constitutes the main prerequisite to essentially boost accountability, integrity and citizens’ participation. Starting from these policy areas, the government applied an approach to involve the relevant public administrations, civil society organizations and the wider public and co-create a set of commitments in the field of open government. The co-creation procedure led to the adoption of an action plan with specific, measurable, time-bound commitments.

Step 1: Announce a clear procedure and a specific time plan for the co-creation process

In April 2016 the Open Government team (Greek Project Team for Open Government, 2017) which is operating under the Hellenic Ministry of Administrative Reform⁴ announces the co-creation process through the social media accounts of the OGP Greece initiative and other online communication channels of the Ministry. All relevant actors, stakeholders and the wider public are invited to be a part of the process and to interact with the government and with each other. Even if all actors cannot be totally satisfied with the outcome of the policy formulation, it is important that relevant actors are reached, involved and engaged in all steps of the co-creation process.

Step 2: Jointly define key policy priorities in the domain with relevant actors

In April 2016 the Project Team for Open Government launches the co-creation process in an open event in Athens. The Greek government introduces communication channels and cooperative procedures with a view to work in close cooperation with public officials, researchers, entrepreneurs, civil society organisations and other actors and stakeholders. Representatives of Greek political parties present their policy priorities and three break-out sessions are held with the active participation of representatives of government and civil society. The result of these break-out sessions is a list of specific policy areas⁵ in which open governance constitutes the main prerequisite to essentially boost accountability, integrity and citizens' participation.

Step 3: Jointly specify the policy fields to be addressed in the horizontal governmental policy

In April 2016 the Project Team for Open Government organizes a workshop with the participation of public administration representatives and other relevant actors and stakeholders with the aim to elaborate on the initial set of ideas produced during the launch event. The result of the workshop is the co-created list of seven (7) thematic pillars that serve as the main outline describing the policy domains of the new NAP (Environment and Energy, Justice, Transport, Economy and Development, Culture and Education, National Defence, Administrative Reform).

Step 4: Involve the wider public in the process of finalizing the policy fields to be addressed

In May 2016, the policy priorities and main initiatives that are developed during the previous steps are published under public deliberation with the use of a digital online deliberation tool. All interested parties are invited to post their comments, suggestions and criticisms under each policy area⁶.

Step 5: Suggest commitments for the NAP according under the defined policy fields

In May 2016, the Project Team for Open Government and an actively involved CSO (Open Knowledge Greece) jointly organize an open conference in Thessaloniki⁷. Relevant actors and stakeholders discuss the results of the co-creation process and formulate suggested commitments. The owners of the commitments are competent public authorities but also civil society organizations that commit to implementing specific tasks and activities that will effectively contribute to this governmental policy agenda.

Step 6: Open the dialogue, online deliberation on the suggested government NAP commitments

⁴ Hellenic Ministry of Administrative Reform, www.ydmed.gov.gr

⁵ <http://opengov.diavgeia.gov.gr/minadmin/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/04/OGP-2016-03-29-Innovathens-NAPConsultation-Final-1.pdf>

⁶ <http://opengov.diavgeia.gov.gr/minadmin/2016/04/25/%CF%80%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%84%CE%AC%CF%83%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%82-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CE%AD%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BE%CE%B7-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF-3%CE%BF-%CE%B5%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C-%CF%83%CF%87%CE%AD%CE%B4/>

⁷ Information about the open government event in Thessaloniki <http://ogp.okfn.gr/node/23>

In June 2016, the Ministry opens the dialogue with the wider public in an open online deliberation to get feedback on the suggested commitments. All interested parties can post their comments, suggestions and criticisms through an online digital platform⁸. In parallel, the Hellenic Parliament publishes commitments under an open public online consultation.

Step 7: Discuss the new horizontal governmental policy and the commitments in the Parliament

In July 2016, the Minister of Administrative Reform discusses the action plan in the Greek Parliament. Members of the Parliament provide their comments and commit to the open governmental policy. This strengthens the engagement and commitment of all parties to support the implementation of the NAP. This is considered an important practice to support the continuity of the policy agenda.

Step 8: Finalize and launch the action plan

End of July, the Ministry launches the third NAP on open government and officially submits it to OGP. All contributors, relevant actors and stakeholders that were involved in the co-creation process, are informed about the finalization of the Action Plan and the steps to follow for its effective implementation.

The co-creation approach led to the development of a NAP with concrete commitments that respond to the demands of the civil society and members of the wider public. The commitments complement the governmental policy of administrative reform, by safeguarding that open governance, transparency, participation and accountability are included in the main policy principles.

5 Actors involvement in the implementation of the Greek National Action Plan on open government

The participation of the Greek government in the OGP initiative and the collaborative development of the new NAP constituted an additional opportunity to activate an area of continuous consultation and cooperation with the civil society as citizens have the opportunity to participate and submit proposals. In addition, civil society stakeholders are further empowered to support the competent public authorities in implementing government commitments but also include their own self-implemented commitments in the NAP.

An important prerequisite to achieve the objectives of the national Action Plan is the adoption of a uniform and effective management model for its implementation. The aim is to monitor and coordinate the implementation of each commitment in order to meet the time-plan and update or amend commitments undertaken, where appropriate. The Greek government applies the following management model for the implementation of the National Action Plan.

The designated representative of the country in OGP coordinates the promotion of the national policy of open government and the implementation of the national Action Plan. The Ministry of Administrative Reform is responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the commitments included in the NAP. However, in order to achieve the optimum coordination of all action among various competent entities of the public sector, the Open Government Team (Greek Project Team for Open Government, 2017) has a key role in this process. This team has the form of a central steering team which coordinates the government activity for the promotion of the open governmental policy. The main responsibilities include:

- to draft and monitor the implementation of the NAP, as well as update its commitments,
- to cooperate with entities of the public sector and other actors that have undertaken commitments,

⁸ Open online public deliberation tool <http://www.opengov.gr/yypes/?ec=131&t=xls>.

- to cooperate, interact, and consult with Civil Society Organizations that are active in the field,
- to cooperate with Greek and foreign academic and research institutions, as well as international organizations and institutions in the fields of open governance and fight against corruption,
- to cooperate with the designated OGP representative, towards ensuring the fulfillment of the relevant OGP obligations

An innovation in the process is that civil society actors that participate in the development of the NAP are further engaged in the full life-cycle of the NAP. Their involvement in the implementation of the NAP is twofold:

- A Civil Society Organization may undertake a commitment and is responsible for its effective implementation according to the specification of the commitment included in the NAP. In the third NAP, two active Greek NGOs (Open Knowledge Greece⁹ and GFOSS¹⁰) that were involved in the NAP co-creation process have undertaken four concrete commitments (Third Greek OGP NAP, 2016) in order to assist the Greek government implement the ambitious open governmental policy.

Commitment 30: Open Data Index for cities and local administrations (Open Knowledge Greece)

Commitment 31: Linked, Open and Participatory Budgets (Open Knowledge Greece)

Commitment 32: School of data for public servants (Open Knowledge Greece)

Commitment 33: The collaborative wikification of public services procedures (GFOSS)

- A Civil Society Organization can contribute to the implementation of a government commitment in cooperation with the competent public authority. When drafting the commitments is completed, the civil society organizations offer to assist the competent Public Authorities in the implementation of specific commitments according to their expertise and capacity.

6 Concluding remarks and future work

The economic and social crisis in Greece has increased the perception of corruption and mistrust among the Greek public (Transparency International, 2017), and reinforced long-standing tendencies to civic disengagement, and disillusionment as citizens feel estranged towards the current public policy making model. The Greek government has gradually come to realise¹¹ that open government can become a powerful tool towards recovery and an enabler for reform. Citizen's participation can overcome obstacles to reform, marginalise resistance and enhance the engagement of citizens to the elaboration of policy solutions to real life problems.

To address this challenge, the Greek government has promoted a series of open government initiatives and has introduced new digital governance applications to support these initiatives and the government reform (Karamagioli and Gouscos, 2015). A common characteristic of the initial open government initiatives introduced by the Greek government is the fact that the policies were formulated internally within the Public Authorities.

In 2016, Greece, as a member of Open Government Partnership, started the process of drafting the third National Action Plan on open government. The challenge for the Greek government was to reach the development of concrete government commitments while ensuring a great level of participation of

⁹ Open Knowledge Greece, <https://okfn.gr/en/>

¹⁰ GFOSS – Open Technologies Alliance, <https://gfooss.eu/>

¹¹ Declaration of the Greek Government in the Open Government Partnership global platform <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/countries/greece>

both governmental bodies and, mainly, civil society. This challenge has been transformed into an opportunity for the government to apply a concrete co-creation process and introduce an open online deliberation platform in order to hand decision-making power to members of the public thus supporting the new role of government 'as a platform' towards the development and evolution of Government 3.0. By using both the expertise of the OGP Support Unit as well as of other OGP member countries, the Greek government cultivated an open procedure to develop a National Action Plan by the citizen for the citizen through an open and collective effort with the involvement of the public administrations, civil society actors and the wider public.

As the analysis has demonstrated, the policy formulation process focused on mobilizing societal resources from a wide range of actors and stakeholders (CSOs, NGOs, Associations etc). The process managed to engage relevant actors (Third Greek OGP NAP, 2016), activate the right groups but also involve, with the use of online deliberation platforms, members of the wider public.

Certain methods, practices and digital tools of the analysed co-creation process are considered important factors that may contribute to the effective formulation of any relevant horizontal governmental policy and its implementation. Involving representatives of the political parties to present their policy priorities at the beginning of the co-creation process is considered an important factor for the success of the process. Another effective approach is to invite and involve the interested parties (public officials, researchers, entrepreneurs, civil society organisations and other actors and stakeholders) from the very early stages of the policy formulation and jointly define the key policy priorities. This method is strengthening the actors' commitment and further engagement in the overall process. The use of digital online deliberation tools to involve the wider public in the specification of the key policy priorities is also an important step in the process. This is an effective means to hand decision-making power to members of the public and builds a more concrete basis for the next steps of the participatory process. This method may also strengthen the validity of the co-creation process outcome and facilitates the adoption of the results of the implemented policy. Another important practice introduced in the NAP co-creation approach is presenting and discussing the draft version of the Action Plan in the Greek Parliament. This practice may strengthen the commitment of all parties to the implementation of the new policy and help secure the continuity of the policy agenda.

A core element of the participatory process is the engagement of civil society beyond the formulation of the policy and in all steps of the OGP NAP cycle. Civil society organizations that are actively involved in formulating the policy are further engaged to the actual implementation of the new governmental policy. Civil society organizations may undertake and implement concrete commitments thus assisting the government activity to effectively promote and implement the policy. In addition, civil society organizations may assist the competent Public Authorities to implement certain government commitments according to their expertise and capacity.

This paper has largely focused on the engagement of relevant actors and the wider public in the development and implementation of a national horizontal policy in Greece. Further work is needed to assess the impact of the participation approaches and provide further insights and more recommendations for the promotion of relevant approaches according to the assessment of their efficiency. An effective practice would be to explore if and how the effectiveness of the participatory methods and practices contribute to maximizing the completion rate of the NAP commitments. The OGP independent progress report for the third Greek NAP, when available, would be a useful source for this further work.

One of the limitations of this paper is that it focuses on the participatory formulation and implementation of a specific horizontal policy of the Greek government. For a more comprehensive understanding of how participatory processes may support the formulation of the open government policies at the global level, the analysis would benefit from broadening the research focus to include a comparative analysis of more OGP NAPs. This comparative analysis could elaborate on the central concepts and general principles of the co-creation approaches that OGP Countries have applied for developing and implementing the NAPs.

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