

**Internal Coherence and Extra-Executive Linkages:
An Assessment of Executive Capacity in Poland 1989-2002**

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Abstract

This paper examines the capacity of the Polish executive to formulate and launch transformative policies. In doing so it looks at the internal coherence of the national executive and its linkages to non-state actors. The principal finding is that despite a relatively high policy formulation and implementation capacity of the Polish executive there is evidence of strong countervailing trends. These include: (i) a politicisation of policy expertise due to extensive use of external policy advisors, (ii) declining implementation capacities due to a high personnel continuity at low and middle levels, the loss of talented staff and an increasing conservatism due to a politicisation of top officials, (iii) a relatively weak position of the prime minister combined with high degree of inter-ministerial competitiveness. Executive capacity is further undermined by under-institutionalised extra-executive linkages based on ad hoc and personal contacts and a resulting prevalence of non-co-operative interaction strategies. These findings seem to reassert the theoretical argument about the significance of a coherent public bureaucracy with highly institutionalised external linkages for sustainable executive capacity.

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Introduction

This paper examines the capacity of the Polish executive to formulate and launch transformative policies. In doing so it looks at two institutional factors that are commonly associated with executive capacity (i) the internal coherence of the Polish executive and (ii) its linkages to non-state actors. The empirical data is drawn from 36 face-to-face interviews with former cabinet ministers conducted in Warsaw between September and November 2002 within the framework of the DEMSTAR project.*

Internal coherence of the central executive is recognised to reinforce capacity by enabling the administrative apparatus to formulate and implement substantively sound policies and by facilitating insulation from clientelistic pressures (Geddes 1994, Williamson 1993). In the standard statist argument it is underpinned by the existence of a self-orienting, Weberian-type bureaucracy. Executive coherence thus hinges on hierarchy and specialisation in the organisational dimension, full-time career appointments as the key element of personnel policy, and legality and expertise as the basis for public action. In analyzing internal coherence, this paper looks at the policy formulation capacity within ministries, the use of external advisors, and the implementation capacity of ministerial officials. In the second place the focus is on vertical and horizontal co-ordination mechanisms within the government for ensuring policy coherence.

The existence of extra-executive linkages is acknowledged to reinforce executive capacity (Evans 1995, Evans, et al. 1985, Weiss 1998). It must be recognised, however, that while executives develop a wide array of linkages to political, societal and economic actors, not all such contacts contribute to higher capacity. Three arguments have been advanced in this regard. First, the literature on developmental states has argued that more centralised (corporatist) linkages contribute to higher state capacity than decentralised (pluralist) ones (Leftwich 1995). Second, institutionalist accounts have highlighted the importance of deep institutionalisation of internal and external executive linkages (see for example (Goetz and Peters 1999)). Finally, executive capacity has been linked to the mode of interaction between state and society. It is claimed that, in the long run, cooperative strategies produce better results than coercive ones (see for example (Amin and Hausner 1997)). Addressing the dimension of extra-executive linkages this paper examines the extent of external pressure on ministers, the degree of institutionalisation of such pressures, and the type of interaction strategies adopted by the executive.

This paper argues that despite a relatively high policy formulation and implementation capacity of the Polish executive there is evidence of strong countervailing trends. These include: (i) a politicisation of policy expertise due to extensive use of external policy advisors, (ii) declining implementation capacities due to a high personnel continuity at low and middle levels, the loss of talented staff and an increasing conservatism due to a politicisation of top officials, (iii) a relatively weak position of the prime minister combined with a high degree of inter-ministerial competitiveness. Executive capacity is further undermined by under-institutionalised extra-executive linkages based on ad hoc and personal contacts and a resulting prevalence of non-co-operative interaction strategies. These findings seem to

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reassert the theoretical argument about the significance of a coherent public bureaucracy with highly institutionalised external linkages for sustainable executive capacity.

The paper is structured in three parts. In the first and second part the survey results are analyzed under the headings of internal coherence and extra-executive linkages respectively. The third and last section contains concluding remarks.

Internal coherence of the Polish executive

The internal coherence of the Polish executive is analysed at three levels (i) policy formulation capacity within ministries, (ii) implementation capacities in the central administration, and (iii) capacity to coordinate policies across levels and pillars of government.

Policy Formulation Capacities

Over the last decade, public policy in Poland has been formulated mainly by political actors working in close cooperation with external experts. Although there may be some variation across ministries, Polish bureaucrats seem to have been mostly engaged in technical policy implementation rather than policy development. Accordingly 40 per cent of the ministers do not even seek policy advice within their own ministry. One minister thus summarised this condition:

There is a difference between opinions from officials and opinions from experts. Officials are not experts. Experts can build alternative models and so on, while officials advise on whether a proposal is legally possible and implementable. (...) Strategy is the task of senior politicians within the ministry and external experts. Ministerial officials are there to monitor and implement policy.

When they need substantive policy advice ministers turn to external experts. Table 1 reveals that according to 73 per cent of the respondent ministers, external advisors were used always or often in the formulation of policies. A further 17 per cent reported that external assistance was used sometimes, but only concerning important issues.

Table 1. External Advice % (N in parentheses)

External advisors are used	All
Always	27 (10)
Often	46 (16)
Sometimes, concerning important issues	17 (6)
Rarely	9 (3)
Total	100 (35)

Response to question no. 4a: To what extent were external advisors used in the policymaking process?

Table 2. Source of External Advice % (N in parentheses)

	Political Advisors	Political Parties	Academic Specialists	NGO specialists
Ministers before 1993	10 (2)	5 (1)	75 (15)	20 (4)
Ministers after 1993	19 (3)	-	75 (12)	50 (16)

Response to question no. 4a: If you needed external advice, whom would you prefer to rely on, or have you relied on, to get the information you need? Political advisors? Political parties? Academic Specialists? NGO specialists? Other?

According to Table 2, two in three ministers indicate academic specialists as the main source of external advice which further confirms that when external advice is sought, ministers look for substantive policy advice which they do not find in their ministry. This finding is confirmed by qualitative accounts. The interviewed ministers identified academic policy experts and law professors as the most common type of external consultants. A post-1993 minister made the following comment on the use of external legal advice:

This happens a lot because the ministerial officials are not capable of for example drafting complicated laws and in such situations it is necessary to have external assistance. Most of the important laws were written by research institutes or law departments at universities. This is an area where very specialised expertise is needed and so laws such as commercial code or industry restructuring laws were written by eminent law professors.

This linkage between academia and central administration seems to be embedded in strong personal networks. Academic experts are either employed part-time or full-time in the administration or are drawn from research institutes formally subordinate to the ministry. This was most evident in economics, foreign affairs and agriculture ministries. Moreover, many of the Polish ministers themselves have an academic background and have tended to turn to their colleagues for assistance. That political actors tend to formulate policy initiatives in close cooperation with external experts rather than rely on bureaucrats seems a direct legacy of the early transformation. According to Izdebski and Kulesza (1999) in the early 1990s the existing bureaucrats lacked the necessary expertise to launch systemic reforms. This was partly confirmed in our survey as one minister mentioned:

I must say that in 1989 the ministerial administration was fairly responsive to the new social and economic circumstances. ... They did understand that change was necessary but of course they often did not know where to look for answers to the new problems.

It must be noted, however, that in cases where new ministries were set up in the early 1990s, the quality of policy expertise was high. The tendency to keep policy formulation within the domain of political actors can also be seen as a legacy of the early period of 'extraordinary politics' when a strongly autocratic, self-steering change team formulated and implemented the first wave of market reforms in close cooperation with international and national academic experts and consultants (see for example (Balcerowicz 1992, Gorniak and Jerschina 1995, Hausner, et al. 2000).

Although this close partnership between political actors and external experts clearly contributed to a high executive capacity in the early 1990s, there is evidence to suggest that it is becoming dysfunctional over time. For one thing, external experts and consultants have been captured by clientelistic pressures. The survey confirms that in recent years ministers have become more cautious of the advice received from external experts. In response to questions about attitude towards lobbying, many interviewees indicated that research institutes were often involved in covert lobbying and that their advice was unreliable. As one minister said,

A negative lobbying is when the lobbyist is dressed up as an objective academic institution or non-governmental organisation. In this sense Polish research institutes or academic institutions were rather unreliable because they were engaged in covert lobbying.

Moreover the dominance of political actors and external expertise in policy formulation has contributed to a relatively unstable policy environment as each new government brought in its own policy-makers. This, in turn, has adversely affected ministerial officials' commitment to

implement new policies and, more generally, inhibited the process of institutionalizing a professional civil service (see below). All in all, our results suggest that, although inevitable during the early stages of transition, the dominance of political actors and external experts in policy formulation may undermine executive coherence in the longer run by providing a point of access for clientelistic pressures and lowering motivation of public officials.

Implementation Capacities

While Polish bureaucrats may have been largely uninvolved in policy development, they have traditionally shown a high effectiveness in policy implementation, a clear legacy of communism when officials were mainly engaged in translating the communist party directives into action. The implementation capacity of ministerial officials is reflected in the ministers' perception of implementation efficiency and the degree of staff turnover. The interviewed ministers have demonstrated a high level of confidence in the quality of the officials' work in policy implementation. Four in five ministers indicated that they were generally confident that policy decisions would be implemented according to political intentions (Table 3). Both pre-1993 and post-1993 ministers shared this positive assessment. Indeed, many of the early Solidarity-led ministers expressed their appreciation for the professionalism of the old ex-communist officials. One of the early ministers noted:

It must be emphasised that - while there were deep concerns about how the ex-communist officials would behave - it soon turned out that these people saw the breakthrough as a lifetime opportunity. Also (...) the quality of ministerial staff was very high, especially at the director level - these people knew foreign languages, used to work abroad, knew exactly the problems of the old system.

Table 3. Confidence in Implementation by Officials % (N in parentheses)

Confidence in implementation by officials	All
Agree	80 (28)
Disagree	20 (7)
Total	100 (35)

Response to question no. 38: Were you generally confident that decisions made in your ministry would be implemented as intended by your staff?

Such positive assessments were of course by no means universal. When asked to compare the efficiency of the present administration with the communist period, 55 per cent found that the administration under communism were more efficient than the present. They seem, however, to have been more characteristic of economic ministries (finance ministry and foreign economic relations), while non-economic ministers (home affairs, social policy) tended to be more critical. For example, one of the early non-economic ministers said,

The inertia of the system was enormous and signing a decision was not enough to know that it would be implemented. To the contrary, hardly ever could you expect that it would be implemented as intended.

This high professionalism of bureaucracy in policy implementation seems to have declined in recent years. The post-1993 ministers were slightly more likely to report no change or decline in the professionalism of public officials (Table 4).

Table 4. Professionalism Increased or Decreased % (N in parentheses)

Professionalism	Ministers Before 1993	Ministers After 1993	All
Significant improvement	31 (6)	33 (5)	32 (11)
Some improvement	53 (10)	33 (5)	44 (15)
No change	10 (2)	20 (3)	15 (5)
Declined	5 (1)	13 (2)	9 (3)
Total	100 (19)	100 (15)	100 (34)

Response to question no 5. Concerning ministerial officials would you say that the professionalism of their advice has improved or declined over time?

Indeed qualitative accounts from those later ministers tend to become less commendatory about the support they received from ministerial officials. This downward tendency was also noted by a minister who re-entered government in the late 1990s and made the following comparison with the early 1990s:

I think that the administration is worse now [2002] than it was at the beginning of the 1990s under the Mazowiecki government. It was not prepared to formulate policy because under communism policy was formulated within the communist party but in terms of implementation it was effective. Already under Suchocka the administration was different - things were getting done more slowly.

The decline in professionalism seems to have been caused by three principal factors (i) high personnel continuity at low and middle levels (ii) the loss of most talented staff to the private sector (iii) high turnover at department director and deputy director level.

Table 5 and 6 reveal that forty per cent of the minister respondents indicated that they had replaced less than half of their staff, while 54 per cent said that there had been no changes at all.¹ Only 14 per cent of the respondent ministers reported frequent staff replacements during their term. Interestingly even the pre-1993 ministers reported only a small number of large-scale staff replacements and only 25 per cent thought staff replacements were frequent.

Table 5. Ordinary Staff Replacements at the Start of a Minister's Term % (N in parentheses)

Minister replaced	Ministers Before 1993	Ministers After 1993	All
Most	5 (1)	-	3 (1)
About half	5 (1)	-	3 (1)
Less than half	37 (7)	44 (7)	40 (14)
None	53 (10)	56 (9)	54 (19)
Total	100 (19)	100 (16)	100 (35)

Response to question no. 10: In general, how many of the ordinary administrative staff did you replace when you became minister?

Table 6. Staff Replacements during a Minister's Term % (N in parentheses)

Staff replacements were frequent	Ministers Before 1993	Ministers After 1993	All
Agree	25 (5)	-	14 (5)
Disagree	70 (14)	100 (16)	83 (30)
Do not know	5 (1)	-	3 (1)
Total	100 (20)	100 (16)	36

Response to question no. 10b (ex-10a): Besides replacements at the beginning of your term were there frequent staff replacements in your ministry?

High personnel continuity at low and middle levels may have contributed to a lower professionalism as the skills of the old staff were quickly rendered inadequate by dynamic

changes in the social and economic environment. The high degree of personnel continuity in the central administration was in many instances a forced necessity rather than a deliberate choice. The inability or difficulty in attracting talented and skilled staff is a general theme running through many of the interviews. The general mood was summarised by one pre-1993 minister:

The staff turnover was very limited. It was generally difficult to find good staff because the salaries within the ministry were very uncompetitive. (...) Even the last Buzek government had to rely to a substantial extent on the old pre-1989 officials because it was difficult to attract new people with the required skills.

The quality of the central bureaucracy was further undermined by many low and middle level officials leaving for the private sector. The highest such economically-determined turnover occurred in legal and economic departments, where skills and expertise come at the highest price. When asked to identify the main reasons for staff turnover, where such occurred, the respondent ministers most frequently pointed to better job prospects and higher salary levels in the private sector. As one privatisation minister noted,

Low and middle-ranking officials left because they could find better jobs and better pay in the private sector. Staff turnover was the highest in line departments and legal department, departments where the knowledge transfer was the highest.

Finally the professionalism of the low and middle level officials was reduced as a result of high turnover at departmental director or deputy director level. Although these positions are nominally permanent civil service posts under civil service legislation (from 1996 onwards), the pattern of their employment in practice resembles that of junior ministers. When asked to specify the ranks of the staff they most often replaced at the start of their term, the interviewed ministers pointed to deputy ministers, department directors and deputy directors as the groups in which a majority of such replacements were made. That ministers prefer to have some power over high-level civil service appointments is also reflected in their assessments of the extent of preferable ministerial discretion in personnel policy (Table 7).

Table 7. Attitude to Appointment of Officials % (N in parentheses)

It is better when minister can appoint officials	All
Strongly agree	33 (12)
Agree	42 (15)
Disagree	17 (6)
Strongly disagree	8 (3)
Total	100 (36)

Response to question no. 13: At the time when you were a minister, would think that it was better if the ministers themselves could appoint their officials?

Frequent changes in the top layer of ministerial officials have adversely affected the motivation of low and middle levels. One minister thus expressed this mood:

Ministerial officials were too conservative because they feared they would lose their job when the new minister came. The majority of the officials were not interested in promotion but wanted merely to survive. (...) Conservative approach guarantees job security. This was most apparent at the level of section heads. (...) There was a high risk that officials were sympathetic to other political parties and could delay or shy away from implementation.

These findings would indicate that a high policy implementation capacity of the early transformation came to be undermined by internal dynamics within the administration, most

notably by the inability to attract new staff, loss of talented personnel to the private sector and an increasingly guarded approach adopted by low and middle levels in the face of high politicisation of top ministerial officials.

Vertical and Horizontal Coordination

High internal coherence means that policies are coordinated across levels and pillars of government. Effective vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms are thus a prerequisite for a capacity to formulate and launch transformation policies. Our survey has found that while a procedurally coherent core executive has emerged Poland (see also Rydlewski 2000, Rydlewski 2002, Zubek 2001), there are some countervailing trends at work. When asked to identify the key mechanisms at the centre of government that have been responsible for ensuring coherence of government policies, almost 70 per cent indicated the cabinet as the principal decision-making forum affecting the work of ministries. In contrast only 12 per cent each (table 8) mentioned cabinet committees and the meetings of the ministry's board (minister, all deputy ministers and directors).

Table 8. The Most Relevant Decision-making Forum % (N in parentheses)

The Most Relevant Decision-making forum	All
Cabinet	69 (22)
Cabinet committees	12 (4)
Ministry's Board	12 (4)
Other	6 (2)
Total	100 (34)

Response to question no. 30: Try to rank the following fora with regard to decision-making of relevance for your ministry: the President, the council of ministers, cabinet committees, parliamentary committees.

The coherence of the core executive was also evident from the interviewees' accounts of a progressive regularisation of the party-government relationship. An early minister recollected that:

Under the Suchocka government we tried to develop a practice of regular meetings of all party leaders and parliamentary leaders. But because there were so many parties in the coalition, these meetings were attended by around fifteen people and were a bit unwieldy. Under Buzek we had meetings of the coalition management but because the AWS was a federation of many parties, these meetings again were very large. The prime minister and ministers briefed the coalition on what the government was working on and what was going to parliament, and the party had a possibility to react.

Similar arrangements were also present under the SLD-PSL governments between 1993 and 1997. One minister said,

[There was] a so-called coalition directorate composed of leaders of parliamentary caucuses, party leaders and members of government. This forum met once a month (...). This is where political decisions were made, in particular with regard to establishing policy priorities.

Co-ordination capacity was further enhanced by a strong position of the finance ministry as the key co-ordinating department within the core executive. When asked to identify the core ministry in terms of influence on decision-making, the respondents were almost unanimous: nine in ten pointed to the finance ministry (Table 9).

Table 9. Core Ministry Influencing Decision-Making % (N in parentheses)

Ministry	All
Finance Ministry	91 (31)
Prime Minister's Office	3 (1)
Home Affairs Minister	3 (1)
Foreign Affairs Minister	3 (1)
Total	100 (34)

Response to question no. 18: Which ministry do you consider to be the core ministry in terms of influence on decision-making in other ministries and/or departments?

This said, the capacity for vertical coordination has been undermined by a relatively weak position of the prime minister. Of the 34 surveyed ministers, only one named Prime Minister's office as the key co-ordination ministry. The tendency was confirmed when asked to identify the most important decision-maker affecting your ministry as revealed in table 10. Only one in five ministers named the Prime Minister.

Table 10. The most important decision-maker % (N in parentheses)

The most important decision-maker affecting your ministry	All
Minister	67 (22)
Prime Minister	18 (6)
Deputy Prime Minister	6 (2)
Ministry's Board	6 (2)
Departmental directors	3 (1)
Total	100 (33)

Response to question no. 29: Who was the most important formal decision maker affecting decisions in your ministry?

Turning to horizontal coordination it is interesting to note a great deal of interaction between ministries during work on policy proposals (Table 11). More than 90 per cent of the respondent ministers reported that other ministries, departments and parliamentary committees tried to influence their policy proposals.

Table 11. Other Ministries' Influence % (N in parentheses)

Experience of influence from other ministries,	All
Agree	94 (34)
Disagree	6 (2)
Total	100 (36)

Response to question no. 20: Did you experience cases where other ministries, departments or parliamentary committees tried to influence proposals in your own ministry?

In the interviews the respondents indicated that the most common channel for such influence had been the so-called interministerial consultations, a formal process of inter-departmental concertation required by internal cabinet rules. While interaction between ministers has been high it has also been highly competitive. When asked how they would react if other ministries tried to influence proposals in their ministry, which could lead to a loss of competence or resources, 80 per cent of the respondent ministers said they would find such actions unacceptable. The competitive atmosphere among ministers was also reflected in very limited informal contacts at civil service level. While officials did communicate with their counterparts in other ministries, lateral requests for information were often disregarded and had to be routed through deputy ministers. One minister noted,

Ministries are rather unwilling to share information. Unfortunately the Polish administration is not too integrated. It is often that for information to be exchanged

between departments, requests have to be made through deputy ministers if they are to succeed.

The lack of interaction between ministries at civil servants level was also reflected in the ministers' attitudes to information-sharing. 53 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement that it was appropriate that officials in one ministry should be allowed to provide information to other ministries without prior permissions while an equally large proportion of 41 per cent was against sharing information without seeking prior permission. (Table 12).

Table 12. Attitude to Information Sharing Between Ministries % (N in parentheses)

Officials should be able to provide information without prior permission	All
Strongly agree	12 (4)
Agree	41 (14)
Disagree	29 (10)
Strongly disagree	12 (4)
Do not know	6 (2)
Total	100 (34)

Response to question no. 14: At the time when you were a minister did you consider it appropriate that officials in one ministry be allowed to provide information to other ministries or departments without prior permission?

This data would suggest that while well-developed vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms do indeed ensure a procedurally coherent core executive, there are some countervailing trends at work most notably the apparent weakness of the prime minister's office and confrontational styles in inter-ministerial interactions.

Extra-executive Linkages

State capacity is assumed to increase where linkages to non-state actors are centralised, institutionalised and co-operative. Addressing this dimension, this paper examines the extent of external pressure on ministers, the degree of institutionalisation of such pressures, and the type of interaction strategies adopted by the executive.

When asked to specify how often they felt under pressure to initiate new legislation or amend the existing one, 77 per cent of the respondent ministers admitted that such pressures had been exerted often or sometimes (Table 13).

Table 13. Degree of Domestic Pressure on Ministers % (N in parentheses)

How often did you feel under pressure to initiate or change legislation	All
Often	33 (12)
Often, but concerning important issues	11 (4)
Sometimes	33 (12)
Rarely	11 (4)
Never	11 (4)
Total	100 (36)

Response to question no. 24: Did you ever feel under pressure from external actors to change the existing or initiate new legislation?

Assessing the influence of non-state actors, the most relevant sources of external pressure according to ministers are trade unions. Table 14 reveals that half of the respondents identified trade unions as the main actor exerting pressure on the executive, while one in three indicated that such pressures originated within interest organisations or NGOs.

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Table 14. Source of Domestic Pressure % (N in parentheses)ⁱⁱ

The most important decision-maker affecting your ministry	All
Trade Unions	50 (13)
Interest organisations	35 (9)
NGOs	27 (7)
Political parties	23 (6)
Parliamentarians	11 (3)
Business individuals	11 (3)
Other	11 (3)
Total	(44)

Response to question no 24a. If often, who did this pressure come from? (multiple answers allowed)

The fact that trade unions are identified as the most common source of pressure, points to their key role in aggregating social and economic interests. But it also points to the fact that private business interests were relatively underdeveloped in the early 1990s. One pre-1993 minister said:

It was hard to have regular contacts with business associations because there were no such organisations at the time. There were no employers' organisations to have contact with. There were old chambers of commerce, which were largely without any influence and a few new emerging organisations.

The qualitative accounts suggest that trade unions dominate partly because the employers' organisations are weakly organised. This seems to have changed in the later years as post-1993 ministers were more likely to identify Business Centre Club, Polish Business Council and Chambers of Commerce as important interlocutors.

External pressure is reflected in close working relations that the Polish executive maintains with external organisations. When asked to assess whether their officials have had close contacts with business, NGOs or trade unions, 84 per cent of the respondent ministers confirmed that this had been common practice (Table 15).

Table 15. Working Relations with External Organisations % (N in parentheses)

Working relations with non-state actors	In own ministry*	In other ministries**	In own ministry*	Common in other ministries**
Yes, most of the time	56 (20)	51 (18)		56 (20)
Yes, but only concerning important issues	28 (10)			28 (10)
No	17 (6)	17 (6)		17 (6)
Do not know		31 (11)		
Total	100 (36)	100 (35)		0 (36)

* Response to question no. 7 (ex 26): In your own ministry was it common practice that ministerial officials had close working relationships with external organisations (business, NGO, trade union or state) within the field of the ministry? ** Response to question 8: In other ministries was it common practice that ministerial officials had

close working relationships with significant organisations (business, NGO, trade unions etc.) within the field of the ministry?

But, while the Polish executive clearly maintains close relations with external constituencies, their contribution to overall executive capacity seems to be undermined by their rather low degree of institutionalisation. Addressing this dimension the survey asked the respondents to identify the most common forum for maintaining such contacts (Table 16).

Table 16. Forum for Relations with External Organisations % (N in parentheses)ⁱⁱⁱ

Type of most common forum	All
Institutional mechanism for consultation	19 (10)
Ad hoc institutional mechanism for consultation	38 (20)
Informal or personal contacts	42 (22)
Total	100 (52)

Response to question no. 7a (ex 28a): If “yes” what was the forum for such contacts? (multiple answers allowed)

Only one in five respondents indicated the existence of a stable institutional forum for such exchanges. An overwhelming majority of the respondent ministers admitted that contacts with non-state actors had been maintained ad hoc or through informal channels. Although the establishment of a tripartite commission in 1993 was identified by many ministers as a sign of greater institutionalisation, the commission ceased to operate in 1999 and was only re-launched in early 2002. Thus the personalised and ad hoc pattern of state-society exchanges continues to provide the framework for much of the extra-executive linkages. A recent minister said:

There were a lot of such working contacts but they were not systematic but rather ad hoc and depended on a given issue.

Personalisation has been often combined with a hierarchical policy style. While the Polish executive maintains working contacts with non-state actors it rarely adopts cooperative strategies in such exchanges. The first thing to note in this regard is that, in general, the respondent ministers demonstrated a rather ambiguous attitude towards being subjected to societal and economic pressure. When asked to evaluate the pressures to adopt or change legislation, 46 per cent thought it was negative, while 37 thought it was positive for the country (Table 17).

Table 17. Attitude towards domestic pressure to initiate or change legislation % (N in parentheses)

Was pressure positive or negative for the country	All
Always positive	4 (1)
Mostly positive	33 (8)
50/50	17 (4)
Mostly negative	46 (11)
Total	100 (24)

Response to question no. 25: If often, did you feel that this pressure was positive or negative for the country? (a follow up to question no. 24)

This ambiguity was even more evident in the respondents' attitude towards lobbying. While a clear majority agreed that lobbying was a positive phenomenon, an equally large proportion

of the respondents thought it was negative (Table 18). A similar tone was evident in qualitative accounts. An early minister noted that, in the short run such pressures are negative because these are particularistic interests and the [...] minister is not there to tender particularistic interests. In the long run such pressures reflected the fact that there was an issue that had to be dealt with.

Table 18. Attitude towards lobbying % (N in parentheses)

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement	Agree	Disagree
Lobbying is positive because it provides information	89 (16)	11 (2)
Lobbying is positive because you get support	74 (14)	26 (5)
Lobbying is negative because the information is biased	69 (11)	31 (5)
Lobbying is negative because it erodes impartiality	67 (12)	33 (6)

Response to question no. 27: Concerning lobbying at the time when you were a minister would you in most cases agree or disagree with the following statements?

Interaction strategies are also determined by the executive's intentions in maintaining contacts with non-state actors. Addressing this dimension, the survey asked the respondent ministers to identify their reasons for seeking such contact (Table 19).

Table 19. Reasons for Seeking External Contacts % (N in parentheses)^{iv}

Rationale for Contacts	All
Addressing information asymmetries	38 (8)
Opinion-seeking	28 (6)
Acceptance seeking	28 (6)
Ensuring social peace	28 (6)
Joint-decision-making	19 (4)
Compliance with a formal requirement	14 (3)
Total	(33)

Response to question no. 7b (ex-28b) Which external organisations and why? (multiple answers allowed)

This data suggests a prevalence of 'soft' interaction strategies in the executive actors' relationship with non-state actors. Twenty out of a total of 33 responses indicated that the executive uses its external linkages to collect information and seek opinions or acceptance to its proposals. The most common rationale for maintaining such contacts was to address information asymmetries: 38 per cent of the respondents indicated this category. It is interesting to note a high number of responses identifying social peace as a key objective of dialogue with non-state actors. More interactive strategies such as joint decision-making or problem-solving have featured rather less frequently in the interviews with only 4 responses falling into this category. This may indicate that ministers adopt more instrumental rather than cooperative strategies in the exchanges with non-state actors. Indeed, most the respondents made it clear in the interviews that while they did listen, they made the final decision according to what they thought was right.

This conclusion seems to be confirmed by differences in the respondents' attitudes to consultations and joint implementation. The respondent ministers have provided generally positive assessments of the interactions based on information or opinion-seeking strategies. When asked to evaluate the effect of consultations on final decisions, 88 per cent of the respondents agreed that they have contributed to a higher quality of final policy decisions (Table 20).

Table 20. Attitude towards consultation % (N in parentheses)

Are decisions improved when decisions are consulted	All
Yes, mostly	88 (30)
Yes, sometimes	12 (4)
No, only rarely	-
No, worse	-
Total	100 (34)

Response to question no. 28: At the time when you were a minister did you believe that decisions were improved when concerned interests were incorporated or heard in the process of policy formulation?

This picture becomes more qualified, however, when one considers the degree to which the ministers admitted to involving non-state actors in the actual process of implementation. 39 per cent reported such practices, while 61 per cent of the respondents said they had done so seldom or never (Table 21).

Table 21. Degree of Involvement of non-state actors in implementation % (N in parentheses)

Did you involve non-state actors in implementation	All
Yes, often	39 (12)
Seldom	42 (13)
Practically never	19 (6)
Total	100 (31)

Response to question no. 41a: At the time when you were a minister did you involve non-state actors in the implementation process?

That ministers favour 'softer' patterns of exchange with non-state actors may indicate the predominance of more voluntaristic or hierarchical styles of policy-making. Ministers are prepared to share information and seek acceptance from external organisations but the policy ideas originate from the ministry and are rarely a product of joint problem-solving. An early minister suggested that a voluntaristic approach to policy-making is a legacy of the strategy adopted by the early reformers. He said,

In that early period people that came into the government knew what had to be done and reforms were implemented top-down with protests being appeased where necessary. But this early period did not contribute to developing a comprehensive system of interest arbitration. But such a system is badly needed. Under Mazowiecki an ambitious programme was implemented with the least scope for interest arbitration (...). Some commentators maintain that trade unions and lobbies upset government mechanisms. No, trade unions and lobbies exist everywhere. But the key to success is a mechanism of interest arbitration that makes it possible to achieve certain goals. In Poland there is not such tradition within political parties, central administration or the trade unions. (...) I think that the government should, of course, have a clear programme but when it comes to its implementation this should be done with the involvement of all interested parties.

These findings indicate that the pattern of executive-society relations assumes a fair amount of interaction between the executive and non-state actors but the positive impact on executive capacity is blunted by their ad hoc personalised character and soft information seeking strategies.

Conclusion

This empirical investigation has found that while preconditions for high executive have obtained over the last decade, internal coherence and external connectedness of the Polish executive has been undermined by strong countervailing trends. The dominance of political actors and external experts in policy formulation may have undermined executive coherence by providing a point of access for clientelistic pressures and lowering motivation of public officials. A high personnel continuity at low and middle levels, the loss of talented staff and an increasing conservatism due to a politicisation of top officials have eroded the capacity for effective policy implementation. A relatively weak position of the prime minister and a high degree of inter-ministerial competitiveness has acted as centrifugal forces undermining the coherence of government action. Finally, executive capacity has been adversely affected by the predominance of under-institutionalised extra-executive linkages based on ad hoc and personal contacts and a resulting prevalence of non-co-operative interaction strategies.

The survey has given some tentative indication that these new factors may have had adverse impact on policy outputs. Lower autonomy in policy formulation has meant that clientelistic pressures may have found it easier to mould legislation in such a way as to be able to escape it when adopted. This, in turn, has had a negative impact on general quality of the regulatory environment. Inadequate mechanisms for vertical and lateral coordination may have further contributed to a lower cohesion and coherence of government regulation. Finally high personalisation of contacts with non-state actors has opened the possibility for clientelistic capture and/or voluntaristic policy style as neither government actors nor external organisations were embedded in stable mechanisms of accountability or were guided by an institutional setting to adopt cooperative strategies.

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NOTES

- ⁱ It must be noted that many of the responses coded as none in fact reported staff replacements of a few per cent. The choice between 'less than half' and 'none' did not capture correctly slight staff movements.
- ⁱⁱ This table presents data that has been recalculated separately from the SPSS tables to unpack the 'other' section. 26 ministers responded to this question (13 pre-1993 and 13 post-1993 ministers)
- ⁱⁱⁱ This table presents data that has been recalculated separately from the SPSS tables to allow for multiple answers.
- ^{iv} This table presents data that has been recalculated separately from the SPSS tables to allow for multiple answers. See below for the dataset. 21 ministers responded to this question. Responses were re-coded to allow for the six categories identified below.

Opinion-seeking	Test reactions Assess reactions Explore reactions Seek opinion on proposals Learn opinions Obtain assessment	Joint-decision making	Coopt into joint problem solving Formulate in line with opinions Negotiate solutions Develop new policy together
Addressing information asymmetries	Obtain full information Obtain info on impact Obtain external info Get a better insight Broaden officials perspective Get advice Get broader picture of the situation Obtain suggestions	Ensuring social peace	Preempt social protests Appease Avoid protests Avoid protests Ensure social peace Solve conflicts
Acceptance seeking	Make sure that policy is business friendly Verify with business Check if acceptable Elicit acceptance Seek acceptance Receive substantive support	Compliance with formal requirement	Obligatory under law Obligated by law Required by law