NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF POLITICAL STUDIES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES

Ph. D THESIS SUMMARY

NETWORK GOVERNANCE. THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR

PROF.UNIV.DR. ANI MATEI

Ph.D CANDIDATE

ADRIAN-STELIAN DUMITRU

BUCHAREST

2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

It is generally recognized that certain concepts and approaches appear overnight and disappear just as quickly in this fundamental field of social sciences (Ansell and Torfing, 2022: 4). However, some of them are more than passing moments and become constantly developing fields of research that attract more and more the attention of researchers. Also, some of the new research fields are stabilized and consolidated and gradually take the form of new paradigms that give rise to significant reorientations of academic activities.

Thus, it should be emphasized that governance research has recently evolved into such a paradigm. Although the notion of governance can be traced far back in history, interest in the concept blossomed in the 1990s and has developed since then.

Today, «governance» is one of the most commonly used social science concepts in the world, as any internet search will readily confirm. A wide range of researchers, research centers, academic journals and conferences are devoted to the study of governance, and many new theories of governance have been enunciated in the last three decades.

Within this phenomenon we can find also the rapid growth of interest in network-type arrangements and based on network governance, such as collaborations, alliances, partnerships – understood as new and innovative ways to manage decisions in all sectors: governmental, community (local) and private.

We will note in this analysis that theories of governance are the analytical 'lenses' that help us understand our contemporary world. These theories have different purposes; some of them highlight how different actors, jurisdictions, levels and institutional arenas interact to share knowledge and ideas, coordinate actions and collaborate on decisions that produce collective outcomes. On the other hand, it helps us to understand the role played by different public, private and civil society actors in governance processes at different levels and in different countries or parts of the world.

Some theories help us analyze how governance is designed, organized and orchestrated, or how it evolves over time across different sectors and domains. Other theories measure governance, study its impact and effects, or help us understand how different types of governance contribute to more efficient, democratic or innovative ways of solving societal problems, providing public services or

regulating social life and economics. Of course, other theories look at the failure of governance or how to improve governance to ensure desired outcomes. Taken together, these theories of governance provide a set of analytical tools for reflecting on and participating in the production of order in increasingly complex, fragmented and dynamic societies.

Regarding of the emergence of theories of network governance and the ways in which they are captured in explanatory concepts and models, Gerrits, Eppel and Rhodes (2021: 162) point out that they were instrumental in the consolidation of public administration as a full discipline.

At the same time, in relation to everyday reality, it is generally recognized that governance is not congruent with the formal institutions of government (Keast, 2022: 162). In some arenas and at some levels, there is still considerable room for unilateral action by the state and certain government agencies, and most public services are still managed by large-scale public bureaucracies, albeit increasingly in partnership with private organizations and associations.

However, multilateral interaction through which a multitude of public and/or private actors collaborate to solve complex and pressing problems or to regulate economic processes and provide public services is gaining ground and becoming the basic norm in some sectors. In particular, in critical areas where public innovation and flexible service delivery are in high demand, governance strategies that explore new opportunities for exchange and pooling of resources or building bridges between bureaucratic organizations have increasingly become a response most prominently (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004: 176; Sabel and Zeitlin, 2008: 276; Ansell and Torfing, 2022: 40).

Globalization has inextricably linked nations, institutions, organizations and individuals. As a result, the public interest is shaped and influenced by coalitions of interest groups using the latest advances in information technology and marketing strategies to influence governance systems toward desired outcomes. The increasing complexity of public issues, the expansion of information technologies, outsourcing, privatization, and partnership movements, along with globalization, have fueled interest in applying network concepts and paradigms to the study of public administration, public policy, and governance structures.

These trends contributed to the emergence of governance structures that essentially became innovations in governance. There is growing evidence to suggest that these trends have and will continue to shape cross-jurisdictional arenas and represent new kinds of reform in how government

interacts with private companies and non-profit organizations to design and deliver goods and public services.

We appreciate that the way we are governed is vital in the reproduction and transformation of societies. Consequently, the ideas, decisions and actions that govern our collective lives have material and discursive effects that ultimately structure social relations.

A study by de Bruijn and Gerrits (2018) illustrates what has happened in the field of network governance and complexity theories: wide adoption and popularity, but a very amorphous field of research. Continuous development in public administration is based on the ways in which researchers in the field deny the tension between complexity and simplicity: to have access to concepts and models that are simple and convenient to use, but which at the same time also address the inherent complexity of social reality.

There is not necessarily a "next" generation in the sense of a completely new and better theory or model for governance and complexity (we will see that all the underlying mechanisms have been addressed), but rather a further refinement of concepts, models, theories and methods existing to better demonstrate how these mechanisms interact in specific contexts and how certain outcomes occur.

Proponents of network governance argue that there are potential benefits associated with it. According to some authors, this form of collaboration is often proclaimed to be a desirable and innovative way to approach complex problems. Networks can function as arenas for deliberation and problem solving, and to the extent that the participation of private actors allows the expression of additional positions, networks can be seen as part of a new pluralistic order. According to Larsson (2015: 9), the pluralist element is further strengthened by the notion that networks consist of horizontal relationships between interdependent actors, meaning that they would collectively drive policy development and its implementation (Klijn and Skelcher 2007: 588, Esmark, 2007: 44). At the same time, while network governance is an empirical phenomenon, it is also presented as a normative and desirable solution to the dysfunctionality of modern states (Dean, 2007: 48).

Of course, network governance is not without its own problems. For example, networks consist of public and private actors who jointly address public issues through informal procedures and within informal structures. This means that networks and individual participants can have undue influence

on public policy to the extent that networks do not live up to democratic ideals of representation, transparency and accountability (Weale, 2011: 68, Follesdal, 2011: 345, Hazenberg, 2013: 8). Rather than being seen as complementing traditional forms of regulation, they can actually be seen as undermining democratic institutions and the capacity of public administration to implement democratic decisions and deliver public goods (Larsson, 2013: 103). Powerful actors can even stop or distort the implementation of public policies (Marsh, 2011: 40). In this sense, some networks may threaten to undermine the state and democratic institutions, rather than functioning as a complement to them (Larsson, 2015: 10).

Based on the above considerations, we appreciate that the study of governance in general and network governance in particular is essentially important to understand the processes and interactions that take place in this new, innovative framework of public policy making – contextualized to the current socio-political-economic realities.

Given the fact that at the national level the study of network governance seems to be relatively reduced or not updated in relation to the researches at the level of the EU or the USA, the role of this research comes to support the development and updating of information and researches at the national level and is addressed to some different categories of audience. On the one hand, the research can be used both as supporting material by students who want to understand the concept and impact of network governance, and on the other hand, the deepening of the discussion related to governance, its aspects and consequences, addresses a wider audience, more experienced and already familiar with certain notions specific to political-institutional architecture.

I.1. Research questions

In order to substantiate the information related to network governance, which is the object of the present study, the research will carry out an analysis of the specialized literature that goes from the general to the particular, pointing out and insisting on the elements that make up the theoretical framework of the research. Thus, first of all, the concept of "governance" will be analyzed in an attempt to identify its meanings and to deepen the existing lines of research, based on the experience of the European Union.

The approach has the role of contributing to a better understanding of the theoretical views on governance, identifying the main views derived from the disciplines and sub-disciplines

consolidated at the European and global level, in order to finally deepen the concept around which the research takes place, respectively network governance. Initially, the chronological order of the studies that have brought the meanings of governance into question will be followed, as far as possible.

First, the present research aims to contribute to the development of the concept of network governance and to provide an answer to the question: **is network governance an effective tool for policy-making?** We advance as a premise a positive answer. As a result, we formulate the following working hypothesis: **network-type structures have a significant impact on the process of policy-making, by facilitating the extensive participation, collaboration and coordination of different stakeholders, leading to more inclusive, innovative and efficient public policy outcomes**.

The hypothesis suggests that network governance, which includes multiple stakeholders, from different sectors and levels of government, can facilitate a deliberative and democratic approach to public policy-making processes, taking into account multiple perspectives and different experiences.

By promoting collaboration, aligning goals and effective communication, network governance can strengthen the capacity of policy networks to achieve their goals and produce added value, especially in complex and difficult areas that require the involvement of multiple actors. Thus, by leveraging the strengths and resources of different actors, network governance can generate more creative and adaptive solutions to complex public policy challenges.

In this sense, deepening the meanings of network governance in general and policy networks in particular, the originality of the present approach consists in the attempt to explicitly link this way of policy-making to the national empirical framework.

Thus, for the evaluation of the network established at the national level, we will start from an analysis model proposed by Klijn and Koppenjan (2015) which includes three categories of analytical activities: mapping the domain of the actor involved in a problematic situation (actor analysis), the characteristics of the process of the governance network (process analysis) and the institutional characteristics of the network configuration in which the process evolves (network analysis) respecting 8 procedural steps.

Secondly, through an exhaustive analysis of literature, the research presents a proposal to systematize the meanings of the governance concept, as well as certain suggestions for interpreting the relationship with "governing". This is necessary because there is often a confusion between the terms defining government and governance and as a result, I will approach the relationship between the two, respectively is there an intrinsic connection between the two? Do the two concepts refer to different realities? Can they exist independently of each other? At the same time, we are interested in whether we can talk about the replacement of the state by the new approach to governance, that is, whether it is an alternative to the state or a component of it that has the role of strengthening it.

Thirdly, following the comparative analysis of the external and internal literature regarding the study of network governance, **the research aims to reduce the existing gap between them, thus contributing to the few national researches that try to connect the Romanian debates to the European ones on the network governance studies segment**. In addition, I hope that the present approach will help to better understand the concept in the internal framework; thus, I believe that the results of this research will be suitable to be applied including to internal policies, respectively as a reference of good practice in order to develop and implement public policies at the national level.

As such, if the researchers from the EU or from third countries are currently discussing the second or third generation of network governance theories, in the field of domestic studies, sustained efforts must still be undertaken to simultaneously recover these debates, opening research directions through the application of various aspects and implications of network governance at the domestic policy level. In fact, this is also the reason why in the present paper the investigation of the specialized literature prevails in order to clarify the current positions and certain passages from them are reproduced so that those interested can familiarize themselves with this particularly important concept in the context of increasingly more complex policy-making process.

Obviously, the research will deepen the concept of «network governance» and certain components of it that have implications when it is applied. Therefore, the specialized literature that addresses the "network/networks" is analyzed and different types of existing networks are highlighted. Following the analysis of the existing studies both externally and internally, the identified meanings are systematized and the research area narrowed to the case of policy networks, as it is

correlated with the process of carrying out the public policies that interest us in particular. The research will address the structure of networks, their role, the diversity of actors, resource dependence, interactions between actors, as well as the relationships that are established within the network.

Since it is necessary to ensure that the output of governance networks represents an adequate and effective response to the social need, simple self-coordination not always being a guarantee of achieving the expected collective results, appears in the discussion the issue of "network management". Thus, the purpose of the management used within the network will be identified, at the same time carrying out a comparative analysis of the existing perspectives, respectively the classical one (classical management) vs. the network perspective, looking at how strategic complexity is managed and by whom the network is coordinated, respectively identifying the role of the network manager.

Taking into account that governance, in general, and network governance, in particular, represent new arenas in which various categories of stakeholders can participate, especially from the perspective of the change that the idea of governance has brought to the classical conception of a democracy in which the lines of responsibility of the elected actors were well drawn in the process of policy-making, the issue of accountability is also brought up - which is another widely circulated concept when discussing network governance. What does accountability mean in the context of governance? Can we talk about legitimacy within a network? Can we have mechanisms in governance that respond to considerations of both democratic accountability and efficiency?

At the same time, we are interested in identifying the existence of possible problems related to liability and if we can talk about a change in the understanding of liability, which would be based on the political-institutional framework of the EU.

Taking into account the analysis of the concept of network governance in general and the highlighting of its implications, the existing official discourse at the level of the European Commission will be indicated, respectively the aspects that emerge from the "European Governance: a White Paper", a document that was issued in the dynamic context of the beginning of the 2000s when it was a desire to change the process and the European institutional framework in order to be congruent with the new political and social developments and challenges.

In addition, an important section will address the phenomenon of policy-making in the EU, with an analysis of the main theoretical perspectives that characterize this process from the perspective of the European legal framework. The role of informal networks will also be addressed in the section dedicated to the EU, with the purpose to identify the main views on the significance of the network governance within the EU.

Since the EU's multi-level system involves a number of actors, we will point out the main institutions with a role in the decision-making process in close correlation with the EU's system of competences, which will also be analyzed to achieve an overall situation aimed at clarifying the complexity of the system. What is the meaning of each fundamental principle of the delimitation of competences? What is the link between treaty powers and policy areas within the EU? What types of actions and instruments are used by the EU to carry out policies according to each type of competence? For all these questions the research will outline answers in the relevant sections.

Also, following the analysis of the current literature, an emphasis on an instrument called the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) has been observed, which is increasingly seen as one of the modes of the new EU governance or as a manifestation of "experimental" type that the EU is testing as a possible solution for those policy areas where supranational control is difficult to implement. Therefore, the research will identify the fundamentals underlying this governance instrument, its role, the reason behind its construction, the actors and institutions involved. Last but not least, the impact of this method on the policy areas in which it is applied will be pointed out.

Next, the research will detail the power game within the EU and the changes that the governance orientation brings to this political system will be closely followed. In the relevant section we deepen three types of actors: the presence of the supranational level, represented by the European Commission, the national level, respectively the power of the member states through the institution of the EU Council and, last but not least, the interest groups as actors that can represent different levels at the same time (subnational, national, regional, transnational, international).

Thus, we are interested in the role of the European Commission as a supranational actor and the influence of this institution on the entire decision-making process at the EU level, the functions it has and the powers it holds.

Also, the role of the state actor on the European stage is analyzed in the context of the policy-making. As such, we are interested in briefly pointing out certain considerations from the literature regarding the concept of the state from the point of view of its historical construction and its meanings, then later we will focus on the role of the member states and their weight in the decision-making process altered by different changes brought about by the treaties. Given that some authors are of the opinion that the arena in which states can best ensure their position is represented by the institution of the EU Council, we will analyze the powers of this institution, its composition and its mode of operation to see if indeed these meanings are still up to date.

The third typology of actors that the research will analyze lies beyond the formal part of EU law and is represented by interest groups. The analysis of this category of actors reveals from the discussion about governance from the point of view of the multiplication of actors involved in this context, being one of the most current topics related to the European policy-making process.

Therefore, the role played by interest groups at the European level, coming from or being involved in all the identified levels and sectors, is analyzed. We are interested in identifying how we can classify interest groups, which is how the organized forms of interest groups try to influence the EU policy-making process and to whom the action of interest groups is directed, i.e. what are the access points to the EU decision-making process?

Taking into account the aforementioned goals, by perceiving network governance as a distinct, innovative way of making public policies in a system that faces increasingly complex and challenging issues, network governance can generate effective solutions, respectively lead to public policy outcomes that take into account different interests of different stakeholders?

I.2. Research methodology

From a methodological point of view, the current approach, which aims to understand reality, the meanings of some facts and the behaviors of the actors, falls in the typology of qualitative research, wanting to understand certain concepts rather than a series of measurements or statistics.

However, the data collected allow both a transversal investigation (the contemporary situation of the European Union's institutional system and the policy-making process) and longitudinal (the evolution of the European Union as a whole or of certain political-institutional components), the analysis can often be on the border between quantitative and qualitative because we are interested

in both the macro level of the Union and its specific manifestations in terms of decision-making actors or instruments and ways of policy-making.

Since we are speaking, in general, about a qualitative research, the methods used fall into the category of unstructured techniques, namely content analysis (of documents) and case study. Systematic bibliographic research was used, primary sources consisting of EU treaties, official documents issued by the EU and published in the EU Official Journal, as well as numerous publications and articles related to the governance phenomenon, in general, and network governance, in particular, were analyzed; but also official documents published by the European Commission regarding the issue of the case study we are addressing.

On the other hand, the questionnaire-based survey was used for the elaboration of chapter 3. As pointed out by de Singly (1998: 21), the questionnaire-based investigation "serves to produce explanatory data", which highlight both social facts and the factors that determine them. Moreover, the questionnaire is a very good means of explaining human behaviors and identifying the factors that determine them (Cauc et al., 2004: 51). As a result, for the empirical analysis that we carry out in the dedicated chapter, with the help of this research tool we were able to analyze and interpret the characteristics of the network, its implications, the relations and expectations of the actors and, last but not least, the actors' perceptions of the results.

However, according to de Singly (1998: 29), having as its objective the production of scientific knowledge, questionnaire inquiry is not necessarily situated at an exclusively empirical level. This "employs a theoretical point of view, a worldview according to which the social is socially determined [a social fact is determined by other social facts]" (de Singly, 1998: 29).

From the point of view of the classification of the type of questionnaire used, related to the way of conception, it can be considered both a questionnaire of factual data (refers to facts and objective situations, which can sometimes be observed directly and verified by other means or by other people) as well as an opinion questionnaire (captures not only people's opinions, but also their motivations, attitudes, inclinations, expectations, etc.)

Furthermore, we specify that in relation to another classification criterion (see Chelcea, 2004: 105-134), the instrument used takes the form of a questionnaire with closed or precoded questions but also open questions that leave the subjects free to express their opinions. We also mention that,

according to the third classification criterion proposed by Chelcea (2004: 115), respectively according to their method of application, in the present case it is a self-administered questionnaire. Thus, the answers are recorded by the persons included in the investigated sample.

Another tool used in the section dedicated to the advantages and disadvantages of network governance was the so-called SWOT analysis. SWOT is an analysis technique that takes a general perspective and presents general solutions, more precisely it represents a road map that leads from the general to the specific. From the point of view of an analysis tool, SWOT offers the possibility to focus on the positive and negative aspects of the internal and external environment; in other words, the elements in this environment that add plus and minus value, concentrated in a related perspective. Therefore, by understanding the weak points, threats can be managed and eliminated to be transformed into flourish opportunities.

II.   THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

From a structural point of view, the analysis follows a logic from the general to the particular in order to finally recompose the whole in a reassembly of the analyzed pieces:

- **Chapter 1: A general analysis of the concept of governance;**
- **Chapter 2: From sustainability to resilience: network governance understood as adaptive governance;**
- **Chapter 3: Analysis of a model of use of network governance at national level: Falsified Medicines Directive;**
- **Chapter 4: A SWOT analysis of the use of network governance**

Therefore, the first part of the paper - *Chapter 1* - is dedicated to theoretical and methodological considerations, with the role of contributing to a better understanding of the concept of network governance.

Thus, the research will address in depth the image of network governance - a particularity of the EU - and will later focus on the analysis of policy networks. We will refer to a series of reference works, in order to identify the general features of the phenomenon and to subsequently choose a working definition.

The research will pay great attention to the aspects related to policy networks because we consider that the subject is extensively treated in studies about the EU, a systematization of divergent research directions being necessary, and on the other hand we consider the unique nature of this theme within the domestic analyses. Once more, a delimitation of the terms government vs. governance, which are often used incorrectly, mainly at the national level is necessary to be performed.

The paper will deepen the implications of network governance on different types of actors, carrying out a brief analysis of the institutional framework involved in the policy-making process at the EU level. In addition, it is necessary to highlight the decision-making process within these formations and the targeted policy areas, respectively types of competences and modes of action of the EU.

At the same time, the diversity of actors, levels and problems imposes extremely different and complex management strategies, the purpose of network management being to initiate and facilitate interaction processes between actors, to create and modify network arrangements for better coordination and guidance of interactions. Thus, we will expose the approaches that concern the management of the policy network/networks and, last but not least, we will point out the concept of coordination and its implications on the entire process within a network. Also, here we approach the dilemma regarding the simultaneous assurance of democratic legitimacy, accountability and efficiency.

In addition, a principle from the realist theory of international relations, contribution of Hans J. Morgenthau, will be taken over, and we will assume that interest determines political action within the network, but an interest defined in terms of power. This hypothesis is reinforced by Thucydides' statement that "identity of interests is the most reliable of links, be it between states or individuals", the assertion being evoked and extended in the 20th century by Max Weber's observation that "interests (material and ideal), not ideas directly and indirectly dominate people's actions" (Morgenthau, 2013: 30).

In *Chapter 2* we address a "hot potato", which seems to be the subject of more and more in-depth research, namely the sustainability and the relationship of this concept with network governance.

In this section of the paper, we aim to address three objectives. The first, concerns the question of whether "sustainability" – ensuring that the use of our natural resources and ecosystems does not exceed the limits of regeneration and jeopardizing their use by future generations – is sufficient as a tool for assessing network governance contributions to the green transition.

We will outline the arguments of 'resilience' scholars who argue that sustainability, understood both as a concept and as a goal of governance, does not adequately recognize the need for our governance systems to adapt to the constant and unpredictable changes occurring under the umbrella of climate change and the scenarios regarding the decline of biodiversity.

Related to this, the second objective aims to explore the implications of network governance analysis in adopting a resilient approach that prioritizes adaptive governance. We will then use insights from the adaptive governance literature to propose a new answer to the question: how can we understand and diagnose the challenges of networked governance and rethinking the governance framework to respond to the environmental crisis.

Taking into account the importance at a practical level of network governance, the applied part of the research, which is the subject of *Chapter 3*, will focus on the novel way of implementing the so-called "Falsified Medicines Directive", respectively Directive 2011/62 /EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 8, 2011 amending Directive 2001/83/EC establishing a community code regarding medicinal products for human use in terms of preventing the entry of falsified medicinal products into the legal supply chain.

Therefore, in this applied part of the research, we will exhaustively analyze the process of developing this policy, as well as the actual implementation, taking into account the term when the system had to be functional and the fact that member states, including Romania, had the obligation to notify the European Commission regarding the implementation of this legislation.

Thus, we will make a brief introduction to the targeted policy area, at the same time indicating the actors involved both in the initial process of policy-making, and later during the implementation stages, which will be clearly highlighted.

The essential part of this chapter is the analysis considerations of the policy network developed at the national level for the creation of the framework for the application and implementation of the legislation in question.

Since networks can only be successfully managed when the nature of the network is understood, as Klijn and Koppenjan (2015) argue, it follows that network knowledge is crucial not only to understand why network processes evolve as they do, but also to be able to manage the network.

As a result, for the empirical analysis of this network we choose to use a framework proposed by the authors Klijn and Koppenjan (2015). The argument underlying the choice of this approach is represented both by the notoriety of the researchers in the field of the in-depth theme, and by the fact that the proposed paradigm deals mainly with the types of actors and insists on the relationships between them.

To evaluate a network, Klijn and Koppenjan (2015) propose going through three categories of analytical activities: mapping the domain of the actor involved in a problematic situation (actor analysis), the characteristics of the governance network process (process analysis) and the institutional characteristics of the network setting in which evolves the process (network analysis), following 8 procedural steps.

Finally, Chapter 4 is built around some fundamental aspects of network governance, namely its opportunities and challenges.

An extended category of the authors who have bent over the study of governance in the network tend to highlight in particular the advantages that the use of network governance brings to the contemporary system. There are, however, also researchers who, beyond the empirical results of some predetermined case studies that exacerbate, in some cases, the results of the policies and the network in question, want to deepen the study of the criticisms of network governance.

Thus, in order to substantiate the information related to possible advantages and disadvantages of network governance, we will carry out an analysis of the literature that focuses on these elements and we will synthesize the potential benefits and pathologies of network governance which we will later map in the form of a SWOT analysis.

First of all, in order to understand the phenomenon, in the first part of the paper we briefly detail the elements that make up a SWOT analysis and introduce the reader to the topic specific to the framework for the appearance and use of this tool, as well as to its relevance. Therefore, we are interested in the field of applicability and further development of this instrument, especially in the area of public administration.

Secondly, we address the issue of the conditions for strengthening accountability mechanisms within the networks so as to identify the criteria that make the difference between framing democratic accountability as an opportunity *vs.* threat to legitimacy. From this point of view, we are interested in deepening both the mechanisms for strengthening horizontal accountability and those of vertical accountability - which is not replaced by the first. The complexities, interdependencies and dynamics that characterize network governance processes will also be considered.

Finally, the main objective of this chapter is to identify the principles that, once applied within the network, can discipline processes and actors, so that they become accountable and the legitimacy of the network, its efficiency and results are not called into question.

III.   CONCLUSIONS

Related to the purpose and objectives of this work, I appreciate that the balance sheet can be considered a positive one. Thus, in the first part of the paper I analyzed the concept of "governance", going from the general to the particular, in an attempt to identify its meanings and to deepen the existing lines of research based on the experience of the European Union.

I am convinced that the research approach contributes to a better understanding of the theoretical views on governance, being identified the main views derived from the disciplines and sub-disciplines consolidated at the European and international level and, last but not least, of the concept around which the research takes place, respectively network governance.

Through the exhaustive analysis of specialized studies, the paper presented a proposal to systematize the meanings of the concept of governance as well as certain suggestions for interpreting its relationship with governing. This was necessary because there is often a confusion between the terms defining governance and governing, and as a result we looked for the relationship between the two, respectively the possible existence of an intrinsic link between the two concepts.

Our line of argument is close to that of Ion (2013: 78) who considers that governance and governing "represent two sides of the same coin". Referring to this phrase, it shows that governance refers to the process of carrying out public policies in which government authorities

are joined by other actors representing different interest groups, a situation generated by the influence of factors such as "globalization, the new public management, new technologies" etc.

Related to the possibility of replacing the state by the new approach to governance (the so-called "hollowing out of the state"), i.e. if governance is an alternative to the state or a component of it that has the role of strengthening it, we appreciate that we cannot talk about the first hypothesis. In our opinion, governance remains a tool for adapting the traditional mechanisms of the state to everyday reality, by no means leading to its evasion. The formal role that governmental authorities play in the process of policy-making cannot be considered obsolete, but it represents the central point that may or may not adopt and implement public policies.

With regard to another objective, that of reducing the existing gap between domestic and European or international works, we appreciate that through this work we have contributed to the few domestic works that try to connect the Romanian debates to the European ones in the segment of studies regarding network governance. In addition, I believe that our approach will help to better understand the concept in the internal framework and the results of the present research will be able to be applied including to internal policies, respectively as a reference of good practice of policy-making at national level.

Following the analysis, we concluded that discussions of networks are highly nuanced even in this narrow context (social sciences), usually highlighting the different types of networks that exist.

At the same time, for Klijn and Koppenjan, the concept of "network" is inseparable from the term "governance", currently reaching the following definition: models of social relations, more or less stable, between mutually dependent actors who gather around a problem that needs solving, a project of policies, and/or a set of resources that emerge, are sustained and adapted/changed through a series of interactions (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2015: 11).

A prominent definition presents the network as "a set of relatively stable relationships that are non-hierarchical and interdependent in nature that link a variety of actors who share a common interest in a [public] policy and who exchange resources in order to achieving common interests, recognizing that cooperation is the best way to achieve common goals" (Börzel, 1998: 254). The elements that make up this definition can also be found in other authors such as Eising and Kohler-Koch (1999), Sørensen and Torfing (2007), Ion (2013), Klijn and Koppenjan (2015), etc.

Regarding the phrase "network governance", according to some authors, the conjugation of the terms - network governance - which occurs mainly in the fundamental field of social sciences, represents "a specific manifestation of governance, a term however insufficiently clear which "refers loosely to non-hierarchical attempts to coordinate public and private interests, actions and resources" (Torfing, 2005: 306). Torfing (2005) believes that the importance of network governance in the context of governance is thus given by a precise delimitation of the sphere of interest – "the attempt to facilitate said coordination in and through negotiated interactions between a plurality of political actors".

Next, we showed that in the context of the complexity and dynamics of the network it is difficult to ensure the expected collective result. We started from the question: how can we ensure that the result of the network governance, namely the public policy, represents an adequate response to the social need considering that simple self-coordination is not always a guarantee of achieving the expected collective results? For this, the issue of network management was analyzed.

For Klijn, network management is an aspect of governance and a freely consented action insofar as interactions are considered as a whole, without being filtered through the prism of any particular interest. But in general, "management involves planning (strategies for the future), design (reallocation of resources to organizational subunits) and leadership (day-to-day management of interactions)" (Klijn, 2005: 330).

The diversity of actors, levels and issues requires extremely different and complex management strategies, the purpose of network management being "to initiate and facilitate interaction processes between actors, create and modify network arrangements to better coordinate and guide interactions" (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2016: 156).

Of course, the second fundamental part of the paper was the use of the approach proposed by Klijn and Kippenjan (2015) as a public policy network evaluation model, which I adapted according to the specifics of the case study elements.

The central analysis carried out in this part concerned the implementation at the Romanian level of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/161 of October 2, 2015 supplementing Directive 2001/83/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council by establishing detailed rules for the elements of safety that appear on the packaging of medicines for human use, a delegated act that

requires national adaptation through the elaboration of a normative act to create the national framework and subsequent changes in national legislation, but also the creation of a complex and expensive IT infrastructure - both from a financial point of view, as well as from the point of view of human resources.

At this stage I set out, and being at the end of this paper I appreciate that I have succeeded, to analyze and reconstruct the network and its complexities in order to understand its functioning and to evaluate the strategies and actions within the policy network developed at national level.

Since networks can only be successfully managed when the nature of the network is understood, as Klijn and Koppenjan (2015) argue, it follows that network knowledge is crucial not only to understanding why network processes evolve as they do, but also to to be able to manage the network.

So, in the analysis carried out we reconstructed the network and its complexities to be able to understand its functioning, strategies and actions that took place. We used the systematic approach, divided into analytical steps, to understand the background, strategic and institutional context of the complex problems in the analyzed network.

Summarizing, the domain of the actor involved in a problematic situation (actor analysis), the characteristics of the governance network process (process analysis) and the institutional characteristics of the network setting in which the process evolves (network analysis) were mapped.

Following the results of the analysis, we can say that given the achievement of the initially set objectives, the network was functional and produced results. Of course, in the absence of official documents, relying only on the subjective perception of the actors interviewed, the research has its limits. But the innovative character of this type of collaboration that was established within a network of authorities and private actors directly impacted by the provisions of the public policy in question, and especially the subsequent implementation that did not encounter blockages at the national level, makes this type of network to be a model of good practice at national and European level.

Finally, the third essential part of the research looked at the elements that complement the assumptions that network governance has some advantages and disadvantages. It should be stated

that following the analysis carried out during the research, we can say that an extended category of the authors who have focused on the study of network governance tend to highlight in particular the advantages that the use of network governance brings to the contemporary system. There are, however, also researchers who, beyond the empirical results of some predetermined case studies that exacerbate, in some cases, the results of the policies and the network in question, want to deepen the study of the criticisms of network governance.

Thus, in order to identify the possible advantages and disadvantages, we used a tool often found in analyzes that address and want to identify the advantages and disadvantages offered by different organizational contexts, namely the concept of SWOT analysis. As we noted, it has developed as a key tool for addressing complex strategic situations by reducing the amount of information in order to improve decision-making. Its simplicity and catchy acronym perpetuates its use in business and beyond, as the tool is used to evaluate alternatives and complex decision-making contexts.

We noted that from the point of view of an analysis tool, SWOT offers the possibility to focus on the positive and negative aspects of the internal and external environment; in other words, the elements in this environment that add plus and minus value, concentrated in a related perspective. Therefore, by understanding the weak points, threats can be managed and eliminated to be transformed into development opportunities.

Network governance remains a component that offers multiple opportunities for new research directions on the formal and informal aspects of interaction, on the possibility of a mutual impact between participants and networks, as well as on the actors who, from an asymmetric position, influence certain stages of the policy-making process.

As a central idea, we must emphasize that network governance is and will continue to be a central approach to organizing and mobilizing for policy-making, service delivery and the generation of innovative ideas. As Keast (2022: 492) points out, we can say that there is no doubt that the future will continue to be based on networks and networked governance; less certain being the form they will take.

The inherent complexity of network governance, and the increasing "hybrid experimentation" that occurs in response to this complexity, is an ongoing challenge for the practice and management of

network governance at multiple levels. New insights, mechanisms and tools help those charged with responsibility for the design, governing and managing of public sector networks.

Researchers also need to remain vigilant and open in their search for more in-depth knowledge of network governance and, as Agranoff (2014: 205) concluded, to provide for a "facilitating context that enables new thinking and practice to flourish and grow".

IV.   REFERENCES

In the research process, primary sources were analyzed, consisting of the Treaties of the European Union or official documents issued by the EU institutions, alongside essential secondary sources such as scientific articles that analyzed the concept of governance, in general, and network governance in particular.

The references in the specialized literature add up to 364 titles. They also include works that have dealt with related and transdisciplinary topics of network governance.

Likewise, the bibliographic references in the official documents include 5 titles and represent, mainly, declarative documents of the EU, of political nature, but also impact analyzes that were used for the adoption of the EU legislative acts.

Last but not least, the category of bibliographic references accessed online (web) includes the primary legislation of the EU, respectively the Treaties, the secondary legislation, represented by the directives and regulations that are the subject of our research, but also the national legislation (7 tiles).

We present below some bibliographic references that form the basis of our research:

1. Ansell, C. and Torfing, J. (2022). Handbook on Theories of Governance. USA, Massachusetts, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.

2. Börzel, T. A. (2011). Networks: Reified metaphor or governance panacea? In Public Administration, 89, 49–63.

3. Klijn, E.H. Koppenjan, J. (2016). Governance networks in the public sector. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

4. Koliba, C. Meek, W.J. Zia, A. Mills, R.W. (2019). Governance Networks in Public Administration and Public Policy, 2nd ed. USA: Routledge.

5. Koppenjan, J.F.M. and Klijn, E.H. (2004), Managing Uncertainties in Networks: Public Private Controversies, Abingdon: Routledge.

6. Ion, Oana-Andreea. (2013). Governance of the European Union: current approaches. Iasi: Polirom.

7. Rhodes, R.A.W. (2017). Network Governance and the Differentiated Polity. Selected Essays, Volume I. New York: Oxford University Press.

8. Sørensen, E. Torfing, J. (2005). The democratic anchorage of governance networks, Scandinavian Political Studies, 28 (3). 195–218.

9. Sørensen, E., Torfing, J. (2007) "Theoretical Approaches to Metagovernance." In Theories of democratic network governance ed. Eva Sorensen and Jacob Torfing. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian.

10. Sørensen, E. (2022). Democratic network governance. In Handbook on Theories of Governance (eds Ansell, C. and Torfing, J.). USA, Massachusetts, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.

11. Torfing, J., Peters, B.G., Pierre, J., Sørsensen, E. (2012). Interactive Governance: Advancing the Paradigm. Oxford: Oxford University Press.