



Do We Have Evidence for Our Policies?

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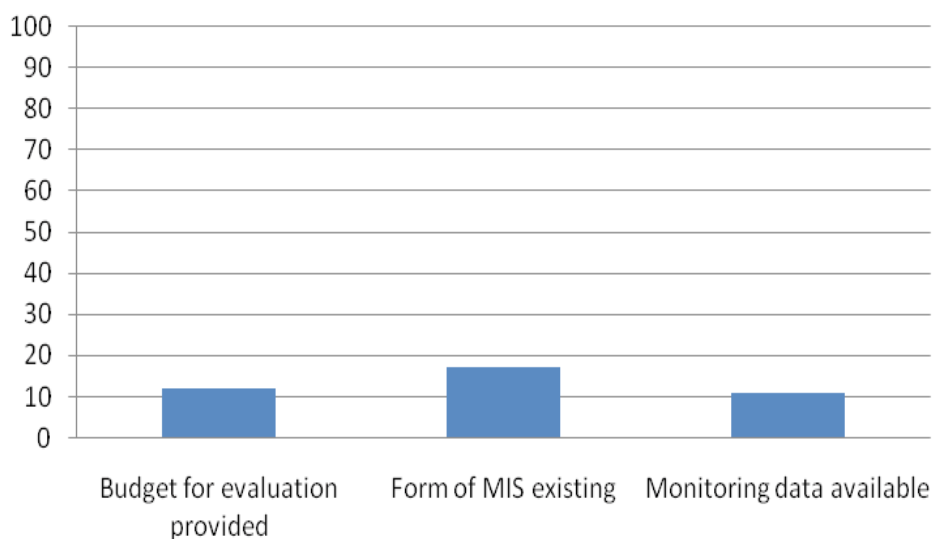
Why Development of Evaluation Systems?

It is very important to find, and propose ways by which public administration in BiH can become more accountable, efficient and effective, and at the same time provide high quality services to the public. This process will also support BiH progress towards EU accession and absorption capacity at different levels of government. At this point institutions in BiH have insufficient capacities for conducting the practice of monitoring and evaluation as well as the regulatory framework or guidelines for such activities.

If evidence about what works were systematically developed and made public, that information could be used for better public policymaking and thus for more effective international aid and domestic spending.”³

The development of the M&E system and analytical capacities demands preconditions such as financial resources and data availability. Research⁴ has shown that, 78% of respondents (with about 11% having no knowledge on this issue) thought that financial resources allocated in the budgets for the evaluation function are not present. Clear conclusions can be made with response to the existence of management information systems (MIS) that would provide technical support to the practice of monitoring and evaluation, where only 17% of respondents stated that there is some form of such a system in place. Respondents were also asked to assess the availability of the necessary monitoring data for their field of work. Only around 11% of those who answered the question said that monitoring data was available.

% Respondents



Summary

In 2007 Romania recorded a negative net position towards the EU budget (representing 0.36 percent of GDP), being in the paradoxical situation of net contributor.¹ Some of the main absorption capacity determinants are ability of administration in terms of strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation practices of policies proposed and implemented. The monitoring and evaluation practice together with transparency are at the same time at the centre of the accountability of public administration to its citizens. The results of the research² show that almost no institution in Bosnia and Herzegovina practices monitoring or evaluation of public policies in a systematic way due to insufficiently developed guidelines or legislation and lack of adequate capacity.

¹ George Georgescu, Determinants of increasing EU funds absorption capacity in Romania, Institute of National Economy, p. 5.

² Rijad Kovač, Accountability through monitoring and evaluation and evidence based policy making, OFS Sarajevo, 2011

³ Report on: Impact Evaluation Workshop Conducted By: International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) at: Malaysian Evaluation Society Conference (31 March - 4 April 2008) The workshop focused on the current status of Impact Evaluation, with experience sharing of obstacles, opportunities; and **Building impact evaluation capacities to strengthen decision-making and accountability:** Country experiences, good practices, lessons learned, common problems, and possible innovations.

⁴ Rijad K., **Accountability through monitoring and evaluation and evidence based policy making**, OFS Sarajevo, 2011

The EU integration process will also increasingly require the need for an effective monitoring and evaluation system. The requirements for the ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post evaluation of Structural Fund interventions are outlined in Articles 40 to 43 of Regulation 1260/1999.

The absorption capacity which is commonly understood as the extent to which a Member State is able to spend the financial resources allocated from the Structural Funds, in an effective and efficient manner depend on administrative capacity defined as the ability and qualifications of central and local authorities to prepare programs and appropriate and timely projects, to decide on them, to ensure coordination of partners involved, to comply with administrative and reporting requirements, to fund and monitor the implementation of programs and projects and to avoid irregularities.⁵ The government of BiH has to be committed in order to build improved evaluation systems for the use of Structural Funds, including the monitoring and evaluation framework.

Once we know what is at stake, we have to focus on strengthening internal capacities of individual government organizations, and in so doing the entire institutional context in which government organizations function, on different levels in BiH. The goal of such a system should be to serve as a management tool to improve the management knowledge base and be part of the continuous learning for performance improvement.

Skills and competencies as well as rules and procedures within the government sector, directing attention to more informed policy making and improved social accountability arrangements should be strengthened without any doubt.

First, the set of skills that address methodological questions, where understanding the knowledge base of evaluation (terms, concepts, theories, assumptions, including results frameworks, theory of change, log frames, logic models, etc) here is the greatest deficiency and in need for trainings.

Second, those who address data collection, data interpretation, identifying data sources, analysing and interpretation of data need significant improvements.

Our options

Policy option 1 - No change means to continue efforts on RIA strengthening methods in a very slow mode. Without any doubt, the no change option would BiH to lose the chance to improve the public policy discussion forum, more accountable public spending and the chance to increase absorption capacity of the country.

Policy option 2 - Moderate change

Moderate level change assumes the introduction of guideline and methodology documents. The monitoring and evaluation reports are published regularly on the webpage and sent to defined stakeholders via electronic newsletters. The strengthening of coordination among institutions or use of the soft approach is applied. Trainings offered within the Public Service Agency education plan should be supported by international projects with the intention to be self-sufficient in terms of financing and domestic consulting services. During the first years, such training should be optional to public servants, but after establishing the system it should become compulsory to all public servants.

Policy option 3 - High level change

High level change assumes the introduction of laws and sub-laws that immediately make evaluations compulsory. Guidelines and methodology documents should be provided immediately and trainings to public servants offered. The monitoring and evaluation reports are published regularly on the webpage and sent to defined stakeholders via electronic newsletters. The strengthening of coordination among institutions or use of the soft approach is applied. Trainings offered within the Public Service Agency education plan should be made compulsory to all public servants. New departments should be introduced and the number of servants should increase to accommodate the need of increased demands. The amount of resources for outsourcing of monitoring and evaluation reports should be provided within all budgets at different levels.

Clearly, with regards to policy options, our present efforts are not enough, but also putting strong pressures on budgets and politicians

⁵ George Georgescu, Determinants of increasing EU funds absorption capacity in Romania, *Institute of National Economy*, p. 3



without taking into consideration the ability of the administration to cope with inevitable changes, for example with by a law introducing evaluations for all kinds of policy development and ex-post assessments and time necessary for this is something that would bring strong rejection both by politicians and by the bureaucracy. This means that the “no-change” and “high level change” options cannot satisfy our criteria. The former is not acceptable from the point of risking country’s ability to absorb assistance funds and it represents real treat to decision makers to have neglected countries development opportunities. While this is true, the latter option of high level change would assume a high level of spending, for an administration and a Public Service Agency that are not ready. The introduction of a law would not solve the problem, but would perhaps worsen situation because everyone would have the excuse not to abide by the law prescriptions as a collective for not having capacities to do desired reports. The moderate change option suits our needs at this point. It addresses issues and challenges the country at a reasonable cost and taking into consideration the current level of capacity development.

Strategies for Change

To state and entity/BD government level and donors

Improved Learning of Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

Conduct intensive trainings at different levels of government and in cooperation with the Public Service Agency. Trainings offered within the Public Service Agency education plan, should internalize sources and capacities for learning. The initiative for including evaluation subjects to university studies should be nominated.

Coordinators Institutions

Essential inquiries were made to four coordinator institutions which should aim to become evaluation knowledge centres. These institutions should:

- prepare a detailed plan of trainings, which would address the issue of strengthening the capacity for monitoring and evaluation purposes

- collaborate to prepare a schedule of trainings
- consider undertaking (commissioning) more in-depth analyses of evaluation capacity development by applying the framework via case studies,
- coordinators institutions should disseminate the identified good practice lessons in the evaluation capacity development through round tables on the exchange of experiences between different institutions.

Institutionalizing Improvements

Institutionalize the monitoring and evaluation practice through a revision of the Rule Books on Internal Organisation of Ministries and preparation and negotiations regarding the adoption of Internal Acts for introducing the methodologies of monitoring and evaluation into the regular work of the ministries.

Cooperation with the academic community should be established with the aim of introducing evaluation within the university curricula. The publishing of the reports and monitoring and evaluation findings should be made compulsory at least on the web pages of institutions.

Recommendation to Ministries

Allocate budget resources for commissioning out small-scale evaluations.

The establishment management information systems to support M&E functions and networking through of different institutions.

Making the MIS systems publicly available on the web would further strengthen transparency and accountability.

The Statistical System

Institutions demanders must be more explicit about requesting data and statistical institutions should use all available resources including existing surveys and managing administrative data in order to make them widely available.

Sources Consulted or Recommended

Rijad K., Accountability through monitoring and evaluation and evidence based policy making, OFS Sarajevo, 2011



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RealWorld Evaluation, working under Budget, time, data, and Political constraints,

World Bank: <http://www.worldbank.org/html/oed/instdtxt.htm>

Establishing Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators, American Journal of Evaluation 2005, page 50. Laurie Stevahn, Jean A. King, Gail Ghere and Jane Minnema American Journal of Evaluation. Uploaded from 1 march 2011: <http://aje.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/26/1/43>

George Georgescu, "Determinants of increasing EU funds absorption capacity in Romania", *Institute of National Economy*, p. 5.



A "Policy Development Fellowship Program" has been launched by the Open Society Fund BiH in early 2004 with the aim to improve BiH policy research and dialogue and to contribute to the development of a sound policy-making culture based on informative and empirically grounded policy options.

The program provides an opportunity for selected fellows to collaborate with the Open Society Fund in conducting policy research and writing a policy study with the support of mentors and trainers during the whole process. Seventy three fellowships have been granted in three cycles since the starting of the Program.

All policy studies are available at www.soros.org.ba