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How to Get Results in Public Policies?

Monitoring & Evaluation with the Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society

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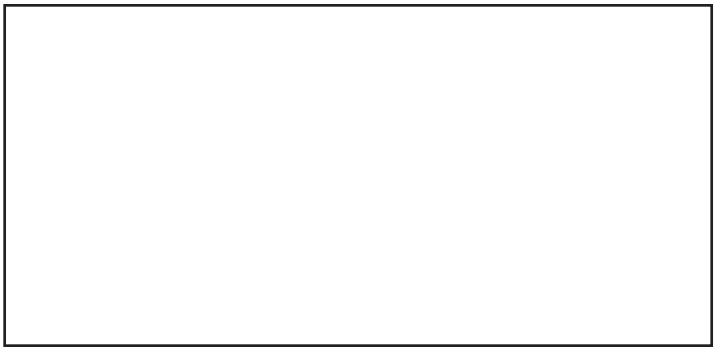

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i. Foreword

Evidence clearly demonstrates that implementation of public policies in Serbia leads to broken promises. Although the Government Annual Work Plan sets goals and planned activities, these are often left unattained in practice, while there is no mechanism to measure the results or impacts of activities conducted. In contrast to Serbia, the decision makers in countries with a more developed political culture are under constant public scrutiny, which calls for effective policies, credible and reliable data and evidence-based policy making in general.

Bearing in mind the context of democratic consolidation and economic transition in Serbia, holding the policy makers accountable through institutionalised mechanisms and practices seems to be an imperative. Moreover, monitoring the implementation of reforms and evaluating their effects are particularly important in the process of the country's accession negotiations with the European Union. Specifically, an effective and sustainable implementation of the acquis will essentially determine the very dynamics of the negotiations, and eventually Serbia's membership in the EU.

How to get results in public policy? Is civil society in Serbia able to engage in monitoring and evaluation processes and contribute to them? Current circumstances demonstrate a clear lack of constructive opposition on the political scene and a deficiency of critical public, as well as citizens' disinterest in becoming more active in social issues. Thus, civil society organisations (CSOs) are expected to take responsibility to present facts and arguments, develop critical thinking and mobilise citizens. Moreover, the European integration process and the accession negotiations require additional CSO engagement, as they are expected to provide knowledge from their areas of expertise and to act as a corrective mechanism of the government. Simultaneously, CSOs are confronted with financial challenges: foreign donors, the biggest source of support to the CSOs in Serbia, are gradually retreating from the country, which makes it impervious to think of new sustainable CSO models.

The aim of this study is to highlight the aspect of monitoring and evaluation in the policy-making process, which is much neglected in Serbia. The study aims to demonstrate the importance of monitoring and evaluation in increasing the quality and transparency of decision-making. It will do so, first by analysing the conditions of CSO participation in the sectors of public administration and social policy and employment in Serbia; and second, by analysing the capacity of line ministries and in general, the government administration in Serbia to conduct monitoring and evaluation tasks. The comparative aspect of the analysis and comprehensive research have the goal to illustrate good examples and practices across EU member states. In return, the aim is to provide ideas and recommendations so as to establish policy monitoring and evaluation in Serbia, as well as to achieve a more relevant and more constructive engagement of CSOs in this regard.

In addition to this study, the project "Achieving Effective Policy Monitoring and Evaluation through Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society" incorporated awareness raising activities on the topic and communication with relevant actors, especially during the round table discussion which mainly gathered CSO representatives; a public debate with the government authorities, renowned CSO representatives and foreign experts, as well as capacity building activities aimed at civil servants and CSO representatives in relation to performing adequate policy monitoring and evaluation. The project is funded by the European Union via Civil Society Facility Programme, and co-funded by the Office for Cooperation with the Civil Society of the Republic of Serbia.

The project team would like to express a special gratitude to those who significantly contributed

to the quality of this study with active involvement, openness to the researchers and provision of recommendations. Among others, we thank Ivana Ćirković, Director of the Office for Cooperation with the Civil Society of the Republic of Serbia; Žarko Šunderić, Team Leader of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Goverment of the Republic of Serbia; Dragica Ivanović, Head of Department of the Active Employment Policy in the Employment Sector of the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Martins Krievins, SIGMA expert; as well as interviewees from the public administration and civil society of Lithuania (Egle Rimkute, Inga Kirstukaitė, Nijolė Kundrotienė, Lina Lajauskienė, Marius Barys, Gitana Jurjoniene, Danute Burakiene, Paulius Baniunas, Ramune Germaniene, Vita Safjan, Darius Liutikas, Vitalis Nakrosis), Finland (Sirpa Kekkonen, Kimmo Ruth, Koho Arto, Heikki Taimio, Seija Ilmakunnas, Milla Sandt) and European Commission officials and researchers of think tanks from Brussels (Matt Dann, Veronica Gaffey, Sandra Kramer, Sarah Piller, Mark Hayden, Kornelia Kozovska, Mirka Janda, Alexandra Stiglmayer, Neil Campbell, Sergio Carrera).

ii. In Brief

The aim of this study is to promote a discussion on possible models of institutionalising policy monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in Serbia, as well as on the means available to include civil society organizations (CSOs). In the context of democratic consolidation and economic transition in Serbia, mechanisms and practices of holding policy makers accountable are gradually being established. Moreover, monitoring the implementation of reforms and evaluating their effects are particularly important in the accession negotiations with the European Union (EU), since the effective and sustainable implementation of the acquis will essentially determine the very dynamics of the negotiations, and eventually Serbia's membership in the EU. However, in Serbia there are no sufficiently developed structures and procedures that would allow a permanent monitoring of results. Additionally, there are no well-established modes of cooperation between the governmental and non-government sector in that regard, while examples of good practices remain rudimentary.

The study provides an overview of CSO involvement in policy M&E in Serbia and the level of institutionalization of these activities. The methodology of the study is based on a qualitative approach. In addition to the analysis of available primary and secondary documents through desk research, the dominant method of analysis was a multiple case study of good practices across EU Member States, which served as a source of ideas on future improvements of the emerging M&E system in Serbia.

In basic terms, policy monitoring involves data collection during policy implementation and then processing, analysing and making use of the collected data in the planning of further steps in the implementation. Policy evaluation entails the use of analysed data at stage of monitoring so as to assess the performance, efficiency and/or final effects of the policy that is being or was implemented.

There is no systematic approach to policy M&E in Serbia. The system of policy planning, as a groundwork for regulating M&E, is not sufficiently consolidated, while the hierarchy of plans and strategic documents of the government is not clearly established and their functional relationships are not determined. Due to a lack of a "top-down" prioritisation (centre of government performing a greater role in regards to the coordination of ministries' the work and quality control), line ministries develop sectoral strategies without taking into account whether they fit the country's long-term and medium-term development goals. As a result, there is approximately one hundred strategies in force with different time frames and conflicted goals, which represents an obstacle to consistent implementation. In addition, the majority of strategic documents is not linked to the budget framework, nor do they contain a financial frame for their implementation and clearly defined performance indicators, which in most cases leads to no monitoring of the strategy implementation. The strategic planning system is insufficiently coherent, which significantly impedes the development of the M&E system and good practices in this area.

Furthermore, the policy M&E culture in Serbia is still not adequate: there is a lack of understanding of the importance of M&E processes, mechanisms by which they are conducted and actors that they should/could gather; the M&E market is underdeveloped on both the supply and demand side; the institutional environment does not offer its full support to the development of an evaluation culture. Additionally, the M&E culture is underdeveloped due to unfavourable historical conditions and weak efforts made towards building an enabling environment necessary for its advancement.

The research within this project revealed that some of the biggest challenges of CSOs involvement in M&E are the scarcity of cooperation between state representatives and CSOs, the lack

of a systematic approach to cooperation and the low awareness of the importance of M&E. Weak organisational and human capacities of CSOs, as well as a strong need for additional trainings, further hinder the establishment of a constructive cooperation. Institutional mechanisms which are more adequate for ensuring CSO involvement in M&E would contribute to a clearer understanding of their role. Namely, this role is multifaceted and includes (1) monitoring public policies within their field of expertise and raising public awareness on those issues, (2) advocating of a particular approach or solution to a problem, (3) conducting research activities and generating studies useful for policy M&E, or (4) providing services for the purpose of policy M&E.

In the areas of social policy and employment in Serbia, there are a few examples of well-developed M&E practices that could serve as a role model for a systematic involvement of CSOs in M&E. In the employment sector, a number of institutions have a prominent role in monitoring the implementation of the National Employment Strategy. In the social policy sector, it is the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU) which plays the central role in M&E and allows CSOs to take part.

Comparative practice illustrates CSO participation in M&E activities, however those cases are rarely institutionalized. Their involvement is mostly concerned with writing independent reports and exercising pressure on officials to deliver credible data. Organisations that provide services to the citizens, such as those which help the socially vulnerable, are in some cases the primary producers of the data that is then used by the government as official facts. In most cases, however, those data serve to the government only as supplementary sources during the monitoring process.

The analysis of the practice in EU Member States demonstrates a number of examples of CSO involvement in policy evaluation. Alongside several think tanks and independent research institutes specialised in producing studies and evaluation reports, the research showed that CSO representatives tend to be wary of taking part in evaluation. The reason stated is the fear that those activities would compromise the reputation of an otherwise independent and neutral actor, who is working in public interest. This position might seem paradoxical at first, considering that external evaluations are conducted specifically with the aim to obtain an independent opinion. However, in such circumstances where there are ever less opportunities for achieving financial sustainability, evaluation reports could serve as one of the options for ensuring diversity of CSO funding sources.

After examining models in the comparative practise, there are three possible scenarios for Serbia in order to establish an M&E system grounded on evidence supplied by the civil society. The first option is a system suitable for a low evaluation culture and insufficiently constructive relations between the CSOs and decision makers. In such a system, the centre of government would have a higher level of authority and control in relation to the ministries, to ensure that ministries are gradually acquiring the skills necessary to conduct a proper M&E. CSOs would be members of the working groups for monitoring, but also external actors, in terms of independent political participation, placing pressure on the authorities to submit data, as well as producing relevant data and analyses for the purpose of independent M&E. This model is designed according to the initial phase of building the M&E system in Lithuania.

The second option goes further than the first in terms of strengthening the effectiveness of M&E and CSO involvement. It is suitable for countries where CSOs have a considerable influence and significance in the political life and where decision makers are ready to accept criticism, in other words – countries with a developed evaluation culture. Such a system would be results-oriented, which would strengthen the evidence-based policy making. As a result of their knowledge and experience, the ministries would become more independent from the centre of government, in terms of choosing the means of monitoring and evaluation. This combined model is based on a system applied by the European Commission.

The third option requires the deepest reforms and a particularly high level of evaluation culture and evidence-based policy making. This option sees the civil society as an integral part of the political life, a constructive critic of the government and an integral part of the M&E system, as well as a primary data producer competing to participate as an external evaluator. Such a system would be results-based and the centre of government would have a role in examining the compliance between horizontal and cross-sectoral policies. The inspiration for considering this model was the Finnish system.

Considering the analysed situation in Serbia, the first option would be the most applicable in the short and medium term. Its advantage lies in the high level of feasibility, for it would actually represent a continuation of the on-going efforts to build a strategic planning system and M&E structures, as well as to increase relevance and influence of CSOs in decision-making. With the recently established Public Policy Secretariat (PPS), it seems that the basic requirements are present and that the centre of Government has the capacity to take up the role described in the first option. This model provides a basic CSO involvement in the structures designed for policy monitoring (e.g. cross-sectoral public groups, and/or councils), however due to a limited capacity, the state would be obliged to take into account and consider the comments of CSOs, without necessarily adopting them. Eventually, as the development of an evaluation culture and capacity in both public administration and civil society sectors proceeds, this basic model could progress into the second option, and in the best case scenario, after several government mandates it could even evolve into the third option.

iii. Introductory Remarks and Key Terms[1]

While conducting the project activities (selection of interviewees and panellists for the round table and public debate), the research team sought to ensure an equal representation of male and female participants.[2]

Context and assumptions	Refers to social, political and economic circumstances in the area of applied policy, and their potential impact. Assumptions are based on a thorough understanding of the contextual factors and evidence-based knowledge.
Subject of M&E	Characteristics of the problem/policy that should be resolved with intervention.
Goals	Should reflect the necessities of the intended intervention and the relationship between the problem and the circumstances that existed prior to considering the intervention.
Indicators	Qualitative or quantitative variables suitable for a reliable measuring of outcomes, assessing performance or detecting changes resulting from the intervention.
Inputs	Data/assets needed in policy implementation (e.g. material and human resources for road construction).
Activities	Based on inputs, actions taken towards policy implementation.
Outputs	Direct results of the intervention (e.g. number of km of constructed road).
Outcomes	Current or short-term results, defined on the basis of the specified intervention goals.
Impact	Broadly defined changes in a longer period of time, based on general intervention goals.
Monitoring	A systematic data collection towards gaining insight of the specific policy at a given time in relation to the targets and results.
Evaluation	A logical continuation of the monitoring process: based on the data and information collected during monitoring, evaluation analyses and measures the impact of the implemented policy.
Civil sector	Includes not only citizens' associations, but also media, trade unions and employers as social partners, as well as other relevant social actors who jointly participate in the reform process and in building a mutual trust in the overall democratization of institutions and society in general.

[1] Based on: "Basic Terminology and Frameworks for Monitoring and Evaluation", UNAIDS, 2009, p. 18-20; European Commission, DG Secretariat General, "Evaluation Guidelines", November 2013, p. 7-8.

[2] From 38 interviewees 20 are females; 4 out of 6 round table panellists and 4 out of 7 public debate panellists.

iv. List of Abbreviations

AOP Annual Operational Plans
AWC Autonomous Women Centre
CCSO Contact Civil Society Organisations
CEPS Centre for European Policy Studies
CDNPS Centre for Development of Non-Profit Sector
CSAC Civil Society Advisory Committee
CSO Civil Society Organisation
DG Directorate General
EPRD Office for Economic Policy and Regional Development
ESI European Stability Initiative
EU European Union
FREN Foundation for the Advancement of Economics
GCC Government Coordination Centre
HD ECG HD European Consulting Group
IDEAS International Development Evaluation Association
IPA Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IT Information technologies
PMU Programme Management Unit
MPALG Ministry of Public Administration and Local Government
NEAP National Employment Action Plan
NES National Employment Service
NGO Non-governmental organisation
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAR Public Administration Reform
PHARE Poland and Hungary Assistance for Restructuring Their Economies
PPMI Public Policy and Management Institute
PPS Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia
PRS Poverty Reduction Strategy
RZS Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
SAPARD Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Development
SECO Sectoral Civil Society Organisations
SIEPA Serbia Investment and Export Promotion Agency
SIGMA Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SILC Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
SIPRU Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit
UNDP United Nations Development Programme

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I. Introduction

I.1. Context

Improving country performance and effectiveness of public policies require continuous revisioning, measuring achieved vis-à-vis target goals, and their relation, as well as evaluating the results and success of realised activities. Today, governments are facing a constant pressure from citizens and are strongly influenced by public opinion to improve their administrative and economic efficiency. Among other reasons, the increasing number of complex and technical issues which require expertise compel decision-makers to seek assistance from external actors. In order to meet the constant demands of different stakeholders to deliver results, in developed countries the state apparatus has gradually accepted result-oriented public management. Under such circumstances, M&E are a powerful tool and an integral part of a properly designed and implemented government policy.

Serbia has not been immune to these trends. Having in mind the context of democratic consolidation and economic transition, as well as the accession negotiations, one is witnessing the development of mechanisms and practices for placing pressure on decision-makers and calling for responsible action and political behaviour. However, there are neither established structures and procedures allowing a systematic result monitoring, nor appropriate modes of cooperation of the governmental and non-governmental sectors in this regard. Additionally, good practice examples are rudimentary.

The subject of this study is to indicate the possibilities of effective policy M&E with evidence supplied by the civil society organisations (CSOs). In basic terms, policy monitoring involves data collection during policy implementation and then processing, analysing and using the collected data in the planning of the next steps in policy implementation. Policy evaluation involves the use of data analysed under the monitoring process to assess the performance, efficiency and/or final effects of the policy that is being or was implemented.

The aim of this study is to promote a discussion on potential models of institutionalising policy M&E in Serbia, as well as on means of including CSOs in these activities. In the context of the imminent membership negotiations, monitoring the implementation of reforms and evaluating their effects are particularly important since the effective and sustainable implementation of the *acquis* will essentially determine the very dynamics of the negotiations. As stated in the EU Negotiating Framework for Serbia presented on 21 January 2013, "Serbia will be requested to indicate its position in relation to the acquis and to report on its progress in meeting the benchmarks, *including by providing reliable and comparable statistical data on reform implementation as required* [emphasis added]. Serbia's correct transposition and, where appropriate, implementation of the acquis, including effective and efficient application through appropriate administrative and judicial structures, will determine the pace of negotiations."[3] In addition, the Framework indicates that the action plans based on screening reports prepared by the Commission for particular negotiating chapters should be developed through a transparent process of consultation with all relevant stakeholders to ensure maximum support for their implementation.[4] Action plans for Chapters 23 – Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, and Chapter 24 – Justice, Freedom and Security will have to include a timeframe for the implementation of the recommendations from the screening reports, as well as a reliable

[3] Inter-Governmental Conference on Accession to the European Union – Serbia, Accession Document, Negotiating Framework, point 48, p. 19. Available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&t=PDF&gc=true&sc=false&f=AD%201%202014%20INIT>

[4] *Ibid*., point 11, p. 5.

estimate of costs and financial means.[5] Strong administrative capacity will also be important for an effective control of the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).[6] The use and management of IPA funds will be subject to increased and more complex M&E on the part of the EU, in particular the Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement,[7] which implies that Serbia will be requested to thoroughly monitor and report on the effects of the funds spent.

The aforementioned demonstrates that for a successful outcome of the negotiations process and the future EU membership of Serbia, alongside solid capacities for policy M&E in the public administration, non-governmental actors also need to be empowered in order to be able to participate in this process. The increased EU emphasis on M&E and on sustainability of meeting the EU membership criteria including transparency and inclusiveness of the process, shows an exceptional precedent in the current EU enlargement policy compared to the previous enlargements. During negotiations with the countries that have so far joined the EU, the Commission did not have control mechanisms developed to such an extent that it measures the implementation of reforms. Therefore, observing policy M&E through the prism of membership negotiations, in particular the candidate's administrative capacities to manage these activities, could be considered as a new and unexplored field in the academic and policy communities. At the same time, since good monitoring and evaluation require transparency, expertise and analytical skills, the potential of CSOs as resources for conducting independent analyses for the purpose of policy M&E in Serbia has also not been explored or sufficiently taken advantage of.

I.2. Methodology, Scope and Structure of the Study

CSO involvement in policy M&E process is a relatively new practice and therefore not familiar enough. It also represents an under-researched field in the current literature, which has been predominantly focused on CSOs' role in monitoring and evaluation of foreign donors' and international organisations' development programmes. Since the establishment of an institutionalised state-level system is a precondition for a systematic CSO involvement in policy M&E, this study mainly focuses on examining the available state systems and practices in the field.

The methodology of the study is based on a qualitative approach, which is considered to be the most appropriate to meet the requirements of the study due to the possibilities of inductive research. In addition to the analysis of available primary and secondary documents through desk research, the dominant method was a multiple case studies analysis. Considering the underdeveloped M&E system in Serbia, researchers aimed to identify best existing practices. The comparison of the systems and practices in Serbia, on one hand, and in Lithuania, Finland and the EU, on the other, proved to be useful since the foreign experience offers to be highly instructive for Serbia, bearing in mind their developed M&E systems and different practices of involving CSOs in these processes. Data was collected through the technique of interviews with civil servants, representatives of professional and academic communities, representatives of ministries and state institutions in Lithuania and Finland, EU officials, as well as using data and information from available documents. For a more detailed explanation of the methodology, including the approach of this study, techniques for the selection of interviewees and an explanation of the choice of case studies, please see Annex I.

The study is focused on policy M&E research, specifically on the policies, which are used by the state to intervene or implement a previously defined work programme/strategy documents. Therefore, it does not attempt to interfere with either the characteristics of the M&E of international development projects or other programmes that do not include the participation of state authorities, or with the *ex-ante* form of evaluation. Admittedly, numerous studies rela-

[5] European Commission, DG Enlargement, presentation on the new negotiation approach for the chapters 23 and 24, available at: <http://www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/seminar_pristupni_pregovori/new_approach_accession_negotiations.pdf>

[6] Conference on Accession to the European Union – Serbia, Accession Document, Negotiating Framework, point 37, p. 17. Available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&t=PDF&gc=true&sc=false&f=AD%201%202014%20INIT>

[7] See European Commission, "Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation – European Regional Fund and Cohesion Fund", January 2014. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf>

ted to development projects M&E were of great importance for a conceptual understanding of these categories, however, the purpose of the study requires a special focus on public policy, more specifically on the examination of systems and structures necessary for conducting M&E. The underlying reason for such a focus is the underdeveloped policy M&E system in Serbia, the previously described conditions regarding the accession negotiations, as well as the need for a strategic consideration of the possibilities for CSO participation and contribution to these processes.

The study is divided into five chapters. Following the first, introductory chapter, the second chapter provides the analytical framework, introducing the reader to the basics of the monitoring and evaluation concepts and CSO involvement in those activities. The third chapter provides an overview of the situation related to the situation in Serbia – the legal and institutional framework, as well as the existing practices of CSO involvement in M&E. The evaluation of three options for building an M&E system in Serbia are given in the fourth chapter, on the basis of the examined models of Lithuania, Finland and the European Union. Finally, the fifth chapter summarises the research results and gives arguments for the selection of one of presented options, including a number of general recommendations.

II. Policy Monitoring and Evaluation and the Role of Civil Society – Analytical Framework

II.1. What is Monitoring and What is Evaluation?

Despite the fact that the two notions are most often being used jointly, as a syntagma, monitoring and evaluation are two separate concepts, with their own definitions, logic and methods of conducting. Monitoring is a systematic data collection for the purpose of gaining insight in particular policies at a given time in relation to targets and results.[8] Data collection is performed by monitoring the developed indicators, which should be logically and content-wise related to the identified goals. Information collected in this way (based on monitoring of indicators) serves as a basis for the notification on the development of policies/programmes, which also gives an insight into the perceived problems during the intervention. Evaluation is a logical continuation of the monitoring process: based on the collected data and information from monitoring, evaluation analyses and measures the impact of the implemented policy. Evaluation provides data, which show if the desired effects are achieved and answers the question of why targets and outcomes are or are not being achieved.[9] The main task of evaluation is to use the information gained through monitoring to determine the relevance and sustainability of the given policy by observing the impact it had, the achieved effects and reached goals.[10] In that regard, evaluation should provide credible and useful information for incorporating the lessons learned into decision-making and policymaking processes.[11] In the best-case scenario, evaluation will offer a comparative insight into *ex ante* and *ex post* situation and analysis of positive and/or negative developments during the intervention.[12]

Therefore, by comparing the two definitions, it can be concluded that they are distinct but yet complementary. Unlike evaluation, monitoring is limited to the relation between the implementation and the outcomes of the accomplished activities.[13] While monitoring provides information on the situation and status of a policy at a given time in relation to the targets, evaluation aims to explain why targets and outcomes are or are not achieved. The complementarity is illustrated by the fact that if a monitoring system sends signals that the intervention going off track, then an information gained through evaluation helps clarify the reality and changes noticed.[14]

A systematic policy M&E first developed in the United States before the World War I, in the social policy field: e.g. researches were conducted on topics such as literacy of the population and on the decrease of the mortality rates. By the third decade of the 20th century, social scientists developed rigorous research methods for assessing social programmes in numerous fields.[15] After the World War II, an intensive development of programme measurements evaluation emerged on the European continent as well, and scientific articles and books on evaluation research encountered a rapid growth. At the beginning, the evaluations were initialised and designed by the social scientists. Eventually, decision-makers started to show interest in the evaluations of the scientists due to the qu-

[8] J. Z. Kuzek, R. C. Rist, "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System", The World Bank, 2004, p. 13.

[9] J. Z. Kuzek, R. C. Rist, "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System", The World Bank, 2004, p. 13.

[10] J. Z. Kuzek, R. C. Rist, "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System", The World Bank, 2004, p. 12.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] Monitoring and Evaluation, Chapter 5, available at: <http://www.ifad.org/hfs/tools/hfs/bsfpub/bsf_7.pdf>

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] Kuzek, Rist, op. cit., str. 13.

[15] H. Peter Rossi, Mark W. Lipsey, Howard E. Freeman, "Evaluation: A Systematic Approach", seventh edition, Sage Publications, Inc., 2004, p. 8.

Table 1: Complementary Roles of M&E [16]

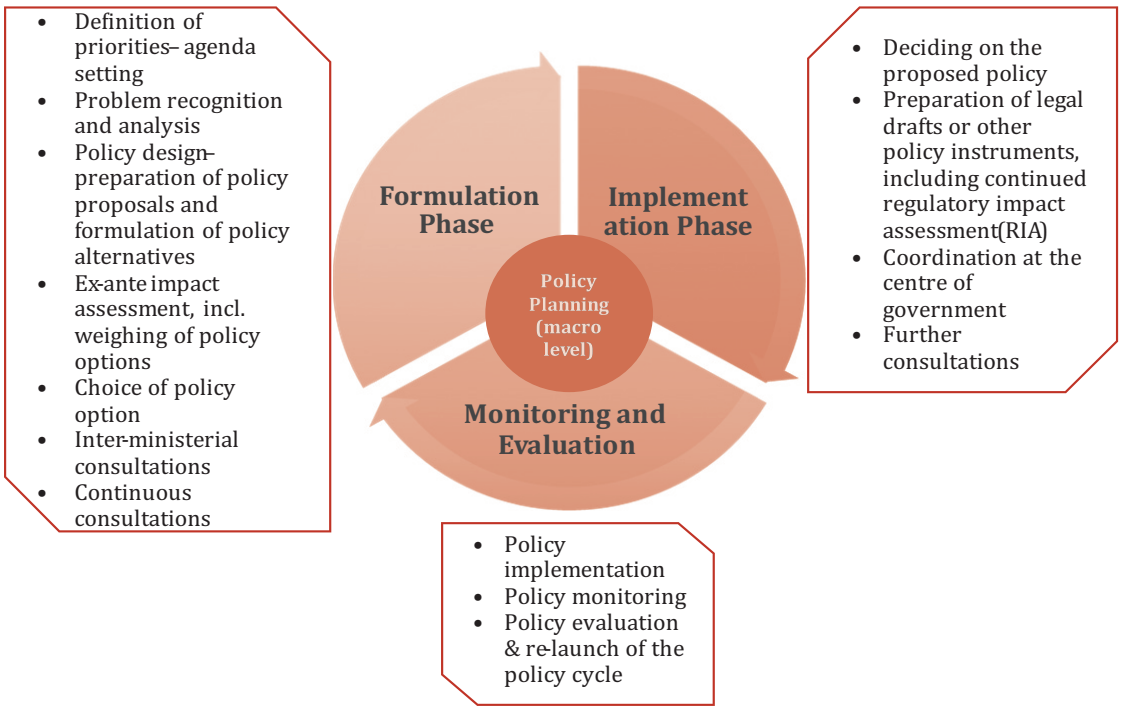
Monitoring	Evaluation
• Clarifies programme objectives	• Analysis why intended results are or are not achieved
• Links activities to their objectives	• Examines the implementation process
• Translates objectives into performance indicators	• Explores unintended results
• Collects data on indicators and compares actual results with targets	• Provides insight for "lessons learned"
• Reports on policy development and draws attention on problems	• Points on positive aspects of policy implementation
	• Provides recommendations for improvement/change of the given policy

ality of their work and findings. That today evolved into a situation when public authorities, administration and general public are the main drivers of the evaluation activities.[17]

The Place of M&E in the Policy Cycle

If policymaking is seen as a continuous cycle, starting from the policy formulation phase and continuing with policy implementation, policy M&E are conducted in the last stage of the cycle, when it is necessary to assess the effectiveness

Diagram 1: Policy cycle [18]

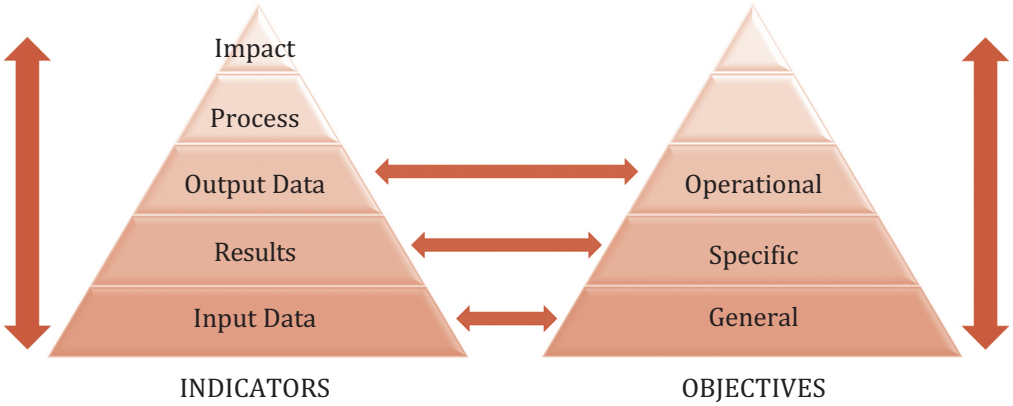


[16] Based on UNAIDS, "Basic Terminology and Frameworks for Monitoring and Evaluation", UNAIDS, 2009. and J. Z. Kuzek, R. C. Rist, "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System", The World Bank, 2004, p. 15.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 9.

[18] Based on: Milena Lazarević, Sena Marić and Amanda Orza, "Policymaking and EU Accession Negotiations: Getting Results for Serbia," European Policy Centre, GIZ, December 2013, p.15.

Diagram 2: Interconnectedness between the basic elements of monitoring and evaluation[19]



of the given policy and bring a decision on its future steps (Diagram 1).

All three stages of policymaking are inter-dependent and inter-linked.[20] For successful M&E it is important to predefine the desired results and indicators for measuring target achievement during the policy formulation phase. If policy foundations are well-laid, through proper policy formulation, the second stage – policy implementation – is also likely to be successfully realised. As each implementation has its flaws, the role of M&E is precisely to point out these limits. The indicators and targets, predefined in the first policymaking stage, as well as implementation experience, should serve as benchmarks, which will provide answers to the question of whether and to what extent it is necessary to revise and improve the existing policy. If properly carried out, M&E offers a constant source of feedback which helps policymakers to achieve the desired results.[21]

Benefits of Policy M&E

Depending on the context, the M&E system has different purposes and objectives, which can be interconnected and complementary, and can roughly be sorted as follows:

- *Reporting (ethical purpose):* Informing citizens and policymakers on the outcomes of a certain policy: the way in which the policy has been implemented and the extent to which its objectives have been achieved. This indirectly encourages decision-maker accountability, as well as an increased awareness and need for evidence-based policy making.

- *Better management (managerial purpose):* Policy M&E provides answers relevant for the internal organisation and rational human and financial resources management of state institutions responsible for the given policy.

- *Decision initiation* (*decision-making purpose*): M&E results serve as an engine for driving decisions about whether to continue, change or terminate the way in which a particular policy is being led.

- *Learning (development purpose):* The M&E system helps public administration authorities to better understand the processes and goals of the policies in which they are engaged.[22]

The benefits of a well-established and functioning policy M&E system are numerous for both decision makers and public administration institutions on the one hand, and for external stakeholders, on the other.

- *For public administration:* Information continuously acquired through the M&E system allows policymakers and civil servants to learn from their mistakes and improve their work and efficiency.

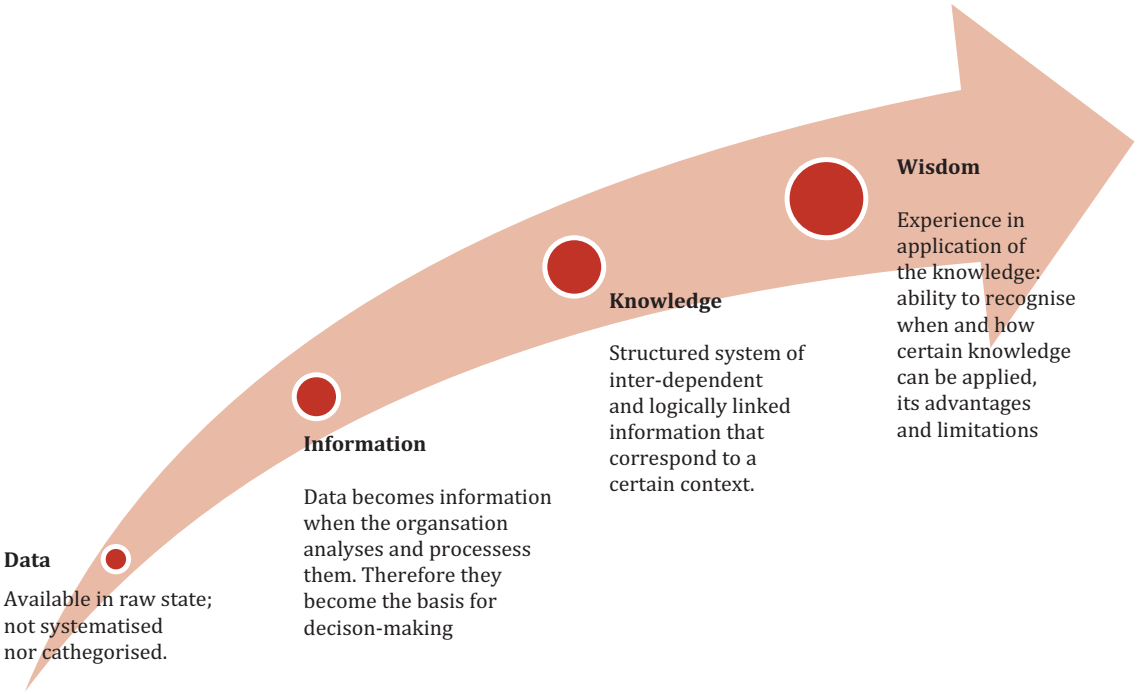
[19] Based on interview with officials from European Commission Secretariat-General for Evaluation, Brussels, 1 April 2014.

[20] For more on policy formulation, see Milena Lazarević, Sena Marić and Amanda Orza, "Policymaking and EU Accession Negotiations: Getting Results for Serbia," European Policy Centre, GIZ, December 2013.

[21] J. Z. Ruzek, R. C. Rist, "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System," The World Bank, 2004, p. xii.

[22] Adapted from Linda G. Morra Imas, Ray C. Rist, "Put do rezultata: Dizajniranje i provođenje efektivnih razvojnih evaluacija," World Bank, 2009, p. 11.

Diagram 3: From data through information to knowledge[23]



- *For external actors* (citizens, CSOs, business associations and others): Data obtained through M&E are used for assessing government work, as well as measuring its results, drawing conclusions and making decisions regarding future steps.

An effective M&E system actually increases state actor responsibility in terms of achieving the promised results. At the same time, M&E can be seen as tools for building trust between the state and citizens as well as a constructive partnership between public administration and non-governmental actors, who can both mutually benefit from the M&E system.

Selecting Data for Conducting M&E

One of the conditions for effectively conducting M&E is to establish an evidence-base or to gather data that will be most useful for building M&E system. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a data selection methodology, which meets technical standards, while at the same time provides usable data. In other words, the challenge is to find a proper balance between the rigorous technical data requirements – verifiable and reliable data, on the one hand, and data relevance, i.e. the data that will have a utility value, on the other hand, because if one of these components is missing, the data will be obsolete. For this reason, it is necessary to find a formula that will help render credible and methodologically rigorous data understandable and usable.

A variety of relevant actors who formally or informally assess and criticise the processes or outcomes of a certain policy are involved in the M&E system.[24] In general, actors included in government policy M&E can be divided in two groups:

- *Data providers* – individuals or organisations who are a source of useful information for the purposes of policy M&E (statistical offices, institutes, civil society organisations, research centres, etc.)

- *Data users* – individuals or organisations who use the information obtained through M&E for drawing their own conclusions and making decisions about their future actions.

[23] According to: R. Daft, "Organization Theory and Design," South-Western, Cengage Learning, 2013; R. M. Burton, B. Obel, G. DeSanctis, "Organizational Design: A Step by Step Approach," Cambridge. Second edition, 2011.

[24] M. Howlett, M. Ramesh, "Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems," Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 207.

To ensure the successful functioning of the M&E system, data providers and data users need to work closely together. However, their cooperation is most often faced with various challenges.

The initial challenge when it comes to the actors is *how to overcome the gap and foster dialogue between these two groups* – data providers and data users – who rarely cooperate.[25] On the one hand, data producers know how to collect and generate relevant data, while on the other hand, data beneficiaries know what data they need, when and why.[26] The gap mostly lies in the fact that the data generated by the providers, no matter how technically correct and reliable, is not at the same time the exact data needed by users – it is not relevant enough. How to acquire data and how to critically approach it is becoming an increasing important skill for policymakers. Without such knowledge it is difficult to ensure demand for evidence and data and consequently, to establish the practical usability of the data.[27]

Another big challenge in terms of cooperation between the data providers and data users lies in compliance with the neutrality requirement. The issue of the neutrality of the actors who have been entrusted with preparing M&E studies on certain policies is one of the key challenges in terms of ensuring validity and credibility. Comparative practice shows that M&E reports can be prepared internally – by the competent ministerial department, or by external actors – scientific institutes, research CSOs, consultancies or a consortium of organisations, engaged by the government via tender process. Self-evaluation by state actors *per se,* raises concerns about neutrality, however, it is essential in terms of encouraging a sense of "ownership" and responsibility over a given policy. In addition, self-evaluation is useful for identifying the limits and challenges of the internal organisation and management.[28] On the other hand, the neutrality and independence of the evaluations conducted by organisations engaged by the state is questionable, since it is in their interest that the government is satisfied with the findings and tone of the reports so that they may be rehired in the future as well.[29] Finally, although independent expert organisations and institutes represent neutral actors conducting evaluations, in light of their narrow expertise in particular areas, they often unrealistically estimate the benefits of a given policy or overemphasise the possible risks as a result of selecting the wrong methodology and data for the purposes of M&E.[30] The question of neutrality in the M&E process is thoroughly discussed in Chapter III.

II.1.a. Prerequisites for a Functioning System of Government Policy M&E

A functioning policy M&E system is considered to be a system that is (1) cost-efficient and (2) effective in terms of its performance. Building a functioning system of government policy M&E requires fulfilling several important prerequisites of a political, administrative, technical, technological and human nature. These preconditions can be systematised in two groups: (1) building capacity for establishing a functional M&E system (2) building a M&E culture.

Building Capacity for Establishing a Functional M&E System

In order to develop a functioning policy M&E system, political prerequisites should be addressed first. This implies a strong political determination of decision-makers to introduce a M&E system and practices, to publicly release data on their work plan and to provide insight into the distribution of the state budget, all of this must be supported by data acquired through the constant updating of the statistical database. While a functioning M&E system is on the one hand, a useful tool for evidence-based decision-making, on the other hand it may impose limits on decision-makers, since the commitment to a particular policy course and the obligation to report information decrease the space for political manoeuvring.[31] It is therefore no wonder that establishing a continuous and sustainable M&E system in countries with

[25] Marco Segone, presentation "Country-led M&E Systems," UNICEF CEE/CIS, 2009. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezfl7NrqE9E>.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] T. Tzavaras Catsambas, S. De Silva; D. Dhar, "Evaluation and Civil Society: Stakeholder's Perspectives on National Capacity Developments," UNICEF, 2009, p. 30.

[28] Telephone interview with a former high-level employee of the Government of Lithuania, 30January 2014.

[29] Interview with a SIGMA representative, Belgrade 16 January 2014.

[30] Interview with a SIGMA representative, Paris, 31 January 2014.

[31] J. Z. Ruzek, R. C. Rist, "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System," The World Bank, 2004, p. 21.

an underdeveloped democratic political culture poses a specific challenge.

Along with securing political support for the establishment of a M&E system, it is necessary to ensure that the technical requirements are met – the administrative and technical capacity-building of the public administration. In other words, it is necessary to establish a methodology for creating indicators and a methodology for collecting and analysing performance data in relation to the indicators set. In that regard, in order to conduct M&E and measure policy outcomes, it is essential that the state has solid statistical capacity – accurate, verifiable, transparent data that is publicly available.[32]

Fulfilment of the political and technical prerequisites will not lead to a functioning M&E system unless state officials possess the skills to manage the available methodology and data. Therefore, in parallel with the establishment of a M&E system, the strengthening of the capacity of civil servants to conduct analyses and use data for policy M&E is needed.[33] One of the main challenges with respect to training civil servants is how to select relevant data which will be useful for M&E, and how to manage the available data, much of which adds no value to this process.[34] Specifically, high-level civil servants (i.e. Assistant Ministers) should be trained in strategic evaluation planning, conducting evaluations, and promoting and using the evaluation results in further activities.[35] Moreover, middle-level civil servants (Heads of Departments and Sectors) should be trained in understanding the role and importance of evaluation and managing the process.[36]

Building a M&E Culture

Besides developing technical capacity, building an efficient and effective policy M&E system requires raising awareness among citizens and decision-makers. In order to stimulate the M&E process, a data collection practice should exist, but that is not the only factor. It is essential that society as a whole believes that such practices will have a beneficial impact on society and its progress, and that they therefore need to be developed. In other words, society has to foster a policy M&E culture.

Culture can be defined as a unique system of shared behavioural assumptions, beliefs, values and norms common to a certain group of people, organization or a society as a whole in a certain period of time.[37] Every society is at some point characterised by specific beliefs, lifestyles and behaviours. In the context of policy M&E, there are cultures that highly value M&E as an important activity in the policy-making process, and there are those that do not recognise the importance of these activities. A stable environment, in which M&E are fostered, places a highly value on the performance and results of a certain policy, seeks for evidence and considers evidence as truly pertinent in the decision-making process. Consequently, "evaluation culture" is defined as a culture which decisively monitors information on policy performance for the purposes of using that information for better management of the policymaking process and provision of better results/effects of implemented policies.[38]

An evaluation culture is characterised by the following: (1) constant and systematic data collection with the aim of reviewing and questioning the actions taken, (2) learning by doing, and (3) an investigative approach to problem solving.[39]

(1) A culture that values M&E has a positive attitude towards systematic data collection because this produces knowledge which is essential to examining its performance and actions. An evaluation culture, therefore, encourages self-examination and self-reflection. The emphasis within this culture is put on:

[32] *Ibid*, p. 22.

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] *Ibid*.

[35] T. Tzavaras Catsambas, S. De Silva; D. Dhar, "Evaluation and Civil Society: Stakeholder's Perspectives on National Capacity Developments," UNICEF, 2009, p. 23.

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] G. Hofstede, "Culture's Consequences," 2nd ed., Sage Publications, 2001.

[38] J. Mayne, "Building an Evaluative Culture for Effective Evaluation and Results Management," ILAC Working Paper 8, Rome Institutional Learning and Change Initiative, 2008; Vladimir Balakirev *et al.,* "New trends in Development Evaluation," M. Segone (ed), UNICEF, 2006.

[39] According to/Adapted from: : J. Mayne, "Building an Evaluative Culture for Effective Evaluation and Results Management," ILAC Working Paper 8, Rome Institutional Learning and Change Initiative, 2008; A. Berthoin Antal, U. Lenhardt, R. Rosenbrock, "Barriers to Organizational Learning," in: M. Dierkes, A. Bethoin, J. Child, I. Nonaka (eds) *Handbook of Organisational Learning & Knowledge*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003; Country-led Evaluations and Systems: Practical experiences of the Central and Eastern European Region, Regional Workshop, Prague, Czech Republic, June 19–20, 2006.

- Consistent and continuous revision of the actions taken by decision-makers;
- Searching for credible and relevant evidence for drawing conclusions on policy effects/impacts;
- Use of data on effects/impact to revise existing activities and find support for their continuation, or termination if their effects are inadequate;
- Fostering continuous dialogue, based on tolerance and diversity, between all parties interested in policy effects.

Focus 1: Evaluation Culture in Finland

According to respondents from Finland, from both the governmental and non-governmental sectors, the evaluation culture in Finland is highly developed. It is characterised by: good cooperation between data producers and data users; public opinion that demands reasonable and evidence-based decision--making; and a high level of usability of evaluation results, which is manifested through the incorporation of findings into the policy-making process. Representatives of the Labour Institute for Economic Research, an independent research institute, believe that the evaluation culture in Finland has not been developed to the same extent as in the case of the UK for example; however, as the most important element they stress the fact that state actors in Finland do not prevents the publishing of scientific results acquired through research. On the contrary, critical assessments of government performance are highly valued by government actors.[40] A respondent from the Ministry of Social Affairs emphasised that the evaluation culture has further improved with Finland's membership in the EU (Finland acceded to the EU in 1995), since every EU directive requires ex ante and ex post impact assessment.[41]

(2) A culture that highly values M&E encourages learning from its own experience as well as from that of others, systematically working to gather evidence that will substantiate the validity of certain actions, or confirm and prove that certain decisions were inadequate and therefore their implementation should be stopped (experience, evidence-based learning). Learning can occur based on proper experience (learning by doing) or based on the experience of others (learning by listening and observing – vicarious learning).[42]

For this to be feasible, it is necessary:

- To offer the possibility of analysing past actions;
- To designate the time for learning from experience based on the performance monitoring of existing or previous actions taken by the government and competent ministries;
- That information regarding poor results is made available for assessment and processing, so that useful recommendations for future actions can be provided;
- To provide stimulus and support for the dissemination and transfer of knowledge;
- To consistently develop mechanisms for the creation, transfer and retention of knowledge;
- To provide the opportunity to learn from others (e.g. best practices benchmarking).

Focus 2: Evaluation Culture in Lithuania – The Case of Increased Accountability of Public Enterprises [43]

Government Coordination Centre (GCC) is an independent institution under the Privatisation Agency, whose main function is to monitor public enterprises, provide advice and guidance for their proper development and analyse their results. After examining the work reports that enterprises are required to submit four times a year, GCC prepares quarterly reports that assess the companies' performances, and then publishes a comprehensive annual report evaluating their work and results. The purpose of this institution is

[40] Interview with Mr. Heikki Taimi, Labour Institute for Economic Research, Helsinki, 26 May 2014.

[41] Interview with Mr. Koho Arto, Advisor to the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health of Finland Helsinki, 27 May 2014.

[42] Adapted from: A. Berthoin Antal, U. Lenhardt, R. Rosenbrock, "Barriers to Organizational Learning", u: M. Dierkes, A. Bethoin, J. Child, I. Nonaka (eds) *Handbook of Organisational Learning&Knowledge*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003.

[43] Interview with Mr. Marius Barys, Director, Government Coordination Centre, Vilnius, 17 March 2014.

to make the work of public enterprises more transparent and to increase management accountability for running a good business and producing better results. Awareness that public companies were not being efficiently managed existed when this institution was established. There was also strong pressure and support from the business community. In the past three years, GCC has significantly contributed to increasing the transparency of state institutions, promoting learning based on past mistakes and on the experience of public enterprises in other countries, particularly in Scandinavia. GCC has received a very positive response from the business community, since the money from the state budget allocated for private sector development increases if public enterprises operate more efficiently.

(3) A culture that highly values M&E encourages investigation and research as an approach to solving problems and implementing changes. Investigation (exploration) includes problem solving through experimenting with new types of activities and procedures, taking risks and innovation. That implies:[44]

- Searching for methods to ensure a better and more efficient performance of activities;
- Supporting risk taking.

On the other hand, a weak evaluation culture is characterised by the following:

- Data on policy performance is collected, but is not used for improving the actual policy in question;
- Data on policy performance is collected, but is not communicated to the public and/or is not available;
- The necessity for learning from experience and based on policy performance is recognised, but the exact time and method for such learning activities are not determined (unstructured process);
- Evidence-based policymaking is advocated, but in reality the *status quo* is maintained;

Finally, in the extreme case, there is the situation in which performance data is not collected at all, society does not show a defined awareness on the importance of questioning policy performance nor the need to use existing knowledge in order to learn something new and apply it to support evidence-based policy making.

Generally speaking, prior to becoming EU Member States and in the immediate years following their accession, Central and Eastern European countries had weak evaluation cultures, mainly due to their political and historical institutional frameworks. The lack of the evaluation culture was reflected in the following:

- Misunderstanding, abuse and lack of evaluation in many cases.
- A negative perception of evaluation, which was replaced by audits or inspections of policies and procedures.
- Lack of communication between the government and the NGO sectors, and inadequate and non-transparent dissemination of evaluation studies and hence their limited use;
- Lack of common norms, indicators and national standards for conducting evaluation.
- Lack of sufficiently developed supply and demand in the evaluation market. Evaluation associations rarely existed, evaluation market participants were isolated, relying on personal contacts, and in some cases local evaluators did not exist at all. On the demand side, a strategy or policy framework for the development of an evaluation community was missing.
- Limited financial and trained human resources for conducting evaluations.[45]

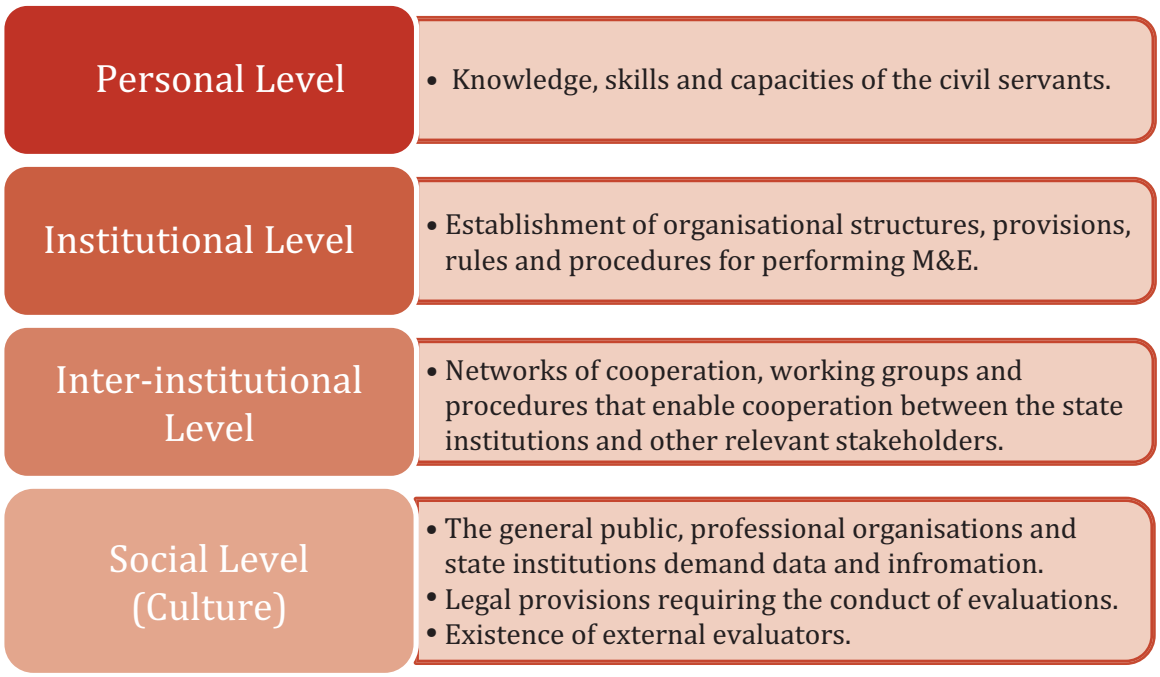
Evidence-based policy making

Countries that need to work on building a public policy M&E system significantly differ in terms of meeting political, technical and human preconditions. Therefore, the possible models

[44] J. Mayne, "Building an Evaluative Culture for Effective Evaluation and Results Management," ILAC Working Paper 8, Rome Institutional Learning and Change Initiative, 2008.

[45] Country-led Evaluations and Systems: Practical experiences of the Central and Eastern European Region, Regional Workshop, Prague, Czech Republic, June 19–20, 2006. <http://www.ideas-int.org/home/index.cfm?navID=1&itemID=1&CFID=846584&CFTOKEN=22211385>

Diagram 4: The levels of evaluation capacity building [45]



for building a M&E system should reflect a country's specific needs and current capacity. In relation to meeting the preconditions for building a national M&E system, countries can be classified into four groups:

- The first group consists of countries with a low level of evidence and data availability, where decision-makers lack strong managerial skills as well as the capacity to use them. There is no evidence-based but rather opinion-based policymaking in these countries. Due to such conditions, policymaking very often does not lead to the desired results. It is necessary for these countries to adopt measures and build a M&E system that will at the same time focus on increasing both evidence supply and demand, and on improving the dialogue between data producers and data users.[47]

- The second group includes countries that show a strong awareness and need for evidence-based policymaking, but lack the technical capacity. These countries need to build a M&E system that will focus on increasing availability and enhancing quality of data, while both balancing measures for improving the evidence base, and ensuring a sustainable national evaluation system.[48]

- Contrary to the previous case, the third group includes countries that have a strong basis for evidence collection and management, but lack the political will and "demand" by decision makers to ensure its use during policy-making, or decision makers lack capacity for that purpose. In this given case, it is necessary to build a system with an emphasis on fostering dialogue between data producers and data users, as well as on measures which will increase the demand for data and evidence.[49]

- The fourth group relates to countries in which evidence and data are available and are properly used for the purpose of M&E. Data producers and data beneficiaries complement each other and cooperate efficiently. This represents an ideal case that is entirely non-existent in practice, but it is something that developed countries strive towards.[50]

[46] Adapted from: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania, "Evaluation Capacity Building in Lithuania: Experience and Lessons", 2013, p. 9 and Marco Segone, "National Evaluation Capacity Development: conceptual framework", UNICEF, slide 13, available at: <http://www.slideshare.net/globalfinland/evaluation-capacity-development-in-partner-countries-marco-segone-unicef>

[47] *Ibid,* p. 31.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *Ibid*, p. 32.

[50] *Ibid.*

Table 2: Positioning depending on data availability and the level of decision-makers' awareness[51]

DECISION-MAKERS' AWARENESS (CULTURE)	DATA AVAILABILITY	
	Weak	Strong
Weak	GROUP I	GROUP III
Strong	GROUP II	GROUP IV

An institutionally grounded and functioning M&E system is a characteristic of countries with a developed evaluation culture and evidence-based policy making. In order to ensure the selection of the best option for formulating a certain policy, it is necessary to make sure that political decisions are backed up with evidence and relevant data. This is achieved through ex ante impact assessment during the policy designing phase, as well as through retrospective evaluation, during or after policy implementation.[51] When observing policymaking as a constant cycle, M&E would, as mentioned, come after the policy formulation and policy implementation phases. However, even though it is useful to make distinctions between the basic policy phases in order to properly understand the policy cycle, it should be noted that all the phases are interconnected and inter-dependent. That means that ex ante impact assessment, conducted during the policy formulation phase, and retrospective evaluation complement each other: evaluations rely on impact assessments in order to identify the anticipated policy implementation methods, while the already conducted evaluations contribute to impact assessment with respect to determining whether a certain policy has been successfully implemented in comparison to expectations and whether there is a potential need for its revision.[53]

M&E systems have been built in countries that practise evidence-based policymaking for it is impossible to foresee with certainty all of the effects of a policy. Namely, after the government decides to design a policy in a certain way, unexpected changes and results may occur during implementation since the policy is not only affected by particular government interventions, but also by other factors. This makes it more difficult to understand the influence of government interventions and their effect on individual policy.[54] Therefore, even if during the formulation phase options are selected based on evidence and through an inclusive and transparent process, unexpected and unknown effects of the chosen options prompt the need for constant and continuous M&E.

Performing M&E helps improve the quality of policymaking as it reveals policy implementation problems, problems caused by unforeseen circumstances, changes caused by intervention and in general, lessons that should serve for better policy planning and implementation. The scope of the M&E system will largely be determined by the level of development of policy planning, policy formulation and policy implementation aspects of policymaking. For instance, if the government work programme, strategic documents and their implementation are not in line with each other and no mechanism for monitoring their relation and compliance exists, it will be extremely difficult to assess the achievement of the targets set in these documents. In contrast, under ideal conditions, it is desirable that M&E are closely linked to policy planning and policy formulation. On the one hand, when determining a course of government action it is important to set a method and timeframe for conducting M&E, already at an early stage. On the other hand, M&E results should be used and incorporated in the

[51] European Commission, DG Secretariat General, "Public Consultation on Commission Guidelines for Evaluation," November 2013, p. 6.

[52] Adapted from: Marco Segone, presentation "Country-led M&E Systems," UNICEF CEE/CIS, 2009. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezfl7NrqE9E>

[53] *Ibid*, p. 7.

[54] Peter Rossi, Mark Lipsey and Howard Freeman, "Evaluation – a Systematic Approach," SAGE publications, 7th edition, 2004, p. 219.

Diagram 5: Dependence of policy phases and strategic planning on M&E (Source: authors' data compilation)

next policy cycle.[55] Monitoring and evaluation are a key component of evidence-based policy making, serving as a mechanism for enhancing the quality of decisions made and the efficiency of their application.[56]

Focus 3: The Place of Evidence-Based Policymaking in M&E

Within the framework of the European Commission's *Smart Regulation*, evaluations are a key component with respect to providing critical evidence-based analyses of present or already implemented EU policies and programmes. *Smart Regulation* covers the whole policy cycle – from policy planning and formulation, through decision-making, to evaluation and revision, in order to ensure that political choices are made based on the most reliable data and evidence. Evaluations are used to assess whether interventions have met the requirements and expectations. Thorough evaluations are useful for learning by doing and learning from mistakes, and the knowledge gained is then incorporated into the decision-making process. In that way the quality and impact of the next planned actions is enhanced.[57] Most EU Member States use the Commission's "Evaluation Guidelines", which are formed on the basis of *Smart Regulation* principles.[58]

Lithuania, as an EU Member State since 2004, over the past 10 years has greatly improved its policy-making system, which is largely due to the pressure and needs arising from EU membership.[59] Lithuania is, after Estonia, the most successful Member State in terms of absorption rates of EU structural funds (70.8% in 2013)[60], which is a testament to the success of its public administration in properly designing, programming, implementing and evaluating the performance of programmes

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] Ministry of Finance of Republic of Finland, "Governments for the Future – Main Report," Novembar 2013, p. 9.

[57] European Commission, op. cit., p. 6.

[58] Interview with representatives of the Secretariat-General of the European Commission, Brussels, 1 April 2014.

[59] Interview with researchers from Public Policy and Management, Vilnius, 17 March 2014.

[60] Inside Europe, „"Absorption rates - Structural and Cohesion Funds - EU-27," available at: <http://www.insideurope.eu/node/403#sthash.56c9J2xa.dpuf>

conducted through structural funds. The rigorousness and complexity of the Commission's assessments have positively impacted Lithuania, leading it to develop and improve its policymaking system, with a particular focus on M&E (see more in Chapter V.1).

The policymaking system in Finland is characterised by a very rich market of data collectors and producers. It includes the official national statistical agency, government agencies, health, social security and welfare funds, as well as public scientific institutes and local authorities. All of them provide a rich source of data and information, which is used as a starting input in deciding on the course of a future policy. Apart from them, independent academic institutes, who primarily deal with economic issues, also occupy an important position when it comes to the production of information and evidence; their studies and analyses are regularly requested by state authorities. The received data is used, checked and updated continuously, throughout the entire policy cycle.

II.1.c. How to Measure Policy Results?

There are three M&E methods in the comparative practise of European countries: (1) classic method (2) results-based method, and (3) "hybrid" method, a mixture of the classic and results-based methods.

The classic way of conducting M&E is based on observing policy implementation – a continuous process of collecting and analysing information and comparing it to see if the policy has been properly implemented in relation to the expected results.[61] This type of M&E is designed in order to provide information on administrating, implementing and managing intervention. It fits with "process oriented evaluation," which tends to provide answers on how, why and under what conditions policy targets have or have not been achieved. Process oriented evaluation usually seeks information about the contextual factors, mechanisms and processes which determine the success of a particular policy.[62]

The deficiencies of the classic M&E approach based on observing the implementation process, have led to the development of results--based monitoring and evaluation. Results-based M&E record policy results in relation to the achievement of specific, measurable, feasible, relevant and time-limited targets set in advance. Results-based monitoring can be defined as a management strategy that focuses on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts.[63] Accordingly, impact evaluation attempts to addresses the question of policy impact on specific outcomes for different target groups. In addition, it provides policy impact assessment, both on the basis of the expected results outlined in the initial plan and compared to another policy, or using counter factual analysis.[64]

These definitions signify that results-based M&E do not exclude the classic, process-oriented method, but they use its findings to go a step further to monitor the way in which implementation leads to achieving targets. Therefore, results-based monitoring implies both monitoring of implementation and monitoring of results. Monitoring of policy impact involves collecting data on performance quality, based on specific guidelines that had been developed.[65]

Traditional systems focused on implementation have been designed in order to provide answers to questions concerning the compliance between the targets and achieved activities, and questions of whether and to what extent a certain policy has been implemented. The questions asked are: "Have the necessary resources been mobilised? Have the set activities been conducted? Have the planned outputs (e.g. certain services) been achieved?" This approach is focused on providing answers concerning the very process of policy implementation. However, it is inadequate for understanding the reasons behind the success or failure of a policy, and that is exactly the advantage of a results--based approach. A results-based approach is suitable for measuring the way in which results

[61] J. Z. Ruzek, R. C. Rist, "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System," The World Bank, 2004, p. 16.

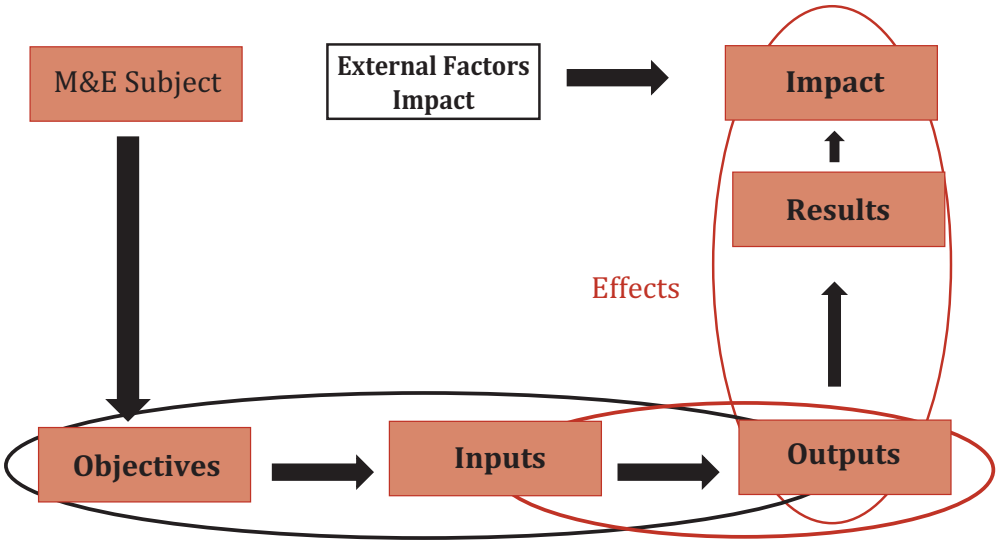
[62] Government of the United Kingdom, HM Treasury, "The Magenta Book: guidance notes for policy evaluation and analysis," HM Treasury, 2011, p. 11.

[63] N. Lamhauge, E. Lanzi and S. Agrawala, "Monitoring and Evaluation for Adaptation: Lessons from Development Co--operation Agencies," OECD Environment Working Papers, No. 38, OECD Publishing, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kg20mj6c2bw-en>

[64] The Magenta Book, *op.cit.,* p. 11.

[65] J. Z. Ruzek, R. C. Rist, "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System," The World Bank, 2004, p. 24.

Diagram 6: The logic of intervention [65]



are achieved, by observing the broader context in which the policy is implemented.

The main advantages of a results-based M&E system are the following:

- Evidence on results: for every benchmark it is necessary to build a system that will provide information on its progress;
- Learning effect: knowledge about what works well and where adjustments are needed;
- Management and control: making strategic and management decisions based on data monitoring;
- Dialogue with partners on the chosen strategy and operational planning;

Table 3: Differences between the traditional and the new approach to policy monitoring [66]

Elements of implementation-based monitoring	Elements of results-based monitoring
• Description of the problems and situation before intervention • Benchmarks for activities and immediate verification sources; • Collection of data on inputs, activities and outputs; • Systematic reporting on inputs • Systematic reporting on outputs • Direct link to intervention (or a series of interventions) • Provides information on administration, implementation and management versus wider questions of intervention effectiveness	• Baseline data describes the problem or situation before intervention • Indicators for outputs • Collection of data on short-term outputs/results as well as on whether and in which way they contribute to the achievement of outcomes • Stronger focus on perception of modification among the relevant actors • Systematic reporting with more qualitative and quantitative information on progress towards expected impact • Cooperation with strategic partners • Provides information on the success or failure of partnerships in achieving desired results.

[66] Based on: European Commission, DG Secretariat General, "Evaluation Guidelines," November 2013, p. 8.

[67] J. Z. Ruzek, R. C. Rist, "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System," The World Bank 2004, p. 17.

By combining and connecting implementation progress with progress in achieving the desired objectives or results of a government policy and programme, M&E are useful tools of public administration.[68]

Focus 4: Ten steps for designing, building and sustaining a results-based M&E system[69]

1. Conducting a readiness assessment; analysis of current state.
2. Agreeing on which outcomes to monitor and evaluate.
3. Selecting key indicators to monitor outcomes.
4. Analysing baseline data on indicators.
5. Selecting realistic targets.
6. Monitoring results.
7. Conducting evaluation.
8. Reporting findings.
9. Using findings.
10. Sustaining the M&E system within the organisation.

II.2. CSOs in Monitoring and Evaluation: Context and Comparative Practice

In the situation where the state is not the sole actor with a monopoly over information, decision-makers face problems relating to the utility of available information and knowledge during policy planning and making. Until two decades ago, efforts to improve good governance had primarily been focused on strengthening the very government – its administrative capacity, audit mechanisms, independent agencies etc. However, due to the "information revolution," the "top-bottom" approach to enhancing public accountability showed only partial success in establishing good governance, in both developed and developing countries.

Namely, successful governance in countries with a democratic political culture requires two-way communication and ensuring that citizens, articulating their interests, are heard and involved in the policymaking process. For this reason, there have been growing demands for a "bottom-up" approach, meaning increased engagement of citizens and CSOs in holding authorities accountable.[70] The concept of social accountability is, in that sense, useful in explaining the phenomenon of political accountability based on direct or indirect civil sector engagement in governance:[71] civil society organisations (CSOs) engage in activities that pressure authorities to behave in a politically responsible manner, while at the same time promote critical thinking and raise citizens' awareness and interest in socio-political issues.

Over the last three decades, European countries have seen a significant decrease in voter turnout, as well as in political participation in general. The European Parliament elections, held in May 2014, also affirmed this and revived the debate on the EU's "democratic deficit". Accordingly, an active civil society is regarded as a solution to the deficiencies of representative democracy, upon which EU Member States are founded. Namely, citizens in representative democracies delegate their power to a group of representatives, who are then, within the scope of their mandate, to a certain level independent and often alienated from voters.[72] Civil society plays an essential role in preventing the growth of the gap between the voters and the elected: through their activism, exerting pressure on government officials and advocating and channelling requests through institutional mechanisms, they trigger an increased political and social engagement of citizens. Civil society activism, therefore, contributes to making representative democracy more participative. It is in that light that the concept of "participatory democracy" has emerged.[73]

[68] Linda G. Morra Imas, Ray C. Rist, "Put do rezultata: dizajniranje i provođenje efektivne razvojne evaluacije," World Bank, 2009, p. 109.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[70] Carmen Malena, "The Role of Civil Society in Holding the Government Accountable: a Perspective from the World Bank on the Concept and Emerging Practice of Social Accountability", World Bank, 2004, str. 5.

[71] *Ibid.*, str. 7.

[72] Enrique Peruzzotti, "The Workings of Social Accountability: Context and Conditions". Workshop Generating Genuine Demand with Social Accountability Mechanisms, World Bank Office, Paris, 2nd November 2007.

[73] Carne Ross, "The Leaderless Revolution: How Ordinary People Can Take Power and Change Politics in the 21st Century," Simon & Schuster, 2011.

Focus 5: Models of CSO contribution to good governance [73]

1. Building state capability
   a. Participatory policy and budget formulation
   b. Delivering basic services
   c. Providing training to civil servants
   d. Delivering civic education; raising citizens' awareness about their rights and freedoms
   e. Mediation to achieve greater efficiency of judiciary (access to justice)
2. Building state accountability
   a. Influencing international standard setting (e.g. lobbying for legislation on transparency, adherence to international commitments on human rights)
   b. Carrying out investigation and research (e.g. monitoring and evaluating government policy through social audits)
   c. Demanding answers from the state (e.g. questioning state institutionsabout progress, parliamentary public hearings)
   d. Applying sanctions where the state is found to be lacking (e.g. protests, boycotts, strikes or negative publicity)
3. Building state responsiveness on the citizens' needs
   a. Identifying and voicing the needs of citizens
   b. Pursuing social inclusion through strategies including advocacy, feeding back research results and informing debates and social mobilisation

One way of using social responsibility in order to enhance good governance is through civil sector participation in policy M&E.[75] Bearing in mind the characteristics and differences between monitoring and evaluation, in terms of the skills needed to carry out these tasks, the contributions that can offer in this area are very diverse. Namely, this primarily depends on the internal capacities of CSOs, their profile and the type of activities they do. To ensure a better understanding of the opportunities for CSO involvement in M&E, the following part explains the preconditions for active CSO involvement and classifies different types of CSOs and their characteristics. Afterwards, an analysis of the different models of CSO involvement in M&E will be presented.

II.2.a. Political and Social Preconditions for Involving CSOs in M&E

Democratic principles, such as the freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly, often tend to be taken for granted, without critically examining the question of whether a lack of respect for these values diminishes the significance of CSOs in society. Therefore, the basic preconditions for ensuring effective CSO involvement in the entire policy-making cycle should be examined.

Living conditions in countries with very high poverty rates have a negative impact on civil society development, for they stifle public spirit as well as prospects for social engagement.[76] This statement applies for both developing and transitional countries, such as Serbia. If the majority of citizens must worry first and foremost about meeting their basic survival needs, the chances that they will be motivated to actively participate in public life are very poor.[77]

[74] Nicola Jones, Fletcher Tembo, "Promoting Good Governance through Civil Society–Legislator Linkages", Overseas Development Institute, 2008, p.3.

[75] *Ibid*.

[76] Vukašin Pavlović, "Civilno društvo i demokratija," Official Journal of the Republic of Serbia, 2006, p. 106–109.

[77] Zoran Stojiljković, professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, speech at a round table discussion: "Civil Society in Membership Negotiation between Serbia and EU," 8 May 2014.

An ideological or any other kind of collectivism is another enemy of civil society.[78] If political and social power lies predominantly in the hands of the state and if the state has control over media and the freedom of speech, there will not be much room for CSO activism.

Assuming that the above-mentioned political and social preconditions are met and under the condition that there is "supply and demand", an enabling environment for CSO engagement in policy M&E will be created in countries with democratic values and tradition. On the supply side, this implies that political awareness and a developed "evaluation culture" exists among the political elite and decision-makers, while on the demand side it implies that CSOs possess the knowledge, skills and capacity to act as partners to the state in these activities.

- Political awareness and evaluation culture

Members of the political elite and decision-makers need to be aware of the benefits that this sector and a developed culture of cooperation between the government and NGOs, can bring. Accordingly, a favourable legal and institutional environment for performing M&E should be ensured, which includes a developed legal framework and practice in the field of free access to information of public importance.[79]

- Knowledge and skills of CSOs

On the other hand, CSOs must possess strong internal capacities and analytical skills for M&E. In that sense, these organisations need to constantly work on improving and investing in their human resources. Besides that, CSOs need to be capable of effectively articulating and positioning their interests to government representatives.

- Continuity and sustainability

CSOs will not be able to improve their knowledge and skills if they cannot ensure sustainable funding. Under the conditions that states receive foreign assistance for administrative capacity building M&E processes need to be ongoing and built into the system, rather than dependent on individual and time-bound projects.[80]

In the field of social policy, several different institutional models of cooperation between government and civil society have been observed in countries implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy, particularly in the areas of Strategy implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Those models can be divided into the following groups:[81]

1. Independent "mediator" organisation.

An organisation of this kind typically has external financial sources. In the case of countries implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), this is usually a donor community. This organisation mediates between the government and NGO sector on a series of questions regarding the Strategy: it works on strengthening government institutional capacities for developing and implementing the Strategy, contributes to increasing CSOs' knowledge of public administration and also works on familiarising the governmental sector with the characteri-

Table 4: Different models of cooperation between government and civil sectors in PRS implementation

	Government openness exists	*Government openness does not exist*
Developed civil sector	Civil society integrated into government processes.	Civil society organises itself independently of the government
Underdeveloped civil sector	Civil society significantly represented in government body in charge of M&E	Independent mediator organisation

[78] *Ibid*.

[79] Marie Gildemyn, "Towards an Understanding of Civil Society Organisations' Involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation: Unpacking the Accountability and Feedback Function of M&E," Institute of Development Policy Management, June 2011, p. 19.

[80] One of the conclusions from a round table discussion: "Policy M&E with Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society," held on 26 May 2014 within this project.

[81] The classification is based on the report: "Implementation Process of Poverty Reduction Strategy in Serbia, Recommendations for Including Civil Society", Annex 4: Examples from other countries.

stics of CSOs. Additionally, an independent mediator organisation works on involving CSOs in policy-making, activity planning, as well as in implementation monitoring. Forming an organisation of this kind is suitable when adequate constructive cooperation between the two sectors is lacking. However, in order to sustain for a long period of time and to maintain its independence, the mediator body needs to ensure long-term donor support.

2. Integration of civil sector into government processes

This implies that civil sector representatives are involved in the work of several government bodies that, among other things, deal with issues relevant to the PRS. In order for this institutional arrangement to endure, a high degree of government openness to CSO involvement in government mechanisms must exist. This also implies that civil society representatives possess adequate knowledge and capacities for working within public administration and not succumbing to government influence, and also for communicating efficiently with other civil society representatives in order to maintain the legitimacy of the process. Additionally, countries need to have a strong donor community that will contribute to strengthening civil society development and civil society involvement in key policymaking processes.

A crucial disadvantage of this system is the fact that many civil sector representatives are simultaneously involved in the work of several bodies in order to ensure consistency, meaning that they are expected to invest a large amount of time working on this problems.

3. Civil society organised independently of the government

An example of this is the non-governmental network of CSOs which was formed following the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy in Zambia. This network is financed by international donors and members themselves. Some of its most important activities include CSO capacity building through trainings for PRS monitoring and implementation, publication of documents on poverty, advocacy, and developing policy measures and activities.

Considering that one part of the funding comes from the members of this network, some of the most important preconditions for the effective functioning of this model are CSO coherence, capacity for collective action, as well as the will to cooperate for the purposes of achieving a common goal. Additionally, a strong presence of international organisations who provide financial and technical support to the network's work is also necessary.

4. Government body supporting research and dialogue on poverty

The basic aim of this body is M&E of PRS implementation. Despite the fact that this is a state institution, the majority of the members of this body are representatives of NGOs, the academic community and members of religious organisations and unions. The main task of this body is to collect and analyse data on PRS implementation, conduct research, organise meetings and seminars as well as gather all data bases in one place and record good practice examples.

For this institutional arrangement to function, the government needs to be open and ready to accept that this body, which structurally is predominantly government body, is led by a CSO representative majority. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure that the government takes into account research results while formulating its policies and activities. Finally, long-term financial support for the work of this body after donors withdraw must be ensured.

II.2.b. Profile of CSOs with Capacities to Perform Policy M&E

This section provides a classification of CSOs based on the main type of activities they do. For the purposes of this research, such a classification proved to be most appropriate due to the possibility of identifying CSO potential and limitations in performing M&E activities.

CSOs working directly with citizens

The main feature of these organizations is direct service delivery and support to citizens in the areas of their expertise, for example, by providing psychological and social support to victims of violence; encouraging civic activism in environmental protection; through the provision of legal aid services, etc. Given that they have direct access to target groups, the work of these organisations can serve as credible data for policy monitoring. In Lithuania, CSOs imple-

menting government social welfare programs at the local level are required to submit to the government data obtained through programme implementation and monitoring,[82] while in Finland data obtained from CSOs is not used as an official, but rather as a supplementary source.[83]

Focus 6: Cooperation Between the Government and NGO Sector in Finland

Within the framework of the Cross-sectoral action plan for reducing social exclusion, poverty and health problems developed for the period of 2011-2015 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of the Republic of Finland, one of the seven topics identified is improving the effectiveness of the work of NGOs.

They are considered to be key players in the promotion of health, wellbeing and inclusion, due to their role as providers of services, information and assistance that are excluded from public services. The action plan recognises that cooperation between the public and NGO sectors is needed in order to achieve the objectives in this field and it covers issues such as taxation and funding of non-profit organisations and the need to revise public procurement legislation. Some of measures include strengthening NGOs' role as assistance and special services providers, the allocation of additional funds for this purpose and clarifying provisions on tax exemptions and fundraising.[84]

The main advantage of local "activist" organisations is their direct engagement with citizens, which allows them to collect primary data. This data is then used for measuring the achievement of predetermined indicators and it shows the extent to which the set policy objectives have been met. Therefore, the data collected by these organisations serves for the purposes of policy monitoring, as well as a primary source for assessing the achievement of expectations of a certain policy or programme. The primary contribution of these organisations is therefore the production of data for monitoring purposes.

Focus 7: CSOs as Participants in Monitoring Working Groups

Comparative practice indicates that several models of CSO involvement in M&E exist. One model is consultative work within official working groups and committees in an established system.

In Lithuania, the State Progress Council within the Office of the Prime Minister is an advisory body made of members of the Government (ministers of the most relevant ministries) and independent individuals from the academic and professional community, CSO representatives and business associations. The Council was established with the aim of monitoring progress towards the targets set in the strategic document "Lithuania 2030". During its meetings, the Council discusses strategic issues, policy planning and target achievement, and provides guidelines for further development, taking into account long-term strategic objectives. Council meetings are held twice a month and Committee members receive preparatory material before every meeting. The heads of ministerial departments responsible for strategic planning and analysis participate in the meetings on behalf of the ministers.

Brussels-based think tanks, European Stability Initiative (ESI) and Open Society Foundations – Europe, are actively involved in the monitoring of the EU enlargement policy. Namely, while preparing the annual progress reports for the EU candidate countries and potential candidates, the European Commission invites these think tanks for consultations, during which views are exchanged on the topics that should be included in the reports, and these organisations are invited to present their opinions on each country's progress in various fields. The legitimacy for these thinks tanks to be consulted during the preparation of the annual reports stems from their many years of research in countries covered by enlargement policy. The European Commission values these organisations' suggestions, which is evident in the final Progress Reports, where certain formulations are often based exactly on the suggestions of either of them.[85]

[82] Interview with the Director of the Department for Strategic Planning in the Ministry of Labour and Employment of Lithuania, Vilnius, 18 March 2014.

[83] Interview with the Head of Department for Monitoring and Evaluation in the Ministry of Social Affairs of Finland, Helsinki, 27 May 2014.

[84] Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, brochure on the Action Plan, available at: <http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=42733&name=DLFE-24515.pdf>

[85] Telephone interview with Open Society Foundations researcher, Belgrade, 15 April 2014.

CSOs Engaged in Advocacy, Oversight and Research

CSOs specialized in advocacy activities pressure officials to act socially and politically accountable. These organisations are typically well-established and recognised among the wider general public and also have a strong access to media. Through their activities, these organisations have gained recognition as an independent voice, acting in the general interest.

In terms of policy monitoring, the advantages of these organisations are very significant, since through their activities they draw public attention to the shortcomings of government policy implementation. However, their disadvantage is that they often tend to base their arguments on negative criticism: they do not act in a constructive way, offering certain options and solutions. They lack the analytical and research capacity for these types of activities, and they often have no time and resources for the development of these capacities.

Think tanks and research institutes/centres are non-profit CSOs specialised in policy research. Employees within these organisations typically have solid academic backgrounds and are dedicated to analysis and research. Besides developing new ideas and studies, think tanks desire to have their ideas and findings taken into account by decision-makers and experts, therefore they also advocate, disseminate their ideas and views through the media and organise public meetings.[86]

Focus 8: EU Enlargement Policy

European Stability Initiative (ESI) - a think tank based in Berlin, Istanbul, and Brussels – advocates for changes in enlargement policy, based on its findings resulting from years of monitoring this policy. One of its recent initiatives relates to the introduction of a different progress reporting method for candidate countries: ESI believes that the European Commission's reports are too brief, uninteresting and incomprehensible to the majority of EU and candidate countries citizens, even to those interested in enlargement. In this way, the Commission has been causing aversion among EU citizens towards further enlargement, while at the same time failing to offer a sufficiently transparent and comprehensible assessment of candidate countries' progress. In an effort to gain support for its ideas, ESI has been meeting with Commission officials and diplomats from Member States and presenting their ideas at many scientific gatherings and conferences. According to ESI analysts, their initiative has had positive reception and it could produce tangible changes, judging by the reaction of senior officials of the Commission and Member States.[87]

The potential of research-oriented organisations, in terms of providing support to the government throughout the entire policy-making process, seems to be insufficiently utilised.[88] Namely, these organisations are a great potential resource in terms of "filtrating" large amounts of information and rendering them useful for policymaking: they often serve to bridge the gap between the academic community and decision-makers, serving the public interest as an independent voice capable of transferring and translating applied research into a language and form that are comprehensive, reliable and accessible for both decision makers and the wider general public. These organisations are capable of generating complex research and analysis and providing ideas and arguments which can help policymakers make informed decisions.[89] Organisations with such a profile have a solid basis for developing M&E capacities.

Globally, more frequent implementation of the evaluation and establishment of the evaluators' associations took place in the 1980's, first in Canada, Australia and the USA, and a decade later in Europe. Nowadays, there is quite an extensive network of evaluators' associations internationally, regionally and locally.[90] One of them is IDEAS (International Development Evaluation Association), formed in 2002 in Beijing (China)

[86] There is no uniform definition of think tanks. Studies which cover profiles and impacts of think tanks on policy-making aren't numerous. See: Diane Stone, "Think Tanks and Policy Analysis", u: Frank Fischer, Gerald J. Miller. & Mara S. Sidney (eds.) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Methods, and Politics*, New York, Marcel Dekker Inc. 2006, 149–157; James McGann, "Global Think Tanks: Policy Networks and Governance (Global Institutions)", Routledge, 2011; Stephen Boucher, "Europe and its Think Tanks: a Promise to be fulfilled", Notre Europe, 2004.

[87] Interview with ESI senior analyst, Brussels, 2nd April 2014.

[88] James McGann, "Global Think Tanks: Policy Networks and Governance (Global Institutions)," Routledge, 2011, p.16.

[89] *Ibid*.

[90] For more, see <http://www.evalserbia.com>

as an independent association of professional evaluators, those interested in evaluation and who believe in the importance of seeking credible data which can contribute to the realization of development goals.[91] The mission of the IDEAS network is to improve and expand the practice of evaluation, contribute to the development of knowledge and capacity-building for evaluation through network expansion, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition.

Given that think tanks and independent research institutes have solid research and analytical capacities, they possess the skills required for public policy evaluation, which is not the case with other types of CSOs. Besides that, their advantage in relation to other competitors in the "evaluation market", which mainly consists of consultancies and private audit firms, lies in the fact that they are typically non-profit organisations acting in the general public interest.

However, despite this, comparative research on international practice has shown that a relatively small number of these organisations decide to specialise in evaluation activities.

Focus 9: CSOs in Finland and Lithuania

Independent research institutes in Finland regularly participate in public tenders released by ministries for the preparation of evaluation reports/studies. Since the requirements of the contracting authority (the ministries in this case) are complex and the institutes themselves do not have the adequate capacity to conduct the entire evaluation, in most cases they join a consortium with other organisations. According to analysts at the Labour Institute of Economic Research in Helsinki, the advantages of having these organisations perform evaluations are their strong academic qualifications and knowledge of complex methods, as well as "academic ethics," which makes them approach every analysis in an objective and thorough way. As a result of this fact, any doubts regarding their neutrality have proved invalid. Precision, expertise and objectivity are the main assets of independent research institutes in comparison to other external evaluators in Finland and the main reason that their work and findings are valued by decision-makers and the professional community.[92]

The policymaking process in Lithuania is characterised by a very effectively developed and elaborated policy M&E system (see section V.1.a). When it comes to evaluation, the majority of ministries carry out external evaluations and engage external actors for evaluation studies. A call for an evaluation study is announced via a public tender, and potential contractors are required to propose methodologies for conducting the evaluation. After the tender process is finished, based on the predetermined criteria the tender is awarded to the highest rated applicant (service provider). Among the applicants are in most cases consortia, consisting of consultancies. However, one think tank, Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI) which is specialised in generating studies and evaluation reports in various policy areas, has become prominent in this field.

In fact, until Lithuania became a member of the EU, the main sources of funding for this think tank came from bilateral foreign donors and the EU, which supported research projects in the areas of the harmonisation of the legal and institutional system of Lithuania with European standards. At that time, state authorities showed only a superficial interest in this organisation's work and after the completion of the project, they were losing interest for managing their activities according to the organisation's recommendations. However, the situation significantly changed with Lithuania's membership in the EU and with the recognition of the need for and importance of evidence-based policymaking. Under the current circumstances, government and state authorities appreciate this organisation's expertise, for which it regularly wins tenders for evaluation reports, and their researchers receive regular training on understanding and applying complex evaluation methods.[93]

[91] IDEAS held its first global meeting in New Delhi (2005) and two regional meetings in Prague (2006) and Niamey (2007). The second global meeting was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in March 2009.

[92] Interview with director and senior researcher in Labour Institute, Helsinki, 26 May 2014.

[93] Interview with PPMI director, Vilnius, 21 March 2014.

II.3. Limitations and Challenges of Involving CSOs in Monitoring and Evaluation

The limitations and challenges CSOs face when conducting M&E are related to both their internal restrictions and external environment and working conditions. In terms of internal limitations, one of the primary challenges for CSOs is how to maintain the analytical skills of its experts at a high level and how to ensure their continuous improvement. This challenge is exacerbated by the need to ensure financial sustainability and to find long-term and stable sources of funding.[94] In particular, since CSO funding, in countries in the Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region, is predominantly based on time-limited projects, these countries experience complications in terms of organisational capacity, meaning they lack funding for training.[95]

With respect to external limitations, one relates to different understandings of the benefits of M&E, on one hand by decision-makers, and by researchers on the other. While decision--makers are primarily interested in acquiring information, researchers are focused on information quality and reliability. Due to these differences, there is an information utility gap between the two communities, which they must overcome. Decision-makers are often unaware of the benefits of these detailed and extensive reports and analysis that CSOs produce, or do not see a way to find the relevant data. On the other hand CSOs, as data producers, often suppose that data beneficiaries are not motivated enough to use their products.[96] Therefore, the basic challenge remains how to improve communication between the decision-makers and civil sector,[97] and how to improve the complete legal environment for mutual cooperation, and evaluation culture in general.

In spite of the fact that CSOs work independently, in the public interest, the question that arises is to what extent these organisations are capable of conducting an objective analysis. In fact, as policy objectives are often not clearly and unambiguously defined, it is difficult to determine to what extent they are achieved. The possibilities of conducting an objective analysis are also limited by the difficulties of developing evaluation standards for assessing government performance. Namely, in dealing with citizens' subjective requests and socially constructed problems, complex qualitative indicators are needed.[98] Therefore, it is important that state authorities, before delegating M&E to CSOs, clearly establish the Terms of Reference and the results expected from M&E executors. Setting a clear definition of M&E objectives and indicators is a complex and time-consuming task, and according to a respondent from the Ministry of Finance of Lithuania, sometimes this is even harder than conducting the evaluation process itself, since the quality of this document determines the quality of the very evaluations.[99]

CSOs can become involved in M&E either through joint working groups with government representatives, or independently. Both models have their pros and cons. On the one hand, by participating in working groups together with state representatives, CSOs have direct access to data and information that are often available only to public administration bodies. Since data availability and reliability are essential for conducting M&E, this is a way to increase the prospects of acquiring quality data. Additionally, involving CSOs in joint M&E through working groups allows the possibility of conducting peer evaluations as well as self-evaluations, which then creates a system of "checks and balances" and thus influences the quality of their work.[100]

On the other hand, working jointly with state authorities can jeopardize the independence and integrity of CSOs, which is why these organisations often decide to perform these activities independently. Respondents from Lithuania and Finland emphasise the necessity of having a clear division of work between governmental and non-governmental actors as this is a way to ensure these actors take ownership and responsibility of a particular task, which then ensures better performance.[101]

[94] Gildemyn, *op.cit*, p. 19.

[95] USAID, "The 2012 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia", 16. Edition, 2012, p. 4.

[96] Segone, presentation, *op.cit.*

[97] Gildemyn, *op.cit*, p. 20

[98] M. Howlett, M. Ramesh, "Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems," Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 226.

[99] Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Finance of Lithuania, Vilnius, 19 March 2014.

[100] Irène Hors, "Fighting Corruption – What Role for Civil Society? The Experience of the OECD," OECD, 2003, p. 14.

[101] Interview with representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister of Lithuania, Vilnius, 17 March 2014; Interview with a representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs of Finland, Helsinki, 27 May 2014.

Involving CSOs in policy M&E offers plenty of possibilities in terms of pressuring the government to act responsibly. However, merely participating in these processes is not sufficient – CSOs must develop additional action strategies which would call on governments to act responsible and would produce real effects, reaction and the adoption of measures in accordance with CSO requirements.[102] At the same time, the fact that CSOs often do not know how to communicate in a sufficiently "bureaucratic" way, can be a problem as this makes it more difficult for them to approach government representatives.[103]

Central and Eastern European countries are an example of "lost opportunities" for more active CSO engagement in these processes. Namely, although the legal and institutional working environment in these countries has been enhanced since their accession,[104] some note that the majority of registered organisations are in fact passive, they lack sustainable funding and public support and have no significant influence on public opinion.[105] Additionally, many successful CSOs have failed to adequately train their "second generation" researchers and activists, which led to their disappearance from the scene. Finally, it is noted that CSOs in this region lack the skills and knowledge to find new funding sources, taking into consideration the withdrawal of bilateral international donors and the fact that the activities these CSOs specialise in are incompatible for considerable share of EU funding.[106] Some of the experiences of the civil society sector in this region could be particularly useful when it comes to finding *modus vivendi* of CSOs in Serbia in the next 10 years and also considering M&E as possible focus of attention.

Focus 10: Arguments Against CSO Involvement in Producing Evaluations

Bruegel and CEPS (Centre for European Policy Studies), two think tanks based in Brussels, share the opinion that think tanks should not be involved in performing M&E. According to a Bruegel representative, think tanks should be mainly focused on generating ideas, strategic thinking and imposing agendas on decision-makers, primarily in the policy design and policy formulation phases. They argue that thinks tanks lack access to information which is in the hands of the state, thus decreasing their chances of producing high quality evaluation reports.[107] A CEPS representative pointed out that participating in the evaluators market would negatively impact their credibility, since the majority of existing evaluators (consortia of consultant and audit firms) have a bad reputation in the eyes of the public. For that reason think tanks, as non-profit actors with independent research activities, would be placed on an equal footing with them.[108]

European Commission representatives also believe that think tanks should not be involved in evaluation process due to specificities in policy and decision-making at the EU level. The role of such organisations is to hold politicians accountable with their objective analyses and studies. By starting a debate and placing pressure, think tanks shape public opinion compelling politicians to submit credible data that other actors can use later on for generating evaluation reports.[109]

[102] Gildemyn, *op.cit*, p. 21.

[103] Vesna Atanasova *et al.,* "Open Government – Fostering Dialogue with Civil Society," OECD, 2003, p. 104.

[104] See USAID, "The 2012 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia," 16th edition, 2012.

[105] Darina Malova, "Notes on the State of Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe," Civil Society Forum, Bratislava, 2009. Available at <http://www.csf.ceetrust.org/paper/36/>

[106] *Ibid*.

[107] Interview with a Bruegel representative, 1 April 2014.

[108] Interview with CEPS senior analysts, Brussels, 3 April 2014.

[109] Interview with a representative of European Commission Secretariat-General, Brussels, 1 April 2014.

III. Policy M&E in Serbia – Emerging Concepts

III.1. Legal and Institutional Framework

Serbia has no systematic approach to policy M&E. The system of policy planning, which would act as a basis for regulating M&E, is not sufficiently consolidated, while the hierarchy of strategic documents and the government planning process is not clearly established and their functional relations are not specified.[110] Due to the lack of "top-down" prioritisation, where the centre of government performs a greater role in coordinating the work of ministries and quality control, line ministries develop sectoral strategies without taking into account whether they fit the country's long-term and medium--term development goals. As a result, there are approximately over one hundred strategies in effect, all with different time frames and conflicted goals, which represents an obstacle to consistent implementation. In addition, the majority of these strategic documents is not linked to the budget framework, nor do they provide a financial implementation framework or clearly defined performance indicators, which in most cases leads to a lack of monitoring of strategies' implementation.[111] Thus, the strategic planning system in Serbia is not coherent enough, which significantly impedes the development of the system and good M&E practices.

Along with the lack of prioritisation and strategic planning, policymaking in Serbia is characterised by underdeveloped policy formulation phase. Namely, decisions are made with no attention to priority definition, problem analysis, identification of policy options and their comparison, impact assessment and selecting the most desirable option. This makes it impossible to set indicators for measuring the success of a policy, monitoring its implementation and evaluating its general impact.[112]

The Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy, adopted in January 2014, among other things envisages improvement in terms of strategic planning and policy coordination. It envisages the adoption of the Methodology of Integrated Policy Planning System which regulates the strategic planning process, from determining Government priorities and objectives, via the strategic plans of state administration bodies to the development of the Government Annual Plan, and it ensures the linkage between this process and the programme budgeting process.[113] Precisely, with respect to M&E the Strategy states that M&E are "essential preconditions for improving policy efficiency and effectiveness in achieving objectives", and that it is "necessary to enhance administrative capacities and technical knowledge in the areas of statistics, analysis and projection, which are crucial for the formulation of reliable economic and development policies based on accurate data".[114] The draft PAR Action Plan, which at the time of the printing of this study was in the process of public hearing, details these provisions of the Strategy, especially keeping in mind the role of the newly established National Public Policy Secretariat.

The Law on State Administration prescribes that "state administration organs shall monitor and verify the state of affairs in the areas under their domain, examine the consequences of the affirmed state of affairs, and either, depending on their jurisdiction, undertake measures themselves or propose that the Government adopt regulations and measures within its jurisdiction".[115] However, research has shown that ministries, even when they collect data and information, do not have a sufficiently developed capacity for conducting analyses for M&E pur-

[110] Milena Lazarević *et al.* "Kreiranje politike i pregovori za pristupanje EU – kako do rezultata za Srbiju," European Policy Centre, GIZ, 2013, p. 41.

[111] *Ibid*., p. 51–53.

[112] *Ibid*., p. 31–38.

[113] Public Administration Reform Strategy "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia," 020-656/2014, p. 21. Strategy is available at: Government of the Republic of Serbia's internet page.

[114] Public Administration Reform Strategy, *op.cit*., p. 23.

[115] Law on State Administration of the Republic of Serbia, "Official Gazette RS" number 79/2005 and 101/2007, Article 13.

poses. According to the research findings, only some strategic documents and their respective action plans are being monitored, mainly through the preparation of regular or periodic reports on the implementation of these strategies and action plans.[116] However, in case of problems or discrepancies in the implementation of strategies and action plans, the data gained through monitoring is not being incorporated into decision-making, nor have practices for the monitoring of the implementation and impact of legal regulations been identified..[117]

Excluding the positive practices of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU), policy evaluation does not exist. Ex post evaluations are typically undertaken exclusively as a result of external initiatives and pressure, within the framework of technical assistance projects or CSO support.[118]

III.1.a. State Administration Sector

Methodology

The Public Administration Reform Strategy (PAR Strategy) emphasises that the previous system of PAR M&E was not conducted in a systematic manner, but rather it was founded on *ad hoc* and inconsistent reporting. It introduces obligatory quarterly/semi-annual reports for all actors involved, which are to be submitted to the competent ministry (Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government), and will be subject to deliberation at the meetings of the PAR coordination structures which will be discussed below.

The strategy envisages the adoption of a special methodology for producing monitoring reports, which will include structured data, comments, recommendations and an annex providing details on the implementation of the applicable Action Plan, its outcomes and monitoring results. In addition to the methodology, the development of other instruments is also envisioned, such as standardised reporting procedures and an info-system software for monitoring the implementation process for individual Action Plans etc. Regarding evaluation, the Strategy indicates that, in addition to the internal evaluation system, it is necessary to ensure independent external evaluation, through the engagement of educational and other expert institutions, civil society, relevant international organisations and independent control bodies. Finally, it is important to stress that the Strategy aims to use obtained information for the planning of corrective activities when its implementation lags behind the planned schedule and expected results.[119]

PAR Coordination Structures

In terms of structures for coordinating the reform, which includes conducting M&E, the Strategy indicates that the coordination of PAR Strategy implementation will be carried out at four levels, and provides detailed descriptions of their composition, roles and functions. However the PAR monitoring and coordination structure envisioned in the Strategy is, to a certain extent, revised in the Action Plan for the implementation of PAR Strategy.[120] In this regard, the purpose of the Action Plan, as a document that operationalises the Strategy, is to simplify the rather complex and somewhat fragmented structure outlined in the Strategy, without compromising its thoroughness and comprehensiveness.[121]

At the first level the reform is monitored by the Division for PAR Implementation and Professional Development within the Department of Public Administration, Labour Relations and Salaries in the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.[122] With the formation of this department, the internal capacity for conducting these activities has been established for the first time in the ministry responsible for the coordination and implementation of public administration reform. Also, while the Strategy envisioned including "contact points" from other state administration bodies as part of the first coordination level, the Action

[116] Milena Lazarević and Marko Obradović, "Map of Policy Cycle at Central Government Level in Serbia," Reforming Policy Coordination and the Centre of Government – Third Phase, project funded by the European Union, Beograd, 2014.

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] *Ibid.*

[119] *Ibid*.

[120] Draft Action Plan for the Implementation of PAR Strategy in the Republic of Serbia, August 2014. <www.mduls.gov.rs>

[121] Interview with the representative of the Office of the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, 20 August 2014.

[122] Rulebook on Internal Organization and Job Systematisation in the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, August 2014.

Plan indicates that the Inter-ministerial Project Group, composed of these contact points, is in fact a part of the second coordination level. This means that the Project Group composed of ministry secretaries has been eliminated from the structure, although it could be understood that "contact points" from state administration bodies may be appointed at the secretary-level or assistant director for general affairs-level.[123] Contact points are in fact individuals within each state administration body who would be responsible for the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of Strategy implementation.[124] At the time of the conclusion of this study, additional details regarding the profile of these individuals were not known, although an interviewee from the Cabinet of the Minister pointed out that they could be representatives of ministry secretariats and/or other organisational units in charge of general affairs, planning and reporting, and similar. Regarding the specific tasks of the Inter-ministerial Project Group, the Strategy states:

"The Inter-ministerial Project Group has a professional role in the coordination and monitoring of the PAR Strategy implementation process. The tasks of Project Group members are directed, first of all, towards professional coordination and reporting on PAR Strategy implementation. This mechanism will secure the active participation of all relevant public authorities in the PAR process."

The Strategy also envisages specific tasks for the Inter-ministerial Project Group, including, "adoption of reports on implementation and evaluation of results achieved by the PAR Strategy (or respective Action Plan on the basis of the findings provided by the organisational units of the ministry responsible for public administration operations)" as well as engagement in the evaluation of the results of PAR Strategy implementation (each member within the scope of their jurisdiction). The description of Project Group tasks does not elaborate on monitoring tasks (e.g. consideration of the fulfilment of Action Plan indicators is not mentioned), except that, it includes the adoption of reports. When it comes to evaluation, the engagement of the Project Group in this activity is anticipated, but no further description is given as to how this role will be carried out. Project Group meetings would be held on a monthly basis or even more often if needed, upon the proposal of MPALSG.

Although the Strategy did not envisage the involvement of external representatives in the work of Inter-ministerial Project Group (civil society in particular), the Ministry, encouraged by its participation in the "Policy M&E with Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society" project, has been considering the possibility of involving them in the Group.[125] In that case, SECO - "Sectoral Civil Society Organisations", which was formed by the Serbian Office for European Integration with the aim of involving CSOs in the programming of EU pre-accession assistance, would be a useful structure, since PAR is one of the sectors in which these organisations are organised.[126] This approach would ensure the representation of organisations involved in the Project Group, as well as the dissemination of information towards other CSOs active in the field of PAR, who are part of this sectoral network (around thirty organisations).[127]

At the third level – representing at the same time the first political coordination level – the Collegium of State Secretaries, formed by the PAR Council (fourth coordination level) as its working group, will manage the reform. Unlike the Council which involves all relevant ministers, the Collegium includes the secretaries of each ministry (or advisors to the ministers), as well as representatives of institutions at the centre of government at the deputy minister-level (e.g. State Secretariat for Legislation, Office for European Integration, National Public Policy Secretariat).[128] The Strategy indicates that the Collegium should "discuss issues relevant for public administration reform. This refers especially to issues on which no consensus has been reached at the expert level. At its regular sessions this body, first of all, addresses the monitoring of reports on evaluation of the success of PAR Strategy/Action Plan implementation. The Collegium of State Secretaries proposes content for discussion during regular and extraordinary sessions of the Public Admi-

[123] Interview with the representative of the Office of the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, 20 August 2014.

[124] PAR Strategy 05 number 020-656/2014, section III.A.3. Improving the system of strategic planning and policy coordination.

[125] Based on an interview with a representative of Office of the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

[126] See: <http://www.cdspredlaze.org.rs/>

[127] Based on an interview with a representative of Office of the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

[128] Decision on Establishing the Collegium of State Secretaries, the Council for Public Administration Reform 28 August 2014.

nistration Reform Council." The Collegium was formed during the constitutional session of the Council for PAR on 28 August 2014.[129]

The fourth management level is the PAR Council, a temporary Government working body headed by the Prime Minister. His deputy is the Minister of Public Administration, while the members are relevant line ministers, the Minister of Finance, a member of Government in charge of European integration (the Minister without portfolio in the current Government), the Secretary General of the Government, the Director of the National Public Policy Secretariat and the Director of the State Secretariat for Legislation.

The Decision on the Establishment of the PAR Council was adopted on July 24, 2014.[130] Unlike the previous State Administration Reform Council, as a result of a mandate expansion to *public* administration reform (until now the Council dealt with the reform of *state* administration in a narrow sense) the Council now accumulates a greater number of ministers, whereby the criterion for selection was under the competence of individual subsystems within the public administration system.[131] Consequently, the Council consists of for instance ministers in charge of public services (education, health, social welfare, culture, sport), the Minister of the Interior, etc. A novelty is also the engagement of the Director of the National Public Policy Secretariat – a new institution in the system.

The Decision on the Establishment of the PAR Council also defines the tasks of the Council, which among others include setting proposals for public administration strategic development; initiating and proposing PAR related policies and activities to the government; and the promotion and monitoring of reforms, particularly in terms of incorporating PAR principles and objectives into sector strategies and planning documents. Following processing at the MPALSG level and deliberation at the lower coordination levels, the Council shall review the annual reports on the implementation of reforms.

[129] Based on interview with a representative of the Office of the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, 29 August 2014.

[130] Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, number 79/2014.

[131] Based on interview with a representative of Office of the Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government 20 August 2014.

Perspectives of M&E in the state administration sector

Since the capacity of the ministry responsible for M&E is still in its early development phase, and the coordination structures are just being established, the effectiveness of the envisaged system cannot yet be discussed. After examining the Draft Action Plan for the Implementation of the PAR Strategy, it seems that monitoring of the reform will be almost exclusively implementation/process-oriented, since the document contains, almost exclusively, process and output indicators. An EU and World Bank project, titled *Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Development for the Western Balkans and Turkey,* has analysed the current state of PAR indicators and has provided assistance to the competent ministry in terms of using and applying the indicators developed within the framework of this project. However, at the time of the printing of this study, the final report on the results of the above mentioned project, which would have given insight into the observed situation in the area, had not yet been released. It can be concluded that the creation of conditions for results-based M&E will certainly have to wait until some future version of the Action Plan, and maybe even the PAR Strategy. Nevertheless, the detailed provisions in the strategic and planning documents on M&E coordination structures, as well as the steps made in relation to their establishment by the time of the publishing of this study, represent a big step forward in comparison to previous PAR phases.

III.1.b. Social Policy and Employment Sectors

In the social policy and employment sectors in Serbia, there are a few examples of a well-developed M&E system. In the employment sector, several institutions play a prominent role in monitoring the implementation of the National Employment Strategy, while in the social policy sector, it is the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU) that plays a central role in M&E.[132]

Monitoring of the achievement of targets set through the employment policy is conducted via the National Employment Strategy for

[132] The World Bank Group, "Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Development for the Western Balkans and Turkey," INCEPTION REPORT P128734, April 2013, p. 86–89.

2011-2020, which is connected to the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) where the objectives of the employment policy, measures for achieving these targets, funding as well as the institutions monitoring its implementation are defined. Active employment policy measures and other planned activities within NEAP are implemented by the ministry in charge for employment affairs, the National Employment Service (NES) as well as other state bodies, institutions and social partners.

In the social welfare sector, SIPRU has a prominent role. It has for over a decade been consolidating the work of several ministries, other state institutions and the non-governmental sector in formulating, implementing, monitoring and reporting on the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). Despite the fact that the Social Welfare Strategy was in force only until 2009 and that no new strategy has been adopted for the period until 2020, the designing and monitoring of the indicators relevant for the social welfare field are still being conducted through SIPRU activities. Consequently, in 2011 the Government adopted the First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia for the period of 2008-2010. In this regard, the SIPRU team actively worked on defining new indicators for social exclusion, as well as on collecting data for these purposes, but above all on carrying out, for the first time in our country, the SILC survey (Statistics on income and living conditions).

In addition to these two strategies, there are almost 20 horizontal strategies regulating areas such as work safety, aging and violence against children, and jurisdiction over these issues is typically shared between the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy and other institutions. In terms of the monitoring of these strategies, each ministry uses its own indicators thus there is no conformity and coordination between the different institutions. Moreover, there is no one unique sectoral strategy covering the entire field of social policy and employment.

Social policy sector

After 2001, the main objective of social welfare system reforms was above all to make the system stable, given the significant destruction of the system during the 90s, and then to improve its efficiency. Considering the nature of social welfare services, building a new system necessitated the active involvement of the non-governmental sector in the formulation and implementation of social policy measures, and afterwards in the evaluation of their effects. Two projects, designed to stimulate cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors, were linked to the establishment of the Fund for Financing Associations of Persons with Disabilities in 2002, and the Social Innovation Fund one year later.[133]

In terms of the legal framework within a period of one year, the Social Welfare Law was amended twice, which was also the case with the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children (amended for the first time after 20 years). Social service reforms included the establishment of the Social Innovation Fund, which supported social services delivery at the local level. The Fund was a unique institution in the region in that it encouraged cooperation between local self-governments and CSOs and it aimed to transpose local innovations in delivering social services to the national level.

However, it is important to mention that the work on the adoption and implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy was one of the most successful processes, and it provided the impetus for change in various parts of the social welfare system, from the legal framework to changes in the way of delivering services at the local level. Following the example of other countries in drafting the PRS and monitoring its implementation, Serbia also recognised the importance of the role of civil society organisations in all stages of this process. In this regard, the PRS implementation team played an important role in liaising the governmental and the NGO sector and in actively promoting involving CSOs in PRS drafting, as well as in the M&E of its implementation. Later, the team evolved into the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit and to this day, it continues to be recognised as a key actor in these processes.

Employment sector

In the employment sector, monitoring is most evident in relation to the National Employment Strategy. Since the adoption of the first Strategy for the period of 2005-2010, and then the new one for the period of 2011-2020, the achieve-

[133] Boris Begović *et* al., "Četiri godine tranzicije u Srbiji," Center for Liberal-Democratic Studies, 2005, p. 348.

ment of strategy objectives has been monitored intensively. Namely, a National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) is drafted each year, defining the objectives of the employment policy, measures for their achievement, funding as well as the institutions that monitor their implementation.

Active employment policy measures and other activities planned under NEAP are implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, National Employment Service (NES), as well as other state bodies, institutions and social partners.

The efficiency and effectiveness of the active employment policy programmes and measures, established within NEAP and implemented by NES, are monitored via the Agreement on National Employment Service Performance, concluded between the Ministry and NES. This Agreement closely regulates duties, responsibilities, objectives, and results in the field of employment policy for a given year, deadlines for implementing specific programs and measures, accountability of individual institutions, reporting methods, etc. Every three months the NES submits a work report as well as an annual performance overview. Reports on NEAP enforcement are not submitted to a special ministry unit, but rather to a working group consisting of representatives of the line ministry, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, unions, the Employers' Association, the Belgrade Chamber of Commerce and representatives of the Serbia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SIEPA). It is important to emphasise the fact that employees of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia are also members of the working group, which is important in terms of collecting the necessary data for designing new and monitoring current indicators in the field of employment.

The employment Sector within the Ministry delivers annual reports on the implementation of NEAP to the Government, based on the reports on conducted activities which are submitted by the rest of the ministries and institutions.

Indicators for monitoring employment strategy implementation through NEAP are defined by NES, more specifically by its branch offices, while the Directorate has an advisory role in defining indicators. Data used for reporting purposes comes from external sources, mainly from the Labour Force Survey and RAD Survey, which are carried out by NES, other ministries and social partners. During the development of new indicators, according to Ministry of Labour representatives, the European Employment Strategy is consulted.[134]

In addition, the Ministry is involved in projects being implemented by international development institutions. For instance, the World Bank project relating to the capacity of Western Balkans countries in the area of M&E, and specifically in the development of indicators, contains several recommendations for the employment sector.[135] World Bank experts have proposed a list of indicators which should be developed and monitored in the following period. In Serbia, the majority of these indicators are already being monitored through NEAP, but some, such as the following, are missing:

- Coefficient of employment variation between regions: the Working Group on NEAP monitors the rate of employment and unemployment by region, classified by sex, however, the Working Group requires additional expertise, more than currently available among Ministry employees, in order to calculate variation rates between regions. In terms of calculating new indicators, such as this one, the consent of the members of the Working Group who are employed in the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) is required.

- Share of employees in sectors with above-average productivity: this is an example of an indicator including a factor (productivity) that is not regularly monitored even by SORS (the latest data was published in 2012).

Until now, evaluations, especially in the field of active employment policy, have been conducted through EU pre-accession assistance projects, predominantly by international but also domestic experts, given that the Ministry lacks the financial resources to independently hire institutions who would conduct evaluations. This year the project titled, "Support to Evidence-Based Employment Policy Creation," funded

[134] Interview with Dragica Ivanović, Head of the Active Employment Policy Department, Employment Sector, Ministry for Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs.

[135] World Bank Group, "Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Development for the Western Balkans and Turkey: Developing Sector Level Indicators," P128734, 2014, p. 17–18.

by the European Union through the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia and implemented by the HD European Consulting Group (HD ECG) in consortium with Pole Emploi, Office for Economic Policy and Regional Development (EPRD) and FREN, by the time of the writing has reached its final phase in its implementation. The beneficiary institution, apart from the Ministry of Labour, is National Employment Service. Project implementation began in November 2012 and lasted until September 2014. The aim of the project was to embed a forecasting, monitoring and evaluation system into the designing and implementing of active labour market policies. The overall objective of the first project component was to assist with the improvement of methodologies for forecasting, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the project aimed to improve the use of evidence obtained from surveys in the development of both NEAP and operational planning in the National Employment Service. The second component sought to improve procedures for the preparation of NEAP for 2014 and 2015 – on the basis of labour market and monitoring evidence, in line with EU priorities for employment policy and on the basis of the evaluation of the effectiveness of previous NEAPs.

III.2. Civil Society in Serbia and M&E Experience

Civil society entails not only civic associations, but also media, trade unions and employers as social partners, as well as other relevant social actors who jointly participate in reform processes and in building overall mutual trust, both within the democratisation of institutions and society as a whole.[136] CSOs are "… organisational structures whose members have objectives and responsibilities that are of public interest and who also act as mediators between the public authorities and citizens."[137] This study, however, perceives civil society in a narrower sense, by focusing on civic associations, non-governmental organisations and independent research centres/institutes.

Research on the involvement of the civil sector in policy M&E is based on: (1) desk research of secondary sources on civil society in Serbia, (2) analysis of the results of an online survey conducted by the LET'S… (*Hajde da…*) organisation between April 23 and June 3, 2013, which included 220 civil society organisations in Serbia and (3) analysis of empirical data collected through special field research within the framework of this project: between March and May 2014 interviews with CSOs, round table discussions and an online survey were organised. In that way 20 civil society organisations, predominantly based in Belgrade and most of them founded after the democratic changes in 2000, were included. Most of the organisations surveyed are involved with policy oversight and advocacy, and a minor part with research activities and the direct empowerment of citizens. Almost all of these organisations are financed by foreign donors on a project basis. In other words, these organisations do not have stable and permanent funding sources.

The extensive research conducted by the LET'S… organisation revealed that Belgrade and Vojvodina have the highest number and concentration of CSOs. Almost 65% of all CSOs are registered in these two regions. The research also showed that there was a significant increase in the number of CSOs during the 2000s. The majority of organisations (56%) were founded in 2005 or later, while less than a quarter (22%) were established before 2000. This growth trend continued even after the outbreak of the economic crisis (the periods of 2005-2009 and 2010-2013 had the same percent of established organisations). The most common areas these organisations work in are social services (19%), environment (18%), education and research (18%), children and youth care (17%), law, advocacy and politics (13%) and culture (11%). All other areas of activity are represented by a considerably smaller number of organisations.

III.2.a. Organisational Characteristics of CSOs in Serbia

Civil society organisations are generally small or micro-organisations, with a particularly small number of employees. The average number of employees in these organisations (approximately three employees according to the findings of this study) is lower (in some cases multiple times) than the average number of associates or volunteers.

[136] For information on the civil sector in Serbia, see: Balkan Civil Society Acquis Strengthening the Advocacy and Monitoring Potential and Capacities of CSOs, "Serbia Report 2013 Monitoring Matrix for Civil Society Development," Balkan Trust for Democracy, Civic Initiatives, 2013.

[137] Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the role and contribution of civil society organisations to the building of Europe (CESE 851/1999), 1999, p. 21. Available at: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/actes_sco_en.pdf>

In terms of organisation and methods of work applied, this could mean the following:

I Civil society organisations in Serbia are "organisations of committed individuals":

- They are formed by the individuals with a vision and strong ideas, who live for the problem based on which they founded the organisation, and therefore they consider the idea and the very organisation as "their own".

- To ensure that things are going as planned, the leader of the organisation coordinates work using direct control, which is cognitively and physically very demanding.

- That, also, probably indicates a low level of work formalisation and standardisation – and this can lead to improvisation and methodologically contestable initiatives.

- CSO representatives (leaders) are capable of dealing with all of these challenges mostly because they are young and highly educated, but this enthusiasm is not endless. Thus, CSOs in Serbia are primarily organisations of highly committed individuals (young, highly educated and self-conscious) who have the energy to tackle a problem in the area of their interest.

- As such, they typically avoid delegating, so the range of control – number of people directly controlled by them – can significantly increase and exceed their physical and cognitive capacities, endangering the efficiency of management. In carrying out their activities, CSOs rely on their associates and volunteers, however if this number increases such that one person coordinates/controls a large number of volunteers, this can lead to organisational mismatches, which is certainly one of the reasons for inefficiencies in the performance of CSOs.

II Organisational structure and human resources:

- In structures of this kind, *everyone does everything:* due to a small number of employees there is no specialisation, rather employees conduct a fairly broad range of activities.

- To succeed in this, their knowledge and skills have to be very diverse (from operational to managerial).

- The positive consequences of such activities can be employees' and volunteers' satisfaction with the diversity and flexibility of the work.

The negative aspects can be low productivity as well as frustration and dissatisfaction caused by work overload and the incompatibility of tasks. Therefore, despite the fact that they may favour the lack of work monotony, people engaged in these organisations might be frustrated with the volume and inconsistency of the tasks they are assigned to.

The practice of involving CSOs in policy M&E in Serbia remains underdeveloped. CSO representatives in Serbia believe that the general public does not recognise at all, or does not sufficiently recognise, the significance of policy M&E and civil society organisations are still not properly being involved in these processes. In close relation to this is the fact that among the activities of these organisations, the practice of policy M&E is underrepresented. Fortunately, some organisations do have some experience in this area, so it cannot be said that there have never been any CSOs in Serbia involved in the M&E of a certain policy.

Focus 11: Security Sector

M&E activities are a part of almost every project that is carried out by the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy. Each monitoring is run on the basis of a specific methodology developed depending on the topics covered. The project titled, "Partnership for Integrity in Security Sector," monitors the process of adopting and implementing integrity plans as well as public procurement in the security sector. Moreover, the project "Mapping and Monitoring of the Security Sector Reform in Serbia" has initiated regular monitoring of the progress of the security sector reform in Serbia and of Serbia's security integration. Consequently, special indicators, methods and instruments for monitoring and measuring the pace and scope of the reform were defined, and the research results were presented in the "Yearbook of Security Sector Reform in Serbia". The implementation of anticorruption measures in the police as well as citizens' and police officers' views on police corruption are monitored via the "A-COP: Civil Society Against Police Corruption" project. In addition, this organisation is a member of the "PrEUgovor"

coalition, which monitors the EU accession negotiation process on Chapters 23 and 24, particularly the following topics: the fight against corruption in the security sector, human rights protection (including security sector employees), gender equality in the security sector, migration and security, the fight against organised crime, the Schengen Agreement and police cooperation. Findings are communicated in different ways, mostly in the form of reports available online, however printed issues exist as well. In addition to the reports, the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy releases practical policy recommendations, as well as analyses of specific (current) issues. They are active on social media websites – both the organisation and its individual researchers. M&E results are accessible on their web page: http://reforma.bezbednost.org and http://korupcija.bezbednost.org. There also have some additional ways of representation, but they are part of advocacy activities.

Source: Questionnaire

However, there is a by far greater number of CSOs who have never been involved in the above mentioned activities and who have no experience as to how to get involved in and conduct such activities. There are two key reasons for this situation: (1) the state does not sufficiently stimulate CSOs to get involved in M&E (2) CSOs, per se, are not motivated to get involved. Most CSO representatives indicate that they are committed to this sector for one of two reasons: first, the civil sector provides the possibility of doing what they believe is important, and second, to contribute to social changes through civil society. Alternative motives appear in a significantly lower number of cases. In that sense, it can be concluded that M&E awareness raising, as an important element of the policymaking process, is an essential aspect in motivating CSOs to engage in these activities. Therefore, civil society organisations in Serbia will get engaged in policy M&E if they believe (1) that it "really matters" to the society, and (2) that it can influence changes in society. Consequently, it is necessary to raise the awareness of present/future CSO leaders regarding M&E.

Organisational and human capacity

In order for the policy M&E process to run smoothly and continuously, it is necessary for all the actors involved in the process to have adequate capacities. "Capacity" usually refers to organisational and human potential.

Organisational capacity (organisational skills) refers to organisational M&E systems present within both state administration bodies and CSOs. Organisational capacity also includes previous experience, work techniques and technology, as well as a network of relations with other organisations and institutions which has been developed over time.

Human capacity (human resources) refers to the competence and expertise of the people involved in this process for conducting M&E activities – the knowledge and skills of employees and associates, but also of the network of volunteers which the organisation has and can rely on.

In assessing its organisational and human potential, an organisation (regardless of whether it represents the state or the civil sector), should answer the following questions:[138]

- Who possesses the technical skills to design and implement a M&E system?
- Who is skilled for managing such a system?
- What data systems currently exist and what is their quality?
- What technology is available for data support/analysis and processing?
- What funding is available for designing and implementing a M&E system?
- What is the organisation's experience with performance reporting systems?

The surveyed CSOs were highly confident in their organisational and human capacities and that they meet policy M&E requirements. They also believe they have sufficient methodological knowledge for properly conducting policy M&E. These responses are not surprising considering that most of the organisations that participated in this study are already developed, respectful and experienced not only when it comes to M&E, but they also have longstanding experien-

[138] Linda G. Morra Imas, Ray C. Rist, "Put do rezultata: dizajniranje i provođenje efektivne razvojne evaluacije," World Bank, 2009, p. 114.

ce in the civil sector. However, there are a far greater number of organisations that have never performed M&E – and that do not have the experience or adequate organisational, human and methodological capacities for performing these activities.

Policy M&E can be conducted by an individual CSO, particularly if it is a big organisation with different skills and a wide base of members/volunteers. However, in most cases, there is a need for cooperation between different organisations and individuals when conducting this process, especially if:

- individual CSOs do not have developed procedures and/or adequately skilled staff;
- individual CSOs do not have contacts or access to data, which is of a key importance for acquiring evidence on policy implementation and effects;
- it is necessary to include more organisations/individuals in order to ensure an adequate representation of all the relevant groups in the M&E process.

Surveyed CSOs in Serbia strongly recognise the need for intensive cooperation (networking) with other organisations instead of acting in a competitive manner. This statement is important to stress, especially since it is in line with trends emerging in M&E markets around the world.

III.2.b. Good Practice Examples of CSO Involvement in Policy Monitoring

The role of SIPRU in engaging CSOs in government policy M&E

In the social policy sector, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (hereinafter SIPRU) has been playing a significant role in enhancing the dialogue between the governmental and non-governmental sectors in recent years.[139] SIPRU was established in 2009, within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of European integration, in order to improve Government capacity: to develop and implement social inclusion policies according to the good practice examples from all around Europe and to provide support for line ministries in developing and implementing social inclusion policy.

What is particularly worth mentioning is that SIPRU grounds its activities on regular consultations with CSOs. Namely, when Poverty Reduction Strategy monitoring was the core SIPRU activity, the Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC) was established first, and then a few years later a programme entitled "Civil Society Focal Points (CSFP) for the Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation in the Republic of Serbia" was launched. The programme aimed at building partnerships between the governmental and non-governmental sectors, with the purpose of ensuring the active participation of civil society organisations in the social inclusion and poverty reduction process. Cooperation took place through the implementation of the PRS during several stages: policy definition, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Bearing in mind the matrix of cooperation between the Government and CSOs in poverty reduction, presented in Table 4, it could be concluded that SIPRU has become a mediator between the governmental and non-governmental sectors in the field of social inclusion. Considering the cross-sectoral nature of the social inclusion issue, SIPRU has been collaborating with several ministries and other relevant institutions and encouraging CSOs to engage in the M&E of relevant policies. With the support of international donors, SIPRU has been funding the development of analyses by CSO which, in the form of recommendations, aim at enhancing the adoption process of better legislative solutions in the area of social inclusion. Cross-sectoral action is facilitated by its position within the Office of Deputy Prime Minister, however, SIPRU recommendations are not binding whether they are coming from SIPRU experts or from an engaged CSO. As shown in the CSFP evaluation, CSOs were dissatisfied with the fact that no feedback was given on whether the Government adopted any of their recommendations, and which ones.

Although being placed within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister provides certain benefits, at the same time it brings into question the independence of SIPRU activities. In addition, long-term sustainability is dependent on project-based donor support. Considering the

[139] The team was previously named the Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Team and was formed in 2004 within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia.

importance of SIPRU's role as a bridge connecting the governmental and non-governmental sectors, and in promoting policy M&E, it will be extremely important to ensure this institution's continuity even after the withdrawal of donors. There are several options in this regard. If SIPRU remains a government body, the question is where would its place be within the government structure: would it be become part of the ministry in charge of social policy, or would a separate office be established? Bearing in mind budget limitations and the Government's intentions to reduce the number of special agencies and offices, as well as the fact that the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society already exists, this option is unlikely. If it becomes impossible to maintain donor support, the human capacity of SIPRU will be challenged: its staff currently consists of well-paid local experts and it also has the possibility of engaging international consultants. It will not be possible to financially support this type of human resources if a switch to budgetary funding is made.

"Civil Society Focal Points for PRS Implementation" Programme

Formulation and monitoring of PRS implementation in other countries included the broad participation of actors from various social spheres, especially from the civil sector. This practice was also applied in Serbia. The Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC) was established first, followed by the "Civil Society Focal Points (CSFP) for the PRS Implementation" Programme. Bearing in mind that it is only with this programme that true institutional cooperation between the Government and CSOs has been initiated and that an evaluation has been done on their established mechanisms of cooperation and communication, a more detailed reflection on CSFP as well as key findings and recommendations from the mentioned evaluation is provided below.

The programme recruited seven NGOs which led the so-called clusters – areas that PRS specifically focuses on such as: people with disabilities, Roma population, women, youth, refugees, etc. CSFP lasted for a year, and the end result was a document containing several recommendations for including CSOs in the PRS implementation process. These recommendations, despite being defined specifically for social policy, could be used to overview the possible forms of cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors in other policy M&E areas as well, such as e.g. public administration.

"Civil Society Focal Points (CSFP) for the Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation in the Republic of Serbia" was a programme aimed at facilitating CSO participation in defining, implementing and monitoring the measures adopted by the Government and other relevant actors throughout the PRS implementation process.

As mentioned, the programme included seven organisations whose role was to manage their cluster – a group of CSOs dealing with the same issues.[140] There was also a Programme Management Unit (PMU) with a coordinating role, which belonged to the Centre for Development of Non-profit Sector (CDNS) from Belgrade.

CSFP evaluation was intended to show to which extent the set objectives had been achieved, as well as to summarise the experiences and recommendations of the participating CSOs in terms of further enhancing cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors. The following are the most important results of the evaluation:[141]

In terms of achieving the first objective, CSFP was, according to the programme evaluation report, designed to channel information about the work of government offices to CSOs, and at the same time to introduce these government institutions to the work of the NGO sector. Above all, the programme was intended to make sure that the views of a large number of CSOs and their target groups are incorporated into these government institutions' programmes and activities.

An important question relating to the first objective is how sustainable will the established information exchange and CSO cooperation mechanisms be after the termination of this one-year programme. According to the evaluation findings, CSFP's resources are sufficient to ena-

[140] Roma Information Centre, Kragujevac – in charge of Roma issues; Centre for Independent Living of People with Disabilities, Belgrade – in charge of issues related to people with disabilities; Autonomous Women's Centre, Beograd – in charge of women's issues; Amity, Belgrade – in charge of the elderly; Group 484, Belgrade – in charge of refugees and IDPs, Association for Promotion of Mental Health in Children and Youth, Niš – CSFP for Children.

[141] Civil Society Focal Points for Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation. Final programme evaluation. Report prepared by an external M&E team Stanislava Vučković and Vojo Lučić.

Table 5: Overview of objectives and the level of their accomplishment according to the surveyed CSOs

OBJECTIVES	ACHIEVEMENT
Development of communication mechanisms between governmental and non-governmental sectors which will enable efficient information exchange	➢ CSFP became organisations through which government institutions spread relevant information about marginalised groups to all other civil society organisations ➢ CSFP's resources are sufficient to enable the continuation of a large part of the developed mechanisms for communication with CSOs in the future as well
Within the clusters, CSOs consult and define the recommendations and views of the wider civil society	➢ All focal point organisations responsible for managing clusters had included other relevant CSOs in defining recommendations for the most important processes and policies
Participation of CSOs in key procedures related to PRS implementation by the Government (policy definition, programme implementation, monitoring and reporting)	➢ CSFP are satisfied with the cooperation with SIPRU, but not as much with the cooperation with representatives of government institutions with whom they had the chance to collaborate during program implementation

ble the continuation of most of the developed mechanisms for communication with CSOs in the following period. This is particularly true for the online information exchange as this type of communication is not very costly. Contrary to that, additional funds are necessary for organising meetings or conferences, therefore after the termination of this programme their continuation is uncertain.

Since the total number of organisations participating in the work of the programme, measured by clusters, significantly increased (from 292 initially to 545) the programme proved to be capable of including the recommendations and views of the wider civil society and therefore of having good civil society representation.

However, despite the wide participation, CSFP representatives believe that CSOs often fail to recognise the relation between their activities and national strategic documents, thus it is necessary to further inform and motivate them to get involved. This is precisely, in the opinion of CSFP, their key role – to act as mediators between the government and the CSOs.

In terms of achieving the third objective, it was concluded that CSFP is satisfied with the cooperation with SIPRU, but not as much with the cooperation with representatives of government institutions with whom they had a chance to collaborate during programme implementation.

At the national and local levels, CSFP and CSOs were included in more than 25 processes relevant for improving the position of their target groups. These processes were mostly related to different national strategies. However, according to some CSOs, collaborating with government institutions and exchanging contacts was greatly facilitated by the PRS Team. In other words, SIPRU acted as a true mediator between the governmental and non-governmental sectors, as evident from a statement made by a representative of CSFP for children:[142] "Essential consultations took place at a very operational level, between CSOs and representatives of line ministries. At this level, important information and experiences were exchanged[...] What proved to be crucial in facilitating contact and cooperation with the line ministries is the fact that the PRS Team, who facilitated and supported this type of collaboration between CSOs and the line ministries, stood behind this programme. This illustrates the need to have a delegated body within the system in the future as well,

[142] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

who would have the task of supporting cooperation between CSOs and government bodies and line ministries."

During a round table discussion held within the framework of this project,[143] a representative of CSFP for children pointed out that, when speaking of child-related policy M&E, the most important thing for them is to primarily focus on the needs of their target group. The primary task is to focus on delivering quality services for children; supplying the state with data (e.g. in the case of M&E) is of a secondary importance to them.

Experience of CSFP with line ministries

As stated in the evaluation, during the CSFP programme, CSOs learned much about the way in which public administration works. This was certainly due to the numerous contacts made with government representatives during the drafting of national strategies, as well as other documents significant for the poorer parts of the population who are the focus of CSOs.

The CSFP evaluation indicated the following deficiencies in terms of the cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors:

- Line ministries rarely initiated contact with CSFP. In most cases they were only responding to CSFP calls.
- The mechanism of delegating contact persons from the line ministries to act on behalf of the ministry was very well remarked, but during programme implementation it turned out that cooperation greatly depended on the delegate's abilities and personal affinity towards the project. In order to achieve maximum effects in the implementation of the CSFP programme, it was necessary to further define the contact person's tasks and level of responsibility, and/or to establish a plan for information flow and cooperation between the CSOs and contact persons during implementation.
- In most cases there was no feedback provided on how many recommendations had been adopted and had become a part of official policies, on their implementation and monitoring.

CSFP for women described the cooperation with the ministries and the PRS Team in the following manner: "Despite the fact that the Autonomous Women's Centre, as the CSFP for women's issues and a women-oriented CSO, was better than ever before informed on state policies [...] although there was a large number of comments and a large number of meetings were attended – the number and type of government bodies that initiated the cooperation, without the support of the PRS Team, is negligible. Even when initiative was taken, it was mostly for the purposes of collecting data on CSO activities which needed to be included in government reports, or making comments on certain documents. In addition, this was most often conducted without providing any feedback on how the data was used or with uncertain (to minimal) information as to how the comments impacted the documents, which is certainly demotivating for all CSOs (especially bearing in mind that the information or comments were always demanded within a very short time)."[144]

Focus 12: A CSO Representative's Reflection on How CSOs are Perceived by the State

During the round table discussion organised within the framework of this project, Vlade Satarić, a representative of Amity, an organisation that also participated in the CSFP programme, pointed out:

"While working, we often received comments from civil servants stating that it is inappropriate for CSOs to comment the work of the ministries... The state, however, lacks the capacity for transforming data into information and knowledge... Activities should not be reduced only to writing reports, but to an analysis of the effects as well. CSOs should therefore be careful and remain well informed. They should have a role in asking questions and placing pressure on the state authorities. Through the CSFP programme the capacities of participating organisations were strengthened. The good thing is that we

[143] Round Table: "M&E in Serbia with the evidence supplied by civil society – possibilities for involvement and good practices", Belgrade, Hyatt Regency Hotel, 29 May 2014.

[144] Civil Society Focal Points for the Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation. Final programme evaluation. The report was prepared by the members of external M&E team Stanislava Vučković and Vojo Lučić, p.25.

have achieved sustainability – based on this experience, later on CSFPs had the opportunity to secure additional funds for their further activities."

Recommendations for enhancing cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors can be drawn from the experiences of CSOs in the CSFP programme. The following recommendations could be useful for any further cooperation between these two sectors in the field of policy M&E:

- The communication between the CSFPs and line ministries should be thoroughly planned and designed. Above all, it was necessary to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of both sides and plan mutual activities during the implementation of CSFP programme.

- It was necessary to build a system which monitors whether the recommendations given by CSFPs and CSOs are adopted, and a system to determine to which extent the recommended measures or strategies developed in consultation with CSFPs and CSOs are being implemented. If certain measures are being accepted, it is important to determine why exactly these measures have been chosen, and for those that are not accepted, it should be determined why they have been rejected.

- In order to have effective cooperation, the governmental and non-governmental sectors each need to be deeply familiar with the work of the other: CSOs should be aware of how the state administration functions, and civil servants should also be familiar with the NGO sector.

Focus 13: Some of CSO Representatives' Answers when Asked about How They Believe are Perceived by Government Officials

Ministerial representatives stated that there are several reasons for limited cooperation with the non-governmental sector:

This sector is not recognised as a resource that the government should use;

There is distrust in the civil society sector and a general attitude that its opinion is not relevant;

Changes in the government and consequent changes in ministries prevent the continuity of previously established cooperation;

The non-governmental sector is not homogeneous in terms of work quality.

Finally, below are some preconditions for including CSOs in Strategy M&E, as proposed by CSO representatives in a document relating to the implementation of PRS.[145] The preconditions are general and could apply to M&E of any policy:

- Good communication with state institutions, which entails defining the ways and frequency in which quality information will be exchanged;

- Availability of relevant information, documentation and materials which would enable the planning of independent, external monitoring;

- Supply of material resources necessary for the active involvement of CSOs in policy M&E.

When asked about what else they themselves can do in order to improve the quality and volume of poverty-related research, CSOs pointed to the following:

- to enhance data collection and processing methodology,

- to improve the knowledge needed to conducting quality M&E in their field.

[145] Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Process in Serbia. Recommendations for Civil Society Inclusion. Final Document. Annex 3 Conclusions of the consultative process. Consultants Jelena Marković, Richard Alen and Government PRS Implementation Team. October 2006.

IV. Opportunities for Performing Policy M&E with Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society

IV.1. State Structures for M&E of Government Policies: An Analysis of Comparative Practise

The following chapter provides an analysis of three examined M&E systems, characterised by a high level of institutionalisation and a developed evaluation culture, and which at the same time reflect the differences in institutional modalities. By examining national M&E systems in Finland and Lithuania, as well as the EU policy M&E system developed by the European Commission, different types of relations between the ministries and the centre of government can be observed in terms of autonomy in conducting M&E, the impact of the external environment and the necessity of building a system, data sources and how they are acquired, and finally the methods used for conducting M&E.

IV.1.a. Centralised System (Lithuanian Model)

Although evaluations were conducted earlier, within the framework of the PHARE and SAPARD assistance programmes, Lithuania institutionalised its evaluation activities in 2003, in the context of the drafting of the Single Programming Document 2004-2006 and Lithuania-'s preparation for EU membership.[146] The system for conducting evaluations was developed for the 2007-2013 budgeting and programming period and based on centralised evaluation planning and coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation. The EU structural funds M&E system that was developed then retains the same structure today: the Ministry of Finance has the overall responsibility for planning and conducting evaluations, while ministries and state institutions, as intermediary bodies, are in charge of planning and conducting the evaluations within their competence. The Evaluation Coordination Group is a special body whose task is to review the planned evaluations, improvements in conducting them, terms of reference and their results, and then provide recommendations to the institutions involved in evaluations. Ministries and government institutions that implement the structural funds are responsible for collecting data for monitoring purposes, while the Monitoring Committee, as a separate body, evaluates the results.[147]

The structural funds evaluation system has played a great role in shaping the national policy M&E system. By June 2013, 47 evaluations of structural funds were conducted in Lithuania, of which 26 were carried out by the Ministry of Finance. Of that number, 34% of evaluations were process/implementation oriented, aiming to assess the internal organisation and the management system.[148] Experiences of the Ministry of Finance in terms of planning, managing the evaluations and enhancing the quality of the terms of reference were valuable for the further establishment of national structures and procedures.[149]

Interestingly, the Lithuanian M&E system originates from a successfully system of national documents' strategic planning in established in 2002. Strategic planning methodology, approved and adopted by the Government, regulates the mechanisms of drafting and approving strategic action plans and strategic documents, monitoring their implementation as well as annual

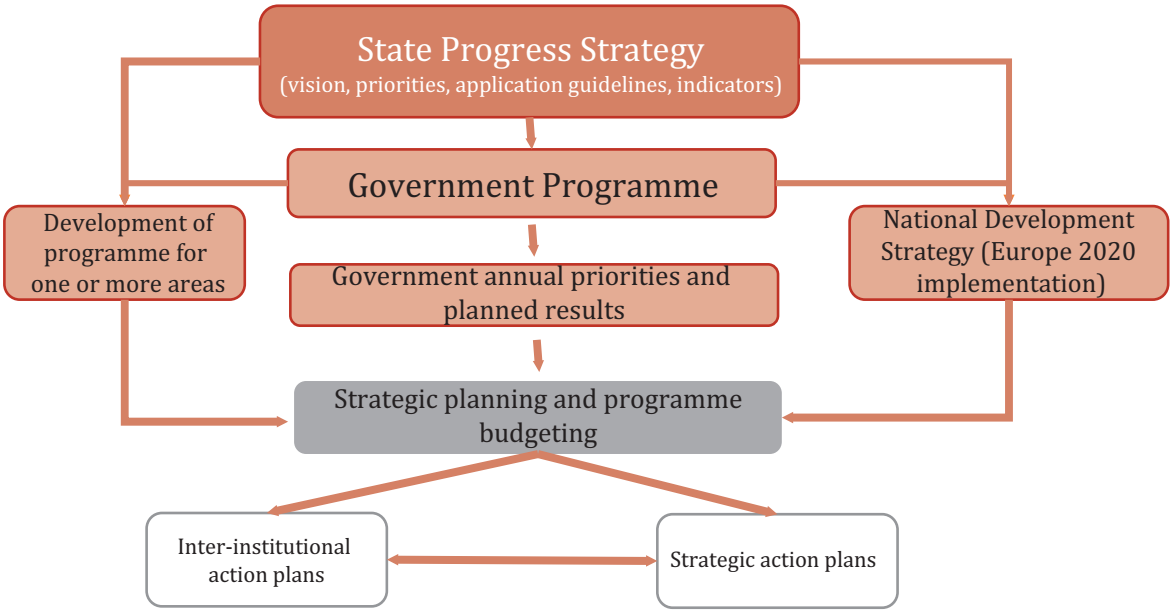
[146] The Single Programming Document is a document that contains strategic social-economic plan and priorities for the use of EU structural funds for the period of 2004-2006.

[147] Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania, "Evaluation Capacity Building in Lithuania: Experience and Lessons," 2013, p. 6.

[148] *Ibid*. p. 7–8.

[149] Interview with officials from the Ministry of Finance, Vilnius, 18 March 2014.

Diagram 7 : Preview of the Links between Strategic Documents



reporting on the activity results.[150] That same year the principle of programme budgeting was introduced, which causally connected the budget planning mechanism with the aims and priorities articulated in strategic documents.

The established system of strategic documents, logically and substantially aligned,[151] was significant for creating an M&E system since each of the document types requires monitoring the indicators and reporting on the progress.

The M&E system has been built gradually, learning from the strategic planning and management experience. According to the interviewees, the established system is not the result of external pressure, but the need for more efficient management and decision-making. In addition, a mitigating circumstance in the M&E institutionalisation was the fact that budget planning was entirely associated with strategic planning.[152]

The M&E system was formally upgraded in 2011 by improving management practices and adopting precise provisions regarding results-based M&E. Interestingly, the reform was carried out through a project[153] financed by the European Social Fund. In addition, Lithuania is a leading member state in terms of using EU structural funds for the improvement of the public administration. Special attention was paid to the improvement of the system for monitoring the performance of ministries, government bodies and agencies, to promotion of analytical capacity, evaluation of budgetary programmes and better assessment of decision impacts. Through the project, sophisticated trainings on the evaluation process were organised for civil servants working in the ministries; a centralised IT system was established, containing all the strategic documents with benchmarks for their monitoring, as well as reports from ministries submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister; and the Evaluation Methodology, which the ministries were obliged to implement, was adopted.

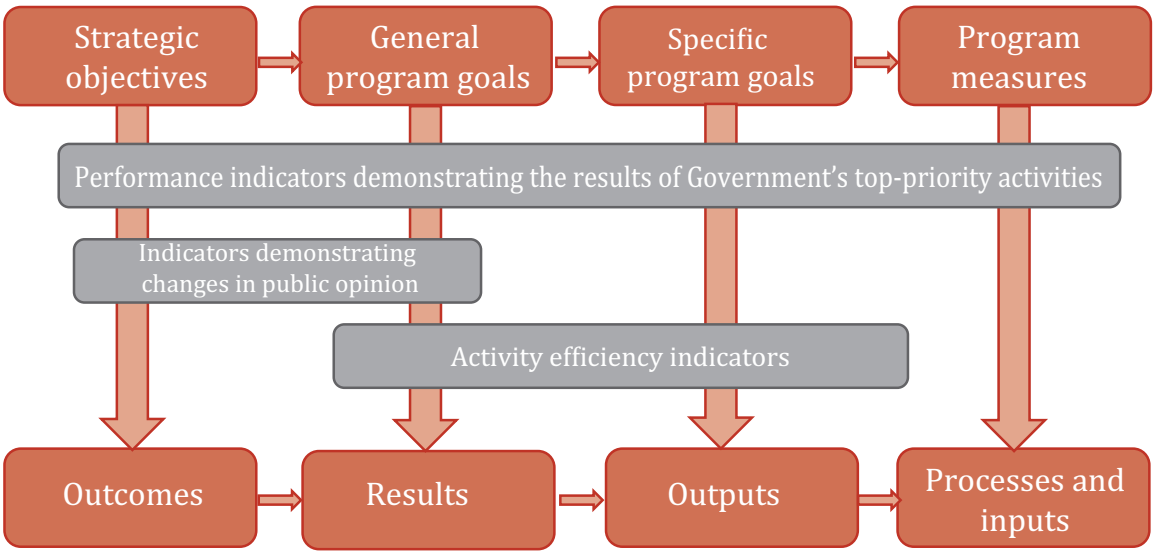
[150] Unless otherwise indicated, the following part is based on the documents of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, Resolution 827 from June 6, 2002 on the Methodology of Strategic Planning, Official Gazette 57-2312, and the Minister of Finance Act from August 13, 2011 number 1K-281 on the approval of Program Evaluation Methodology. Unofficial document translations were provided by the respondents from the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania.

[151] On top of the hierarchy is the long-term Strategy of Development of Lithuania, which is aligned with the National Development Programme for a 9-year period, with programmes set for the duration of the government mandate (up to 4 years) and short-term documents: cross-sectoral action plans for horizontal objectives, strategic action plans for s 3-year period, annual priorities of government and the ministries.

[152] Interview with officials at the Office of the Prime Minister, Vilnius, 17 March 2014.

[153] It is a project "Improvement of Performance-Based Management" implemented by the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance in the period 2009–2011. The project was prepared by a consortium which among others included a think tank Public Policy and Management Institute.

Diagram 8: Example of Horizontal Performance Indicators Within Institutions[154]



The Lithuanian system is a mixture of a process (implementation) oriented and a results-based system. The former includes analysis and monitoring of the internal organisation of the ministries and expended resources, in order to detect internal weaknesses, which all things considered influences and helps results-based M&E run more successful.[154] The system primarily relies on performance assessment, for which precise regulations and mechanisms have been introduced in 2011. A performance indicator is an indicator that provides information on achieving general and particular objectives. The development of performance indicators provides a possibility to evaluate the overall progress achieved in areas in which an institution has performed activities for a certain period of time.

Performance indicators need to demonstrate the qualitative and quantitative results of strategic action plan programmes. Quantitative indicators are used for expressing facts, figures, statistical data and data provided by institutions. They present the inputs, outputs or result in a quantitative way. Qualitative indicators demonstrate the qualitative characteristics of an institution's activities, e.g. an improvement or a decline – they indicate whether the results were realised in time, whether they correspond to beneficiaries' needs, whether they meet the standards etc. They are developed using evidence gained through interviews and surveys, expert discussions as well as other qualitative data. The indicator value must enable an assessment of the direction and/or extent of progress. Indicators can be horizontal or vertical and each should contain a technical annex.

Monitoring System

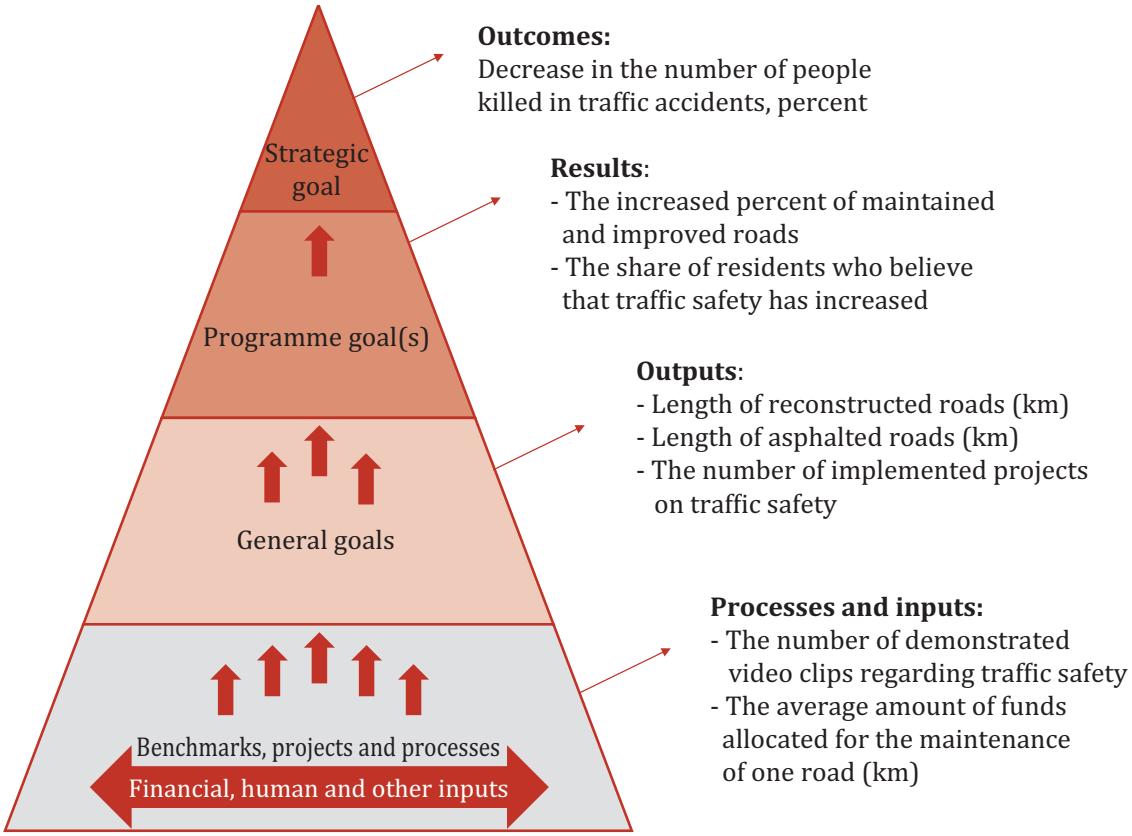
Strategic planning documents, in addition to annual operating plans, are subject to systematic monitoring by the following actors:

- The Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for the final preparation of Government programmes and priorities, strategic action plans of the institutions accountable for their work to the Government, as well as for monitoring the implementation of the long-term State Progress Strategy;
- The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of the National Progress Programme (intended for the implementation and enforcement of the EU 2020 strategy);
- Ministries are responsible for monitoring development programmes and policy areas in the scope of their competence, as well as for implementation of the strategic action plans of government institutions. Almost all ministries have a Strategic Planning, Monitoring

[154] Interview with an official from the Office of the Prime Minister, Vilnius, 17 March 2014.

[155] *Ibid*, p. 17.

Diagram 9: Example of the Vertical Logical Link between Indicators[155]



and Evaluation Section within their internal organisation, as well as separate M&E units.[157]

- Coordinators of inter-institutional action plans are responsible for the monitoring of their implementation.

The monitoring process consists of the following steps:

- Heads of ministries, who are responsible for policies in the scope of their competence, send data on performance indicators to a centralised IT monitoring system 15 days prior to the end of the 3-month period, while the information on indicators that cannot be calculated quarterly is delivered in another form. Semi-annual and annual activity reports should contain an explanation justifying the reasons behind the inability to reach the set performance indicators' values.

- This data is used by the Office of the Prime Minister for preparing the annual Performance Reports, which are submitted to the Government. The ministries also submit information on the achievement of Government priorities. The same data is also used for the preparation of public reports on the achieved results. The data regarding monitoring may indicate the need for programme evaluation or for a review of budgetary expenditures.

Data monitoring consists of both the planned and real indicators values specified in the planning documents, economic and social indicator values as well as other indicators defined by the Parliament and the Government. The data obtained through monitoring is entered into the IT monitoring system, which is managed by the Office of the Prime Minister. The official National Statistics Office collects and reveals statistical data on the achievement of economic and social indicators set by the Government. They

[156] Adopted from: Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, "Methodology for Formulating and Implementing Performance Measures Used in Strategic Planning Documents," 2011, p. 13.

[157] Interview with officials from the Office of the Prime Minister, Vilnius, 17 March 2014.

cooperate with monitoring units in the ministries and consult with them on data collection methods in order to ensure their reliability. Furthermore, the Statistics Office is consulted when Government priorities indicators, as well as long-term and medium-term strategic planning document indicators, are being developed.

It could be concluded based on the above mentioned information that the central role in the monitoring system belongs to the Office of the Prime Minister. It manages the centralised IT system which collects all the monitoring data and is the only body with access to the entire system; it links, on the one hand, the political priorities presented by the Government before the start of each mandate, and on the other, the ministries whose work it supervises and from whom it receives annual reports on programme implementation. Additionally, the Office helps ministries prepare the mentioned document in line with the defined objectives and long-term strategic documents.[158]

Evaluation system

All the programmes and policies that emerge from the National Development Programme and strategic action documents are evaluated, with the aim of assessing the success of implemented, current and planned programmes according to one or more of the following aspects:

- Compatibility of general and specific policy objectives with public needs;
- Cost-effectiveness ratio in terms of achieving results;
- The extent to which the general and specific objectives are met in comparison to planned and real indicators;
- Compatibility of targeted and achieved programme/policy results with the needs of direct and indirect beneficiaries;
- Long-term results and impacts of a programme/policy.

Evaluations can, in terms of methods for their conduct, be centralised or decentralised. The centralised method is applied for the evaluation of the National Development Programme, as well as for development programmes that are implemented by two or more ministries. While it is the Ministry of Finance that designs the evaluations, they are carried out by an evaluation working group formed by the Prime Minister. On the other hand, the decentralised method is used by individual ministries for evaluating policies within the scope of their competence. They are carried out by evaluation working groups formed by the relevant minister. Evaluation working groups consist of representatives of one or more departments, the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the Prime Minister. The group conducts evaluations and prepares an evaluation report which describes the evaluation procedure, applied approaches, conclusions and specific recommendations.

Concerning the actors performing evaluations, evaluations can be conducted internally – within the institutions that cover the programme/policy which is being subject to evaluation; they can be performed by a team mixed of competent institutions and independent external actors; or they can be entirely performed by independent external actors. In the first case, they are conducted by civil servants and in most cases these are evaluations of internal organisation and programme management, in other words self-evaluations of the work of a competent institution.[159] The second type is hardly ever applied and so far it has shown limited results, considering the difficulties emerging from the division of work and responsibilities.[160] In most cases, evaluations are performed by external evaluators, most often by consortia of consultancies and audit institutions, which are selected by the ministry after a public tendering process.

Therefore, the evaluation process includes all state administration institutions: the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Finance, line ministries and government bodies. In January every year, each actor, within the scope of its competence, delivers to the Ministry of Finance a proposal of the programme to be included in the evaluations. On the basis of the received proposals and taking into account the set criteria,[161] the Ministry of Finance dra-

[158] Interview with officials from the Office of the Prime Minister, Vilnius, 17 March 2014.

[159] Interview with representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Vilnius, 17 and 18 March 2014.

[160] Interview with a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture of Lithuania, Vilnius, 18 March 2014.

[161] In accordance with the priorities of the Government and the ministries; financial requests; programme implementation risks; programme productivity level; the need for programme implementation and relevance information.

fts an annual evaluation plan and delivers it to the Government for approval by the beginning of February. The approved annual evaluation plan establishes the institution and person in charge of the evaluation, the name, the subject, general and specific evaluation objectives, the method of conducting the evaluation (centralised, decentralised), the method of evaluation implementation (internal, mixed, external), the evaluation type (ex ante, medium-term, retrospective), as well as the timeframe for delivering the evaluation report.

Developing terms of reference in the evaluation planning phase is a particular challenge for line ministries, since it is not easy to define with high precision and unambiguously all the questions which the evaluation should answer.[162] The terms of reference should also define the methods and techniques of data collection. They include: analysis of secondary resources, monitoring data analysis, interviews, surveys, group discussions, panel discussions of experts, consultations with relevant actors, case studies, analysis of performance and cost-effectiveness, and statistical analysis. In practice, external evaluators have the freedom to propose the data processing method. After the termination of a public tender process, and during the process of selecting evaluators, one of the criteria that the ministry (contracting authority) values is the explanation for choosing a particular methodology made by applicants – external evaluators.[163]

The final product of the evaluation working group is an evaluation report. It is submitted, together with implementation recommendations, to the Ministry of Finance, the Office of the Prime Minister and the institution whose program is being assessed. They provide their comments within 10 days, which are then taken into account and incorporated by the competent institution within the next 10 days. Afterwards, the final report and recommendations are approved.

Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour Experiences with M&E[164]

Within the ministry there are 18 programmes (medium-term strategic documents for a period of 4 years) which are monitored quarterly and annually. For those programmes there are 234 input, output and outcome indicators, of which two thirds are "annual" criteria and one third is for quarterly reports. Data for monitoring purposes is collected by the Ministry and the Statistics Office, together with municipalities, Government offices and NGOs that implement the Ministry's projects and programmes. Data is sometimes, but not very frequent, acquired by engaging external researchers, since the Ministry does not have sufficient financial resources for this. However, according to the interviewees, evidence supplied by external actors is usually the most credible, as it is based on sound analysis.

The Ministry's Strategic Planning and Analysis section is responsible for coordinating M&E report preparation. The unit for M&E has four officers who assess the quality of reports submitted by other units within the Ministry and, if needed, request revisions. The M&E Unit does not prepare reports itself because the Ministry covers many policies which require professional expertise. Usually one individual is in charge of monitoring programme development as well as preparing terms of reference. Ministry evaluations are in most cases conducted internally – only 10% of evaluations have been performed by external evaluators. As a reason for the small number of external evaluations the interviewees cited a lack of financial means. However, this number should increase in the future, since the Ministry intends to apply for EU structural funds.

In terms of particular challenges in the Ministry, the interviewees mentioned the difficulties of monitoring and evaluating inter-institutional action plans, since this requires cooperation with other ministries which is very difficult because no ministry receives additional funds or resources for these activities. In addition, it is necessary to share and exchange data with other ministries, which can be difficult to do with some ministries.

[162] Interview with officials from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 17 and 18 March 2014. .

[163] Interview with officials from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania, Vilnius, 17 March 2014.

[164] Based on the interview with officials from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Vilnius, 18 March 2014.

Most of the data processing methods applied by the Ministry are quantitative. The interviewees agree that qualitative methods should be improved, but they are much more expensive and require more time, because of the need to organise interviews and to analyse them. For these tasks the Ministry applies for funding from EU structural funds and in that way the expenses for qualitative methods are partly covered.

Experience of the Lithuanian Ministry in Charge of PAR[165]

Within the Ministry of the Interior there is a Public Administration Policy Division which deals with the issues of public administration rationalisation, improvement of the institutional structure, quality of governance as well as the policy formulation phase in the policy cycle.

Public administration reform in Lithuania began in 2004 with the adoption of the PAR Strategy, which was in force between 2004 and 2010. A new strategy and action plan for its implementation are currently in force until 2020. The above mentioned Division coordinates the monitoring of the action plan implementation.

The Law on Public Administration from 2011 envisions M&E of public administration reform. This system is currently being developed, for which a consortium of two Lithuanian firms have been engaged through a public tender. A state of the art IT monitoring system is to be developed, and it will be managed by the mentioned Division. The system will include the following vertical areas: structure and functions; human resources; budget and funds; strategic plan realisation; clients. Horizontal topics will be human resources optimisation, quality of internal processes, effectiveness and efficiency.

The IT system is, therefore, still under construction and the entire monitoring system should be finished by 2015. The biggest challenge for the Ministry, regarding which the discussions have been held with the consortium, is the indicators to be monitored, bearing in mind the

	Summary: Lithuanian System
System type	Mixture of process (implementation)-oriented and results-based
Type of Arrangement	Centralised: - Centre of Government (Prime Minister's Office) manages the centralised IT system for monitoring indicators and measures; supervises strategic documents and ministerial plans compliance; provides support to the ministries in coordinating monitoring process. - Ministries are responsible for monitoring and evaluating development programmes and policies within the scope of their competence.
Monitoring Characteristics	Data which is generated and monitored is acquired internally (State Statistics Office, state agencies) and to a small extent from local NGOs whose programmes are funded by the state. Planned and actual performance indicator values, specified in planning documents; values of economic and social indicators; as well as other indicators defined by the Parliament and the Government are monitored. Data delivered by the ministries is used for the preparation of the annual Progress Reports, prepared by the Office of the Prime Minister and delivered to the Government.
Evaluation Characteristics	Internal (for process-oriented evaluations), mixed and external (for results-based evaluations). Evaluators market: mainly consortia of national and foreign consultancies and audit firms.

[165] Based on the interview with the official from the Ministry of Interior, Vilnius, 18 March 2014.

specificities of the public administration sector. In any case, the data to be used will only be internal – taken from the IT system. During Lithuania's Presidency of the Council of the EU, the country took the opportunity to discuss this topic with the Member States and comparative experience is now being used for creating the national system.

IV.1.b. Decentralised System with a Strong Coordination Element (Finnish model)

Finland began to develop its policy M&E system in the early nineties of the last century, adapting to the trend of the New Public Management. The reforms focused on finding a proper way of defining objectives and desired results, while the ministries gained more freedom in relation to the centre of government. However, a need for a larger inter-ministerial coordination emerged over time, considering the fact that majority of the ministries could not act independently in the circumstances of an increased interdependence between the public policies. A four-year Government Programme was adopted within the 2003 reform, and it defined three priority areas in respect to the competence of different ministries and mechanisms for achieving targets. The reform also aimed at the modification of the Government Programme monitoring system.[166]

Monitoring System

In 2007, the system was improved after the adoption of the Government Strategy Document, which aimed at promoting, steering and monitoring the implementation of the Government Programme, especially in matters requiring intersectoral cooperation.[167] The document defined the principal policy projects and processes and the indicators used in the monitoring of the Government Programme. Most indicators describe the development of policies that are essential for the Government mandate. Since it is generally difficult to assess the impact of policy measures, and especially because of the time lag between the measures and their impact, it cannot be assumed that the indicators would, with a sufficient precision, describe the effects of the implementation of the Government Programme itself. For this reason, some indicators are process indicators that describe the progress of policy measures.[168]

The definition of indicators aims at a more thorough review and assessment of the realisation of the Government Programme that will be carried out, at the latest, when the Government has reached its mid-term point. It essential that indicators provide information about social development trends so that, whenever necessary, new or more efficient means can be introduced for affecting these trends. Policies are monitored and assessed from the perspectives of gender and regional impacts within the limits allowed by statistical materials. During the monitoring, the selection of indicators in use is specified depending on the development of factors such as the availability of data.[169]

The Finnish system of government policy M&E is characterised by a strong decentralisation in which the ministries are highly independent in performing these activities, while the Prime Minister's Office has the role of guiding them and cross-referencing data during the M&E process for priority areas under the competence of several ministries. Each ministry has its own working agenda, with a set of objectives and indicators which are directly linked to the Government Work Programme. State Secretaries in the ministries meet twice a month, in order to monitor development of the Government Programme, while the Heads of the strategic planning units within the ministries meet once every three weeks for the same purposes. Team meetings are chaired by the Head of the strategic planning unit in the Prime Minister's Office. The purpose of these expert meetings is not only to monitor implementation of public policies but also to discuss and analyse opportunities for implementation improvement.[170]

[166] Based on the interview with the Advisor at the Prime Minister's Office in charge of monitoring and evaluation, Helsinki, 26 May 2014.

[167] Under policy programmes of priority the document included: employment, entrepreneurship and worklife; the policy programme for health promotion; and the policy programme for the well-being of children, youth and families. In addition, the Government Strategy Document includes a number of subject areas under special monitoring: climate and energy; know-how and innovations; revision of administration, restructuring of local government and services; etc. Republic of Finland, Prime Minister's Office, Government Strategy Document 2007, available at <http://vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2007/j18-j19-hallituksen-strategia-asiakirja/pdf/en.pdf>

[168] Republic of Finland, Prime Minister's Office, Government Strategy Document 2007, p. 9, available at <http://vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2007/j18-j19-hallituksen-strategia-asiakirja/pdf/en.pdf>

[169] *Ibid*.

[170] Interview with the Prime Minister's Office Advisor in charge of monitoring and evaluation, Helsinki, 26 May 2014.

Table 6: An Example of Defined Objectives and Indicators for Employment Policy[170]

Objectives	Indicators
Mismatches on the labour market are alleviated.	- Share of employers who have experienced recruitment problems and labour shortage out of the total number of employers who have sought workers.
Young people are given help to find their place on the labour market through educational and labour policy means.	- Share of people under 25 years of age who have been unemployed for over 3 months (process indicator).

The Prime Minister's Office is responsible for collecting data gained through the monitoring process and submitted by the ministries, as well as for preparing the annual Government report which is delivered to the Parliament. However, due to the inter-institutional nature of the policies and interweaving of different impacts, the Prime Minister's Office tends to strengthen its horizontal function. The next project which will start in 2014 will introduce a sophisticated evaluation system which will combine methods and inputs of different ministries.[172]

Regarding the internal organisation of the ministries, there are special strategic planning units which combine the function of monitoring and evaluation. It is usually one civil servant who is responsible for monitoring or data analysing, and for writing terms of reference for the evaluation that is carried out externally. Monitoring data are acquired internally – for the employment, entrepreneurship and worklife policy programmes the data is produced by the Statistics Office, the Social Insurance Institution and other insurance companies, and they can also be acquired by interviewing employees.[173] Data supplied by the local government is also considered credible. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture and Employment conducts local surveys on citizen satisfaction with social employment services and creates a database of the profiles of the unemployed. The database contains a great amount of information which helps them connect with the employers.[174] In the case of Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Welfare, the principal data producers are two research institutes – the Institute for Health and the Institute for Social Insurance. In addition, the data is produced by local NGOs which deliver services to citizens, however, their data is not taken as official, but only supplementary.[175]

An example of indicators for monitoring the productivity of the public provision of services:[176]

- Trends in the expenses of the State and municipalities
- Development of productivity as shown by statistics and surveys on productivity
- Trends in the expenses of administration and service production
- Number of people working for the public sector
- Effectiveness, the quality and availability of services
- Re-targeting of resources freed
- Number and impact of IT projects
- The productivity of municipal provision of services

Evaluation System

Apart from periodical self-evaluations conducted by the Prime Minister's Office, evaluations in Finland are performed exclusively by external evaluators, on the basis of tendering by mi-

[171] Government Strategy Document, *op.cit.,* p. 23.

[172] Interview with Mr. Kimmo Ruth, Ministry of Economy and Employment Advisor, Helsinki, 27 May 2014.

[173] Government Strategy Document, *op.cit*, p. 21.

[174] Kimmo Ruth, *op.cit.*

[175] Interview with Mr. Koho Arto, Ministry for Social Policy and Social Welfare Advisor, Helsinki, 27 May 2014.

[176] Government Strategy Document, *op.cit.,* str. 69–70.

nistries. Each year, a certain amount is allocated from the budget of each ministry to the research departments or departments for strategy and analysis, which are in charge of writing terms of reference for the evaluations. Based on available resources, the units within the ministries form proposals for the studies and evaluations they wish to contract. It often happens that their "wishlist" is longer than the available budget will permit so the department for research/strategy and analysis has the task to prioritise the subjects of interest, to coordinate and merge certain topics, or to try and meet the needs of all the parts of the ministries. It is the Director of the research department who makes the final decision regarding the chosen topics for studies and evaluations.[177]

The terms of reference defined by the ministries determine the objectives, essence of the study and the basic research questions. It is left to the interested evaluators applying for the open call to determine the research and evaluation method. The ministry units assess the applications and select the evaluator on the basis of predetermined criteria and the quality of the evaluation proposal. Evaluator markets in most cases consist of consultancies and academic or government research institutes. Terms of reference most often require expertise in different areas, which makes it necessary for these actors to form a consortium and then apply.[178] In the area of social issues, evaluators are mostly from Finland because, according to the interviewee, foreign evaluators do not have sufficient comprehension and knowledge of the Finnish context. This is evident by the quality of the evaluations themselves, which when conducted by foreign evaluators tend to be very sparse and superficial.

IV.1.c. Combined System (EU Model)

M&E on the EU level is characterised by a strong decentralisation, in which the individual Directorates-General (DGs) are autonomous in terms of choosing data to be monitored and evaluation methods. They receive guidelines from the Secretariat-General of the European Commission on the application of different methods, writing terms of reference, document standardisation and providing insight into good practices.[179] The Secretariat-General monitors the quality of M&E reports delivered by DGs, identifies possibilities for corrections and shapes them in its uniform guidelines which the DGs are obliged to consult and apply. In addition, the Secretariat-General provides trainings for the M&E units within the DGs for the purpose of enhancing their efficiency. On the other hand, the Directorates-General, in accordance with their departments, have different needs and room for manoeuvre in the EU policy M&E, which depends on the "communitarisation" level of a given policy (being under the exclusive competence of the EU or the shared competence with the Member States).[180]

EU Policy Monitoring

In the case of the DG for Employment, a policy that is predominantly under the Member States' competence, data is acquired directly from the states. One positive circumstance is the fact that Member States already have improved mechanisms of developing indicator benchmarks in this area, which facilitates their gathering and cross-referencing. Although 80% of the monitoring indicators are based on Eurostat data, official statistical data base of the European Union, it is difficult to gather particular data, especially qualitative data, because of the different methods used by the Member States. Obtained and analysed data is published annually in the DG Enlargement report on the conditions in this area at the EU level.[181]

The Directorate-General for Justice of the European Commission partially covers, within its competence, the issue of good governance. Since the field of justice did not become communitarised until 2011, the monitoring system is still in its infancy. The Directorate publishes the Justice Scoreboard annually, which consolidates data on EU citizens' satisfaction with EU services, access to justice and an effective public administration system, in order to create an enabling environment for business development.[182] Data gathered from the Member States is predominantly quantitative and relates to the

[177] Kimmo Ruth, *op.cit.*

[178] Interview with a high-level servant in the Ministry of Economy and Employment, Helsinki, 27 May 2014.

[179] Documents were thoroughly analysed in the Guidelines for ministries.

[180] Interview with representatives of Secretariat-General of the European Commission, Brussels, April 2014.

[181] Interview with a representative of the Directorate-General for Employment, Brussels, 2 April 2014.

[182] See European Commission, DG Justice, "The 2014 EU Justice Scoreboard," 2014, p. 3–7.

	Summary: Finnish Model
System type	Results-based
Type of Arrangement	Decentralised with a strong focus on inter-ministerial coordination: - Centre of Government has a horizontal role of assessing the compatibility between strategic and planning documents; - Ministries are autonomous in terms of data collection and selection as well as evaluation implementation
Monitoring Characteristics	Monitoring data is internal; produced by the Statistical Office, government funds, agencies and institutes as well as local self-government institutions. Certain indicators are continuously monitored – these are process indicators and performance indicators. Each ministry has its own work agency, with set objectives and indicators which are directly linked to the Government's Work Programme. The Prime Minister's Office is responsible for collecting data which it receives from the ministries and for compiling the Annual Government Report.
Evaluation Characteristics	External. Evaluators market: consortia of national consultants and audit firms and independent research institutes.

length of administrative and judicial procedures. Most of the qualitative data is provided by the Eurobarometer, an EU agency which conducts public opinion surveys and research.[183]

EU Policy Evaluation

Besides the internal self-evaluations of the organisational capacity of the DGs, EU policy evaluations are carried out by external evaluators, through public tendering. The largest share of evaluators is consortia, consisting mostly of consulting companies or international audit firms. The competent DG is responsible for managing the evaluation process by writing terms of reference, based on the binding standards prescribed by the Secretariat-General.

When it comes to internal resources and the organisation of evaluations, according to the standards each DG must have a clearly defined unit responsible for coordinating and monitoring evaluation activities, promoting quality of evaluation and organisational learning, as well as assisting the Secretariat-General in the implementation of the general EC Evaluation Policy. Each DG has to secure adequate financial and human resources for that purpose. Evaluation activities must be planned in a transparent and consistent way so that relevant evaluation results are available in due time for operational and strategic decision-making and reporting needs. This implies the preparation of annual and multi-annual evaluation plans, compliance with the strategic documents and budget, ensuring proper timing so that they will be usable, etc. Evaluations have to contain clear and specific objectives, and appropriate methods and means for managing the evaluation process and its results, which are detailed in the terms of reference. Evaluation activities must be conducted to provide reliable and robust results, based on facts. In that regard, evaluators must be guaranteed the freedom to present their findings and results, although they should regularly consult the steering group for evaluation (mixed working group consisting of represen-

[183] Interview with representatives from the Directorate-General for Justice, Brussels, 1 April 2014.

tatives of institutions and evaluators). Finally, evaluations must ensure the maximum use of the results and they have to meet the needs of decision-makers and stakeholders, as well as made publicly available and disseminated through all means of communication.[184]

A special system is used for the M&E of EU structural funds, which is the responsibility of the DG for Regional Policy. It is characterised by stricter rules in terms of performance monitoring and results measuring, expressed in the guidelines for external evaluators as well as in guidelines used for monitoring of the activities of managing authorities (national bodies that manage the evaluations). The impact and performance of the projects financed from EU structural funds largely depends on the managing authorities' internal capacity for monitoring and carrying out the project. The Directorate General for Regional Policy conducts rigorous controls with an emphasis on the efficiency of the funds spent and delivering evidence of results.[185]

One positive example of strengthening national capacities for absorbing EU structural funds is the Academy of Evaluation within the University of Warsaw, which provides trainings for civil servants on the whole process of planning and conducting evaluations, as well as on applying the knowledge acquired from evaluation for evidence-based policymaking. The programme is based on a combination of a theoretical and a practical approach, and since 2008 almost 150 Polish civil servants have participated in the Academy's trainings.[186] In addition, during the last 10 years, Poland has served as a positive example of how EU funds should be used for country development.

IV.1.d. Challenges of Measuring Policy Impact in Comparative Practice

The following chapter provides insight into the difficulties and limitations of M&E, based on the existing literature as well as statements by interviewees.[187]

Data Availability

Data necessary for assessing the impact of intervention can be unavailable or available in an inappropriate form. Namely, data collected during policy implementation can for instance give relevant information about policy beneficiaries, but not enough information on the overall targeted population and the impact of the given policy. Also, certain data is incomparable in terms of data collection methodology, which is evident especially when comparing state and local government databases.

	Summary: EU Model
System type	Results-based with evidence-based policymaking.
Type of Arrangement	Decentralised: - Secretariat-General of the European Commission sets standards and guidelines; - M&E system of the DGs is strongly influenced by the level of communitarisation of the given sector (department).
Monitoring Characteristics	Data is delivered by Member States to Eurostat. Depending on the department, monitoring data sources could also include Eurobarometer surveys.
Evaluation Characteristics	External. Evaluators market: consortia of consultancies.

[184] Based on: European Commission, General Secretariat, "Evaluation Standards," available at <http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/docs/standards_c_2002_5267_final_en.pdf>. Related documents are available at <http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/index_en.htm>.

[185] Interview with an official from the Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Brussels, 3 April 2014.

[186] More information at <http://www.euroreg.uw.edu.pl/en/studies>

[187] Unless otherwise indicated, based on Peter Rossi, Mark Lipsey and Howard Freeman, "Evaluation – a Systematic Approach," SAGE publications, 7th edition, 2004, p. 222–228.

Large Number of Data and Indicators

The case studies from Finland and Lithuania revealed the problem that emerges when the M&E system is too institutionalised, or when society produces much more data and information than the system itself can process. In the first case, which is characteristic for Lithuania, the large number of strategic planning documents and indicators developed for monitoring their implementation led to an increased number of indicators that were either impossible to monitor, or insufficiently usable.[188] On the other hand, Finland has been affected by the phenomenon of "data surplus", which causes ministries to lose sight of the principal policy objective. The solution to these problems, according to interviewees from both countries, would be in rationalising the number of indicators and strengthening programme prioritisation. In addition, the problem could be partially solved by more frequently reviewing the situation and reacting in a timely manner if deviations emerge.[189]

Relation between the Evaluation and Defined Objectives

Having a clear and unambiguous definition of the policy objectives is a condition *sine qua non* for conducting a proper evaluation. The policymakers' problem to agree upon a policy direction results in imprecise policy objectives, and if the objectives are not clearly defined, the policy criteria itself will be unclear. In that case, the evaluator faces difficulties in assessing the actual policy objectives, and even whether it is practical to conduct the evaluation. Problems can also appear if there is a lack of prioritisation or specification of objectives, which can make some of them mutually incompatible.

Even if the objectives are clearly defined, in practice they may during implementation in line with the emergence of new circumstances. In that case, the challenge is to choose between measuring success on the basis of the targets initially set or those identified as the "actual" objectives.

Defining and Measuring the Performance Criteria

Clearly defining objectives does not necessarily mean that the intervention performance criteria can be defined based on these objectives. Even a seemingly simply defined objective can contain a word or an expression that will be interpreted differently by various actors, which can lead to the development of disparate options for achieving results. Unfortunately, if the performance criterion is not adequately represented with a pre-tested indicator, it will be hard to determine whether the used criterion is a reliable measure.[190]

Time Limits

Decision makers often request that evaluation findings be delivered within a very short period of time, so that they can be applied in the planned policymaking cycle. The need for rapid analysis is incompatible with the principles of in-depth and evidence-based evaluation report drafting, which requires time and reflection. In addition, a problem may occur if the data is not directly available, or if it is necessary to get an approval for its use from the state authorities. This is time consuming and slows down the evaluation process.[191] On the other hand, the evaluation findings have to be published in a timely manner, before any data and information become irrelevant.[192] This applies particularly to those countries where there are frequent changes of government, government programs and priorities.

Unexpected and Side Effects

The damage resulting from undesirable and side effects can have a greater impact on the intervention than the accomplishment of the objectives initially set. While it is easy to define the negative consequences, turning the positive consequences into the objectives and measuring the ratio of negative impacts to central goals can be difficult.

[188] Interviews with officials from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and the Office of the Prime Minister of Lithuania, Vilnius, 18 and 19 March 2014.

[189] Interview with a civil servant in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Helsinki, 27 May 2014.

[190] Peter Rossi, Mark Lipsey and Howard Freeman, *op.cit.*, str. 224.

[191] Interview with researchers from the Finnish Labour Institute in Helsinki, 26 May 2014.

[192] Interview with the Advisor for monitoring and evaluation in the Prime Minister's Office, Helsinki, 27 May 2014.

Distinguishing Policy Impacts from Other External Impacts

A constant challenge of policy evaluation is making a distinction between the effects resulting from interventions and other policy impacts. For example, enhanced indicators in the field of health may reflect an improvement in living standards arising from better housing conditions or improved general education of the population about health. The impact of policy and other parallel effects can occur in opposite directions and produce apparent, but actually misleading results. For these situations it is useful to apply a quasi-experimental method.

Objectives Common to Several Departments

Considering that most policies nowadays are co-dependent and subject to the activity of several government departments, it is sometimes useless to observe and analyse the impact of each individual policy. Complex problems require the development of multiple solutions, which makes it impossible to determine which is the most effective. At the same time, since a given programme shows effects only in synergy with another one, it would be counterproductive to isolate the effects of each of them individually.

Focus 14: Finnish Model of Cross-Sectoral Monitoring

Finland is currently implementing a system designed to avoid the negative effects of monitoring and evaluating each policy individually, by developing programme areas common to several different departments and defining common indicators. These indicators are then linked with individual indicators developed by the ministries. Because of this need, the Prime Minister's Office will be given greater horizontal competencies in the future.[193]

For instance, the Cross-sectoral Action Plan for Reducing Social Exclusion, Poverty and Health Problems for the period of 2011-2014 includes seven different topics and 30 projects which have been defined by the Government. The Action Plan is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health; a working group at the ministerial level manages the Action Plan, while the steering group is composed of representatives from other ministries, professional government institutions, associations of local and regional authorities, social partners, NGOs, etc. The Action Plan is closely linked to the Government Programme, as well as to the Europe 2020 strategy objectives.[194]

Political Sensitivity of Monitoring and Evaluation

Government policy performance assessment takes place in the context where politicians invest great efforts into maintaining a good reputation, the careers of civil servants are constantly questioned and it is questionable whether the target group that benefits from a certain policy should in fact be the beneficiary. Therefore, it is not surprising that evaluations can be seen as a threat to the continuation of policy implementation, a policy in which many actors have significant stakes and interests invested. For these reasons it is not clear to what extent evaluation results will be used. On the other hand, politically sensitive circumstances can put evaluators under pressure and influence the quality and neutrality of evaluations, given that during the evaluation process they have to cooperate with civil servants and policy beneficiaries.

Focus 15: External Evaluations and Neutrality

The purpose of engaging external actors for conducting evaluations is to ensure an unbiased and objective assessment of the performance of the given policy, its impact as well as the ratio of results achieved in comparison to the expected results. In all three case studies covered by this study, policy evaluation and EU structural funds evaluation is carried out exclusively by external evaluators, who are engaged through a public procurement process. Although at the first sight it seems that external evaluations are conducted in an objective and neutral manner, the interviewees from all three case studies have confirmed that this is not the case in practice. Namely, during the evaluation process, external evaluators are in constant communication

[193] Interview with an advisor in the Prime Minister's Office, Helsinki, 27. May 2014.

[194] Ministry of Social Affairs and Health brochure about the Action Plan, available at <http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=42733&name=DLFE-24515.pdf>

with the contracting authorities – ministries, primarily for the purposes of collected data necessary for executing the evaluation. As a result, external evaluators often form close relations with ministries, which impacts the objectivity and the final findings of the evaluation reports. Beside this, since it is in the interest of external evaluators to be rehired in the future, if they judge that an overly "honest" evaluation would jeopardize their relationship with the contracting authority, they will not write the evaluation in a sufficiently critical and objective manner.

This widespread phenomenon, according to interviewees, can be resolved through two "fronts". The first is through continuous influence on increasing the level of evaluation culture, exerting pressure on decision-makers to make data available and to make political decisions based on facts/to make evidence-based political decisions.[195] Secondly, by creating a favourable environment for the development of an "evaluators market," or preventing the situation where the number of evaluators competing is limited and based on previous evaluations. Creating competition will increase the quality of offers, as well as of the evaluations themselves.[196]

Independent academic institutes in Finland are some of the "competitors" in the government policy evaluations market. According to researchers from the Labour Institute for Economic Research, specialised in fiscal and social policy and employment issues, the objectivity and neutrality of their evaluation reports is never questioned, since the institute consistently applies rigorous academic criteria while conducting a research.

In addition, their thoroughness and precision impacts their credibility, keeping in mind that to date they have never made a qualitative error in any of their evaluation reports.[197] In Lithuania, the Public Policy and Management Institute, an independent think tank organisation, is described as an organisation with expertise for conducting evaluations, and based on the fact that this organisation is an actor working in the public interest there is no need to question the objectivity of its reports.[198]

Utility of the M&E results

The efficiency and effectiveness of the M&E system is reflected in the utility of its findings for further steps in the policymaking process. In an ideal system, objective and thorough evaluations will compel decision makers to incorporate messages and lessons learned into decisions on further courses of action. Evaluation utility, besides quality, is very much dependent on institutional and societal evaluation culture as well as the readiness to accept and correct mistakes. Research conducted within the Secretariat-General of the European Commission showed that 70% of new policies and decisions made at the EU level take into account and made reference to the evaluation findings.[199] Focus on evidence-based policy assessment is expected to lead to greater use of evaluation results. In all three case studies interviewees emphasised that using evaluation results is an never-ending challenge and there will always be room for improvement in this area, since this question is directly connected to evaluation culture. Other factors include the competence of ministry officials and organisational units, well-defined terms of reference, adequate time resources, access to information and efficient cooperation between evaluation contracting authorities and providers.[200]

IV.2. Building a Structure for M&E Supported by Civil Society: Evaluation of Options for Serbia

After examining models of policy M&E institutionalisation through comparative practice, as well as the practice of CSO involvement in these procedures, there are three possible scenarios for Serbia in terms of establishing an M&E system with civil society involvement in the

[195] Interview with advisor at the Prime Minister's Office of the Republic of Finland, Helsinki, 27 May; Interview with officials from the Secretariat-General of the European Commission, Brussels, 1 May 2014.

[196] Interview with official from the Directorate-General for Regional Policy of the European Commission, 3 April 2014.

[197] Interview with the senior researcher and director at the Labour Institute for Economic Research, Helsinki, 26 May 2014.

[198] Interview with the director and researcher at PPMI, Vilnius, 17 March, 2014.

[199] Interview with the officials from the Secretariat-General of the European Commission, Brussels, 1 April 2014.

[200] Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania, "Evaluation Capacity Building in Lithuania: Experience and Lessons," 2013, p. 22.

process. The systems of Lithuania, Finland and the EU examined above, the opportunities and characteristics of the Serbian context, as well as the available secondary literature, have provided a framework for designing a (1) basic, (2) advanced and (3) developed model for Serbia. They are formed on the basis of the following criteria:

- Level/degree of evaluation culture development;
- Relations between the centre of the government and the ministries;
- Focus on process/results.

The options, defined on the basis of these criteria, are evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Short and medium-term feasibility in relation to the current level of development of the evaluation culture, which includes reviewing data availability, knowledge and capacity for M&E, etc.
- Suitability of the option for involving CSOs, in which the evaluation with respect to involvement possibilities is conducted in accordance with the degree of development of the cooperation environment with civil society in Serbia and perspectives for its further development.

IV.2.1. Basic Elements of the Identified Options

Option 1 – Basic Model

The first option represents a Basic System which is suitable in a context where there is a low level of evaluation culture, where public administration does not possess sufficiently credible and good quality data in all policy areas, nor does it possess organisational capacity and its civil servant lack skills for conducting M&E. In this system, the centre of government would have a high level of authority and control in relation to the ministries, so as to ensure that the ministries gradually acquire the skills necessary for proper conducting of M&E. More concretely, the centre of the government would be in charge of verifying compliance between strategic documents and the working programme of the ministries, it would prescribe detailed obligatory guidelines and procedures for all the ministries and would control the quality of the reports delivered by the ministries. Moreover, the centre of the government would conduct regular trainings, manage the centralised data base, and also undertake independent evaluations in complex policy fields, where requirements cannot be met by the capacity of the ministries.

The system would be predominantly process/implementation oriented, in order to ensure that learning of the basic steps of conducting M&E takes place and that the difficulties of identifying and measuring result indicators in several public policy areas are taken into account. Under the circumstances of underdeveloped M&E institutionalisation, bearing in mind weak capacities and the lack of means for preparing studies on indicators, and in general, on measuring results, a results-based system would be difficult to apply in the initial period. The Basic Model was designed based on the initial phase of building the M&E system in Lithuania.

Option 2 – Developed Model

The second option implies a considerably higher level of M&E culture development comparing to the Basic Model, which presumes the existence of developed institutional and human capacity for performing these activities. The Advanced Model implies a results-based monitoring system, which requires the ability to identify, as well as to measure, more complex result indicators. Within this system, each ministry has an M&E unit, but the procedures and modes of conducting M&E are prescribed by the central level, so the managers do not have much room for introducing specificities in different policy areas. This also means that in the Advanced Model the centre of the government performs coordination functions, harmonises practices and performs quality control, however less prescriptive and centralised than in the Basic Model. This option implies the existence of relatively high-developed data collection mechanisms, that is to say, well-networked, regularly updated and content-rich official databases, which facilitates the transition from a process-oriented to a results-oriented system. The described model is based on the system that is used by the European Commission.

Option 3 – Advanced Model

The third option represents the most complex system, suitable for a highly developed evaluation culture, as well as a developed managerial culture. In such a system, measuring effects would be the focus of M&E, while lessons learned would be taken into account when launching new interventions. The centre of government would be only in charge of assessing compliance between horizontal and cross-sectoral policies and controlling the complementarity between strategic documents and indicators. Ministries would, however, have full autonomy in conducting monitoring tasks, creating structures and procedures most applicable to the specificities of their policies, as well as choosing the themes for which the independent evaluation reports will be prepared. The official statistical data is of a high-quality, it is credible and easily accessible to the public. The Finnish system was the inspiration for examining this model.

IV.2.2. Evaluation of Identified Options

Option 1 – Basic model

Bearing in mind the current level of M&E culture development in Serbia, the underdeveloped institutional mechanisms, the low quality and availability of official statistical data, as well as resources for assessing performance, the first option is most feasible for short and medium-term implementation. At the same time with the creation of the Public Policy Secretariat, an institution in the centre of government particularly responsible for improving the policymaking process, the basic requirements for exercising centre of government functions, without which this option cannot be realised, have been met.

The first option is also the most suitable considering the current possibilities for involving civil society in the policy process, which are above all informational and consultative in nature. Practically speaking, this means that in the Basic System, CSOs would not be able to contribute to policy M&E with their own data and research, since their research capacities are not sufficiently developed nor does the state have the ability to assess the credibility of such data and information. Consequently, the data cannot be accepted as credible and objective, and therefore it cannot be used in official state reports on policy performance. At the same time, considering the current level of cooperation between the state and the civil society in Serbia and the state's intention to create a more enabling environment for cooperation with civil society,[201] this Basic Model can facilitate a basic level of civil society involvement in structures for policy M&E already in the short-term (e.g. cross-sectoral working groups and/or councils). This type of involvement already exists in for example the legislative phase of the policy cycle, although it is primarily based on expertise and not some objective criteria of CSO representation. In absence of the possibility to contribute to M&E through their own research, as credible and recognised information source, CSOs would participate as observers within these structures, expressing their views and commenting on the prepared reports.

All in all, in this system, CSOs would be involved in individual working groups, although they would not be engaged in measuring results and delivering data. The state would commit to take into account and review CSO comments, but not to necessarily adopt them. That way the level of awareness of CSOs would be increased and the foundation for deeper forms of cooperation with the state/public administration would be established.

Option 2 – Developed model

Since it is results-based, the Developed Model is more difficult to implement in the short and medium-term in Serbia, primarily because it requires the capacity to identify results-based indicators and the capacity to regularly measure them, which is currently possible only for a very limited number of policy areas (e.g. in the field of employment, certain internationally comparable indicators are regularly monitored, contrary to the field of government and public administration effectiveness, where almost no statistical data is available). In addition, the applicability of this option in the short-term decreases the already weak organisational and

[201] The Government formed the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society in January 2011. Work on the National Strategy for Communication and for forming an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in the Republic of Serbia is in progress. At the same time, the Government adopted the "Guidelines for Including CSOs in the Legislative Procedure" in August 2014. (Conclusion 05 number 011-8872/2014). All of these measures point to the intention to create conditions for further development of cooperation between the state and civil society.

Table 7: Analysis of Options in Relation to Criteria

Options / Criteria	Option 1: Basic System	Option 2: Developed System	Option 3: Advanced System
Evaluation Culture	Low	Low/Medium	High
Type of System	Process/implementation oriented	Results oriented	
Level of Centralisation	High: the centre of government (CoG) manages the centralised database, oversees compliance with strategic documents and coordinates the work of M&E units within the ministries	Moderate/low: the CoG collects the data submitted by the ministries, coordinates cross-sectoral policies and controls the compliance between the intervention and the strategic documents, while the ministries have autonomy in choosing the method of performing M&E.	
Form of CSO Participation	Gradual involvement: CSOs are members of the monitoring working groups, they exert pressure on the authorities to submit data + produce independent reports for the purpose of policy M&E	CSO representatives take part in the working groups for monitoring the implementation of policies / CSOs operate independently in the public interest and their findings are well received in public	CSOs are active members of political life, their work is acknowledged by state actors. Think tanks are the one of the contenders at the market of evaluators
Period of Time	Short-term (1-3 years)	Medium-term (4-7 years)	Long-term (8-12 years)

human capacities within the Serbian public administration for measuring policy performance.

In this option, civil society could achieve far more constructive participation in M&E structures than in the first option, since the availability of detailed, extensive and credible statistics would make it possible to conduct quantitative research that could, with the use of verified methodology, also be officially accepted by the state. At the same time, by using high-quality official statistics, civil society could hold authorities accountable more frequently and meaningfully. Naturally, for this option to be realised civil society would have to improve its research and analytical capacities, which is currently difficult considering insufficient and uncertain CSO financial sustainability.

Option 3 – Advanced Model

The third option requires the deepest reforms when it comes to Serbia, and above all, a high level of evaluation culture and evidence-based policy making. It requires not only developed practices and strong capacities for systematic M&E with evidence supplied by the civil society, but in addition, a significant increase of the level of democratic and political culture in Serbia, and civic activism in socio-political issues.

In the third option, in which there is a high level of understanding and knowledge of M&E on both sides (the state and the civil society), civil society would be an integrative part in the policymaking, a constructive critic of the government and an integral part of the M&E system, acting as a state partner in terms of data production and an active participant in conducting external evaluations. Since the ministries, in this model, would be independent in terms

of selecting the methods of conducting M&E, options for involving CSOs in these processes would therefore be more diverse. CSOs would base their legitimacy on acting in public interest, generating objective and quality analyses and gaining citizens' trust. If the first option evolves into the second one in the medium--term, the realisation of the third option in Serbia would be possible in 10 years at the fastest.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This study has aimed to demonstrate the significance of M&E in the policymaking system, as two functions that are in the initial phase of development in Serbia. Policy M&E have to be observed in a holistic manner, as an integrative part of evidence-based policymaking. One condition for a sustainable and functioning M&E system is the development of other policy cycle elements, especially the strategic planning system and the policy formulation phase. These aspects of policymaking are directly linked to M&E. On the one hand, strategic documents and objectives defined during the formulation phase serve as a basis for developing indicators that will assist in the monitoring and evaluation of a certain policy. On the other hand, knowledge acquired through M&E serves as lessons learnt that should become an integral part of the formulation phase at the beginning of a new cycle.

Comparative practice has shown different forms of institutionalisation of the M&E system. If the findings are generalised, differences are noticed in relation to:

- differences in the level of independence between ministries and the centre of government in performing these activities;
- focus of M&E on process or on results achieved;
- modalities of CSO involvement in these procedures.
- In terms of the level of independence of ministries compared to the centre of government in conducting M&E activities, differences exist between the centralised and decentralised models. In the centralised model, the centre of government manages the centralised system for monitoring indicators and measures, oversees compatibility between strategic documents and the plans of ministries, supports ministries in steering the monitoring process; while the ministries are responsible for the M&E of interventions within the scope of their competence. Contrary to that, the decentralised model implies that the centre of government has a horizontal role in verifying compatibility between the strategic and planning documents, while the ministries are given independence with respect to data collection and selection, as well as conducting evaluations.

If the focus of M&E is placed on internal capacity and characteristics and problems of implementing the intervention, this is a process/implementation-oriented system. If, on the other hand, the focus is on an analysis of the effects of the intervention and explanation as to why the expected results have or have not been achieved, this is a results-based system.

For the purposes of this study, CSOs were classified based on the dominant type of activities they conduct: whether they deal with direct civic activism, place pressure on decision-makers or conduct research and advocate their findings. Accordingly, it can be concluded that their contribution to monitoring activities is manifold and that they possess the capacities for performing these tasks, which can also be further developed in the future. Activist organisations and organisations that provide certain services to citizens are the most suitable for collecting primary data that can later be processed and used as a credible tool during the monitoring process. Organisations involved in advocacy have a stronghold on public opinion and thereby force decision-makers to act responsibly and to deliver data. Think tanks and research institutes can use their analytical skills for processing and interpreting official government data for monitoring purposes. When it comes to conducting evaluations, comparative practice has shown that only think tanks and research organisations have adequately developed capacities for performing these tasks.

This is due to a special nature of the evaluation procedure, the need for strong analytical skills and knowledge of complex methodologies – in other words, operations and activities that are most closely related to research-oriented CSOs.

CSO involvement in policy M&E is evident in comparative practice, however, it is rarely institutionalised. The CSOs that were interviewed largely confirmed that their influence is most visible in terms of writing independent reports and placing pressure on authorities to deliver credible data. Organisations who deliver services to citizens, such as those who help socially vulnerable citizens, are in certain cases primary data producers and this data is then used by the government as official data. In most cases, however, the data delivered by CSOs serves as additional source to the government in the monitoring process.

Practices in European countries show a restricted number of examples of CSO involvement in the evaluation process. Apart from a few think tanks and independent research institutes that are specialised in preparing studies and evaluation reports, during the research it was discovered that CSOs representatives predominately have reserved views concerning their involvement in evaluations. As a justification they cited the fear that this would impede their reputation as an independent and neutral actor acting in public interest. This attitude may seem paradoxical at first glance, since external evaluations are conducted precisely in order to obtain an independent opinion. Nevertheless, under the conditions that there are limited opportunities for achieving financial sustainability, evaluation reports may be one of the options used for ensuring CSO funding source diversity.

Utilising M&E results for assessing policy impact has been a constant challenge for policy-makers, decision-makers and stakeholders. The difficulties and limitations of performing M&E have been recognised in the existing literature as well as through comparative practice and statements by interviewees, particularly with respect to data availability, indicator development, definition of objectives, time limitations, political sensitiveness etc.

In the Serbian context, the research conducted within the framework of this study showed that the biggest challenges of involving CSOs in M&E processes are:

- *Difficulty of establishing cooperation between state representatives and CSOs*

In Serbia, there is a lack of interest as well as a lack of internal motivation of the state administration for increasing CSO involvement in M&E. As a result, all advancements made are essentially due to external assistance, which does not yield in return long-term and significant CSO involvement. On the contrary, participation is usually *pro forma,* with short-term effects depending on a specific time-limited project. In addition, external support (finance, expertise, etc.) has also not been articulated to a sufficient extent in order to increase the interest of the state administration in involving CSOs.

- *Communication gap between the state and CSOs*

There is a communication problem between CSOs and the state administration. Civil servants do not perceive CSOs as potential partners, which is partially a consequence of the unconstructive approach employed by CSOs: rather than giving concrete proposals and ideas, they often only criticise.

- *Insufficiently systematic approach to cooperation*

For civil society to be completely involved in the M&E process, it has to be aware of which processes it is participating in, how and when. In the policy M&E domain, civil sector can play different roles: (1) as an organisation that *monitors* policies within its field of expertise and *raises public awareness* on these issues, (2) as an organisation that primarily deals with *advocating* a particular approach or solution to a problem, (3) as an organisation that conducts *research activities and generates studies* useful for policy M&E or (4) as an organisation that is engaged in providing *report writing services* for the purpose of policy M&E.

Each of these roles, *per se,* is important in the M&E process, but it is crucial that a CSO which is interested in getting involved clearly and strategically defines its role in this process, understands the forms of action which it has to undertake (in light with its role) and carries them out consistently.

Developing more adequate institutional mechanisms for ensuring CSO participation, could

contribute to gaining a clearer understanding of the role of the CSO. Some good practice examples, for instance in the area of social policy, indicate that progress has been made primarily due to the personal commitment of particular servants in addition to international assistance. That implies that the behaviour of the state administration is unpredictable and unreliable, because there is no institutional guarantee that the CSO will be involved in M&E, regardless of the personal commitment of particular civil servants who are sympathetic to this topic and comprehend the importance of CSO involvement.

- *Insufficiently developed awareness on the significance of policy M&E*

The majority of surveyed CSO representatives (62%) indicated that their primary ideas and expectations regarding the civil sector were idealistic and that they thus had to somewhat adapt them to the actual situation. Just over a third (36%) believes that their initial ideas and expectations were generally satisfied. Therefore, the involvement of CSOs in the M&E process requires a highly operational approach to the problem, in order to avoid idealisation of the process and it "getting lost in the fog". A clear explanation of what can be achieved through M&E and what can be achieved if CSOs are involved, as well as a very practical guideline as to how CSOs can get involved.

- *Insufficiently developed organisational and human capacities* in a vast number of CSOs or a strong need for additional training and further educating of CSOs representatives, who have been involved in these processes.

- *An underdeveloped monitoring and evaluation culture*.

- Public policy evaluation culture in Serbia is underdeveloped: (1) there is a lack of sufficient understanding of the importance of policy M&E, the mechanisms for conducting this process as well as the actors who should (can) be involved of the process; (2) the monitoring and evaluation market is insufficiently developed both on the supply and demand sides in terms of performing these activities; (3) the institutional environment does not offer full support for evaluation culture development and (4) monitoring and evaluation culture is weak due to unfavourable historical circumstances, as well as weak efforts made towards building a more enabling environment.

The following shortcomings are observed with respect to state administration representatives and their understanding the essence and scope of policy M&E:

- The lack of a strategy and policy for regulating M&E processes;

- There is no systematic evaluation: no common, uniform norms, rules, indicators, national standards or behaviour patterns;

- Neither M&E market supply nor demand have been adequately developed; M&E organisations are rare as are associations that bring together these organisations, there is a small number of participants and the relations between them are primarily established on the basis of personal contacts and in some cases there are no organisations capable of offering M&E services at the local level;

- There is a certain misunderstanding, misuse or even a complete lack of evaluation in certain cases.

- Evaluation is seen as a process used for searching for mistakes and culprits, which contributes to its unpopularity and avoidance of using it (negative perception of evaluation);

- Insufficient communication between state administration representatives and other stakeholders, above all CSOs, with respect to conducting M&E activities;

- Limited application of evaluation results, and the planning, implementation and evaluation processes are separated from each other;

- Weak evaluation culture might be the reason that attempts to establish an efficient M&E system are failing;

- Transparency of the evaluation system (in the case that a system even exists) is insufficient. Fragmented and silo-mentality administration;

- Limited financial and human resources.

The study examined the existing M&E system in Serbia at the general level, with a particular focus on the state administration reform and social policy and employment sectors. In the area of state administration reform, an M&E system will be established after the Action Plan for the Implementation of the PAR Strategy comes into force. Certain CSOs in Serbia are active in monitoring this field, by producing independent studies and exerting pressure on decision makers for e.g. responsible budgetary behaviour. Through the mechanism of Sectoral Civic Society Organisations (SCSO), five CSOs form a consortium led by SCSO for PAR which, at the invitation of the competent ministry, participate in the policymaking process in this area by providing suggestions and comments.[202] The SCSO for PAR network consists of a total of 29 organisations. This fact demonstrates how much civil society interest there is in this policy area, and it indicates that preconditions for strengthening CSO capacities for M&E in this field exist.

In the social policy and employment sectors in Serbia, there are a few examples of well-developed M&E practices that could serve as a role model for a systematic involvement of CSOs in M&E. Detailed analysis has shown that a precondition for actively involving CSOs is strong donor support, such as in the case of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Donor presence, however, does not only imply that funds are made available, but also that there is a transfer of knowledge with respect to Strategy M&E practices and procedures, which was the case in other countries implementing the Strategy as well. Initiatives, such as CSFP programme, illustrated the necessary preconditions in order for CSOs to be involved in policy M&E. First of all, good communication with state institutions is considered to be a key precondition, which implies defining the method and frequency of quality information exchange. Additionally, CSOs should have access to all the relevant documents and materials, which would facilitate the planning of independent, external monitoring. Finally, it is essential to secure financial resources for supporting the active involvement of CSOs in policy M&E. On the other hand, CSOs themselves, on the basis of experiences from the CSFP programme, have concluded that they should improve their data collection and processing methodologies as well as the necessary knowledge for conducting good quality M&E in the fields of their competence.

Civil society organisations, such as unions and employer associations, are actively included in the monitoring of the National Employment Strategy. Monitoring of the Strategy through NEAP is supported through IPA funds. In addition, the evaluation of employment policies is supported by donor funds as well, because the Ministry itself does not possess the capacities to independently assess the effects of the implemented measures. Nevertheless, national think tanks are often members of the expert team for evaluation.

Based on the examined comparative practices and the current state of affairs in terms of policy M&E in Serbia with evidence supplied by the civil society three possible models of arranging the emerging system have been identified. They are defined in relation to the following criteria: level of development of M&E culture, scope of reforms required and relation between the centre of government and ministries; and then assessed with respect to time feasibility and degree of CSO involvement.

The first option is a system which is suitable in the context where there is a low level of evaluation culture and an insufficiently constructive relationship between CSOs and decision makers. In this system, the centre of government would have a higher level of authority and control in comparison to the ministries, in order to ensure that the ministries are gradually acquiring the skills necessary for conducting proper M&E. CSOs would be members of the working groups for monitoring, but also external actors, in terms of independent political participation, exerting pressure on authorities to submit data, as well as producing relevant data and analyses for the purpose of independent M&E. This model was designed based on the initial M&E system building phase in Lithuania.

The second option goes one step further than the first in terms of strengthening the effectiveness of the M&E process and CSO participation. It is suitable for countries in which CSOs have a considerable influence and impact on political life and in which decision makers are ready to accept criticism, in other words – in countries with a developed evaluation culture. This system would be partially results-oriented, which would strengthen evidence-based policy making. As a result of knowledge and

[202] For more on SCSO mechanism in PAR see: <http://www.cdspredlaze.org.rs/default.asp?Category=2>

experience acquired, the ministries would have more autonomy from the centre of government in terms of selecting monitoring and evaluation methods. This combined model is based on the system used by the European Commission.

The third option requires the deepest reforms and a particularly high level of evaluation culture and evidence-based policy making. Civil society would be an integral part of political life, a constructive critic of the government and an integral part of the M&E system, as well as a primary data producer and a participant in external evaluation tenders. This system would be results-based and the centre of government would have a role in verifying compatibility between horizontal and cross-sectoral policies. The Finnish system was inspiration for examining this model.

Keeping in mind, the analysed situation in Serbia, the first option would be the most suitable in the short and medium-term. Its advantage lies in the fact that it has a high feasibility level, for it would actually represent a continuation of the on-going efforts to build a strategic planning system and M&E structures, as well as the effects of CSOs to increase their relevance and influence on decision-makers. With the recent establishment of the Public Policy Secretariat (PPS), it seems that the basic requirements for exercising centre of government functions, without which the first option cannot be realised, have been met. This model facilitates a basic level of civil society involvement in policy M&E structures (e.g. cross-sectoral working groups and/or councils), however due to limited capacities, the state would have to commit to taking into account and considering the comments of CSOs, but without any obligation to adopt them. Eventually, as the development of an evaluation culture and capacity in both public administration and civil society sectors proceeds, this basic model could transition into the second model, and in the best case scenario, after several government mandates it would evolve into the third model.

Recommendations

I. Establishing an effective and functioning M&E system:

- Adopt an act which would regulate the policymaking process and which would confer certain M&E competences upon the Public Policy Secretariat. These would above all include: the preparation of guidelines and instructions for the ministries; *ex ante* and *ex post* quality control (i.e. PPS would control the quality of indicators, reports and recommendations); harmonisation of procedures/acts and quality at the inter-ministerial level via trainings (which the Human Resource Management Service could conduct in accordance with the PPS programme); coaching in the ministries, with the largest gaps in quality, to acquire the necessary skills; coordination of reports across different sectors so as to ensure consistence of policies, etc.

- Institutionalise the involvement of CSOs in M&E procedures. Sectoral Civic Society Organisations (SEKO) can serve as an institutional mechanism for facilitating direct consultations and interactions with policy makers. The European Commission has, as one of the conclusions in the Screening Report on Chapter 23 on judicial reform, emphasised the necessity to ensure the involvement of CSOs in further reforms as in monitoring the implementation of the action plans.[203] Since neither the state nor CSOs currently possess sufficient capacities and resources for conducting thorough qualitative research and executing studies on performance assessment, CSOs could be directly involved in certain structures for managing and monitoring policies, but with no explicit responsibility to contribute by submitting data. Their participation would be facultative and the purpose of their involvement would be to become informed and to be consulted regarding progress in certain policy areas. In case of this type of participation, the state would not be obliged to accept the views of and comments made by civil society, but rather to selectively take them into consideration, in cases where it is deemed

[203] European Commission Screening Report on Chapter 23, p. 26, available at: < http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/140729-screening-report-chapter-23-serbia.pdf>

that their quality and content can positively contribute to the monitoring reports. Participation in the evaluation would be reduced to the right to comment on evaluation reports during deliberations in the given structures, in cases where internal or external evaluations are being carried out.

II. Involving CSOs in policy M&E:

- The state should create preconditions for the development of civil society so as to have it as a partner in terms of information gathering and monitoring, i.e. to get more familiarised with the work and functioning of CSOs in order to identify resources they possess which could be valuable for the monitoring and evaluation process. The prerequisites for developing an enabling environment for CSO support and improving communication between the two sectors already exist to a certain extent, since cooperation between the two sectors has already been significantly enhanced in recent years (at least formally), e.g. through CSFP experience, the legal drafting process (obligation to hold public hearings, and in some cases through participation in working groups for drafting laws), IPA programming (through SECS mechanism) or in monitoring of accession negotiations between Serbia and the EU (via participation in National Convent).

- Ministries in charge of certain policy areas should be responsible for involving CSOs in the structures for the M&E of these policies, which are now being created. If ministries implement the Guidelines for Involving CSOs in the Legislative Procedure, which have been adopted by the Government,[204] and accordingly appoint persons who will be in charge of cooperation with civil society, this capacity could ensure both adequate communication and commitment to involving CSOs in the M&E structures. On the other hand, if the first option is accepted (the Basic Model), guidelines and recommendations for involving CSOs in M&E should be prepared by the National Public Policy Secretariat (in cooperation with the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society), considering that this body is supposed to possess a deep knowledge and understanding of these procedures. Individual ministries should be given the possibility of altering the means for CSO involvement based on specific circumstances within their departments, and in line with certain minimum standards whose application would be monitored by the centre of government (PPS and the Office). For ensuring proper CSO representation, there should be a heavy reliance on the existing mechanisms and networks established for monitoring IPA programming (SECS) and some policies with existing civil society involvement practices (e.g. CSFP). Finally, the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, bearing in mind its general role in developing the overall environment for cooperation between the state and civil society should, in collaboration with PPS, monitor CSO inclusion in the M&E of all the policies, identify the possibilities for improving the mutual cooperation legislative framework and advocate for more meaningful CSO involvement .

III. CSO capacity building:

- State administration representatives take a clear stance that CSOs will be involved in M&E only and exclusively on the basis of their expertise. In this regard, in order to be on equal footing with other M&E stakeholders, CSOs should strengthen their own capacity and abilities to approach these activities in a professional manner. Strengthening the human, organisational and financial capacities of CSOs is particularly important bearing in mind the expected gradual withdrawal of the majority of foreign donors, which are at the present moment the largest source of CSO funding in Serbia. The debate on the models of CSO sustainability in Serbia has to draw serious attention of state actors and of the European Union.

- One of the ways of securing funds could be if certain CSOs specialise in delivering services for the purpose of M&E, e.g. by preparing evaluation reports as external evaluators. In this regard, a special focus should be placed on strengthening research and analysis capacities, to make sure that CSOs will be capable of adequately participating in the M&E process.

[204] Government Conclusion 05 number 011-8872/2014, adopted on 26 August 2014.

IV. Top-bottom approach to strengthening the evaluation culture

Political authorities should support results--oriented governance and show consistency in terms their words and actions by applying in practice what they express in public. In order for M&E to be substantial, learning processes should be incorporated into the policymaking cycle and they should be managed by relevant decision makers. The fear of potential sanctions, which many evaluation subjects believed would follow if the impact evaluation process showed disappointing results, can incite strong resistance to this process, and can lead the subjects to conscious or unconscious sabotage the process and to do everything they can to prevent it. However, with the parallel development of a monitoring and evaluation culture in society, it is in the government's interest to monitor and evaluate policy implementation, because this is a way to increase its own legitimacy and gain "political points".

Learning will not occur by way of a spontaneous, uncontrolled process, but rather it should be systematically managed and conducted by the relevant stakeholders. For this to happen, errors must be recognised as such, and then through the analysis process it should determine why these mistakes occurred, what caused the side effects and how to act in the future in order to avoid such mistakes.

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Annex 1: Research Methodology

Research Approach and Method

For the purposes of this research, a neo-institutional approach was adopted since it was deemed to be the most appropriate due to the fact that it is not limited to only the formal aspects but also incorporates informal rules and procedures of political life.[205] Moreover, given the fact that the functioning of the Serbian state administration is heavily influenced by external circumstances, it is necessary to take into account the behaviour of the actors involved beyond the formal norms, if the goal of identifying and analysing deficiencies in policy-making and policy-coordination systems in Serbia are to be attained.

The research was based on a qualitative approach which included qualitative data collection, as "[t]he research process is not locked into rigid designs but is adaptable to changing situations and has the ability to pursue new paths of discovery as they emerge."[206] Additionally, in order to attain the research goal, a qualitative methodology was deemed to be the most suitable for "[engaging] in research that probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features."[207] In other words, due to the depth and richness of the findings which stem from a qualitative approach,[208] this method was deemed the most appropriate in terms of formulating adequate conclusions and policy recommendations based on the specific circumstances in Serbia.

In addition to the qualitative approach, the comparative method was adopted as it facilitates the "developing, testing and refining theories about causal relationships" and helps to establish generalisations.[209] Namely, three country case studies were examined in order to devise ideas and develop options for enhancing policy M&E and CSO involvement in Serbia.

Country Case Studies Rationale

In selecting country case studies, the research team selected country case studies based on the following criteria: a high level of development and institutionalisation of policy M&E; an active civil society and developed practices of participation in these procedures; different mechanisms of management; the experiences of "newer" Member States versus the "older" ones; and case relevance for the Serbian context.

On the basis of desk research it has been concluded that, among the EU member states that acceded in 2004, the Lithuanian case is the most relevant for this study. A particularly important aspect in the Lithuanian experience is the system of strategic planning and strategic documents, the government work programmes and policy documents and their linkage to programme budgeting, which were the foundations for building the M&E structure. The Lithuanian case also drew attention to the fact that Lithuania is, alongside Estonia, a leader in terms of the absorption of EU structural funds, which requires an effective and functioning M&E system. In terms of CSO involvement in these activities, the Lithuanian example is valuable to Serbia for several reasons. Namely, generally speaking, Lithuanian CSOs had not been prepared for coping with the new circumstances emerging from EU membership, which is clear today as

[205] March David and Gerry Stoker (ed.), "Theory and Methods in Political Science," Palgrave, 2010, p. 66-67.

[206] Ibid., p. 257.

[207] Scott D. Johnson, "Will our research hold up under scrutiny?" Journal of Industrial Teacher Education, 32.3, 1995, 4 ed. Nahid Golafshani, "Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research," The Qualitative Report Vol. 8 No. 4, 2003, p. 603. Available at: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf>

[208] Alan Brymam, "Quantity and Quality in Social Research," Routledge, 1998

[209] Jonathan Hopkin, "The Comparative Method," in: Theory and Methods in Political Science Ed. David March, Gerry Stoker. Palgrave, 2010, p. 285-308.

a result of their insufficient participation in the policy and decision making processes, and therefore in policy monitoring as well. At the same time, the experience of one think tank in Lithuania specialised in policy evaluation serves as an instructive example for research-oriented CSOs in Serbia in terms of devising an action plan strategy for the next 10 years.

Finland was, on the other hand, chosen specifically due to its highly developed evidence-based policymaking practices, high level of evaluation culture, as well as an example of participation of research-oriented CSOs in performing external evaluation. The Government M&E system seemed useful for Serbia because of its strong reliance on ministries, as well as its inter-sectoral character and the developed mechanisms of coordinating the work of different ministries and government bodies.

The reason for selecting the M&E system applied at the EU level is due to its role in setting standards for Member States in this area. The guidelines, methodology and manuals developed by the Secretariat-General of the European Commission are widely used and adapted by Member States. In addition, examining the EU structural funds M&E system was especially important in the case of Serbia due to the system's complexity and special requirements, hence why it is advisable for Serbia to consider this system at an early stage of the accession negotiations. Since think tanks, based in Brussels, are an integrative factor of policy making at the EU level, the research team sought to examine their role in EU policy M&E processes and to determine their views on this topic.

Data Collection and Analysis

The research component of this study was comprised of two complementary phases: desk research (analysis of available documents) and qualitative research with respect to the selected case studies. This way, the research team was able to compare and contrast the existing findings and claims with first-hand experience and observations.

a. Desk research

Desk research entailed an examination of both primary and secondary sources and enabled a triangulation of sources which promises "to increase the validity of a study by seeking the degree of agreement in the investigation outcome from the use of multiple methods and measurement procedures."[210] The primary sources consisted of the laws and regulations of the Government of Serbia on the policy-making process; strategies and action plans within the areas of public administration and social policy and employment; as well as relevant official documents and regulations from case studies. The secondary sources included OECD reports on public sector modernisation, academic and professional literature dealing with issues related to monitoring and evaluation, policy M&E studies, as well as literature on involving CSOs in the policymaking process in general, and specifically in the M&E process.

Although it was initially assumed that the World Bank and European Commission project titled, "Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Development for the Western Balkans and Turkey," would publish certain results during the preparation of this study, which should have been taken into account, very early - right at the beginning of this research project - it was concluded based on meetings with World Bank experts and civil servants in Serbia that there would not be any overlaps between their research and this given study. In this way, sustainability and synergistic effect have been ensured.

b. Field Research

Based on the preliminary findings acquired through desk research, "field" research was conducted. Primary data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews which according to the literature "enable 'special insight' into subjectivity, voice and lived experiences."[211] The interviewees were selected through a combination of the nonprobability purposeful sampling and snowballing techniques so as to devise sound conclusions and policy options

[210] Agnes Ma and Brahm Norwich, "Triangulation and Theoretical Understanding," Int. J. Social Research Methodology. Vol. 10, No. 3, July 2007, p. 211–226.

[211] P. Atkinson, D. Silverman. "Kundera's Immortality: the interview society and the invention of the self," Qualitative Inquiry, vol. 3 (3), 1997, p. 304–25.

and prevent the possibility of going astray.[212] Interviewees were selected in accordance with the relevance of their experience and expertise for the study.

In order to assess the current state of the policy monitoring and evaluation system in Serbia at the governmental level, interviews were held with civil servants from the ministry in charge of public administration, ministry in charge of social policy and employment as well as representatives from the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit. Interviews were also held with representatives of the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, as well as representatives of CSOs in Serbia, in order to examine the modes of including CSOs in policy M&E. Discussion and findings of the round table discussion on the same topic also served as a data source which was incorporated into the study.

In terms of devising options for building an M&E system in Serbia, as well as for involving CSOs, direct interviews with civil servants and CSO representatives in Lithuania and Finland were of a great importance, as were also interviews with European Commission officials and think tanks in Brussels.[213] They were preceded by direct interviews with five officials from OECD/SIGMA,[214] who assisted the project team in selecting case studies and identifying project themes which can be complementary to the work of SIGMA.

A special questionnaire was designed for each interviewee to consult before the interview, which proved to be a very effective practice, since it gave the interviewees the chance to prepare for the meetings, which resulted in fruitful and high quality conversations. Interview questions and topics were formed in line with each individual interviewee's expertise and position. Most of the questionnaires began with general questions, continuing with questions on specific matters relating to the experience and special expertise of the interviewees in order to eventually come to a discussion on recommendations and possible development in the given area in the future.

Data on the state and capacities of CSOs in Serbia was collected via online semi-open questionnaires, which were sent to 50 CSOs in Serbia, most registered in Belgrade, which were deemed as active and with a profile relevant for this research. Although the response rate to the questionnaire was slightly higher than 40%, the data collected was mostly qualitative in nature and served for identifying the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for increasing CSO participation in monitoring and evaluation procedures.[215]

[212] Intentional purposeful sampling involves a predefining a group who is thought to be relevant for the research based on the background knowledge of the researchers on the given topic. The "snowballing" technique could be understood as sub-category of purposeful sampling and it means that the sample of interviewees is expanded in accordance with determined research criteria, through the recommendations of previous interviewees.

[213] A total of seven interviews are held in Vilnius: with the Director of the Government Coordination Centre, the Director of the Strategic Analysis Department and the Head of the M&E Department in the Ministry of Social Security and Employment, three representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister in charge of M&E, the Head of the Ministry of Agriculture Department in charge of M&E, the Head of the Ministry of Finance department in charge of monitoring and the Head of the department in change of evaluation at the same ministry, as well as the Director of and Researcher at the Public Policy and Management Institute – a think tank organisation; Six interviews were held in Finland: with an Advisor from the Prime Minister's Office in charge of M&E, representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Economy and Employment, as well as representatives of the Labour Institute for Economic Research and a coalition of NGOs advocating for women's issues; Eight interviews were held in Brussels: with representatives of think tank organisations Bruegel, CEPS, EPC, OSF and ESI as well as representatives of the European Commission in the Secretariat-General, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, DG Justice, and DG Employment.

[214] A meeting with Briann Finn was held in Belgrade on 15 January 2014, while meetings with Rachel Halloway, Klas Klaas and Keit Kasemets were held in Paris on 31 January 2014.

[215] The questionnaire covered following organisations: European Movement in Serbia, Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, NGO Astra, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Centre for Euro-Atlantic Studies, Institute for Territorial Development – Inter, BOŠ – Centre for European Integration, Civic Association Amity, YUCOM, Centre for Non-Profit Sector Development, Belgrade Centre for Political Excellence, Centre for Applied European Studies, Autonomous Women's Centre.

Institutions that Participated in the Interviews

Serbia

- Office for Cooperation with Civil Society
- SIPRU
- Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs
- European Integration Office

Lithuania

- Office of the Prime Minister
- Ministry of Social Security and Labour
- Ministry of the Interior (in charge of state administration reform)
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Agriculture
- GCC
- PPMI

European Union

- Secretariat-General
- Directorate-General for Regional Policy
- Directorate-General for Justice
- Directorate-General for Employment
- Bruegel
- ESI
- OSI
- CEPS

Finland

- Prime Minister's Office
- Ministry of Economy and Employment
- Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
- Institute for Economic Research
- NGO Coalition of Finnish Women's Association

Annex 2: Questionnaire Sent to CSOs in Serbia

General questions about the organisation:

Year of formation: _____

Scope of activity:_____

Number of employees: _____

Number of volunteers (approximately/ from – to): _____

Please circle or fill in the appropriate answer on the following questions:

1. According to your own belief, does the general public in Serbia understand the importance of policy M&E?

a. Yes, very clearly

b. It does, but not sufficiently

c. No, not in an adequate way

d. Not at all

2. To which extent do civil society organisations in Serbia practice policy M&E?

a. They do not practice it at all

b. Not enough

c. To a certain extent

d. Very much

3. Is policy M&E recognised as an important practice in your organisation?

a. Yes, very much

b. Yes, partially

c. No

4. Has your organisation ever been involved in policy M&E?

a. YES

b. NO

If you answered YES, please expand your answer and describe your experience:

5. What are your organisation's ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITIES (previous experience, technique, technology and resources) for being included in policy M&E process?

a. My organisation has fully developed organisational capacities for being included in policy M&E process.

b. My organisation has somewhat developed organisational capacities for being included in policy M&E process.

c. My organisation does not have developed organisational capacities for being included in policy M&E process.

6. What are your organisation's HUMAN CAPACITIES (staff knowledge and skills, network of volunteers) for being included in policy M&E process?

a. My organisation's human capacities are completely adequate for being included in policy M&E process.

b. My organisation's human capacities are somewhat adequate for being included in policy M&E process.

c. My organisation's human capacities are inadequate for being included in policy M&E process.

7. Do you have developed policy monitoring guidelines or methodology?

a. Yes, we do

b. Only partially

c. No, we do not

If not, please indicate the potential mechanisms which you believe that would be helpful in developing your policy monitoring methodology:

8. Do you have developed policy evaluation guidelines or methodology?

a. Yes, we do

b. Only partially

c. No, we do not

If not, please indicate the potential mechanisms which you believe that would be helpful in developing your policy evaluation methodology:

9. Does your organisation publish reports on policy M&E?

a. YES

b. NO

if YES, please indicate below where and in which form the reports are published:

10. What do you think are the biggest challenges of involving civil society in the process of policy M&E:

a. insufficient awareness on the significance of policy M&E

b. inadequate organisational capacities of CSOs

c. inadequate human resources in CSOs

d. difficulties in establishing cooperation between state representatives and civil society organisations

If there is an alternative option, please indicate below:

11. What would be the primary role of your organisation in policy M&E?

a. *Monitoring* areas within our field of expertise and *raising public awareness* of these issues

b. *Advocating* a particular approach or a solution to a problem

c. Conducting *research activities* and *producing studies* useful for policy M&E

d. Delivering *reporting services* for the purpose of policy M&E

If there is an alternative option, please indicate below: