Regional School
of Public Administration

Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies

REPORT:

Follow-up Actions for ReSPA in the area of Monitoring and Evaluation

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I. Introduction

In the process of the EU integration, the accession countries in the Western Balkan (WB) region face a number of challenges. The governments in the WB region have to cope with the tight budgets on the one hand and the increasing demands of citizens as well as meeting the pre-conditions and requirements of the EU accession process on the other hand. Significant amount of assistance has been and is likely to be provided to accession countries to support their efforts in implementing political and economic reforms. For this, a number of reform initiatives have been designed by individual countries as well as several regional initiatives have been launched in the recent past to boost the socio-economic development, e.g. the South East European Strategy 2020 being one recent example. In addition to the very tangible and undisputed benefits of such initiatives, the countries also need to tackle the increasing demand for better institutional and administrative capacity to implement such initiatives. Countries are required to possess not only good knowledge on the policy issues, but also to master good policy management skills and knowledge.

Public administrations of all ReSPA members present some common features and problems. They will have to follow similar reform paths if they want to proceed towards EU accession. Having in mind the emphasis placed on public administration reforms in the latest EU enlargement strategy, it is clear that monitoring and evaluation of public policies becomes of crucial importance. Moreover, the financial and economic crisis has hit, very severely, public finances of all ReSPA countries, putting even more pressure on stakeholders to reform public administration and rationalize the existing resources, in order to be able, indeed, "to do more with less".

Within this context, setting up systematic mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation of public policies represents a crucial step for achieving a successful modernization of the public administration, while at the same time addressing budgetary constrains as well as citizens' needs.

Monitoring can be defined as "systematic data collection towards gaining insight of the specific policy at a given time in relation to targets and results."[1] It should be distinguished from **evaluation,** the process that follows monitoring, which is based on previously acquired data – it analyses the impact of a particular policy upon its implementation. M&E represent, together, indispensable elements of the policy cycle, and are the prerequisites of well-elaborated and applicable public policies.

M&E mechanisms are expected to have three major types of impact:

1) Strengthen effectiveness, efficiency and service orientation of public policies.[2] Overall, a proper use of M&E mechanisms constitutes a major change in operational style and working culture of public servants, that enables to set up a process of continuous learning through experience and evidence.

2) In addition, M&E mechanisms ought to, normally, have an important spillover effect, in terms of strengthening citizens' trust in public institutions. In fact, M&E of

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[1] Sena Marić et al. "How to Get Results in Public Policies: Monitoring and Evaluation with the Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society", Foundation for the Advancement of Economics, European Policy Centre, Belgrade, 2014.

[2] Philip Davies, American Institute for Research, SRA Workshop, British Library Conference Centre, London, 10 March 2008, available at: http://the-sra.org.uk/files-presentations/davies.pdf

public policies is a necessary precondition for assuring adequate government responsibility and accountability in the allocation and spending of public funds. Therefore, building a horizontal policy M&E framework will strengthen democratic governance principles, improve responsiveness of policies and contribute to generating public trust.

3) Finally, they should influence economic governance. It is clear that a well-functioning system of M&E directly influences the ability of public policies to foster competitiveness and economic growth. Moreover, the fifth pillar of the SEE2020 Strategy[3], for which ReSPA is the regional coordinator, highlights the interconnection between public governance and economic growth. In particular, the Strategy emphasises evidence-based public policy, with much greater reliance on data collection, as well as statistical and other types of analysis. In other words, it stresses the importance and complementarity of both a precise ex-ante assessment such as RIA (that is not M&E *stricto sensu)*, and an ex-post evaluation of the success of the policies chosen.

For the above reasons the Regional Conference "Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies" was held in ReSPA, Danilovgrad, on 13-14 October 2015. In gathered public administration and civil society representatives, as well as a number of experts in the area, to initiate a regional level discussion on the systems and practices of policy M&E in the Western Balkans. Whereas on the first day the programme was mostly dedicated to the presentations and discussions of the experiences and practices of M&E by international organisations (including SIGMA/OECD and RCC) and national governments, the second day of the conference was mainly oriented to the role of non-governmental actors in policy M&E. That included two sessions which dealt with (i) the role of professional evaluators, and (ii) the role of civil society organisations in policy M&E.

The purpose of this Report is to summarise in brief the main findings of the Regional Conference on Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies and to propose, based on the issues that the Conference participants raised, further areas of intervention and follow-up actions that ReSPA could pursue in the future.

II. Insights on Current State of Affairs in the Area of M&E

2.1. Monitoring and evaluation of PAR in the WB countries

The participants in the M&E Conference briefly presented their current practices in monitoring, reporting and evaluation of PAR Strategy as well as the challenges they face. Most WB countries have applied monitoring and reporting on the implementation of PAR Strategy, however, the extent of systematisation and institutionalisation of monitoring and reporting practice as well as the depth of analysis varies in all countries. More systematic and regular efforts can be recorded

[3]South East Europe 2020 Strategy, Regional Cooperation Council, September 2013, available att. http://www.rcc.int/pages/62/south-east-europe-2020-strategy

in Bosnia and Herzegovina and recently - in the Republic of Serbia. Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo*[4].

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been applying a monitoring methodology, which allows the assessment of implementation of PAR Strategy objectives based on the implementation of the actions. It produces bi-annual and annual reports, which provide information on whether the objectives were implemented fully, partially, on-going implementation or implementation not yet started. All reports are discussed by the Council of Ministers of BiH and later made publicly accessible on the PARCO website.

The challenges that BiH is currently facing in M&E is the possession of adequate skills for monitoring and evaluation (analytical), the availability of qualitative and quantitative performance indicators that would be suitable for monitoring and evaluation of PAR as well as the definition of mandates of various institutions (e.g. how to define the ever strengthening role of the Secretariat General of the Government vis-à-vis PAR coordinating ministry and other ministries).

In recent years **Serbia** has been focusing on establishing the monitoring and evaluation system of the PAR Strategy and its Action Plan as well as trying to set the national planning system. Just recently Serbia has produced the first semi-annual PAR Action Plan report, which is focusing on providing the status on the implementation of activities (using traffic lights system) and with expected annual report which will also focus on the achievement of objectives and performance indicators. It should also be noted that Serbia has introduced performance indicator passports to make performance information more reliable and understandable. The semi-annual PAR Action Plan report was made publicly accessible on the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government website.

In the area of planning system a draft law on strategic planning system was elaborated as well as methodological documents prepared.

Kosovo* has just approved a new Strategy for Modernisation of Public Administration 2015-2020 and the work on establishing a new monitoring and evaluation system is underway. It is scheduled that monitoring of PAR Strategy will be based on performance indicators for each objective. There will be quantitative and qualitative performance indicators with their own methodology (performance indicator passports). There is also OECD/SIGMA assistance provided to establish the roles for monitoring and evaluation of the PAR Strategy.

In 2014 the Ministry of Public Administration of Kosovo completed a comprehensive report on the implementation of PAR Strategy 2010 – 2013 where it provided an overview against each objective.

Montenegro is in the process of finalising its new PAR Strategy 2016-2020, so the monitoring and evaluation system is still to be developed. However, a few challenges

[4] *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and it is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

were mentioned in relation to the past experiences. First, in Montenegro there are a number of planning documents and their contents as well as their hierarchical linkages are not clear. Reporting requirements for sectorial planning documents are different since there is no common methodology and requirements. The reports on the implementation of the documents are mostly focusing on quantitative indicators not so much on the qualitative effects. The analysis of effects of AURUM Strategy implementation was done in 2015 and it represents the efforts of the Ministry of Interior to move from simple monitoring to more elaborate assessment practices.

Macedonia is in the last year of PAR Strategy implementation. The reporting was monthly and was focusing on activities. Currently the Ministry of Information and Public Administration, with the support from SIGMA, is developing a new PAR Strategy.

The following findings can be drawn from country experiences in relation to monitoring and evaluation of PAR Strategy and other sectorial documents:

- **The focus of monitoring is on activities rather than SMART performance indicators.** The effects of the public modernisation process are not always visible, discussed and assessed. Partially this is the result of poor planning stage since **many PAR Strategies do not have measurable performance indicators,** which had to be developed in the policy planning stage. Some PAR Strategy Activity Plans contain performance indicators but mostly at output level.
- **There is no unified methodology/ requirements for monitoring and evaluation** of public policies including that of the PAR Strategy as well as other sectorial strategies.
- There are some attempts to carry out assessment of PAR Strategy implementation[5], but more robust evaluations applying qualitative or quantitative evaluation methods are mostly absent or done by technical assistance projects or civil society organisations.

2.2. Role of Civil Society Organisation in Monitoring and Evaluation

The session on the role of civil society in policy M&E brought together representatives of organisations from Bosnia and Hercegovina (Transparency International, BH branch), Macedonia (European Policy Institute – EPI), Montenegro (Institute Alternative – IA), Serbia (European Policy Centre – CEP) and Kosovo[6] (GAP Institute). The speakers at this panel addressed various aspects of involvement of CSOs in policy M&E, focusing mainly in the experiences of their own organisations, but also drawing more general conclusions regarding the conditions for ensuring their involvement as well as obstacles to it. The role of civil society organisations in public policy process was extensively discussed during the Conference. Five good practice examples of CSOs engaging in monitoring and evaluation of public policies were presented during the Conference:

[5] Comprehensive Report on Implementation of of PAR Strategy 2010-2013 of Kosovo and Analysis of Effects of Implementation of PAR Strategy 2011-2014 of Montenegro.
[6] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.

1. **GAP** institute involvement in functional reviews and Brain Gain Fund evaluation in Kosovo;
2. **European Policy Institutive** monitoring and baseline measurement in the area of judiciary and fundamental rights in Macedonia;
3. **Alternative** assessment of the Implementation of Civil Service Law provisions and preparation of the first evidence based report in the PAR area in Montenegro;
4. **European Policy Centre** assessments in the areas of Good Governance, competitiveness and transport;
5. **Transparency International** monitoring of the PAR Strategy in BiH.

The main finding is that CSOs have the resources and skills to perform external monitoring and evaluation of public policies and bridging mechanisms between public sector and CSOs should encouraged. In the discussion, which was particularly lively, the following main points were made:

- CSOs need an enabling environment for participating in policy M&E, which includes availability and openness of data and information as well as a culture of participation and openness by the government.
- CSOs have much to offer to the governments in policy M&E, as they have very developed capacities for research and analysis, but it is very important that they are evidence based in their monitoring of government policies, in order to avoid simply criticising the government and to ensure that constructive proposals and constructive criticism is addressed to the government.
- Public administration often lacks adequate resources, including human resource capacities, to fully involve civil society in the policy processes. PA needs to be more proactive in developing and involving the CSOs in policy M&E, and needs to be trained in policy cycle and policy M&E.
- There is a very low level of evaluation culture in the WB countries, which needs to be addressed and built progressively, in order to allow for the M&E practices to develop.
- An important question was raised regarding the best model for structuring government interaction with civil society (for example, should each ministry have a single contact person for consultations and cooperation with civil society or should that be part of each civil servant's job).
- The discussion was expanded to the more general questions of cooperation between the government and the civil society, the conditions and constraints to such cooperation, perceptions between the two sides, etc. The discussion also included the question of representativeness of CSOs which are consulted or involved in the work of the public administration bodies was raised, suggesting that competence and expertise should be the main consideration for involving the civil society in the policy process, with the responsibility of the PA bodies to start from a more inclusive approach (inviting everyone), which can then, in the course of work and based on experiences from previous consultative processes, be narrowed down to those organisations that prove as the most active and constructive in terms of substance that they contribute with.

2.3. Regional Initiatives Enhancing Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies

Two regional initiatives on monitoring approaches have been presented and discussed during the Conference – monitoring of South East Europe Strategy 2020 5th pillar “Governance for Growth” and OECD/SIGMA Baseline measurement.

The South East Europe (SEE) Strategy 2020 aims to boost socio-economic development in the Balkan region and sets major targets for the countries to be reached by the end of 2020. A monitoring tool **SEE Progress Tracker** has been established to track the progress against performance indicators. While the SEE 2020 is a tool to boost regional progress, the SEE Progress Tracker faces some challenges related to monitoring, including timeliness of data collection and the relevance of indicators.

The Public Administration Principles **Baseline Measurement** completed by OECD/SIGMA in 2015 in the Western Balkan countries and Turkey assessed performance in PAR areas based on selected 157 indicators. Mr Klas Klaas, SIGMA, pointed out that the framework of the principles worked well and the methodology has proven clear and simple. The monitoring framework triggered a higher-level attention on the draft reports and increased commitment of the countries to provide data. The indicator values and justifications were discussed thoroughly with the administration. In order to treat countries equally, a strict horizontal methodology was applied and the same type of evidence was collected.

While the monitoring reports triggered higher attention of administrations through the use of indicators, the measurement framework faces some challenges. As in many monitoring frameworks, the key issue is the availability (or regular availability) of data as in many countries part of the data is not available through institutional or national statistical data collection systems. Mr Klass therefore emphasised the main challenges for the future: often data are not available in the countries (partly because there is not enough focus on monitoring of implementation of policies). Statistical offices do not provide relevant data on public administration. As a solution he proposed development of PAR monitoring frameworks in countries and cooperation with statistical offices, which should provide certain data on public administration**.**

III. Challenges in M&E of Public Policies and Next Steps

The Conference discussions highlighted that currently countries face the following major challenges in the M&E of PAR Strategies and other public policies:

1. Availability of data for M&E of PAR and other strategies’ implementation and increasing costs of data collection

The WB countries in the past years have witnessed the increasing demand for data to monitor the implementation of regional initiatives as well as national policies. Increasing workload was reported due to emerging regional strategic initiatives in the area of PAR (e.g. SEE 2020, OECD/SIGMA Baseline Measurement) and slowly increasing national, internal demand for more evidence. The M&E of PAR related areas, i.e. impacts of PAR and results in the areas of civil service, accountability, public procurement, public financial measurement, policy making and coordination, etc., requires analysing progress against various indicators – qualitative, quantitative, composite indexes, perceptions, etc. Data for these indicators can be collected through various ways:

- **International organisations (e.g. World Bamk)**
- **National statticts systems**
- **National/ sectorial registers**
- **Administrative institutional data collection systems**
- **Surveys**

More challenges can be observed in cases where data has to be collected from:

- national registers, which are either unavailable (e.g. civil service registers are being currently established in some WB countries) or do not produce the data required by the indicators (alignment of data needs with the register data sets);
- Administrative institutional systems which are not currently aligned with the emerging needs of regional initiatives or PAR Strategies. New emerging data needs require institutions creating and applying new data collection processes within institutions. Such processes can vary from micro being applied within one particular unit (e.g. central unit in charge of policy planning may need to establish a data collection practice/procedure to monitor the compliance of new strategic documents with new planning methodologies) to macro involving several or all institutions into data collection (e.g. turnover of civil servants in case it is not collected through registers);
- Surveys which are either not applied or the methodology may not be appropriate for regional benchmarking (e.g. percentage of users satisfied with public services). More often governments tend to measure citizen satisfaction with services or institutions sometimes making it an obligatory practice, however, this approach requires additional financial recourses.

In addition to this, often ministries/ institutions in charge of PAR coordination face the problem of "data fragmentation" since PAR is a cross-cutting reform and information should be collected from various institutions which may have different timelines and formats.

To overcome these challenges several steps could be taken:

1) Establish registers where they are not yet established taking into account international practice (especially in the area of civil service);
2) Align register data sets with performance information demands;
3) Create data collection procedures (it can be formal or informal depending on the complexity of data collection) for administrative institutional data collection needs;
4) Review national statics programs to align them with data collection needs;

5) Create database for PAR monitoring purposes. It can be more complex based on IT application or more simple in Excel format depending on currently available applications in different countries.

2. Quality of data where it exists (including timeliness and credibility)

The key issues related to data quality are credibility of data and its timeliness. These issues are crucial since based on performance data decisions are made. For PAR purposes timeliness of data is a serious issue due to many sources from which data is collected – from international organisations to all ministries and even government agencies.

Another issue is the credibility of data. Credible performance indicators require thinking through very detailed methodologies for defining the scope of indicator and calculating the values. Often countries develop performance indicator passports or technical annexes to explain, among other things:

- links between indicator and objectives;
- responsibilities (institutions in charge);
- data collection frequency;
- calculation methodology;
- baseline values.

To overcome these challenges several steps could be taken:

1) Analyse/ review of data collection frameworks (especially in relation to its timeliness) applied by various institutions which contribute to PAR Strategy implementation. This would allow to identify the gaps and delays compared to PAR M&E needs and identify further actions, if any, to be taken;
2) Develop a methodological framework for performance indicators.

3. Involvement of CSOs in M&E of public policies.

CSOs can perform an objective and external oversight of public sector institutions or can take part in policy process by providing their advice. CSOs have the resources and skills to carry out monitoring and evaluation of public policies. While less complex evaluations (light assessment) can be done internally by institutions, more rigorous evaluations which require involvement of more complex quantitative or qualitative methods are usually supported by external experts. However, the relationships between the CSOs and the public sector organisations are sometimes competing rather than complementing.

To overcome these challenges several steps could be taken to bridge the gaps between CSOs and public sector (these are based on the results of Conference debates):

1) Institutions should define transparent ways/ procedures how to identify counterparts form CSOs;
2) Organize networking, training and awareness events for public sector organizations and CSOs;

3) Establish the obligation for institutions to prepare a comprehensive report on the status of public consultations.

4. Assignment of M&E roles and responsibilities.

The participants in the Conference highlighted that for proper performance of M&E it is necessary to align tasks for various staff. M&E function is performed at several levels:

- Central M&E function is performed by a centre of government and is in charge of setting the standards and methodology for M&E at country level;
- Sectorial M&E function is performed by a coordinating ministry and is in charge of coordinating implementation of sectorial/ cross-sectorial strategies. Such function is done by a unit of sector-lead institution and has to coordinate the M&E of the strategy in question;
- M&E analysis function is performed by line departments in the ministry(ies) who are in charge of policy implementation. Usually the functions of such departments are related to data collection and analysis when performing their regular functions.

To overcome this challenge several steps could be taken:

1) Prepare a standard description of the Terms of Reference of M&E functions at different level (central coordination, sector coordination and analysis);
2) Prepare standard job descriptions of the staff working at different M&E levels (center of government, lead ministry, line department).

5. Awareness of managers and skills of staff for M&E

Possession of skills required for proper M&E has been mentioned as one of the bottlenecks for quality M&E outputs. In addition, low awareness of M&E by managers has been mentioned as having an impact on the demand for M&E. These two issues limit the effective use of M&E in decision-making process. To overcome this challenge several steps could be taken:

1) Carry out capacity and training needs assessment for proper application of M&E function in the WB countries;
2) Design and conduct training activities on M&E for different target groups:
    a. Top and mid-level managers;
    b. M&E coordinators (in Center of Government, lead-ministry);
    c. Civil servants in sectors.
3) Elaborate (basic) methodology for M&E (for PAR and other sectors).

IV. Areas for ReSPA intervention in M&E of Public Policies

Some of the steps presented in section III can and should be taken by the administrations of the WB countries. However, given the horizontal aspect of the challenge and the need to accumulate best international practice in the solution of the challenge, several activities could be implemented at regional level by ReSPA:

No	Activity	Description
1.	Create database for PAR monitoring purposes	ReSPA could assist countries in creating a framework for database for monitoring PAR. This could involve analysis of the needs and creating standard templates that could be supported by IT or Excel solutions.
2.	Develop a methodological framework for performance indicators	ReSPA could assist the countries in developing methodologies for performance indicators used in PAR areas. The scope of work can range depending on SIGMA involvement (e.g. from creating methodological framework to developing standard performance indicator methodologies which could later be adjusted by individual countries depending on local context).
3.	Organize networking, training and awareness events for public sector organizations and CSOs	ReSPA could initiative follow-up or new activities in the area of public participation. It could be i) providing discussion platforms in the form of round-table discussions, conferences ii) training programs (workshops or seminars) for civil servants and NGO/CSOs representatives.
4.	Prepare a standard description of the Terms of Reference of M&E functions at different levels	ReSPA could develop standard Terms of Reference for M&E functions at different levels that could be used by countries when designing their M&E systems. The standard Terms of Reference could contain key responsibilities and could later be adjusted by countries based on their specific needs.
5.	Prepare standard job descriptions of the staff working at different M&E levels	ReSPA could develop standard job descriptions for the staff performing M&E functions at different levels that could be used by countries when designing their M&E systems. The standard job description could contain key responsibilities and could later be adjusted by countries based on their specific needs.
6.	Carry out capacity and training needs assessment for proper application of M&E function in the WB countries	ReSPA could initiate a regional comparative study for the readiness of M&E in the WB countries as well as the training needs to perform M&E function. The Study should also include recommendations for further improvements and proposals for capacity building initiatives.
7.	Design and conduct training activities on M&E for different target groups	The training programs should be prepared based on the capacity assessment and training needs assessment. It is worth considering two target groups when designing M&E training: a. Top and mid-level managers; b. M&E coordinators (in Center of Government, lead-ministry).
8.	Elaborate (basic) methodology for M&E	This activity, if needed, could be implemented after preliminary analysis of: i) current practices in M&E ii)

	(for PAR and other sectors)	currently available methodologies in WB countries (through technical assistance or other projects). It can be that a number of M&E methodologies have been created through various projects, but they are not effectively utilized. If such methodologies do not exist yet, ReSPA could consider creating a basic methodology including definitions, tools used, examples, case studies, etc. and which could be further applied by countries with adjustment, if needed.
9.	Carry out the assessment of the status on public consultations in WB countries (with recommendations).	ReSPA could carry out diagnostic assessment of practices in public consultations in the WB countries and propose recommendations for improvements. This could contribute to the PAR by offering individual countries the measures that could be implemented in strengthening public participation.