



Achieving Effective Policy  
Monitoring and Evaluation through  
Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society

# Policy Brief

September 2014

## Getting Results in Public Policy: Monitoring and Evaluation with Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society

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**Policy monitoring** involves collecting data during the present policy implementation and then processing, analysing and using the collected data for planning the following steps in policy implementation.

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**Policy evaluation** involves the use of analysed data from the monitoring process to assess the performance, efficiency and/or final effects of the policy that is being or has been implemented.

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### Measuring policy performance in Serbia is somewhat neglected.

Evidence clearly demonstrates that implementation of public policies in Serbia leads to broken promises. Although the Government Work Programme sets goals and planned activities, these goals are often left unachieved in practice, while there is no mechanism to measure the activities' results or impact. In contrast to Serbia, the decision makers in countries with a more developed political culture are under constant public scrutiny that demands 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 evaluation of their effects are particularly important in accession negotiations with the European Union, 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. In fact, 20 recommendations of the recently published screening reports on Negotiating Chapters 23 and 24 emphasised the need to develop or improve mechanisms for monitoring the progress of reforms, while seven recommendations stressed the necessity to improve evaluation mechanisms for particular policies within these chapters.

The results of this research reveal similar conditions in other policy areas. Therefore, systematic M&E would be a powerful asset and an integral part of properly designed and implemented government policies.

### Civil society should call for the policy makers to provide evidence and data...

In the situation where the state is no longer the sole holder of monopoly over information, successful policies need to involve citizens' voice and inputs. A strong and influential civil society holds the government accountable, while encouraging critical thinking and raising awareness on socio-political issues.



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In that sense, the role of the civil society organisations (CSOs) in M&E can be multifaceted, and includes:

- Monitoring public policies within their field of expertise and awareness raising;
- Advocating a particular approach or solution to a problem;
- Conducting research activities and producing studies useful for M&E of public policies;
- Providing services for the purpose of public policy M&E.

**...but, there are many challenges.**

The absence of institutional mechanisms, lack of systematic approach to cooperation and lack of awareness are the biggest challenges for CSOs' involvement in M&E processes. In addition, under-developed organisational and human capacities of CSOs, as well as a strong necessity for more trainings, further hinder the establishment of a constructive cooperation. Since the public administration is fairly motivated to further engage CSOs in policy M&E, the previous efforts solely relied on foreign expertise, thus failing to provide durability

and sustainability of CSO involvement. What is more, the expertise provided was not sufficiently focused on increasing public administration demand and interest for more CSO participation in these processes.

In the areas of social policy and employment in Serbia, there are a few examples of well-developed M&E practices that could be a role model for the systematic involvement of CSOs in M&E. In the employment sector, several 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 enables CSOs to take part.

**Options for establishing policy M&E with the CSO support do exist.**

Based on the examined models in comparative practise and the research conducted in Serbia, the table below offers three possible scenarios for Serbia to establish an M&E system grounded on the evidence supplied by the civil society.

Options	Option 1: Basic System	Option 2: Advanced System	Option 3: Developed System
<b>Criteria</b>			
<b>Evaluation Culture</b>	Low	Low/Medium	High
<b>Type of System</b>	Process/implementation oriented	Results-oriented	
<b>Level of Centralisation</b>	High: the centre of government (CoG) manages centralised database, oversees compliance with strategic documents and coordinates the work of M&E units within the ministries	Moderate/low: 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.	



<b>Form of CSO participation</b>	Gradual involvement: CSOs participate in monitoring working groups, 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 engagement is acknowledged by the state actors. Think tanks are the one of the contenders on the evaluation market
<b>Period of time</b>	Short-term (1–3 years)	Medium-term (4–7 years)	Long-term (8–12 years)

Considering the situation in Serbia, the first option would be the most applicable, as a continuation of current 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. Eventually, with the development of an evaluation culture and capacity in both public administration and civil society sectors, this basic model could evolve into the second option. The third option is unrealistic in the medium term and its feasibility requires further analysis.

In order to carry out the first option, it would be necessary to enforce a new act which would confer the PPS with certain M&E competences. These would primarily 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, reporting and recommendations); harmonisation of acts and quality on inter-ministerial level via trainings (which the Human Resource Service could conduct in accordance with the PPS programme); coaching in the ministries to acquire the necessary skills; coordination of reports

across different sectors so as to ensure consistence, etc. When it comes to CSO involvement, Sectorial Civic Society Organisations (SEKO) can serve as an institutional mechanism for direct consultations and interactions with the policy makers. Civil society representatives would thus, be permanently present in working groups or similar bodies in charge of public policy monitoring and coordination. State actors would not be obliged to fully accept CSO contributions, however, it would be necessary to provide justification in case of rejection.

This model would not be possible if awareness-raising on necessity and mutual benefits of cooperation between the state and civil sectors and actual moves in that direction come to a standstill. Therefore, fostering human, organisational and financial capacities of the CSOs seems essential, especially having in mind the expected gradual withdrawal of the majority of foreign donors from Serbia, who nowadays represent the biggest source of CSO financing. The debate on the sustainability of CSOs in Serbia needs to gain more attention by the state actors and the European Union. A possibility is for certain CSOs to specialise in M&E service provision, such as conducting external evaluations and producing evaluation reports.



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## About the project “Achieving Effective Policy Monitoring and Evaluation through Evidence Supplied by the Civil Society”

The research project aims to improve the effects and relevance of policies through increased use of evidence for policy monitoring and evaluation as intrinsic parts of public administration reform. The research resulted in a study that explains the concept of policy M&E and informs on the situation in Serbia regarding the institutionalisation of M&E and the civil society involvement. After analysing the comparative practice of EU Member States in this area, the study provides options for policy M&E in Serbia with the evidence supplied by CSOs. Additionally, the project includes educational workshops for civil servants and civil society representatives, as well as raising public awareness about the importance of the topic. The project is carried out by Foundation for the Advancement of Economics (FREN) and the European Policy Centre (CEP), and funded by the European Union and the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society of the Republic of Serbia.



For more information on the project and the study,

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The study based on which this policy brief was prepared could be downloaded at:

[www.cep.org.rs/en/documentation-centre/cep-editions.html](http://www.cep.org.rs/en/documentation-centre/cep-editions.html) and

[www.fren.org.rs/publications](http://www.fren.org.rs/publications)

### Foundation for the Advancement of Economics

Foundation for the Advancement of Economics (FREN) was founded in 2005 with mission to promote academic research in Serbia and to construct a new body of knowledge for economic decision makers. The founder of the Foundation is Belgrade University's Faculty of Economics, one of the leading economic faculties in South East-Europe.

Thanks to the quality and relevance of it's research, FREN has established itself as one of the leading economic think tanks in Serbia.

FREN's goals are:

- to advance teaching and research in economics in Serbia and wider region of South-East Europe;
- to provide access to high-standard statistical and analytical data for the decision-makers in the government and in the business;
- to make modern thinking in economics accessible to professional circles and the broader public.

[www.fren.org.rs](http://www.fren.org.rs)

### European Policy Centre

European Policy Centre (CEP) je independent, non-governmental, non-profit think tank organisation founded by a group of professionals in the area of EU law, EU affairs, economics and public administration reform, with a shared vision of changing the policy making environment in Serbia for the better.

CEP develops research and analysis as a basis for policy making and produces high quality options for the decision makers with the aim to substantially improve the accession process of Serbia to the EU and to position Serbia as an equal partner with the EU member states in terms of:

- openness and accountability of the democratic institutions of the government;
- market regulation and performance;
- capacity to not only fulfil the obligations arising from EU membership but also make the most of the resulting rights and opportunities once EU membership is achieved.

[www.cep.org.rs](http://www.cep.org.rs)

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