

Public welfare is their concern

Policy impact evaluators study if public money is well spent in terms of relevance, efficiency, and sustainability of achievements. Policy evaluation is gaining momentum in Western Balkan region. Six national and one regional evaluation communities, consisting of more than 400 members, will held their first regional conference in Sarajevo, 28-29 October 2015 with some distinguished guests. Conference is organized by Evaluation Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHeval).

Systematic assessment of government performance in terms of their achieved results and wider social impacts is practiced in Western countries already since 60's of XX century. In Western Balkan region policy evaluation, specifically, of laws, development programs, policy measures, investments, and sometimes even public budgets, is gaining momentum. Probably the most regular driver that enhances new evaluation culture in Western Balkan is external financing of development projects, either through development assistance agencies or in programs financed by European Union. Another important factor is increased strength of civil society organizations in region and their demand to participate in policy making on EU, national and local level of governance.

Increasing need for establishing critical mass of evaluators led Slovenian Evaluation Society to propose establishing Western Balkan Evaluation Network (WBEN) to Evaluation Society in B&H in 2012. Today WBEN involves founding members also from Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia.

By now WBEN enriched cooperation between members with infrastructure consisting of some basic elements. They opened web based regional forum, a newsletter, e-mailing list, and web page. Coordinative body has been established of national representatives that meet regularly, they adopted networks mission, vision, and work plan for 2014-2015. Regional members have already accomplished several joint projects, shared activities and new initiatives are launched for cooperation in future, depending on available resources. They will organize their first conference in October as an important milestone toward achievement of their strategic goals to enhance new evaluative culture and professionalization of evaluation in region. This conference is otherwise one of 70 registered global events that are marking 'Year of Evaluation' as declared by global evaluation community represented by the EvalPartners and United Nations.

Programme committee of the Conference decided to present almost 30 papers, also including presentations of experts from outside of region such as international organizations. Beside two plenary sessions they will organize two special conference sections, and round table on evaluation in WB region. Conference will propose a joint statement to be addressed to national and regional stakeholders about importance of strengthening national evaluation capacities in Western Balkan region.

Organizers promised to bring together evaluators from region, including high ranking government and court of audit officials, chairman of the largest global network of national evaluation communities, as well as members of parliaments, experts from international organizations - EU, EBRD, USAid and Mr. Ziad Moussa, president of International organization for cooperation in evaluation, as their three small grants in 2013 and 2014 considerably contributed to so successful regional networking.

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Preliminary Conference programme: <http://www.sdeval.si/2-uncategorised/592-preliminarni-program-1-regionalne-konferencije-evaluatora>

Conference Registration Form: <http://www.sdeval.si/2-uncategorised/595-1st-regional-evaluation-conference-registration-form>