

Evaluace na rozcestí – trendy a praxe

Practical Challenges of Evaluating

**A FEW OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EU'S BALKAN RIM
STEVEN O'CONNOR**

Background - I

Evaluand

- multi-annual (2004 – 2006) EU funded programme to support Roma communities in Bulgaria - Total value €37.3M
- 4 components, 21 sub-components (projects)

Type of evaluation - Ex-post

- Interventions started in 2007 and were completed in July 2010
- Evaluation took place in August – October 2010.
- Part of a wider ex-post evaluation of all EU pre-accession assistance to Bulgaria (1998-2007)

Background II

Types of interventions

- Technical Assistance for institution Building; Investment Support (equipment, works)

Client

- EU Funds Dept at Government of Bulgaria/European Commission (DG Enlargement)

Evaluation Team

- 1 evaluator (me) and 1 secretarial staff (Bulgarian)

Structure of Evaluation

- Based around 5 evaluation questions (Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability, Failure of 2006 programme, Conclusions and Recommendations)

The Challenges



1: How do you evaluate impact without adequate indicators?

Project documentation contains basic design inadequacies, especially in the area of intervention logic and indicators of achievement

Some examples of purpose level IoAs:

- *“Number of disadvantaged ethnic minorities with improved health status”*
- *“Health Programmes in force and wide application”*
- *“considerable progress towards completed desegregation”*

Solution

- Use what indicators you've got and make the best of them – embellish/elaborate using basic criteria such as QQT
- Where there are no indicators, use imagination and invent some (Judgement Criteria):
 - What should be being done now that wasn't being done before the project?
 - What should this desired change look like in reality?

2: How do I get insights from the 'final beneficiaries'?

- Evaluator has only general information about the project details from project documentation
- Has no contacts within the Bulgarian administration who can provide contacts to Roma representatives
- Only basic knowledge of Roma organisations
- Has only limited command of Bulgarian language

Solution

- Locate Regional Roma mediators via internet /project documentation and try to arrange interviews (limited success)
- Contact NGOs found on the internet/project documents and ask for interviews (moderate success)
- Go to the locations where infrastructure was built and conduct transect walks/unstructured evaluation (successful but limited validity)

3: Evaluation in an Institutional Vacuum

How do you run an evaluation when you don't have an institutional counterpart?

- DEDI disbanded in November 2009 – no successor institution
- Department for EU Funds only a 'formal' party in the evaluation

OR.. key institutional parties don't participate?

- MRDPW/MoEd refuse to submit documents or be interviewed
- MoLSP not involved in the programme's implementation (but directly responsible for Roma support operations under ESF!)

Impact on the evaluation

Complicates the inception of the evaluation

- How do you get key documentation?
- Contacts for interviews?

Deprives the evaluation of an audience

- To whom do you report back findings?
- How to target recommendations properly?

Solution

- Use formal requests from EU Funds Dept for compliance with evaluation (unsuccessful)
- Try to find where the DEDI staff are and interview them (lots of work but successful)
- State the limitations to the research in the report
- Try not to go mad chasing shadows