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Policy Brief

Monitoring and Evaluation – A Roadmap to Results on Roma Inclusion

Sandor Karacsony, Consultant, Open Society Roma Initiatives

While there is no shortage of myths and beliefs about the Roma, Europe's largest and most disenfranchised minority, data, information, or factual knowledge of any kind is desperately missing from the public dialogue surrounding Roma inclusion. One of the main reasons behind this unfortunate phenomenon is that governments (particularly in Central and Eastern Europe) have little or no information about whether policy efforts over the years have actually made a difference in the lives of Roma communities. This lack of awareness comes with all the risks, dangers, and ill consequences of policy myopia, ranging from governmental overconfidence to pushing obsolete or ineffective policies to stopping programs that have actually worked. The highest price, however, is the inability to demonstrate inclusion results to society, which indirectly contributes to the current Europe-wide flare-up of racist and anti-Roma sentiment. Knowledge about inclusion comes from facts based on reliable data and information, which only a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is able to deliver. M&E on Roma inclusion is therefore no longer an option: it has to become an essential component of policy interactions at the national level, and it also has to be done right.

M&E: an old-new buzzword in the debate. While institutions dealing with Roma inclusion—the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Roma Education Fund, as well as several think tanks and NGOs—have long been advocating for evidence-based Roma inclusion policies, Europe only started listening in April 2011 when the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies* explicitly called upon EU Member States to design their national inclusion strategies with a view to including strong monitoring methods to help evaluate the impact of Roma integration actions, along with review mechanisms for the adaptation of the strategies. This was the first time that such actions were called for in the context of Roma inclusion. In theory this meant that the commitment by governments to deliver the new (or revised) national Roma inclusion strategies provided a window of opportunity for European governments—having varying degrees of awareness and ownership of M&E in general, with very little focus on inclusion policies as a starting point—to start the long and difficult process of trying to understand the impact of Roma inclusion policy efforts and positively link them with the activities, programs, and projects launched under the auspices of inclusion strategies. In practice, the strategies that have been submitted to the European Union have yet to live up to this expectation, but some governments do show interest in learning more about M&E, not the least because of increasing pressure from civil society.

Inputs, activities or outputs do not make a difference—results do. As a prerequisite of this learning process, governments need to understand that an effort in itself does not make a difference; it is the result of this effort that does, be it positive or negative. The ultimate purpose of every policy effort should be to generate positive results: in the case of Roma inclusion policies, positive results should mean sustained improvement in the lives of people living in Roma communities. Banal as these statements may sound, such a results-oriented philosophy requires a significant shift in how most governments think, away from focusing on inputs ("We have spent gargantuan amounts of funding on preschool education, and still…"), activities ("Despite our heroic efforts to facilitate preschool enrollment…") or outputs ("We have trained hundreds of new preschool teachers, but…"), toward focusing on what matters: the intended impact, or result, of these policies. In the previous example this would be an increase in the preschool enrollment rate: so when reviewing policies facilitating Roma preschool enrollment, understanding that the number of new preschool teachers trained is ultimately less important than whether or not an increase in preschool enrollment rates for Roma children has been achieved, is half the battle already.

Measure results to track progress. Measuring results[1] is the only way to tell whether a policy effort is a success or a failure. The inability to differentiate between the two leads to the inability to learn from successes and to correct failures. This inability also makes it impossible to reward success, and at the same time increases the risk of rewarding failure. Most importantly, demonstrating results is the only way to win public support for a policy, and it is easy to understand why: if the general public is aware of how Roma families have managed to repair their own houses with their own money and some assistance from a community savings program, and the result has been lower housing expenditures by that particular municipality, then public resistance to policies facilitating Roma access to financial services is much less likely.

The M and the E against the R. Monitoring is a continuous process of collecting and analyzing data and information to compare how policies are being implemented against the expected results; evaluation, on the other hand, is an assessment of an intervention with a view to determining its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. In other words, monitoring gives descriptive information on *where* a policy is at any given time, while evaluation gives evidence of *why* outcomes are or are not being achieved.[2] Policymakers should monitor inputs (how much a policy action costs; e.g., how much is being spent on active labor market programs), activities (what is being done under the auspices of that particular policy action; e.g., how many vouchers for vocational training are being offered to long-term unemployed Roma in a community), and outputs (what are the tangible results of implementation; e.g., how many long-term unemployed Roma have received training in that particular

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[1] International Program for Development Evaluation Training (presentation): *Building a Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation System.*
(http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/ipdet/presentation/M_04-Pr.pdf)
[2] J. Z. Kusek, R. C. Rist: *Ten Steps to a Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation System.* The World Bank, 2004.

community), and then they should examine the impact on outcomes (e.g., whether or not the employment rate of currently long-term unemployed Roma has increased).

So why should policymakers use M&E? Results-based M&E provides a toolkit for performance measurement with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of policy interventions, to ensuring greater transparency and accountability, and to ultimately supporting governments' efforts to deliver on their commitments to the inclusion of Roma. The introduction of results-based M&E ensures that policy efforts are well managed internally, and that lessons are captured in time and disseminated to all stakeholders and partners to provide continuous feedback for adjustments if necessary. Results-based M&E is also the cornerstone of demonstrating the results of funding, which, in light of the ongoing European dialogue on how to better use EU funds to support Roma inclusion, is likely to provide an essential input for governments' planning ahead of the next (2014-2020) EU budget cycle.

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Box 1. M&E in the European context[3]

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The idea of results-based M&E is not new to Europe. The European Commission has long emphasized that cohesion policy assistance—a key priority of which is Roma inclusion—should be subject to regular and rigorous evaluation so as to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of programs, and to provide knowledge on the impact of cohesion policy. There is also a growing demand for a more performance-oriented approach in EU cohesion policy, which requires a shift of focus from financial inputs (i.e., spending) toward progress in terms of contributing to outcomes. A recently drafted guidance document on monitoring and evaluation of cohesion assistance sets out some changes in the understanding and organization of M&E, the most important one being the emphasis on a clearer articulation of the policy objectives so as to implement results-oriented policies, and to move away from an excessive focus on the absorption of funding. In other words, the philosophical shift toward results has already started in Europe, but it has yet to trickle down to the level of national inclusion policies.

Building a results-based M&E framework on Roma inclusion. While understanding and adhering to the guiding principle of results is an essential component of the learning process, this principle needs to be operationalized: it needs to take shape in a robust results-based M&E framework, which should be developed and operated by the government in conjunction with its policy efforts on Roma inclusion. This task may seem daunting, yet it is quite simple and logical, and seeks the answer to the question everyone is asking from the

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[3] DG Regional Policy (draft guidance document): *The Programming Period 2014-2020: Monitoring and Evaluation of European Cohesion Policy - European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund –Concepts and Recommendations.* 2011.
(http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/doc/30032011_wd_2014_n etwork.doc)

policymaker: are you making a difference? This simple question may be further broken down as follows: (i) who are you targeting? (ii) what are your priority areas? (iii) what kind of results are you seeking? (iv) what is the best way to achieve these results? At recent workshops and conferences about monitoring and evaluation organized by the World Bank in Bulgaria and Slovakia—in partnership with the respective governments, the Open Society Foundations, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Commission, and the Poverty Action Lab Europe (JPAL)—the following outline[4] has taken shape as a good way to approach the task of developing a results-based M&E framework. The approach is organized in accordance with the logical order of the above questions.

Step 1: Target the right communities. The first step in addressing Roma inclusion is making sure that programs aimed at improving the lives of Roma are actually implemented where Roma live. An M&E framework must therefore first identify which Roma communities are marginalized and where they are located. Some governments in Europe have decided to produce small-area poverty maps using the new national census information in combination with the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) which collects annual information on income, poverty, social exclusion, housing, labor, education, and health: such poverty maps provide the most appropriate instrument for this targeting exercise.

Step 2: Identify gaps and develop priority areas. The next step in M&E is identifying indicators on human development outcomes (e.g., pre-school enrollment or employment) where the gap between these communities and the general population is the largest. This gap may be identified through comparable household survey data on random samples of the general population and the Roma population. To support this goal in a systematic, rigorous, and cost-effective manner, the sample of annual EU-SILC surveys should be expanded periodically (for example, every two or three years) to include the marginalized communities. As EU-SILC surveys are carried out by Member States' statistical offices, this would not only ensure quality and national-level ownership, but also provide comparability among Member States. The identified human development gaps between the sample of marginalized communities and the overall sample should then be prioritized for program funding.

Step 3: Understand the results chain and focus on impacts. The intended impacts of interventions (for example, an increase in preschool enrollment) should be clarified as the first step of program or project design, which should be in line with the priorities identified in Step 2. As a second step, those types of interventions need to be determined that stand the best chance of achieving the desired impacts in the most cost-effective way (for example, whether preschool enrollment will be affected more by hiring preschool teachers, by providing books and school meals for Roma children, or by a combination of these actions). Third, the project activities (providing books and school meals) and inputs

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[4] The World Bank (deliberative draft): *Promote Learning and Measure Progress: Establishing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework on Roma Inclusion.* 2011.

(funding for books and school meals) that are required to achieve the desired project outputs, need to be determined. Whatever these decisions, the results chain between outputs and impacts, activities and outputs, and between inputs and activities should be clearly articulated. To institutionalize the use of proper results frameworks in Roma inclusion projects and programs, governments may consider capacity building (for example, providing M&E training for key stakeholders in Roma inclusion projects), establishing program conditionality (for example, making a results framework a requirement for project funding applications or requiring funded projects to submit annual updates), or using crowdsourcing innovation to support transparency and accountability (for example, linking project results to a poverty map, making it accessible online, and encouraging NGOs, project beneficiaries, and the general public to also track results and comment on progress[5]).

Step 4: Seek the best possible options by institutionalizing evaluations. Often, there are many different policy options seeking to achieve the same policy outcome: for example, boosting preschool enrollment may be achieved through several options ranging from building new preschools to training teachers. Policymakers and project team leaders quite often lack information about which interventions are more cost-effective than others: as a result, some interventions may not be effective, leading to a misallocation of resources. For these reasons, identifying what is likely to work best should be an integral component of the M&E framework, and should be addressed by evaluation instruments such as household survey data analysis, interviews with communities and local stakeholders, and pilot projects that include a rigorous counterfactual impact evaluation so as to isolate the causal impact of specific interventions.

Never too late. Saying that "it is about time" for governments to start developing M&E frameworks to support Roma inclusion policies would be an understatement: the time to do this was many years ago, probably before the beginning of the current (2007-2013) EU budget cycle. Had it happened then, Member States and the Commission could have had a wealth of knowledge and evidence to support their arguments in the planning discussions of the 2014-2020 budget cycle. However, with the start of the implementation cycle of the new or revised national Roma inclusion strategies, European governments cannot delay any further the development of robust results-based M&E frameworks to support Roma inclusion. Systematically measuring progress and learning which interventions work the best will save everyone money, time and headaches

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[5] For an example of such an application, visit The World Bank's *Mapping for Results* portal at http://maps.worldbank.org/

Further Resources

Presentations from the *Monitoring and Evaluation for Results on Inclusion Policies* conference (Bratislava, December 15-16, 2011): http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/EXTROMA/0,,contentMDK:23078022~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:615987,00.html

The World Bank: The Nuts and Bolts of M&E Systems: http://go.worldbank.org/CC5UP7ABN0

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab: http://www.povertyactionlab.org/

Ten Steps to a Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation System: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/27/35281194.pdf

International Initiative for Impact Evaluation. http://www.3ieimpact.org/

International Program for Development Evaluation Training: http://www.ipdet.org/