

EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING IN EDUCATION  
REGIONAL CLUSTER OF KNOWLEDGE

**REGIONAL MEETING: EVIDENCE BASED POLICY MAKING IN EDUCATION**

**Regional Capacities in Evidence-based Policy Making in Education**

*DPM/ SIPRU, MoESc, Task Force/ERISEE, KulturKontakt Austria*

*15-16 December 2011, Vienna*

*Venue: Hotel Regina Rooseveltplatz 15, 1010 Vienna, Austria*

REPORT

The Co-Chair of the RCC Task Force BHC, Mr. **Anton Dobart**, greeted the participants of the working meeting. Stressing the significance of the partnership established with ERISEE, Mr. Dobart emphasized the relevance of the initiative originating from ERISEE and TF, in regards to bringing countries together regarding the topics in the focus of reform at the national levels, aiming for mutual learning and the exchange of good practices. Mr Dobart stressed that main aim of the meeting is to present *Mapping Regional Capacities for Evidence Based Policy Making in Education in South Eastern Europe* and to try to discuss findings and to define course of action based on finding and conclusions.

ERISEE and TF managed, over a short period of time, to initiate and support the work of the cluster for VET (Romania), NQF (Croatia) and EBPM (Serbia). Reflecting on the first meeting of the EBPM cluster in Belgrade, held in June 2011, which focused on the consequences of PISA results on decision making, on the relevance of research findings and limitations, Mr. Dobart emphasized that a joint decision was made during the meeting to launch *Mapping of EBPM capacities in the region*. The research was conducted in a very short period of time and the first findings indicate that this is a well managed activity which represents a good foundation for discussion on further actions regarding the Cluster.

Tanja Ranković presented the main activities of the Cluster of Knowledge on Evidence Based Policy Making in the period June 2011 – December 2011. The cluster was, based on the official letters and in addition to Serbia, accessed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania and Rep. of Moldova. Croatia and Montenegro also expressed interest and said they would submit official letters of accession.

**Three Cluster Meetings** were held during the previous period (15-17 June - Cluster Kick Off Meeting; 07 December 2011 in Belgrade - presentation of the preliminary results of the mapping; 16 December – Vienna, Austria) and a **regional conference**, Turning research into practice – learning from PISA, **was organized on 15 – 17 June 2011 in Belgrade**.

The EBPM Cluster project description received a recommendation letter by the Steering group of the Priority Area 9 “To invest in people and skills” of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The *Mapping Regional Capacities for Evidence Based Policy Making in Education in South Eastern Europe* study was organized and draft results were already discussed in Belgrade in December 2011. The preparation of the regional project in the area of Evidence Based Policy Making is under way as support and promotion of the Cluster activities – based on the Mapping exercise. A TAIEX event will be organized during the next period, aimed at strengthening education statistics within the region and the Cluster will prepare a regional project on EBPM.

Predrag Lažetić, as the person engaged to conduct the research for the Cluster, greeted the participants on behalf of the CEP.

The researcher of the Centre for Education Policies - Jelena Branković presented the research, findings and recommendations.

Jelena Marković (Serbia) stressed that it is very important to include statistical offices of the countries of the region in research capacities of, having in mind their role, relation with policy makers and research community.

Danijela Šćepanović (Serbia) pointed out that we have to talk about the Evidence Informed Policy Making Process, which is a much wider concept than EBPM and includes quantitative data and evidence coming from practice.

Ms Tanja Ranković facilitated the meeting during the plenary session, tackling the contents of the study, the general impressions and reflections on the key findings of the study. She reflected on the findings of the first discussion on preliminary findings of the Mapping exercise held within the ERISSE conference on 6 December 2011 in Belgrade, which related to: the opportunities of including country profiles into research and the opportunity for better coverage of RSO from the region by the study. Further discussions led to a proposal to analyse the “policy cycle” at the beginning of the analysis (a few models from a few countries) and to include 2-3 examples of brokerage agencies and to define “evidence” at the beginning of research.

Ms Ildiko Pataki (Romania) commented that the adoption of policies is not based on facts even when there are abundant data available.

Žarko Šunderić (Serbia) – research in the field of education must be interdisciplinary and have a wider scope than they currently have.

Ms. Sabina Melavc (Slovenia) – educational policies in Slovenia must be adopted based on data, considering the existence of joint policy objectives at the EU level. These data are, *inter alia*, used as a basis for operational programmes financed from structural funds. The important missing data need to be identified and their collection must begin in each of the countries.

**Andrija Pejović, consultant (Serbia) spoke of the potential sources of funding for projects in the field of Education.**

**Two working groups were established for the second part of the working meeting. The goal of working in workgroups was the** Identification of types of interventions for regional cooperation in the selected areas of action. **Expected result:** *Prioritised actions and initiatives to be further elaborated in the follow up consultation process on future regional activities as based on the priorities/recommendations identified in the report Mapping Regional Capacities for Evidence-based Policy Making in Education in South Eastern Europe.*

The first WG was *facilitated by Jelena Marković from the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit/Serbia*. Topics for discussion were **how to** build capacities of different relevant stakeholders for EBPM through regional cooperation and how to encourage the exchange of good practices in EBPM through joint regional ventures.

The second WG was *facilitated by Žarko Šunderić from the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit/Serbia*. Topics for discussion were how to improve communication channels between different stakeholders in the EBPM process (regional approach); how to identify policy relevant research at the regional level (topics, resources, gaps etc).

## Results of the work of the WGs

### 1. Identified problems related to EBPM

- Lack of **political commitment** for evidence based policy making from the side of policy makers in the previous period
- Lacking the culture of the EBPM
- Lack of capacities for EBPM
  - Lack of trained staff for analytical work and evidence use
  - Capacity for implementation of different techniques for progressive policy making is insufficient among both public servants and researchers
  - Lack of capacities among journalists to promote the EBPM way of thinking
  - Lack of awareness and capacities of citizens and interest groups in the field of education. Therefore we lack two things: researchers do not care about decisions, while the decision makers are lacking scenarios about consequences.
  - Limited resources for research and policy making.
- Lack of transparent and clear strategic planning by decision makers, lack of defined priorities of MoE, so researches do not know what the priorities for their work are.
- Weak communication channels
  - Weak communication between researchers and policy makers. Different languages are among the greatest obstacles to communication between the worlds of research and policy making, with resulting difficulties in understanding each other's perspectives.
  - Different challenges in "translating" policy recommendations into policy and practice.
- Researchers do not need to participate in the decision making process –problem with independence. But researchers need to be invited to participate in structured consultative mechanism with decision makers
- Weak promotion of EBPM
  - Strong discussion to inform wider population about findings of research. Researchers are not promoting and they do what they are requested to do, not being promoted to create demand for change.
  - A need for a Fund to promote EBPM. There are attempts but still need to be clarified.
  - Advocacy exercise of the research findings, campaigns and discussions...
  - Small scale events on related topics
- Knowledge base of policy papers – share the existing policy papers (Database of researches).
- Analysis of policy decision making process in countries in the region.

### 2. Identified Stakeholders in EBPM

- Decision makers,

- Citizens,
- Political parties and parliament members (committees),
- Universities,
- Trade unions,
- Employers/businesses
- Civil Society
- Regional and local level,
- Business,
- Educational institutions and teachers,

### **3. Principles and focuses of the work in EBPM**

- Need to care about political priorities and European Integration agenda
  - Early childhood development
  - EU 2020 benchmarks and indicators
- Need to avoid that decisions serve the system – decisions and reform are for the good of child
- Policymakers need pragmatic decisions/scenarios with as clear as possible consequences
- Policymakers need interdisciplinary approach when analysing evidence on education
- Researchers to know the plans of the Ministry of education
- Researchers to be invited during the initial phase of discussing and choosing topics
- There is a need for consultative structure between researchers and decision makers, while taking care that researchers keep their independence
- There is a need for clear signal that funds for researches are available nationally
- Need to inform wider community/people/CSOs about the research results – translating researchers messages and empower people to raise their voice
- Advocating for the research findings – bigger role of the CSOs
- Need to involve local level decision makers, since the implementation is in most cases at the local self-government level
- Need to care for the time perspective: politics (4 year period), vs. research (often 2 year period or more), vs. impact (longer for education policies)

### **4. Activities**

- Create knowledge base – policy papers on a single web site
- Small scale events on related topics
- Analysis of the process of policy making in different countries
- Develop training programme for different actors, with special focus on political parties and parliament members,

- Develop regional peer review process on different topics in education relevant for the region,
- Organize a regional school for applied statistics to improve decision making in education,
- Improve regional and national incentive mechanisms for researchers,
- Recognise research aimed at public policy development as a part of scientific advancement,
- Develop tools for “translation of research results into education policy”,
- Organize regional conferences,
- Joint research platform-best way to be found in order to avoid lack of sustainability,
  - Regional research network and database
- Mechanism to support standards for research practice and quality practice,
- Develop brokerage role and develop capacity for lobbying and advocacy.

## 5. Regionally relevant research topics

- Need for longitudinal research,
- Impact evaluations produced in multidisciplinary studies,
- Economy and Education and multidisciplinary researches (fiscal and social impacts, etc.)
- Early childhood development
- EU 2020 benchmarks and indicators
- Impact analysis, e.g. fiscal impact of education reforms,
- Fighting Corruption in education – Good way to open this issue nationally, as the regional initiative, since it is hard to initiate activities related to the combat against corruption in education nationally because of the sensitivity of the issue,
- Changing the methods of teaching different subjects,
- Common platforms, social media, peer reviews,
- The role of parents in education (private tutoring, satisfaction, cooperation with teachers and child),
- Need to have more research about key competences in education and link it with employment/employability,
- Drop out research/policy options,
- Action research – analyses of the policy making process.

### Conclusions:

- An agreement was reached that, based on the discussion, the work conducted during the meeting and comments that will arrive by the end of 2011, the existing draft report be revised.
- The cluster coordinators will send the analysis for comments to be received by the end of 2011.

- Based on input from the analysis and today's workshop, the meeting coordinators will complete a two-pager on the future project for EBPM.
- TFBHC via KulturKontakt Austria will further support the preparation of the future project for EBPM.
- Serbia will prepare proposal for regional TAIEX event aimed at strengthening education statistics within the region and the Cluster will prepare a regional project on EBPM.