



Mapping Regional Capacities for Evidence-based Policy Making in Education in South Eastern Europe

An exploratory analysis of evidence-based policy making in
the field of education in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia



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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	9
<i>Regional cooperation</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>The ‘mapping’ exercise</i>	<i>11</i>
2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK.....	13
CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND.....	13
ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK.....	15
3. METHODOLOGY.....	17
QUESTIONNAIRE.....	17
DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS.....	18
INTERVIEW	19
LIMITATIONS.....	20
4. EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY MAKING IN EDUCATION	23
ACTORS.....	23
<i>Decision makers.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Evidence providers.....</i>	<i>26</i>
EVIDENCE	28
INTERACTION.....	34
CHALLENGES	36
<i>Institutional linkages</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Regional cooperation</i>	<i>42</i>
5. REFLECTION ON THE AIMS OF THE ‘MAPPING EXERCISE’	43
6. RECOMMENDATIONS	45
7. OVERVIEW ON FUNDING POSSIBILITIES FOR REGIONAL PROJECTS.....	47
EU PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE	47
<i>Multi-annual Indicative Financial Framework (MIF) for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)..</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>TEMPUS</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX)</i>	<i>51</i>
A LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A COOPERATION INITIATIVE.....	53
REFERENCES	57
ANNEX.....	59

I QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EVIDENCE PROVIDERS (MS WORD VERSION; ENGLISH) 59
II INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DECISION MAKERS (IN ENGLISH) 63
III INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EVIDENCE PROVIDERS (ENGLISH)..... 64

List of Figures

Figure 4.1 Policy makers and research organisations	24
Figure 4.2 Primary users of research and analysis as perceived by evidence providers (questionnaire/aggregate)	28
Figure 4.3 Disciplinary orientation of evidence providers (questionnaire/aggregate)	30
Figure 4.4 Research contribution by research area (questionnaire/aggregate)	31
Figure 4.5 Research contribution by level of education (questionnaire/aggregate)	32
Figure 4.6 Factors influencing evidence providers' choice of research topic (Interview/aggregate)	32
Figure 4.7 Thematic orientation of evidence providers (questionnaire & web-based sources/aggregate).....	33
Figure 4.8 International institution's/organisation's activity in the region by research area (web-based sources/aggregate).....	34
Figure 4.9 Key obstacles to evidence-based policy making as identified by interviewees (Interview/aggregate)	37
Figure 4.10 Steps in addressing obstacles to evidence-based policy making as suggested by interviewees (Interview/aggregate)	38

List of Abbreviations

DM	Decision Maker
EP	Evidence Provider
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EBPM	Evidence-based policy making
ERI SEE	Educational Reform Initiative of South Easter Europe
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
LLP	Lifelong Learning Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Country abbreviations

AL	Albania
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina
HR	Croatia
MD	Moldova
ME	Montenegro
MK	Macedonia
RS	Serbia

1. Introduction

‘Mapping Regional Capacities for Evidence-based Policy Making in Education in South Eastern Europe’ is conceptualised as an exploratory research endeavour with the aim, as suggested by its title, to map regional capacities for evidence-based policy making in education or, in more elaborate terms, to identify and position evidence, actors and interaction in education policy making in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia.

Apart from Albania and Moldova, the countries covered with this study had until about two decades ago been part of a single educational system, the one of SFR Yugoslavia, which implies that these countries have common roots when it comes to education policy and the related institutional legacy. On the other hand, as both Albania and Moldova also have relatively ‘fresh’ memories of a centralised political system as well as educational system, we can expect certain level of commonality among all the countries hereby ‘mapped.’ Last but not least, all the countries covered by this study except for Albania and Moldova speak similar languages, more or less understandable to each other, thus reducing the language barrier between these countries and considerably facilitating communication process. It is for this reason that the mutual policy learning is expected to be more likely among the countries of former Yugoslavia, than between these and non-Slavic speaking countries of the region. This, of course, does not have to be always the case.

Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation among these countries is nowadays very common, be it among civil sector, institutes, universities or governments. The cooperation normally takes place within the framework of international programmes, EU integration, donors’ programmes or similar. When it comes to regional cooperation in education at the inter-governmental level, there are currently two initiatives to be mentioned here:

- a) **Education-Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)** established in 2004 and currently gathering seven countries as members (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Moldova, Macedonia and Serbia) and three observer countries (Bulgaria, Kosovo, under UNSCR 1244 and Romania).

ERI SEE subscribes to the following objectives:¹

- To continue the support of national education reform efforts in South Eastern Europe in the perspective of the process of EU integration and the more global developments in education and training;
- To actively promote regional cooperation at system, expert and civil society level through capacity building and know-how transfer;
- To facilitate information exchange and cooperation between the education and the research sector in South Eastern Europe;
- To support national activities of its members related to the priorities of the 'Detailed Work Programme on the Follow-up of the Objectives of Education and Training Systems in Europe' (Education & Training 2010) and follow-ups, the Copenhagen Declaration and follow-up communiqués (Copenhagen process) and the Bologna Declaration and the follow-up communiqués (Bologna process).

ERISEE closely cooperates with European Training Foundation (ETF), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), European University Association (EUA), Council of Europe (CoE) and Task Force Fostering & Building Human Capital (TFBHC) of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

- b) Task Force Fostering & Building Human Capital of the Regional Cooperation Council (TFBHC)** launched by the RCC Board in 2008 and for the purpose of promoting 'coherency between education, higher education and research cooperation in South Eastern Europe.'²

TFBHC states its mandate as follows:³

- Awareness raising for the importance of education, higher education and research;
- Agenda setting in these policy areas and respective lobbying activities;
- Promotion of a regular dialogue, information exchange and coordination of activities, where appropriate, between the areas of education, higher education, research and science in the SEECP region and formulation of recommendations for the Regional Cooperation Council;
- Coordination with other priority areas of the RCC, as contribution to a coherent and sustainable approach to regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe by all actors involved;
- Promotion of priorities, partnerships and activities in line with the Memorandum of Understanding from Istanbul between the Ministers responsible for Education, Science

¹ Source: <http://www.erisee.org>, last retrieved on 19.01.2012

² Source: <http://www.taskforcehumancapital.info/>, last retrieved on 19.01.2012

³ Ibid.

and Research of South Eastern Europe, and the Framework for Action to the Memorandum, as well as the priority of Fostering and Building Human Capital of the Regional Cooperation Council.

Apart from the aforementioned Copenhagen and Bologna processes, another initiative has been started recently by the European Training Foundation (ETF) - Torino process. As stated on the ETF website, 'the objective of the "Torino Process," an extensive project that involves several ETF partner countries, is to provide a concise, documented analysis of vocational education and training (VET) reform in each country, including the identification of key policy trends, challenges, constraints, as well as good practice and opportunities, in order to support countries' evidence-based policy making.'⁴ All ERI SEE members except for Bulgaria and Romania are also included in the Torino process.

The 'mapping' exercise

The wider purpose of the project is to provide stakeholders in the field of education in South Eastern Europe with data and information on the topic of policy making in education and the role evidence and its providers play in it, as well as to provide recommendations for strengthening the role of evidence in the policy-making process. From the conceptual point of view, the study is looking at the *policy formulation* phase of the policy cycle and seeks to identify the conditions in which education policy is developed, who the key actors are and what affects this process, with a particular focus on the role of evidence and its providers.

The aims of the project have been formulated as follows:⁵

- To map and describe the major research capacities and existing research in the area of education in the last 5 years in ERI SEE member countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia);
- To identify and categorise the main research topics in order to identify not covered areas for future regional research action;
- To identify the contexts and purpose of existing research in order to identify in which circumstances and to which extent it contributed to the education policy process;
- To identify and recommend available and suitable EU funds for a potential regional research project promoting evidence based policy making.

Therefore, the research questions asked were framed around these aims and they are given in the following chapter. The report has been structured in the following manner. After the introductory chapter, we proceed with providing conceptual premises of the research and

⁴ Source: http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/Pages/Torino_process, last retrieved on 19.01.2012

⁵ The aims provided here were part of the project Terms of Reference and were not altered by researchers.

with developing the analytical framework. Research methodology is given in Chapter 3, followed by the presentation of research findings in Chapter 4 and summary and conclusions in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 contains recommendations for policy makers and possible directions of future project development, while Chapter 7 gives an overview of suitable EU funding opportunities, as well as a choice of measures to use these funds for. The report also includes three annexes, three of which are data-collection instruments, while the fourth gives an overview of the EU funding opportunities.

2. Analytical framework

Conceptual background

In broadest terms, the research looks in the policy process in the field of education and focuses on the policy formulation part in the policy cycle. While it acknowledges the policy implementation and policy evaluation as the other two key phases of the policy process, the research focuses on the policy making formulation. In more specific terms, the research looks into the method of policy formulation which places evidence in the centre of process and assigns it the role of a road sign in the policy development.

Evidence-based policy making (EBPM) is not a novel phenomenon, even though the catchphrase seems to have penetrated the debates across Europe rather recently. Flyvbjerg (2001) goes back to Aristotle in looking for the roots of the relationship between knowledge and governing and argues in favour of conducting social sciences which are more politically and socially relevant. On the other hand, it appears that EBPM has been long present in the United States, as well as in the UK and other European countries, yet it was not specifically referred to as evidence-based policy (e.g. see Clarence, 2002).

There is no such thing as a unique definition of evidence-based policy making on which everyone agrees, as the meaning and practice of it are widely contested (see Young, Ashby, Boaz, & Grayson, 2002; Marston & Watts, 2003). Despite the fact that the phrase seems self-explanatory, its increased usage in debates, both scholarly and political, there is still a lack of common understanding of both the meaning of evidence and the meaning of policy making which is based on it. Yet this does not undermine the increasing relevance given to it by policy makers, which raises the question of what the basis of policy making has been until now or, as Marston & Watts (2003, p. 144) put it, 'Does current enthusiasm for evidence-based policy imply that policy-making in the past has not been based on empirical evidence?'

With regards to the definition of EBMP, we could say that in literature it ranges from a very narrow to a very broad one. For instance, Davies (1999) defines it as an *approach* which 'helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation.' On the other side of the spectrum lies the so-called 'opinion-based policy,' which, as Davies (2004, p. 3) puts it, 'relies heavily on either the selective use of evidence (e.g. on single studies irrespective of quality) or on the untested views of individuals or groups, often inspired by ideological standpoints, prejudices, or speculative conjecture.' This understanding of the evidence-based policy making implies a constant struggle between the *rational actor* of policy making - pushing for efficient and effective policies, often resorting

to the values embedded in New Public Management and aiming at achieving maximum impact with minimum resources, and the *political actor* - the one, as Marston & Watts (2003, p. 146) put it, which relies on evidence as just one of the inputs in policy making which interacts with value-driven arguments, normative stances, vested interests, which in together determine policy outcomes. Apart from the assumed ambition of governments to maximise the use of resources in securing the desired policy outcomes, EBPM is also seen as a simple attempt to improve 'the business' or, as Clarence (2002, p. 1) puts it, 'to bring order' by means of employing evidence in decision making.

Even though the above cited definition appears to be broad, it, however, does not tell us much of the nature of evidence, which is perhaps the most contested element in the debate, but rather of an approach to its application. In this sense, evidence can include any or all of the following, 'expert knowledge; published research, existing research; stakeholder consultations; previous policy evaluations; the Internet; outcomes from consultations; costing of policy options; output from economic and statistical modelling' (Cabinet Office, 1999, p. 33), which, again, depends on the approach Davies refers to. On the other hand, EBPM as an objective, fact-based process may appear too idealistic and as such not existing in reality, since the policy making process is inherently political, as argued by some (Nutley, Davies & Walter, 2002), which is, again, difficult to dispute. In this respect, we understand EBPM as a direction or an approach, while assuming that in reality, policy making is evidence-informed, evidence-aware, evidence-influenced, or similar. Thus, we do not see policy making as either evidence-based or not evidence-based, but rather to a greater or smaller extend evidence-based.

Now that we have determined the nature of policy making as evidence-based, the term evidence needs to be adequately defined for the purpose of this study. There is much discussion about what actually lies behind the term evidence in the context of policy making. However, this discussion goes beyond the scope of this report. Therefore, we have decided to use the broadest definition in order to simply set the borders of the concept. Starting from the OECD's definition of research as 'any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge', Sutcliffe & Court (2005, p. 3) establish the systematic process of collection as the basic criteria for determining whether something is evidence. Therefore, they consider evidence to be anything that comes as a result of:

'...any systematic process of critical investigation and evaluation, theory building, data collection, analysis and codification related to development policy and practice. It also includes action research, i.e. self-reflection by practitioners orientated towards the enhancement of direct practice.'

Thus, evidence includes all the information, data and knowledge acquired through the above described systematic processes.

Due to the notion that our research is interested in the *capacities for EBPM*, we are both interested in the approach and the evidence, since both having the right approach and evidence at hand are prerequisites for basing any policy on such evidence. Nevertheless, we explore, or, if you wish, map them separately and understand the former as the method and the latter as the object. We look into where the policy makers in the countries under study stand when it comes to the rational vs. political model of decision making, how does the evidence come about and what kind of evidence is produced, as well as the obstacles on the way towards policies which are more evidence based and how these can be surmounted.

Analytical framework

The research starts from the assumption that policy making is a complex process which can involve multiple actors who strive to affect the process, yet their power over it differs, while their individual interests as regards education policy are not necessarily aligned. The principal actor in the public policy making is the state, i.e. the structures with formal responsibility and mandate for educational activities in the country - the ministry in charge of education (hereafter referred to as the Ministry). Alongside the Ministry, other state structures can exist, such as agencies, institutes or similar. Outside the state structures, a plethora of stakeholders in the education sector can be identified - schools, universities, teachers, parents, students, employers, civil society and other. The extent and nature of their involvement in the policy process can vary from country to country and from case to case.

Another assumption used here is that the evidence-based policy making in education presupposes two principal roles, the one of the evidence provider and the other of policy maker or evidence user. Or, what Davies (2004) termed as *doers* or research and *users* of research. While the role of policy maker pertains solely to the state structures, evidence providers can be found both among these as well as outside.

Based on these assumptions, the analytical framework of the 'mapping exercise' consists of the following three pillars:

- Actors
- Evidence
- Interaction

It is, therefore, along these lines that the findings will be presented in Chapter 4 of this report. The findings on these three elements of evidence-based policy making are followed by a reflection on the main challenges identified.

3. Methodology

The research has been envisaged as an exploratory qualitative study combining desk and field research. Desk research consisted of documentary analysis and questionnaire analysis, while interviews were the sole instrument in the field data collection.

Apart from enabling researchers to approach the object of enquiry from different angles, collecting data by means of three data-collection methods was also seen as a method to triangulate data and cross-check for possible inconsistencies. The questionnaire and the interview guides for both decision makers and evidence providers can be found in the Annex of this report.

It is important to note here that even though initially focus groups with evidence providers had been envisaged, we decided to employ interviews instead, due to partly practical and partly methodological reasons. The practical reasons were mainly coming from the difficulty of gathering a significant number of participants from different organisations/institutions at one place at once in every country. As for the methodological reasoning, the researchers saw the direct interaction of different evidence providers as potentially affecting the nature of their responses. The documents analysed were web-based sources containing information on decision makers and evidence providers, as well as the research conducted in the last five years.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been developed for the evidence providers in order to collect data on their research activity, funding, resources, etc. The questionnaire has been written in English and Serbian and prepared as a MS Word document, which was at a later stage complemented by an identical web-based questionnaire (also in two languages), as an attempt to facilitate its completing. The questionnaire has been sent to each identified evidence providers in the countries under study via e-mail.

In total, 46 questionnaires were sent to evidence providers in all the seven countries, while only 15 were completed and returned (Table 3.1). At least 35 questionnaires were sent more than once to potential respondents. The data collection process with questionnaires could not have been taken further due to the time available. Still, we find the findings very insightful and indicative.

Questionnaire (Evidence providers)		
	Sent	Filled
Albania	5	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	11	3
Croatia	7	3
Macedonia	4	0
Moldova	9	1
Montenegro	3	2
Serbia	7	4
Total	46	15

Table 3.1 Questionnaire in figures

Documentary analysis

With respect to the documentary analysis, the web presentations of decision makers and evidence providers have been used for the purpose of identifying them, their key characteristics, as well as for the analysis of the evidence provided in the last five years. In addition, the researchers have used existing contacts and links with related institutions and organisations in order to identify and reach individuals both on the side of decision makers and evidence providers.

We have categorised evidence from the websites of 15 evidence providers, according to the actual availability of information and concentrating on those whose response had not been received via questionnaire. While for a number of them it was possible to determine their type, scope of activity, thematic orientation, etc. for the rest this was a challenge and in many cases even impossible within the scope of desk research.

Interview

Finally, in-depth structured interviews have been designed for both decision makers and evidence providers with the aim to, again, triangulate with the data obtained through other sources and to obtain more qualitative data such as their perceptions and experiences with the policy making process and the role of evidence within it.

Due to the very short time given for conducting the research, we asked most of the actors identified during the first month of the project implementation period to participate in the interview. Few interviews had not been realised due to practical reasons, such as availability of potential interviewees on particular dates.

	Interviews (individual & group)		Interviewees	
	Decision makers	Evidence providers	Decision makers	Evidence providers
Albania	2	3	2	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	2	2	3
Croatia	3	4	3	4
Macedonia	1	1	5	1
Moldova	2	2	2	3
Montenegro	3	2	4	1
Serbia	2	3	2	6
Total	14	17	20	23
	31		43	

Table 3.2 Interview in figures

The interviews were both individual and group, depending on the case in question and what was seen as more convenient by the interviewees. In total, 31 interviews were conducted, in which 43 persons participated (see Table 3.2). One of the interviews was, in effect, a written

answer to the interview questions. This appeared as the only way to conduct the interview with the person in question, due to the language barrier. Out of the remaining 30, all but two were recorded and the exception from recording was done upon the interviewees' negative answer to the permission request. All interviews are anonymous, while, almost all interviewees were familiar with the interview guide prior to the meeting. All interviews were transcribed and coded for further analysis. Not all the recorded material was fully transcribed and focus was on the relevance of the segments of conversation for the purpose of this research.

Limitations

It is important to point to some of the limitations of the findings provided in the following chapters. First, a distinction needs to be made between data provided from the interviews, on one hand, and between the data obtained from web-based sources and through questionnaire, on the other. The former represents perceptions of the interviewed and is thus subjective in its nature, while the latter represents facts and is therefore more objective when compared to the former. In this sense, the interviews reflect nothing but the personal impressions of the interviewed.

Second, the findings are always conditioned by the scope and depth of the study, as well as by the sampling. Even though the intention of the researchers was to collect as much reliable data as possible in the two-month period, there is a chance that some aspects of reality which we attempt to explore and map here is not adequately presented.

Third, the perceptions identified on the side of informants, either decision makers, or evidence providers, do not necessarily represent perceptions of all individuals in one of these two groups of interviewees.

Fourth and perhaps crucial for reading the following pages is the nature of conclusions we draw. Namely, as the research has been conceptualised as a regional one, we have taken the region as the main unit of analysis, where the region is understood as a set of countries which are determined by the project Terms of Reference. Therefore, we have refrained from making direct comparisons between countries, as this research has not been foreseen as a comparative one. Hence, all the conclusions made in the final parts of this report stand for all the countries covered, although likely not to the same extent and in the same shape. On the other hand, even if we wanted to make conclusions for each of the countries in order to identify distinctive features, this would be extremely difficult and could even mean running a risk of rendering our findings invalid. The simple explanation for this is the mere nature of the study - it is a qualitative inquiry conducted on a small number of institutions and organisations in each country. However, when put against each other at the regional level, the data collected gains in significance.

Finally, all the observations, interpretations and generalisations made in this report belong to the researchers. Likewise, all mismanagements and mistakes associated with the research are the sole responsibility of the researchers.

4. Evidence-based policy making in education

This chapter is organised in four sections. The first section introduces the context of South-Eastern Europe and informs the reader on the policy formulation practices. In the second section we analyse the *actors*, that is, the decision makers (DM) and evidence providers (EP), both by country and at the level of the region. This section is followed by the section on *evidence*, where thematic scope of research and analyses conducted by various evidence providers is presented, also in the countries and at the regional level. The fourth section focuses on *interactions* between decision makers and evidence providers in the seven countries, while the final section, *challenges*, looks into the identified obstacles towards policy making based on evidence, perceived ways of addressing these by the informants and other related aspects.

Actors

Two categories of actors have been identified as key in the evidence-based policy making process. The first one we refer to decision makers and these are, in effect, policy makers, i.e. governmental institutions responsible for planning and regulating educational sectors in the respective countries. The second category are evidence providers, i.e. all the institutions and organisations which act as providers of research, evidence or knowledge on some aspect of education in the countries this research covers. Therefore, we shall proceed by looking into these two categories separately.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the assumed relationship between the policy maker (decision maker) and evidence providers and does not suggest any particular nature of this relationship, but its mere hypothetical existence. In reality, as it will be demonstrated later on, its nature can be diverse, from having some evidence providers closer to or further away from policy maker, or having some of them being part of the governmental structure, while others not, etc.

With regards to the evidence providers, this category includes all institutions and organisation, within the governmental or not, which are noted for providing evidence in the field of education. We have identified four types of evidence providers that are based and operate in the region.

- Units within the government
- Independent research institutes
- University research units
- Non-governmental organisations

- International institutions/organisations

It is important to note that international institutions/organisations which act as direct evidence providers for the region are considered somewhat outside the main corpus of evidence providers, as they are not essentially local. It is important to note that they are not ignored, but rather observed under somewhat different lens. In this respect, the first four listed above were included in the survey sample and the analysis by means of web-based sources, while the last listed only by means of the latter. Apart from these, individual experts hired by the decision maker can as well be acting in the direction of informing policy with evidence, yet rather less visible to an outsider.

In general, with regards to the units within the government, independent research institutes, university research units and non-governmental organisations, we have noted that their influence, thematic focus, source of funding, capacity, the relationship with DM vary across the region.

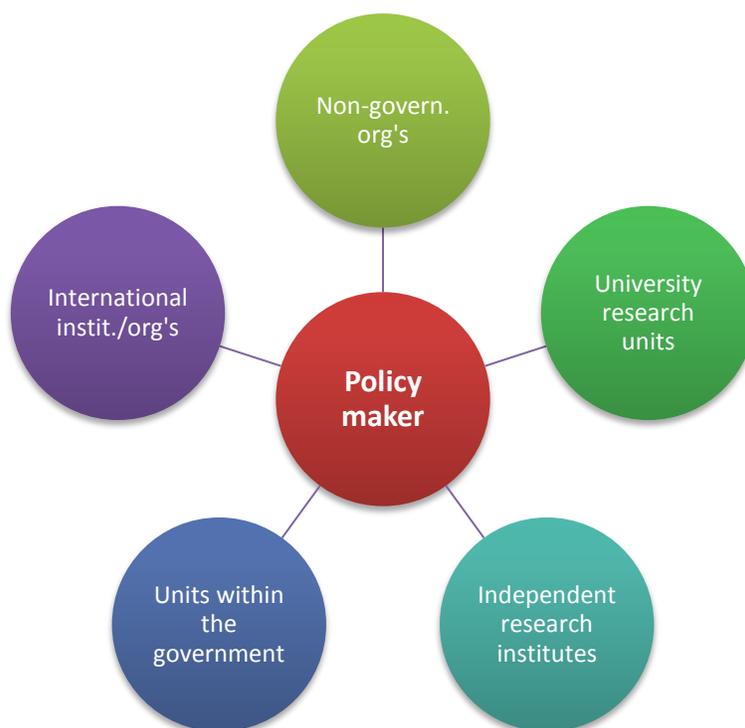


Figure 4.1 Policy makers and research organisations

Decision makers

As decision makers we recognise ministries responsible for education in the countries, as well as agencies or other units under government which act as policy creators (Table 4.1). Decision

makers in all the countries act within roughly similar governance arrangements, except for Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the state level has a more facilitatory role and the actual decision making takes place at cantonal level in the case of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and at the entity level in the case of Republic of Srpska.

Country	Name in English	Name in mother tongue	Website
Albania	Ministry of Education and Science	Ministria e Arsimit dhe Shkencës	http://www.mash.gov.al/
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ministry of Civil Affairs	Ministarstvo civilnih poslova	http://www.mcp.gov.ba/
Croatia	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports	Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i športa	http://www.mzos.hr/
Macedonia	Ministry of Education and Science	Министрите за образование и наука	http://www.mon.gov.mk/
Moldova	Ministry of Education	Ministerul Educației	http://www.edu.md/
Montenegro	Ministry of Education and Sports	Ministarstvo prosvjete i sporta	http://www.mpin.gov.me/
Serbia	Ministry of Education and Science	Ministarstvo prosvete i nauke	http://www.mpn.gov.rs/

Table 4.1 Education authorities at the country level

In all the countries analysed, the ministries' responsibilities are divided between higher education and other educational levels which are further divided into elementary, pre-school, secondary, vocational, etc. Moreover, the ministries' competences differ between the higher education sector and other sectors, due to the higher level of autonomy of the tertiary sector and even the strong role of universities in most cases. Consequently, a sharp distinction between policy making practices of pre-university education and higher education is noted.

With regards to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has very limited competences and plays a mere facilitatory or supervisory role, which could as well be said for the Federal Ministry of Education and Science, and most of the power of over educational matters falls in the hands of cantons. In the case of Republic of Srpska, the competences on education policy are centralised in the hands of the entity's Ministry of Education and Culture. Nonetheless, due to the limited time available for the study, we were not able to analyse both entities and cantons in the Federation at greater length, but relied on the insights of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, as well as evidence providers and web-based sources.

With regards to the decision makers' approach to evidence-based policy making (EBPM), in all the interviewee's responses a very good understanding of the importance of EBPM has been

noted, accompanied by a positive attitude towards the practice of basing education policy on evidence. Nonetheless, when it comes to the actual understanding of the concept of EBPM, a more diverse picture is drawn, both with regards to the understanding of the concept itself, i.e. what EBPM is and how EBPM looks or should look in practice.

The conceptualisation of evidence, however, seems particularly interesting. Some of the decision makers see it as a phenomenon closer to the statistical data available and their reliability, while others perceive it more as a research and analysis shedding light on some aspect on the education system, i.e. as more complex than mere quantitative indicators. Some take expert opinion as evidence as well, while evidence as a counterforce to ideological stance in policy making is explicitly mentioned by two interviewees from decision makers group, both from one country.

Evidence providers

As indicated in the previous chapter, we collected 15 questionnaires, which in order to map the evidence providers as truthfully as possible were complemented by web-based sources, namely EP's websites and interview data from interviews conducted with 17 providers or 23 interviewees. Therefore, we have worked with three different samples of evidence providers:

- 15 evidence providers (research institutions/organisations) which completed the questionnaire (see Annex); (8 non-governmental organisations, 1 independent research institute, 4 university research units, 2 units within the government);
- 15 evidence providers (research institutions/organisations) whose scope of activity was identified by means of web-based sources; (8 non-governmental organisations, 2 independent research institute, 3 university research units, 2 units within the government);
- 17 evidence providers who participated in interviews, i.e. 23 interviewees;
- 6 international institutions/organisations from web-based sources; (OECD, Open Society Foundation, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank).

In sum, our analysis of evidence providers covers in total 37 evidence providers.

With regards to the finding source of the 15 evidence providers covered with questionnaire (see Annex I, question no. 6), seven listed government as their main source of income, while eight stated he same of other international donors (Table 4.2). The first group is, in effect, a governmental research unit, university or independent research institute, while the latter refers to the non-governmental sector. The finding is not surprising, given that the main source of funding for the non-governmental sector is most often international donors.

Country	Type	Funding relevance assigned to						
		Government	University	European Union	Other international donors	Other domestic donors	Business enterprise	Other
BA	Non-governmental organisation							
MD	Non-governmental organisation							
AL	Non-governmental organisation							
BA	Non-governmental organisation							
ME	Non-governmental organisation							
AL	Non-governmental organisation							
RS	Non-governmental organisation							
RS	Non-governmental organisation							
HR	Independent research institute							
HR	University research unit							
RS	University research unit							
BA	University research unit							
ME	University research unit							
RS	Unit within the government							
BA	Unit within the government							

Table 4.2 Funding source relevance for EP (questionnaire)
 Remark: dark shade - extremely relevant; no shade - not relevant.

Even though Table 4.2 also includes the country where these providers are located, we refrain from drawing conclusions for any of the countries individually.

With regards to the interview data, evidence providers mostly rely on project-based funding, unless they are supported by the government as a public institute or as a governmental research unit. The latter play the role of a support to the Ministry in particular educational matters.

It can be concluded that evidence providers from the non-governmental sector suffer from greater financial instability than those who enjoy continual government support and are therefore more likely to follow donor policies and align these with their own goals or perceptions of the relevant issues, than with what government needs at a particular moment. In case where communication between them and decision makers is not regular or is disrupted, evidence providers are even less likely to be timely informed of the needs of the policy maker.

According to the questionnaire data (see Annex I, question no. 7), almost all respondents (14/15) recognised government as the primary user of their research and analysis in the field of education, while 12 selected international institutions/organisations. Students and pupils and scientific community were recognised as a primary user by 9 respondents. On the other hand, local self-government and parents came as the least recognised as primary users. (Figure 4.2)

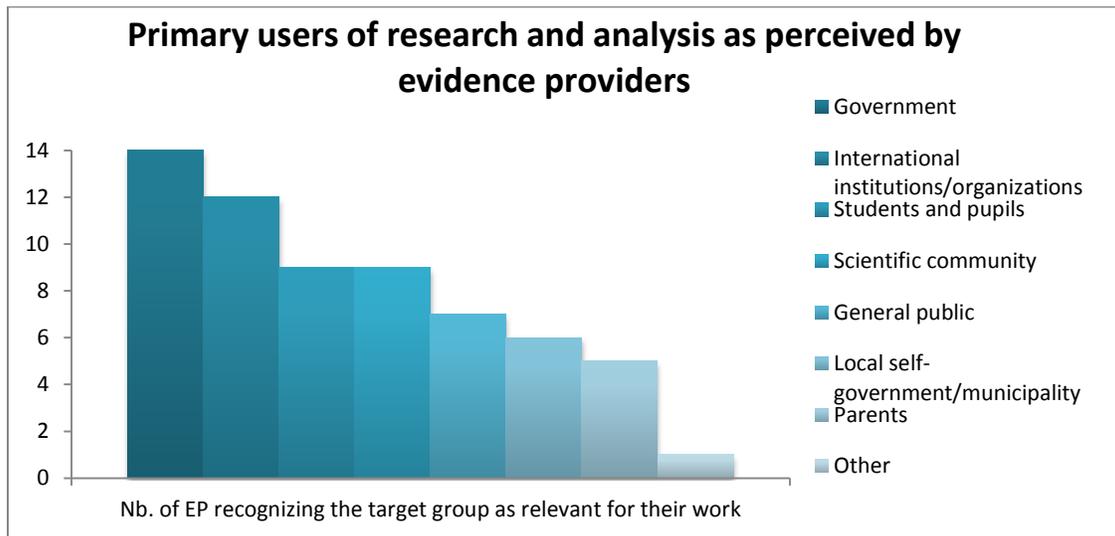


Figure 4.2 Primary users of research and analysis as perceived by evidence providers (questionnaire/aggregate)

Evidence

With respect to evidence, with regards to the conceptual framework given in Chapter 2, it is important to bear in mind that evidence and data are not synonyms and while data are integral part of a body of evidence, data solely do not necessarily constitute evidence. In other words, while all evidence is data, not all data is evidence. Therefore, these two terms should not be used interchangeably. In order to create evidence, one needs to be in possession of data in the first place. Still, in order for some piece of information to be called evidence, it needs to be gathered through the process of research, i.e. systematic effort to accumulate knowledge.

Interviewees have also pointed out cases when evidence had actually played an important role in the policy making process. The examples below are illustrative of these statements:

The whole issue of equity has entered in our regulations in this way [evidence-based policy making approach]. And if there had not been for previous initiatives as regards data collecting, no previous studies that had shown which elements need to be

improved, we would have not been able to improve the situation regarding equity policy. Importantly, these data were not collected between the moment the decision to create new law had been made and the moment the law was promulgated, simply because there was little time to generate new data. Therefore, we relied on previously collected data.

Decision maker, Serbia, quoted, translated from Serbian

The work of our institute was very much taken into account in the project of developing the State Matura system ('Državna matura'). The Ministry relied on our research and we were in close cooperation during the process of designing the 'Matura' system.

Evidence provider, Croatia, paraphrased, translated from Croatian

In the course of conducting interviews, the issue of statistics and official data-collection arose many times, and it is our conclusion for all the countries that there is a general dissatisfaction both among the evidence providers and decision makers with the accessibility of official statistics, which clearly indicates the lack of institutional cooperation even between state institutions. Apart from the accessibility problem, there is also the issue of the mutual coherence between what kind of data policy maker and researchers need and what kind of data official statistics provides.

Below we provide examples of interviewees' statements on official statistics:

We have statistics at all levels [country, entity, canton], but they are not problem-oriented, but rather a mere collection of numbers.

Decision maker, Bosnia and Herzegovina, quoted, translated from Bosnian

There is some data available on the website of the statistics office and we know that the Ministry is using these data, but as far as we know, the Ministry also has some data of their own which they say it is not for public use. For example, they have information about which universities are more efficient in providing research, but they don't provide this data publicly.

Evidence provider, Moldova, paraphrased

It happened that the data on the same thing from the university and the data we receive from the official state statistics do not match.

Decision maker, Montenegro, paraphrased, translated from Montenegrin

The official statistics should also have data-collection cycles which follow the policy cycle, not only the regular ones.

Decision maker, Serbia, paraphrase [translated from Serbian]

In the case of Albania, even the problem of reliability of the official statistics arose, as claimed by two interviewees.

In the following pages, we shall look at the responses of the providers on the question on the relevance of various disciplines/fields for their work (see Annex I, question no. 10). Figure 4.3 below shows that out of 15 providers, 11 identified psychology as one of the relevant ones for their research, followed by pedagogy and public policy (each identified by 10 providers), these followed by sociology (6), andragogy and organisational science (4 each). Economics and political science, on the other hand, seem to be the least covered by researchers' expertise in educational research.

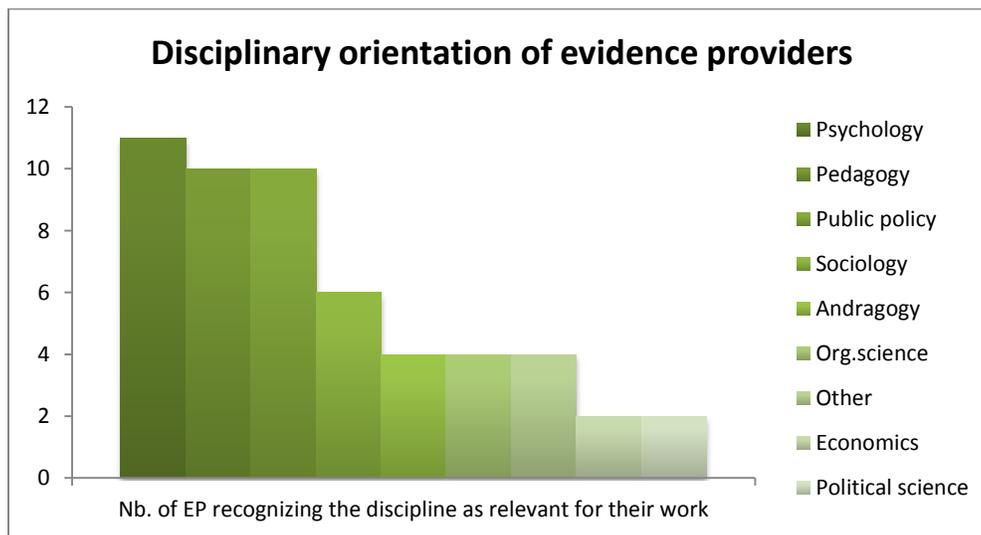


Figure 4.3 Disciplinary orientation of evidence providers (questionnaire/aggregate)

On the other hand, when we look into the actual research contributions, as listed by the evidence providers in the questionnaire (see Annex I, question no. 11), the two areas of research standing out as the most covered ones are *equity & social dimension* and *teaching & learning*, followed by *standards & quality* and *education & society* (Figure 4.4).⁶

⁶ Research areas hereby used are suggested by the authors and they represent a rough delineation of areas in the broader field of education policy. The areas do overlap and many of the research works or contributions of educational researchers could easily be listed under more than one category, as it is probably impossible to offer clear-cut areas with sharp distinctions between them. Whenever we identified a certain work to fall under two or three categories, we would have placed it under all two or three. Unfortunately, due to time constraints it was not

Internationalisation and financing came out as the least present areas by research contribution, the latter being partly in line with the above indicated presence of economics as a discipline in educational research.

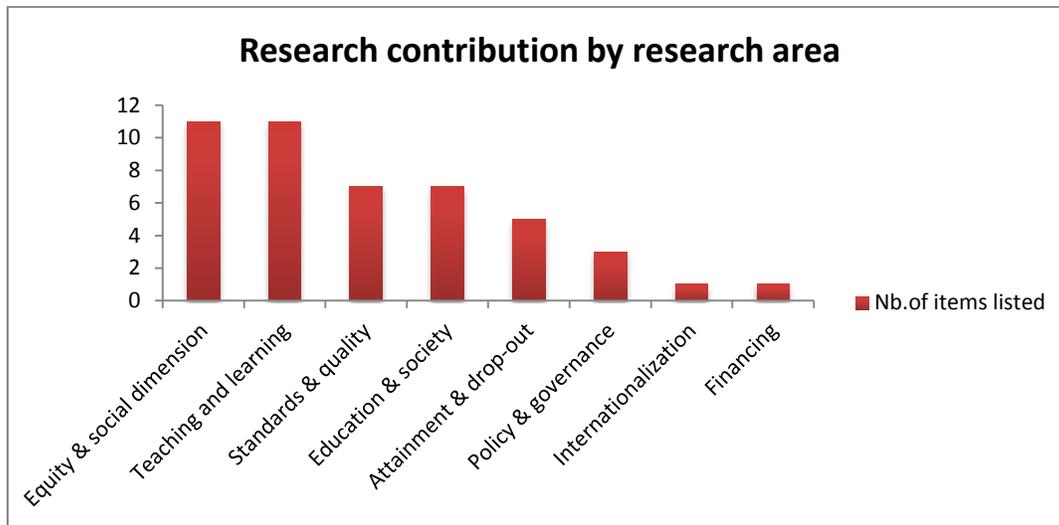


Figure 4.4 Research contribution by research area (questionnaire/aggregate)

The same answers could be as well categorised along the level of education, and spread among *pre-university*, *higher* and topics which are not specified, hereby termed *general* (Figure 4.5). Pre-university education covers most of the contributions listed, followed by general which is more likely to address issues in pre-university than higher education, and finally higher education. Due to the fact that the providers did not consistently specify or provide further information on the educational level, on one hand, and to the fact that this would have necessarily yield further resources, it has not been possible for us to go deeper into the topics and perhaps categorise them into the appropriate levels further (also into pre-school, elementary and secondary, vocational education, etc.). Still, we find this finding relevant enough to draw a conclusion that pre-university education is more addressed in research in the region than it is the case with higher education.

possible for us both to analyze all the providers we cover here and go into depth on every research project they have conducted.

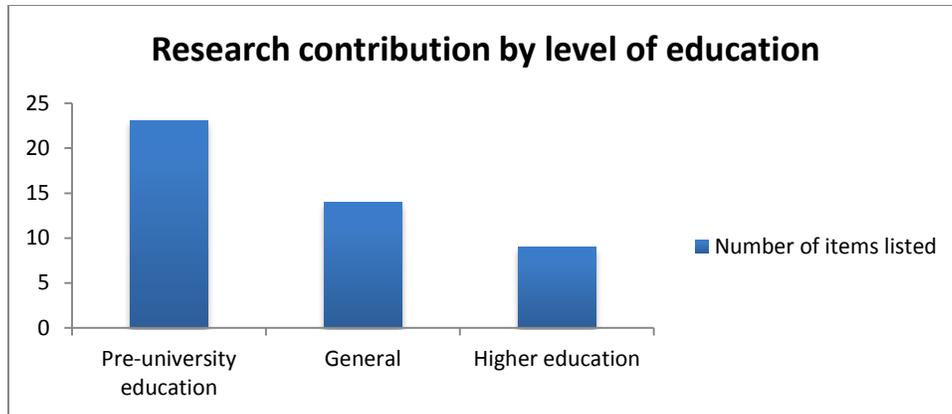


Figure 4.5 Research contribution by level of education (questionnaire/aggregate)

Interviews with EP indicate that the resource dependence influences the choice of research activity and topics addressed; the less stable financing is (e.g. in non-governmental organisations), the more they are likely to follow donor policy. Still, financing is not the sole factor, as all EP interviewed tend to show commitment to their organisations' missions, research ethics or recognised social relevance of their research.

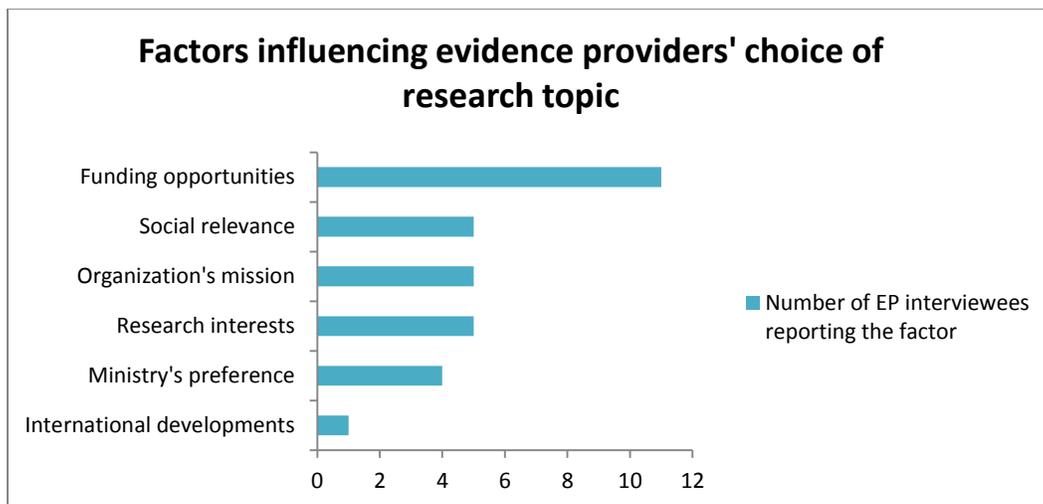


Figure 4.6 Factors influencing evidence providers' choice of research topic (Interview/aggregate)

When it comes to the human resources of the 15 evidence providers (see Annex I, questions no. 8 and 9), we noted that non-governmental organisations were concentrated at the lower part of the scale when providers sorted from largest to smallest by the number of researchers in education as full-time equivalent employees. This observation is a plausible one, given the not-so stable funding of these providers.

When we broaden the coverage of evidence providers and look into the data obtained both from the questionnaire and web-based sources, we can notice a very similar pattern in the thematic orientation as the one in Figure 4.4. Again, teaching & learning and equity & social dimension are in the top three, accompanied by education & society, also a leading area in the figure above. Importantly, we need to make a methodological remark at this point, as these two figures are not directly comparable. Namely, while Figures 4.4 and 4.5 take into account the number of instances listed by providers themselves, Figure 4.7 gives the number of providers which we have identified that conduct research in one of the areas we have foreseen (see Footnote 2). To illustrate, Figure 4.7 shows that out of the total of 30 evidence providers (excluding international ones), 22 conduct research in the areas of teaching & learning, 16 in education & society, etc.

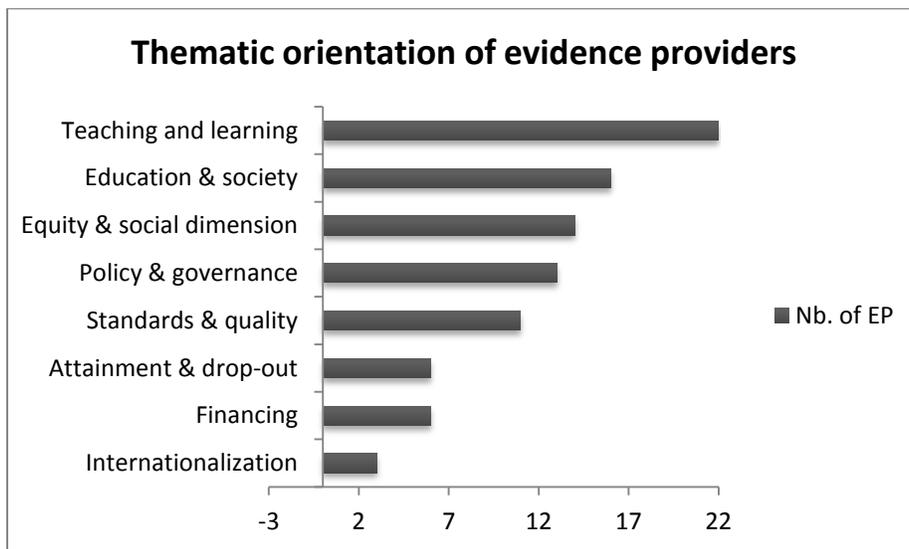


Figure 4.7 Thematic orientation of evidence providers (questionnaire & web-based sources/aggregate)

If we move on the international institutions/organisations conducting research and analysis in the field of education in the region, we can also notice the dominance of the teaching & learning as an area of enquiry, followed by equity & social dimension (Figure 4.8). Namely, we looked at EU, OECD, Open Society Foundation, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank and what we have noted as different with these, compared to local providers of evidence, is more activity in the area of education policy & governance. The index of activity created here represents the total number of countries in which activity in some of the eight areas is noted in the past 5 years times the six international institutions/organisations.

On the other hand, their thematic focus is fairly similar in all the countries. Interview data in some of the countries indicate that policy makers are more responsive to the evidence coming from these institutions than to the local ones.



Figure 4.8 International institution's/organisation's activity in the region by research area (web-based sources/aggregate)

Interaction

In principle, the interaction between policy makers and research organisations can range from none or random to stable and regular. On the other hand, the relationship could range from, again, none or distant to very close. This, of course, does not have to be the same for all research organisations or evidence providers in a country and some can have a more regular or closer relationship with the policy maker, while the others can be positioned further from it and with no interaction whatsoever. At the same time, interaction and close relationship do not necessarily indicate that policy making is more based on or informed by evidence, yet it is seen as a prerequisite.

As indicated in the previous section, evidence providers can be grouped in several types according to their status - units within the government, independent research institute, university research units, non-governmental organisations and international institutions/organisations. Their 'proximity' to the decision maker can as well be status-conditioned. For instance, research units within the government are expected to have more influence in policy making than a non-governmental organisation because the very purpose of their existence is to inform policies. Yet this does not have to be always the case.

When it comes to the relationship between decision makers and research organisations providing evidence in education, interview data show that positive attributes prevail in describing this relationship. Nonetheless, there are those who pointed out some shortcomings, also identified across the rest of interview data (see Table 4.3).

Actor	Dominating negative aspects of the relationship
Decision makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship with evidence providers is not systematic; ▪ Relationship is individual or informal; ▪ Cooperation at the institutional level is too formal.
Evidence providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship with the Ministry is based on personal relationships; ▪ No regular cooperation, rather ad hoc;

Table 4.3 Dominating negative aspects of the relationship between decision makers and evidence providers (Interview/aggregate)

In more detail, interview data show that research units within the government are more positive of the relationship, while others tend to be the ones pointing out the key weaknesses of the relationship (given in Table 4.3). As for the decision makers, most of the interviewed show awareness of the weaknesses in the relationship, yet few have suggested that their institution had initiated or intended to initiate steps towards improvement while reflecting on this issue. On the other hand, most of both decision makers and evidence providers suggested that the situation with regards to this relationship has improved in the past years.

The question on who should be the one providing evidence yielded a variety of answers, from naming individual organisations and institutions to specific measures expected to provide evidence. While in the case of some of the decision makers interviewed, governmental units would be the first named, while some others would be more focused on the university sector, and so on. We regarded as the most interesting those answers in which interviewees would avoid listing individual evidence providers, but would rather put forward the centrality of evidence in the matter, i.e. suggesting that as long as the evidence is reliable and relevant, who provides it comes secondary.

Among the measures for improving the cooperation, several were mentioned, such as (a) outsourcing research work to universities, institutes, non-governmental organisations or independent experts; (b) establishing a body which would both gather evidence and coordinate research activity outside the Ministry; (c) establishing a body within the governmental structures which would collect data and provide evidence.

Interviewees were as well asked to give examples of a change in the education policy or an introduction of certain regulation or measure which had been based or informed by evidence. In all the countries interviewees could list at least one example in which evidence was used in

preparing a law, for instance, or in which there was a consultation process in which suggestions from evidence providers were taken on board. Even though in all the countries interviewees would agree that the situation is better now than several years ago in this respect, they would more often than not be critical of the policy making process, referring to examples of basing policies on evidence as an exception, rather than a rule.

When asked to what extent their research is led by what they perceive as the needs of the decision maker, the evidence providers interviewed would provide diverse answers, yet the distinction could be made between the units within the government, which are directly connected to the policy maker and therefore more likely to directly respond to its explicit needs, and between other evidence providers who tend to be led by a mixture of factors, such as their perception of what relevant topics are and the availability of funding for conducting such research. But unless a certain research is directly commissioned by the policy maker, decision makers' needs are not the ones guiding researchers.

On the other hand, it appears that decision makers perceive evidence providers as a kind of service which is at their disposal if needed and which they can use or rely from time to time. Interestingly, interviewees from the decision maker group rarely referred to evidence providers as a resource which needs to be supported and with which the relationship needs to be built and nurtured in order for it to yield results, or as a source of constructive criticism of the education policy.

Moreover, the existing relationship and interaction is not based on formal institutional links, but rather on ad hoc or random communication and cooperation, and sometimes of informal nature. Hence, the interaction is in principle reactive or problem driven, rather than proactive or strategic.

Challenges

In this section we shall look at the challenges to EBPM from two perspectives. First, we shall look into the interview data and the challenges or obstacles our informants identify, as well as the solutions or steps towards addressing challenges or overcoming obstacles. Second, we provide our own, or researchers', reflection on the challenges to EBPM, based on other segments of the interview data.

Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10 below represent an attempt to quantify interviewees' identification of key obstacles to EBPM and steps in surmounting them, regardless of whether they are suggested by decision makers or evidence providers. It is important to note here that we have avoided presenting the answers grouped under certain category on purpose, for the reason of bringing the interviewees' answers closer to the reader. Also, we only selected those answers which were given by two or more interviewees.

In total, 12 out of 31 interviewees reported poor reliability of research and data and lack of evidence collection and systematisation as one of the key obstacles to EBPM. These two are followed by the lack of capacities or competences in policy maker (10), political influence (7), lack of institutional linkages, either between governmental structures or between the government and other institutions and organisations (7), little understanding of EBPM (6), political instability in the meaning that elections and change in the government cause discontinuity in policy processes (5), lack of trust (5), etc.

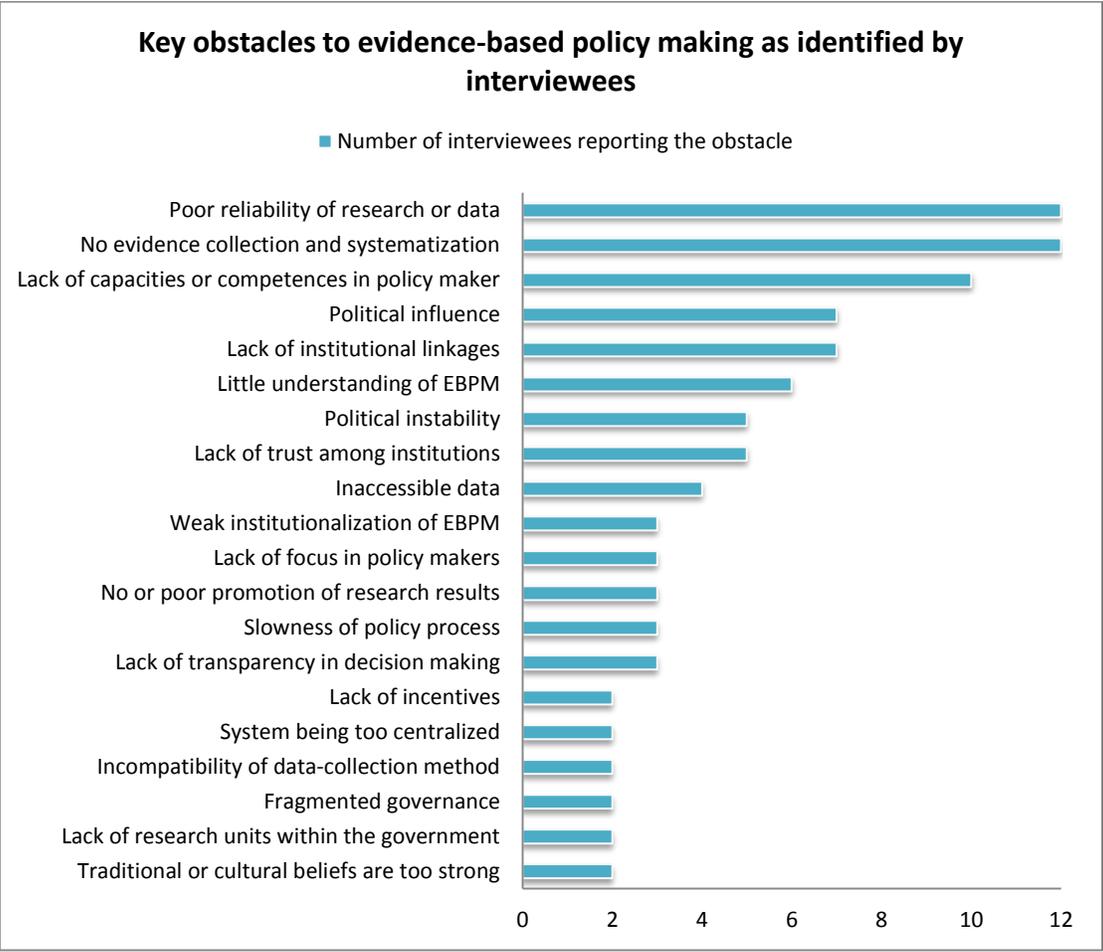


Figure 4.9 Key obstacles to evidence-based policy making as identified by interviewees (Interview/aggregate)

As for the steps in enhancing EPBM practices, the scope of answers was more diverse than in the case of obstacles, as the most suggested ones were embraced by only 5 interviewees. These are, as the figure shows, strengthening of institutional linkages and investing in capacities and competences of the decision maker. They are followed by the ideas such as to establish a network of evidence providers, coordinate evidence provision, better

communicate evidence to policy makers and enhance evidence collection and systematisation.

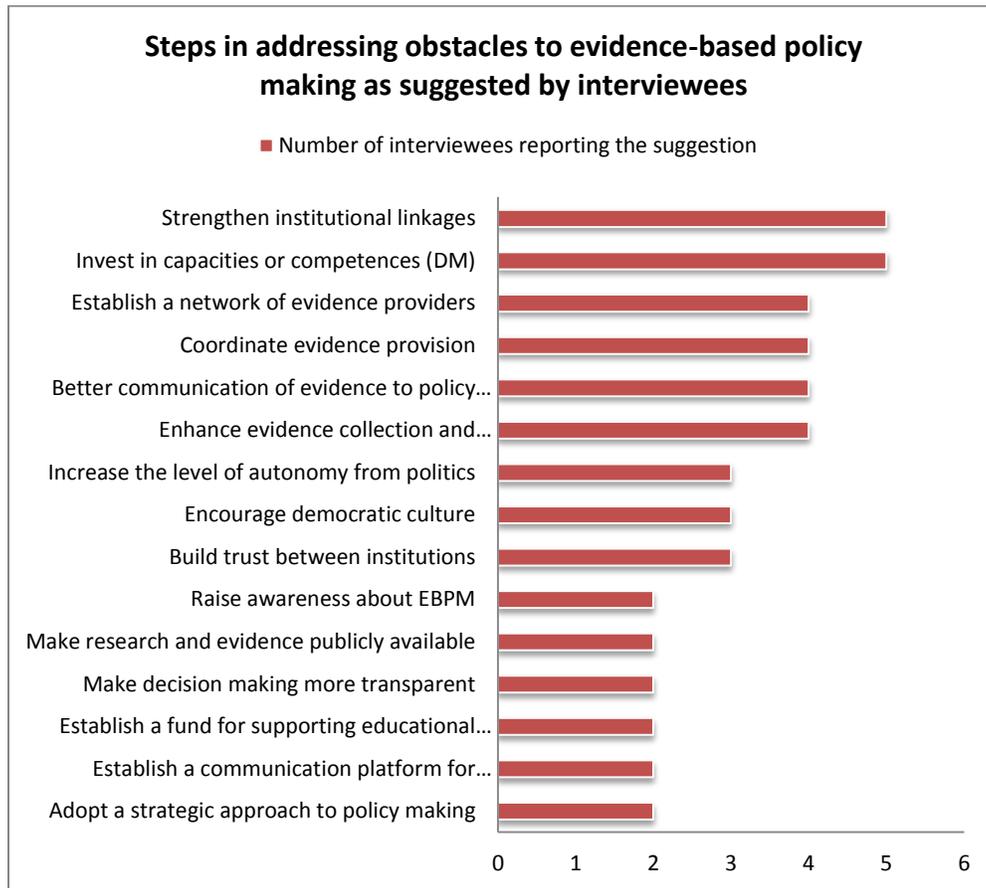


Figure 4.10 Steps in addressing obstacles to evidence-based policy making as suggested by interviewees (Interview/aggregate)

In general, we can conclude that the central challenge is the randomness of interaction between decision makers and evidence providers and the fact that EBPM is not institutionalised as an approach to policy making in education in the seven countries. In practice, this means that decisions and actions still depend on individuals in the decision making bodies and their willingness and capacity to inform policies with evidence or to mobilise others who can participate in the process. This also means that the policy making process is highly vulnerable to changes in the political context and more likely to be influenced by ideologies embraced by those who make decisions. This threatens to disrupt the continuity of the policy process and thus hinder the development of policy maker’s knowledge base and learning from experience.

Furthermore, we noticed that linkages both among governmental institutions and between education policy makers and research organisations are very weak and in some cases decision

makers even show lack of trust towards evidence providers or some type of them, such as non-governmental organisations. On the other hand, evidence providers see the policy making as not always transparent and some policy decisions are seen as lacking clear or justified rationale behind.

While it can be concluded that in all the countries evidence available is not systematically collected and analysed by policy makers, at least according to the statements of the interviewed, there are also claims that not all research is equally relevant or reliable and not all research organisations have the same capacity to contribute. Furthermore, some policy makers stated that a great deal of evidence produced is not communicated to the policy maker and therefore it does not reach it, while much of it is not communicated in a 'policy-friendly' manner, meaning that it is not directly applicable in the policy making process. When it comes to primary data collection conducted by official statistics offices and ministries, in some countries there were claims that it is not publicly available and sometimes not even reliable. In general, in none of the countries the Ministry seems to be satisfied with how official statistics agencies operate or at least with the state of affairs when it comes to the official figures, be it their availability, reliability, up-to-datedness or the method in which they are collected.

There are claims made both by decision makers and evidence providers that there is a lack of competence and/or capacities for EBPM in policy makers and that this is one of the major challenges. It is accompanied by the still old-fashioned ways of policy making procedures which are too bureaucratic and little flexible. Furthermore, decision makers tend to claim that data and research are not systematised, sometimes methodologically incompatible or unreliable, scattered, not communicated in a policy-friendly manner, etc. On the other hand, albeit evidence providers perceive government as the prime user of their work, they see their research as not sufficiently absorbed by the policy process and here we notice variations across the region. Importantly, evidence providers show clear willingness to participate more actively in the policy making, while the policy makers themselves, at least within the limitations of this research, show the need to engage evidence more actively in the policies which they contribute to. Yet in most cases there is no clear vision of how this relationship should look like.

Another criticism directed to policy maker is that new policies sometimes come by means of mimicking the trends in other countries, rather than through policy learning. This goes hand in hand with the noted high exposure to international actors' policies and supra-national policy processes. An example from Albania illustrates a perception of this phenomenon:

Some of the interventions are mostly based on mimicking. They are mostly done by adopting one institutional norm from the European Union or a European country. This is actually the main method, to imitate and adopt, regardless on the context. And

sometimes they are not even piloted, nor do we see how much we can adopt from it. It is just something we take for granted.

Decision maker, Albania, quoted

Institutional linkages

The discussion on the institutional linkages starts from the assumption that evidence-based policy making as an approach is conditioned by the existence of institutionalised relationships between the key stakeholders to the policy process. In this sense, having informal, random, non-systematised, individual interactions as the dominating mode of communication among, as well as between DM and EP, is indicative of the lack of firm linkages which are prerequisite in increasing stability of the role of evidence in policy making practices and thus reduce randomness in the system.

One of the biggest challenges interviewees claim to be facing in the process of policy making is the lack of communication between the institutions, which implies other difficulties in the process as well. As it has been emphasised before, there is a will for establishing better cooperation, yet it appears that the interviewees do not have it clear which steps can be taken in order to overcome obstacles.

As it has already been mentioned, the relationships between the EP and DM appear to be mostly sporadic and unsystematic, more informal than formal in nature and as the system has been in this state for some time, these informal relationships have grown to be very stronger. Similarly, some of the evidence providers interviewed pointed out that with the different ministries they had different kind of relationship and hence different experiences, which can point to the presence of the political influence. Almost all participants in the study agree that it is necessary to create a system which is more stable and functional, accompanied by mechanisms that would generate data and experts in this field, which would be independent of political changes and which would in a way, define the whole process of decision making based on evidence.

As for data collection, data analysis, and finally, the decision-making based on evidence or regardless of the data, we do not have any kind of protocol. Decision-making system is so called 'Garbage can' model. It is unknown who should take part in specific segments of the process. It is not clear how the decision making process is operationally implemented. Consequently it is unknown who has which jurisdiction.

Decision maker, Croatia, quoted, translated from Croatian

A suggestion which was put forth by several of the DM was to install a special policy unit within the government which would be responsible for data collection and update. This unit

would be a contact point for all EP and other actors involved in EBPM process, as well as gather data and evidence in one place, this body would facilitate levelling out methodologies at national and international level as well. Respondents reported that sometimes happens that researchers do not submit the results of their studies to decision makers, thus decision makers often are not aware of data existence at all, or that the research findings are not understandable to decision makers. Most of the evidence providers are consistent in thought that the initiative for cooperation should start from the ministries and thus it is their task to define a context of a research area, so that research organisations can fit into the given framework. It is expected that given priorities be permanent, i.e. not changing along with political currents.

Another problem that interviewees stated several times, both EP and DM, is that it is not clear how their research data are used in policy making process. It is not clear to what extent data are taken into account in the same manner as there is no guarantee they will be used at all. Therefore, even though a lot of research is being produced in the field of education, much of it is never used by any decision makers, regardless of whether it can be used to enhance the education policy or not.

There is awareness on both sides, DM and EP that civil sector is not used sufficiently, and obstacle arises in the fact that EP do not know which are the true needs of DM, and DM do not know exactly which organisations they can cooperate with. This was particularly emphasised in the case of Macedonian ministry which even suggests establishing some sort of control system for NGOs:

It would be good if we had a list of all NGOs dealing with policy issues, to have a list of accredited organisations that work on policy development, that provide trainings, and work on adult education. In this case we would have to set criteria which organisations could work in which area.

Decision maker, Macedonia, paraphrased, translated from Macedonian

The fragmentation of civil society in most countries raises doubts among DM about its capacity and affects trust in their work. Sometimes it is unknown which are sufficiently relevant organisations, whose methodology is appropriate and whose experts are eminent. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, the Ministry reports too much initiative for research and too many non-governmental organisations. This, according to the same source, makes the choice of the organisation to cooperate more difficult.

The data also indicate some DM find the research conducted by the non-governmental organisations often do not comply with the needs of decision makers, whether due to the methodology which is not-levelled out or, simply, there is no need for such research. This is likely to be related to the fact non-governmental organisations are mostly funded by international donors which have their own priorities which do not necessarily correspond

to those of the government. On the other hand, NGOs are a type of evidence provider which is more than others dependent on the market. Regardless of the overall number of NGOs in some countries, there are only a few that can be extracted as organisations exclusively dealing with research in education.

Regional cooperation

Besides strengthening institutional communication and cooperation in each country separately, it is of great interest to do so at the regional level as well. Very often experts' proposals from the EU, although very welcome, do not fit into real situation in the region. They convey to European experiences, but by default they cannot be applied in regional context.

Any regional cooperation is welcome and both EP and DM interviewed showed great willingness to engage in regional cooperation. Already existing networks are seen as insufficiently used, thus the existing communication channels need to be enhanced and the exchange of experience to be further stimulated. Here we provide an illustration from Bosnia and Herzegovina:

It is even enough that somebody from the Ministry goes to some conference to meet colleagues, to see what is done in other countries. Legacy is the same and it is possible to learn from similar models of other countries. When a person is a part of something s/he will take more effort to make it successful, than if the person just read statistic data about the matter. Data of regional character are valuable to see regional trends, to learn from neighbouring countries and to realise that we all have same problems.

Evidence provider, Bosnia and Herzegovina, paraphrased, translated from Bosnian

Even though at the moment there are many projects in the field of education which are being jointly implemented by institutions and organisations across the region, there is a lack of clear direction and almost no steering of the resources invested. Therefore, the cooperation should not be only intensified, but also directed and synchronised.

5. Reflection on the aims of the ‘Mapping exercise’

In this chapter we shall go back to the initial project tasks and briefly reflect on them in the light of the findings provided. We shall not repeat all the findings, but rather attempt to wrap them up in a coherent whole. As already outlined in the introductory chapter, the aims of the project have been formulated as follows:

1. To map and describe the major research capacities and existing research in the area of education in the last 5 years in ERI SEE member countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia);
2. To identify and categorise the main research topics in order to identify not covered areas for future regional research action;
3. To identify the contexts and purpose of existing research in order to identify in which circumstances and to which extent it contributed to the education policy process;
4. To identify and recommend available and suitable EU funds for a potential regional research project promoting evidence based policy making.

With respect to the first task, the major research capacities in all the countries lie both within the supporting structures to the Ministry, as well as outside governmental structures, with public institutes, non-governmental organisations and universities or with international institutions/organisations. These capacities are certainly not equal, yet what we see as more relevant than their distribution among various providers is how these are used for the purpose of creating better educational policies and therefore better educational systems, which is conditioned by a variety of factors such as the funding base and financial stability of the evidence provider, its mission and status, its formal and informal links with the decision maker, etc.

In other words, the factors affecting behaviour of the evidence providers need to be adjusted in such a manner so as to better address the evidence-based policy agenda, i.e. to engage researchers in the policy process in such a way so that their knowledge and expertise will best contribute to this process. Thus, the question of capacity is the one of the institutional predispositions for triggering change in this direction. As we have seen above, the willingness seems to exist at both sides across the region, yet the capacities still need to be built and preferably by joining efforts at the level of the region.

Further to the already provided in Chapter 4, as regards the identification and categorisation of the main research topics, we have that teaching & learning, education & society and equity & social dimension are the topics most commonly researched across the region and this can as well be said even for each of the countries individually. On the other hand, financing, policy

& governance and attainment & drop-out seem to be the ones in need to be further researched.

With regards to the third aim, as indicated in Chapter 4, interviewees were as well asked to give examples of a change in the education policy or an introduction of certain regulation or measure which had been based or informed by evidence. In all the countries interviewees could list at least one example in which evidence was used in preparing a law, for instance, or in which there was a consultation process in which suggestions from evidence providers were taken on board. The answer would easily be formulated in the following fashion *yes, the research is used, sometimes, to some extent, sometimes not, depending on the policy or situation in question*. In other words, the approach to policy making which asks for evidence to be placed at its base or at least to inform it in the seven countries under study is not institutionalised to the extent that we can call the EBPM approach a well-established practice. In other words, in all the countries, policy-making process is rather *political* than *rational*. This also indicates that completed policy cycles are rarely, if at all, taking place and what we have encountered across the region are only elements of supposed policy cycles. At the same time, no policy making exemplary stories have been mentioned by any of the 43 informants, even when this question was explicitly asked.

Even though in all the countries interviewees would agree that the situation is better now than several years ago in this respect, they would more often than not be critical of the policy making process, referring to examples of basing policies on evidence as an exception, rather than a rule. Therefore, we could not identify a definite set of circumstances under which EBPM takes place, as its occurrence seems not to be of regular and systematised nature. On the other hand, the prime condition for it to take place is the willingness of the policy maker to 'open up' the policy making process to experts and providers of evidence, alongside the willingness of the latter to participate and the existence of the evidence needed.

The available and suitable EU funds are provided in Chapter 7 of this report.

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions from the previous chapter, we have formulated a set of recommendations, formulated so as to best address the main challenges hereby identified. They are given in the table below. The recommendations should be used as a starting point in planning and developing further steps towards institutionalizing the rational and evidence-informed approach to education policy making in the countries of ERI SEE.

The information provided in the chapter following this one, i.e. on the available EU funds, should be taken as instrumental to enhancing evidence-based policy making practice, as well as to fostering regional cooperation in this domain.

	Challenge	Recommendations
Actors	Poor or no evidence collection, systematisation and analysis by policy makers; poor organisational memory in policy makers;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a publicly available knowledge base of existing research in education for the entire region;
	Non-flexible data collection system by official statistics offices; most data often not publicly available;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Negotiate changes in data-collection systems of the official statistics offices and urge them to have it publicly available;
	Research conducted not communicated in a 'policy-friendly' manner;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce incentives for or urge research institutions/organisations to communicate it in a manner readable to policy makers;
	Lack of competence and/or capacities for EBPM in policy makers;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build institutional capacities within the government for EBPM through regional cooperation; ▪ Encourage exchange of good practices in EBPM through joint regional ventures;
	Little transparency of the policy making process;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure transparency in policy and decision making by opening up the process; ▪ Stimulate involvement of researchers and experts all along the policy cycle and encourage feedback;

Interaction	<p>Poor linkages between education policy makers and research organisations (esp. civil sector); Randomness of interaction; lack of trust;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a communication platform for policy makers and researcher/experts in the field of education at national levels and regional level; ▪ Stimulate involvement of researchers and experts all along the policy cycle and encourage feedback;
Evidence	<p>Research concentrated in certain areas (e.g. teaching & learning, education & society and equity & social dimension), while others remain under researched (e.g. financing, policy & governance and attainment & drop-out)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify priority policy areas in every country and direct researchers towards topics in which more knowledge is needed; ▪ Initiate and stimulate regional research cooperation in the areas identified as relevant for more than one country;

7. Overview on Funding Possibilities for Regional Projects

This chapter gives an overview of the availability of five targeted EU funding opportunities for the cooperation between Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia. The second part of the chapter offers a logical framework matrix for a potential cooperation project.

EU programmes available

The table below shows the actual availability of the programmes for each of the countries.

	ENPI	TAIEX	TEMPUS	IPA	LLP
Albania	×	✓	✓	✓*	✓*
Bosnia and Herzegovina	×	✓	✓	✓*	✓*
Croatia	×	✓	✓*	✓*	✓
Macedonia	×	✓	✓*	✓	✓*
Moldova	✓	✓	✓	×	×
Montenegro	×	✓	✓	✓	✓*
Serbia	×	✓	✓	✓*	✓*

✓ - Available
 ✓* - Limited availability
 × - Not available

The limited availability of a certain programme indicates that the country in question can use it under certain conditions only. In the case of TEMPUS, Croatia and Macedonia can only use it on the self-financed basis, meaning they cannot receive funding for the programme activities. In the case of IPA, as it will be elaborated later on, the asterisk indicates that a country can only use two of the total five of its components. In the case of Croatia, due to its joining the

EU in 2013, the programme will not be open for it after that point. Finally, the Lifelong Learning Programme is primarily designed for EU members and participation of non-EU members in it is very limited. The only country from the region which is currently fully integrated in the programme is Croatia.

In the remainder of the Annex section, we provide an overview of the EU funds supporting regional projects in the field of educational policy that are most suitable for the purpose. We deliberately do not cover ENPI and LLP due to the fact that they are limited for most of the countries in the region.

- Multi-annual Indicative Financial Framework (MIFF) for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)
- TEMPUS
- Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX)

Multi-annual Indicative Financial Framework (MIFF) for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) has been created with the objective to continue to support the Beneficiaries; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99, Turkey and Iceland, in their efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, reform public administration, carry out economic reforms, develop their civil society and advance in regional cooperation and reconciliation, with the ultimate aim of acceding to the EU.

Assistance through IPA can take the following forms:

- Investment, procurement, contracts or subsidies;
- Administrative cooperation, involving experts sent from Member States;
- Action by the EU in the interest of the beneficiary country;
- Measures to support the implementation process and programme management;
- Budget support (granted exceptionally and subject to supervision).

IPA is targeted at a wide range of institution-building measures. Participation in the award of procurement or grant contracts is open to:

- All natural persons who are nationals of a MS
- Legal persons who are established in a Member State of the EU or the EEA
- A country that is a beneficiary of the IPA or
- A country that is a beneficiary of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), and to international organisations

In order to achieve the objectives of each candidate and potential candidate as efficiently as possible, IPA consists of the five components of which the first two are available to all beneficiary countries. Three other components are available only to candidate countries.

Component I (Transition Assistance and Institution Building) provides financing for institution-building and associated investments. It supports measures to drive stabilisation and the transition to a democratic society and market economy.

Component II (Cross-Border Cooperation) supports cross-border cooperation between candidates and potential candidates and with EU Member States. It may also fund participation in transnational cooperation programmes (under the Structural Funds) and Sea Basin programmes (under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument or ENPI).

Component III (Regional Development) finances investments and associated technical assistance in areas such as transport, environment and economic cohesion.

Component IV (Human Resources Development) aims to strengthen human capital through education and training and to help combat exclusion.

Component V (Rural Development) contributes to sustainable rural development. It provides assistance for the restructuring of agriculture and its adaptation to EU standards in the areas of environmental protection, public health, animal and plant health, animal welfare and occupational safety.

The IPA budget for the period 2011-2013 is EUR 5 756 293 000. The bulk of this IPA support to the Beneficiaries will be delivered through the National Programmes.

Types of projects which benefit from this assistance:

- Regional projects - to facilitate cooperation between beneficiaries in the region's different countries, promoting reconciliation, reconstruction and political cooperation (e.g. ReSPA, CEFTA, RCC);
- Horizontal projects - addressing shared needs of several beneficiaries and where efficient implementation and economies of scale can be achieved (e.g. statistics, environmental projects).

TEMPUS

Tempus is the European Union's programme which supports the modernisation of higher education in the Partner Countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region, mainly through university cooperation projects. Tempus also

contributes to preparing the pre-accession countries of the Western Balkans for their participation in the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme.

Beneficiary Countries are 27 EU Member States; 6 countries from the Western Balkan region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, UNMIK/Kosovo; 16 countries South of the EU: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Occupied Palestinian territory, Tunisia and East of the EU Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and the Russian Federation; 5 Central Asian countries -Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

Limited and short term mobility of students, academic staff and university administrators may be possible as part of a Tempus project, but only as long as it contributes to achievement of the project's objective(s); Public administrations may be 'associate partners' in the project but may not receive funding from the grant; 'Individual Experts' may be invited to participate in project activities.

Tempus finances three types of Actions:

Joint Projects based on multilateral partnerships between higher education institutions in the EU and the Partner Countries aimed at exchanging knowledge and know-how between EU universities and institutions in the Partner Countries and between Partner Country institutions themselves in certain cases. Joint Projects are implemented at institutional level. They aim to help develop curricula, enhance university governance and address issues relevant for Higher education and society. Joint Projects may include small scale mobility activities of short duration for students, academic staff, researchers, university administrators and companies.

Structural Measures seek to contribute to the development and reform of education institutions and systems at national level in the Partner Countries. They can address issues linked to the reform of governance structures and systems (qualification systems, quality assurance, etc.) or enhancing the links between higher education and society. Structural Measures can include studies and research, conferences and seminars, training courses, policy advice and dissemination of information.

Accompanying Measures comprise of dissemination and information activities, such as thematic conferences, studies and activities aiming at the identification and exploitation of good practice, stakeholder consultations, etc.

Joint Projects and Structural Measures are implemented through regular Calls for Proposals, while Accompanying Measures are launched through Calls for Tender or Framework Contracts.

The programme works through projects. Themes for Tempus project are structured around the main components of the EU's higher education modernisation agenda and within following three building blocks:

1. Curricular Reform

Modernisation of curricula in academic disciplines identified as priorities by the Partner Countries, using the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the three cycle system and the recognition of degrees

2. Governance Reform

- University management and services for students
- Introduction of quality assurance
- Institutional and financial autonomy and accountability
- Equal and transparent access to higher education
- Development of international relations

3. Higher Education and Society

- Training of non-university teachers
- Development of partnerships with enterprises
- Knowledge triangle education-research-innovation
- Training courses for public services (ministries, regional/local authorities)
- Development of lifelong learning in society at large
- Qualifications frameworks

The total budget available for the co-financing of projects is estimated at EUR 78,1 million (plus an additional amount of EUR 12,5 million for the Southern and Eastern neighbouring area, under the reserve that the relevant financing decision following the recent ENP review is adopted by the European Commission). The minimum grant for both Joint Projects and Structural Measures will be EUR 500 000. The maximum grant will amount to EUR 1 500 000. For national projects in Kosovo and Montenegro the minimum grant for both project types is set at EUR 300 000.

Applications for Joint Projects and Structural Measures must be submitted to the Executive Agency (EACEA) no later than 23 February 2012, 12.00 (Brussels time).

Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX)

TAIEX is the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument managed by the Directorate-General Enlargement of the European Commission. TAIEX supports partner

countries with regard to the approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation. It is largely demand driven and facilitates the delivery of appropriate tailor-made expertise to address issues at short notice.

TAIEX aim is to provide short-term technical assistance to the acceding countries, candidate countries, and the Western Balkans.

- To bring ENPI partner countries closer to the European Union, through increased economic integration and a deepening of political cooperation by sharing the experience gained during the enlargement process.
- To provide technical training and peer assistance to partners and stakeholders of the beneficiary countries.
- To be an information broker by gathering and making available information.
- To provide database tools for facilitating and monitoring the approximation progress as well as to identify further technical assistance needs.

The Beneficiary Partners and Countries are all those which come under the TAIEX mandate. The TAIEX mandate covers the following groups of beneficiary countries: Croatia, Iceland, Turkey, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (as defined in UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999); Turkish Cypriot community in the northern part of Cyprus; Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine and Russia.

Target Groups of this instrument are civil servants work in public administrations; at national and sub-national level and in associations of local authorities; The Judiciary and Law Enforcement authorities; Parliaments and civil servants working in Parliaments and Legislative Councils; Professional and commercial associations representing social partners, as well as trade unions and employers' associations; Private Sector Associations; Interpreters, revisers and translators of legislative texts. TAIEX does not provide direct support to private citizens, or to individual companies.

Activities are divided as follows: Agriculture and Food Safety; Freedom, Security and Justice; Infrastructure: Environment, Transport and Energy; Internal Market; Support to the Turkish Cypriot community; TAIEX and the European Neighbourhood Policy; Regional Training Programme; Translation.

A logical framework for a cooperation initiative

The framework given below is a mere suggestion for potential cooperation project targeting the needs identified by this study and taking into account the recommendations of the authors.

Wider Objective	Specific Project Objective/s	Outputs & Activities
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Create better education policies in South Eastern Europe by strengthening the role of evidence in policy making</p>		<p>1. Evidence in education policy process accommodated in the regulatory framework</p>
	<p>Establish the practice of basing education policies on evidence</p>	<p>1.1 Adapt procedures for preparing or passing legal acts in the field of education so as they stipulate quality and reliable evidence as a prerequisite for decisions affecting educational system or some of its segments; 1.2 Develop and adopt standards determining the quality and reliability of evidence in education, preferably at the regional level;</p>
	<p>Create a stable communication channel between researchers in education and policy makers</p>	<p>2. Unit within ministries responsible for education in charge of informing the policy process with evidence established and trained</p>
	<p>Strengthen capacities for conducting policy relevant research in education</p>	<p>2.1 Establish special unit within the Ministry/Agency outside the Ministry/Clearinghouse in each country which will internally bear the responsibility of securing the basis of education policies in evidence; 2.2 Train the unit for its tasks; 2.3 Pilot the unit on one policy case and evaluate its functioning on the basis of expertise, professionalism and objectivity;</p>
	<p>Enhance policy learning and exchange of practices at the regional level</p>	<p>3. SEE Educational Observatory established and trained</p> <p>3.1 Establish a special body (Observatory) at the regional level with the mission to evaluate and monitor education policy making in all the countries, as well as give recommendations; secure the even stakeholder representation including educational researchers and experts outside the region; 3.2 Establish links between this body and responsible ministries, educational researchers and other stakeholders;</p>

		<p>3.3 Create SEE Educational Observatory contact points in each country;</p> <p>3.4 Secure transparency and publicity of Observatory's work;</p> <p>3.5 Train the people in the body for their tasks;</p> <p>3.6 Pilot the Observatory on one policy case and evaluate its functioning on the basis of expertise, professionalism and objectivity;</p>
		<p>4. Communication platform between researchers in education and policy makers established and functioning</p>
		<p>4.1 Set up a communication platform between researchers and policy makers in each country with the aim to facilitate bring the demand and supply in knowledge on education and policies closer;</p> <p>4.2 Determine the needs of both parties to be fulfilled in order for the partnership to function;</p> <p>4.3 Secure regular and stable communication channel among the parties in the platform;</p> <p>4.4 Evaluate platform's functioning;</p>
		<p>5. Scheme to support policy relevant research established</p>
		<p>5.1 Create a government funding scheme specially designed to stimulate the creation of evidence in need in every country;</p> <p>5.2 Stimulate regional cooperation through this scheme;</p> <p>5.3 Create links between the scheme and SEE Knowledge Base;</p> <p>5.4 Pilot the scheme and evaluate its functioning;</p>
		<p>6. SEE Knowledge Base for Education Policy created and maintained</p>
		<p>6.1 Establish the publicly available Knowledge Base for Education Policy at the regional level gathering all relevant research and evidence in one place;</p> <p>6.2 Maintain the Knowledge Base;</p> <p>6.3 Create Toolkit for Policy Makers for applying evidence in education policy process;</p> <p>6.4 Create Toolkit for Researchers to facilitate the translation of research results to the language of policy;</p>

		7. Official data-collection system adapted or enhanced so as to meet the policy makers' needs and to follow the rhythm of the policy cycle
		7.1 Engage national statistics offices and other units within the government in the evidence provision process; 7.2 Create mechanisms for more flexibility in data-collection systems and methods; 7.3 Secure the necessary knowledge and skills;

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Annex

I Questionnaire for Evidence Providers (MS Word version; English)

Nb.	Questions	Answers
1.	Name of the institution/organisation	
2.	Contact of the institution/organisation	
3.	Website of the institution/organisation	
4.	Type of institution/organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific institution <input type="checkbox"/> Educational institution <input type="checkbox"/> Government-owned or public service (institutes) <input type="checkbox"/> Non-government organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify which) <hr/> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>More than one answer is possible.</i></p>
5.	Year of establishment of your institution/organisation	
6.	On the scale from 1 to 5 (5 - extremely relevant; 1 - not relevant) please rate the following funding sources according to their relevance for your institution/organisation	Government Business enterprise University European Union

		<p>Other international donors</p> <p>Other domestic donors</p> <p>Other (specify which)</p> <hr/> <p><i>Not all of the above need to be rated.</i></p>
7.	<p>Which of the following does your institution/organisation perceive as primary users of your research and analysis in the field of education?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Government</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Local self-government/municipality</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> General public</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Students and pupils</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Parents</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> International institutions/organisations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific community</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify which)</p> <hr/> <p><i>More than one answer is possible.</i></p>
8.	<p>How many employees does your institution/organisation employ which are involved in education policy analysis, educational research and related, expressed in full-time equivalent (FTE)?</p>	
9.	<p>Does your institution/organisation have external associates, i.e. experts who are not full-time employees of your institution/organisation, but are occasionally hired to</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but we rarely engage them in our projects</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, and we often engage them in our projects</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, and we always engage them in our projects</p>

	conduct education policy analysis or educational research?	<input type="checkbox"/> No. <i>Please tick <u>only one</u> of the answers.</i>
10.	Which ones from the following list of disciplines/fields are relevant to your institution/organisation's work in the domain of education research?	<input type="checkbox"/> Andragogy <input type="checkbox"/> Economics <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational science <input type="checkbox"/> Pedagogy <input type="checkbox"/> Political science <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology <input type="checkbox"/> Public policy studies <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify which) <hr/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify which) <hr/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify which) <hr/> <i>More than one answer is possible.</i>
11.	Please provide the most significant scientific <u>achievements</u> of your institution/organisation in the field of education in the last 5 years.	
12.	Please list the most relevant <u>publications</u> of your institution/organisation in the field of education in the last 5 years, including web pages	

	where they can be obtained on the Internet.	
13.	Could you list the most significant areas/topics of education that your institution/organisation has covered in the last 5 years?	
14.	In case you would like to add some information that you find to be of relevance to our survey, and that has not been covered by the questions 1-13, please do so here:	
Thank you for your time!		

II Interview guide for decision makers (in English)

I Introductory questions (5-8 min)

- What is your name, the name of your institution/unit and your position within it?
- How long have you been in the current position?
- How long have you been in the current institution/unit?
- What are your principal responsibilities?

II Evidence-based policy making (10-15 min)

- What is for you evidence-based policy making?
- In your opinion, are policies of your ministry based on evidence?
- Please provide some examples of evidence-based policy making within your ministry that you have experienced?
- Are you satisfied with how things currently are when it comes to education policy making in your country?
- What do you recognise as major obstacles in evidence-based policy making in education in your country?
- What would you improve and how?

III Evidence providers (15-20 min)

- In your opinion, who should provide evidence for education policy making in your country?
- Do you find the existing evidence (research conducted, analyses, reports, data, etc.) adequate and/or useful?
- In your opinion, which topics within the field of education have not been sufficiently researched, and which have been overresearched?
- What do you think should be done to make the evidence more corresponding to the policy makers' needs?
- Which of these research organisations, institutes and similar institutions that produce evidence in education in your country you find to be the most relevant?
- How do you see the role of international organisations and institutions in the evidence-based policy making in education in your country?
- How would you describe the Ministry's relationship with research organisations, institutes and similar institutions which produce evidence of (potential) relevance for education policy making?

IV Closing question (2-5 min)

- In the framework of this project (*Mapping of Regional Capacities in Evidence-based Policy Making in Education*) and ERI SEE as a regional initiative, is there something you find to be relevant to mention, not covered in this interview?

III Interview guide for evidence providers (English)

I Introductory questions (5-8 min)

- What is your name, the name of your institution/organisation and your position within it?
- How long have you been in the current position?
- How long have you been in the current institution/organisation?
- What are your principal responsibilities?

II Evidence-based policy making (10-15 min)

- What is for you evidence-based policy making?
- In your opinion, are policies of the Ministry of Education in your country based on evidence?
- Please provide some examples of evidence-based policy making that you have know of, if any?
- Are you satisfied with how things currently are when it comes to education policy making in your country?
- What do you recognise as major obstacles in evidence-based policy making in education in your country?
- What would you improve and how?

III Research in education (15-20 min)

- In your opinion, who should provide evidence for education policy making in your country?
- Do you find the existing evidence (research conducted, analyses, reports, data, etc.) produced by your organisation adequate and/or useful for policy making?
- Which of research organisations, institutes and similar institutions that produce evidence in education in your country you find to be the most relevant (including or excluding your institution/organisation)?
- How do you see the role of international organisations and institutions in the evidence-based policy making in education in your country?
- How would you describe the relationship of your institution/organisation and the Ministry of Education in your country?
- In the last 5 years, which areas and topics within the field of education have been researched by your institution/organisation?
- Is the choice of your research topics based on your perception of policy makers' needs?
- Has any of it been used in the policy making process? Could you elaborate?
- How did you choose these areas and topics for your research and why?
- Does the availability of funding opportunities play a role in the choice of research area/topic?

IV Closing question (2-5 min)

- In the framework of this project (*Mapping of Regional Capacities in Evidence-based Policy Making in Education*) and ERI SEE as a regional initiative, is there something you find to be relevant to mention, not covered in this interview.

