NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF POLITICAL STUDIES AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The role of non-governmental organizations in the development process of evaluation capacity of public policies in Romania

Summary

Scientific Coordinator:
Prof. Univ. Dr. Cezar BÎRZEA

PhD Candidate:
Teodora Diana IACOB

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The evaluation of public programs and policies, although a relatively new domain and continuously under development in comparison with other areas of social sciences, has rapidly expanded in the European states. It has firstly developed in the western countries and they further influenced the integration of evaluation in the administrative structures of other states. In this context, Romania has not made an exception, the pre-accession period and, subsequently, the obligations resulting from the European Union regulations have favoured the creation and development of an evaluation capacity for the programs funded by the European Commission. Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, evaluation has been the subject of numerous analyses and researches, the interest in understanding this activity and complementary processes increased significantly over the last decade, especially from the point of view of the institutionalization level of this practice as well as of the evaluation system architecture.

Thus, in addition to the existing studies, the present paper focuses on the analysis of the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the development process of evaluation capacity of public programs and policies in Romania.

The analytical demarche was introduced by a detailed presentation of the theoretical perspectives related to evaluation and the evaluation capacity of public programs and policies. The theoretical substantiation of the proposed subject focused firstly on the influence that the New Public Management theory had on evaluation, taking into consideration that the literature attributes the emergence and subsequent developments of this field to the major changes introduced at the level of the public sector, the most important being the use of results-oriented management. Thus, the use of evaluation in the processes of elaboration and implementation of public programs and policies, as well as the need to strengthen the capacities related to these activities, is one of the results of the reform actions influenced by elements of the New Public Management theory.

The extension of this practice was due to the rational thinking that characterized the 1960s and later the 1980s, the emergence of New Public Management as Furubo, Rist and Sandhal mention (Furubo, Rist, Sandhal, 2012, p. 146). The most important principles of New Public Management theory were synthesized by Christopher Hood in the paper "A Public Management for All Seasons?", namely: *the application of professional management principles in the public sector* through appointment of better managers, the introduction of visible and discretionary forms of control to adequately justify the responsibility for the specific actions and to clarify the tasks; *the introduction of explicit standards and performance indicators* so that targets and indicators can be set in both qualitative and quantitative terms to measure efficiency of the public sector; *the emphasis on the control of results* in order to decentralize certain functions and to (re)allocate resources corresponding to the results achieved; the emphasis on results, detrimental to procedures; *the disaggregation and decentralization of* public sector "monolithic" units in order to create autonomous, manageable units by allocating their own resources and interests so that they can contract external services in order to increase their efficiency; *the introduction of public sector competition* through external contracting and award procedures to reduce costs and improve the quality of certain services; *enhanced management practices* from the private sector with greater flexibility in recruiting and stimulating the civil servants; *the emphasis on discipline and parsimony in resource use* to reduce direct costs, better organization of activities and limiting "conforming costs" (Hood, 1991, pp. 4-5).

Performance measurement, the need for an increased accountability of the decision-makers in relation to their citizens, increased number of informed decision-making processes, better usage of the lessons learned from previous exercises, the need for transparency at the administrative level, including public presentations of the implemented interventions results or prioritizing the public agenda are just some of the principles underlying the administrative reforms around the world. In a direct relationship, the process of developing the evaluation capacity is understood as an integrated component of the results-oriented management of the public sector. This is an element of a more complex managerial framework that aims to strengthen public sector performance.

The diversity of approaches related to evaluation was influenced by the different perspectives that both theoreticians and practitioners have advanced, according to their experiences, philosophical orientations, methodological and practical preferences. In this respect, J. L.

Fitzpatrick, J.R. Sanders and B. R. Worthen, note that there were two major factors behind the different understanding of evaluation: on the one hand, the differences that arose as a result of ideological and philosophical confrontations, and on the other hand differences resulting from methodological preferences. According to these authors, there have been four paradigms that have influenced the theory and practice of evaluation, namely positivism, post-positivism, constructivist paradigm, transformative paradigm (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2012, pp. 114-115). The development of social sciences was influenced in the nineteenth century by the ideas of Auguste Compte, known under the name of *positivism*. According to Compte, the scientific knowledge requires the utilization of certain methods, theoretical laws and viable empirical observations. Thus, as Turner mentioned (Turner, 2001 apud Hasan, 2016, p. 318), Compte's interest in using methods was the basis for four analysis strategies, namely: using the observation method, considering that when social phenomena are perceived as "things" or "social facts" the observation is understood as an exception of subjective or moral judgment; the second strategy involves using the experiment in the context of analysing social facts; the third strategy advances the method of comparison, and particularly refers to the comparison of societies in order to observe the differences that arise between different social phenomenon; the latter strategy involves the method of historical analysis, which is a version of the comparative method.

A second paradigm that influenced evaluation was *post-positivism*. According to the advocates of this paradigm, knowledge is influenced by the values of the researchers and implicitly is subject to error; the data can be explained based on several theories, the reality is perceived as a human construct and their realities. The main objective of the theoreticians was to analyse causal relationships in order to develop norms and approaches to understand and describe the realities, albeit temporally, taking into account the limited character of knowledge (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2012, p. 28).

The constructivist approach, as mentioned by D. Stufflebeam, is acknowledged to have opposed positivism's ideas in the attempt to understand the evaluation domain, namely the realistic ontology, objective epistemology and experimental methods. Constructivism promotes knowledge as a human, uncertified and problematic construct; continuously subject of change (Stufflebeam, 2002, p. 71). The advocates of the constructivist paradigm argue that objectivity in the evaluation process is not possible. House and Howe claim that fact-value dichotomy or this

radical distinction between "facts" that are objective and "values" that are subjective represent a continuum. Values actually influence the perception of the facts (House, Howe, 1998, p. 56).

The *transformative paradigm* appeared as a response of the researchers in the domain of evaluation focused on how to address critical social and political issues. The basic principle of this perspective envisages that power is an element to be approached multi-level. According to D. Mertens, although the constructivist paradigm recognizes the existence of several realities that are social constructs, special importance must be paid to the social, political, cultural and economic values that define these realities.

Not just ideological paradigms have influenced the evaluation domain and its understandings. According to Stevenson and Thomas, another important factor contributing to the definition of distinct approaches in evaluation activities relates to methodological foundations. In this respect, the two theoreticians realized what they named the "intellectual context of evaluation" (Stevenson, Thomas, 2006, p. 201). They identified three traditions in the field of evaluation, namely the experimental tradition, the case-study tradition or the context tradition and the tradition of political influence.

As regards the definition of the evaluation concept, according to Dahler-Larsen, there are at least three approaches. The first perspective, as the above mentioned theoretician notes, focuses on the conceptual content; the second is understood from the pragmatic profile of evaluation, and the third one takes into account the socio-historical context in which evaluation has developed. It should also be noted that the various forms of the definitions given to evaluation also depend on the normative-ideological perspectives on which they were based (Dahler-Larsen, 2012, p. 5). Thus, from a **conceptual - analytical** perspective (Weiss, 1998; Scriven, 1991; Stufflebeam, 2001), according to Carol Weiss, evaluation represents "a systematic analysis of the operations and / or results of a program or policy, compared to an explicit set of standards, as a way to help improve programs or policies" (Weiss, 1998, p. 4). From a **methodological** perspective, evaluation is defined by Rossi and Freeman as "a systematic application of social research procedures in order to analyse the conceptualization and design, implementation and utility of social programs. This involves the use of social research methodologies to judge and improve the design, monitoring, efficiency and effectiveness of programs in areas such as health, education, welfare and other social programs" (Rossi, Freeman, 1985 apud Dahler-Larsen, 2012, pag . 5).

Based on the scope, evaluation was defined by Patton as "a systematic collection of information in relation to the activities, characteristics and results of the programs in order to make judgments about the program, improve its effectiveness, or inform decisions about programming" (Patton, 1997 and Dahler-Larsen, 2012, p. 7). Patton is known for addressing the utility-focused evaluation. The verbs of "judging," "improving," and "informing" describe the most important purposes of evaluation. In addition, a definition of evaluation understood as a **practice in a context** was provided by Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey. According to these theoreticians, evaluation implies "the use of social research methods to systematically analyse the effectiveness of a program, methods adapted to the organizational and political environment, designed to inform social actions and to improve social conditions" (Rossi, Lipsey, Freeman, 2004, p. 16). D. Russ-Eft and H. Preskill note that the definition offered by these theorists is also a result of the long-standing relationship between evaluation and social programs which has been influenced by the socio-historical research perspectives (Russ-Eft, Preskill, 2009, p. 2).

Even though the approaches in this area are different and focus on certain components of an evaluation process, the final goals are generally accepted. Thus, from a theoretical perspective, there are several directions in relation to the functions that characterize evaluation in modern societies. For a relatively long period of time, evaluation has been used to improve programs and policies, but today the discussion focuses on several evaluation functions that are, in most cases, complementary. Initially, Harriet Talmage, mentioned three purposes of evaluation that emerged from its definitions, namely:

- to make judgments about the merit or value of a program;
- to assist decision makers responsible for the policy making processes;
- to have a political function (Talmage, 1982 apud Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen, 2012, p. 13).

Shulha and Cousins mention that the use of evaluation is not a unitary concept, but rather a multi-dimensional phenomenon described through the interplay of several dimensions, respectively: the instrumental dimension that refers to the support function for the decision-making processes and solving problems, the conceptual dimension that refers to the educational function of evaluation and the symbolic dimension or the political function of evaluation (Shulha, Cousins, 1997, p. 196). The literature dedicated to this subject included analyses on the use of evaluation processes taking into account criteria such as relevance, credibility,

involvement of the users, the effectiveness of communication, the potential of information processing, customer's need for information, anticipation of a change at program level, the perception over the values that define evaluation as a management tool, the quality of the evaluation activities, the contextual features of decision-making processes or policy frameworks. The added value of evaluation processes can be understood both at micro level (organizational level) and macro level (society level).

Lately, as Dahler-Larsen observed, particular attention has been paid to the contexts in which the evaluation has developed, and the extended use of this practice leading to a much deeper analysis of the structures and contexts that either hampered the development of the domain or promoted its ideas and practices. A direct consequence of this attitude determined a reorientation of the evaluation study to the concept of *evaluation capacity building/ development (ECB/ ECD).*

Stockdill, Baizerman and Comton have defined the *evaluation capacity building* as a continuous and sustained process to create and maintain the practice of evaluation at different levels to the highest standards so that its use becomes routine. Mackay defined the development of evaluation capacity in a broader sense as "the extension of national or sectoral evaluation systems" (Mackay, 1999, p. 2). Boyle and Lemaire have defined evaluation capacity building in direct relation to the notion of an evaluation regime described as the configuration of evaluation capacity, appraisal practice, organizational arrangements and its degree of institutionalization. Thus, the development of evaluation capacity is understood as a "set of activities and initiatives set up to implement an evaluation regime" (Boyle, Lemaire, 1999, p. 6). The purpose of evaluation capacity building processes, as Volkov and King mention, is to strengthen and support the evaluation practices by developing the capabilities of an organization to effectively design, implement and manage evaluation activities; to access, build and use the knowledge and skills acquired; to cultivate a continuous spirit of learning, improvement and accountability within the organization; and to raise awareness of program evaluation and self-evaluation as a strategy for improving the performance of internal and external environment in which it operates (King, Volkov, 2005, p. 11).

In order to understand these types of processes, several theoretical models of evaluation capacity analysis were described, models that focused on identifying the basic components of these types of activities. Thus, the most relevant theoretical perspectives for the subject under consideration were: the model proposed by Stockdill, Baizerman and Compton; it provides a general overview

related to the development process of evaluation capacity; the advanced model of Taylor-Powell and Boyd; it focuses on the evaluation capacity in complex organizations; the model presented by Preskill and Boyle, characterized by the multidisciplinary dimension of the evaluation capacity building processes and an integrated model of analysis of the evaluation capacity development proposed by Labin, Duffy, Meyers, Wandersman and Lesene, presented succinctly below:

Model	Component	Specific elements
Baizerman, Stockdill și Compton	**Overall process**	*Acknowledged/ legitimate, intentional process*
		Dedicated structures for evaluation activities
		Dedicated resources at all levels
	Actual practices	*ECB expertise*
		Dedicated resources
		Explicit, public and executive support for ECB
		Existence of a strategy
		Responsibility for the design, management and support for the ECB process
		Integration of experts in the decision-making process
		Involvement of experts within the inter and intra organizational practices
		Demand for evaluation activities
	Occupational orientation and Practitioner Role	*Expertise in ECB theory, processes and practices*
		Orientation to potential collaborators
		Orientation to inclusive practices
		Commitment to the standards
		Orientation to ECB work as ongoing learning and teaching process
Powell și Boyd	**Professional development**	*Training*
		Technical assistance
		Collaborative evaluation projects
		Mentoring and coaching

		Communities of practice
	Resources and support	*Evaluation and ECB expertise*
		Evaluation materials
		Evaluation champions
		Organizational assets
		Financing
		Technology
		Time
	Organizational environment	*Leadership*
		Demand
		Incentives
		Structures
		Policies and procedures
Preskill și Boyle	**Evaluation Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes**	*Motivations, assumptions and expectations*
		Design, implementation and evaluation
		ECB strategies: internship, written materials, technology, meetings, appreciative inquiry, communities of practices, training, involvement in evaluation, technical assistance, coaching
	Transfer of learning	*Leadership*
		Culture
		Systems and Structures
		Communication
	Sustainable Evaluation Practice	*Evaluation Frameworks and Processes*
		Resources Dedicated to Evaluation
		Use of Evaluation Findings
		Shared Evaluation Beliefs and Commitment
		Integrated Knowledge Management Evaluation System
		Strategic Plan for Evaluation
		Evaluation Policies and Procedures
Labin, Duffy, Meyers,	**Need**	*Motivations: internal and external audience*
		Objectives

Wandersman și Lesene		*Context: needs assesment and adaptation* *Resources and strenghts: individual (attitudes) and organizational (resources, evaluation expertise, practices, leadership, culture, mainstreaming)*
	Activities	*Strategies: theories, models, individual and organizational level, type, content* *Implementation: target, timing, barriers* *Evaluation of ECB: approach, design, measures, data type, timeframe, internal or external*
	Results	*Individual level: attitudes, knowledge, skills/ behaviours* *Organizational level: processes, policies, practices, leadership, organizational culture, mainstreaming, resources* *Program outcomes: development, implementation, results* *Negative outcomes* *Lessons learned*

Thus, with regard to the general processes for developing the inter and intra-organizational evaluation capacity, one of the main elements resulted from the theoretical models presented above refers to the ***identification and understanding the need*** for these types of processes, and implicitly ***the benefits*** resulting from evaluation activities, whether we are talking about programs or policies. In this respect, the ***context*** as well as ***the level of information and awareness*** of the decision-makers, which subsequently engage and support the evaluation capacity building processes, contribute to the increased demand for such processes and to the development of new initiatives.

A second important element highlighted in the proposed models is the need for ***expertise.*** First of all, there is a lack of expertise in terms of the ECB process itself. As Baizerman, Stockdill and Compton emphasize, the evaluation processes are distinct from those on capacity development and therefore the expertise differs. However, according to the ideas promoted by Powell and Boyd, expertise is needed both in the area of evaluation and capacity development processes, an element identified and included in all the four models. Complementary to expertise is the need
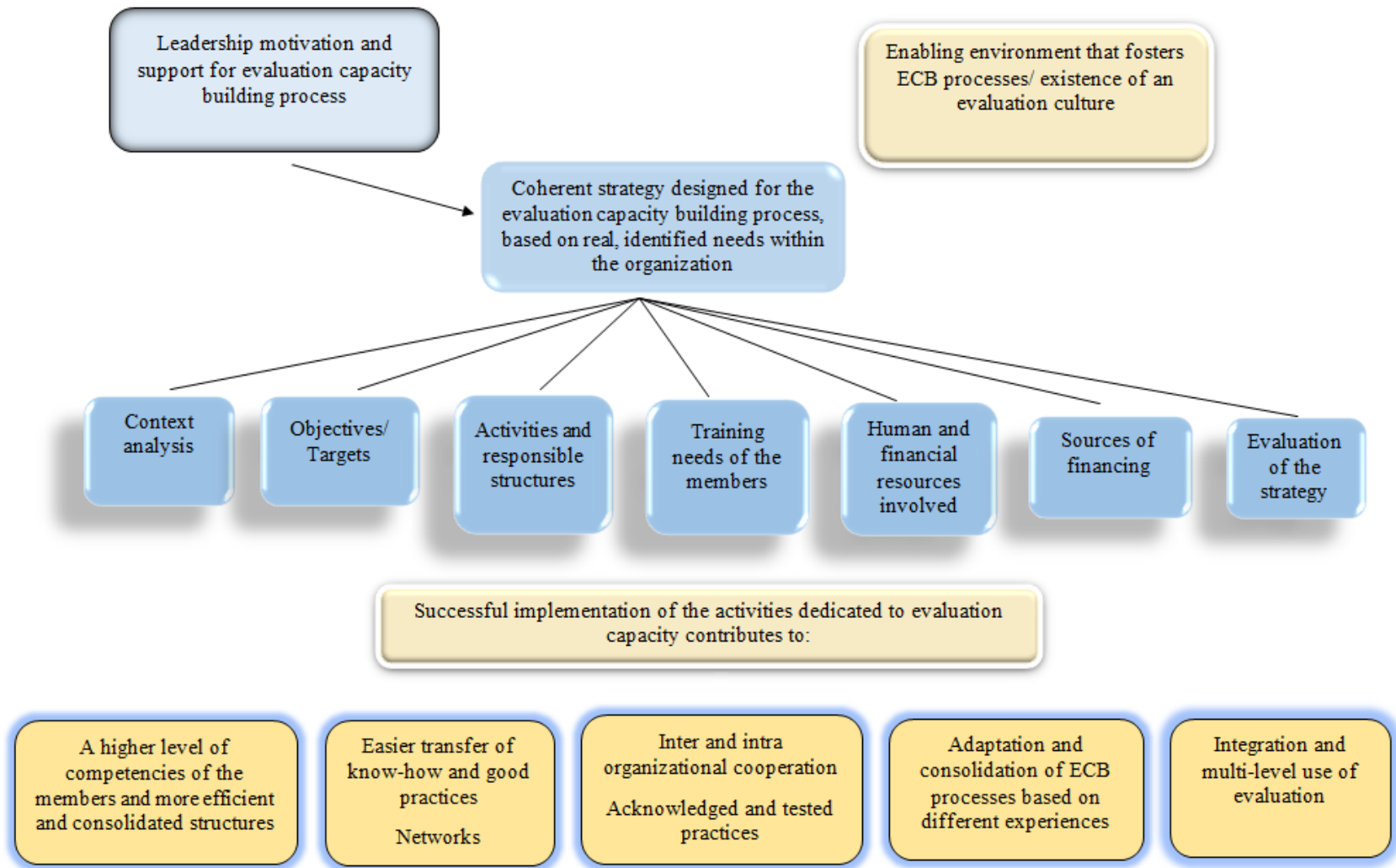
for a *strategy* that focuses on the evaluation capacity development processes. The design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies involve a series of standard elements, namely:

- A strategic framework for the evaluation capacity development process;
- Objectives;
- Elements of the implementation process: theories, target group, types of expertise, activities, resources (human, financial, etc.), implementation calendar, constraints, expected results;
- Process evaluation (internal or external, involves designing the process itself including approach, implementation of data types, analysis, conclusions, recommendations);
- Lessons learned and dissemination of good practices.

As Baizerman, Stockdill and Compton have highlighted, as well as Preskill and Boyle, a very important element in the process of evaluation capacity building is the *sustainability of the process*. The long-term sustainability depends on several factors, including leaders' commitment to such practices, the existence of conceptual frameworks, procedures and policies on evaluation practices, the existence of a strategic plan for evaluation activities, the allocation of resources for such activities within organizations, the existence and promotion of an organizational culture of evaluation and the values that define it, etc.

The existence of a *community of practitioners* is another important element in the processes of developing evaluation capacity, as Powell and Boyle have stressed. In this respect, the contribution and influence that these communities have in the processes of developing evaluation capacity is extremely valuable.

Based on these theoretical models and the elements that characterize the processes of evaluation capacity building (motivation and leadership support for these activities, the existence of an environment / context that favours the use of evaluation, the planning and implementation of a coherent capacity development strategy within the organization, inter-organizational cooperation) an analysis matrix was developed in order to analyse how the non-governmental organizations contributed to the development of the evaluation capacity of the public interventions in Romania, namely:

Leadership motivation and support for evaluation capacity building process

Enabling environment that fosters ECB processes/ existence of an evaluation culture

Coherent strategy designed for the evaluation capacity building process, based on real, identified needs within the organization

Context analysis

Objectives/ Targets

Activities and responsible structures

Training needs of the members

Human and financial resources involved

Sources of financing

Evaluation of the strategy

Successful implementation of the activities dedicated to evaluation capacity contributes to:

A higher level of competencies of the members and more efficient and consolidated structures

Easier transfer of know-how and good practices

Networks

Inter and intra organizational cooperation

Acknowledged and tested practices

Adaptation and consolidation of ECB processes based on different experiences

Integration and multi-level use of evaluation

Source: Own representation

This multidimensional configuration is in relation to the previously presented theoretical models, the common element identified refers to the fact that the evaluation capacity building activity is a multi-level process, influenced both by internal and external factors. The basic elements of an evaluation capacity building process as outlined in the above figure are:

- the existence of motivation and necessary support, at management level, for the evaluation capacity building process;
- the existence of a coherent strategy for developing the organization's evaluation capacity based on identified needs, including: context elements, clear and assumed objectives, activities related to the objectives and expected results, training needs of the members, human and financial resources to be employed in this process, funding sources, activities in order to evaluate the strategy.

The successful implementation of these phases contributes to an increased level of competences for the members within the organization, facilitates further transfers of best practices and knowledge and facilitates the creation of networks bringing together key actors in the field, inter-organizational cooperation, increased level of integration of evaluation practices and the internalization of learning processes. That is to say, it concentrates on developing and strengthening evaluation capacity at the level of institutions and organizations.

As regards the evaluation system of public programs and policies in Romania, the general objective of the analysis focuses on *how non-governmental organizations contribute to the development of the evaluation capacity of public interventions at national level.* Therefore, the first phase relates to the selection of professional organizations and associations relevant to the subject. In this context, the selection criterion was the profile of the organization, which was composed of the following elements: mission and objectives, internal organization, profile of the organization members, activities and the resources.

The specific objectives of the analysis are:

- ✓ to define the profile of professional organizations and associations that have evaluation of public interventions as their mission;
- ✓ to analyse their activity focusing on the influence they have had in the development of the evaluation capacity;

✓ to identify the main obstacles they encountered in achieving their mission and objectives;

✓ to analyse the context in which they operate;

✓ to provide proposals or solutions in order to strengthen their role in the evaluation capacity building process of public programs and policies;

Taking into consideration the above mentioned elements, the selected organizations for the analysis were: *The Romanian Evaluation Association "Evalrom", The Romanian Society of Evaluators (ROSE), The Association for the Development of Evaluation in Romania (ADER), Romanian Academic Society (SAR), The Romanian Centre for European Policies (CRPE), the Institute for Public Policies (IPP)*. **A very important aspect refers to the fact that within the analysis an artificial distinction was made between associations active in the field of evaluation, hereinafter referred to as professional associations and non-governmental organizations, as they are classified under Law 26/2000 with subsequent amendments and completions.** This was necessary in order to create a clearer picture of how evaluation associations contribute to the processes of developing the evaluation capacity of public programs and policies based on their objectives and missions.

The methodology used included literature review, supplemented by documentary analysis which involved both primary data (normative acts) and secondary data (information available on the websites of the organizations, reports elaborated within the framework of some projects implemented by the concerned associative structures as well as studies and analyses elaborated by the European Commission and central public structures), interviews with representatives of the organizations selected and questionnaires addressed to the experts responsible for evaluation of programs financed from the EU budget.

Firstly, the analysis focused on the associations whose main objective is to promote, use and develop evaluation as an instrument in the programming and implementation processes of public intervention, as well as on organizations that through their activities contribute indirectly to evaluation capacity building. A number of variables were identified for the functional analysis of the selected organizations. These variables were included in a semi-structured interview grid that focused on the following aspects:

• **internal context**
  - *missions and objectives*

- *profile of the members, management and leadership*
- *implemented activities and expected results*
- *networks*
- *resources*

• **external context**

The second part of the research focused on the analysis of the knowledge and perception of the experts that work within management system of European funds, which are responsible for evaluation of the programs financed by the European Commission. Thus, the objective of this endeavour was to collect data, analyse the perception of the target group on how these associative structures contributed to the process of building evaluation capacity from the perspective of the demand side for evaluation activities. A second objective was to complement the information gathered through interviews and to provide an overview of how the activities implemented by the associations and non-governmental organizations are perceived by stakeholders, respectively by those requesting evaluation services.

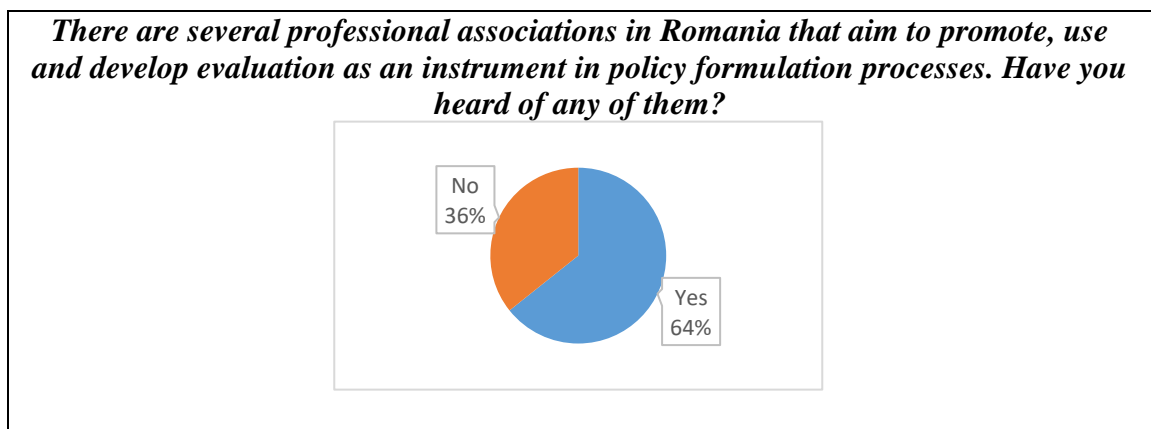## Main Findings and Conclusions

There are several associative structures in Romania that have as their primary goal the promotion, use and development of evaluation as an instrument in the process of programming and implementation of public interventions. In addition, there are many organizations that, through their activities, indirectly contribute to strengthening the evaluation capacity. As a result of the information gathered through the interviews, but also after analysing the activities conducted, the following findings and conclusions were drawn:

From the internal dynamics perspective, the vision, objectives and activities carried out so far by the selected organizations represent a solid foundation for contributing in a coherent manner to the creation and development of the necessary capacities in the area of evaluation. In addition, the level of expertise of the members is the guarantor for the quality of the activities finalized or under implementation. However, some weaknesses have also been identified, among which we mention: the lack of medium and long-term development strategies that create the necessary premises for the continuous development of the activities; limited involvement, both at the level of leadership and members, in planning and implicitly performing the activities; limited financial

resources, in many cases only limited to a few projects with external funding; lack of communication channels with representatives of the public administration or academia.

From an external perspective, both the initiatives for creation and development of associative structures and the activities implemented, had the support of the central authorities. This conclusion was reinforced by the information gathered through a questionnaire addressed to the administrative structures personnel that conduct evaluation activities. Thus, the response highlighted the following:

• Although there is not a high level of familiarity among the representatives of the administrative structures regarding the mission, objectives and activities carried out by the evaluation associations, in the last decade, there is a satisfactory level of knowledge regarding their existence, which ensures the premises for the development of future partnerships. The partnership is one of the basic principles that have strengthened public administration reforms around the world as a result of the influence of New Public Management.

There are several professional associations in Romania that aim to promote, use and develop evaluation as an instrument in policy formulation processes. Have you heard of any of them?

No
36%

Yes
64%

• Even though the extent to which associations and non-governmental organizations have been actively involved in planning, implementation, monitoring, dissemination or capacity building activities is low, there is great openness to their involvement in evaluation activities and complementary actions related programs financed from the European Union. Accountability and transparency according to the New Public Management theory are principles that determine the administrative structures to co-opt professional associations or non-governmental organizations in their activities.

Do you think that professional associations should be more involved in the evaluation of the EU funded programs?
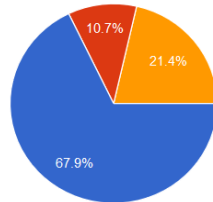
67, 9% - Yes
10,7% - No
21,4% - I don't know

- Despite the fact that the level of cooperation between the associative environment and the administrative structures is less developed, the results show that there are real advantages resulting from a greater involvement of the professional associations in the evaluation activities implemented by the administrative structures. In this case, the element that influences the level of involvement of professional associations and non-governmental organizations in the evaluation activities is productivity, another fundamental principle of the New Public Management. Cooperation between the two levels can help achieve results such as: consensus on the objectives of the evaluation, the legitimacy of these processes as well as for the evaluator profession, the development of evaluation capacities at the national level by increasing the demand for these types of processes and the supply side by constantly increasing the competences of the evaluators, creating professional networks to enable continuous learning by transferring knowledge and best practices, development opportunities for members, supporting innovation from a theoretical and practical perspective.

- While the potential of professional associations and non-governmental organizations to strengthen the evaluation culture and capacity at national level has so far been insufficiently exploited, closer collaboration relationships can bring real benefits in terms of strengthening public intervention evaluation system. Linking administrative structures to citizens / civil society to improve their satisfaction is known in the New Public Management theory as service orientation. Therefore, an adequate level of evaluation culture is a determining factor for the failure or success of evaluation capacity

development processes, respectively, engagements for such processes need to be complemented by an environment that favours and even encourage evaluation activities.

- Although the contribution of professional associations and non-governmental organizations has been so far reduced in terms of development of evaluation capacity, the results shown that they have very useful tools to boost evaluation activities, such as know-how and expertise (70%), facilitation of networks development (70%), advocacy activities (57%), experience in the analysis of public programs and policies (50%), acknowledged sectoral expertise (29%), the results achieved over time (29%). These results are relevant to understand both the internal dynamics of organizations, which is influenced by the way human, financial or time resources are used, as well as the influence of the external environment such as limited perceptions on evaluation practices, its objectives and its benefits.

What do you think would be the most useful tools that non-governmental organizations have in order to contribute to the development of evaluation activities / evaluation capacity? (multiple responses can be selected)

- Expertise and sectoral know-how (70%)

- Facilitate network development (70%)

- Advocacy activities (57%)

- Experience in analyzing public programs and policies (50%)

- Local / regional/ sectoral expertise (29%)

- The results obtained over time (29%) .

In conclusion, we can appreciate that the influence that professional associations and non-governmental organizations have on the evaluation activities and on the processes of developing the evaluation capacity of public programs and policies is relatively low. However, there is a great potential, recognized and validated in the analysis.

Recommendations:

- The existence of a single structure to support evaluation capacity development processes at national level (eg. the Romanian Evaluation Society) and to consolidate the evaluation culture or at least to create a partnership between professional associations so that they can respond in a coherent manner to the objectives assumed by ensuring common positions, a common voice;
- Reviving associations through a higher level of leadership involvement, through assuring funding opportunities, engaging members in projects to motivate them and to increase the number of affiliates and institutional partners;
- Develop an action plan based on identified development needs that includes actions to strengthen the organization's internal capabilities;
- Create continuous training opportunities for the members of associations;
- Ensure a constant dialogue with key actors of the national evaluation system;
- Create and maintain partnership / collaboration relationships with similar associations as well as with the academic environment;
- Empowerment of non-governmental organizations to promote increased use of evidence in public policy implementation processes;

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