

Methodology for regular expert assessment of regional socio-economic measures in Moldova¹

Peter Goliaš, INEKO, Slovakia

November 2017

Project

The methodology was created within the initiative "**Promoting transparency and financial sustainability of regional policies, state-owned enterprises and local authorities in Moldova**". The initiative is being implemented from September 2017 until March 2019 by the Institute for Economic and Social Reforms in Slovakia (INEKO), in partnership with IDIS "Viitorul" in Moldova with the financial support of the Official Development Assistance of the Slovak Republic (SlovakAid). The initiative aims to increase the transparency, financial accountability, and quality of regional policies, state-owned enterprises and local authorities in Moldova.

Objective

Improving the quality of regional regulation and legislation through publishing a regular expert assessment of the regional socio-economic measures proposed or implemented by local governments in Moldova

Activities

1. IDIS: Research on competencies of local governments and mapping the areas of regulations suitable for regular expert assessments in Moldova (writing summary of at least 5 pages)
2. INEKO: Writing summary (at least 10 pages) on the best and the worst examples of regional measures evaluated in Slovakia
3. INEKO + IDIS: Developing methodology (at least 5 pages) for regular expert assessment of regional socio-economic measures in Moldova
4. IDIS: Creating the project webpage on <http://viitorul.org/>
5. IDIS: Creating the team of Experts for regular evaluation of measures (at least 15 experts independent from local and central government – local activists, NGO experts, economic analysts, people from academy, sociologists, political scientists, etc.)

¹ The methodology proposed for Moldova has been inspired by the Slovak projects HESO (<http://www.ineko.sk/static/heso/index.php>) and HESO-Regions (http://www.ineko.sk/static/heso_regiony/index.php) implemented by INEKO institute in 2000-2007.

6. IDIS + Experts: Continuous monitoring of regional measures proposed or implemented by local authorities
7. IDIS: Selecting key measures to be evaluated every quarter and writing short characteristics of them (at least 30 measures during 5 quarters: Q4 2017 – Q4 2018)
8. IDIS + Experts: Regular (quarterly) submitting of questionnaire with selected measures and their characteristics for evaluation to the panel of independent experts; evaluation
9. IDIS: Collecting and processing results of evaluation, calculating ratings
10. IDIS: Publishing results via press-report and the project web page

Altogether, at least 30 regulations will be evaluated by at least 15 Experts over October 2017 – February 2019. The evaluations will be made on quarterly basis with results to be published for 5 quarters in: January 2018, April 2018, July 2018, October 2018, and February 2019.

Timeline

Activity/Month	2017			2018												2019			Responsible
	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	
1. Research on competencies of local governments and related regulations in Moldova (5 pages)	x	x																	IDIS
2. Writing document describing the best and the worst practices from Slovakia (10 pages)	x	x	x																INEKO
3. Developing methodology for regular expert assessment of regional socio-economic measures in Moldova (5 pages)	x	x																	INEKO + IDIS
4. Creating the project webpage			x	x															IDIS
5. Creating the team of Experts for regular evaluation of measures (15 experts)	x	x																	IDIS
6. Collecting information about adopted or proposed regulations of local governments during given quarter	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	IDIS + Experts
7. Writing short characteristics of measures to be evaluated (30 measures)			x	x		x	x		x	x		x	x				x	x	IDIS
8. Submitting selected measures to the Experts for evaluation				x			x			x			x					x	IDIS + Experts
9. Processing results, calculating ratings				x			x			x			x					x	IDIS
10. Publishing results				x			x			x			x					x	IDIS

Background

The project takes inspiration from the Slovak project HESO-Regions run in 2002-2007 by non-governmental non-profit organization INEKO (Institute for Economic and Social Reforms) based in

Bratislava. The project HESO-Regions (Evaluation of Economic and Social Measures in Regions) created a platform where respected economic analysts, lawyers, sociologists, political scientists, economic journalists, representatives from the business community as well as from academic institutions, and think tanks regularly expressed their opinions on selected economic and social measures proposed or implemented by local authorities (cities and regions) in Slovakia. In this way they informed the wider public about their opinions on the quality and importance of given measures. Thus, the citizens had a possibility to obtain a reliable overview of economic and social measures proposed and implemented in Slovakia on regional level and of the evaluation by renowned professionals without the necessity of becoming acquainted with too many details.

The HESO-Regions project was a replication of the HESO project evaluating the economic and social measures proposed or adopted on a national level. The ambition and the main objective of the HESO Project was not to monitor the development in individual areas of the society completely and in-details nor to provide professional starting points for the action of competent bodies but to regularly provide citizens with the opinion of the expert public on frequently discussed, important, innovative or unprecedented economic and social measures affecting the quality of life of citizens and to create better preconditions for the political acceptance of structural measures – reforms – bringing systemic changes into the Slovak economy and society.

Besides informing the public about quality and importance of evaluated measures, the HESO-Regions project served also as means of highlighting and sharing the best practices among local authorities. Thus it was aimed to inspire representatives of local governments to implement the best measures and to avoid implementing measures with low rating.

Methodology

Selecting Measures to Evaluate

Evaluated economic and social measures include, among others, measures (regulations, resolutions, privatization decisions, strategy documents, policy concepts, etc.) proposed or passed by the Municipal (villages, communes, cities and municipalities) or Regional (“rayons”) Parliament as well as by the Chief Representatives of Local Governments (mayors, etc.). The measures can be identified based on (1) media monitoring, (2) advice from local activists and experts or based on (3) direct addressing local governments (e.g. by an official letter) and offering them the possibility to submit their measure for the evaluation. The most desired option would be to spark competition among municipalities and regions to submit measures regularly and win the quarterly evaluations. It is important that any local government authority has the possibility to win the ranking in particular quarter if they have a good measure. Therefore, there should not be any filters based on the size of the authority or any other criteria. IDIS Viitorul makes final selection about which measure will be evaluated. Emphasis is laid on measures widely discussed in the public as well as on measures, which are, according to IDIS Viitorul, rare, innovative and/or important for the economic and social development of the country. It is recommended to select measures that bring the highest value added (and can become inspiring for others) or, on the other hand, can cause the highest damage (and we want to warn against their

spreading). Evaluated measures are not meant to provide a comprehensive and detailed overview and monitoring of the development in individual areas of the society.

Writing Characteristics of Measures

Characteristics (description) of the evaluated measures are prepared by IDIS Viitorul. For this purpose IDIS Viitorul uses information from original materials, documents as well as from media sources. Every quarter starting from Q4 2017, IDIS Viitorul selects at least 6 measures to be evaluated and writes short (1-2 paragraphs) characteristics of those measures.

Evaluation Experts' Committee

In October – November 2017, IDIS Viitorul creates the evaluation Experts' Committee consisting of at least 15 members for each evaluation period. The experts are reputable local activists, economic analysts, lawyers, political scientist, sociologists, economic journalists, representatives from business community as well as from academic institutions, and think tanks. They represent leading or senior management positions in their organizations. The experts do not work in civil service, local government administration, and do not represent any political party. All of the experts attend the project for no reward. The opinions presented in the project represent solely those of the experts and do not necessarily reflect the views of their employers or any organizations of which they are members, nor the views of IDIS Viitorul.

Evaluation Criteria

Experts evaluate all the selected measures in two categories: quality (i.e. experts' acceptance) of the measure and importance of the measure for the society and economy at local level. These do not affect each other.

Quality of the Measure [-3; +3]

Experts evaluate the effect of a given measure and give it a grade (*see the range below*). Often, there is a crucial difference between the real effects of a measure and the effects proclaimed by its author or administrator. Therefore, no matter what the measure presents to solve or improve, experts evaluate the impact and the effects they think the measure will bring to life.

Range:

- 3 expert's absolute disapproval of the measure
- 2 expert's moderate disapproval of the measure
- 1 expert's minor disapproval of the measure
- 0 status quo, no change, no effect of the measure
- +1 expert's minor approval of the measure
- +2 expert's moderate approval of the measure
- +3 expert's absolute approval of the measure

Importance of the Measure for the Society and Economy (%)

Experts express opinion how essential and necessary a given measure is for the society and economy, for the economic and social development at local level. This category highlights the importance of reforming

a given feature of a system in the city or region. The higher the score, the more important the measure is.

Experts' Comments on Evaluated Measures

Experts are invited to mention the pros and cons of the measures they evaluate. Their comments on evaluated measures represent a part of the quality evaluation of the Experts' Committee.

Ratings

Rating of the Measure [-300; +300]

To get the Rating of the measure, the average quality grade of the measure is multiplied by a coefficient expressing the average value of the measure's importance for the local society and economy. Thus, the rating values of the evaluated measures come in range [-300; +300]. According to these rating values all measures are ranked in a chart. The Rating of the measure indicates the contribution of an evaluated measure to the economic and social development of the city or region.

Example of the evaluation questionnaire

Evaluation period	4Q 2017		
Deadline for submitting survey	January 15 th 2018		
Expert name and organization	XY		
	Quality [-3; +3]	Importance (%)	Comment
Measure 1 (plus short description)			
Measure 2 (plus short description)			
Measure 3 (plus short description)			
...			

Example of calculating the ratings

	Quality [-3; +3]	Importance (%)	Rating [-300; +300]
Measure 1	3	70%	210
Measure 2	0	50%	0
Measure 3	-2	40%	-80
...			

Examples of the best Slovak practices

- Electronic auctions
- Publishing subsidies/contracts on internet (searchable)
- Creating and publishing rules for giving subsidies, social flats or any handling with public assets
- Open/Internet communication with citizens
- Introducing and enforcing separated waste
- Integration of Roma minority or poor people

- Providing free internet access in public spaces
- Participative budgeting, launching business incubators
- Long-term investment plans, etc.

Examples of the worst Slovak practices

- Non-transparent public procurement, privatization
- Non-transparent provision of subsidies, public flats, rewards, etc.
- Abusing public media for political campaigns
- Important decisions (e.g. construction in the city center) without sufficient public dialogue
- Clientelism – preferential treatment of preferred suppliers
- Limitations to freedom on information
- Forced movement of problematic citizens (debtors) outside the municipality