

LECTURE 8. MONITORING, EVALUATION, REPORTING AND SUSTAINABILITY OF INTERNATIONAL PROJECT RESULTS

Lecture Plan

1. Progress monitoring: indicators, baseline, targets, means of verification, and evidence-based management.
2. Evaluating the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of an international project.
3. Interim and final reporting: technical, financial and analytical reports.
4. Preparing management decisions based on the results of monitoring and evaluation.
5. The sustainability plan, impact pathways, commercialisation, scaling up and institutionalisation of results.
6. Project closure, handover of results, archiving of documentation, and lessons learned.

1. Progress Monitoring: Indicators, Baseline, Targets, Means of Verification, and Evidence-Based Management

Monitoring is a systematic, continuous process of collecting and analysing information on the progress of project implementation, with the aim of tracking progress against planned indicators and promptly identifying deviations. Unlike evaluation (Section 2), monitoring is a cross-cutting process carried out throughout the entire project life cycle (as noted in Topic 1, Section 3), rather than a separate phase.

1.1. System of Monitoring Indicators

Monitoring relies on a system of objectively verifiable indicators, defined in the project's logical framework (Topic 2, Section 5) for each level of intervention logic — results, specific objective, and overall objective. Each indicator is accompanied by:

- a **baseline** — the initial state of the indicator at the start of the project, against which progress is measured;
- a **target** — the planned state of the indicator at the end of the project or an interim stage;
- an **actual value** — the state of the indicator actually achieved at the time of measurement;
- a **means of verification** — the document or instrument confirming the value of the indicator (a report, database, or survey results).

1.2. Monitoring System

The **monitoring plan** defines, for each indicator, the data-collection methodology, the frequency of measurement, the responsible person, and the format for presenting results (typically in the form of a table: "indicator — baseline — target — value achieved — deviation").

1.3. Evidence-Based Management

Contemporary practice in managing international projects involves a shift from formal ("paper-based") monitoring towards **evidence-based management** — the systematic use of information gathered during monitoring as a direct basis for management decisions (adjusting the work plan, reallocating resources, revising strategy), rather than merely as material for reporting to the donor.

2. Evaluating the Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability of an International Project

Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of a project, generally undertaken with the involvement of independent (external) experts to ensure the objectivity of the findings.

2.1. Evaluation Criteria (*According to the OECD DAC Methodology*)

The most widely used evaluation methodology, developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD DAC), defines the following criteria:

- **relevance** — the extent to which the project's objectives correspond to the needs of beneficiaries, the donor's priorities, and global development priorities (echoing the application-assessment criterion discussed in Topic 3, Section 5);
- **coherence** — the compatibility of the project with other interventions in the same sector or country;
- **effectiveness** — the degree to which the project's stated objectives and results have been achieved;
- **efficiency** — the relationship between the resources used and the results obtained (echoing cost-effectiveness, Topic 3, Section 5, and financial efficiency, Topic 4, Section 5);
- **impact** — the long-term positive and negative, direct and indirect changes brought about by the project;
- **sustainability** — the likelihood that the project's benefits will continue after the end of donor funding.

2.2. Types of Evaluation by Timing

A distinction is drawn between **mid-term evaluation**, carried out midway through the implementation period with a view to adjusting the subsequent strategy; **final (end-of-project) evaluation**, carried out immediately after the project's completion; and **ex-post evaluation**, carried out some time (usually several years) after the project's completion, in order to measure its actual long-term impact and the sustainability of its results.

2.3. Data Collection Methods for Evaluation

Evaluation relies on a combination of **quantitative methods** (analysis of statistical indicators, structured surveys) and **qualitative methods** (in-depth interviews, focus groups, case studies), which ensures **triangulation** — the cross-checking of findings on the basis of different sources and methods of data collection, in order to enhance the reliability of the evaluation's results.

3. Interim and Final Reporting: Technical, Financial and Analytical Reports

3.1. Technical (Narrative) Reports

A **technical (narrative) report** describes the substantive progress of project implementation: activities carried out, results achieved against planned indicators, any deviations from the work plan and the corrective measures taken, and the updated status of the risk register (Topic 7, Section 2). Technical reports are submitted in accordance with the schedule established by the grant agreement (typically, interim reports are submitted annually or at the end of each stage, and the final report within a set period after the project's completion).

3.2. Financial Reports

The **financial report**, discussed in detail in Topic 6 (Section 5), is submitted synchronously with the technical report and must be fully consistent with it — the reported progress of activities must correspond to the volume of resources actually used.

3.3. Analytical Reports

Analytical reports (monitoring and evaluation reports, thematic analytical briefs) serve as an additional instrument that synthesises monitoring data for the purposes of management analysis and the preparation of recommendations, as well as for communicating the project's results externally to stakeholders who are not a direct party to the grant agreement.

3.4. Procedure for Donor Review of Reports

Submitted reports are subject to review by the donor's project officer, who may either approve the report, send the consortium a request for clarification or revision (clarification request), or order an on-the-spot check. Approval of an interim report is generally a condition for the disbursement of the next instalment of funding, which underscores the critical importance of timely and high-quality reporting.

4. Preparing Management Decisions Based on the Results of Monitoring and Evaluation

Data gathered through monitoring and evaluation form the direct basis for management decisions at various levels of the consortium.

At the operational level (the project manager, working groups), the results of ongoing monitoring serve as the basis for adjusting the timetable, reallocating tasks among team members, and activating risk-response plans (Topic 7, Sections 1–2).

At the strategic level (the consortium's steering committee), the findings of a mid-term evaluation may prompt a review of the project's implementation strategy, including a possible formal revision of the logical framework or budget through the change-management procedure (Topic 5, Section 5).

At the level of relations with the donor, the conclusions and recommendations of an evaluation may provide grounds for a formal request to extend the implementation period, to reallocate the budget between budget lines, or, in extreme cases, for the early termination of the project by mutual agreement of the parties.

Management responses to monitoring and evaluation results must be documented (in the minutes of the steering committee, in responses to evaluators' recommendations), which ensures the consortium's accountability for the use of the evidence obtained.

5. Sustainability Plan, Impact Pathways, Commercialisation, Scaling Up and Institutionalisation of Results

5.1. Sustainability of Project Results

Discussed at the conceptual level in Topic 3 (Section 1) and as a criterion for assessing an application in Topic 3 (Section 5), sustainability at the project-completion stage is elaborated along four dimensions:

— **institutional sustainability** — the capacity of partner organisations to continue using and developing the approaches, structures and competencies developed, by their own means;

— **financial sustainability** — the existence of a mechanism for funding activities after the end of the grant period (the organisation's own funds, new grants, commercialisation, public funding);

— **political/regulatory sustainability** — the embedding of project results in legal and regulatory instruments or strategic documents at the relevant level;

— **social sustainability** — the continued engagement of target groups and community support after the end of the project's active phase.

5.2. Impact Pathway

The **impact pathway** is the sequence of steps linking the project's immediate results (outputs) to long-term impact through intermediate consequences (outcomes), which elaborates the project's theory of change (Topic 2, Section 4) at the sustainability-planning stage: who will continue to use and disseminate the project's results after the end of funding, in what manner, and under what conditions.

5.3. Commercialisation, Scaling Up and Institutionalisation

Commercialisation, applicable to projects with the potential for market application of the developed product or technology, is a strategy for converting project results into a source of income capable of sustaining their further development.

Scaling up is the expansion of the reach or geographical coverage of a successful approach piloted within the project, to a larger target audience or territory, in particular through securing new funding or partnering with other organisations.

Institutionalisation is the integration of project results into the permanent structures, procedures or policy of partner organisations or public authorities, and constitutes the most durable form of ensuring sustainability, since it does not depend on further project funding.

5.4. Sustainability Plan

A practical instrument for implementing the strategies set out above is a document that defines specific measures, responsible parties and timeframes for each of the four dimensions of sustainability; the development of such a plan, in accordance with the requirements of most

donors, should begin not at the project-completion stage but considerably earlier — from the first stages of implementation.

6. Project Closure, Handover of Results, Archiving of Documentation, and Lessons Learned

6.1. Formal Project Closure

Project closure is the final phase of the life cycle (Topic 1, Section 3), which involves: preparing and submitting the final technical and financial reports (Section 3); obtaining formal confirmation from the donor that the obligations of the grant agreement have been fulfilled; making the final payment (or, if non-compliance is identified, a financial correction); and the formal dissolution of the project team and the consortium's governing bodies.

6.2. Handover of Results

Handover is the process of formally transferring project deliverables, developed systems, databases, equipment and intellectual property rights to the relevant beneficiaries or institutions that will be responsible for their further use, accompanied, where necessary, by the training of the receiving party's staff.

6.3. Archiving of Documentation

In accordance with the donor's document-retention requirements (referred to in Topic 6, Section 4), the consortium is obliged to ensure the systematic archiving of all project documentation — technical, financial and communication-related — in a format that enables prompt retrieval in the event of a subsequent check or audit by the donor, for the period established by the contract.

6.4. Lessons Learned

Lessons learned are a structured summary of the project's management experience: what worked well and can be replicated in future initiatives, which approaches proved ineffective and why, and which external factors most influenced the course of implementation. Documenting lessons learned (typically as a separate section of the final report or as a stand-alone document) is not a formal requirement but a practical instrument for accumulating an organisation's institutional memory and improving the quality of future project initiatives — thereby organically linking the completion of one project to the initiation of the next (see the concept of a project portfolio, Topic 1, Section 2).

Self-Check Questions

1. What is the fundamental difference between monitoring and evaluation in terms of the continuity of the process and the party responsible for carrying it out?
2. Characterise the six OECD DAC evaluation criteria using the example of a hypothetical educational project.
3. Why is the consistency of the technical and financial reports a critically important condition for their approval by the donor?
4. Give an example of a management decision that a consortium steering committee might take on the basis of the results of a mid-term evaluation.

5. How does the institutionalisation of project results differ from scaling up?
6. What practical function does the documentation of lessons learned perform for the applicant organisation?

Recommended Reading

1. OECD/DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
2. Aid Delivery Methods. Volume 1: Project Cycle Management Guidelines. European Commission, EuropeAid Cooperation Office.
3. A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide). 7th edition. Project Management Institute, 2021.
4. Model Grant Agreement (Multi-beneficiary General MGA). European Commission, Funding & Tenders Portal.
5. Better Evaluation. International Network on Evaluation Methodology and Practice — methodological materials on monitoring and evaluation.