Institutional determinants and mechanisms of evaluation use in public sector organizations

This project deals with the problem of insufficient use of evaluation findings in the process of planning and implementing public interventions (policies, programs, regulations). Years of observations have proven that more than too often public sector organizations use evaluation only in symbolic way (they conduct studies not to implement their findings, but to demonstrate to the outside world that they behave rational and base decisions on analyses). Explaining and solving this problem is important, because evaluation use influence the quality of public policies and indirectly economic development and quality of life.

Previous research focusing mostly on single evaluation study perspective have not produced conclusive findings. For few years a new, promising approach has been developed. It focuses on holistic perspective of evaluation system. That means organization, which conduct (and should use) stream of studies and environment in which it operates. This project contributes to that approach.

The aim of this project is to verify, how the way in which public sector organizations use evaluation is influences by:

- external pressure from the institutional environment (e.g. pressure from funding or supervising agency, uncertainty about future),
- internal propensity to evaluate related to the type of activities of particular organization.

Verification will be based on comparative study of 20 cases of various public sector organizations conducting evaluation and operating in three countries with different evaluation culture: Poland, Ireland and Netherlands. Applying qualitative comparative analysis will allow to identify necessary and sufficient conditions of each type of evaluation use as well as non-use.

The project has the potential to contribute to the development of policy studies and management fields by offering theoretically grounded and rigorously verified framework explaining how the institutional environment and characteristics of organization impact the way evaluation is used in evaluation systems on initial and later stages of their operation.