

Ambassador Torbjörn Haak

Chair of the GR-PBA

Speaking notes of the High-level event on Evaluation

9 November 2018

Dear Deputy Secretary General,

Dear visiting colleagues,

Dear colleagues,

I'm delighted to see so many of you at today's discussion on Evaluation Culture and Policy in international organisations. This is very timely seminar, since we in the Committee of Ministers are about to deliberate on a new evaluation policy for the Council of Europe.

Moving ahead, today's seminar will provide us with an excellent opportunity to draw on experiences attained in other organisations, in order to better understand the challenges and thus form a basis of knowledge for continued work in the Council of Europe.

Arguably, it is by now reasonably established that Evaluation provides the essential tool to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in operations, in international organisations as well as at national level. Any organisation that hesitates to draw on its own experiences will be faced with severe difficulties. This is true not only in relation to how operations are conducted, but also if they should be pursued at all.

It wasn't always easy to recognise the importance of the evaluation tool and how it should operate. Many international organisations have passed through a long learning

process, sometimes painful, before coming to this conclusion. Some still have a distance to travel. In many cases, the starting-point was bad experience from unfortunate organisational habits, a bad internal culture or, even worse, severe misconduct. Indeed, at national level, and also in my own country, we've had similar experiences.

But at the end of this learning process, the response is the recognition of evaluation as a basic approach. It is the need to openly address and discuss progress and mistakes. It is about learning from them in an institutionalised fashion.

Openness, transparency and readiness to face the facts are no doubt key elements for progress, as are consequence in methodology, persistence and independence, as well as trust in evaluators.

However, those fundamental and essential aspects of evaluation are sometimes seen as being in conflict with ownership. In other words: who is evaluating, who is the receiver of the evaluation report, who is drawing the conclusions and on which additional input, and who is implementing the conclusions?

These are important aspects that I would like to learn more about today.

I am convinced that our visiting colleagues Susanne Frueh from the UNESCO, Hans Lundgren and Bastiaan de Laat from the OECD, Antonia Cipollone from the European Commission as well as Margareta de Goys from our own Oversight Advisory Committee will offer considerable insights and comments on which we can and should build in the Council of Europe.

Once again, very welcome to today's seminar.