



# 10<sup>th</sup> Evaluation Conference in Prague

**What is (not) going well  
in evaluations and why?**

**The Fairy Tale  
of the Unknown Evaluator**

**Balázs Mezősi, PhD, CMC**

**12 November 2024, Prague**



Co-funded by  
the European Union



MINISTRY  
OF REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT CZ



EVALUATION  
UNIT NCA





# The Fairy Tale of the Unknown Evaluator

**Balazs Mezosi, PhD, CMC**

Hungary

Illustration generated by AI, Microsoft Bing





# Who is the Evaluator?

**A hero? A super-human?**

**Yes, often they are expected to be.  
Or they think they are.**

**In fact, tales start with ordinary  
players. It is the context and the  
opportunity that may forge heroes.**

**They have many roles, many hats.  
Sometimes too many. And too many  
to handle.**





# The fairy tale of the unknown evaluator

- A tale of 10+1 chapters
- Our hero, after facing many challenges, prevails. Or not?
- A fully fictional and biased story
- Containing intended exaggeration for entertainment purposes only.

Once upon a time...





# **Wait! Beware and remember!**

Characters in this story  
are entirely fictional.

Any resemblance to real  
persons, living or dead, is  
purely coincidental.

Any parallel suspected with  
evaluation activities is purely  
ungrounded and unjustified.

**No judgements here.  
It is just a tale...**





# CHAPTER 1

## ‘The Chosen One’

**There is a shroud of darkness over the kingdom.**

**The young princess disappeared. Who will help the king in investigating her whereabouts? Noone dares.**

**Then, the smallest lad of a poor blacksmith, collecting all his courage, steps forward to accept the challenge.**

**The king accepts him as his knight and orders him to begin his search.**





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***Public procurement / cheapest offer  
High level task definition in ToR  
Evaluator skillset aligned to ToR  
Evaluator capacity aligned to ToR***





## CHAPTER 2

### ‘The Mission’

**The king briefs the young knight.**

**The princess, (and some treasure) was taken by ... a dragon.**

**The king admits, that there is more than investigation here. A dragon needs to be defeated, probably.**

**The knight admits that he has not confronted dragons before.**

**However, they are both bound by their oaths and tasks by now.**





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However, they are both bound by their oaths and tasks by now.

***Definition (change) of scope***  
***Skill and capacity alignment***  
***Mutual understanding***  
***Establishment of trust***





## CHAPTER 3 'Gearing Up'

**The king shows the old armoury so that the knight may pick weapons and armor.**

**They both see that it is not what they expected. Too big, too dull, too rusty. Not much of a help.**

**They both sense that they need a solution. Suitable armour, new sword. But who can do that?**





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***Access to data, documents  
Expectations vs. reality  
Rowing the same boat  
No way back, look ahead***





## CHAPTER 4

### ‘Forging weapons’

**The knight accepts to forge his own weapons and armour.**

**He has some skills, but he thought it is not part of the mission.**

**Still, he acts enthusiastic and tries to do as the king requested.**

**He sincerely trusts that his extra work will be appreciated as a ‘credit’ by the king, showing his loyalty and commitment.**





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***Additional data collection***  
***Unexpected data cleansing***  
***Re-design evaluation methodology***  
***Re-design evaluation toolset***





## CHAPTER 5

### ‘Act Quietly’

**The king asks the knight to be careful and act in quiet.**

**There are so many suitors who think the king is old and tired. It could weaken his position to reveal that he does not have all the resources and does not control everything in his realm.**

**‘Only speak to those essential - so that they do not avert you from your mission’ the king says.**





## CHAPTER 5

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***Access to information and data  
Disturbing core operations  
Drawing too much attention  
Involvement of stakeholders***





## CHAPTER 6

### ‘The Battle’

The knight spends a long time to investigate the dragon hideout. He encounters many foes and gets lost a few times in dead ends.

Tired and demotivated, he finds the ancient ruins where the dragon hides the kidnapped princess and the treasure, at last.

He confronts the dragon and defeats it with his skills and some luck. He searches the castle to find the princess and the treasure.





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***Internal operations, capacity  
Re-alignment of resources  
Tensions, conflicts, debates  
Communication issues***





# CHAPTER 7

## ‘The Countdown’

**The dragon slain, the princess saved, the treasure found.**

**The king, however, seems rather disappointed.**

**‘This dragon is smaller than I expected. I could have taken care of it myself.’ he says. ‘The treasure seems less than I expected, too’. ‘Do you really think you deserve such great reward for such a small deed, my son?’**

**The knight feels disappointed, too, though he knows, luck was also a major contributor to his success.**





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***Efforts vs. results***

***Differences in judgement***

***Justification of methods and actions***

***Communication and reconciliation***





## CHAPTER 8

### ‘The Fallen’

The knight found out, that the loss of the princess was partly the king’s responsibility – a series of now doubtful decisions and acts.

The king is furious about the knight: ‘How dare you instruct me on tasks and responsibility!’ ‘You serve me’.

The knight is in pain: ‘Should I contradict my king, or keep the whole story to myself?’ Is it only my own frustration that I want to let everyone know about it, selfishly?’ he struggles internally.





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***Findings and conclusions***

***Recommendations***

***Cognitive dissonance:***

***success is ours, failure is context***





## CHAPTER 9

### ‘Happy End’

**The knight accepts that he tells the king all that he found and all his recommendations – to the king only.**

**The king is content and appreciates his insights. The princess and the treasure is safe from now on.**

**The king announces the return of the princess and the defeat of the dragon and his new plans. The kingdom feasts for a whole week.**

**The knight walks away with some of the treasure and much experience.**





## CHAPTER 9

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***Communication, communication***

***Learning purpose***

***Co-creation of narrative***

***Closing the project and the deal***





# CHAPTER 10

## ‘Moral of the Story’ What does *not* work well in evaluations?

- Managing expectations and avoiding surprises on all sides
- Clear demarcation of facts, evidences and assumptions
- Definition of tasks, roles, rules
- Regular, open, honest and respectful, two-way communication
- Rowing the same boat, mutual trust and respect
- Hunger for making an impact through learning together
- The right to do vs. the right thing to do



# CHAPTER 10+1

## ‘Lived Happily Ever After?’

- Evaluators are human, though sometimes seen (by others) or thought (by them) to be super-humans.
- Do they have a new enemy to fight, before going for the dragon or is AI an ally to help with the fight?
- This might be another fairy tale  
(Now, AI seems to think highly of evaluators. Is it respect, or only a conscious diversion?)





Thank you for your attention!



**Statue of the unknown evaluator** – as seen and generated by AI





# Farewell

**Balázs Mezősi, PhD, CMC**

**[balazs.mezosi@deveco.hu](mailto:balazs.mezosi@deveco.hu)**

**+36 30 945 8569**



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