

Evaluation in RTDI policy and the perspectives for SEE

Experiences, observations and critical comments

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Intro

- Personal Background
 - Over 20 years at European Commission in DG Research and Innovation
 - Responsible for SSH and Programme Evaluation
 - Retired since end of last year
- Views expressed are only engaging myself

Roadmap

- RTD Evaluation in Europe – in 2014
 - Evolution, Context, EU, National level
- Challenges and Perspectives
 - Policy cycle, Big data, Culture, Ethics, Participation
- South East Europe
 - Regional context, Capacity building, Connectivity

RTD Evaluation – in 2014

Evolution over past decade

- From „individual skill“ to „systematic process“
- Search for a broader evidence base
- Large increase in number of evaluations
- Steady improvements in Terms of References
- More readable (shorter!!) reports
- Increased attention in the political arena
- ...

RTD Evaluation – in 2014

Beyond research

- RTD Evaluation part of a broader effort to better shape public interventions
 - Link to other policies (Structural Funds)
 - RTD Evaluation sometimes more courageous or „fundamental“ than others
- RTD Evaluation more and more concerned about wider societal impact
 - Growth and jobs; societal challenges; ...
 - Very difficult to meet expectations

RTD Evaluation – in 2014

European Commission

- Important player
 - Setting the example (Evaluations of FPs)
 - Defining requirements (Structural funds)
 - Pushing for a wider „evaluation culture“ in Europe
- Next steps
 - Strengthen formal requirements for COM evaluations
 - From „evaluation of programmes“
to „evaluation of policies“

RTD Evaluation – in 2014

National/ regional activities

- Wide range of activities
- Huge differences in intensity and „quality“
- Limited level of “mutual learning”
- Number of experts involved steadily increasing
- Not yet sufficient for a true professionalisation

- *Risk “to miss the forest for the trees” ...*

Challenges and Perspectives Evaluation in the Policy Cycle

- Evaluation as key element in the Policy Cycle
 - Ex-Ante / Interim / Ex-Post Evaluation
- Extremely convincing theoretical concept
 - Recipe for rational policy making
 - Justification for increased evaluation efforts
- *Difficult to implement in practice*
 - *Time-lags, Availability of evidence?*
 - *Adequate policy model?*

Challenges and Perspectives

Short Term vs. Long Term

- Almost all project/program evaluations are carried out within 2 or 3 years after completion
 - Political and administrative necessities
 - Importance of „proxies“: Publications, Patent applications
- Real impact of research activities comes much later ...
 - UK Study for the health sector: 18 years
- *Relevance of short term evidence for long term impact?*
- *Risk of neglecting „fundamentals“ ...*

Challenges and Perspectives

Big Data

- Enormous potential for gaining new insights
 - Linking all kind of web based data sources
 - Unprecedented quality: availability, completeness, reliability
 - Filtering options: Individuals, Labs, Organisations ...
- Beefing-up research evaluation with output data
 - Chance to overcome a historical weakness of research evaluations
- *Do we really understand what the data are about?*

Challenges and Perspectives Culture(s)

- Evaluation no longer regarded as „stand alone“ activity
- Integral part of the prevailing political and administrative system
- Important differences from one county / context to another
- *No „single best methodology“*
- *Understanding of the „cultural“ context is crucial ...*

Challenges and Perspectives

Ethics and Standards

- Trend towards defining minimum standards („good practice“) in terms of ethics and methodology
 - Independence, Transparency, ...
- Chance for evaluators to maintain reasonable levels of autonomy
 - Risk of interferences
- *Standards should not hamper new developments*

Challenges and Perspectives

Participation

- New tools will allow to re-think “participative” evaluations
 - Online surveys, targeted mailings ...
 - Social media ...
- Chance to go beyond evaluations “from experts for experts”
 - Involvement of various actors and potential beneficiaries
- *New territory – to handle with care ...*

RTD Evaluation in SEE Regional Context

- Some specificities:
 - Small systems
 - Small number of key actors / players
 - Very specific context for RTD Evaluations
 - Barriers to entry?
- Importance of respecting minimum standards on methodologies and ethics
- Necessity to identify and develop the role of evaluation in the specific RTD policy context of each country

RTD Evaluation in SEE

Capacities

- Limited national capacities in research evaluation
- Necessity to link-up with colleagues from neighbouring countries (EVAL INNO ...)
- Look out for colleagues in other evaluation areas
- Look out for colleagues analysing the national policy context
- Train „young generation“ in view of new approaches
- *Easier said than done ...*

RTD Evaluation in SEE Connectivity

- Importance to avoid national lock-in situations
- Expose national evaluation activities in an international context
 - EN summary; availability on the web
 - Presence at conferences etc.
- Lack of „long lasting experience“ as chance to test new approaches
 - Possibility to get „moral support“ from abroad for implementing innovative methods

Some hopes ...

- Political context favourable for steady development of research evaluation
 - Rational policy making; Crisis ...
 - Europe ...
- New output data will stimulate analysis of research impact
 - Need to demonstrate the „relevance“ of research funding
- Chance to get out of the „ivory tower“ and to engage in a real dialogue with actors and society at large



Thanks

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