

Evaluation of Cohesion Policy

Overview of practices

Warsaw 2012

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EUROPEAN UNION
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Introduction

Karol Olejniczak, Stanisław Bienias, Piotr Strzęboszewski

As public managers who contract out and use evaluation studies or evaluators who conduct them, we naturally tend to focus on our topics, our programmes and projects. Under time pressure of everyday operational issues we often tend to forget about the bigger picture. First, that the strategic aim of our activities is to improve the process of decision-making for socio-economic development. Second, that we are not alone in this pursuit. The challenges we face are often not so unique as we think. Colleagues in other countries face similar problems, and researchers in other fields of socio-economic studies struggle as well. Using evaluation for improving public policies is a Europe-wide exercise and it is worth looking across Europe for lessons. There are already some excellent, in depth comparative studies of evaluation cultures and practices (**see: Bachtler et al., 2000; European Policies Research Centre, Fraser of Allander Institute, 2000 and Furubo et al., 2002 for overall policy practice**). However, due to their publication date, these studies do not include three important developments. The first one was an enlargement of the European Union. In 2004, ten countries became new members of the European Union, while two years later, another two states - Romania and Bulgaria joined the European club. Second, developments at the beginning of the new millennium saw a spread of “Evidence-Based Policy” practice across public administration in OECD countries (**Shillabeer et al., 2011**). This new approach underlined the importance of using knowledge and research results in the policy-making and decision-making process. This increased the importance of evaluation studies, as one of the sources of evidence available for decision-makers. A third factor is the development of the discipline over the past 10-15 years, reflected in debates about the concepts and methodologies of evaluation, the growth of journals dedicated to evaluation and the launch of national and international evaluation societies (**Bachtler, 2011**).

This volume is a tentative attempt to address the information gap on the evaluation of Cohesion Policy. The study has been conducted on the behalf of the Ministry of Regional Development Poland, as part of a programme of the Polish Presidency of the European Union. We aimed to provide a brief, synthetic overview of evaluation practices and developments in the field of Cohesion Policy, in all 27 Member States of the European Union. We hope it will be a valuable, first-reference source for evaluation practitioners across European Union. We also hope it will contribute to the discussion on how to strengthen the role of evaluation in effective decision-making.

We do not pretend to present a fully-fledged academic study. It is rather a concise overview, a starting point for further in depth comparative undertakings. However, we have tried to make it as systematic as possible by applying a unified approach to data collection and analysis across the countries. So, let us briefly present the focus of the study, the method and structure of the book.

Our project focused exclusively on the field of Cohesion Policy programmes. This means two things. First, we have been interested in evaluations of interventions co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund. Second, we have been concerned mainly with the evaluation studies that are above the project level. In other words, we focus on the evaluations that explore programmes, parts of programmes (priority axis, measures and sub-measures), horizontal or thematic issues. We have excluded single-project studies.

The timeframe covered by the analysis of this book is 11 years, from 2000 up to 2010. This means that we have been exploring evaluation practices in both the 2000-2006 and 2007-13 programming periods. This period is particularly interesting for the evaluation of Cohesion policy, for two reasons. First, the evaluation of Structural and Cohesion Funds has moved from being undertaken primarily as a compliance exercise to being more central for policy and programme developed, reflected in the largest ever ex post evaluation exercise conducted for the 2000-06 period, the creation of an Evaluation Network for Cohesion Policy, and the proposals put forward for the role of evaluation after 2013. Second, there is growing evidence of the role of Cohesion policy evaluation encouraging spillovers into the evaluation practice within the domestic policies of EU Member States (**Bachtler et al, 2010**).

We interpreted evaluation practice as a system of knowledge production and use. We analysed it by looking at the environment in which it has been operating as well as parts of the system. These main conceptual blocks that we used for data collation and presentation are a modified version of a model already used in the literature (**Ferry, 2009**). They are:

- Context of Cohesion Policy evaluation system – this means the scale of EU financing, the importance of Cohesion Policy in the national system of policies, the overall evaluation practices of the public sector in the particular country (presence in national policies, use of study results in public debates, etc.);
- Demand side – the characteristics of the contracting side of the evaluation process, meaning the number and composition of public institutions that contract out evaluation studies related to Cohesion Policy, resources devoted to evaluation, process and procedures in place for contracting evaluations of Cohesion Policy interventions;
- Supply side – number and characteristics of firms, institutes, think tanks and experts that execute evaluation contracts in the field of Cohesion Policy, their level of activity;

- Products of the system - the stock of knowledge accumulated in the form of reports and studies, basis characteristics of a population of completed studies (number, scope, type, methods used, quality);
- Facilitators - activities and structures that build evaluation culture and strengthen its sustainability for example: trainings, studies, publications, organised data-bases, platforms for know-how exchange, etc.;
- Effects of evaluation – the ultimate outcome of the evaluation system that is use to produce knowledge in the decision-making process, in particular the main audience of study conclusions, the dissemination channels of findings, solutions for tracing implementation of recommendations, any inside and examples of how evaluation studies have been used.

Based on this framework we developed analytical guidance (see Annex). The authors of each country chapters used it for collecting secondary data, interviews with key civil servants and practitioners from each country,¹ analysis of sources and drafting of the final country reports.

The horizontal analysis of trends across countries has been done on the basis of country reports. The Polish team used a basic descriptive and structural coding (**Saldana, 2009**) of qualitative analysis supported by Maxqda software. In the report, we decided not present rankings or country-by-country comparisons. We had three good reasons for not doing so. First of all, rankings would hinder the process of joint learning. The main attention would be placed on comparing, contrasting and competing instead of looking at our joint body of knowledge and experience, discussing interesting practices and possible developments. Second, the collected data set, although rich and unique in its scope, does not allow for reliable comparison. Most of the numbers and quotas are estimates. Last but not least, we respected the rule of neutrality of the EU Presidency. During execution of this project, Poland held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. We felt that we are not in a position to judge other countries while at the same time being a part of this judgement. We also felt that talking about similarities and possible joint improvements in the topics that matter for us all would be a much more constructive approach for the presidential discussion.

In this book, we present countries in alphabetical order. The description of evaluation practices in each country follows the already discussed blocks of analysis. These are: context; demand side; supply side; products; facilitators; and effects (use of evaluation). In the final chapter of the book we try to summarise the current situation. However, instead of descriptive synthesis (typologies and country-by-country comparison) we tried to look from a normative perspective – challenges and needs. The reference point of our assessment is our vision of evaluation in public policies. We also

¹ Around 60 interviews were conducted.

make suggestions on the improvements and developments in the current evaluation practice. We hope it will spark a discussion about challenges and constrains in this field.

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Austria

Aleksandra Jaskólska

Context of Evaluation System

Evaluation was not broadly disseminated in Austria, before joining the European Union (**Bachtler & Polverari 2004**). The preparations to EU access in 1995 started the development of interest in evaluation. Currently, evaluation still does not play an important role outside the EU co-financed programmes, although, the decision-makers are more and more interested in evaluation and policy performance debates. Evaluations on this field are used to justify decisions or to underline positive trends. The limited scope of evaluations of programmes not related to the EU's funding is because of the fact, that very few of the domestic policies have precisely set targets and indicators.

The development of evaluation in Austria was determined by such factors as policy trends, development of policy design processes, more strategic approaches of the policy makers and academia discussions. In the field of Cohesion Policy there is a strong belief that evaluation activities have been very helpful for improving delivery mechanisms and thus for increasing the added value of EU Cohesion Policy interventions. Evaluation is also seen to be helpful for designing programmes and more generally has increased coordination among regional policy actors.

In Austria, in comparison to other EU's members, the Cohesion Policy is not such a significant support. There were doubts on the administration resources (human, financial) that should be engaged in evaluation EU Structural Funds. The whole evaluation system was built on the principle of proportionality – rational and efficient. There should not be too many institutions involved in evaluation, and evaluation studies themselves should be well planned, useful but not too big in scope. From the beginning, the idea about evaluation in Austria was that it should be a real help in programmes' improvement rather than just the fulfilment the EU obligation (**Strohmeier & Holzinger, 2006: 5**). Its aim is to make the whole system learn and improve the programmes by finding their failures (**Strohmeier & Holzinger, 2006: 9**). As a result, evaluation has become a useful and important tool in not only assessing effects but also conditions of effects of the particular programme.

What is worth noticing, generally, Austria implements EU Structural funds into existing support programmes. Comparing to other EU countries, the Cohesion Policy is not so significant financial support. In 2000-2006 financial perspective ERDF accounted only 2% of total public investment in Austria (**Resch, 2010: 10**). Also in 2007-2013 period in the field of regional development the majority

of public funding comes from outside the Cohesion Policy (**Resch, 2010: 4**). Nevertheless, the Cohesion Policy had influenced the implementation of the EU co-financed programmes. Firstly, it has strengthened formal coordination (e.g. programming of OP) among the institution involved in regional policy. Secondly, it has shaped a culture of evaluation and is an important stimulator for innovation, also on the regional level.

In Austria, as in a federal republic of 9 states (Germ. Länder - NUTS 2), the regions play an important role. Due to the fact that many institutions at different levels (national, regional) were involved in the management and implementation of EU Structural Funds, it became necessary to improve communication and coordination among the various implementing institutions. The Länder are responsible for Regional Policy as such (each has its own Managing Authority) and the federal level (eg. Austrian Federal Chancellery, Federal Ministry for Social Affairs) has a coordinating role in implementation and managing the programmes.

In 2000-2006 financial perspective Austria had benefited from the Objective 1 Structural Funds (regional programme for Burgenland), Objective 2 for 8 other regions (Vienna, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Tyrol, Salzburg, Vorarlberg, Styria and Carinthia) and Objective 3 (regions not covered by Objective 1) (**European Commission 2006**). The total structural aid for this period reached over 2 billion EUR (including INTERREG, URBAN, EQUAL and Fisheries initiatives). The ERDF in 2000-2006 for Austria was 886 mln EUR (**ibidem**).

Table X. Funds for Austria 2007-2013 (in billion EUR)

Objective	Fund	EU	National Public	Total
Regional Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	0,56	0,56	1,12
	ESF	0,46	0,53	1
Total Regional Competitiveness and Employment		1,03		
Convergence	ERDF	0,13	0,04	0,17
	ESF	0,05	0,02	0,07
Total Convergence		0,18		
Total European Territorial Co-operation	ERDF	0,26	-	0,26
TOTAL		1,47	1,15	2,62

Source: (European Commission 2009)

For the 2007-2013 the Cohesion Policy is financed from two funds (ERDF and ESF). Austria had achieved 1,47 bln EUR (**European Commission 2009**) of which about 950 mln EUR from ERDF and 520

mIn EUR from ESF. In 2007-2013 there are Operational Programmes for: Objective Convergence (Phasing Out region - Burgenland), Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment (8 other regions) and 7 OPs for Objective European Territorial Cooperation.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion

During last 10 years about 15 institutions were involved in contracting evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy programmes. In 2010 11 institutions were engaged in contracting evaluation studies of programmes co-financed by ERDF and ESF. As mentioned above, institutions involved in evaluation the Structural Funds in Austria are both, central and regional level. On the regional level the evaluation studies are ordered by the Managing Authorities of the Regional Competitiveness Programmes.

The key institutions in the system of evaluation on the national level are:

In the field of ERDF:

- ⇒ Austrian Federal Chancellery;
- ⇒ Austrian Spatial Conference (ÖROK), which coordinates the Regional Policy; including EU-Structural Funds, on national level.

In the field of ESF:

- ⇒ Federal Ministry for Social Affairs (Managing Authority);
- ⇒ Austrian Labour Market Service (main intermediate bodies AMS);
- ⇒ Federal Ministry for Education and Culture (BMUKK).

The estimated total annual spending for the evaluation activities of the Structural Funds in Austria in 2010 was about 50.000 EUR in the field of the ERDF. In the field of ESF there is no available data on the budget, but there were 21 evaluations co-financed by ESF. Usually, the evaluation are ordered by direct contracting, less common are invitations to tender. The most important selection criteria for offers are competence, price, experience and the quality of concept. In Austria there is no explicit standard system for contracting evaluation.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion

The domestic evaluation market is relatively limited. The number of firms and institutions which are really active in the field of evaluation programmes co-financed by the EU Structural Funds reached around 15 in the last 10 years. Last year (2010) 6 firms obtained evaluation contracts connected with

the ERDF, in the field of ESF the situation looked a little bit different – about 30 firms/ institutions were involved in evaluation, but many of them were small entities.

There are mainly national entities, of which about 60% are consultants and 40% research institutes and academics. The overall potential and know-how of evaluation contractors that have executed studies was in general of satisfactory quality.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion

In Austrian evaluation system, there is no unified database or library of all evaluation reports produced on the topic of Cohesion Policy. There were about 100 evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy programmes executed during the last 10 years. Only in 2010 there were 6 evaluations in the field of ERDF and 21 in ESF. Within 2007-2013 financial perspective, in comparison with 2000-06, the evaluations are more specific, often cross-programme. The evaluation studies reveal generally positive effect of Cohesion Policy in Austria but there are not many completed studies summarizing the current financial perspective (**Resch, 2010: 5**).

The evaluation studies in Austria are both, internal and external, they cover such fields as innovation, implementation system, governance, environment and energy. They are commissioned on national as well as on regional level and are designed as horizontal studies, as well as thematic studies. The evaluations of the Structural Funds are relatively small in size, their budget does not usually exceed 20.000-30.000 EUR. Evaluation studies exploit common methodology, the most popular are Case studies, Input/Output, workshops, impact monitoring, qualitative assessments and quantitative analysis.

There are no standards on assessing the quality of the evaluation reports. The institutions ordering evaluations, monitor quality through specific requirements concerning presentation of intermediate reports, task groups, feedback-loops. In general, the evaluation studies are assessed as of the quite high quality. One of the report, that could be presented as a good practice is EU cohesion policy in Austria 1995-2007, carried out in 2009. The report consists of quantitative pilot study conducted by Vienna Institute for Economic Research (WIFO) and complementary qualitative studies for ERDF, ESF and EAGGF. The synopsis summarizes the results also in consideration of future development challenges. Another, worth mentioning, report is the Ex-ante evaluation of the National Strategic Reference Framework “STRAT.AT” as the design enabled the incorporation of the evaluation results into the strategy document. The evaluation is a good example of well planned process oriented approach. The study was published in the series “ÖROK-Schriftenreihe” in German language. The English executive summary can be found in (**ÖROK 2009**).

There are also two significant ESF evaluation studies from the 2000-2006 perspective. Especially the Evaluation of the ESF program 2000-2006 (Evaluierung ESF 2000-2006, Ziel-3-Österreich) is very detailed, inclusive and gives an excellent insight in the effectiveness of the Austrian ESF. Simultaneously, the whole of the Austrian active LMP has been evaluated (Evaluierung der österreichischen Arbeitsmarktförderungen 2000 – 2003). The rest of the evaluations refer to several either very widely used instruments or rather new instruments.

Most informative evaluation studies in the area of human capital other than ESF:

- Evaluierung der österreichischen Arbeitsmarktförderungen 2000 – 2003 (Österreichisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung 2005);
- Mikroökonomische Evaluierung der Instrumente der Aktiven Arbeitsmarktpolitik in Österreich (Universität St. Gallen 2007);

Measures for disadvantaged people:

- Evaluierung der Beschäftigungsoffensive 2004-2006 (abgeschlossen); 2007-2009 (laufend); L&R Sozialforschung; ESF measures as well as national measures (2008)²

Also in the field of ERDF there are few important evaluation reports:

- Territorial cohesion - Analysis of environmental aspects of the EU Cohesion Policy in selected countries (European Environment Agency 2009). Of specific relevance for ERDF are the Case studies of Austria on the issues Biodiversity and Energy;

Some evaluations are already completed, but the results will be available soon:

- Cross programs evaluation of ERDF co-financed support measures in the field of environmental protection implemented by Kommunalkredit Public Consulting; Austrian Convergence/Phasing Out and Regional Competiveness Programmes 2007-2013;
- Other evaluation study that explore the effects of Cohesion Policy interventions is a report 15 years INTERREG/ETC in Austria (Richard Hummelbrunner et. al.), which will be available in autumn 2011.
- The most advanced and complex analysis of the effects of Cohesion Policy within 2000-2006 financial perspective is the evaluation commissioned by the European Commission, “The Ex-Post Evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2000-06 co-financed by the ERDF (Objective 1 and 2)”. The report consist of the synthesis report as well as 11 work packages, containing more detailed case studies analysis and methodology description.

² <http://www.lrsocialresearch.at/content.php?pg=archiv&submitsearch=1&id2thid=11&lng=de> [accessed 2011.06.21]

Among others, the reports contains analysis of outcomes for two Austrian regions – Steiermark (Objective 2, NUTS 2 region) and Burgenland (Objective 1). The evaluation shows that the four NUTS 2 regions (Niederösterreich, Oberrösterreich, Kärnten and Steiermark) supported within the Objective 2 GDP per citizen growth over the period was almost double the GDP growth in non-assisted regions. The projects launched within Objective 2 had influenced “the modernisation of industry, including of tourism, by helping to fund business premises, advisory services, research and technology centers, the expansion of broadband networks and improvements in the environment as well as by encouraging the development of clusters” (**Ex-Post Evaluation 2011, p. 150**). The projects have contributed also to better quality of regional policies.

- At the same time, the evaluation has revealed that some of the expected outcomes of the projects did not appear or were limited. The anticipated objectives were not fully met by the projects aiming to establish cooperation between companies and research centers, projects financed by venture capital funds were very limited in number, also the number of innovation networks created was not satisfactory (**Ibidem**).

The analysis of 12 case studies regions supported within Objective 2 indicated that only Steiermark region in Austria was able to find a new field of specialization and build the new industry (automobile) not based on the previous region’s industries. The evaluation, through comparison with other Objective 2 regions, showed that the change in specialization is long-term process and is more successful if the supported region is rather small and the regional authorities are active and aware of the need of the structural change (**Ex-Post Evaluation 2011, p. 76-77**).

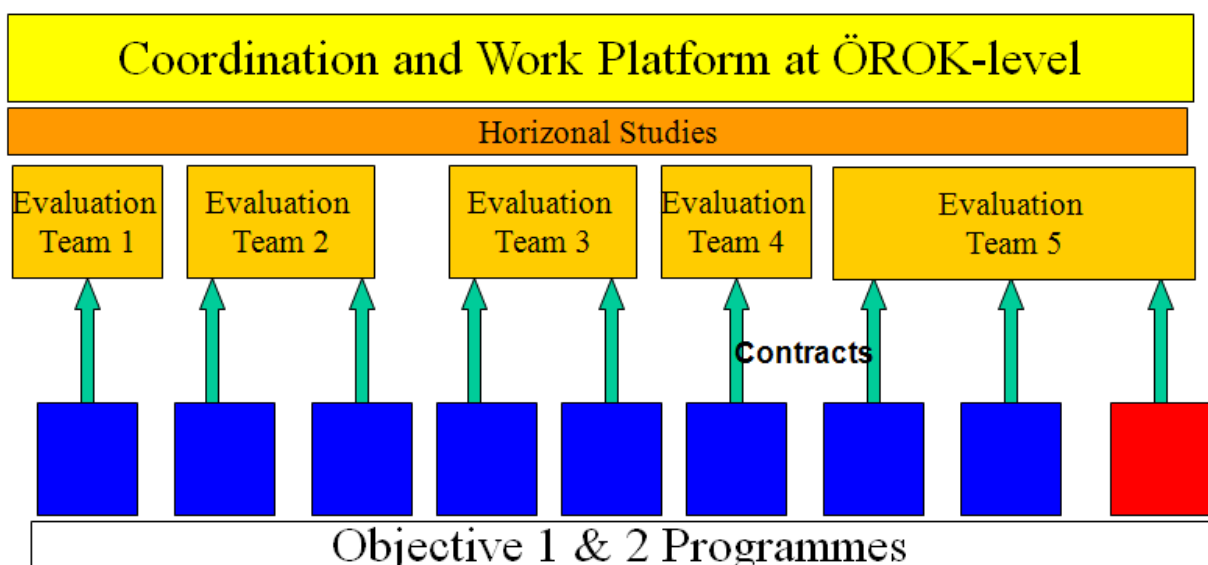
Burgenland region, supported under Objective 2 (full funding), was analyzed in comparison to 2 other EU regions also supported from Objective 2 (Hainaut in Belgium and Flevoland in the Netherlands; phasing-out support)). The main objective of the projects introduced in the Burgenland was to encourage more business activity in the region and create jobs in the new sectors that will diminish the influence of “old sectors” jobs reduction. The evaluation has indicated problems in developing research centers in Burgenland as well as projects’ high administrative costs. Nonetheless, the projects financed within Objective 2 in the period of 2000-2006 helped to formulate long-term development objectives and plans, strengthen cooperation between local and federal authorities, established regional networks for information exchange and had strengthen the understanding of evaluation importance (**Ex-Post Evaluation 2011, p.134-136**).

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Because of the European Commission requirement to carry out the mid-term evaluation in the 2000-2006 period, a necessity of the cooperation between institutions responsible for implementation SF in Austria have appeared. Beyond the mid-term evaluation, Austria decided also to launch the on-going evaluation. The solution which enabled both was the KAP-EVA Platform (Die Koordinations-und Arbeitsplattform Evaluierung - the Coordination and Work Platform Evaluation). The platform was created in 2002 by ÖROK (Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning) and aimed to coordinate evaluations and to build evaluation capacity. The main institutions involved in the process of capacity building on evaluation were Austrian Federal Chancellery and ÖROK, which had invited the regions to cooperation. The idea was that the programmes' results assessment will be obtained while the programmes were being implemented, linking the mid-term and on-going evaluation (**Strohmeier & Holzinger 2006**).

The institutions involved in the KAP-EVA platform were the Federal Chancellery, Federal Ministry for Finances, Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Federal Ministry for Economy and Labour, ERP-FUND, the ÖROK, and the ÖROK work group Administrative Authorities, i.e. the regional administrative authorities, and accounting bodies of the programmes, the evaluators and the scientific advisors (**Ibidem**). The platform was a useful tool to coordinate the programmes' implementation, management and evaluation in 2000-2006 period. It helped to exchange experience, and was an important contribution of capacity-building on evaluation in Austria. Unfortunately, after completing the mid-term evaluations the members of the KAP-EVA platform were less interested in continuing the on-going evaluation.

Scheme 1. Organisation of the KAP-EVA Platform



Source: (Strohmeier & Holzinger 2006)

For the period 2007-2013, the Austrian Conference of Spatial Planning (ÖROK) had prepared the “STRAT.EVA” platform. The platform offers regular meetings and workshops, which forms an integrated element of the “STRAT.ATplus”- a coordinated Monitoring Process for the implementation of the NSRF 2007-2013.

The platform is a unique opportunity to expand the knowledge on evaluation and to exchange experience, as in Austria there are no special courses or trainings developed for civil servants. Austria does not have an evaluation society. Some may participate in the international activities such as DEGEval, the German Evaluation Society (www.degeval.de).

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion

There is no particular system devoted to implementation and management of the evaluation findings and recommendations. The evaluation experience in Austria is shared within the framework of the Austrian Conference of Spatial Planning (ÖROK) by presentations and discussions of the evaluation findings. The main channels of knowledge dissemination are workshops, seminars, conferences and publishing the reports on the ÖROK website to distribute results to the target groups. The evaluation findings are especially addressed to primary actors on regional and national level responsible for policy implementation - Managing Authorities, Intermediate Bodies, policy coordinators on national level and also to decision-makers on political level. Discussion events do also involve the wider civil society.

Evaluations related to Cohesion Policy had especially important influence on shaping an evaluation culture in the field of Regional Policy, as there was no well-established evaluation culture before EU-accession in this field. Huber explains that some Austrian policies (on federal as well as regional level) were evaluated before accessing the EU (Huber 2005). He mentions regional aid schemes and labor market training programs as examples. The problem is that those evaluations did not have systematic character and were not conducted on the regular basis. Nonetheless, they have helped federal and regional institutions to gain first experience in evaluating public policies.

One needs to remember that Austria does not use Structural Funds to large extent. The key to good, useful evaluation studies is in this particular case good planning and incorporating into the planning process a “principle of proportionality”. This utilitarian approach means that the evaluations should be fit to the particular policy extend. The evaluations studies aim to improve the management of public policies therefore the recommendations from the studies should be easily applied.

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Belgium

Zuzanna Popis

Context of Evaluation System

Belgium is composed of three regions with independent administration structures: Brussels-Capital, Wallonia, and Flanders. Apart from administrative autonomy, each of the three regions has full autonomy over public policies system. This practically means that each of the regions developed its own system of planning, implementing and evaluating public interventions.

In the previous programming period (2000-2006) Belgium was eligible for Objective 1 of the Cohesion Policy (region Province de Hainaut was categorized as the "phasing-out" region) and for Objective 2 (also, parts of some regions fell into "phasing out" category). For this period Belgium received 2258 mln Euro in total of Cohesion Policy funds.

For 2007-2013 period the whole country is eligible for Objective 2 of the Cohesion Policy "Regional Competitiveness and Employment" except for Province de Hainaut region which remained the "phasing-out" region eligible for means from Objective 1 "Convergence". Also, Belgium is eligible for the European Territorial Cooperation Objective and takes part in five cross-border cooperation and two transnational cooperation programmes.

The Cohesion policy budget for the whole country for current programming period totals at around 2258 mln Euro (638 mln Euro - Objective 1, 1425 mln Euro - Objective 2, 194 mln - European Territorial Cooperation Objective) **(European Commission DG Regio 2006)**.

Table 1 Allocation of EU funds by Region (mln EUR)

	Brussels-Capital	Wallonia (ex. Hainaut)	Hainaut	Flanders
ERDF	57,59	282,51	449,23	200,95
ESF	73,94	328,83	189,10	481,34

Source: Cohesion policy 2007-2013 in Belgium. **(European Commission, 2008)**

- As each of the Belgium's regions has different socio-economic characteristics, the objectives and purposes they have set for the 2007-2013 period vary too.

The low status of evaluation in Belgium is assigned mainly to the lack of coordination between the levels of federal state, relatively weak parliament and to the reluctance to reaching political consensus (Bachtler 2008).

Belgium is considered to be one of the 'second wave of evaluation' countries where evaluation was introduced because of the external pressure coming from different sources. First of all, the need to increase accountability came along with the spread of New Public Management ideas. Secondly the European Commission required the participation of MS governments in evaluation activities. (De Peuter 2008) However, evaluation culture couldn't have been introduced only on the base of the external drivers. The main internal factor that determined the development of overall evaluation practice in Belgium was the need to enhance decision making process and to strengthen efficiency of the public interventions (to demonstrate the proper use of public funds and the objectivity of the spending process). In Flemish region the factor that surely contributed to the development of the overall evaluation practice was the 2006 "Better Administrative Policy" reform designed to make the public administration more efficient.

In Flanders the Cohesion Policy seem to have less importance for the development of evaluation culture. Relatively small budget of the programmes financed by ERDF and ESF is considered as the main reason for this situation. However, there are other public policy areas, which may have influenced general evaluation culture development in the region, i.e. environmental policy (Tieleman & Humbeek 2007).

In Wallonia, on the other hand, Cohesion Policy is perceived as the main driver of public policies evaluation development. Based on the experience from evaluating interventions of Structural Funds, evaluation practices have diffused to other regional policies (for example clustering policy, investment support policy) and are now embedded in the wider political process in Wallonia (e.g. in the Marshall Plan 2.Green which is the main policy program of the Walloon government). Currently, evaluation is regularly used in major policies and is an obligation for public agencies. Additionally, evaluation studies are also conducted by the public administration for strategic purposes or on the special requests from the Ministries. Those studies are the base for the decision-making process and debate on political orientations and practical arrangements.

- Apart from following official European Council Regulations (No 1083/2006 of July 2006 and repealing Regulation No 1260/1999) (Greunz & Botti 2010), none of the Belgian regions has managed to create any specific evaluation strategy. They follow the principles laid down by the EU institutions.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

As a result of applying the New Public Management reforms, public administration institutions of all levels have been assigned specific tasks in the area of policy evaluation. In the case of Cohesion Policy management for each of the three Belgian regions the system of contracting evaluation studies is centralised. In practice this means, that the managing authority for each of the Funds is also responsible for contracting the evaluation studies.

In Brussels-Capital region the key institution is **Ministry of Brussels-Capital Region**.

For the Walloon region the institutions involved in contracting evaluations in the Cohesion Policy area for the present programming period are as follows:

- **Service Public de Wallonie**, particularly:
 - Direction de l'Animation et de l'Evaluation of Departement de la Coordination des Fonds Structurels (Division of Animation and Evaluation of Department of Coordination of the Structural Funds is an institution responsible for monitoring of Cohesion Policy (**SPW Wallonie 2011**)) - for ERDF excluding INTERREG initiative
- **Agence FSE** - for ESF (ESF Agency is an independent Agency managing the European Funds for Human Capital development for French-speaking community comprising of Brussels - Capital and Wallon regions (**Agence Fonds social européen 2011**));
- **Wallonie-Bruxelles International** - for INTERREG initiative (Wallonia-Brussels International (WBI) is a governmental body in charge of International Relations Wallonia-Brussels. It is the instrument of international policy by the French Community of Belgium's Walloon Region and French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital (**Wallonie-Bruxelles International 2011**)).

Consequently in Flanders, the institutions contracting out evaluations are:

- **Ministry of Economy, Science and Innovation** (Vlaams Ministerie van Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie - EWI) - (responsible for Cohesion Policy Monitoring), exclusively:
 - Agentschap Ondernemen - for ERDF. The Enterprise Agency is an independent agency belonging to the Ministry of Economy, Science and Innovation (EWI). The main task of the Agency is to implement economic policies (**Agentschap Ondernemen 2011**).
- **ESF Agentschap Vlaanderen** - for ESF. The ESF Agency reinforces the implementation and innovation of the Flemish employment policy, thus helping to put into practice the Flemish

reform programme in the context of the revised Lisbon **Strategy (Europees Sociaal Fonds Agentschap 2011)**.

Apart from the above mentioned central institutions, there are other that contribute to the Cohesion Policy evaluation. The example of such institution is **Institute Walloon de l'evaluation, de la prospectivte et de la statistique (Walloon Institute of Evaluation, Foresight and Statistics)**. The IWEPS Walloon is an institution of decision support that provides decision makers in the Walloon Region, their partners and the public opinion with information in various forms. Derived from scientific methods, information ranging from simple presentation of statistics and indicators for studies and analysis in the fields covered by economics, social, political and environmental. The IWEPS also has an advisory function to the Walloon government in conducting prospective studies and, at the request of the Government, evaluation exercises (**L'Institut wallon de l'Evaluation de la Prospective et de la Statistique 2011**).

The estimate annual spendings for evaluation activities in the field of Cohesion Policy are not high. For example 2010 ERDF evaluation budget amounted at around 145 000 € for Wallon region and around 200 000 € for Flemish region.

The most common public procurement procedure used for contracting out evaluation studies in all three regions is negotiated procedure or tender without negotiations. The contractors are selected based on the following criteria: price (usually from 30% to 50% of the final score of the offer), methodological value of the offer (25% - 30 %), human resources used in the study (10%-20%), technical issues (i.e. planning of the study) (10%). To prove the capacity to conduct the evaluation study contractors must always give references on evaluation of public policy similar to the objective of particular study and/or reference to publications or scientific work relevant to the topic. Insitutions contracting evaluation studies use official European guidance and/or standards of regional simplification agency (i.e. for Wallon region - Easi-Wal).

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The evaluation market of Belgium is quite limited. It varies in the scope and size of the companies. There are individuals performing evaluation studies, medium sized consultancies and big transnational players like PriceWaterhouseCoopers or Ernst & Young. In the last two programming periods there has been not more than 20 firms conducting evaluation studies in the field of Cohesion Policy. Those institutions were mostly national entities, only some of them operate on the transnational level. Among them there are consultancies such as: Aide a la Decision Economique, Comase Management Consulting, Perspective Consulting, Technopolis Consulting Group, Sonecom, Idea Consult and academics like Department of the Applied Economics of the Université Libre de

Bruxelles (ULB) or Louvain School of Management. There was also a number of evaluation studies commissioned to the external contractors like United Nations University based in Netherlands.

Consultancies and academics are equally represented, often forming consortiums.

Some of the evaluation studies are not commissioned but done by the public policy institutions with their own resources (i.e. IWEPS, IWT Flanders).

The contractors which performed evaluation studies for the above mentioned institutions (see Chapter 2) in the last years have built a good know-how on Cohesion Policy evaluation, but the limitation of the supply side of the market causes difficulties in regard to number of offers and variety of methodological approaches.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion

The trends in carrying out evaluation in any of the three Belgian regions haven't changed much in the last ten years. The current programming period haven't brought much changes to the number of evaluation studies undertaken, the moment of undertaking them nor to their scope or topics.

For the period 2000-2006 all of the three regions abided by the Council regulations thus carrying out ex-ante studies on the planning of interventions stage and mid-term evaluations focused on the implementation processes. Apart from the mandatory evaluation studies, the topics covered by the evaluation of the programmes for the 2000-2006 period were as follows:

- innovation policy
- direct support to enterprises
- clusters and poles of competitiveness policy.

Not only these areas are important in context of implementing the Cohesion Policy objectives, but they also allow to use relatively simple support instruments. Consequently those forms of support become very widely used, which makes them big “consumers” of the development funds. In Walloon region there were several evaluation studies on the “direct support to enterprises” topic carried out in the last fifteen years varying in methodological approaches and research problems. The same goes for the clusters support instruments – last years brought several evaluations on this policy area.

For the previous programming period Belgium carried out nine mid-term evaluations (Walloon region – 3 evaluations, Brussels Capital – 1 evaluation, Flanders – 5 evaluations). For the present perspective each of the Belgian regions conducted ex-ante evaluation studies before the adoption of each of the Operational Programmes 2007-2013 corresponding with the Cohesion Policy Objectives. The execution of the above mentioned programmes is being monitored and the reports on the monitoring are published annually in all regions.

As an addition to those studies Wallonia, Brussels-Capital and Flanders each executed evaluations of their respective programmes in context of the Strategic Report for **Belgium 2009**. Their purpose was to assess the contribution of the programmes towards implementing the objectives of Cohesion Policy as established by the treaty fulfilling the tasks of the ERDF and the ESF implementing the priorities of the Community Strategic Guidelines on cohesion achieving the objective of promoting competitiveness and job creation and working towards meeting the objectives of the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs (**Greunz & Botti 2010**).

Apart from those studies Walloon region carried out two studies in 2010:

- Added value of project portfolios (1st phase);
- Evaluation of results of actions in terms of entrepreneurship (1st phase)

Neither Brussels Capital region nor Flemish Region haven't undertaken any evaluation studies since the one from 2009, though the mid-term evaluations are planned for 2011 in both regions.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There is no national platform or system for sharing evaluation resources or practices in neither Belgian region, although there exists a National Statistical Institution – **Directorate General Statistics and Economic Information**. This institution is responsible for collecting, processing and disseminating relevant, reliable and commented statistical and economic information (**The Directorate General Statistics and Economic Information 2011**).

Wallonia and Flanders each have their own Evaluation Societies:

- ⇒ Société Wallonne de l'Évaluation et de la Prospective (The Walloon Evaluation and Foresight Society). The purpose of establishing this organisation was to increase the quality of the expertise provided by the evaluation and foresight studies. Thus its tasks are to stimulate the functions of evaluation in both public and private institutions, to generalise the evaluation procedures and to provide the ethical and methodological debate on evaluation (**Société Wallonne de l'Évaluation et de la Prospective 2011**).
- ⇒ Vlaams Evaluatie Platform (The Flemish Evaluation Platform) (**Vlaams Evaluatieplatform 2011**) The aims of this organisation are above all oriented at building and diffusing the evaluation culture and enhancing the evaluation capacity which is supposed to contribute to increasing the quality of the carried out studies and consequently to stimulating the use of evaluation results in policy making processes. The activities that lead to achieving those aims consist of organising and promoting the exchange of ideas, experiences, knowledge and information among the evaluation market actors – public administration, the contractors, the academics etc.

Both those organisations are responsible for the networking initiatives. They organise workshops, where case studies are presented and discussed, conferences on actual issues concerning policy evaluation, open seminars and small meetings of evaluation practitioners (the so-called “breakfast sessions”).

In 2009 the SWEF launched an inter-university training on public policies evaluation (**Université catholique de Louvain 2010**). This study program addresses the specific issues and questions that evaluators encounter in the course of their practice. It is aimed at giving the participants the necessary foundation for understanding the processes of assessing the public policies.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The evaluation reports are systematically published on the websites of the commissioning bodies.

In Walloon region the debate on Cohesion Policy evaluation studies is carried out within the Programs managing committees and once approved by the Monitoring Committee are published on the European Funds managing authority website. The results are also presented to the other institutions engaged into policy-making process and to programmes beneficiaries. The main target groups of the evaluation studies are: programmes managers: administration, politicians, beneficiaries, academics, researchers, students and evaluation community. No systematic control or follow-up of evaluation reports causes risk of findings and recommendations not reaching the relevant stakeholders and being “wasted”. That is why in Wallonia works have been undertaken to create a system of tracing implementation of findings and recommendations.

The main objectives for the future of Cohesion Policy evaluation in Belgium are:

- ⇒ to create an evaluation plan with strategic and specific goals.
- ⇒ to collect adequate human and financial resources.
- ⇒ to review the scope of ex ante evaluation in order to embed it in the programming process
- ⇒ to be able to have enough flexibility to define the timing, the themes and scope of evaluation.

Meeting those challenges means for all the Belgian regions ensuring the best possible utilization of evaluation results and establishing good standards of Cohesion Policy evaluation studies.

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Bulgaria

Iryna Kravchuk

Context of Evaluation System

After EU accession EU structural funds became one of the main sources of financing the national investment and national policies. In the light of the financial crisis and budgetary restrictions, the importance of Cohesion policy support considerably grows. Pre-accession funds and then EU Cohesion and Structural funds imposed obligation to conduct evaluations. It became the key driver of development of evaluation system and cultural change in Bulgarian public administration. There is no such obligation applicable to national funds.

The National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund for the period 2007-2013, The National Development Plan (NDP) of Bulgaria for the period 2007-2013 and National Strategic Plan for agricultural and rural development 2007-2013 are main planning documents in this area.

The estimated EU support for 2007-2013 is 6, 673 628 244 billions EUR and relevant national co-financing is around 1, 3 billion EUR (**The National Strategic Reference Framework of Bulgaria 2006**). For comparison the GDP for Bulgaria in 2010 was 32 billion EUR.

Bulgarian evaluation practice is strictly connected to Cohesion policy and EU funds. There was relatively smooth institutional transition and transfer of evaluation experience from EU Pre-accession structures to Structural Funds. Around 90 % of staff currently dealing with structural funds in Central Coordination Unit (CCU) and Managing Authorities was dealing with Pre-accession funds. On the one hand institutional memory of new institutions is an advantage. On the other hand experts point out that *'Bulgaria has no experience with evaluations of OPs, since the operational programmes are methodologically different from the pre-accession instruments PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD. From Bulgaria's experience with project monitoring in this period, there are no evaluations that can be listed as good practice.'* (**Stefanov et al. 2010**).

Evaluation findings are discussed on meetings of Monitoring Committee of NSRF and OPs were politicians are well represented at the level of ministers and deputy ministers. But evaluation results are not on the agenda of wider public debates and discussions in the parliament.

However there are tendencies to incorporate evaluation practices into public finance management and national policies. For example since several years, each draft law that should be approved by the parliament has to be accompanied by impact assessment that may be considered evaluation to some extent. But this process is more concentrated on administrative compliance and collecting all necessary documentation than real impact assessment. There is a few analytical work on impact assessment. The Bulgarian National Audit office conducts so-called performance audit (**National Audit Office Act 2011**) – *‘Review of the activities related to planning, implementation and control at all management levels in the audited entity with regard to their effectiveness, efficiency and economy.’* (**Audit standard № 4 2006**) In spite of some similarity of methodologies, it is mainly related to the management and control system, compliance assessment (**Naydenov 2011**).

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The NSRF and DECREE № 182 of the Council of Ministers dated 21 July, 2006 on the Establishment of Monitoring Committees of the National Strategic Reference Framework and the Operational Programmes Co-Financed by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund of the European Union established institutional structures managing Structural funds which are responsible for evaluations.

According to Decree № 182 Council of Ministers establishes Monitoring Committee of the NSRF. Monitoring Committee of the NSRF reviews the progress in the achieving of the aims and priorities, based on the the defined in the NSRF indicators; receives information from the MA OPs regarding the results, conclusions and recommendations of the OPs’ evaluations (**DECREE № 182 of the Council of Ministers 2006**). Monitoring Committee is headed by Minister for Management of EU Funds and is composed of representatives of OPs, Central Coordination Unit, regions, social and economic partners.

As it was mentioned before there was quite smooth transition from pre-accession assistance to EU Structural Funds coordination structures. During recent 10 years around 9 institutions were involved in commissioning evaluations. Evaluation of PHARE was managed by so-called National evaluation unit in the Ministry of Finance. It became basis for Central Coordination Unit responsible for the evaluation of NSRF. Central Coordination Unit for the EU Structural Funds is a structure from three Directorates within the Council of Ministers’ Administration – Programming of EU Funds; Monitoring of EU Funds; Information Systems for Management of EU Funds.

The Central Coordination Unit is responsible for:

- ⇒ operational coordination of the elaboration, evaluation and implementation of National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and conducting negotiations with the European Commission for its approval and updating;
- ⇒ coordination the development process, evaluation, updating and monitoring the implementation of the National Programme Document (NPD), ensuring consistency between it and the NSRF;
- ⇒ Monitoring of the planning, execution and implementation of Operational Programs "Development of the competitiveness of the Bulgarian Economy", "Human Resources Development", "Administrative Capacity" and "Technical Assistance";
- ⇒ participating in the elaboration of methodological guidelines for the implementation of Operational Programs financed by EU funds, and prepare such guidelines for bilateral cooperation programs;
- ⇒ participating in the Evaluation network to DG Regional Policy of the European Commission and the Evaluation Partnership to DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission;
- ⇒ creating and managing a horizontal network of experts on evaluation of NSRF and Operational Programs financed by EU funds, and coordinate the implementation of the evaluation plans of the Operational Programs;

Operational programs (OPs) are managed by seven managing authorities with evaluation competences.

All OPs has its own Monitoring Committees, which review the progress made towards achieving the specific targets and of the priorities of the Operational Programme on the basis of documents submitted by the Director of the Managing Authority. However there are different practices because some OPs which have enough administrative capacity established an evaluation sub-committee to the monitoring committee. In this subcommittee there MAs, NGOs, CCU are represented. As a rule these evaluation sub-committees deal with approval of TORs, management of the contracts, the quality control of the evaluation reports **(Naydenov 2011)**.

All above mentioned institutions are launching and contracting evaluations: Central coordination unit (CCU) and managing authorities are dealing with the whole circle of evaluation planning, launching, managing, distribution of results and follow up recommendations. As Bulgaria is relatively small country all institutions are established predominantly at central level. However bigger OP Regional Development and OP Environment have regional offices, but they are not managing evaluations.

Most of MAs have experience of management of EU pre-accession funds and are well established. They work exclusively with Structural Funds, but in fact they are directorates in the respective ministries that are dealing with particular policy or sector. They are highly involved in the implementation of the national policies irrespective what is the source of funding EU or national. There is an effort to streamline the EU funds and national funds in one direction.

In majority of cases evaluations are contracted out through open tender procurement procedure. In case of very small and simple study, for example in case of Human Resource OP when simple grant scheme was evaluated, procedure with 3 offers can be used.

There is no standard system or guidance for contracting evaluations in Bulgaria, except General Procedure Manual. Bulgarian administration applies Document of DG Regio - Evalsed Guide for Evaluation of Social and Economic Development (**DG REGIO Evaluation Unit 2008**). Trainings organized by CCE are also used for guidance. All contracts include training component for practical implementaiton and management of evaluations. Terms of Reference are prepared by MAs. In some cases special working groups or evaluation subcommittees to the monitoring committees are created in order to get more expertise and expert views on the development of Terms of Reference.

The most important selection criteria for choosing contractor is evaluation methodology and organization of implementation of the contract (about 50-60 %), however price is also important criterion (30-40 %). Very often realistic timetable of implementation is 3rd selection riterion (around 10 %) (**Naydenov 2011**).

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There are approximately 15 companies/firms (foreign predominantly) that are active on the evaluation market in Bulgaria. It also includes companies performing ex-ante evaluation for the OPs and for the NSRF. For the evaluation of PHARE there were 2 companies which are also included in this number. Some of them perform 2 contracts, some work in consortia. In 2010 there were active approximately 8 companies. Most of them are well-known international consultancy companies such as Ecorys, Ecotec, CPMG, Ramboll but the evaluators are predominantly Bulgarian. For the Pre-accession evaluations mainly Bulgarian evaluators were involved because all documentation is in Bulgarian. As Bulgarian evaluators already get experience recent during years more Bulgarian companies appear and start to apply for the tenders. Sometime they even win the tender, but usually in relatively small contracts. Main background of Bulgarian evaluators is economy, social science, public administration, in some cases engineering (**Naydenov 2011**).

Unfortunately there is low level of involvement of academia. Some practical steps and recommendations were developed in order to attract the academics, develop post-graduate studies on evaluation of public policy.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

During current programming period 2007-2010 around 15 evaluation studies had been performed, incl. ex-ante evaluations of OPs and NSRF. (See table “Evaluation studies performed in the framework of NSRF and OPs in Bulgaria”). If we take into account evaluations of PHARE approximately 40 evaluations were made (**Naydenov 2011**). During pre-accession period the evaluation contracts of Phare were centrally managed by EU Commission.

During current programming period 2007-2013 most of evaluations are on-going. *‘Different levels of assessment are planned for the different programmes: evaluation of the implementation of the programme itself, evaluation of its management, and/or evaluation on project level. In other words, the evaluation can encompass only the institution managing the programme, or it could also include organisations that implement it’* (**Stefanov et al. 2010**). Bulgaria has completed one Mid-term Evaluation of Operational Programme Regional Development 2007-2013 (**ECOTEC Research & Consulting n.d.**). Ex-post evaluations will be done by EU Commission, but Bulgaria is likely to do its own evaluation. In 2010 5 evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy had been executed.

Country report on achievements of Cohesion Policy summarized results of Cohesion Policy in Bulgaria (as of November 2010). There are separate Chapter devoted to “Evaluation and good practices in Evaluation”. This study states that the *‘planned evaluations are a cause for concern, since no unified methodology has been approved. Bulgaria has no experience with evaluations of OPs, since the operational programmes are methodologically different from the pre-accession instruments PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD. From Bulgaria’s experience with project monitoring in this period, there are no evaluations that can be listed as good practice. The ex-ante evaluations of the OPs and other EU-funded programmes (such as the Rural Development Programme) prepared before the programmes started in 2007 can be pointed to as relevant experience but their quality has yet to be assessed.’* (**Stefanov et al. 2010**).

The most of evaluation studies are external. MAs undertake only a small-scale internal studies. Currently evaluations are done at the level of OP. The start of evaluation of the NSRF is planned for the autumn 2011.

In financial terms the most of evaluations are middle-sized (15 000-17 000 EURO), but big mid-term evaluation may have budget up to 200 000 EUR. Contracts with budgets 100 000 EUR for the OPs

are considered large in Bulgaria. The estimated annual spending for the evaluation activities in the field of Cohesion Policy (for year 2010) was approximately 400 000 EUR. The total spending for 15 evaluations in the area of NSRF and OPs (mentioned in the table) was 1 245 615 EUR.

There is Management and Control Information System that has public part where relevant management and financial data is provided (operational programs, projects, beneficiaries, partners, contractors, funding). But there is no national database of evaluations exists in Bulgaria. Full reports are not published. Only short summaries of reports are published on the web-pages of OPs.

Monitoring of EU Funds Directorate of CCU is responsible for collection of reports and studies related to Cohesion policy. In Bulgaria Single Information Web Portal for Structural and Cohesion Funds (different from the Unified Management Information System) is functioning. The plans are to create separate section, specially dedicated to evaluation of the Cohesion Policy.

For the evaluations undertaken the methods were quite traditional: desk research, interview. Use of case studies is considered to be an improvement. But there is a trend to use rigorous evaluation methods, impact evaluations, counter-factual methods, case-studies, macro-modeling. Bulgaria follows general trend of the EU Commission documents regarding next programming period on the more wider application of impact assessment.

There is no centralized system or guidance for assessing quality of evaluation reports. Bulgarian administration uses Evalsed documents developed by DG Regio. Quality assessment of reports is done on case by case basis. Experts in charge for evaluation in MAs provide their comments on the quality of the report as a whole, on the findings, on the suitability of recommendations, etc. Each MA has its own methodology and procedures for quality assessment. Some kind of check-lists are used.

Mid-term evaluation of Regional Development OP and Evaluation of the progress achieved with the implementation of the first six operations under HRD OP can be considered as best evaluations **(Naydenov 2011)**. Both of them provided reasonable recommendations that supported MAs.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Network of evaluation experts is the main tool for sharing experience and practices and know-how. This Bulgarian network is to some extent similar to the evaluation networks of EU Commission. It is composed of representatives of MAs, intermediate bodies, external evaluators and is chaired by CCU. Network has regular meetings 2 or 3 times per year. Its discusses main results and outcomes of EU Commission evaluation network meetings of the DG Regio and Evaluation partnership of DG employment, exchange of good practices, methodological guidelines. Results of completed evaluations of OPs are also presented. Main task of network is to streamline and coordinate the evaluation of NSRF. It is platform for sharing of evaluation experience and findings, informal discussions. Representatives of EU Commission are invited to the meetings and trainings of the network to provide advice and guidance. But the wider public is not involved. CCU doesn't organize international or national conferences devoted to evaluation (**Naydenov 2011**).

Every year public administration prepares annual training program with exact type of courses, dates, types of trainings, etc. The evaluation is one of the main topics. CCU provides substantial trainings for the representatives of MAs and central level bodies. CCU has support from the Evaluation Units of DG Regio and Empl in performing trainings in 2008 and 2009. In 2010 evaluation trainings were provided for all MAs. For example in January 2010 training for MAs to the designing and managing evaluations; indicators for monitoring and evaluation. But there is no special web-page dedicated to the trainings. There is a lack of involvement of academia and post-graduate studies in Bulgaria. The most big and popular universities in Bulgaria don't have specialized evaluation courses (**Naydenov 2011**).

Funds of technical assistance are used to gain foreign expertise from foreign training institutions (IPA, EIPA). The people who are dealing with structural funds in particular with evaluation are trained mainly abroad.

There is no evaluation society as professional organization in Bulgaria. 'Thematic Report: Establishment of a National Evaluation Society' in the framework of Interim Evaluation of PHARE and Transition Facility Programmes in Bulgaria develops recommendation how to establish evaluation society, how to attract the academics, the companies more oriented to demand and supply side of evaluation were developed in (**ECOTEC Research & Consulting n.d.**). The basis of the study is Czech and somewhat Irish Experience.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The findings of evaluation reports are discussed mainly on monitoring committees meetings. Full reports are not available. Only summaries are published on the web-pages of OPs. In monitoring committees non-governmental sector is well represented - social and economic partners. NGOs dealing with topics of OPs are invited as observers at the meeting of monitoring committees. They are quite well aware about evaluation results, recommendations, weak points. This is the good channel for distribution of evaluation results. The political level is also well represented. Some OPs monitoring committees are chaired by respective minister. In other Monitoring Committees there are representative at the level of deputy minister. But wider public – politicians from the parliament, journalists are not involved.

There is no special procedure or system that trace implementation of findings and recommendations of evaluation. However after each evaluation regular follow-up recommendations are agreed. Follow-up recommendations that has to be implemented are provided to the members of monitoring committee and to the CCU. Usually it is a table with evaluation findings, recommendations and follow-up actions and the deadline. Implementation of the follow-up actions is monitored.

The best example of use of evaluation results is Mid-term evaluation of Regional Development OP. Different types of recommendations which are both related to the implementation system, management of contracts, to launch of proposals were developed. Recommendations were utilized in the work of MA. The internal guidelines, guidelines for applicants for the forthcoming call for proposals were improved. Some changes were done in management and control system in the MA. Improvements relates also to the beneficiaries because scope of potential beneficiaries was enlarged (**Naydenov 2011**).

This study was successful because more advanced methodology applied (case-studies). The other factor is good cooperation between evaluator and MA. The evaluation team was also rather professional.

CCU plans to have in early June 2011 the meeting of evaluation network where this evaluation will be presented to the rest of MAs. CCU realizes that it is necessary to distribute this know-how to develop good practices in Bulgaria. Recommendations and conclusions of the study, methodology, relations between MAs and evaluators, quality control will be discussed.

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Cyprus

Weronika Felcis

Context of Evaluation System

Within the context of cohesion policy, Cyprus managed to secure approximately €640 million from the EU Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund for the 2007-2013 programming period. Taking into account the duration of both programming periods, it is almost three times the amount given in the previous period (around €110m. for the years 2004-2006).

The 612 million provided in the context of the Convergence and Competitiveness and Employment Objective -delivered through the implementation of two Operational Programmes – ‘Sustainable Development and Competitiveness’ (funded by the ERDF and CF) and ‘Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion’ (funded by the ESF)³.

The exact amounts devoted to each of the funds in comparison for both periods can be found in the table below:

Table 1. The EU funds allocated in Cyprus in programming period 2004-2006 and 2007-2013

Objective	Fund	Total (million €)
Convergence	CF	213
Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	279
	ESF	120
European Territorial Cooperation	ERDF	28
Total 2007 – 2013		640
Objective 2 (rural and downgraded urban areas)		28
Objective 3 (strengthening human capital)		22
Community Initiatives	(INTERREG III and EQUAL)	5.2
Fisheries	FIFG	3.4
Cohesion Fund	CF	54.9
Total 2004 – 2006		113.5

Source: Self-reported data based on DG REGIO factsheets for both programming periods

³ It is worth noting, that although all of Cyprus constitutes a single region, European funds are not applicable in the areas not under the effective control of the the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Although, the idea of regional policies is relatively new in Cyprus, the national objectives seem to be consistent with the EU strategies on regional development (DG REGIO, 2010). There are also other regional development policies funded only by state budget, for example, learning programmes. However, they have been somewhat constrained due to economic downturn. Nevertheless, it is worth to bear in mind throughout this chapter that the EU funds have only approximately 15% share in the overall development oriented public expenses.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The Key Institution with the responsibilities of the Managing Authority (MA) in Cyprus is the Planning Bureau – a government service supervised by the Minister of Finance. The Directorate of Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund of the Planning Bureau is coordinating the management, implementation process, monitoring and evaluation systems of the EU structural funds in the country. The unit consists of approximately 30 people, and there are 3 people permanently dealing with the issues related solely to evaluation. A number of Intermediary Bodies (IBs) have been set up to facilitate the work of the MA, since IBs are authorized to perform some tasks on behalf of the MA.

Another significant body is the Evaluation Steering Committee. The Evaluation Steering Committee for the operational programmes ‘Sustainable Development and Competitiveness’ and ‘Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion’ was established in 2009 and has the overall coordination of monitoring and supporting of evaluation. The Committee’s role is advisory and its recommendations will play an essential role in the evaluation process. The Committee serves the role of the communication network of people dealing with evaluation in the country and a forum where ideas for improvements are being generated, planned and ongoing evaluations are discussed and results from completed evaluations are presented. The Committee is made up of members from Ministries and representatives from both DG Employment and DG REGIO attend the meetings of the Committee as observers. The Committee meets at least once a year and information about this body and its meetings with invitations, resources and final decisions is accessible on the website www.structuralfunds.org.cy (in Greek). The progress/results of the ongoing evaluations carried out in 2011, will be presented at the Annual Steering Committee’s Meeting in Autumn 2011.

Over the years the number of institutions involved in contracting evaluations has increased to around twenty. Most of them are public administration units, mainly Planning Bureau and Cypriot Ministries. However, the exact number of evaluation studies ordered by latter institutions remains unknown to the Managing Authority due to lack of official requirement for reporting them.

According to the Planning Bureau, since the start-up of the EU funds expenditure, institutions obliged to conduct evaluation were willing to learn the new regulations and the new approach to eligible

funds. After the evaluations have been carried out, the responsible organisations uploaded results on their websites, presented the findings on relevant meetings or even organized press conferences.

However the main obstacle for the development of evaluation culture is limited:

- The overall EU budget devoted to evaluation in Cyprus in the period 2007-2013 estimated at approximately €1.000,000.

Just as many other countries (such as Sweden, Italy or the United Kingdom), Cyprus has improved its e-governance tool in respect to the procurement system, what has also affected contracting of evaluation studies.

The new, more efficient and transparent procurement system is affecting contracting evaluations in several ways. Firstly, the cuts of costs in human resources are resulting in savings of 50-70% on transactional costs. Also, the real-time information is ensuring the transparency and fluency of the process.

Precise judicial requirements for the parties interested in conducting a particular study are chosen independently every time for the particular evaluation topic. This is facilitated online in tender document format with a check-list, where each contracting authority is choosing what they require.

The criteria for choosing the offers from evaluation contractors is based on technical offer and economical offer, with a clear percentage of weight being assigned to both of them - 80% to the former and 20% to the latter. On the grounds of this rule the two parts of the offer are later divided into two envelopes and rated separately.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

According to the Planning Bureau, from Cyprus accession to the EU in May 2004 up to 2011 there were around 15-20 different companies which have attended a procurement for structural funds evaluations. Those firms are mostly established in 1990s, but rather as social or political research companies and they have expanded their services to evaluation matters. Having no previous experience in such research, they were forced to learn over relatively short time all the new regulations, follow the guidelines and enter a new system of utilization of the research. Both quality and quantity of such firms is still increasing in Cyprus.

In the last ten years, overall not more than 10 studies were carried out and there were no evaluations carried out in 2010 on behalf of the Planning Bureau. However, two evaluation contracts were signed in March and May 2011. For each of those tenders approximately four consortiums had applied. However, on the basis of the current Cyprus experiences it is possible to conclude that contractors have been working most often in partnership with other companies, consultancies or

with academic experts on the particular evaluated topic. Frequently those would be Cypriot firms in collaboration with Greek ones. There are several reasons for that:

- Firstly, there is no language barrier
- Secondly, the evaluation consortiums/firms from Greece have a well established knowledge in relation to structural funds
- Thirdly, Cypriot companies know the context and can provide better insights and fieldwork

Nonetheless, from a business point of view there is not much of a need for developing the supply side until the role of evaluation will be recognized in respect to other policies and greater resources will be devoted to this exercise.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

For the period 2004-2006, an ex post evaluation to assess the impact of objective 3 projects of the 2004-2006 period was undertaken in 2009. This study can be found on the website of the Planning Bureau. Cyprus has not carried out its own ex-post evaluation because it was prepared by the European Commission. Based on information from the Planning Bureau, there is a total of 8 evaluation studies which were carried out by the Planning Bureau (for both programming periods and up to 2010) Some of them are accessible and published on the website www.structuralfunds.org.cy whereas the remaining will be accessible by September, since the particular site is under revision/reconstruction. In 2011 the contracts for two ongoing evaluation studies were signed. Specifically the Evaluations involve:

1. Evaluation of the Communication Plan for the Operational Programmes “Sustainable Development and Competitiveness” and “Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion” ,
2. Evaluation of the implementation of the Operational Programmes “Sustainable Development and Competitiveness” and “Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion”.

Although lessons were drawn from the period 2004-2006 with the ex-post Evaluation that was conducted at the end of the period and the ex ante evaluation for the new programming period, there is still no systematic review of implemented programmes as Cypriot management system of structural funds acts without a strategic Evaluation Plan. The Planning Bureau is explaining this situation with lack of obligation to create such document as Cyprus belongs to "Regional Competitiveness and Employment" and therefore there is no requirement of preparing an Evaluation Plan for the entire program period (Article 48, paragraph 1 of Regulation 1083/2006). DG REGIO also expresses concerns about the situation: *‘Evaluation is extremely weak in Cyprus (...). The absence of*

evaluations of the interventions co-financed in the 2004-2006 period resulted in the lack of reliable data and caused difficulties in the presentation of the results of the previous period as well as in the determination of goals and objectives of the current OP.' (Tsipouri & Rubliova 2010)

Finally, there are also no country guidelines published for researchers or contracting institutions as well as for assessment of evaluation studies. Both demand and supply side are supported by the publications of the EU.

A study indicated as the most relevant by the Planning Bureau is "The ex-ante evaluation of 2007-2013 programmes". The study elaborated the economic situation in Cyprus in the current period, assessed shortly relevance and accuracy of strategies in relation to national policies, pointed out the most urgent needs and helped to set up new objectives with determining the possible impact of OPs. All of that makes it a first reference document for the Planning Bureau. This study will be on the above mentioned structural funds site in September once the website will be upgraded.

Another interesting study is the ex-ante impact evaluation of operational programmes on environment of the island. Cyprus energy system is heavily dependent on imported fuels (96%) and needs to develop use of renewable energy sources, especially solar ones. The study titled "*Impact Assessment study on the Environment*" was carried out for the Operational Programme "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" in December 2006 and is accessible through the website www.structuralfunds.org.cy.

The study especially acknowledged in DG REGIO is the "Evaluation of the system of Indicators of the Operational Programmes Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" and "Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion". In this report the indicators were reviewed together with accuracy of targets and they not only helped in implementation and monitoring progress of OPs, but also set foundation for current mid-term evaluation of programming period. The study was carried out in December 2009 and its executive summary is available in English (Planning Bureau 2009).

In respect to evaluation outside of Cohesion Policy the only mentioned example is the study titled *Panorama of the Impact of the HRDA on the Human Resources of Cyprus 2007-2009*.

Two evaluations are carried out by the Managing Authority in 2011:

- ⇒ The Evaluation of the Communication Plan of the Operational Programmes "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" and "Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion".
- ⇒ The Evaluation of the Implementation Progress of the Operational Programmes "Sustainable Development and Competitiveness" and "Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion".

Statistics provided by the Managing Authority state that an average study in Cyprus lasts around six months, costs approximately €150,000 and most often uses the classical research methods of questionnaires or interviews.

Although managing the EU funds on a comparatively small territory, the Planning Bureau makes the effort to conduct at least one study annually in this new period. In addition, it is now obligatory for all contractors to include in reports at least a short executive summary in English. Moreover, more of mid-term and ex post studies are considered for the future.

Although there are no official guidelines on how to assess the quality of delivered evaluation studies, a special body, the Project Steering Committee, is created for that purpose each time a study is planned to be carried out. The main aim of the committee is to guarantee high quality studies accurately answering the research questions. Typically the number of members would vary between four and five employees of the contracting institution (from the particular Ministry or the Managing Authority). Their role is to control the research process and review the evaluation report, which after maximum of two weeks and several rounds of several alterations acquires approval. For both of 2011 studies, Project Steering Committees are already established and are operating in close cooperation with the Contractor.

The changes in monitoring and evaluation of this programming period are noticeable. The amount of new studies has increased incomparably. There is an attempt to make evaluations publicly more accessible through creating a database. Nonetheless, there is no Evaluation Plan and no systematic approach to the assessment. That causes problems in monitoring of the progress. Without an adequate level of evaluation, the use and impact of the EU funds and the absorption rate might be sufficient, payments transferred on time, but still not much of development can be achieved.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The overall evaluation culture is still comparatively very weak in Cyprus. It is visible especially in relation to facilitators of evaluation and lack of systematic operations. According to the Planning Bureau - the Coordinating Authority responsible for evaluation of the EU funds and dissemination of the concept of evidence-based policy - there are no specific programmes, workshops or seminars for civil servants where they could deepen their knowledge on the subject. There are also no publications or academic studies dealing with the matter. There are, naturally, overall trainings provided and funded by the European Commission, but the interest in them is scattered and the level of participation vary substantially.

Furthermore, there are no online libraries created or local journals on evaluation issues. There is also no Evaluation Society in Cyprus; however that is rather caused by the overall lack of evaluation

culture and therefore devoted resources to get companies and individuals interested in creating one.

The Planning Bureau as the Managing Authority is in the process of creating such a database aiming at collecting all evaluation reports produced by all public institutions. At the moment, however, such a database does not exist and any evaluations carried out are uploaded individually on the sites of each of the public institutions. Establishment of such a database will be important for overview of these activities.

In conclusion, there is an urgent need for more training for civil servants in evaluation to raise awareness of its value, to share expertise and knowledge among stakeholders and improve communication in order to learn from best practices, especially among different ministries. In spite of the small size of the country and limited resources from the EU devoted to evaluation, with Cypriot '*ambition to become a "key player" in the economic cooperation between the EU, the Middle East and North Africa*' (Tsipouri & Rubliova 2010) it cannot neglect this issue. In addition, e-governance in its high level of development must be supplemented by evidence-based policy to become justly labelled as 'governance'. Only on the basis of answering the questions of "*What and why works?*" further development is possible.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The results from the evaluation studies in Cyprus might be disseminated in several ways reaching different audience. Firstly, Planning Bureau is trying to inform regularly all Ministries about its work (with an effort to create more of a dialogue among those institutions).

Secondly, they are frequently published on websites and on press conferences held by each Ministry that was responsible for contracting the particular study. The most important website is www.structuralfunds.org.cy, where a reader can find useful information on management, monitoring, audit and implementation of structural funds as well as selected publications of evaluation studies. Unfortunately, the majority of it is available only in Greek. However, with the upcoming revision of the above mentioned website the information is expected to be soon be available in English as well.

In addition, results might be occasionally shared on official meetings in Brussels when reporting the progress.

Lastly, the results are shared on the annual meetings of the common Monitoring Committee which has been established for both Operational Programmes. The Committee is comprised of ministries representatives, bodies of the wider public sector, local authority bodies, economic and social partners as well as other organisations. Representatives of the European Commission also attend the

meetings. The members of the Committee are also informed, about a progress on evaluations and the final evaluation findings. These are frequently presented by contractors themselves.

There is no unified system or procedure that traces implementation of recommendations. The Planning Bureau is supervising use of the results and the rationale for evaluative conclusions and propositions of changes can be ad hoc discussed on any of the above mentioned meetings.

Regarding the best examples of study utilization, the ex ante evaluation of 2007-2013 has been indicated again along with the Evaluation of the system of Indicators of the Operational Programmes “Sustainable Development and Competitiveness” and “Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion”.

Conclusion

Cyprus in many respects is at the start of developing an evaluation culture. The primary problem is a lack of systematic approach which is causing shortages of important data and limiting opportunities for reflective debates on the use of structural funds. However, some logical chain can be recognised in sequence and timing of main evaluation studies, for example, ex-ante evaluation was followed by revision of indicator system and further planned to be revised in 2011 with the mid-term evaluation of progress.

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The Czech Republic

Tomasz Kupiec

Context of the Evaluation System

As in all countries that joined the EU in 2004 (or later), the Cohesion Policy is also an extremely important element in the Czech Republic's system of public policies. For a number of national strategic documents, a time horizon has been set that is coherent with the EU financial perspective, which facilitates the coordination of national instruments with those of the EU. One of the objectives listed in the *Economic Growth Strategy of the Czech Republic* (Vláda ČR, 2004) consists in channeling the aid provided under EU funds. On the other hand, the *Regional Development Strategy of the Czech Republic* (Vláda ČR, 2006) mentions that the priorities are reflected in the Operational Programmes co-financed by the Structural Funds and implemented by them.

The Cohesion Policy budget in the Czech Republic for the 2000-06 and 2007-13 perspectives amounted to EUR 1,685.2 million⁴ and EUR 26,302.6 million respectively. According to the estimates made for the needs of the NSRF, the Structural Funds in 2007-2013 should represent ca. 41% of the entire public structural expenditure in the Czech Republic in the areas supported by the CP.

The role of the Cohesion Policy in the development of evaluation culture in the Czech Republic is essential. Without financial resources and the obligation to evaluate Operational Programmes, which appeared along with the Cohesion Policy, the evaluation practice would probably not have developed until now. Let us only mention that none of several dozen sectoral development programmes, introduced by individual ministries after 1989 and funded purely out of Czech resources was subject to evaluation (Hladek & Grolig 2004). Even in the time of a centrally planned economy, admittedly there were departments functioning in individual ministries that were responsible for conducting analyses and planning, and the study of the efficiency of expenditure was a legal obligation. Evaluation in the currently commonly accepted meaning, however, emerged for the first time with pre-accession funds, and still when it came to the ex ante evaluation of 2004-2006 programmes, it was considered a new exercise in the Czech Republic, with no previous experience in evaluating national programmes and policies (Blažek & Vozáb 2003). Although over 10 years have passed since the time of the first research on the pre-accession programmes, there was no substantial evaluation culture development understood as the adoption of evaluation research in

⁴ Exclusive of the Cohesion Fund

other public policies (in the case of which there is no externally imposed obligation to carry out evaluations). The expert group appointed by the Prime Minister (the national government economic council), which aims at developing recommendations concerning the issue of combating the effects of the economic crisis and the necessary reforms of public policies, is a positive manifestation of certain activities. The analyses and reports prepared by experts are not evaluations in the full sense of the word, and the practical use thereof was of a low level. Quite simply evaluation research, the Cohesion Policy apart, is not conducted. The Supreme Control Office and audit entities within the ministries and other offices operate only under strictly defined rules, orientated towards the verification of the measures' compliance with the law and their socio-economic impact. Politicians and key decision-makers do not report the need of or interest in implementing the evaluations and using their results in the decision-making process.

Demand side of the evaluation system for the Cohesion Policy

From the beginning of the Cohesion Policy functioning in the Czech Republic the number of bodies acting as contracting entities of evaluation research can be estimated at 40-50. First of all, they cover the Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies of Operational Programmes. In the 2004-2006 perspective, 9 Operational Programmes were under implementation and 18 in 2007-2013. The number of institutions ordering evaluations in 2010 amounted to 25.

Most contracting entities (the National Coordinating Body, ministries functioning as Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies for thematic Operational Programmes) are entities of the central level. Some of them have experience in evaluation from the previous programming period. The competences of these entities are not limited to the Cohesion Policy, but they concern particular national development policies.

The other group of entities includes Regional Councils – Managing Authorities for seven Regional Operational Programmes and the City of Prague managing two programmes of the region of Prague⁵. Regional Councils, although established for the needs of the previous financial perspective, had no former experience in evaluation and they only started gathering it now, when acting as an MA. The implementation of Regional Operational Programmes is the main scope of activity for Regional Councils. It should be pointed out that the areas of the ROP implementation, the so-called “cohesion regions” constitute 8 artificial, statistical entities established for the needs of the Cohesion Policy and created by merging 14 local-government regions functioning since 1997. The cohesion regions are not justified in either historical or economic terms (**Stachová et al. 2007**). Therefore, the evaluation

⁵ Prague, as the only region in the Czech Republic, is not eligible for support under Objective 1 “Convergence”. Hence, there are two separate Operational Programmes financed under Objective 2.

actions at the ROP level can correspond only to the needs of particular local government regions to a limited degree.

The most essential actor in the Cohesion Policy evaluation system in the Czech Republic is constituted by the NSRF Evaluation Unit under the National Coordination Body within the structure of the Ministry of Regional Development (forming the continuation of the Community Support Framework Evaluation Unit functioning in the previous financial perspective). Its duties, for instance, cover the following: the coordination of evaluation under all the Operational Programmes, identification and performance of thematic and horizontal evaluations beyond the area of one Operational Programme and launching initiatives for the development of evaluation culture and potential in the country.

Another important evaluation unit operates within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which, apart from performing research within the framework of the Operational Programme under implementation, takes action for the coordination and development of evaluation potential under the European Social Fund.

The expenditure engaged in the implementation of evaluation research in the area of Cohesion Policy in 2010 can be estimated at EUR 1,350,000-1,800,000⁶. In comparison with the budget in 2008 estimated at EUR 1,350,000 (Kaufmann & Rados 2009).

Clearly the most popular procedure for evaluation procurement is represented by the so-called minor (small-scale) contracts. Under this procedure a contracting party is exempt from the obligation to apply the provision of public procurement law. It can be applied for contracts whose value not exceeds CZK 2 million (ca. EUR 80,000). The other single cases of major evaluations are ordered under the so-called “simplified sub-threshold procedure”. It requires that a written invitation to submit tenders be sent to at least 5 tenderers⁷.

So far no standardised approach has been developed that regulates the process of evaluation research procurement. The general rules concerning the commission of an evaluation are included in the “Evaluation Guidelines” (**Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj 2006**), which form an appendix to a larger document entitled: “Methodology for the preparation of programme document for 2007-2013”. Nonetheless, for the needs of the ESF evaluation a standard system has been developed

⁶ The emerging disparity depends on the estimation method adopted – the number of implemented tasks and their average value or budgets declared by some evaluation entities, extrapolated on the entire population.

⁷ However, a contracting entity is also obliged to publish via electronic means the information about the commission and to include the proposals by entities that have not been invited in writing during selection. The maximum contract value for which this procedure may be used amounts to ca. CZK 3,236,000 for public administration and CZK 4,997,000 for local governments.

which is used by the evaluation units of the three Operational Programmes co-financed under this fund.

Price is always an important tender selection criterion. Its share in the total assessment in relation to quality criteria amounts on average to 50%-60%. In the case of the ESF studies, however, it is usually 40% and in the Regional Operational Programmes - usually 70%.

Supply side of the evaluation system for the Cohesion Policy

From the beginning of the Cohesion Policy's history, evaluation in the Czech Republic, i.e. since 2004, ca. 50 entities have emerged on the contractor market. The number of companies that have carried out an evaluation in 2010 can be estimated at ca. 30.

Most contractors are research companies and conduct broader advisory and training activities. Most companies are small domestic entities (70%), foreign companies / branch offices of international corporations have a smaller share (30%). The activity of research institutes and non-governmental organisations as evaluation contractors is insignificant. However, representatives of science are involved in evaluations as research team members, although employees of consulting firms are clearly dominant in them as well (academics represent 10%-20% of evaluators).

Assessments of contractors' potential and knowledge vary greatly depending on the contracting entities. The opinions that their potential is large and still increasing and that professionalization of market is taking place can be contrasted by means of other views from which it results that a contractor's ability to draw proper in-depth conclusions and to formulate good recommendations is, to a great extent, still limited, which restricts the usefulness of reports. The representatives of the Managing Authorities for Operational Programmes when assessing the potential of contractors on a scale of 1-5⁸ usually rated them at 4.

In quantitative terms, the supply side of the evaluation market has developed quite fast since 2004, when there were no Czech companies specializing in the supply of evaluations (**Hladek & Grolig 2004**)⁹. Decentralisation of the management system for the Structural Funds (the establishment of Regional Operational Programmes) constituted an impulse for further growth in 2006-2007. As a result the demand for evaluation has increased considerably. It seems that at the moment the market is saturated and specialisation, improvement in the quality, should probably be expected in the future rather than quantitative development.

⁸ Where: 1 – very bad, 5 – very good.

⁹ However as authors admit an expert base existed in particular in the academic community that could have been used for the purposes of evaluation.

Products of the evaluation system for the Cohesion Policy

In 2004-2010¹⁰, under the Cohesion Policy in the Czech Republic, ca. 150 evaluations were carried out¹¹. In 2010, the number of evaluations reached 40. Most of the evaluations conducted (over 100) concern the current programming period, the rest the 2004-2006 perspective.

Most of the evaluations hitherto, those most important in terms of the use of effects included, comprise external evaluations. However, as the potential of evaluation units increases, internal evaluations appear (e.g. the two evaluations concerning the management of human resources and indicators under the Human Capital Operational Programme financed by the ESF conducted in 2010). Minor analytical studies based usually on monitoring data are also relatively frequent, primarily at the regional level. These studies should not be recognised as evaluations, but they are a manifestation of an MA's internal activities serving the purpose of reflection and learning. A lack of human resources often constitutes an obstacle for the implementation of internal evaluations.

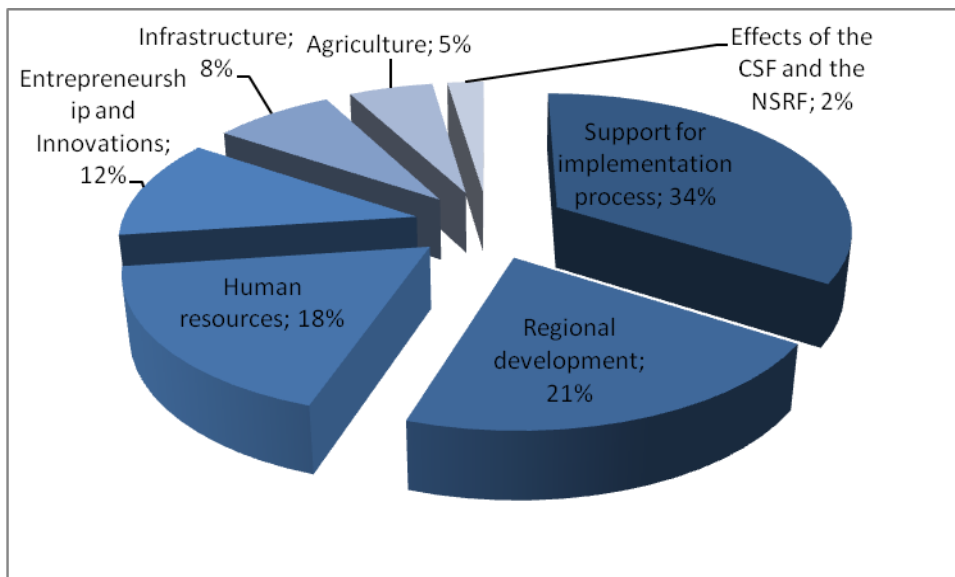
Ex ante evaluations represent over 1/5 of the research previously conducted, with process evaluations clearly predominate among the other ones. Evaluations on the effects of conducted actions are rare. However, it should be pointed out that sometimes there are cases of *ex post* evaluations of effects that are carried out at the national level. Research of this type has already been carried out for the Operational Programme Industry and Entrepreneurship, and in 2011 the *ex post* evaluation of the Community Support Framework and Single Programming Documents for 2004-2006 will be completed.

In thematic terms, evaluations serving the facilitation on a regular basis of the implementation process (project selection criteria, indicators, absorption capacities and effectiveness of information actions) are the most frequent. A large group is formed by evaluations in the scope of regional development. Their share should be even greater in the future due to the high number of regional programmes and the increasing experience of their Managing Authorities. Nearly 1/5 of evaluations are related to the area of human resources, which reflects the activity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The evaluations of effects at the level of strategic documents and research in the field of agriculture and fisheries, which is currently covered by support under the Cohesion Policy, are marginal.

¹⁰ Therefore, the list does not include the research of pre-accession funds since the relevant holistic data are not available. However, traces of evaluation activity can be found in this period, e.g.: the *ex ante* evaluation of the EQUAL initiative in the Czech Republic, round 1, 2000-2003 – financed by PHARE.

¹¹ This value and the following ones are approximate and may be affected by error. The basis for the estimation was formed by the information included in **(Kaufmann & Rados 2009), p. 70-78**, supplemented with the data collected on the basis of a survey conducted among Managing Authorities of Operational Programmes, annual reports and other documents listed on MAs' websites.

Figure 1 Thematic areas of evaluation



Source: own elaboration on the basis of (Kaufmann & Rados 2009) and survey among MAs as well as data from their websites

Due to the centralised implementation system for the Cohesion Policy in the previous perspective, in which all the programmes were managed at the national level and had a national range, most evaluations covered the entire country. Currently, the share of research on the regional scale is on the increase. Most evaluations conducted cover an entire programme, horizontal and thematic evaluations are clearly less numerous.

The average budget for an evaluation research project in recent years (2008-2011) amounted to ca. EUR 40,000¹² whereas the average amounted to EUR 26,000 at the regional level and to EUR 53,000 at the national level. Almost all evaluations (95%) are below the threshold of EUR 80,000, which makes it possible for them to be contracted beyond the PPL act. Evaluations whose value is below EUR 20,000 (representing ca. 1/3 of all evaluations) can be regarded as minor while those with a budget equalling EUR 20,000-60,000 (about half of the evaluations) as medium. The most expensive evaluation carried out so far is the mid-term NSRF evaluation and the Community Support Framework *ex post* evaluation each with a value of EUR 128,000.

The former evaluations do not feature any sophisticated methodological apparatus. The most popular tools include individual and group interviews of effective and ineffective applicants as well as persons involved in the implementation process, benchmarking and simple statistical analyses (Blažek 2010). Attempts are currently being made in the area of human resources to introduce a

¹² These data and those below have been drawn up on the basis of a sample of evaluations, information on which has been derived from an MA survey and tender documentation published on the MA website. In the case of approximately half the evaluations, their value was the estimated value of the contract and not the actual value of signed contract, which slightly inflates the estimations.

more restrictive approach towards the impact assessment exerted by programmes on the target groups. The first evaluation with a counterfactual approach towards the estimation of the effects of adaptation priorities under the OP Human Resources and Employment (OP HRE) is under implementation.

No formal assessment and control system for the received reports has been developed either in the previous or current perspective. Certain general rules concerning the supervision and acceptance of evaluations are included in the above-mentioned "Evaluation Guidelines". For their own needs, evaluation units under the ESF adopted the criteria applied by the Commission and use them for the assessment of reports commissioned by them.

At this stage, the key institutions responsible for the coordination of Cohesion Policy evaluation have not indicated any evaluation that would represent an example of good practice.

Facilitators of the evaluation system for the Cohesion Policy

The NSRF evaluation unit is the most important body for facilitating cooperation and information sharing in the field of evaluation. Its scope of duties includes cooperation with the entities responsible for evaluation of individual Operational Programmes, methodological support, moderation of discussions on the emerging reports at the national level.

The basic tool, a platform for cooperation and information sharing, is formed by the working group for NSRF evaluation. Apart from the discussion about the desired developments of NSRF evaluations and their effects, the group also forms an adequate environment for the broader exchange of experience in evaluation within the scope of results obtained so far, methodology, organisational matters and the development of evaluation potential. The group consists of the representatives of Operational Programmes' and the NSRF's MAs, as well as other stakeholders. The group's sessions are held twice a year and are considered a useful method for information sharing by MA representatives.

In addition, there is an evaluation working group gathering the representatives of regional programme MAs and certain thematic programmes. There is also a separate working group in the field of the ESF. The representatives of the MAs, the IBs and the Monitoring Committees for 3 programmes co-financed by the ESF cooperate within it. Academics are also invited to participate.

The NSRF Evaluation Unit maintains a website devoted to evaluation. However, its usefulness as a platform for information sharing is quite limited. The published material includes the evaluations carried out by the NSRF Evaluation Unit and the documents governing the evaluation process. The provisions of the "Evaluation Guidelines" oblige individual MAs to submit reports on the conducted

evaluations to the NSRF Evaluation Unit, which will subsequently enter them into the commonly accessible central base. However, as of now, such a base has yet to be established.

The situation looks better in the ESF area, for which there is a base collecting all the evaluation reports from the current and previous financial perspectives. In addition, a forum has been launched where it is possible to comment on previous evaluations and other issues connected with ESF evaluation. A base of publications in the field of evaluation, including guidebooks, e.g. **(HOPE-E.S. & Greater London Enterprise 2008)**, has been made available within the forum as well.

No programme of post-graduate studies devoted to evaluation has been created in the Czech Republic so far. However, the domestic training market offers sufficient opportunities for the acquisition and deepening of knowledge in the field of public policy evaluation. The representatives of most MAs have participated in the International Development Evaluation Training Czech DET **(Development Worldwide 2011)**, the Czech Evaluation Society offers an evaluation e-Learning course and it is also common practice to order closed training tailored to individual needs. Their scope is sometimes very broad and covers the lecture element, workshops and study visits. The MAs also participate in training / workshops organised by the NSRF Evaluation Unit and use the opportunity of financing training abroad, among others Spring school on impact evaluation (by DG Regio) or IPDET. Additional training opportunities in the field of ESF evaluation are available under the OP HRE.

Public sector activity in the area of building the evaluation culture in the Czech Republic is, as a rule, limited to two subjects, as already mentioned in Chapter 2. The CSF Evaluation Unit (succeeded by the NSRF Evaluation Unit) has prepared, *inter alia*, the publication *Evaluation of the socio-economic development* on the basis of the translated Evalsed material already in the previous financial perspective. Particular emphasis was placed on networking and the transfer of foreign experience in evaluation to the Czech Republic. Apart from training, the Evaluation Unit under the ESF has prepared several publications concerning ESF evaluation, including a manual on an independent evaluation for soft project managers. The OP HRE Evaluation Unit is also involved in the promotion of the counterfactual approach in research on the impact of ESF intervention on the target groups through participation in conferences. What should be pointed out as a symptom of forming the evaluation culture is also the International Conference of the European Evaluation Society, which in 2010 was held in Prague.

In 2008, in response to a visible need for disseminating evaluation knowledge and experience sharing, the Czech Evaluation Society was established. The CES actively promotes the evaluation culture in the Czech Republic, it is an independent platform enabling cooperation for Czech evaluators, both amongst themselves and through the medium of the CES with the EES and other domestic and international evaluator associations. The operation of CES includes e.g. the

organisation of training, study visits and the maintenance of a publications' base. The activity of the CES is connected with issues concerning Cohesion Policy evaluation. The usefulness of the society's actions also consists in that they are orientated towards the entities performing the evaluations, which develops the supply side of the evaluation market and forms what may be described as a counterbalance for those mentioned above that are aimed mainly at public bodies – the contracting entities.

Effects of the evaluation system for the Cohesion Policy

The process of disseminating the results of evaluation research in the Czech Republic is not officially regulated and is not coordinated on the national level. The "Evaluation Guidelines" indicate only the obligation to publish the evaluation reports via the Internet or in another way. However, not all MAs fulfill this obligation. As mentioned before, the central base collecting the reports on the national scale does not exist. Reports are also not published in paper form.

The evaluation results are presented at evaluation group sessions and Monitoring Committees of particular Operational Programmes. Sometimes there are cases when representatives of other MAs are invited to the meetings where evaluation results are presented. However, the group of evaluation recipients is narrow, and it is limited to the representatives of the entities directly involved in the management and implementation of an Operational Programme.

At the national level, no uniformed approach towards a monitoring system for the use of conclusions and recommendations derived from evaluation exists. This issue is decided upon individually by each MA. Good practice in this respect is presented by the OP HRE MA. The recommendations are first assessed / selected by the recipients in terms of their validity and feasibility. Afterwards, a recommendations implementation plan is drawn up, which is accepted by the working group for evaluation and the MC. The document currently in force covers the recommendations from the evaluations carried out in 2009 and in the first half of 2010 (**Ministerstvo práce a sociálních věcí 2010**). The recommendations are presented in a breakdown by thematic groups with identification of the priority, implementation schedule and the entity responsible. However, the above-mentioned solution cannot be said to be common practice on the national scale.

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Denmark

Weronika Felcis

There is no doubt that evaluation is an important activity in Denmark in most policy sectors and public organizations at all administrative levels. During the 1960s and 1970s, evaluation was introduced into policy making within a few policy fields and disseminated to other fields in the 1980s, but peaked in the 1990s. (Hansen, 2005)

Context of Evaluation System

New Public Management inspired reforms have been introduced in Denmark 30 years ago by performance management, responsiveness towards users of public services, appropriate regulations, marketization and human resource management (Hansen, 2005). In Denmark the evidence movement has gained ground and become institutionalized in especially three sectors – health, social work and education. The evidence research in these sectors has developed relatively independently.

The three institutions mainly responsible for the development of evaluation were¹³:

- *Cochrane Collaboration* (using mainly randomized control trials in the field of medicine)
- *Nordic Campbell Centre* at the Danish National Institute for Social Research¹⁴ (using the same approach)
- *Danish Clearinghouse* (using mainly formative evaluations and contributing to a critical discussion on the limited methodological tradition in the above mentioned classical approach)

In addition, from the public administration sector the most active institutions at that time were:

- Ministry of Finance (during the 'Nyrup Rasmussen period', the Ministry worked hard to become a proactive opinion-shaping think tank producing key guidelines for evaluations. However it was undertaking internal evaluations related for the soft reforms it was implementing at the time)
- National Audit Office (the NAO had strong position in the field of evaluation, although more external and independent evaluations were conducted with hierarchical approach focused more on implementation gaps instead of impact or effects of the actions)
- Ministry of Business Affairs

¹³ Both medicine and social work evaluations were the ideas brought from abroad, whereas the evaluations in the field of education were more domestically created because of the knowledge needs.

¹⁴ Currently called SFI Campbell, is indirectly financed by the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs.

In general, the main types of evaluations in Denmark are organizational performance, evaluation of user satisfaction and quality assessment for development. Although evidence based policy has spread into many fields and gained its position on governmental level, research was undertaken primarily at the level of state institutions, regions and municipalities. Private sector and non-governmental organizations were involved to a lesser extent.

In addition, it is not only the practice which is important in the field of Danish evaluation, but also theoretical and methodological concerns play their roles. In comparison to other Nordic countries (**Hansen & Rieper, 2010**), Danish evaluation system is not centralised and is mostly focused on internal evaluation. All of Denmark is eligible for the “Competitiveness and Employment” Objective.

Table 2. The EU funds of Cohesion Policy allocated in Denmark in programming periods **2000-2006 and 2007-2013 (million EUR)**

Objective	Fund	Total
	ERDF “Innovation and Knowledge”	254.8 ¹⁵
	ESF “More and Better Jobs”	245.8 ¹⁶
Total 2007 – 2013		500.6
	Objective 2	193
	Objective 3	382.4
	Urban II	5.3
	EQUAL	30.4
Total 2000 – 2006		611.1

Source: Financial plans from Programmes for the ERDF (Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority 2007b) and the ESF (Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority 2007a) in 2007-2013 period in Denmark

The temporal coincidence made it possible to merge together strategies of the national and regional level with the European objectives. However, it is important to remember that the EU funds, including national co-financing, accounts for only 0.07% of the Danish annual GDP. (**Andersen & Plougmann, 2010**)

Total budget for evaluation activities in this programming period devoted to the structural funds is estimated on approximately 1,5 million euro. The amount spent in 010 for the only contract in that year (regarding the Strategic Evaluation) amounts for 0,2 million euro.

¹⁵ With a similar national contribution

¹⁶ With a similar national contribution

For all the aforementioned reasons the question about evaluation culture development is not about how the EU funds advanced it, but rather how the previously existing evaluation system and culture has been used in case of evaluating structural funds. However, the field of structural funds evaluation in Denmark is much more complex than in other areas. For that reason it has been kept separately with supply side specializing in that field in Denmark.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Due to the regional reform there has been a substantial shift in the strategic focus from the programmes of 2000-2006 period to the programmes for the 2007-2013 period. In the result of that funds management responsibility was transferred from councils in 14 counties into forums in six regions. However, the Managing Authority - the Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority (DEACA) is a common body for management of funds on national level for both programmes ERDF and ESF. The national evaluation plan was presented to the Monitoring Committee in 2007 (**DG Regio & DG Employment, 2007**).

Managing Authority is planning, initiating and managing evaluations of the EU funds. In addition, for the period 2007-2013 there was established a joint Monitoring Committee for the two Danish operational programmes (ERDF and ESF). Each of the six regional growth forums is represented in the Monitoring Committee for the Regional Fund and the Social Fund in Denmark.

Monitoring Committee is responsible for the themes of evaluation and subsequently Managing Authority prepares and chooses external evaluators through appropriate procurement procedure. The body has also appointed the Technical Reference Group – a special partner for methodology and preliminary work before the decisions regarding the project themes.

Denmark implemented the electronic procurement system at an early stage - PePP (public e-procurement portal) owned by National Procurement Ltd. (SKI) was one of the first in Europe. The project applicants are obliged to use it. However, some shortfalls of the system have been recognised and due to relatively small amounts of the evaluation projects related to the EU funds it is not a computerised system. Of course, together with all relevant documents the applicants are obliged to submit also the electronic version of the full application, but all papers have to be sent by post or handed in person. Most commonly the procurement procedure is based on call for tenders with weighted criteria. First of all, judicial requirements are verified. Then the economically best offer is chosen that is not necessarily the cheapest offer, but has the most accurate research design for the best proposed price. From two technically identical offers, the cheapest is chosen. Detailed criteria for selection have not been specified by DEACA.

The two already completed evaluations in the programming period 2007-2013 (Thematic evaluation 2009 and Strategic evaluation 2011) have been conducted by external consultants. The consultants were chosen through procurement procedure. A number of consultants (or consortiums of consultants) submitted tenders for each of the two evaluations and after a thorough selection, the consultants for each of the two evaluations were selected.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There are no estimates available on the number of companies, institutes and universities that have been involved in conducting studies in the field of Cohesion Policy. However, a strong tendency towards cooperating with limited number of contracting companies can be observed from looking at the last two programming periods. Evaluations procured by DEACA have been conducted by the following institutions/firms:

1. Danish Technological Institute
2. NIRAS Consultants and DMA/Research
3. COWI

The executers are most commonly the national companies or Danish branches of multinational corporations. Also academics do not submit offers individually, but rather in partnerships. This is often due to highly specified nature of structural funds evaluations with very precise regulations and strategies describing the shapes of the policies. This complex knowledge is acquired by a small circle of professionals.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Overall, a good diagnosis of the evaluation research in Denmark has been presented by Hanne Foss Hansen: *‘Especially general evaluation is scarce. In addition, internal evaluation is more common than external partial evaluation. Furthermore, evaluation focuses more on implementation than on results and impact. Experiments are evaluated more often than other types of reform elements. External evaluations especially report on incremental change and implementation gaps.(...) Systematic knowledge about the dissemination, practice and impact of these evaluative elements in reforms is not available.’ (Hansen, 2005)*

The exact Evaluation Plan for the programming period 2007-2013 is accessible from DEACA in English, but the following evaluations (only those launched by DEACA¹⁷) have been conducted in the last two programming periods. The three most important studies of this programming period were:

- ⇒ **Ex ante evaluation** which has taken the form of an iterative process involving four sparring meetings and one workshop, in the course of which the evaluator's observations in relation to various draft versions of the programmes were sent to DEACA. **(Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority 2007b)**
- ⇒ **Thematic evaluation of the Danish structural funds, 2009** conducted by COWI Group. The main results indicated strong links between the EU funds implemented in close relationship with regional development policies¹⁸ that are strongly focused on the four *growth drivers*:
 - "Development of human resources"
 - "Innovation, knowledge sharing and knowledge development"
 - "Creation and development of new businesses"
 - "Application of new technologies"
- ⇒ **Strategic evaluation of the structural funds for the period 2007-2013** conducted again by the COWI Group. The study played an important role in showing the As discussed in the interview with DEACA representative **(Dissing, 2011)**, besides the carried out and planned evaluations there are also the strategic reports (2010 and 2012) and the annual implementation reports prepared by the Managing Authority, that technically are not considered as evaluations per se.

Other examples of studies not contracted by DEACA, but indicated by the Managing Authority as good evaluations:

- Strategic Evaluation on Innovation and the Knowledge Based Economy in relation to the Structural and Cohesion Funds for the programming period 2007-2013, Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation **(Technopolis, 2006)**,
- Evaluation of Danish Participation in the 6th and 7th framework programmes, Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation **(Technopolis, 2010)**,
- 8 small projects evaluations which present an analysis of the economic impact of 'Videnpilotordningen' ("Knowledge pilot" scheme) on participating firms (Centre for Economic and Business Research (CEBR), 2010) actual performance and the impact of the implemented programmes.

¹⁷ In addition to DEACA evaluations, only one evaluation at the regional level was carried out in this programming period by the Regional Growth Forum in North Jutland. It was finished in March 2010 and published in Danish on the website below:
<http://www.rim-europa.eu/index.cfm?q=p.file&r=a1da785f1f0834845faeb9c36f6e28a7>. No data is available about regional studies in the years 2000-2006.

¹⁸ Which is innovatory approach among member states

The formal quality assessment is responsibility of the supply side. The companies are following the guideline for evaluation prepared by the Managing Authority (Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority 2011). The Monitoring Committee has decided to establish the Technical Reference Group under the Monitoring Committee to serve as a sparring partner for the evaluation effort (for example, in relation to methodology, preliminary work before the decisions regarding the themes and quality control). The Reference Group is expected to meet twice a year.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There is a variety of evaluation culture facilitators accessible in Denmark. Strong academic background and active Evaluation Society¹⁹ are helping to enhance and reflect on development of evidence research in the country. Studies in evaluation are available at all levels (including PhD) and are often linked with business administration. Nonetheless, not many of such activities are directly related to Cohesion Policy and the EU funds. This is mainly explained by limited scale of research related to this field. There are only several studies in each programming period. Administration reform, evidence movement and regional policies are also all independent of the European Union regulations and are not caused by the structural funds expenditure as in many younger member states. That is why there are no big conferences on evaluation of structural funds, no platform of communication for stakeholders (except for the DEACA website) or strong links between Managing Authority and Danish Evaluation Society.

However, the Danish regions and DEACA have prepared the launch of a development project aiming to strengthen impact assessment. It is supposed to run for three years starting from 2011. The project aims to strengthen the evaluation and impact assessment of the initiatives of regional development. It is also supposed to give quantitative evidence on which projects work best and provide the best value for money.

The project includes:

- Development of measurement methods for different types of effects of regional projects (including use of data from Statistics Denmark),
- Development of sound evaluation design on regional level,
- Exchange of experience on the regional initiatives that work the best.

Although the REG STAT database (**Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs, 2010**) is not an impact indicator system related to the structural funds, it compiles a number of indicators measuring

¹⁹ Danish Evaluation Society is holding annual conference with themes on quality and application of evaluation, publishing DES newsletter, organize regular regional and national meetings, sharing program studies with Nordic countries.

performance and framework conditions of the Danish regions in areas critical to regional growth: education, entrepreneurship, innovation and research, and employment rate.

All of the indicators are divided into five regions and where possible also include Bornholm. Most of the indicators are based on register data from Statistics Denmark, but they are also benefiting from surveys with representative sample of the population (for example, in area of entrepreneurship) or internal data from companies (in the area of innovations and local knowledge). REG STAT has exactly the same interface as Statistics Denmark Bank. Thus, among other things, both have graphs and maps to display the indicators graphically on screen. All indicators can be downloaded in Excel, PC-Axis and other formats. In addition, majority is available as time series; therefore the evolution over time is traceable. Each indicator is updated over the years with new data when they become available. The data is used by the Regional Growth Forums, regional councils and other organizations for setting goals of regional development, follow-up strategies, identifying priorities etc. Most of the regional indicators, especially for the performances are very similar to the national and international indicators of the Government's Annual Competitiveness Report. This allows the regions to benchmark their performance not only internally in Denmark, but also with the best performing countries.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning the wide variety of information accessible from the website of Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority. All documents like strategies and research are available there. Data from Regional Statistic Bank and useful articles from Regional Competitiveness Review and Regional Policy Growth Review are published. There are sections on news, updates on rules and regulations, libraries and information on the EU funds expenditure from current and last periods. The website includes most of the crucial information in English, but it is more developed in Danish.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Utilization of evaluation results plays an important role in Denmark in general and in respect of Cohesion Policy it is among responsibilities of the Managing Authority. DEACA is disseminating results in regards to recommendations and reporting to Monitoring Committee on how the results will be used by them and other involved to stakeholders. Occasionally conferences can be held after the study is published, however no specific example have been found.

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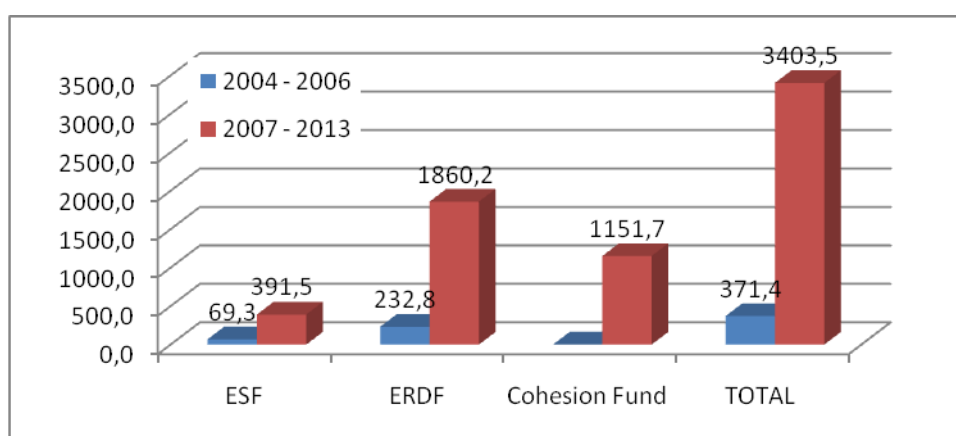
Estonia

Klaas-Jan Reincke

Context of Evaluation System

Cohesion policy forms a substantial resource in promoting strategic development and contributing to the growth potential in Estonia²⁰. The volume of EU Structural Funds assistance assigned to Estonia for the period 2007-2013 is almost four times higher than compared to the years 2004-2006. Cohesion policy funds has increased from around 8% of general government expenditures and as much as 60% of general government gross capital formation.

Figure 2. Overview of the Structural Funds assigned to Estonia (millions EUR)



Source: Ministry of Finance of Estonia

Therefore, the evaluation of the planning, implementation and effects of these programmes are an essential part of governmental policy cycle. The evaluation culture in Estonia is predominately shaped by the evaluation of structural funds, which is regulated by the Government Regulation on monitoring, evaluation and setting up monitoring committee²¹, that follows definitions and concepts of EC regulation No 1083/2006.

In parallel there are discussions going on how to broaden the knowledge and experience gained within the evaluation process of Structural Funds into the evaluation of implementation and effects of state budget finances. There might also be an option to link the structural funds evaluation to the evaluation of national and sectoral strategic programmes where the coordination and responsibility

²⁰ More information about pre-accession period (especially about macro impact evaluation) at: John Bradley, *Macro Impact Evaluation of National Development Plans: Ireland and Estonia*.

²¹ RT I 2006, 61, 461

lays on Government Office (www.riigikantselei.ee). Therefore, one can assume that lessons learned and practises developed during the evaluation of structural funds are valuable source of learning for developing impact assessment and evaluation framework of budgetary allocations as well as national and sectoral programmes. It could be expected that sooner or later these processes would be jointly coordinated and deigned as they share the common purpose to ensure efficient and effective use of public resources and promoting evidence based policy making.

National Audit Office (**The National Audit Office of Estonia 2011**) has also plaid a significant role in developing the evaluation culture of Estonia, especially via their rather critical performance audits in different spheres and tiers of public authorities.

Nevertheless, up til now the evaluation has rather been limited to the structural funds and its effects on general policy making have been modest. However, the strategic importance of evaluation in ensuring the quality of governmental policies has been acknowledged, especially during the consolidation of expenditures during the economic recession where the economy, efficiency and effectiveness gain especially important meaning. Therefore, it could be expected that the efforts to design a working evaluation system and promote development of evaluation culture will be strengthened in the coming future to enforce the lessons learned.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In order to understand the demand for evaluation one needs to understand the general build-up of the structural funds planning, implementation and monitoring system in Estonia.

The key document describing the overall strategy and implementation logic is the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 (NSRF) (Republic of Estonia 2007). According to the NSRF the overall responsibility for managing Cohesion Policy in Estonia is assigned to the Ministry of Finance (www.fin.ee). Ministry of Finance organises the allocation of structural assistance across operational programmes, is responsible for the creation and update of the necessary legal framework, disburses support payments and conducts audits according to the legislation of the European Union. It is also responsible for planning, designing, contracting and managing the evaluations on the NSRF level, ie above the operational programmes. The Managing, Certifying and Auditing Authorities of the structural assistance are all subordinates to the Ministry of Finance.

NSRF is implemented via three operational programmes (OP), each of which having a separate intermediate body (rakendusasustus):

- Operational Programme for the Development of the Economic Environment is managed by Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications (www.mkm.ee),

- Operational Programme for the Development of the Living Environment is led by Ministry of the Environment (www.envir.ee),
- Operational Programme for Human Resource Development is led by Ministry of Education and Research (www.hm.ee).

Ministries form 1st level intermediate bodies that are responsible for planning, designing, contracting and managing the evaluations on OP and Priority axes levels.

In addition, there are a number of implementing units (*rakendusüksus*) or 2nd level intermediate bodies that are responsible for carrying out the daily management of SF activities and communicate directly with the recipients of the structural assistance. There are altogether 10 such kind of entities. Most of these institutions have emerged during the last 10 years to ensure the proper implementation of SF and national policy programmes.

Each of these institutions is in one way or another involved in evaluation process. Implementing agencies have the right to plan and carry out evaluations within OP-s, mainly on measure or programme level. However, their role in this process varies significantly. In some areas they possess a full authority to decide the aim and content of the evaluation assignment, in other cases 1st level implementing bodies plan and design the evaluation and the 2nd level implementing bodies only contract and manage the evaluation process.

Launching an evaluation can be justified on a basis of management needs, monitoring data or results of the risk evaluation. Evaluations are primarily used in addition to the monitoring activities in the areas where the data on implementation is too vague to justify management decisions or where the existing knowledge indicates to potential problems that need to be investigated closer before continuing implementation of measures or launching new measures.

The evaluation process is coordinated by Evaluation Management Committee (EMC) that is formed by the Decree of the Minister of Finance. The EMC coordinates evaluation activities, formulates evaluation questions and performs quality control on NSRF and OP level, all lower level evaluations are not formally centrally coordinated, but the planning is nevertheless based on mutual information sharing in order to avoid overlapping of major evaluation activities as much as possible. EMC serves thus as a platform for sharing information, knowledge and experience on the demand side. Evaluation on the operational programme levels and horizontal evaluations are summarised into an evaluation work-plan that is approved by the Evaluation Management Committee. The work plan covers evaluation activities throughout the financial perspective 2007 – 2013.

Evaluation results and suggestions on operational programme level are submitted for information to the Operational Programme Monitoring Committee by the respective intermediate body. Ex-post evaluation results are also presented to the EC if requested.

The responsibilities for planning and managing evaluations are usually integrated with monitoring tasks and are included to the responsibilities of the civil servants that are involved in structural funds management processes. In the Ministry of Finance, there is a separate department, dealing with monitoring and evaluation of structural funds.

Evaluation studies are usually contracted via public tendering and they are subject to public procurement law. Therefore the procurement procedure depends on the expected size of the contract, which usually varies significantly depending on the subject and scope of the evaluation. The offers are evaluated usually using threefold criteria – technical and methodological quality of the offer, expertise of the evaluation team and price. It is common that price forms around 1/3 of the overall score, thus there is much space for technical evaluations to allow for the best methodology to be offered by the evaluation team. The evaluation forms an integral part of overall public tendering and does not obtain any kind of special treatment. Hence, although some common trends are promoted among the contractors such as importance of technical/methodological criteria in evaluations. There is no standard system or specific guidelines for contracting the evaluations.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Evaluations on the programme level are usually based on the institutional tenders leading to the contract, involvement of individual experts with specific expertise are mainly encouraged with the tender documentation. The estimated total costs of evaluations planned in the evaluation work plan for 2010 was approximately 50 000 euros. This size of the market is not very extensive and does not lead to a specialisation of companies. As a results, evaluations usually form just a small part of the activities of the suppliers.

The number of suppliers in the area of evaluations has been rather stable over the last ten years. The evaluation expertise is primarily offered by six-seven leading companies/institutions. There are two independent policy research centres (think tanks), three-four local affiliates of international companies, a few private own consultancy companies and three public universities who have been active in taking part in tendering. The universities have not exposed their full potential as the evaluations so far have been rather administrative and technical nature. It could be expected that with the growing number of evaluations measuring the effects of programmes universities' interest would emerge as the task will be more challenging and would allow to exploit more scientific methods.

Usually the number of tenderers for each evaluation remains around 3-4. It is a common practise that the tenderers form consortia to combine the strengths of each individual tenderer. In addition, external experts and individual consultants are invited to participate in evaluations depending on the nature of the task (eg. Experts of R&D, transport construction, public procurements etc).

Low number of supplies leads to the situation where the competitive pressure is too low to enforce quality improvement, especially new methodological approaches or international expertise.

Although there is a large share of companies with international background, international expertise is not very evident. Increasing involvement of international expertise in combination of country specific local knowledge would ensure a better quality of evaluations.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Number of evaluations carried out in Estonia has been modest (see table in the annex). The table contains all evaluations that are included into the workplan of Evaluation Management Committee. There are additional evaluations carried out by the 2nd level intermediate bodies which are not included into the evaluation workplan. The management committee is informed about the planning and results of these evaluations.

It is evident that the dominating types of evaluation are determined by the programming phase of the SF implementation. During the programme implementation the focus is on ongoing evaluations, at the end of the programme period the focus shifts towards ex-post evaluations. As each of the evaluations has been assigned a specific task, the trend has been so far towards evaluations of administrative implementation schemes and strategic coherence of programmes. The evaluation of effects and impacts has been limited – the period of 2004-2006 has been too short to lead to some significant effects, the period of 2007 – 2013 has not last long enough to allow to evaluate the effects. Evaluations on NSRF and OP level are dominated by qualitative approach. Surveys, statistical analysis and econometric modelling have been used to evaluate effects on specific measures or programmes. However, one could expect the increase of the importance of the quantitative measures in coming evaluations where the effects of the SF are expected to be studied more thoroughly.

The scope of the studies has been merely national covering all areas of evaluations; regional dimensions have not been in the focus until the last ongoing evaluation. There has been a number of evaluations carried out on programme and measure level. These evaluations have mainly been concentrated on entrepreneurship, innovation, employment and education measures.

The budgets for evaluations have varied between 25 000 - 150 000 EUR

All reports are studied by the relevant officials and presented to the Monitoring Committees of Operational Programmes. The major results are also presented to the Government within the framework of quarterly budgetary reports. However, there are no agreed quality assessment criteria, neither is there any guidance on quality assessment. Each of the officials evaluates the quality of the

reports based on their best understanding and experience as well as relevance of the suggestions and results to his/her field of expertise.

One of the outstanding reports has been the Evaluation of the SF operational programmes, where the evaluators managed to offer sector-specific advice and therefore created a basis for clear ownership of recommendations leading to the control and implementation of the recommendations. Another good example has been the ex-ante evaluation of the NSRF especially because of the strong methodological basis.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The evaluation expertise was extensively promoted among the respective civil servants during the start-up training for the 2007-2013 SF period. These training sessions contained personal consultations and assignments for each participant with thorough feedback given by instructors. Most of the officials that have participated in these training sessions are still active in the area of evaluation. Based on this training an evaluation work-book was worked out (www.strukturifondid.ee), which is also being used for updating the basics on evaluation.

Currently, the sharing of knowledge and expertise among the contractors of the evaluation studies takes place in monitoring committee meetings, where evaluation is one of the topics among many other questions. Therefore, the attention usually remains modest and the exchange of best practise takes place in informal consultation between different authorities. This is also facilitated by small number of officials dealing with evaluations. Evaluation reports and guidance are made public on SF web-site, however, they are not very extensively used. There are also a methodological guidance and training materials available (**Rahandusministeerium 2011a**), but they have not being updated since their completion in 2007/2008. More emphasis has been tuned to the monitoring systems of the SF implementations, where regular meetings take place, guidelines are being updated. There are no post-graduate studies or regular training programmes offered to the civil servants neither to the public administration students. Evaluation is usually dealt with in general framework of policy making process and there are a few academic courses on policy evaluation and impact assessment.

The need for systematic development of evaluation culture and know-how motivated three of the main providers of evaluation services in Estonia to establish the Estonian Evaluation Society ESTES on 29 December 2010. Its mission is to support evidence- and participation-based policy and strategy making. The main tools envisaged to be used to this end are the development of common standards, terminology (in Estonian) and methods for evaluations to be carried out in Estonia, raising the professional and ethical level of evaluations and evaluators as well as strengthening the knowledge and culture of evaluation in Estonia. In addition to the public policy level, ESTES would like to

contribute to increasing the learning capacity of systems and organisations. As ESTES has been just recently launched, its activities are only in the starting phase.

Only last few years there have been ideas and plans circulating on the need to develop the evaluation culture with in primarily starting to make more use of evaluation results and follow up activities. There is a long way to go towards joint methodological development of evaluation studies and promotion of evaluation results to the wider public. The newly created ESTES would create a strong starting platform of this challenging development.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Evaluation reports are accessible to the wider public over the Structural Funds web-page as well as via web-pages of respective intermediate bodies. Usually, they are also presented on the suppliers' web-page. The target audience of the evaluation results depend on the topic of evaluation. In general the results are discussed in the Monitoring Committees that involve in addition to the high level civil servants representatives of social partners and local governments. The results are also presented on the press conferences to the larger audiences. However, due to the administrative and technical focus reports have not served very wide interest of the general public.

The implementation of the recommendations depends on the quality of the recommendations, the more specific and well grounded they are, the more likely they will be taken on the board. Policy makers use evaluations to strengthen their arguments in policy design thus promoting to the evidence based policy making.

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Finland

Kaisa Lähteenmäki-Smith²²

Context of Evaluation System

Finland's share of EU Structural Funds for the period 2007-2013 is a total of approximately EUR 1.7 billion. The amount of national public funding is about EUR 2.01 billion (75% of the state, municipalities, 25%). An estimated of EUR 2.3 billion of private funding is spent on EU projects. The funding focuses mainly on eastern and northern parts of Finland.

EU Structural Funds Programmes 2007 - 2013 aims at promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, employment and the knowledge economy, as well as developing the regional economy and creating new jobs. In Finland, the instruments implemented include the Regional competitiveness and employment objective and the European territorial cooperation objective.

Regional competitiveness and employment objective highlights the need to focus in particular on research, innovation, accessibility and job creation. Human capital investments play a major role in adapting to economic change and restructuring.

European territorial cooperation objective and the ENPI programme support cross-border cooperation and cross-border regional integration as well as creation and strengthening of regional and urban networks. In 2007-2013, Finland participates in implementation of nine European territorial cooperation objectives, and three of the ENPI programmes. Cross-border cooperation's priority is the Union's external borders (Finland / Russia) and northern regions of the Baltic Sea cooperation.

The ESF operational programme for Continental Finland in 2007-2013 in turn is a nationwide programme, which funds projects whose aim is to promote employment, staying at work and social inclusion. The financial framework of the programme is EUR 615.4 million. In addition, national public funding to the amount of EUR 798.7 million has been reserved for the implementation of the programme. Within the national section of the ESF programme, funding focuses on large national wholes that complement national policies (**Tempo Economics & Ramboll, 2010**).

²² In writing the article the author interviewed Aila Rynnänen and Pasi Rantahalvari at the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. Their time and expertise is greatly appreciated, whilst the content of the article remains the responsibility of the author.

Structural Fund programmes are closely coordinated with national support structures and programmes, particularly in employment, entrepreneurship, innovation and energy policy areas. This is naturally a requirement for effective policy, as Structural Funds resources available are relatively marginal in their volume. The means by which this coordination is achieved on the regional level are the Regional Development Programmes.

On the national level, coordination is at the hand of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, who is responsible for preparing national regional development targets together with other ministries and Regional Councils. In addition, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy is responsible for coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the preparation and implementation of regional strategic programmes and other programmes under the Regional Development Act jointly with other ministries and Regional Councils.

The bodies involved in the administration and implementation are described below. Particularly important for the evaluation functions is the monitoring committee, which also organises a separate evaluation steering group in order to give direct feedback and quality assurance to the evaluators and to make sure that they are on the right track.

The responsibility for evaluation lies with the managing authority and they provide guidance to the potential project applicants, for instance (**Rakenerahastot, 2011a**). This guidance does not address evaluation, which could be seen as an issue to be addressed if quality awareness and evaluative knowledge was to be promoted more actively. During this programming period ESF does expect evaluation from all its projects, which would also tend to be indicative of the fact that some common guidance might be useful to ensure common standards. Previously both samples of projects and thematic projects have also been evaluated, in addition to single projects (**Uusikylä & Karinen, 2005**). Commissioning evaluations naturally has to pay heed to legislation on public procurement ("Finnish Act of Public Contracts" of 2007), but otherwise there is little in the form of guidelines or shared evaluation criteria for project level evaluation.

Finland is one of the countries in which evaluation culture has been considerably influenced by EU Membership and Structural Funds regulation has played a part, as argued for instance by (**Bachtler & Polverari, 2004**). Evaluation has emerged largely in connection with the EU Membership and in conjunction with Structural Funds programmes, gradually spreading to national policies and programmes as well. According to the managing authority representatives as well as other sources, evaluation has become a more systematic and professional exercise. There are critical views as well, in particular on the utilization of evaluation results, where the perception is that the results could be used more effectively. Evaluation can at best provide a starting point for dialogue and shed light on issues that would otherwise remain un-said or un-covered. It is essential that the evaluators can play the part of 'critical friends' and are able to shed enough light on problematic issues and knowledge

gaps. As the Structural Funds are mostly about testing and piloting new things and developing experimental methods and practices (in particular the European Social Fund = ESF activities), it is essential to be able to judge the final value added, i.e. would the activity have been undertaken without the ESF. This perception of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy has been particularly important during the current programming period and the current ESF evaluation.

In addition to the programme evaluations (on the national level) and project level (decentralized), the National Audit Office has undertaken some performance reviews on Structural Funds, which have been thematic and cross-cutting. In 2008 Finland was also participating in the Parallel Audit of the Performance (output/effectiveness) of the Structural Funds in the areas of Employment and on regionally implemented Information Society-activities (**VTV / National Audit Office, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c**). The findings of these studies were largely similar to observations made in evaluations and by the authorities commissioning evaluations alike, i.e. due to different factors it is difficult to ascertain whether the impacts can be attributed to the Structural Funds activities.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The system of contracting evaluation studies on the programme level in Finland is centralised, which means, that for each programming period the managing authority was responsible for contracting the ex ante and mid-term evaluations. The European Commission has been responsible for the ex post evaluation stage, though this was one point where the managing authority representatives felt that the national authorities should play a more active part. It was seen as valuable also for national policy that the managing authorities would commission ex post studies that could shed light on the sustainable impacts of the programmes. This may be an item on the policy agenda after 2013. Thus far the more holistic analysis of regional development has taken place in another context, i.e. that of regional trend analysis or evaluation of 'broad regional policy' (as opposed to the 'narrow' regional policy, see **Polverari & Michie 2011**), including also infrastructure, educational and regionalised welfare policies etc (**Sisäasiainministeriö, 2007**).

The projects are also increasingly using evaluation as a means of improving their quality and effectiveness. The practice varies greatly across the projects, as do the methodologies selected. In some cases evaluations are undertaken as self-evaluation exercises, while in other cases they are external in nature. Some regional authorities have commissioned their own evaluations of the projects implemented and in some cases these have even sought to span across programming periods. In some cases such evaluations have been thematic, relating to environmental or equal opportunities for instance (**Jalava, Koskela, von Hertzen, & Virtanen, 2007; Vuorela, Haila, & Vaittinen, 2008**). Evaluation demand in this sense is considerable and if one was to count all the evaluations undertaken in 2000-2006 or 2007-2013, result would be hundreds. While according to

the managing authority representative, there are fewer evaluations during 2007-2013 due to Community Initiatives no longer being available on the portfolio of policy measures, projects have become increasingly active in evaluation activity. Different authorities on the regional and national levels have commissioned evaluations on their own projects and development activities, while the programme level evaluations are more standardized, with ex ante commissioned on the programme level and mid-term evaluations on the regional-level Operational Programmes (2000-2006, Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western Finland) and thematically across the priority areas (2007-2013, business development, innovation, accessibility and development of the operational environment, as well as sustainability and the environment).

National and domestic influences become increasingly intertwined. The evaluation culture as visible in the case of Finnish Cohesion policy is therefore also connected to the quality management thinking and performance management, where practices have been developed independently of the direct EU influence. Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's Office have been particularly active in this field, as it is in their interest that not only sectoral policies are monitored, evaluated and assessed, rather a more holistic and cross-cutting quality and performance management is put into place and performance is continuously assessed and evaluated (**Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Finland, 2006, 2007; Pöysti, 2006**). The challenge here has been the relative independence of the sector ministries and the fact that performance management practice has further strengthened this sector orientation at the expense of a more systematic and holistic approach. In a recent OECD Review, this point was made very strongly and it was recommended that Finland should implement a systematic assessment and evaluation-culture to foster priority-setting and resource flexibility, for instance through the introduction of a systematic ex ante financial and performance assessment of new legal regulations and programmes (**OECD, 2010**). It was also recommended that mid-term review should be used as a means of reviewing the objectives of the Government Programme instead of simply reassessing implementation. Another proposal was to use programme review to eliminate and/or reduce „programme spread and to refocus the work of the public service on priority areas.

During the current programme period 2007–2013, efforts have been made to make the evaluation work for the ESF programme for Continental Finland more closely tied to supporting the implementation of the programme through on-going evaluation. The purpose of the on-going evaluation is to provide relevant and practical feedback at regular intervals regarding, for example, the relevance of the programme goals, the efficiency of implementation and execution, the functionality of programmatic guidance processes and the preliminary results and impacts of the activities. Based on the principle, the aim of both the evaluation and reporting work is to produce systematic and comparable evaluation data that takes into account the programme life span. The

indicators that describe the results and impacts of the programme and the various programme priorities have been defined in the ESF programme evaluation plan for the programme period 2007–2013. During the first ESF evaluation round in 2007–2009, the indicators were further defined and monitoring and indicator systems with their measurement scales that support on-going programme-level and priority specific evaluation were created.

Evaluations are funded through the technical assistance, the share of which in 2007-2013 in ESF is 4%. Annual budget allocated to evaluation on the national level for ESF is 160 000-180 000 eur. Financial volumes allocated to individual evaluations vary. Price is not a key selection criteria in commissioning evaluations on the national level: the criteria is openly described in the tendering documents and is usually 20%, while understanding of the task and quality of the evaluation plan and the team are more central basis upon which the decisions are based (40% working programme, 40% expertise, in most cases). Selection criteria vary considerably more on the regional and local levels and in individual projects price tends to play a much more important part, as the resources are considerably scarce.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There is a relatively well developed professional community of evaluators in Finland. For cohesion policy evaluations on the national level, any call for tenders usually gets a response from five to fifteen different companies or research organisations. Number of organisations has increased and from the Client's perspective this is seen as a positive influence, as this can potentially improve the quality, as well as bringing a more broad-based and diverse pool of expertise at their disposal. The evaluators represent both the public and private sector, with university institutes and private consultancies being the main supply side partners. There is extensive cooperation between the evaluators as well and consortia are often built in order to provide the best expertise possible. There is increasingly a tendency to cooperate across the organisations and companies providing evaluation services, thereby also ensuring that expertise from different policy instruments, sectors and programmes is shared more broadly. International experts are rare in the Structural Funds evaluations, while they are increasingly common in evaluations in Finland otherwise. The language barrier and small market have kept the business relatively limited for international companies.

There has been a process of professionalization of evaluation. The methods are relatively standardised, also depending on the Client's way of formulating the terms of reference. As the evaluation community is quite small, the standardisation process is also partly the consequence of the same experts moving across the organisations involved in the evaluation activities. Clients of evaluations naturally welcome methodological innovation and field work is welcomed, while often restricted by the relatively small resources allocated to evaluations. Clients also welcome and

emphasise the need to ensure access to tacit knowledge and multiple sources. Intellectual curiosity and ownership were also emphasized by the managing authority representatives: the best evaluations are the outcome of a process where both of these are ensured.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The utilisation of the end products and of evaluative knowledge is an important issues debated quite widely in Finland. The trend of 'evidence-based policy' has been influencing public policy and governance, but there are a number of familiar bottlenecks when assessing the products and how they are used. Reports are used mainly by those that commissioned them, in the case of cohesion policy the managing authorities themselves, as well as other organisations involved in the monitoring committees (in addition to state and regional level representatives, the third sector and social partners). In most cases the monitoring committee establishes a separate body to support the evaluation and to make sure that the outcomes and results are quality assured and all useful information can be used as soon as possible. There were a number of issues that were raised by the interviewees on making sure the products are useful:

- ⇒ **Clarity of purpose:** Making sure that the evaluation task is formulated clearly enough and the Client and the Evaluator have the same understanding of what this entails.
- ⇒ **Ensuring appropriate scope:** much of the information produced through day-to-day monitoring and annual reporting is useful and could be used more effectively if evaluation and monitoring were developed more in parallel and in dialogue. Evaluators should aim at providing added value to monitoring and explaining the impact chains and impact mechanisms of different measures and methods.
- ⇒ **Clarity of language:** Paying particular attention to the wording and language used in reporting is essential in order to get the main findings and conclusions across to policy-makers and practitioners. Clarity of language and argumentation is a key success factor in this respect and if the reports were to be used more broadly in developing project activity and ensuring knowledge transfer, more attention should be paid to avoiding overly bureaucratic language and professional cohesion policy jargon.
- ⇒ **Fit-for-purpose methods:** Using methods that provide useful and appropriate end results is part of the art and craft of evaluation. Mixed methods were seen as particularly useful and while quantifiable information has previously been the norms and golden standard, more attention has recently also been paid to qualitative methods and the need to get illustrative examples and best practice descriptions to complement the picture provided by quantitative monitoring an evaluation. While the EVALSED and MEANS have provided methodological guidance on the European level,

they may be too technical in nature and more substantive guidelines and methodological support may be more needed, illustrative examples of analysis of counter-factual situations, longer time series etc. In the future monitoring data for trends and possible user-panels or barometers on the regional level could provide additional information. The value added of policy interventions, the mechanisms at play and sustainability of effects are issues that require more methodological development also in the future.

- ⇒ **Practical applications:** Seeking to embed evaluative knowledge on the level of practice is important and there are views that more attention should be provided to ensuring that also those organisations involved in concrete development activities on the local and regional level better are taken into consideration in developing evaluations. Tangible results and concrete examples are useful in this respect.²³
- ⇒ **Linking evaluation to decision-making:** while already now the evaluations are used to developing policy, more attention could be given to communicating evaluators to policy-makers. This would require a more pragmatic approach to evaluation and making sure the messages and argumentation used are clear and concise.
- ⇒ **Providing international state-of-the-art:** evaluators are part of an international community and cohesion policy is European in its nature. Therefore the evaluators need to follow the developments elsewhere very closely and bring back to their national contexts the best methods and the most innovative approaches, while also keeping abreast of what is happening in the actual cohesion policy sphere.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The availability and access to evaluation results of Cohesion Policy in Finland is quite good, though the decentralisation makes the access and transparency sometimes challenging. This means that the national level outputs are available online (**Rakennerahistot, 2011b**). An improvement during this programming period has been the integration of ESF and ERDF under the same roof, both in terms of the ministry responsible (after departmental changes, Ministry of Employment and the Economy now houses the structural policy sections of previous Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Labour). This has made the coordination easier. Both ESF and ERDF have their electronic materials and documents available (**Rakennerahistot, 2011b**), while the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry still has its own website (**Rural Network Unit of Finland, 2011**). In particular in business development sector, the funds are parallel and in some cases complementary (in many cases rural companies

²³ Getting across the messages of cohesion policy is not easy. The communication aspects have been given increasing attention and there was even an evaluation of the ESF and ERDF communication in 2010 (**Hytkilä et al., 2011**)

could have funding from either through rural policy instruments or those of the ESF or ERDF), integrating all programme information in one website may be considered useful in the future. Most materials are available in Finnish and Swedish, as Finland is a bilingual country. Relatively little information is provided in English however.

Professionalisation of the evaluation activity has been on-going since the 1990s. While in the early 2000s, there was still considerable lack of evaluation training and professional standards, situation has changed rather rapidly and across the 1990s and 2000s. Evaluation has become an essential ingredient in the post-Ne Public management governance debate (and practice) in Finland, with the number of evaluations undertaken also increasing exponentially (**Temmes 2004: 86**). All universities that have training and education in public management and political or administrative sciences also provide courses in evaluation. Polytechnics and other educational establishments also train in quality and performance systems, where evaluation plays a part. Yet there is no one training for evaluators and the professional background of those involving in professional evaluation activity varies greatly. Finnish Evaluation Society (FES) was established in 1999, with the aim of advancing and maintaining knowledge on evaluation research and evaluation practices in Finland.

Communication is one of the most critical questions relating to evaluation and the interfaces between producers, recipients and target groups of evaluation knowledge and information as policy-relevant evidence. Getting across the messages of cohesion policy is not easy. The communication aspects have been given increasing attention and there was even an evaluation of the ESF and ERDF communication in 2010 (**Hylkilä et al., 2011**). It is generally considered very difficult to draw attention to regional or cohesion policy issues in the national media. Regional and local media is more interested in these issues, in particular on concrete local achievements and success stories. The monitoring committees regularly report from their meetings and organize press conferences, which are often reported in the local and regional media. On the national level it is mainly the managing authority that is active on the national level and much of the information and communication is to professionals and peers (e.g. through webpage or publications and news-letters such as *Alueintegraattori* (**Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, 2011**)).

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

It can be concluded from previous studies, recent evaluations and interviews that while the monitoring and reporting system is working quite well, there are still challenges in making sure that indicators are appropriate. The main challenges lies in making sure the indicators reflect imputable effects that are caused by Structural Funds alone. This is also where the main demand for evaluative knowledge lies: there needs to be a concerted effort to understand and show what are the mechanisms behind effective policy measures, what are the most appropriate ways of organising the

projects and programmes and what are the impact chains that emerge from different policy options. Comparability of data across the different regions and measures can sometimes also be a challenge, as the Audit Office concluded in 2008. It is important that the cohesion policy actions are regionally specific and needs-based, but at the same time this should not hamper the availability of comparative data. In addition to reliable standardised quantitative data qualitative information is essential and in many cases in order to understand the mechanisms even more important than quantitative data. Those commissioning evaluations and using them in decision-making share the view that qualitative and professionally conducted in-depth evaluations are more useful and of value than evaluations based on quantitative data only.

Timing is also essential for assessing the effects and for ensuring the use of evaluation information and insights in decision-making. In many cases the stakeholders are of the opinion that evaluations are undertaken too late in the process. Shifting more to process-based evaluation and on-going evaluation is one way of responding to this perceived weakness. Also ensuring an open and continuous dialogue is part of the answer: it is important to ensure that those making decisions have all the information at their disposal and that there is an open dialogue on the findings, results, methodological choices and utilisation needs.

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France

Łukasz Krajnow

Context of Evaluation System²⁴

Evaluation of public policy in France (l'évaluation des politiques publiques), including the evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes, is understood in several ways. That is systematic and objective assessment of a programme or policy, their assumptions, implementation process and results in respect to their relevance, effectiveness, durability, efficiency and usefulness of actions taken thereunder. It should provide reliable and useful information about the research object, thereby supporting the decision-making process and fostering the cooperation of all partners involved in the programme implementation. Therefore, evaluation is the primary instrument for the implementation of State's reform (*Bourdin et al. 2004*).

The first attempts to incorporate evaluation into the public decision-making processes were made in 1968-1989 and these were mostly isolated initiatives of individual ministries. Only after the Decree of 1983 on Rationalisation of Budget Decisions (Rationalisation des Choix Budgetaires) and, subsequently, Ordinance 90-82 of 22.01.1990 on evaluation of public policies a more institutionalised approach towards evaluation have started (*Furubo et al. 2002*).

The allocation of funds for financing of the Cohesion Policy in France in 2007-2013 amounts to EUR 33.9 billion, of which EUR 14.4 billion will be the funds derived under the Structural Funds (9 billion under the ERDF and 5.4 billion under the ESF), with the remaining EUR 13.9 billion obtained under domestic financing (public and private). The financing rules regulate 36 Operational Programmes, of which 31 are co-financed under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and 5 under the European Social Fund (*European Commission 2009*).

²⁴ In writing the article the author interviewed Thomas Peguy (DATAR), Claude Rack and Aude Faravelli (both from DGEFP). Their time and expertise is greatly appreciated, whilst the content of the article remains the responsibility of the author.

The allocation of funds between individual objectives is presented on the Figure below:

Table 3 EU Funds for France 2007-2013 (in billion EUR)

Objective	Fund	EU	National Public	National Private	Total
Convergence	ERDF	2.3	1.9	0.6	4.8
	ESF	0.9	0.3	0.05	1.3
Total Convergence		3.2			
Regional Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	5.8	8.4	3.7	17.9
	ESF	4.5	3.3	1.2	9
Total Regional Competitiveness and Employment		10.3			
Total European Territorial Cooperation*	ERDF	0.9	-	-	0.9
TOTAL		14.4	13.9	5.6	33.9

Figures have been rounded up

* Each Territorial Cooperation programme includes a minimum of 15% co-financing from each participating Member State.

Source: (European Commission 2009)

The share of the European Funds in relation to the total French expenditure incurred on increasing socio-economic cohesion is insignificant, given that in 2007-2010 the expenditure on State aid and investment on the side of State budget amounted to EUR 331.69 billion²⁵. Hence, the contribution of the Cohesion Policy to the development of France should be viewed as an added value, notably in the scope of defining the target groups, success indicators and good practices (**Faravelli 2011**).

In 1997 Laurence Jourdain²⁶ published an article, in which he described the role of the European Funds in the formation of the French evaluation culture in the following way: "As a rule, the administrative authorities in France seem to gradually get adjusted to the Brussels requirements; the evaluation practice is accepted, sometimes taken over and extended to pilot programmes of domestic policies. (...) At the regional and local level, a trend towards popularisation of systematic application of the evaluation required for the implementation of financial programmes under the

²⁵ In 2007 it was EUR 77.64 billion, in 2008 – EUR 77.94 billion, in 2009– EUR 89,4 billion, in 2010 – EUR 86,71 billion, and it represents 27.1% the total State expenditure. Own elaboration on the basis of *Ministre du Budget des Comptes publics et de la Réforme de l'État 2010*; *Ministre du Budget des Comptes publics et de la Réforme de l'État 2011a*; *Ministre du Budget des Comptes publics et de la Réforme de l'État 2011b*.

²⁶ Chairman of the council of political science at the University of Amiens and member of the European Centre for University Studies (CRUCE – Centre de Recherche Universitaire sur la Construction Européenne).

Structural Funds is more and more visible. Such a requirement is to be applied **as of 1993** in reference to the planning agreements concluded by a region and the State, as well as agreements concluded by and between cities. Evaluations encouraged by local and regional self-governments are more and more popular, and this practice seems to enjoy increasing interest of the competent political and administrative authorities. Admittedly, the elaboration of reports is still assigned to high-ranking officials or consulting offices, yet closer and closer cooperation between various local entities, in particular with universities, can be observed.” (*Jourdain 1997*).

The subsequent developments do not confirm the thesis about greater role of universities in the development of evaluation research. In fact, the development of evaluation culture in France was connected with the decentralisation reform, or to be more precise, with the resultant obligation to evaluate contracts between the State and a Region (the so-called CPER – Contrat de Projet Etat-Region). The obligation to evaluate CPERs was regulated by a number of circulars (starting with the Circular of 9 December 1993), of which the last one²⁷ established the National Steering Committee at the national level for joint assessment of OPs and CPERs and the Regional Committee for OP/CPER Evaluation (**Comité Régional de l’Evaluation**). The task of this Committee included, for example, the following: channelling the research (plan for the conduct of assessment), drawing up annual summaries of assessments and actions taken as a result thereof, suggesting methods for dissemination and publication of assessments. Hence, it can be assumed that the previously created system incorporates the obligatory OP evaluation in the formerly existing framework for evaluation of CPER contracts. The one to which appropriate cohesion of actions and indicators is assured. The most distinct expression thereof is constituted by common training of persons responsible for CPER evaluation and persons responsible for OPs.

It should be pointed out that the special Secretariat for Forecasts and Evaluation of Public Policies, which gathers every month on a regular basis, has been functioning at the level of the National Assembly since 2007. It is an element that was corrected in relation to the high rank awarded to France in the research carried out by Furubo in 1995²⁸. In addition, the amendment of 23 July 2008 has introduced evaluation to the Constitution of the Republic of France (Article 24)²⁹. Despite that fact, cooperation between researchers and politicians in the scope of evaluation is still insufficient. Although today evaluation is commonly applied, in France it is more often used as justification for public spending or as a threat, instead of a tool that would be used by the country to actively formulate public policies³⁰.

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http://www.dgcl.interieur.gouv.fr/sections/les_collectivites_te/interventions_econom/developpement_econom/contrat_de_programme/les_contrats_de_proj_1/downloadFile/attachedFile_5/annexes_a_la_circulaire_n_5213_SG_du_25_avril_2007_sur_la_mise_en_oeuvre_des_CPER_2007_2013.pdf?nocache=1311591583.46
Annexe relative au dispositif national et régional d’évaluation des contrats de projets 2007-2013 et des PO FEDER Objectifs compétitivité régionale et emploi et convergence 2007/2013.

²⁸ The maturity of evaluation culture in France was ranked eleven points (with eighteen available).

²⁹ “Le Parlement vote la loi. Il contrôle l’action du Gouvernement. Il évalue les politiques publiques. Il contrôle l’action du Gouvernement. Il évalue les politiques publiques.” Art, 24 Constitution de la République Française, du 4 Octobre 1958.

³⁰ “Evaluation has become a way to legitimate actions at political level, to determine whether objectives have been fulfilled when a policy started and if the financial means spent were worth it. Politics more and more refer to evaluation because it has also become a communication tool, either to value their action or to avoid being disclaimed. In a way, it complies with the growing need of transparency and growing control from citizen (social media) and media” (*Faravelli 2011*).

It should be highlight the important role of self-evaluation of the system. Thorough reflection on its functioning led an expert to determine the list of factors that should be taken into account when evaluating system and context³¹

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Evaluation actions in France involve as many as 71 institutions of the public sector. This derives from the fact that evaluation in France is a highly institutionalised practice.

Central level:

La DATAR (La Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale), that is: the Interdepartmental Delegation for Regional Planning and Attractiveness. It was established on 14th of February 1963, transformed in 2005 into DIACT (la Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement et à la compétitivité des territoires), and in 2009 again renamed DATAR³². DATAR is subordinate to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development; it co-creates, implements and coordinates the regional development policy and the Cohesion Policy. Both of them are co-financed by the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) in cooperation with local actors, including the local communities, representatives of associations operating for socio-economic development (e.g. ARF – Association of Regions of France), etc.

Contracting and evaluation of actions co-financed by the European Social Fund lies within the responsibility of the DGEFP (Delegation General a l'Emploi, et a la Formation Professionnelle in French Ministère du travail, de l'emploi et de la santé). Regarding evaluation of ESF a specific mention has to be pointed out about the activity of the Scientific Committee of Evaluation, which is built out from the National Monitoring Committee and reports to it. The Scientific Committee of Evaluation is an ESF ad hoc evaluation committee that validates all the work prepared and done according to the evaluation plan. It gathers representatives of the main stakeholders taking part in the implementation of the program as well as experts. They dealt with various matters such as communication, gender mainstreaming, and role of ESF in the governance and monitoring of active inclusion mechanisms. It has, a great leverage effect regarding the improvement of the current programming period and the start of negotiations regarding 2014-2020 programming period, specifically to clarify roles and to improve simplification and efficiency.

Regional level:

Twenty-six representatives of the State (in each region) and 26 Regional Evaluation Committees. These committees are responsible for coordination of evaluation actions in each region³³. The operation of these committees within the scope of operational programmes' evaluation is not identical, however, when looking at the number of conducted evaluations, it should be rated high.

³¹ Interview with T. Peguy, 2011.

³² Décret n° 2009-1549 du 14 décembre 2009 créant la délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale.

³³ Annexe relative au dispositif national et régional d'évaluation des contrats de projets 2007-2013 et des PO FEDER Objectifs compétitivité régionale et emploi et convergence 2007/2013.

In 2010, ca. EUR 3 million were earmarked for evaluation under the ERDF, ca. EUR 600,000 under the ESF (in the field of Regional Competitiveness and Employment).

In the French evaluation culture, there are no formal guidelines in place, which refer to the evaluation standards, except of those adopted in 2003 by French Evaluation Society³⁴ (SFE). SFE set the general rules that should be respected by any entity involved in conducting the research. The rules are as follows: pluralism, independence, competence, respect for integrity of individuals, transparency and responsibility. However, the guidelines do not cover the issue of contracting criteria. It should be assumed that each institution involved in this process is guided in this respect by its own experience and the nature of research (**Peguy 2011**). Thus, for instance, when drawing up the Terms of Reference for its latest research, DATAR has applied the following criteria: 30% price, 40 % applied methodology/quality, 30% Contractor's experience³⁵. In the case of research contracted by the DGEFP, the price represents 30% of the available points as a default. The standard public procurement procedure in the case of evaluation of the ESF resources provides for a three-year framework agreement, renewed three times a year.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The market of evaluation research in France is dominated by private consulting companies (one of the first that notice large potential of evaluation is EUREVAL, which to this day published the highest number of publications on evaluation in the world). The research outsourcing model is not an exception. It stems from concern about the impartiality of the research. The applied requirement was mentioned in the Circular of 25 April 2007³⁶. It is estimated that private companies constitute ca. 95% of all contractors³⁷. The other 5% are represented by universities. It probably results from changes in the approach towards evaluation: departure from academic research in favour of the monitoring processes and operational methods (**Faravelli 2011**). In the case of evaluation of programmes co-financed by the ERDF, all entities are French apart from two contractors, of which one is an international company and one is a Belgian company. In the last ten years, the activity within the field of Cohesion Policy was manifested by 35 of them. In 2010, the evaluation research of the ERDF programmes was carried out by ca. 30 companies³⁸. Apart from consulting companies, the research was carried out by several universities and by *Institut*

³⁴ Charter of evaluation guiding principles, 20 October 2003 (accessed on 4 December 2011, <http://www.sfe-asso.fr/intranet/ckfinder/userfiles/charter-english.pdf>) The document has been mentioned in the aforementioned Annex to the Circulaire no 5213 of 25 April 2007 sur la mise en oeuvre des CPER 2007-2013.

³⁵ Interview with T. Peguy, 2011.

³⁶ *“Les évaluations peuvent être externalisées, en particulier auprès de prestataires privés ou d’universitaires qui apportent un regard indépendant et critique dans le but d’améliorer la qualité des interventions. S’il est envisagé de recourir à une évaluation en interne, l’exercice devra être mené de façon suffisamment indépendante. En particulier, pour les PO, l’indépendance doit être principalement garantie par rapport aux autorités en charge de l’audit, du contrôle ou de la certification.”* Annexe relative au dispositif national et régional d’évaluation des contrats de projets 2007-2013 et des PO FEDER Objectifs compétitivité régionale et emploi et convergence 2007/2013.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Annexe relative au dispositif national et régional d’évaluation des contrats de projets 2007-2013 et des PO FEDER Objectifs compétitivité régionale et emploi et convergence 2007/2013.

National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (INSEE), i.e. the National Institute for Statistics and Economics.

The market of research contractors in France is still under development. The last noticeable changes concern higher specialisation of contractors due to the number of thematic evaluations that increases each year. In the opinion of the expert, traditional evaluations more and more often have thematic elements (**Peguy 2011**).

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Approximately 244 evaluations have been carried out at the central level throughout the last ten years under the programmes co-financed by the ERDF. Over 54 were *ex ante* evaluations and ca. 121 were mid-term evaluations. None of the evaluation was an *ex post* evaluation. With the exception of three evaluations, all of them were outsourced.

In 2010, a total of 58 evaluations were carried out. Nineteen of them were typical mid-term evaluations thematically oriented towards environment/ sustainable development and innovations.

The remaining ones were strictly thematic: 10 were related to the environment, sustainable development and energy, 10 to research, innovation and financial engineering, 5 to implementation/ indicators and horizontal policies, 3 to regional development, 3 to information and communication technologies, 3 to job creation.

The estimated cost of the above-mentioned research (contracts alone) amounted to ca. EUR 65,000.

The most popular methods included: data analysis, document examination, interviews, questionnaire-based methods, benchmarking (between regions) and workshop at the end of research with a view to discussing the conclusions and determining the order of recommendations implementation. In the opinion of the expert, the adopted indicators can rarely be achieved. Another problem covers data that is not always measurable (**Peguy 2011**).

One of the most interesting research approaches was used in update to the regional mid-term evaluation. This evaluation was coordinated at the central level and contained several questions obligatory for each region, e.g. about the number of newly created jobs and questions to certain regions, e.g. about the technology transfer, the environment, gender equality, etc. Such an approach helped to create a synthesis of regional evaluations that additionally contained a review of the regional approach towards vulnerable issues under horizontal policies. This method made it possible to give the full picture, e.g. for concerning the participation of the private sector in the programme, global grants or the approach towards project selection.

As far as the used tools are concerned, an original idea of DATAR was the NECATER system developed in 2008³⁹. It was used to monitor and “steer” the carbon dioxide emissions in the projects co-financed by the ERDF. The system was calibrated on the basis of financial analysis of

³⁹ Interview with T. Peguy, 2011.

the funds awarded for each region owing to a simple assumption that each spent euro entails certain CO₂ emission. Taking into consideration exemplary sources of emissions such as: transport infrastructure, economic development, housing and commercial infrastructure, consumed electricity. Subsequently new output data corresponding to the actual expenditure were introduced thereto. In consequence, a tool was created that made it possible to compare CO₂ emissions between the regions or the analysis relating to European programmes. Moreover, it has educational values through the introduction of the topic of greenhouse gas emissions into programming (**Mignerey 2008**).

In 2007-2013, four thematic analyses of programmes co-financed by the ESF and one ongoing evaluation for the entire period were carried out. Evaluation of ESF cause to create data base with information about participants of projects within 24 objectives. This tool make possible quantitative analyses of current progress in realization of obligatory indicators mentioned in appendix XXIII in European Commission Regulation nr 1828/2006. Works on improve of mentioned data base are in progress actually. There are plans to enlarge scope of this base with some horizontal indicators (i.e. gender mainstreaming)

The assessment of reports takes place at the regional level. Some regions use assessment sheets while the other request the Regional Evaluation Committee to conduct an analysis. This assessment is sometimes included in the report (even if it is critical of it). It also happens that the regions hold a working meeting with a view to discuss the recommendations and methodological consistency of reports.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The market of post-graduate studies devoted to evaluation is relatively well developed in France. Civil servants can choose at least several post-graduate programmes in the field of public policy evaluation, located in several regions of the country, offered, *for instance*, by the University of Economics in Marseille (156 hours + 6-8-month apprenticeship) (**Faculté des Sciences Economiques et de Gestion de l'Université de la Méditerranée 2008**) or the Institute of Marketing and Management in Strasbourg (**EDInstitut 2009**). DATAR also offers specialist two-day training for new officials dealing with evaluation of Operational Programmes at the local level. It also provides trainings for officials at the local level dealing with collection of data for the needs of monitoring and evaluation.

The graduates of secondary schools can be educated at the major of public policy evaluation as well. During the master's studies at the University of Politics in Lyon, they can decide to study in the specialisation of Public Policy Evaluation (**Sciences Po Lyon 2011**).

Enhancement of competences in the field of public policy evaluation is also available in a completely remote formula. The four-month training cycle offered by EUREVAL (**EUREVAL 2011a**) consists of 12 modules. The first four focus on the diagnosis of situation and planning. The next four concentrate on the methodology and organisation of research, whereas the last four on the quality of research, analysis of received data and further use thereof (**EUREVAL 2011b**).

According to the expert, in the context of a well developed market, it is much more important for evaluation to be put into practice of offices' operation in order to work on the commitment of people dealing with evaluation⁴⁰. And this cannot be acquired only through counteracting routine or refreshing of qualifications (e.g. training courses or post graduate studies)

The French Evaluation Society (SFE) was established in 1999. It is aimed at the development of the method, dissemination of ethical standards and quality standards in evaluation research. Currently, the SFE gathers civil servants, practitioners, academics and users of both the public and private sector. The members of the Society organise themselves in regional clubs (e.g. Club Ile de France or Club Aquitaine), as well as in focus groups (e.g. the Sustainable Development Group, the Economic Policy Group, the Group for Standards and Quality). The Society's activity should be assessed positively. The statistical analysis of the calendar of meetings⁴¹ and events has demonstrated that, for instance in 2010, there were 20 meetings in the clubs, 18 meetings in the groups, 5 seminars/conferences, 2 meetings connected with specific events (the so-called ateliers on the occasion of conferences or publications), 2 sessions of the Society's Administrative Council. The conferences usually attract from 500 to 700 participants, and they always result in a publication in the form of a report or an article. In addition, in 2008, the SFE has contributed to the establishment of the Network of Evaluation Societies in Europe (NESE), a working group supported by the European Evaluation Society. The SFE is also a part of the Scientific Evaluation Committee of the European Social Fund, and the President of the Society, Ms Fouquet, is the Chairwoman of this Committee.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The results from the evaluation studies in France are disseminated in several ways. There are two main categories of effects. The first will be those relevant to improving the efficiency of the system and research and the other ones that affect the broader culture of evaluation and planning of development policy. Significant effects are mainly seen in the first area. It comes as a result of careful analysis of lessons from evaluation activities carried out in relation to 2000-2006 period⁴². The analysis came with a request of the necessity creating rules conducive to the aforementioned rapprochement in developing OP and CPER. For this purpose, a common territorial diagnosis CPER/OP was elaborated, and common core national indicators were defined (notably employment, CO₂, and criteria covering ITC instruction, innovation and environment). Also the process of defining regional innovation strategies was synchronized in order to increase efficiency of the programs. At the institutional level, institutions responsible for the strategic coordination of regional (Regional OP Monitoring Committees/ CPER) and national (CPER Monitoring Group) were related to the institutions responsible for coordinating the evaluation (respectively: Regional Evaluation Committee and the National Authority for Assessment). The Ernst & Young study on evaluation of regional contracts (CPER) 2000-2006 can be given as an example of usefull

⁴⁰ "What is extremely important is to make the evaluation function exists officially in the services, with people devoted to this function". (Peguy 2011)

⁴¹ Own studies. Statistical analysis of the SFE calendar, 7-8 May 2011.

⁴² Evaluation of european and domestic programmes in France. Better coordination thanks to mutual enrichment (T. Peguy, Presentation for Polish Ministry of Regional Development, Warsaw, 2008)

evaluation (**Peguy 2008**). The goal of this evaluation was twofold. First, to create an overall vision for the lessons learned from regional contracts in 2000-2006 in terms of results and added value with a view to provide information about them. Second, to trace the maturation process of the evaluation system by means of critical diagnosis of evaluation systems. The description of the diversity in maturity of regions was of exceptional importance for the monitoring and evaluation system. Four subgroups were created:

- ⇒ Mature monitoring and mature evaluation,
- ⇒ Mature monitoring system and weak evaluation,
- ⇒ Good basis for evaluation, yet weak monitoring,
- ⇒ Weak monitoring and evaluation.

An important contribution to the development of CPER/OP evaluation was the definition of areas in need of improvements and diagnosis of the current state of affair and creation of a map for further development of CPER evaluation in 2007-2013.

Positive effects are a bit harder noticeable lift in the broader context of an evaluation culture. According to the expert (**Peguy 2011**), the evaluation in France is becoming increasingly present in the political discourse (e.g. in speeches of politicians), yet this area can be improved as well. He described the current role of the evaluation in France in the following way: "(...) I would say that it's getting more and more importance, in the speeches, but in reality, there is room for improvement. We can highlight that, the French parliament gets a specific commission dealing with evaluation matters and gathers on a monthly basis." (**Peguy 2011**). According to the European Social Fund, the main receivers and readers of the evaluation studies are civil servants, both at national and regional level, the European Commission, various stakeholders in the employment policy and experts. Conclusions from research do not reach the awareness of the public and journalists are not interested in them either. Probably the problem is still the language of these reports, which remains highly technical and abstract for people not related to the issues of cohesion policy (Faravelli, 2011).

One can assume that interest in evaluation research from policy-makers and the media and the rest of the society would be greater if not for the fact that access to some of the results and reports is difficult for people not directly involved in the evaluations. For example, the largest database of evaluation reports, led by the French Evaluation Society (<http://www.sfe-asso.fr>) is only available for members of the society (access requires registration and payment of membership fee). In turn, individuals and institutions involved in the evaluation of the PO have their own network (it meets 2-3 times a year) and the website, however the network is also closed to the public (Peguy 2011). Raising awareness of the evaluation is not conducive to the fact that, according to expert opinion, the content of evaluation reports in France are propagated only in the traditional manner, i.e. through a brochure summarizing, seminars, etc. Additionally it is up to each institution or consultancy to share the findings from evaluation studies. There is no such thing as a platform aggregating findings and results. Nevertheless, reports are most of the time accessible to general public. Those wishing to broaden their knowledge about the evaluation in regional perspective may benefit from an public opened database of evaluation studies available on DATAR pages at <http://www.territoires.gouv.fr>. In the case of the European Social Fund database is available at <http://www.fse.gouv.fr/evaluation/evaluer-le-programme/pourquoi-evaluer/>.

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Germany

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Context of Evaluation System

The case of Germany is quite unique among other EU countries. On one hand there is the western part of the country with a long tradition of evaluation, or rather *performance monitoring*, on the other hand – Eastern Leander- which had to learn how to manage regional development programmes. Although mentioned *performance monitoring* was known in the West Germany, especially in particular policy fields, the *evaluation* became common after the reunification in 1990. At the beginning evaluation was applied to some eastern university faculties and central research institutions. After a while, evaluating universities became necessary also in the western Germany (**Furubo et al. 2002: 77**). Then, with the EU regional policy implementation in the new Leander, evaluation started to be an obligation (**Furubo et al. 2002: 85**).

Germany is a federal republic of sixteen states (Bundesleander). States governments are to a large extent independent when it comes to creating and managing the regional policy (**EPRC & Metis 2008**). The regional policy is embedded in Joint Task "Improvement of Regional Economic Structures" (Gemeinschaftsaufgabe "Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur"), managed together by the federal and states' institutions. The role of the national level institutions is to support regional development and to act when serious problems appear.

The Cohesion Policy does not play such an important role at the national level as in e.g. the new EU member countries but is still a substantial financial source for the development programmes at the states' level. The regions use the Structural Funds as a financial support for the existing programmes for regional development rather, than create specific instruments financed only from Cohesion Policy funds (**Schwab 2010: 14**). On the federal level Structural Funds and domestic policies evaluations does not have much in common. However, on the situation is different at the states' level, where SF evaluation rules influence to some extent domestic evaluations (**Bachtler & Polverari 2004: 15**).

Problems with obtaining the relevant data from each of the states lead to difficulties with evaluating structural funds at the national level. Schwab identifies three reasons why it is difficult to assess the overall effects of the structural funds in Germany. Firstly, the data is more on outputs than results and outcomes. The second problem is that information at the programme level is usually very limited. And finally, the indicators do not usually have unambiguous definitions, specified on the

national level and applied in the same way. That means the data between programmes is not comparable (**Schwab 2010: 18-21**).

The North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is a western region of Germany that for many years was a center of coal and steel industries. The state had to undergo structural changes to adjust its economy to meet the challenges of modern, service-based economy. The changes began in 70' with regional action programmes and were continued by programmes implemented within Objective 2. Before the Structural Funds' programmes implementation, the state was conducting only "econometric impact analyses of the German regional aid scheme Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur (Joint Task 'Improvement of the Regional Economic Structure')" (**Jakoby 2006**). The first Structural Funds programme for the NRW region (1989-93) was not including any results of previous regional programmes evaluations. There was no requirement of ex-ante evaluation as well. Nonetheless, the North Rhine-Westphalia was the only German state that decided to conduct an ongoing evaluation (**Jakoby 2006: 282**). The research was not well planned and therefore its' outcomes were not useful in designing the new programmes but it has shown the need of systematic, well designed evaluation of regional programmes. The evaluations undertaken within the next financial perspective (1994-1999) were much more useful and actually led to reprogramming of the Objective 2 programme. The recommendations from evaluations (mid-term, thematic case studies) had a significant role in designing 2000-2006 programmes for NRW region. As Jakoby wrote, "NRW has made use of evaluation as a catalyst for change in the programme strategies, measures and management system" for their regional development programs (**Jakoby 2006: 283**). The EU new evaluation requirements for all programmes supported within the Structural Funds enabled experience exchange not only between different German states, but also between other EU members' regions that deal with the problems similar to the North Rhine-Westphalia state.

The federal institutions rely more on financial data and macro-economic models while assessing the effects of the intervention. The macroeconomic models of the net effects of the Structural Funds in East Germany estimate GDP to be between 1.4% and 1.5% higher in the years 2009 to 2015 than it would have been without the intervention and employment to be 1.2% to 1.4 % higher, as result of the effects of EU financial support in the current and 2000-2006 programming period (**Schwab 2010: 18-21, 38-39**).

In 2000-2006 financial perspective Germany received 34 027.49 million EUR (**European Commission 2006**) (2004 prices) from Structural Funds. Under Objective 1 one multiregional and six regional development programmes (Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Brandenburg, Thüringen, Mecklenburg – Western Pomerania, and phasing-out region - East Berlin) were implemented, under Objective 2- 11 regional programmes (West Berlin, North Rhineland – Westphalia, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Lower Saxony, Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Saarland and Bremen).

The multiregional programme “Transport Infrastructures” was designed for eastern Germany regions (germ. new Leander) **(European Commission 2006)**.

Table X. Table X. Funds for Germany 2007-2013 (in billion EUR)

Objective	Fund	EU	National Public	National Private	Total
Regional Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	4,7	3,7	2,4	10,8
	ESF	4,7	3,6	1,2	9,5
Total Regional Competitiveness and Employment		9.4			
Convergence	ERDF	11,4	3,7	0,5	15,6
	ESF	4,7	1,2	0,3	6,2
Total Convergence		16,1			
Total European Territorial Co-operation	ERDF	0,9	-		0,9
TOTAL		24,6	12,2	4,4	43

Source: **(European Commission 2009)**

For 2007-2013 programming period Structural Funds for Germany reached 24,6 m EUR **(European Commission 2009)**, of which about 17 m eUR from ERDF, and 9,4 m EUR from ESF **(European Commission 2009)**. In 2007-2013 there are 17 ERDF regional programmes (of which 6 within Convergence Objective) and one – as in previous programming period - Operational Programme Transport for Convergence regions **(Federal Ministry of Transport Building and Urban Development 2011)**. There are also 16 ESF OPs (for each state), one ESF OP for the region of Lüneburg in Lower Saxony and federal ESF programme **(Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology 2011)** and **(Schreckenberger 2009)**.

The most important institutions engaged in Structural Funds implementation on the federal level are the Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi), which coordinates ERDF and ESF, and reconciles federal and state interests and represents them in the European Commission, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) - competent department for the ESF, the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development (BMVBS) - competent department for the ERDF Federal Transport program, the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF) as the competent department for questions of financial control **(Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology 2011)**. The regional operational programmes are implemented and managed by the states.

In Germany there are thousands of projects, carried out within Structural Funds at the region's level. It is very difficult to gain reliable, summarized data on all those projects on the national level (**Schwab 2010: 18-21**). There are problems with the indicators' definitions and with the moment of data gathering. What is more not many evaluation studies are commissioned at the national level, and the regions have different evaluation strategies. Some gain just monitoring data, some commission mid-term or thematic evaluations.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

EU evaluation requirements had influenced the development of evaluation culture in Germany. Nonetheless, it is difficult to say that the results of Cohesion Policy evaluations have much effect on the evaluations of other public policies, because there is not enough comparability between the different fields of policy.

Schwab in a report for the DG REGIO presents dimensions of evaluation strategies across the selected German states:

- ⇒ Ongoing (continuous, usually external) versus punctual evaluation (usually for smaller programmes, undertaken when problems appear). The ongoing evaluation are commissioned as a short or long-term contracts;
- ⇒ Internal versus external evaluation;
- ⇒ Monitoring and evaluation linkage; that is the question on evaluators role- just to process monitoring data or to analyze target achievement or develop the indicator systems.
- ⇒ Involvement of the Monitoring Committee; sometimes a working group of the Monitoring Committee is part of the ongoing evaluation process (**Schwab 2010: 40-41**).

There is no unified database in which all evaluation reports on Cohesion Policy could be collected. The key institutions in the system of evaluation on the national level are: the Federal Ministry of Economy (BMW), the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development (BMVBS). At the states' level: ministries of the each of 16 Leander (more information on MA in East Leander can be found in (**Ridder 2002**)); for ERDF either Ministry of Economy or Rural Development (e.g. in Baden-Wuerttemberg), for ESF Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. It is very difficult to point all institutions, especially at the states' level, involved in contracting evaluation studies, the number can differ from state to state, according to the nature and scope of the Programme implemented. The contracting entity is usually a unit within the Ministry, where the Managing Authority of a Programme is established, and the unit id responsible for all kind of studies which are contracted by the Ministry. The Managing authority acts as functional or professional advisor of the contracting entity. The studies are usually commissioned in

public procurement procedure. The contractors follow the rules of European and national law, which apply for contracting all public services.

The most important selection criteria for offers is its' cost-effectiveness, the most economically advantageous offer is accepted for the contract. The price is only one factor in selection process, though an important one.

There is no overall annual budget devoted to evaluation contracts in Germany, so it is very hard to estimate the annual spending on evaluations of all MAs, the number of institutions that execute studies in the field of Cohesion Policy and the number of evaluation contracts being executed all over the country.

The Managing Authority for North Rhine-Westphalia region is Objective 2 Office at the Ministry of Ministry of Economic Affairs, Energy, Building, Housing and Transport ⁴³ (germ. Ziel 2 Sekretariat im Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Energie, Bauen, Wohnen und Verkehr des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen) and there are 3 main institutions engaged in Cohesion Policy evaluation – GEFRA Münster, MR Regionalpolitik and Prognos. The overall budget for evaluation of Cohesion Policy in 2010 reached 150,000 EUR. One of the most important evaluation of the Structural Funds is “The Future of the European Structural Funds in North Rhine-Westphalia (ger. Zukunft der Europäischen Strukturfonds in Nordrhein-Westfalen). Generally, in Germany evaluation studies (not only those of Cohesion Policy) are found an useful instrument. However, in political debates, the evaluation studies' results are not often exploited. Politicians are usually aware of some limitations of implementing the recommendations from the evaluation reports. It may happen that evaluations are of bad quality, for various reasons. They could be biased or be based on wrong assumptions as a basis for their conclusions. They can also be inconsistent with one another. These are the reasons why evaluations' findings are not always directly implemented by the German administration, but are treated more like an important contribution in decision making process. In most cases they are taken account of in the political process, but there has to be a balance between recommendations from evaluations' studies and other important political factors.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The institutions conducting evaluation studies are usually economic research institutes, companies, financial auditors, certified accountants etc. There are mainly national entities, of which about 50% are consultants and another 50% research institutes and academics. The total number of all institutions active in the field of evaluation the Structural Funds is difficult to asses. Estimated

⁴³ The Ministry has been divided and the current Managing Authority is the Ministry of Economy, Energy, Industry, Trade and Crafts NRW (2013)

number of only research companies is about 50. Most of them are well established, very active and specialized in evaluating the structural policy. For Lower Saxony region the main research company engaged in the Cohesion Policy programmes evaluation in 2010 was Steria Mummert Consulting AG, for Saxony – PwC, for Rhineland-Palatinate: ISOPLAN Institut für Entwicklungsforschung, Wirtschafts- und Sozialplanung GmbH, Institut zur Modernisierung von Wirtschafts- und Beschäftigungsstrukturen, Institut für Mittelstandsökonomie an der Universität Trier and VDI/VDE-IT. The overall potential and know-how of evaluation contractors that have executed studies was in general of very good quality.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

As mentioned above, there is no general database at national level, gathering information on evaluation studies executed each year in Germany. However, there is a monitoring system of ESF, available only for authorized users (www.esf-de.de). The only reliable data on ERDF can be gained from the websites of the regional ministries responsible for EU structural funding, but not all of them have an evaluation plan (**Schwab 2010: 39-40**). There are also significant differences between the states also regarding activity on the field of evaluation. Some Leander are very active and some have not launched already any evaluation of their OPs in this programming period.

The Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development is responsible for ERDF Federal Transport Operational Programme. In this case no evaluation had been started so far. far (the article was written in 2011). The Programme promotes exclusively major and long-lasting projects, so it is still too early to evaluate this Programme. The projects within the Transport OP are quite specific and it would be difficult to apply recommendations from evaluation of one of them to the other. Another problem is that the projects' effects cannot be summed up. That is why in this particular OP evaluation of the whole Programme will lead to very limited conclusions. Therefore in the Transport programme, projects' evaluations should be made retrospect, i.e. at the end of the period. This is also due to the fact, that the effects of transport projects are mainly directed to the year 2025.

The quality of evaluations is assessed by the Managing Authority in regard to their content. The other aspects of the contract are supervised and controlled by the unit responsible for contracting in particular MA. There is no central guiding system for assessing the quality of the reports.

The most recent complex analysis of projects launched under the Cohesion Policy in 2000-2006 financial perspective is “The Ex-Post Evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2000-06 co-financed by the ERDF (Objective 1 and 2)” available at the European Commission Regional Policy website⁴⁴.

Faciliators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In Germany there is no national platform for sharing evaluations’ studies findings. Usually, each MA publishes the evaluations’ reports on their website or in print.

There are special trainings for expanding knowledge in the field of evaluation. The training are organized by both public and private institutions or schools. Public servants in Germany can take part in such trainings and also in seminars organized by the European Commission. For example, the Federal Ministry for Economics and Labour has established a special evaluation team within the institution to help efficient exchange of information and experience and organizes trainings on evaluation for the Ministry’s staff (**Bachtler & Polverari 2004: 18**). German public institutions are within the average of the European Union in the field of developing evaluation culture within the Structural Funds. From time to time there are conferences and seminars organized. As mentioned above, some Leander are more active and they commission evaluation studies which go beyond the minimum needed to simple effects’ assessment, for example there were studies on how gender mainstreaming in the ERDF could be implemented and evaluated. (e.g. Berlin, Brandenburg, Saxony)⁴⁵

Important role in evaluation capacity building plays the German Evaluation Society (germ. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluierung), DeGEval. The Society was founded in 1997 and aims to professionalize evaluation in Germany, combine different perspectives of the evaluation, and enable sharing knowledge and experience in the field of evaluation⁴⁶. The DeGEval offers a membership for institutions and private persons. Within the Society there are working parties responsible for evaluating regional and structural policy⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information/evaluations/archives_2000_2006_en.cfm#1

⁴⁵ <http://www.db-decision.de/GenderMainstreaming/germany.html>

More on DeGEval website (in German)

⁴⁶ <http://www.degeval.de/ueber-uns>

⁴⁷ <http://www.degeval.de/arbeitskreise>

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Evaluation became a requirement and an important tool in regional policies development because of the significant rise of the importance of the Cohesion Policy (from 7.5% of the total “future” EU budget in mid-1980’ to 36% in 2007-2013 perspective) and 1988 reform of the Structural Funds that granted the European Commission a much greater power over funding distribution (**Bachtler & Wren 2006: 143**).

Although there were evaluations conducted within the 1989-1993 perspective in Germany, evaluation became an important factor in designing and managing regional programmes financed through Cohesion Policy funds in 1994-1999 financial perspective. As mentioned before, all regional development programmes are implemented under the Joint Task ‘Improvement of the Regional Economic Structure’ (GRW). There is a legal requirement for GRW to be audited and evaluated but there are no timeframe requirements (**Bachtler & Polverari 2004: 12, 24**). The evaluations of the regional programmes are mainly focused on effectiveness and impact assessment of specific intervention instruments and usually are conducted as ex-post evaluations (**Bachtler & Polverari 2004: 28-30**).

The evaluation reports are especially addressed to professionals dealing with the particular policy field and evaluation experts. Recommendations from the studies are implemented if they are considered reasonable. The responsibility for decisions on implementation rests with the Programme managers. Germany does not have a system managing the evaluations’ findings or recommendations. One of the example of implementing evaluation recommendation could be Sachsen Land, where a domestic instrument of grants addresses to enterprises to gain patents had been stopped after the mid-term evaluation of the Objective 1 OP (**Bachtler & Polverari 2004: 15**). The German Evaluation Society is an important platform for not only exchanging information on evaluation methodology, experience and also evaluation studies’ findings. Additionally, some public and private institution create their own “networks” for exchange experience on evaluation. Those networks work usually in some specific policy fields.

It is believed that well-designed evaluations of the regional programmes in the German Leander can help to convince some of the policy-makers, still skeptical towards EU regional policy, of the effectiveness of the Cohesion Policy programmes. Also, the Structural Funds programmes evaluation can become in the future an important contribution to discussion on the GRW reform (**Bachtler Polverari & Taylor 2001: 356-357**).

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Greece

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Context of Evaluation System

Currently Greece is participating in IVth programming period. The EU funds, more commonly known as Community Support Framework (CSF) in this country, are based on Cohesion Policy funding include: €19.6 billion under the Convergence¹ Objective, €635 million under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective and €210 million under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective. The overall budget for 2007-2013 period is estimated on €20.4 billion. The exact amounts devoted to each of the funds in comparison for both periods can be found in the table below⁴⁸:

Table 4 The EU funds allocated in Greece in programming periods 2000 - 2006 and 2007 - 2013

Objective	Fund	Total (billion €)
Convergence	ERDF	11.6
	ESF	4.3
Community Initiatives	CF	3.7
Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	0.5
	ESF	0.1
European Territorial Cooperation	ERDF	0.2
Total 2007 – 2013		20.4
Objective 1		21
Cohesion Fund		3.32
Community Initiatives		0.92
Total 2000 – 2006		25.24

Source: self-reported data on the basis of CSF Coordination Authority websites on co-financed Development Programmes 2000-2006 and NSRF 2007-2013

Notably, there is substantial difference in management of structural funds between two last programming periods. Since year 2007 the sectoral operational programmes (OPs) has changed and the flexible management has been introduced. According to National Strategic Reference Framework

⁴⁸ 3.9 billion euro based in European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) is managed by the Ministry of Rural Development and Food.

2007 - 2013 the funds are being implemented through eight sectoral operational programmes (OPs)⁴⁹.

Also, there are five Regional OPs and twelve European Territorial Cooperation OPs performing. In comparison to previous programming period, the amount of regional programmes decreased from 13 down to five what is significantly improving the management efficiency at all levels. Notably, five Greek Regions have been included under a transitional support scheme now.

The reader should however keep in mind that according to the estimations obtained from Coordination Authority, EU funds share approximately 65% in the overall development oriented public expenses⁵⁰. Despite of this fact, the funds from CSF devoted exclusively to the evaluation activities in the field of Cohesion Policy in period 2007-2013 is very small – with no funds spent in this area last year and 1 million spent in 2011 (the exact budget in period 2007-2013 is not published).

The body responsible for the implementation of ESF interventions (EYSEKT) is comparably the most active institution in disseminating evaluation culture by managerial, political and methodological considerations on national and international level. It does not have its equivalent in areas of the ERDF or Cohesion Fund programmes.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The management system of structural funds in Greece is very vague. Although there are only few key institutions, like Unit B (Planning and Evaluation) of the Special Service for Strategy, Planning and Evaluation of Development Programmes (EYSSAAP), ESF Actions Coordination and Monitoring Authority (EYSEKT) and Units A (Programming and Evaluation) of each Managing Authority, the division of their role in the light of several additional bodies (Special Technical Committee for Evaluation – ETEA, Evaluation Network, National Coordination Authority, Monitoring Committees) becomes unclear. Their names are being frequently changed, so that tracing the activity over several programming periods becomes very difficult. Also, despite of having relatively small number of regions, there is no information about regional level of independence and activity in the field of evaluation. Therefore, this chapter will be focused predominantly on key players when it comes to planning, contracting and reviewing evaluations.

According to the law 3614/2007 responsibility for evaluation of structural funds lies with the National Coordination Authority which is the Directorate General for Development Planning, Regional Policy and Public Investment of the Ministry of Economy and Finance⁵¹. The National

⁴⁹ Most of the OP websites are not having English version.

⁵⁰ Percentage was derived by Coordinating Authority from the program of public investment. It does not include expenses of 1st and 2nd degree local authorities, for which data is difficult to find.

⁵¹ Currently titled Ministry of Economy, Competitiveness and Shipping

Coordinating Authority is composed of four Special Services, one of them being the Special Service for Strategy, Planning and Evaluation of Development Programmes (EFSSAAP⁵²).

The commitments such as issuing guidelines for evaluating Community Support Framework (CSF), Operational Programmes (OPs), Community Initiatives and other programs expenditure, coordinating work of all Managing Authorities as well as supervising regional performance lie in the Planning and Evaluation Unit. Its role in the system is formal and institutionalised therefore EFSSAAP is inevitably more focused on controlling the processes of conducting the obligatory studies than on disseminating the evaluation culture. On the other hand, that is the first institution which faces the mental, institutional and political barriers in conducting and using the results of evaluation studies by other stakeholders in Greece.

In 2001 a separate body from the Coordinating Ministry was created to monitor interventions of European Social Fund (namely funds implemented through three Operational Programmes. The General Secretariat for the Management of European Funds at the Ministry of Labour and Social Security⁵³ is in charge of the coordination, management and implementation of interventions that bear on the development of the country's human resources and are co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) (**General Secretariat of Management of European Funds 2011**). The body is called ESF Actions Coordination and Monitoring Authority (EYSEKT). Unit C of EYSEKT (Evaluation of Human Resource Interventions) coordinates and monitors the evaluation of ESF interventions and of human resource policies being implemented in Greece.

The efforts of EYSEKT were very diffused in 2000-2006 period due to the need for coordination of five sectoral operational programmes (concerning health, education, employment, competitiveness and information technology) which were run by respective ministries with 13 regional OPs. Despite the fact that numerous political institutions were involved in management of funds at different level, Coordination and Monitoring Body managed to develop common standards and formal guidelines in call for tenders, indicator systems and evaluation studies of all ESF actions. That is especially noticeable achievement of the previous period in the light of 54 obligatory evaluation studies in operational programmes (3 evaluations in each of 18 OPs).

In comparison to the previous period, not only the number of OPs has decreased (5 regional programmes and 3 horizontal), but also the sectoral OP Education and Lifelong Learning, OP Human Resources Development and OP Administration Reform are based on "mono-funded" programmes (solely ESF). That is why, despite the previous discussions on essential improvements of evaluation system, the actions could be undertaken only now. Working on the grounds of primary guidelines of Coordination Authority (EFSSAAP), there are more considerations in EYSEKT regarding methodology

⁵² Also referred as EYSSAAP

⁵³ Also referred as Ministry of Employment and Social Protection

issues, dissemination of results in political circles and controlling the quality of studies. However, the ideas are relatively new and the time is needed for their implementation.

Each of the Managing Authorities (specifically units A on Programming and Evaluation) is responsible for contracting, monitoring and using results from evaluations of corresponding operational programmes. Those can be either one of the three compulsory evaluations, thematic studies based on emerging needs or additional analyses.

The horizontal studies such as CSF and NSRF evaluations lie in responsibilities of the National Coordination Authority.

The Monitoring Committee of CSF (working in accordance to Law 2860/2000) is a horizontal body which is supervising the overall evaluative actions as well as decides on evaluation plan, prepares thematic guidelines, follows issues of equality and dispersion of results. Its task is to monitor the effective and correct implementation of the CSF on the basis of:

- ⇒ regular evaluation of progress towards achieving the specific objectives of the CSF
- ⇒ examination of the effects of implementing the CSF, in particular the objectives of operational programs and interim evaluation
- ⇒ approval of any proposal to modify the content of the Commission decision on the participation of the Funds
- ⇒ recommendations to the CSF Managing Authority on any adjustment or review of the CSF, which may contribute to the achievement of its objectives or to improve its management. (*HELLAS, 2002-2005*)

In addition, two advisory subcommittees were established to coordinate interventions in specific areas:

- ⇒ **Rural Development Subcommittee**
- ⇒ **Subcommittee on Human Resources** chaired by a representative of the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection. The subcommittee gives recommendations on improvements of coordination of the ESF actions as well as monitors issues relating to equal gender opportunities. This body will be described separately as being one of the driving forces of evaluation culture in the country.

The example of Monitoring Committee for CSF giving common guidelines and solving ad hoc methodological issues (sets of indicators, common terms of reference etc.) has proved to be a good practice. However, the need of a more “organised” and “specialized” way of thinking in evaluation matters for the European Social Fund emerged. That is why with the initiative of EYSEKT, a special evaluation committee was created in 2009 (called EAPAP). This committee has an advisory role to the Monitoring Committee of all structural funds. Its meetings are organized at least twice a year,

however it also communicates among the members regularly in written form and exchanges views ad hoc since its mode of operating is a less formal one⁵⁴.

The key areas of work of the HR Subcommittee are:

- ⇒ methodological concerns of evaluation (developing methodologies for assessing specific areas of ESF)
- ⇒ working out common terms of reference between parallel evaluations (reviewing each created ToR)
- ⇒ exchanging best practices with other countries (through participating in and organizing conferences)
- ⇒ utilizing EU working papers and preparing its own similar documents (latest two were on dissemination of evaluation results and implementation of recommendations)
- ⇒ ameliorating the quality of evaluations by supervising the process of conducting and submitting products of evaluation
- ⇒ disseminating results of evaluations and making use of the recommendations in decision making
- ⇒ spreading the culture of evaluation among public institutions of different level

Although the EYSSAAP is referring to guideline no. 18 in regards to procurement procedures, there is no publicly accessible information on the subject as well as on selection criteria of applicants for conducting evaluation studies. However, there are several features known. Open call for tender was indicated as the most common procedure (with competitive dialogues going on very rarely). All process progresses in Greek language and all documents need to be sent by post or delivered personally. As there are many bureaucratic requirements, the whole contracting procedure commonly lasts, depending on the number of offers, 6 months up to 1 year.

Most often, there are approximately 20 companies applying in partnerships and presenting 5-6 final proposals. Some of the partnerships are based on conjunction of private (in majority national) companies with universities or university representatives as individual experts.

The selection process is based on two stages. Firstly, the technical side of the proposal is thoroughly assessed with most focused being paid to the judicial letter of credit and formal proof of required experience. Only the formally complete offers are assessed onwards. Secondly, the methodological proposal is reviewed and the weight assigned to this criterion is estimated on 80%. Finally, the price of the offer is concluded at the level of 20%.

What is needed the most according to leading institutions is:

⁵⁴ Because it is an additional, not compulsory body, in the management system

- ⇒ More of quality studies which would answer accurately and reliably decision makers' questions so they would rely more on evidence
- ⇒ More of timely submitted studies – currently it might take up to 2 years to assign a contract; contracting much in advance and shortening the time of preparing the conclusions is delimiting usefulness of the results as they might become outdated before even presented
- ⇒ More of methodology development - more complex research designs leading to production of proof of *what works and why and how to repeat it*

Overall, the structure of demand side is developing and confusion is caused by many names of each body are coexisting. At the regional level, the structure of the system is not transparent enough and no data is published on their activity, especially in respect to evaluation.

Although, the general guideline (the minimum requirements) for evaluation of structural funds in Greece has been published in the past on the website of Ministry of Finance and Economy, they are not accessible now, just as other guidelines and many studies conducted by Managing Authorities of specific OPs.

According to the National Coordination Authority, the biggest impediment for development of evaluation culture at the moment is lack of reliable up-to-date data and timely submitted evaluations. Another problem is the gross dependence of majority of public institutions on works and decisions of EFSSAAP (regarding setting up the deadlines, required methodologies, organized conferences, cooperating with research market and universities). Internal evaluations are carried out in the public administration for the continuation of certain programmes, but they are not publicly available.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There is not much data on how exactly looks the supply side in Greece – what are the characteristics or the structure of the market. One of the reasons might be that public administration is very cautious when it comes to speaking in any narrower terms or mentioning any company names (even of the previous contractors) being afraid of the threat of corruption accusation (which is now treated very seriously in Greece). On the other hand, there are no official statistics or records on the number, size or level of incomes of companies involved in evaluation research. However, most of them are rather national than a branch of international firm from abroad due to the language barrier⁵⁵. That is

⁵⁵ However, as demand for the research is still very small in Greece and only recently started to increase, a number of Greek research consultancies were working also outside of the country – namely on Cyprus (without any language barrier) or in Eastern Europe. The companies are applying their know-how knowledge from previous experiences in national context again.

giving advantage to local companies in understanding economical context, carrying out the fieldwork or knowing the procurement procedures.

Generally, at least the Coordination Authority is requiring from the firms 5 or 10 years of experience, with the exception of the leader who needs to present at least 10 years of work in the field.

The knowledge desired by the companies (which are more flexible and adjustable to bureaucratic requirements) is available at the universities. However, the knowledge is not often used in connection to NSRF implementation. Partnerships between universities and companies which succeed in winning the projects (and reliably assessing the impact of funds by for example complicated economic micromodels) are observed only occasionally. However, an extra thought is now given to attracting more university contractors in order to improve reliability of methodologies used for evaluation.

Overall, according to the national Management Authority, the quality and variety of the services and methodologies has improved, with the research questions being more accurately and reliably answered.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The Special Service for Strategy, Planning and Evaluation of Development Programmes (EFSSAAP) estimates the number of evaluation studies contracted in the last 10 years on around 100. Most of them are being obligatory ex-ante, mid-term and update of mid-term evaluations and only several thematic studies carried out by EYSEKT. There are no plans for creating a database of carried out evaluations.

Contracting evaluations is usually the responsibility of Managing Authorities of operational programmes (except for horizontal evaluations of CSF and NSRF). However, according to the records of Managing Authority of CSF, two small evaluations studies have been contracted in 2010 for the Structural Funds under the Hellenic NSRF 2007-2013. Compulsory ex-ante evaluations for the 2007-2013 period have been commissioned in 2007, while on-going evaluations are being contracted throughout 2011. The good evidence of significance of this rapid change is comparison of the budget devoted to evaluation activities, which in 2010 was estimated on 50 thousands euro (spent on two small thematic studies of ESF actions) and a year later increased to 1 million euro. The national Coordination Authority admitted the currently contracted studies are delayed according to the schedule due to overall disruptions in the level of EU funds implementation caused by economic crisis in Greece.

Summative study of all operational programmes together with a number of strategic evaluations (on employment, social inclusion, environmental impact etc.) supposed to be a mid-term evaluation in

2010. For the reasons aforementioned it has been exchanged into operational evaluation which should start by the end of 2011.

The ex-ante evaluation 2007-2013 has been indicated as the best study contracted by the Managing Authority of CSF in this programming period. However, the study was not published on the MA website and is not accessible otherwise as well. Therefore, several other examples of valuable studies can be mentioned:

- ⇒ Desk research and assessment of ESF success stories of the Third Programming Period (2000-2006).
- ⇒ Guide to the implementation of gender equality in the design and evaluation of actions under the third CSF (2000-2006).
- ⇒ Evaluation of gender mainstreaming and specific actions in the ESF interventions of the Third CSF (2000-2006).

Overall, it is clearly visible that best examples of evaluation studies are coming from the field of human resources. Despite the fact that there might be also some quality evaluations prepared by particular OP Managing Authorities, ESF actions are more frequently evaluated and results of the studies published and utilized more.

Assessing the quality of horizontal studies and the studies from all operational programmes is a responsibility of Technical Committee for Evaluation (in the Ministry of Economy and Finance). The Committee needs to approve the final version of the reports, after a round of comments given to the contractors by representatives of MA, central Coordinating Units and others experienced in evaluation Committee members. However, there is no explicit system of assessing the quality of studies and the final review is based on the expert knowledge of employees of the unit.

Overall, it is not straightforward to find a searched evaluation and there are only a small number of Managing Authorities which regularly update their websites and publish evaluation reports. Also, only this year the obligation to include a short English summary has been introduced in some of the programmes.

In the end it seems worth quoting the summative assessment of Greek evaluation culture prepared by DG REGIO in the report on performance of Cohesion Policy in this programming period: *Impact considerations are seen as a luxury. Evaluations are limited to almost the minimum number deriving from the legal obligations of the country to the EU. Cost-benefit analyses are made for larger projects. The technical assistance is used for studies, their quality varying. Transparency is limited and very few studies are in the relevant sites, which are not regularly updated. Prioritising by impact and assessing the quality of the studies is thus impossible in the context of the report (Tsipouri & Rubliova, 2010: 4).*

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The primary difficulty in describing evaluation facilitators in Greece is again lack of transparency in actions of coordinating bodies. Although many practices are reported to be ongoing, there is almost no data available about some groups, institutions, papers and events. Although, the Planning and Evaluation Unit of the National Coordinating Authority claims to keep the record of all evaluations carried out under the Structural Funds in operational programmes (at least at national level), there are no statistics, database or library of evaluation reports (either published or accessible on demand). Moreover, despite the fact that the studies (or their summaries) are scattered on a number of websites of EU co-financed Operational Programmes, no English summaries are frequently accessible, even when the website has an English version.

According to the knowledge of EFSSAAP and EYSEKT there are no trainings, and postgraduate programs, available for civil servants in Greece. Also foreign trainings are not attended.

Another useful website is the source of information on ESF actions provided by respective Coordination and Monitoring Authority (EYSEKT). On www.esfhellas.gr a reader can find clear explanation of vertical structure of evaluation system in Greece, past and currently open call for tenders, information on different initiatives and funded programmes, glossary as well as library of evaluation studies undertaken by EYSEKT (available in Greek).

EYSEKT, has been already described here as an example of creative and open-minded think tank in regards to evaluation. It is worth mention that its efforts are being appreciating also directly by DG Employment as it is closely cooperating with the Evaluation & Impact Assessment Unit. The cooperation has been fruitful in improving methodology on ESF actions (e.g. methodology on assessing best practices from the field presented in the study *Desk research and assessment of ESF success stories of the Third Programming Period (2000-2006)*). The study is available in Greek from EYSEKT website: www.esfhellas.gr). EYSEKT has also contributed to the recent publication of DG Employment on Overview of the final evaluations of the ESF co-funded programmes in period 2000-2006.

Also, an international conference on role of evaluation of ESF actions in programming period 2007-2013 was organised by EYSEKT in Athens, in November 2008. The conference was attended by representatives of 17 member states and European Commission and was valuable platform for exchanging good practices among different stakeholders. Moreover, a bilingual book with relevant conclusions has been published.

Although some thoughts were given to the specific context of programmes on human resources by the Technical Evaluation Committee, the need for creating a special subcommittee has become evident in 2008 and the body was created a year later, with the extra efforts of EYSEKT Evaluation

Unit. Simultaneously a very first evaluation plan for ESF action has been prepared for the years 2009/2010. The body is supervised by EFSSAAP, although there are no close links or communication, but rather the practice of reporting Subcommittee's actions.

The most important achievements of the subcommittee can be cited as:

- ⇒ Publication of two working papers related to functioning of subcommittee and evaluation results dissemination, and added value of evaluation culture
- ⇒ Preparation of Evaluation Plan 2009/2010 – three out of four proposed studies has been carried out (two on health and welfare and one on gender equality)
- ⇒ Obliging all MAs related to ESF funded programmes to update regularly the websites and include English summaries of studies
- ⇒ reviewing all Terms of Reference and methodologies and discussing them in the Committee before starting the evaluators' fieldwork

Another important source of knowledge related to the policies implemented in Greece is the National Centre for Social Research. Although not directly related to the structural funds, it provides a useful Social Data Bank, publishes regularly a journal titled Greek Review of Social Research and bases research on work of three institutes – related to Urban and Rural Sociology, Political Sociology and Social Policy. Details can be found on the website of the Centre (**The National Centre for Social Research 2011**). Valuable analyses often serve as the first hand source of information for civil servants before planning evaluation studies.

There is no Evaluation Society established as a formal organisation.

There is not much of spill-over effect visible, but the influence of Cohesion Policy can be mainly detected in creating networks at the local level to enhance information dissemination and support to project promoters as well as networks of evaluation experts and officials.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The National Coordination Authority has no official procedure on implementation of recommendation. Monitoring Committee decides on the evaluation plan and controls the evaluation process, but also discusses the important results of the studies and Managing Authority and monitors implementation of recommendations on case-by-case basis. Just like in many other countries, after an important study has been carried out, a press conference or a seminar is organized and results are being presented. Therefore, the range of audience is relatively wide including non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders. Also, a short notice is usually given to relevant politicians and decision makers, respective ministers as well as to General Secretaries for Gender Equality or Social Inclusion. Managing Authority tries to beware of the character and implications of recommendations – whether they are up to date, accurate to the current context, helpful (with potential for improving the programme) and realistic.

The explicit actions regarding dissemination of evaluation results have been undertaken by EYSEKT in the last year. In order to put pressure on politicians to take into account evaluation findings for designing new programmes, several resolutions were made. Firstly, every Managing Authority related to ESF actions is obliged, after finishing an evaluation contract, to prepare a small note on how can the results of the study be used for the future programmes by the General Secretaries. That special note is also helping the contracting institution to be aware of the lesson learnt. Another formal obligation proposed by EYSEKT is to organize a one day seminar (or a conference) within two months after finishing the study regarding the state of the evaluated subject. However, it is not certain that the latter idea will be approved on the political level. In the Evaluation Plan for years 2009/2010 prepared by the Human Resources Subcommittee a form on implementation of recommendations was presented with suggestion to send it to General Secretaries and EYSEKT. The form contains the brief description of the study, major findings and conclusions, and propositions of applicable changes. There is also extra form regarding horizontal issues where the vertical and horizontal recommendations are treated separately and related thematic studies are presented.

In Greece there seem to be some mental barriers to evaluation. In general, even after several programming periods, it is still perceived as a control tool and even constructive and analytical critique of the actions undertaken within the programme can be frequently taken as a personal threat to the personnel performance. One of the arguments of such logic brought in this context is the decision regarding Cohesion Policy budget based on evidence of performance. Suspiciousness towards evaluation results and misunderstanding of its role has not change notably throughout several programming periods. Also, exceptional lack of transparency is limiting developments of evidence-based policies. Furthermore there is not enough critical assessing details of actions. That is

why even when small corrections would be applicable, often whole programmes are being neglected. Therefore, aforementioned skewed perception of evaluation makes it especially difficult to convince politicians or administrative institutions that evaluation is not harmful but helpful and that development of evaluation culture is urgently needed.

An evidence to lack of evaluation culture might be also the amount of evaluations studies outside of structural funds is unknown and no alike research was published. One exception for evidence-based thinking might be there recent decision of the Minister of Economy and Finance which was based on the evaluation results from assessing the performance of ESF actions in years 2005/2006. On that basis, Minister has delimited funds devoted to services and focused the actions on increasing the role of economically beneficial production sectors. That is why, in relation to the improvements in this period, the National Management Authority is hoping that the importance of evaluation will increase in the future.

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Hungary

Piotr Stronkowski

Context of Evaluation System

In Hungary EU Cohesion Policy forms significant contribution to budget for public development policy. For the period 2007-2013 the allocation for Hungary is 25 307 million euro from EU budget (8 642 million euro from Cohesion Fund, 14 248 million euro for Convergence, 2 031 million euro from Regional Competitiveness and Employment, 386 million euro from European Territorial Cooperation Objective).

Dominating role of EU Cohesion Policy in development policy is acknowledged by official documents. As it is mentioned in first sentence of New Hungary Development Plan for 2007-2013: *Hungary has reached the gateway of a historical opportunity (The Government of the Republic of Hungary 2007)*.

The role of investments financed in frame of Cohesion Policy became even more essential for Hungarian development in light of the difficult situation of public finance, deepened by current financial crisis, that forced the Government to reduce significantly public expenditures. In this circumstance structural funds may be seen as main source of financing development policy.

Hungary is an example of the country, where development of evaluation culture is strongly inspired by external factors. Integration with European structures created an impulse for more strategic planning of the development and consequently required more attention on monitoring and evaluation. Cohesion Policy and its requirements, regarding creation of evaluation framework, has constituted definitely the strongest factor. Planning and implementation of PHARE Programmes and later Operational Programmes (OPs) required undertaking concrete activities related to evaluation. Practical experience with first evaluations of pre-accession funds and also first round of OPs have created positive environment for learning and better understanding of role and requirements of evaluation, building capacity, development of more sophisticated methodological approaches, building structures of management evaluation processes.

Beginning of evaluation in Hungary may be seen at second half of 1990s. In the Government Decree 208/1996 on the planning and financial rules of funds integrated into program financing, formal obligation was settled of implementation of evaluation in the management process of certain programmes. This rule was referred in Government Resolution issued next year. General approach of the government was to include all national development initiative, regardless of source of financing,

into one methodological framework, based on EU structural funds planning methodology, where evaluation is taking important position. However implementation of those assumption was rather weak. Administration responsible for pre-accession and later structural funds was strongly focus on preparation programming documents and implementation, while linkages with other part of public administration (and also influence) were rather fragmented and limited. Thus a flow of knowledge between those two parts of public administration was rather limited.

At the beginning of new decade government launched preparation of National Development Plan 2004-2006. In 2002 new office was established: Office of National Development Plan and EU. This institution was responsible for preparation of the new National Development Plan. It was also responsible for conducting ex-ante evaluation. A new unit was set, dedicated to evaluation and analyses (Unit for Analysis, Evaluation and Modeling – UAEM). In 2004 National Development Office became independent institutions and UAEM became responsible for managing and coordinating evaluation for whole Cohesion Policy. These actions have created a foundation for the formation and maturation of an evaluation culture of Cohesion Policy in Hungary. It can therefore be concluded that the development of institutions of the evaluation, and a culture of evaluation, was strongly associated with the process of integration with European structures and implementation of Cohesion Policy.

It should be mentioned here, that other factors also have impact, however weaker, on development of evaluation culture in Hungary. One of them was activity of other international organizations (e.g preparation by OECD LEED Programme, in cooperation with Ministry for National Development and Economy of Hungary, *Guide to evaluation of local development strategies (OECD 2009a)*). Another factor was the activity of international companies, with previous experience in evaluation and research, which role was particularly visibly during first period of evaluation practice in Hungary, related to evaluation of PHARE programmes.

Experiences in the field of evaluation outside structural funds were rather weak. National development programmes and funds have not been evaluated yet as systematically as those co-financed by EU. Evaluation/assessment are undertaken relatively rarely, organise on ad-hoc basis and mainly undertaken with the form of self-assessment. Reason for this is probably due to non-mandatory status of evaluations as well as lack of incentives and resources for commissioning evaluations (OECD 2009b).

Certain elements of the evaluation approach was also used by the State Audit Office. Reports, especially in the initial stage of membership, focused on assessing the potential of the structures responsible for implementing cohesion policy.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Number of institutions involved in contracting evaluation research is decreasing due to the progressing concentration of all functions related to management of structural funds. Currently one institution is a key player: National Development Agency (NDA). In 2006 all Managing Authorities were included into a structure of NDA. Currently NDA, and more specific Unit for Strategy and Evaluation (USE) is a main player in area of evaluation of Cohesion Policy. The dominating role of NDA in evaluation is recently even increasing due to the difficult situation of public finance and reduced budgets for this type of activities in other institutions.

It's role contains number of strategic tasks:

- ⇒ preparation and conducting the preliminarily planned, comprehensive strategic evaluations;
- ⇒ providing resources for the regular evaluations, based on unified methodology and the enforcement of the evaluation plan;
- ⇒ preparation and carrying out evaluations conducted in areas which concern more than one of the operational programmes;
- ⇒ prepare and carrying out evaluation of operations having no innovative domestic history;
- ⇒ ensuring that evaluation reports are available to the public.

Besides NDA some line ministries were also active in commissioning evaluation studies, like Ministry of Economy and Transport, Ministry of Employment and Labour. At the regional level Regional Development Agencies (RDA) play role of Managing Authorities of seven Operational Programmes implemented at regional level. RDA are also entitled to commission evaluation studies.

Evaluations in Cohesion Policy are conducted according to Evaluation Plans, which cover three years period and are revised annually. The evaluation plan contains the evaluations described below:

- ⇒ Mid-term revision of the operational programmes strategy and implementation system (2009-2010);
- ⇒ ex-post evaluation of the operational programmes (2015-2016);
- ⇒ annual operational evaluation of action plans (2008, 2010, 2012, 2014);
- ⇒ ex-post evaluation of action plans (2009, 2011, 2013, 2015);
- ⇒ ex-ante evaluation of the contribution of action plans, individual interventions and major projects to the implementation of the objectives of the operational programme and to the enforcement of horizontal policies (2006, 2008, 2010);

- ⇒ comprehensive evaluation of the operational programme regarding horizontal principles (for example: equality of opportunities, sustainability etc.) (2008, 2010, 2012).

Managing Authorities are responsible for preparing input to Evaluation Plan. According to Implementation Operational Programme, at the OP level evaluation will be made:

- ⇒ in case of those operations of the action plan, for which during the implementation there was a significant difference between the indicator values specified in the implementation schedule;
- ⇒ to summarize the findings in connection with the measure(s) related to the operations of the action plan, and implemented in the 1st National Hungarian Development Plan (NDP1);
- ⇒ 2 years after the completion of operations having no innovative domestic implementation history in order to summarize the findings of the implementation, and to explore impact mechanisms;
- ⇒ to assess the intended and non-intended impacts of at least one operation per priority annually as from 2009, by ex-post evaluation.

Managing authority is also enable to conduct on-going evaluation on the ad-hoc basis.

Evaluation activity is financed from the Implementation Operational Program. Both the administrative costs and the external evaluators are funded from this source. 115 m € is allocated for the monitoring, evaluation and communication. The biannual action plans dedicate 500 million Ft (1,7-1,75 million EUR) annually to procure external evaluations.

Until 2008 selection of evaluations was based on public procurement procedures organise individually in case of each evaluation. Currently selection process of evaluation is centralised and carried out in two phases. First phase took place in 2008/2009 and covers selection of evaluators for framework contracts, signed for four years. Framework contract was divided in four lots:

- ⇒ Environment (includes: strategic environmental assessment)
- ⇒ Infrastructure (transport, energy)
- ⇒ Economic and social development (education, health, employment, R+D and innovation)
- ⇒ Operative evaluations (includes: system of institution development).

For each lot six evaluators were selected and altogether 14 evaluators were chosen (some of them in more than one lot). Selection of contractors was based on experience, skills, expertise of experts, proposed methodology for evaluation. There were set some requirements for evaluators (related to level of education, experience, expertise in the field of evaluation).

At the second stage, in frame of each lot, evaluators from short list are invited to submit proposal. Call for proposal is based on detailed TOR and defined number of expert-days. At these stage price is the only selection criteria.

This approach prove to be not as efficient as it was supposed to be. There is very strong price competition on the market and as a result current prices are relatively low. Thus the quality of evaluation is often not as good as expected. Also lack of involvement of evaluators in process of designing and development of evaluation methodology results with their lower engagement and thus lower quality of research realisation. Thus in new round of framework contracts it is planned to include also other criteria, related to quality of proposal, will be taken into account.

Process of selection of evaluators is not supported by any formal document or guidance. However the organization of evaluation process is described in the Operational Manual of the NDA. This description consist of: the goal of the evaluation system for NHDP, mechanism for planning of evaluation, implementation system of evaluation, mechanisms for assuring quality and efficiency.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In Hungary supply side of evaluation market is currently more or less stable. During 1990s. mainly international companies were active. Beginning of new decade was a period where national institutions entered the evaluation market. Hungarian medium sized companies started their activity in the field of evaluation in the mid of the previous decade. At the beginning of new programming period (2007-2013) evaluation market was relatively stable.

Currently in the framework contracts there are 14 evaluation consortia. Most of them consist of Hungarian and international enterprises, like TÁRKI Social Research Institute, Ex Ante Kft, AGENDA Consulting Co. Ltd, Pillars Kft, Ernst&Young, IFUA, KPMG. Most of the institutions active on the evaluation market in Hungary are consulting company. For most of them evaluation is only part of their activity. The most experience and most devoted to the research and evaluation seems to be Tarki Institute.

Due to numbers of years of development of evaluation research in Hungary current capacity of main players may be assessed as relatively advanced. Selected consortia engaged experimental economists, sociologists, experts in surveying, consultants with business analyses competences, engineers with environmental and infrastructural expertise. Also number of ex civil servants move to evaluation companies, what assure flow of expertise on policy designing and implementation.

They are able to provide high quality products. However, as it was mentioned earlier, strong competition based on prices causes that some of the companies significantly reduced their activity on that market.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

During last ten years number of evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy was conducted. Each year approximately ten evaluations for PHARE programmes in period 2004 – 2007 were accomplished (**Gabor 2009**). In case of first National Development Plan evaluations may be divided in three periods: first, ex-ante evaluations were conducted for each of operational programme. Average value of the those researches was 200.000 euro. Interim evaluations were conducted in 2006. Evaluations were commissioned by Managing Authorities, which were placed in different Ministries. Thus quality and utilisation of the evaluations results was diverse. Also value of the contracts varied from 30.000 euro to 200.000 euro. During next phase number of ex-post evaluation for 2004-2006 were conducted (2008-2009).

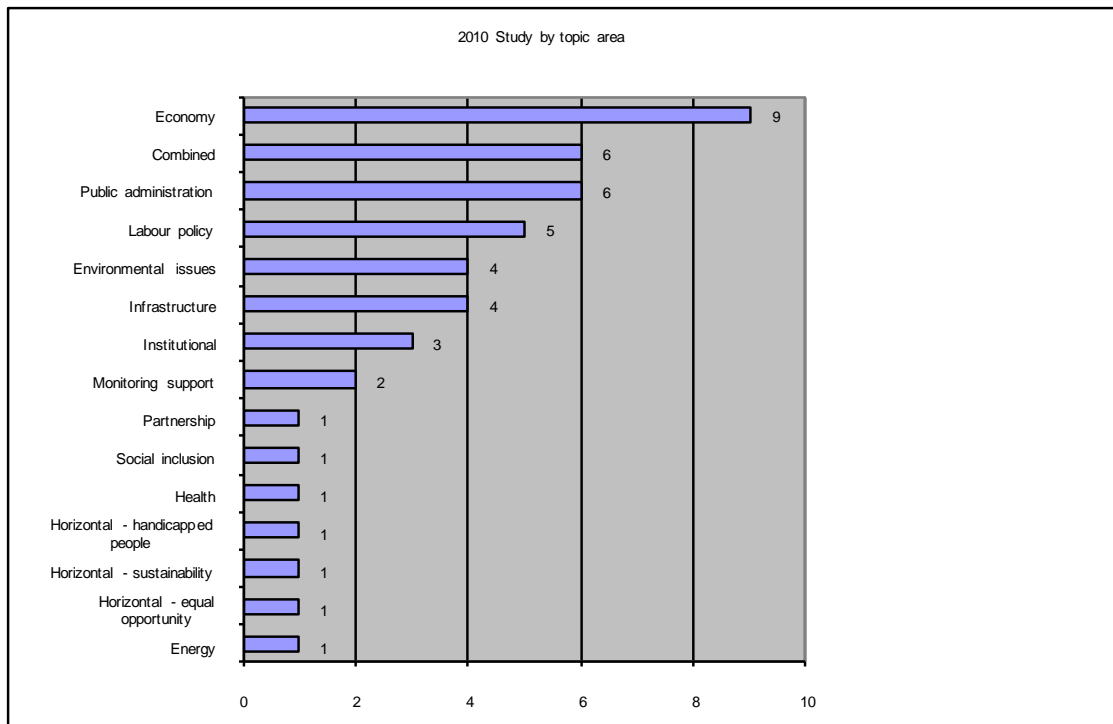
Regarding the new financial perspective (2007-2013) for each of 15 OP ex-ante evaluation was conducted. All studies were commissioned by NDA. Additionally two more research projects were carried on: one focused on strategic aspects of EU funds utilisation and second focused on possible impact of Operational Programmes on employment, growth, public finance, equality of opportunities and social equality.

In the evaluation plan for the period 2010 – 2012, for year 2010 it was assumed to launch 28 evaluations. During 2010 main activity in the field of evaluation was mid-term evaluation of the 15 Operational Programmes and synthesis of these evaluations on the level of National Strategic Frame of Reference. Main goal of this work was on the one hand to enhance the fine – tuning of the implementation of Ops and on the other hand highlight the best practises and lessons which can be utilises for the next programming period (**The Hungarian National Development Agency 2011**).

Mid-term evaluation for each OP was carried out separately, however according to the same methodology developed by Managing Authority of NDA. This approach assured comparability of evaluation studies. It was also designed in this way in order to secure smooth synthesis of the main findings.

Besides of mid-term evaluation Unit for Evaluation at NDA in 2010 lunched 12 evaluations (8 ex-post and 4 on-going). For year 2011 there is a plan to launch 19 evaluations studies.

Figure 3 Evaluations study by topic area 2010



Source: (Kenyeres 2010)

Summarising, in recent years significant increase in the number of evaluation studies was observed. However number of evaluations achieved in 2010 may be assumed as more or less optimum and in future it may be expected to be keep at similar level.

Type of the evaluations is closely link to the stage of implementation of Cohesion Policy in Hungary. Until the beginning of 2010 ex-post evaluation dominated, what was linked to evaluation of previous financial period. In 2010 dominated on-going evaluations (with main undertaking: mid-term evaluations). Next years it may be assumed that it will be more focus on ex-post evaluations, while results of the OPs will be more visible and also conclusion will be more significant in the perspective of programming new OPs. Also ex-ante evaluation for new OPs will be also important activity.

Evaluations studies are focus mostly on impact of Cohesion Policy on employment, economic situation and environment. Also methods of evaluation are developing and they are more and more advanced. One of the factor facilitating this process is production of databases with detailed data on enterprises supported in frame of Cohesion Policy. It enables conducting more advanced counterfactual impact assessment. In the future there is a plan to produce similar database containing detailed information on supported people, what shall enable more advance evaluations of interventions address to people.

There is no formal system of assessment of quality of evaluation reports. As a rule it is a process of assessment of consecutive versions of the reports. First version usually is below expectations,

however successive versions are better. During assessment of evaluation reports attention is put on relevance of findings and also correctness of methodological and statistical approach. Example of study with highest quality: some of the mid-term evaluations, which were conducted by experts in the field, thus offering much deeper insight (transport, environment, economic assessment).

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

NDA has developed number of channels to collect, manage and disseminate knowledge in order to support the better utilization of Cohesion Policy funds. However there is lack of any platform or system devoted exclusively to evaluation recourses and practise, although number of activities are undertaken in order to facilitate exchange of knowledge. There are e.g. seminars for persons involved in Cohesion Policy evaluation, where methodological issues are discussed. Also national conferences are organised, which are open to wider public, where main findings of evaluations studies are discussed. Additionally international evaluation conferences took place. Recently one was organised in 2010, and all materials are available to the public (**The National Development Agency of The Republic of Hungary 2010**), and also in 2011 one was organised (at the moment of preparation of this paper materials were not yet available). This activities have significant input in creation of evaluation culture in Hungary, however still there is focus on evaluation of Cohesion Policy with rather limited references to other policy areas.

One of the important elements of development of evaluation culture is the offer of education and training in this field. However in case of Hungary proposal regarding training or post-graduated study is rather limited. Recently post-graduated course was launched at the Central European University in Budapest. Besides there is lack of any dedicated trainings for civil servants in area of evaluations and research. In Hungary there is evaluation society, however its activity is rather limited.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

According to expert's assessment, centralised system of evaluation seems to be successful in improving the quality and size of evaluation market, however it shows only minor success in the improvement of utilisation of evaluation results (**Gabor 2009**).

There is lack of strict system of monitoring implementations of recommendations. As a rule after finalising the report there is a workshop, where all stakeholders are invited and recommendations are discussed in order to provide some thoughts to Managing Authority. Previously there were prepared tables with recommendations and information about implementation. After all this procedure was assessed as too much bureaucratic and discontinued. However currently there are discussions on how to built more systematic approach.

Findings of evaluation studies are presented also to Monitoring Committee of OPs. Results of the evaluations are also discussed by Evaluation Subcommittee of The Committee for Interministerial Coordination of Development Policy (CICDP), a high level forum to discuss development policy issues was established in 1999. Evaluation reports are published at the home page of National Development Agency.

Main reasons behind limited usage of evaluation results:

- ⇒ Strong focus of implementing and managing authorities on absorption, quick decisions, finding solutions for legal, organisational or technical problems related to implementations. Thus there is rather limited interest in findings of evaluations, which are more outcome oriented.
- ⇒ Recommendations are often rather general and with limited usefulness for persons responsible for implementation. However it is currently a process of working out more balanced approach, where recommendation would be more concrete, and in the same time persons responsible for management of OPs more open for more abstract ideas.
- ⇒ Limited interest in evaluations studies from the policy makers. It may be a result of perceiving evaluation as rather formal procedure, required by EU and not yet fully integrated in policy making process.

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Ireland

Joanna Hofman

Context of the Cohesion Policy Evaluation System

The National Development Plan (2000-2006) provided a framework for the development policy in Ireland and it amounted to over 57 billion EUR of public, private and EU funds. Investments aimed to improving infrastructure, developing a skilled workforce, and promoting social inclusion. Most of the public funding for this initiative (about 90%) came from domestic sources and the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds (worth of 3.8 billion EUR) represented approximately 7% of the budget (**The Irish Times 2000**).

For 2007–13, Ireland has been allocated 900 million EUR in total Cohesion Policy funding: 750 million EUR under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective and 150 million EUR under the European Territorial Co-operation Objective. Ireland has two regional programmes for the Border, Midland and Western region and the Southern and Eastern region funded by the ERDF. The third country-wide programme is funded by the ESF. Given that the new National Development Plan 2007-2013 amounts to 184 billion EUR (**Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011**) the proportion of the Cohesion Policy has shrunk to less than 2% of the total budget.

Figure 4: Eligible areas in Ireland under the European Competitiveness and Employment Objective 2007-2013

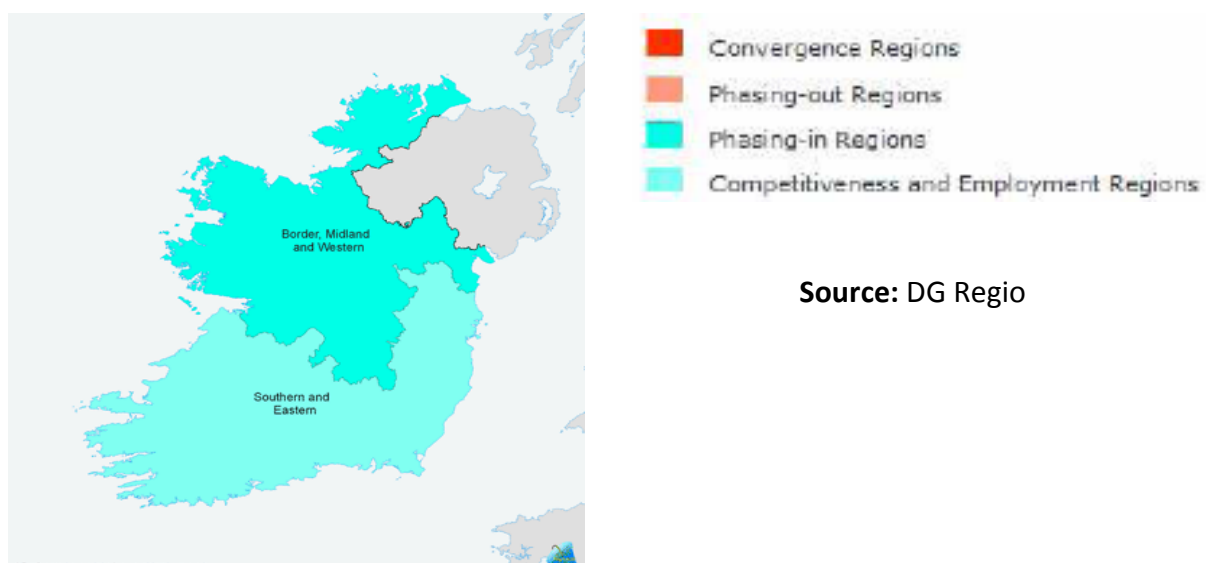


Table 5. Funds for Ireland 2007-2013 (in million EUR)

Objective	Fund	EU	National Public	Total
Regional Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	375	564	939
	ESF	375	982	1 357
Total Regional Competitiveness and Employment		750		
Total European Territorial Co-operation*	ERDF	150	-	150
TOTAL		900	1 546	2 446

Source: (European Commission DG Regio 2009b)

As shown in the figures above, the Cohesion Policy has rather a small share in the national development policy; nonetheless, it is still an important source of funding for public programmes.

The Cohesion Policy played an important role to develop the evaluation culture in Ireland. In the early 1990s special evaluation units were created at the Operational Programme level. Although they were independent, they were placed within Managing Authorities of Irish Operational Programmes. Since then, the evaluation capacity in Ireland expanded and a central evaluation unit was established in 1996 at the Department of Finance to co-ordinate the evaluation work. Subsequently, the NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit⁵⁶ took over the responsibilities of separate Programmes' evaluation units and the emphasis has been subsequently shifted from Structural Funds expenditures to national public interventions as a whole. Hegarty (2003) confirms that "the requirements of EU regulations have helped [to] promote an evaluation culture and capacity in Ireland".

However, in recent years the evaluation in Ireland was affected by several negative factors and one of the most important was the EU requirements for evaluation of structural funds which was particularly strong in the 90-ties. With the Cohesion Policy funding losing on the importance after 2006, the EU pressure ceased to be a key driver for the Irish evaluation. Another factor influencing the development of the evaluation practice in Ireland relates to the public service modernisation and the Expenditure Review that later turned into the Value for Money and Policy Review initiative. Given the patchy and slow progress of those initiatives, several Irish stakeholders, including Boyle, believe that the problem was more of the demand than of the supply of the market (Boyle 2009).

⁵⁶ <http://www.ndp.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2Foverview%2Fevaluation.htm&mn=ovex&nID=5> 28.05.2011

It should also be noted that according to Furubo (**Furubo et al. 2002**), Ireland scored only seven points out of 18 points possible in total, with the worst results in the area of professional organisations and the degree of institutionalisation of the evaluation at the Irish Parliament. With this result Ireland ranked 16 among 22 countries under review.

In summary, the main factors conducive to for the development of the evaluation practice in Ireland include (**European Commission DG Regio 2009a**):

- ⇒ EU pressure to promote evaluation culture;
- ⇒ establishing independent evaluation units in the 90ties;
- ⇒ providing central support from the NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit and the VFM Review Initiative.

On the other hand, the main impediments for the evaluation practice are:

- ⇒ abolishment of the decentralised evaluation structure that resulted in a loss of the expertise built up in the past and required time to rebuilt it;
- ⇒ limited number of external suppliers of evaluation services;
- ⇒ fading pressure of the EU with a limited scope of the EU Cohesion Policy support to Ireland;
- ⇒ using evaluation as a tool to justify the rationale for public interventions rather than improving the way the scarce resources are allocated that requires bold recommendations and decisions to cease the funding.

These factors are presented in more detail below.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit has been the key institution involved in contracting evaluation studies in Ireland over the last 10 years. In the last programming period (2000-2006), NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit had a limited number of staff and its budget amounted to 4.6 million EUR. The Unit has been responsible for interim evaluation studies that look at the effectiveness, relevance, and efficiency of the NDP. The studies usually have a thematic focus and look into more than one operational programme. Also, they are strongly focused on management and implementation issues. Interim evaluation studies feed into the mid-term evaluation that are commissioned externally and focused on up-to-date performance and socio-economic situation.

The Economic and Social Research Institute (**The Economic and Social Research Institute 2011**) is another player with an important role in the evaluation practice in Ireland. It analysis the needs for public interventions funded by the Structural Funds. This process is prior to the drafting the NDP which is then formally evaluated by the NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit as regards rationale for interventions and their relevance, as mentioned above.

Recently, the Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit was established (also in the Department of Finance) and it plays a major role in general oversight of Value for Money (VFM) issues relating to the NDP. It has specific responsibility for central oversight of the VFM and Policy Reviews and for organising ongoing NDP evaluation at programme level including the mid-term review of the NDP. However, the budget for evaluation studies has been limited in comparison to the previous programming period and the economic crisis seemed to have further adverse impact on the demand side of the evaluation market in Ireland. As result, there were just a few studies launched in recent years: a mid-term evaluation of an ERDF funded programme that was carried out internally by the Evaluation Unit in 2010 is one example to illustrate it.⁵⁷ Also, there are no immediate plans to conduct other evaluations.

Irish public procurement rules provide some general guidelines for contracting bodies on how to commission external services and they are briefly presented below.

Table 6. National Public Procurement Rules

Estimated Order Value (excluding VAT)	Quotations/Tenders Required	Minimum Documentation to Retain
Up to 5,000 EUR	1 or more competitive quotes, select the most suitable offer.	Evidence that quotations were sought Written confirmation of prices (fax/email/letter)
Between 5,000 and 50,000 EUR	At least 3 written quotes. Contract details should be sent to at least 3 suppliers.	Evidence that appropriate number of quotes were sought. Documentation and/or Terms of Reference sent to all potential bidders/suppliers. All tenders received and evidence they were received within the specified timeframe (date stamped) Notes of assessment of tenders including signed scoring, minutes of discussion and names of assessment panel members. The reason for selecting the successful supplier must be stated. Correspondence with the successful and unsuccessful bidders/suppliers. (Unsuccessful bidders should be notified

⁵⁷ Originally the intention was to procure an external study and the terms of reference were developed when a decision was taken to use internal resources.

		<p>before the contract is formally awarded to the successful party).</p> <p>Contract or equivalent awarded to winning tender.</p> <p>Documented changes or addendums to contract.</p>
<p>Contracts above 50,000 EUR and up to the value of EU thresholds</p>	<p>Full Tender Process</p> <p>Publication on the e-tenders.gov.ie web site generally meets national advertising requirements.</p> <p>Contracts may also be advertised elsewhere.</p>	<p>All of the above and in addition:</p> <p>Copy of advertisements placed on e-tenders.gov.ie or elsewhere.</p>

Source: (Ireland-Wales Programme 2007 – 2013 2009)

Tendering procedures in Ireland follow the revised EU public sector Directives permitting four tendering procedures:

- ⇒ open (where all interested parties may submit tenders);
- ⇒ restricted (which is a two-stage process where only those parties who meet minimum requirements in regard to professional or technical capability, experience and expertise and financial capacity to carry out a project are invited to tender);
- ⇒ competitive dialogue (which provides more flexibility in the tendering process for more complex contracts, for example public private partnerships (PPPs);
- ⇒ negotiated (which may be used only in the limited circumstances).

An example of selection criteria used in Irish public procurement is presented below:

- ⇒ quality of proposal for providing service;
- ⇒ the management and service structure proposed;
- ⇒ expertise and skills of personnel proposed for providing the service required;
- ⇒ timeframe for delivery;
- ⇒ proposed cost of providing service (**eTenders 2010**).

The selection criteria below are taken from Terms of Reference for evaluation and therefore they are more tailored to this type of services:

- ⇒ understanding and coverage of ToR;
- ⇒ quality of methodological approach;
- ⇒ experience of team and resources allocated;
- ⇒ cost of tender (**Grimes 2006**).

Project procurement under the NDP is firmly focussed on securing VFM for the taxpayer. The Irish Government is introducing new standardised public works contracts terms and new conditions of engagement for construction-related consultants (i.e. architects, engineers etc.). Cost certainty, value for money and cost effective delivery of public capital projects are at the core of the reforms. The scope of the reforms covers contractors, consultants and public service clients. The new public works contracts provide for fixed price lump sum contracts with appropriate risk transfer tendered on a competitive basis. The new arrangements for consultants also introduce fixed fees, tendered on a competitive basis. Public sector clients also have to define their requirements comprehensively so that the project scope is very clear before going to tender. The overall objective is to secure greater certainty for the state on project outturns and to greatly reduce cost overruns over project tender prices. The implementation of the procurement reforms are one of the key elements in the drive to secure better VFM outcomes from the very significant expenditure allocated for infrastructure development in the Plan.⁵⁸

Other guiding documents more specifically related to evaluation (or evaluation-type) studies include *Indicative guidelines on evaluation methods: monitoring and evaluation indicators: working document no. 2*, developed by the EC, and provisions of the NDP 2007-2013 (Chapter 14). According to this document, all expenditure under the Plan are subject to the VFM management and assessment frameworks.⁵⁹ Key elements of this framework include:

- ⇒ all projects are subject to project appraisal to ensure that NDP programme objectives and VFM are being achieved;
- ⇒ all capital projects over 30 million EUR require a full cost benefit analysis;
- ⇒ progress on capital programmes and projects is reported regularly to the management of all government departments and agencies concerned;
- ⇒ government departments and agencies carry out annual spot checks to ensure compliance with the VFM requirements;
- ⇒ NDP programme evaluations and VFM and Policy Reviews are published and submitted to the relevant committees of the Parliament.

⁵⁸ http://www.ndp.ie/documents/NDP2007-2013/NDP_Main_Ch_12_14.pdf 28.05.2011

⁵⁹ See more: <http://www.ndp.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2FNDP2007-2013%2Foverview.htm> 28.05.2011

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The review of the published evaluation reports shows that there were quite a few firms and institutions active in the field of Cohesion Policy evaluations in Ireland during last 10 years. Among those who managed to secure contracts or were commissioned to evaluate Irish Operational Programmes there were several consultancy companies, out of which the majority was active primarily on the domestic market and only a few were based in another EU country.

These included:

- ⇒ Fitzpatrick Associates - <http://www.fitzpatrick-associates.com/>
- ⇒ Indecon - <http://www.indecon.ie/>
- ⇒ FGS Consulting <http://www.fgspartnership.com/Content.aspx?ID=24ee4c34-d938-4d21-ae90-b16fa67cca53&PID=c6c34385-3e7a-4a4e-8d7a-79f1c10034eb>
- ⇒ Dorgan Associates - <http://www.dorganassociates.com/>
- ⇒ DKM Economic Consultants - <http://www.dkm.ie/>
- ⇒ ECOTEC Research and Consulting - <http://www.uk.ecorys.com/>
- ⇒ Gesellschaft für Finanz- und Regionalanalysen (GEFRA) http://www.gefra-muenster.de/english/home/about_us.htm

There were also a few public bodies, such as the Evaluation Unit in the Department of Finance and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) mentioned earlier and the University College Dublin (UCD).

Fitzpatrick Associated and the Evaluation Unit conducted the highest number of evaluation studies (eight and five respectively) accounting for more than half of all evaluations published online. Other institutions were involved in a much fewer number of evaluations.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

All publications and evaluation reports can be downloaded from the Evaluation Unit publications' section⁶⁰. According to this source of information, there were approximately 20 evaluation studies commissioned, conducted and subsequently published online during the last 10 years. Most of them (15) were conducted by external contractors and five evaluations were delivered by the Evaluation Unit and their topics ranged from single aspects, such as human resource development or infrastructure, to broad analysis related to the regional development. Also the scope of the studies was often horizontal, i.e. overlooking more than one Operational Programme, or at least dedicated to a single programme at the national level. Only two published evaluations were focused on regional programmes.

⁶⁰ <http://www.ndp.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/publications/evaluation/default.htm> 28.05.2011

Apart from two ex ante evaluations, all remaining studies were conducted during the last programming. According to the Evaluation Unit, ex-post evaluation is carried out and available on the European Commission website.⁶¹

In terms of assessing the quality of evaluation reports steering committees usually takes into account the following considerations:

- ⇒ Does the evaluation report comprehensively address the terms of reference?
- ⇒ Is the overall analytical approach adequate and are the methodologies utilised robust?
- ⇒ Are the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation supported by the analysis carried out?
- ⇒ The structure, presentation and clarity of the report.

The list of completed evaluation studies is presented in the last section of this report and includes the links to the published reports.

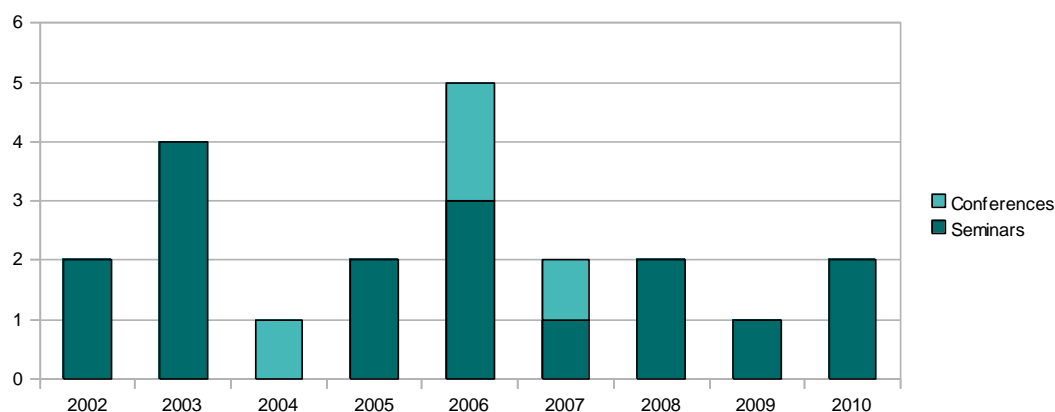
Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Just several years ago evaluation was an important element in the Structural Fund implementation system in Ireland. According to Hegarty, EU impetus has led to improvement in capacity and expertise (**Hegarty 2003b**). Especially in the 90-ties, the Commission ensured funding and put a pressure to carry out evaluation studies and set up implementation structures .

The Irish Evaluation Network was established in late 2002, to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, seminars and conferences for people involved in evaluation in Ireland. The Network is supported by the School of Education Studies at Dublin City University and a Co-ordination Committee composed of individuals' interested or involved in evaluation in Ireland (including Boyle, McNamara, Fitzpatrick, Hegarty, and others). For more information see (**Irish Evaluation Network 2010**) For the last eight years it organised approximately 17 seminars and four national conferences related to evaluation in Ireland with 2006 marking the top of its activities (see the figure below).

⁶¹ <http://www.ndp.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2Foverview%2Fevaluation.htm&mn=ovex&nID=5#3> 28.05.2011

Figure 5. Irish Evaluation Network events (2002-2010)



Source: (Irish Evaluation Network 2010)

In terms of the role of the public institutions in developing the evaluation culture in Ireland, findings of this review present a mixed picture. There are opinions that the developments in the public sector, such as the VFM initiative, helped to embed an evaluation culture within the civil service, encourage it to strengthen internal expertise, develop networks, share information, and build up the evaluation capacity (**Smyth cited in O'Hara, McNamara, & Boyle, 2010**). Indeed, with a newly established Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit there was a great need for professional training and postgraduate qualifications were funded for those undertaking VFM reviews. Also, the Irish Evaluation Network received public funding. However, funding for these initiatives was withdrawn after 2008.

On the other hand, others express more critical views claiming that *"evaluation has not yet become part of the mind-set of the Irish public servant. It is still regarded to a large extent as an external imposition to be done in a way which will cause least disruption to the continuation of existing schemes and programmes"* (**Tutty cited in O'Hara et al., 2010**).

Currently, Institute of Public Administration in Ireland offers several programmes (Master degrees and postgraduate studies) that focus on developing of policy analysis skills across the wider public service. Policy evaluation is either explicit or implicit part of these programmes that provide expertise in assessing contemporary public policy, including project management, economic and financial analysis, social policy analysis, as well as tools and methodologies that should be applied in such analysis (**The Institute of Public Administration 2011**).

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The evaluation reports in Ireland are published on NDP Evaluation Unit Publications section and accessible to all stakeholders involved in the implementation of programmes, decision-makers, researchers, as well as the general public.

An evaluation report is submitted by the Managing Authority to the Monitoring Committee which has to take its position towards each recommendation of the report and it has the power to reject a recommendation. Managing Authority is obliged to keep the Committee informed about the progress in implementing the adopted recommendations.

It is believed that evaluation should be, and indeed is, capable to influence policy planning and its implementation. Therefore, appropriate procedures should be ensured to allow for a constructive discussion and “consideration of whether and how change in underlying structures and interventions should occur” (**Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants 2003**). What is more important, “programme evaluation can influence not just the programmes evaluated but also have long lasting institutional and cultural effects. This requires that programme evaluations are undertaken to high professional standards, when resources are allocated to promote the development of evaluation capacity, and when models of good practice are shared and promoted” (**Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants 2003**).

While the opinions presented above seemed to dominate discussions a few years ago, one can hear much stronger criticism towards Irish evaluation nowadays. Boyle critically reviews the impact of the evaluation type of studies and claims that out of 43 reports produced as part of the VFM and Policy Reviews between 2002 and 2004 only two were received by Select Committees of the Irish Parliament. While he acknowledges that currently reports are passed on the Parliament, there are still issues to engage the committees in discussing them (**Boyle 2009**).

Also in terms of the content of the reports and the quality of recommendations, opinions are rather critical. In the great number of developed conclusions and recommendations, there are no direct recommendations for programme termination, significant number of them supported status quo and focused on minor improvements to the management process. After 2008 evaluation was seen as a “technique of management” used to argue against cuts. Rather than improving evaluation was now about proving the rationale for intervention (**O’Hara et al. 2010**). This process undermined the evaluation culture in Ireland that is driven by economic circumstances and political imperatives and it seems that currently the importance of evaluation is fading away.

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Italy

Łukasz Krajnow

Context of Evaluation System

The Cohesion Policy in Italy is of fundamental importance as regards overcoming the persistent economic disproportions between the regions. Italy is the third largest beneficiary of the European Cohesion Policy (following Poland and Spain). In 2007-2013, Italy will receive nearly EUR 29 billion of aid from the European Funds (*European Commission DG Regio 2011*). The detailed division into objectives is presented on the Figure below:

Table 7 EU Funds for Italy 2007-2013 (in billion EUR)

Objective	Fund	EU	National Public	Total
Convergence	ERDF	17.8	18	35.8
	ESF	3.7	3.9	7.6
Total Convergence		21.5		
Regional Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	3.1	5	8.1
	ESF	3.2	4.4	7.6
Total Regional Competitiveness and Employment		6.3		
Total European Territorial Cooperation*	ERDF	1	-	1
TOTAL		28.8	31.3	60.1

Figures have been rounded up

* Each Territorial Cooperation programme includes a minimum of 15% co-financing from each participating Member State.

These funds are divided among 19 Operational Programmes of the Convergence objective, 33 programmes of the Competitiveness and Employment objectives and 14 European Territorial Cooperation programmes. In total, this give 56 regional and 10 central programmes.

The share of the European Funds in relation to the total expenditure by Italy, incurred on increasing the socio-economic cohesion is substantial (*Busillo et al. 2010*)⁶², although it might seem insignificant, given that in 2000-2007 the expenditure on State aid and investment

⁶² "Our findings show a positive, but moderate, policy effect on regional growth. Per capita GDP of the "treated" regions (Objective 1 regions) grows, on an yearly average in the period 1995-2006, 0.8 percentage points more than that of the non-treated regions".

on the side of State budget amounted to EUR 276.19 billion⁶³. However, efficient use of the funds is equally important as the awarded amount since, at the halfway point of the disbursement period, Italy has used only 16.8% of the allocation. It was the Southern regions that have come off as the weakest in this respect.

The role of the European Funds in the formation of evaluation culture in Italy is “extremely important” (**Bertamino, Capece Galeota and De Luca 2011**). The EU funds and regulations greatly stimulate the development of evidence-based policy in Italy. Evaluation is recently becoming increasingly popular not only in reference to the Structural Funds, but also as regards the use of domestic funds. In Italy the EU and national cohesion policy are integrated within a single strategy, as a result the national development policy takes over the European models of efficiency and effectiveness⁶⁴ that make the rules more and more similar.

An urgent need, intensifying between 1990 and 2000, to increase the effectiveness of public policies and enhance the quality of management in public administration was one of the most important factors affecting the development of evaluation practice in Italy. This need resulted from the decentralisation process, in consequence of which the regional self-governments have gained increased influence on local development. Increased power for the regions means greater responsibility and a necessity of controlling the efficiency of disbursing the public funds. The evaluation of European programmes has helped to create a consistent system for the evaluation of public policies including both the necessity of evaluation at the national and regional level.

Another cause was the willingness to increase economic competitiveness of the Southern Italy area (Mezzogiorno) through a better use of resources and attracting the investment capital (**Anselmo & Raimondo 2000**). In order to eliminate the barriers for mobility of capital it was required to establish an efficient institutional system whose efficiency would be confirmed by a reliable assessment.

Another factor was the necessity to strength public investment. The development assisted by the EU resources required extensive knowledge and awareness on the side of public administration due to the broad scope of available data and high analytical competences required in such interventions.

A lot of publications (**Furubo et al. 2002**) about the importance of the Cohesion Policy for the development of evaluation culture in Italy refer to overcoming the resistance of the state and local administration in the implementation of evaluation practices in management. The users have viewed evaluation as another formal requirement to be met in the application for the European Funds⁶⁵ (**European Commission DG Regio 2009; Oliva & Pesce 2002**). At that time,

⁶³ On 27 December 2007, pursuant to Resolution No. 166, the Italian Government has assigned additional EUR 63.27 billion for a special-purpose Fund for Non-profitable Areas (Fondo per le Aree Sottoutilizzate) aimed at compensating for the economic disproportions between the Northern and Southern Italy (Combined Report on the economy and public finance 2008, Ministry of the Economy and Finance, pp. 94, 99).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ „Before 1998, the Italian public administration had substantially ignored the European evaluation requirements. However, with the starting of the 2000-2006 Community Support Framework (CSF) the Department for Development Policies (DPS) made it clear that accountability, transparency, and effective compliance with the European requirements were to be implemented. The choice to refer to the European evaluation guidelines was justified by the need to give external legitimacy and credibility to the process. It also

neither the Government nor the local authorities used the results of evaluation research in their activity. They did not refer to them in discussions or negotiations as well.

The situation is gradually improving. Evaluation practices are currently more and more present in the area of education. Notably at the national level. In the opinion of the experts, from the point of view of evaluation culture, there is still much to be done for evaluation practice to be commonly used by politicians for planning and development.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The key institutions in Italy involved in the evaluation practice belong to the **National Evaluation System (NES)**. NES is a set of activities to provide support and technical and methodological guidance in order to improve and enhance evaluation activities. The National Strategic Framework 2007-2013 assigns the coordination and implementation of these activities to UVAL, which to this end must work together with other national structures for the appraisal of interventions in the European Social Fund (ESF) (ISFOL – ESF national evaluation unit) and the European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) (INEA), as well as the Evaluation Units of Central and Regional Administrations pursuant to Law 144/1999. The NES is therefore structured as a collective entity in the implementation of its activities. The NES is charged with proposing methodologies, offering guidance and monitoring evaluation activities involving the Structural Funds and national cohesion policy. NES has no coercive powers vis-à-vis regional authorities and federal ministries and cannot substitute Regions and ministries in deciding which evaluations are to be realized, choosing evaluation subjects, carrying out evaluations. NES rather operates through reputational mechanisms such as moral suasion and peer pressure.

UVAL – *Unità di valutazione degli investimenti pubblici* (The Public investments Evaluation Unit), which was reorganised within the Department for Development and Economic Cohesion, according to law 144/1999, is responsible for the coordination of the National Evaluation System. The tasks of UVAL include:

- ⇒ participating in the planning, implementation and management of activities as part of the Network Management Committee, in line with its role within the Joint Technical Committee;
- ⇒ collaborating in the co-ordination and planning within the framework of the activities of the Technical Steering Committee of the NUVAL Project of the implementation of technical support and specialist training projects aimed at strengthening the implementation processes and operational activities of the individual units and operational sub-networks of units;
- ⇒ active participation with other units on joint projects within the framework of the Network;
- ⇒ carrying out evaluations on behalf of the CIPE together with the Evaluation Unit Network (CIPE Resolution 17/20 of 2004).

The Network of Evaluation and Verification Units was established in 2003 in accordance with Law 144 of 1999⁶⁶, which also provided for the creation and activation of the individual units (a total of 33 in 12 central government departments, all the regional and provincial governments). The Network is a self-governing federal system independent of all participating entities. The Network is composed of units that, although they sometimes have different roles depending on the entities to which they are linked, share a common approach and mission with the aim of improving the quality and effectiveness of public investments. Till 2009 UVAL had no formal central role in the Network. A reorganization of the Network is currently ongoing.

The Regional Units vary widely by composition, structure, function, and number of staff (from 4 to 30 people). Staff are hired in part from inside the administration itself and in part from the market. Such proportions vary, as did the hiring process—for example, Calabria performed a wide outside hiring campaign, posting advertisements in international journals.

Evaluation units perform a number of programming and even implementation tasks, such as analyzing projects *ex ante*, developing methods to select project recipients, or approving feasibility studies. By being internal to the administration, they can broker evaluation results and evaluators' work within their administrations. Therefore, the regional evaluation units act as evaluation brokers—as interfaces between their administration and independent evaluators.

The System also includes:

- ⇒ **UVER** - Public Investment Monitoring Unit (Unità di Verifica degli Investimenti Pubblici - UVER). UVER is responsible for monitoring public investments for regional development (both national and Objective 1 funds), identifying indicators, carrying out statistical analysis and assessing whether the initial objectives have been attained. Both UVAL and UVER are required to present an annual report on the work undertaken to the national Parliament. Table 1 summarises the main stakeholders in evaluating development policies in Italy. The Head of the Department for the Development and Cohesion Policy in the Ministry of Economic Development is directly responsible for the operation of the Unit. UVER, along with the evaluation unit (UVAL), takes part in the analyses of public investment;
- ⇒ **L'ISFOL** - Struttura nazionale di valutazione FSE (National Evaluation Unit for ESF)
- ⇒ **INEA** - (National Institute of Agricultural Economy);
- ⇒ **La Rete Rurale Nazionale** - (Italian National Rural Network For Rural Development);
- ⇒ **L'INVALSI** - conducting periodic evaluations concerning the skills of students and the overall quality of the educational institutions;

Approximate expenditure on evaluation under the Cohesion Policy in Italy, exclusive of domestic co-financing and VAT, in 2010 will amount to EUR 6.5 million⁶⁷ (ERDF, ESF and

⁶⁶ Legge 17 maggio 1999, n. 144 (in SO n.99/L alla GU 22 maggio 1999, n.118). Misure in materia di investimenti, delega al Governo per il riordino degli incentivi all'occupazione e della normativa che disciplina l'INAIL, nonché disposizioni per il riordino degli enti previdenziali.

⁶⁷ The quoted amounts do not include own costs (*Bertamino; Capece Galeota and De Luca 2011*)

EAFRD). For the following years it is expected that the expenditure might even reach EUR 10 million.

In the Italian evaluation culture, there are no formal guidelines referring to the evaluation contracting standards. It should be assumed that each institution involved in this process is guided in this respect by its own experience and the nature of research. In case of contracting of evaluation services by UVAL, tender is the most popular procedure. Technical criteria are usually assigned 70% importance. The other 30% falls for the price.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Before 2007 excessive concentration⁶⁸ of the evaluation research market was not a problem in Italy. The adopted assessment criteria for the financial potential of contractors have prevented numerous smaller entities from applying for contracts for evaluation research. This problem has been noticed by the European Commission and the Department for Development Policy (DPS) in the Ministry of Economic Development, which has prepared national guidelines with a view to assuring an opportunity for smaller enterprises to apply for contracts. The guidelines recommended that mid-term evaluation should be divided into smaller contracts so that the responsibility for the research, preparation of the report and programme assessment is still held by one entity, but there is still a possibility for other entities to successfully perform other contract parts, such as a study of a specific issue or within a specific area (cluster, gmina). The managing authorities were also encouraged to prepare small thematic evaluations, e.g. on the effectiveness of employment policies.

The conviction that evaluation of the Structural Funds differs to a great extent from evaluation of other programmes constituted another obstacle to the development of evaluation market. It was affected both by the adopted terminology, used methodology and requirements often reduced to simple monitoring. This translated to high market concentration and high amounts of contracts.

Today a lot has changed. In Italy there are more or less 50 companies, research institutes and universities that executed evaluation studies in Italy, including central and regional evaluation units.

The nature of contractors is presently a subject of analysis. In general they are mainly national entities. Approximately 80-90% of them are private companies and the rest are universities, research institutes and regional evaluation units.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In 2000-2006, under Objective 1 (Convergence), 17 evaluations were carried out. Three evaluations under the Community Support Framework, 7 under the Regional Operational Programmes and 7 under the National Operational Programmes. They were mostly mid-term evaluations along with updates. In case of domestic programmes, they were evaluations covering

⁶⁸ Considering both Objective 1 and Objective 3 mid-term evaluations for the 2000-2006 programming period, a total of 25 firms have been involved but with 5 firms undertaking 50% of the contracts (**European Commission DG Regio 2009**).

the following fields: transport, local development, security, fisheries, research and development, education and technical assistance. In case of Objective 2, 10 regional mid-term evaluations along with updates have been carried out, and in the case of Objective 3 - 5 regional mid-term evaluations.

NES regularly carries out analysis on the implementation of evaluations plans at national and local level in order to have an updated situation on evaluations which have been already full-finished, are still ongoing or have only been scheduled. Currently, UVAL is working on a online questionnaire that would be supplemented by relevant units of central and regional administration and would provide information about the progress in the implementation of evaluation plans on a regular basis (Bertamino; Capece Galeota and De Luca, 2011).

The NES has a website where all the evaluations delivered by each Administration are being collected (*Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione economica 2011a*).

As for the 2010 annual enquiry on evaluation, there were twenty one full-filled evaluations. In the majority of cases, they have been carried out by external subjects (companies or individuals) or by external subject in collaboration with Universities.

As far as funding sources are concerned, figures point out that in majority of cases the most utilized has been ESF (15 evaluations over 21), followed by ERDF (6 over 21).

Dealing with the way administrations have diffused the results of evaluations, it is worth to notice that dissemination methods such are videos and conferences have been especially utilized in those regions where information have been largely shared with stakeholders. Anyway, these latter have been involved in the diffusion of results in most of cases.

Some very interesting examples of local evaluation are worth to be mentioned, e. g Val Cavallina in Lombardia Region (*Silvestri et al. 2011*). The pilot project itself will last three years and involves many proactive stakeholders at the local level apart from the Lombardia Region and the National Evaluation System. Moreover, local stakeholders are showing strong interest in such a new concept of evaluation. In particular, local evaluation needs to be led by local actors in order to reach their own aims. Therefore the positive trend should be encouraged and strengthened through a capacity building process in order to enable local stakeholders to carry out effective evaluations.

As far as trends are concerned, evaluations are becoming more and more:

- ⇒ Specific in terms of topic evaluated (in the past there were more evaluations of programmes);
- ⇒ Local (they are planned and carried out in a regional administration)
- ⇒ Multi-method with regard to the kind of evaluation they perform
- ⇒ Small in terms of size of final product (*Bertamino 2011; Capece Galeota 2011*).

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In Italy, NES uses diverse channels to share information, resources and practices. These are, in most cases: the website (*Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione economica 2011b*), formal

meetings, exchange of information via e-mail, participation of the European Evaluation Network, publications, studies and reports carried out at the local level.

The market of training and post-graduate studies in the field of evaluation is relatively well developed in Italy. Civil servants can choose at least several training and post-graduate programmes in the field of public policy evaluation, located in several regions of the country, offered, for example, by the University in Pisa (84 hours) (**Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Sociali Università ' di Pisa 2011**) or the most prestigious NUVAL Master programme (1st and 2nd degree available), which is aimed at training of specialists in the field of public policy evaluation and cohesion. This programme is organised in cooperation with three universities from Rome: La Sapienza, Tor Vergata and Roma 3. These studies consist of 3 parts, with 2 devoted to teaching (360 h) and 1 to apprenticeship (500 h). The programme provides for 4 hours of lectures, 5 days a week. The lectures are delivered in Italian. The apprenticeship lasts 12 weeks (**Consorzio N.U.R Nuval - Università' Statali di Roma 2003**). Between 2004 and 2006, nine editions of these studies were launched. Owing to large interest, the Department of Economic Development has launched next editions of the studies in 2007-2009. Also, the Italian Association of Evaluation (Associazione Italiana di Valutazione, AIV) organises summer schools on evaluation and several universities and training agencies have developed specific courses on public policy evaluation. There is also a master programme in the field of Evaluation of Territorial Development at the University of Catania (1,500 study hours, including 300 hours of apprenticeship)⁶⁹. The anticipated effect of the activity is constituted by increased awareness of the staff involved in the evaluation activity.

The Italian Evaluation Association (AIV), established in 1997, is a non-profit organisation operating for the promotion and development of evaluation culture by means of dissemination of the practice of evaluating undertakings and public and private decision-making processes, conduct of debates about the methods and techniques, as well as training of evaluation units. Its features are interdisciplinarity and professional diversity, support for the dialogue between disciplines + professions and the performed functions. AIV gathers both professionals planning to confront their knowledge and exchange their experience and the users of evaluation (groups and persons steering public entities, service operators, associations of civil-law partnership) who express willingness to participate in the assessment processes. AIV also conducts intense cultural and training activity aimed at young people willing to gain experience in the activity of that type. AIV assures clear distinction between the actions carried out by the association and the professional measures of evaluation entities. Currently, AIV has ca. 300 members. As a result of its actions, the evaluation has become a subject taught at studies (including the post-graduate ones). Once a year, AIV organises a scientific congress during which a partial renovation of social bodies is conducted, numerous seminars and days of science devoted to a specific area are organised, as well as summer schools of introductory and specialisation nature. Furthermore, AIV publishes a lot of studies and the "ANNUARIO" periodical⁷⁰ and provides a newsletter service and promotes the functioning of the "Italian approximate Review" (**Associazione Italiana di Valutazione 2011**).

⁶⁹ Evaluation of territorial development (including the logic and evaluation theories, statistics and evaluation analysis, methods and techniques for evaluation research (**Università' di Catania 2010**).

⁷⁰ *Annuario AIV* is a periodical devoted to the general state of art and perspectives for conduct of evaluation in Italy. *Annuario* makes it possible to learn interesting phenomena in the field of evaluation, by presenting an open attitude towards the contribution of other environments involved in evaluation, other disciplines of reference, theoretical and methodological positions. More information on that subject is available on the website (**Associazione Italiana di Valutazione 2011**).

One of the most distinct non-profit organisations operating in the field of evaluation is the Italian Evaluation Institute (**L'Istituto Italiano di Valutazione (The Italian Institute of Evaluation) (Istituto Italiano di Valutazione 2011)**). IIE is an independent organisation that was set up in 2000 and operates on a national level. It develops **evaluation, research** and **monitoring** activities in the various areas of welfare, training and community development. The activities of the Institute are addressed to public and private bodies that require evaluation and monitoring for their projects and policies. The Italian Institute of Evaluation is a supporting member of the Italian Association of Evaluation.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

One of the most important effects of actions carrying by UVAL is to promote develop of evaluation culture. That goal should be obtained by promoting proper standards of evaluation in regions. Those standards are introduced by guidelines concerning both research and monitoring activities in the various areas of evaluation. Guidelines put a great pressure on the following aspects of evaluation:

- preparing actualization for on-going evaluation of public policies
- constructing evaluation in projects level
- monitoring of public policies
- projecting indicators for regional policies
- making evaluation plans (in long term perspective)

However implementation of regulations and guidelines alone wouldn't change anything. Introduced only regulations cause unnecessary strengthen of formalization of UE directives. This phenomenal is described in the following words: *„Just issuing guidelines, therefore, would be naive: substantially, nothing would happen. Rather, administrations would have to deal with additional responsibilities. Evaluators have signaled problems with their commissioners, who interpret in a formalistic way the guidelines suggestions—“evaluations might include” becomes “evaluations must include.”*⁷¹

That is why it is so essential and important to support constantly growing of (NES) network. This is primary object of future actions that should be obtained by specify the way of activity of mentioned network and number of trainings.

Promotion of standards is not only one purpose of NES. It cannot be forgotten that one of the biggest success of NES was creating data base of all evaluation projects which concern the following programming periods: 1994-1999, 2000-2006 as well 2007-2013⁷². Another matter is a fact that main readers of these reports are still only experts involved in Structural Funds implementation process. In great majority it concern public administration, institutions that coordinates introducing Europeans programs and some few social partners.

The result of evaluation are very rarely used in public debate for instant in politician speech. Recently the Evaluation Unit has decided to analyse the evaluations related to some important topics for the

⁷¹ Paola Casavola and Laura Tagle, Fifth European Conference on Evaluation of the Structural Funds Budapest, 26/27 June 2003 , “Challenges for Evaluation in an Enlarged Europe”, Building Capacity For Evaluation: Lessons From Italy.

⁷² <http://www.dps.tesoro.it/valutazione/ml.asp>

next programming period, in order to increase the use of evaluation results. The aim is first to summarise and elaborate the results of the available evaluations to formulate considerations on the implemented policies, then to draw conclusions in terms of policy implications useful for the those who are responsible for the future cohesion policy.

It can be predict that if new solutions will works the influence of evaluation will have a bigger impact on improving quality of programming and implementing not only structural funds but also public policies in general.

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Latvia

Elgars Felcis

Context of the Cohesion Policy Evaluation System

From EU funds for the 2007-2013 programming period Latvia has been allocated around EUR 4.62 billion. EUR 4.53 billion of that is under the Convergence Objective and EUR 90 million – under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective. This is a substantially larger amount of support in comparison to the pre-accession funds and funds received in 2004–06.

Table 8. The EU funds allocated to Latvia in programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013

Objective	Fund	Total (billion EUR)
Convergence	CF	1.5
	ERDF	2.4
	ESF	0.6
European Territorial Cooperation	ERDF	0.09
Total 2007-2013		4.63
Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA)		0.195
Cohesion Fund (CF)		0.515
ERDF, ESF, EAFRD, EFF		0.625
Total 2000-2006		1.34

Source: Self-reported data based on DG REGIO factsheets for both programming periods

The overall importance of the EU structural funds in Latvia during and after the rapid economic downturn remains very high, because it is almost the only source of development oriented public sector expenses.

Before joining the EU in 2004 there was no united evaluation policy across the public sector in Latvia and no evaluations were carried out. Therefore Cohesion Policy marked a difference in initiating evaluation instruments for systematic evaluation of effectiveness of this EU policy and other national level policies and strategies.

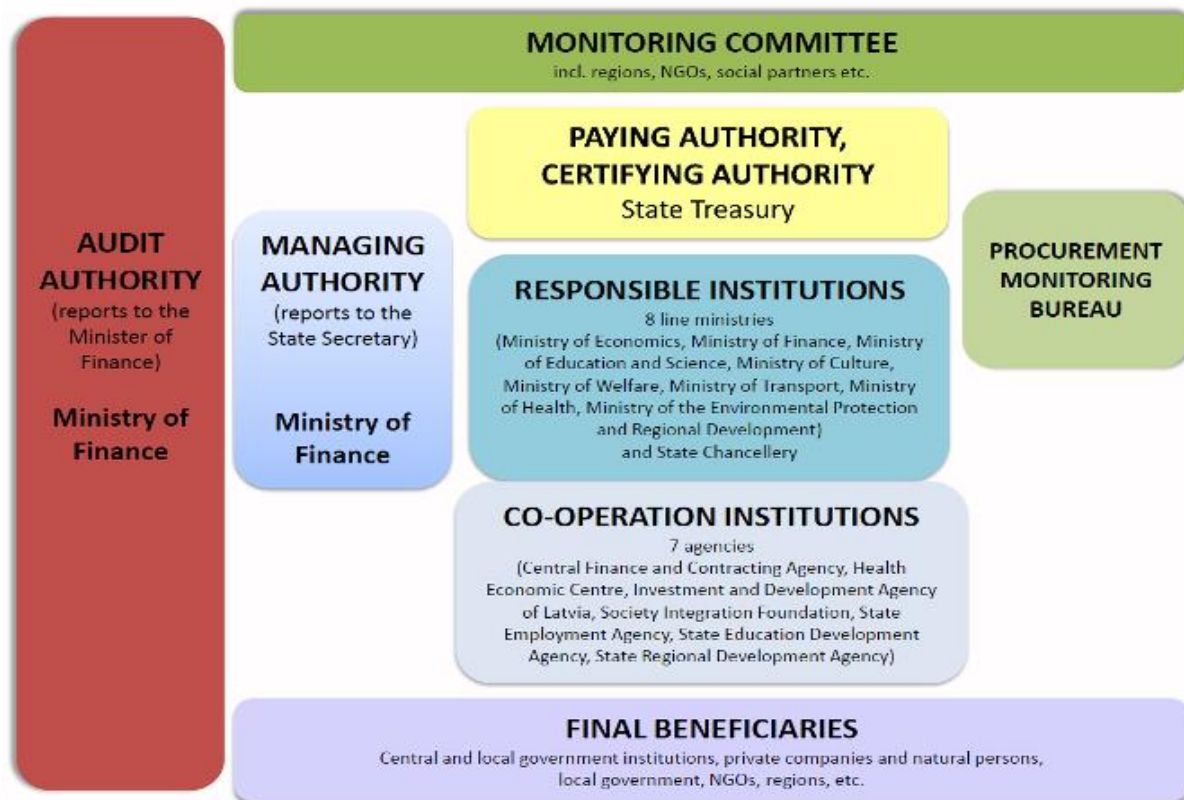
Since the initial developments in early 2000s the evaluation culture in Latvia has developed in close cooperation with the EU and all involved parties have been very willing to learn and adapt evaluation approaches in Latvia.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia (Managing Authority of the EU structural and Cohesion funds) is mostly responsible for contracting evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy programmes.

Along with that some other sectoral ministries were involved in contracting evaluation studies concerning particular sector activity or horizontal priority implementation, like the Ministry of Environment⁷³ in the 2004-2006 programming period and the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development in 2007-2013.

Figure 6. Institutional framework of the EU funds management in Latvia



Source: <http://www.esfondi.lv/page.php?id=967> [accessed: 04.06.2011]

Within the Managing Authority there are two departments responsible for the EU Funds management:⁷⁴

⁷³ Since 01.01.2011 – the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development; Ordered only four unpublished evaluations

⁷⁴ All European Union Funds related information including all evaluation related documents and report publications are available online: www.esfondi.lv [accessed: 04.06.2011]. Full structure of the Managing Authority including all employee contact information is available online: <http://www.esfondi.lv/page.php?id=486> [accessed: 04.06.2011]

- ⇒ EU Funds Strategy Department
- ⇒ EU Funds Monitoring Department

One of five units in the EU Funds Strategy Department is Strategic Planning Unit that is dealing with any EU funds related questions in Latvia. Because of the small size of the country and relatively little funds that are managed, not all Strategic Programming Unit employees are engaged with evaluation issues on a full time basis. Therefore there are approximately 1.5 full time equivalent employees dealing with evaluation issues at any time.

In the programming period 2004-2006 only Managing Authority was responsible for organisation of EU funds evaluations in Latvia due to relatively insignificant amount of investments to be evaluated. The structure of evaluation process in Latvia has been changed with the start of the 2007-2013 programming period. According to that, any of the ministries can initiate and carry out sector specific evaluations, but each of such evaluations needs to be reviewed and confirmed by the Managing Authority to avoid duplication of the topics and expenditures. These procedures for evaluation topic submission and final agreements are described in the national legislative acts and Regulation of the Evaluation Consultative Working Group of the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Policy for 2007-2013 programming period.

According to the EU Funds Evaluation Plan⁷⁵ for 2007-2013 the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development have been ordering evaluations in Latvia. In 2010 the total spending on evaluations was €73,358. In total seven payments for evaluation reports have been made, ranging from €3,000 to €25,000. Some of the reports have been completed in 2010 and some others have received the first payments before the completion in 2011.

In addition to the Managing Authority there are two other important forums in Latvia involved in all stages of EU funds evaluation:

- ⇒ Monitoring Committee⁷⁶
- ⇒ Evaluation Consultative Working Group of the EU Structural funds (Evaluation Working Group)⁷⁷

The Monitoring Committee was established to ensure effective monitoring of the EU funds implementation according to priorities and goals of operation programmes. All institutions involved in the management of the EU funds, as well as various groups of the society are represented in the

⁷⁵ Available (in Latvian):http://www.esfondi.lv/upload/Petijumi_un_izvertejumi/IZV_PLANS_20110110.pdf [accessed: 04.06.2011]

⁷⁶ As shown on the top bar in the Institutional Framework. More information about the Committee is available online: <http://www.esfondi.lv/page.php?id=965> [accessed: 04.06.2011]

⁷⁷ Evaluation Consultative Working Group of the EU Structural Funds and Cohesion Policy for 2007 – 2013 programming period. Regulation of the Working Group is available online (in Latvian): http://www.esfondi.lv/upload/Petijumi_un_izvertejumi/TIKDG_reg_2011-04-14.pdf [accessed: 04.06.2011]

Committee through more than 20 NGOs, regional representatives and other social partners that are involved in its work. The EU Funds Evaluation Plan has been adopted in the Committee and updated on a regular basis according to the newest proposals of the evaluation topics. The Managing Authority informs the Committee about evaluation activities on regular basis, for example, every six months it provides information regarding on-going evaluations and implementation progress of evaluation recommendations.

The Evaluation Working Group was first established in the period of 2004-2006 and proved to be an efficient instrument of coordinating evaluation process in Latvia. Therefore it was established by the Managing Authority also at the start of the 2007-2013 programming period. Therefore it has clear working principles and it has more than 20 members that are confirmed by an order of the Cabinet of Ministers. The members are representing all Latvian ministries, cooperation institutions (7 agencies), five Latvia planning regions and few other institutions. This group primarily helps to elaborate Terms of Reference (ToR), discuss initial and final reports, disseminate the results and implement the evaluation recommendations receiving feedback from all involved institutions regarding various evaluation related issues.

Evaluation studies in Latvia are contracted in open tendering procedures and all applications are submitted in person or via post. Technical specifications for evaluations are written by the particular organisation that wants to contract the evaluation, but the final versions of ToR are always agreed by the Evaluation Working Group and therefore are rather standardized.

An example of ToR contents in Latvia would include:

- ⇒ Overall objective of the evaluation
- ⇒ Sub-objectives (elaborating in more detail what needs to be evaluated in the study)
- ⇒ Expected results (how the evaluation objectives should be met)
- ⇒ Work experience and qualifications of the evaluators
- ⇒ Methodology (it is either in the form of described vision about the methods that should be applied or evaluators have more freedom of choice to suggest the most suitable methodology for the particular evaluation objectives)
- ⇒ Cooperation during the evaluation (for example, description of involved parties, requirements and examples of good practice are provided to applicants)
- ⇒ Requirements about the overall quality of work
- ⇒ Description of control mechanisms applied to ensure the quality of the service
- ⇒ Guidance for the dissemination of evaluation results (all of them need to be publicly available, accessible on www.esfondi.lv; other typical requirements are to participate in discussions or conferences soon after the completion of evaluation)
- ⇒ Timetable of the planned evaluation

All procurement proposals are reviewed by the procurement committee that is organised separately for each procurement. Depending on the content of an evaluation different parties may be involved in verification of procurement proposals, for example, members of the Evaluation Working Group or representatives of other Latvian or EU institutions. Independent experts are invited to help in the selection process in case of any specific topics.

The two core principles in selection of applications are the overall quality of the proposal (60%) and its price (40%). In addition, proposals not achieving a half of the 60% value for quality are not further considered to avoid any dumping prices and to achieve better final quality of evaluations.

This topic has been a very difficult one to deal with since the start of evaluations in Latvia. The current system is developed on the basis of consultations with the European Commission and personal experience with the main focus on ability to understand the quality of proposals and proposed methodologies.

Selection of proposals has been especially difficult during the economic downturn. In the environment of much reduced amount of research projects in the market, some companies were competing with lowered prices and unfortunately the overall quality had suffered in the result of that. For example, in procurement processes there have been proposals with higher price and well developed methodologies, but according to the selection criteria it was not possible to accept those proposals that were up to two times more expensive than the cheaper ones.

The risk of worsened evaluation quality has led to the final changes in the selection procedures, where among other the proportion of quality and price was changed to 60%/40% from 50%/50% as it was before.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

From the start of evaluation traditions in Latvia 23 different organisations have been involved in evaluation studies. Most of these companies have been conducting evaluations in the previous and current programming periods. The table below summarizes the total number of involved organisations:

Table 9. Number of organisations involved in evaluations in Latvia

2004-2006	No. of organisations
EU Structural Funds	14
Cohesion Fund	8
Studies about the level of information about the EU funds among the general public	1
Other research and evaluations	3
2007-2013	No. of organisations
EU Funds	3 ⁷⁸
Studies about the level of information about the EU funds among the general public in 2007-2013 programming period	2
Other research and evaluations	2
Total	23

Source: Data acquired from the EU Funds Strategy Department of the Ministry of Finance

In 2010 six evaluation contracts have been signed with five different companies. Three of the contracts have been completed within the same year, but the contracts of the other three were continued in 2011. One of the organisations has signed two contracts, while others have signed a single contract each in 2010.

The overall quality of more recent evaluations is quite different in comparison to the initial evaluations before and in the years following the accession in the EU. Many companies were very keen to work on the initial evaluations that were contracted in Latvia. However, the quality was relatively weak and both the demand and supply side were continuously learning about the evaluation process. Towards the end of the 2004-2006 programming period evaluations were already much clearer in answering the outlined objectives and provided better and more practical recommendations.

The question of selection criteria for evaluation contracts in Latvia was under intensive discussion process in early development stages also to enable involvement of wider range of companies. There have been attempts to engage research institutes and Universities to a larger extent, but their involvement has not been successful up to the day (there is only one contract signed with the Latvian University of Agriculture). One of the aspects of this problem lies in Universities' staff rather preferring to get involved in the research projects that are contracted by various Ministries, but are less capable in carrying out evaluations. This is related to comparatively lower practical knowledge about EU funds related issues within academia in comparison to private sector companies that are much more knowledgeable in these questions and winning the evaluation contracts. In order to

⁷⁸ Including one organisation whose contract was terminated because of the inability to fulfil the evaluation objectives.

strengthen evaluation quality by facilitating involvement of academic personnel, in May 2011 the Managing Authority has proposed to inform academic personnel and conduct training about issues related to the EU funds evaluation.

Large multinational companies like PricewaterhouseCooper and Ernst & Young have been very competitive in the bids for evaluation studies because of their international experience and quality of work and have won multiple projects. However, the ToR in general are attempted not to be restrictive and it has resulted in many companies winning the proposals.

There are also good partnerships with local evaluators in Latvia. Those are most often companies that are dealing with a wider range of business and evaluations are just one direction of their business. Those can be EU Funds related consultancies, full service research companies or companies with from other related sectors. In general the small size of the country is not allowing for existence of too specialized niche companies and therefore the businesses are rather diversified in their services.

Despite the overall continuous evaluation quality improvements over the years, the work carried out during the economic downturn in 2009 and 2010 has been of rather inconsistent quality. For example, there have been:

- ⇒ Delays of the deadlines and following penalty charges
- ⇒ Need to repeatedly provide commentaries on the same questions
- ⇒ Terminated contract of one evaluation because of unfulfilled evaluation objectives

As described in the previous section, these problems are partly related to the changes in research and evaluation market in the result of the overall economic problems. Companies facing big decrease in the amount of contracted work were bidding with substantially lower prices. This has lead to the difficulties in the implementation of evaluations up to the required standards of the contracted work because of two key aspects:

- ⇒ Lack of time (for example, proposing unrealistically little amount of working days)
- ⇒ Lack of quality (for example, not attracting appropriately qualified researcher for complex analytic tasks necessary to answer evaluation objectives)

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Across the both programming periods 56 evaluations have been carried out in Latvia by 23 different organisations. Some have conducted only single studies, while others have completed a number of evaluations. In some instances evaluations were carried out by consortiums. The table below summarizes the numbers of involved organisations and carried out evaluations:

Table 10. Number of organisations involved in evaluations and total number of evaluations carried out in Latvia

2004-2006	No. of organisations	No. of evaluations
EU Structural Funds	14	24
Cohesion Fund	8	20 ⁷⁹
Studies about the level of information about the EU funds among the general public	1	4
Other research and evaluations	3	2
2007-2013	No. of organisations	No. of evaluations
EU Funds	3	2 ⁸⁰
Studies about the level of information about the EU funds among the general public in 2007-2013 programming period	2	2
Other research and evaluations	2	2
Total	23	56

Source: Data acquired from the EU Funds Strategy Department of the Ministry of Finance
 In 2010 only three evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy programmes have been executed in Latvia.
 All of these evaluations were carried out on national level:

- ⇒ An evaluation establishing impact of socio-economic benefits of Cohesion Fund projects carried out in 2004-2006 programming period (24,964 EUR)
- ⇒ An evaluation about the Cohesion Fund financing attraction for the public-private partnership projects (17,044 EUR)
- ⇒ A study about public awareness of EU funds acquisition in Latvia (3,254 EUR)

2010 was also the start for the ex-post evaluation of results and impact of EU funded investments during the programming period 2004-2006 in the fields of:

- ⇒ Support to business (**Baltijas Konsultācijas Ltd., 2011**)
- ⇒ Employment (**DEA Baltika Ltd. 2011**)
- ⇒ Education and science.

Each of the parts of this evaluation were contracted to a different organisation and after the initial reports on those in 2010 the work on the first two parts was completed in April and on education and science – in July 2011. The results were presented and discussed in the conference about EU structural fund impact on support to business, employment, education and science in the 2004 – 2006 programming period in May 2011⁸¹.

⁷⁹ Without four unpublished Cohesion Fund evaluations that were ordered by the Ministry of Environment.

⁸⁰ Without the incomplete evaluation where the contract was terminated with the supplier.

⁸¹ Detailed information about the conference and all presented paper are available online: <http://www.esfondi.lv/events.php?id=1&action=event&category=45&eid=1486> [accessed: 04.06.2011]

In 2007 Latvia completed ex-ante evaluation for 2007-2013 programming period and will also carry out the non-compulsory mid-term evaluation. It is expected to be contracted until June 2011 and completed until November 2011.

Overall the prices of evaluations in Latvia have varied very widely across different projects throughout the both programming periods. Average cost for an evaluation that is carried out within six month period is between €40-50,000. Evaluations in Latvia are likely to be comparatively cheaper than in other countries because of:

- ⇒ The smaller scale of work and amount of data that needs to be collected in a small country
- ⇒ The lower labour force costs in Latvia in comparison to most of the EU countries

The largest and highest quality evaluations up to 2011 in Latvia have been:

- ⇒ „*Ex-ante evaluation of NSRF and OPs*” 2007-2013 programming period ex-ante evaluation conducted by Ernst&Young - First work programme (**LR Finansu Ministrija, 2007a**); Second work programme (**LR Finansu Ministrija, 2007b**); Third work programme (**LR Finansu Ministrija, 2007c**);
- ⇒ “*Macroeconomic impact assessment of the EU funds*” by BICEPS - First Stage Report (**Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies 2007**) and Second Stage Report (**Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies 2008**);
- ⇒ „*Impact evaluation of the EU structural funds on the regional development in Latvia*” (**SIA PKC 2008**);

The quality of evaluation reports is ensured through a number of procedures. Firstly, the contractor submits an Introductory Report, where all technical, methodological and practical questions are described to clarify the whole process of the upcoming evaluation. These early stages are managed in close cooperation with the Managing Authority and other experts.

Secondly, during the data collection all questions are regularly communicated, discussed and all required information from government institutions is acquired.

Thirdly, before the final evaluation report is accepted, the evaluation results are reviewed and discussed in the Evaluation Working Group. All members are fully informed about the ongoing evaluations and receive draft reports for commenting. Then they have ten days for reviewing and commenting on it from personal and represented institutions’ viewpoint.

Finally, following this process a common meeting is held, where all involved parties gather, evaluators are presenting their work and any further questions regarding draft report are discussed. After this process, the contractors are addressing any outstanding comments and additional requests. Typically drafts of evaluation reports get reviewed at least several times until the final

version of report gets accepted and confirmed by the Managing Authority. In cases of poor quality or delays of deadlines the evaluators receive financial penalties and in the worst case their contract is terminated.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The evaluation system in Latvia was initiated directly following the requirements related to Cohesion Policy programmes. Therefore the core skills and practices have been adapted from the European Committee and general best practice examples across the European Union.

Because of the small size of the country, EU funds allocation and respectively small evaluation system, there are no major development processes possible within this system. For example, there are no study programmes related to this topic and there are no groups or institutions providing trainings in this area. However, the improvements in the evaluation system are ongoing and are proportionate to the scale of the actions in the country.

One of the best examples in the evaluation system facilitation is the creation of the Evaluation Working Group. As mentioned in previous chapters, it has responsibilities in all stages of evaluation and is vitally important in strengthening the internal capacity of all parties involved in evaluation.

Approximately once a year some training events are carried out to improve the capacity and knowledge of evaluation related issues. For example, the last event was an internal training in the Evaluation Working Group including some invited evaluators. Firstly, the Group members discussed the issues they are facing and ongoing changes and secondly, evaluators shared their experiences about the communication process with government institutions and any other possible areas that could be improved.

Any information that is received from the European Commission also is shared within the Evaluation Working Group. Everyone is informed about any training courses that are held abroad, but there has been no active involvement in those. While there is no formal Evaluation Society in Latvia, as described in the paragraphs above, the Evaluation Working Group to some extent fulfils the functions of such an organisation.

Occasionally some evaluation related conferences are held in Latvia, like the one regarding ex-post evaluations of the 2004-2006 programming period in May 2011⁸². Following the presentations some organised discussions were held between all involved parties. In addition to ex-post evaluation presentations, representatives from the European Commission and other Baltic countries presented papers on the summary outcomes of the previous programming period. There are plans for a similar

⁸² Detailed information about the conference and all presented paper are available online: <http://www.esfondi.lv/events.php?id=1&action=event&category=45&eid=1486> [accessed: 04.06.2011]

conference in November 2011 regarding the results of the mid-term evaluation of 2007-2013 programming period.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

All information related to evaluation in Latvia including full evaluation reports is managed by the Managing Authority and is gathered in the key website www.esfondi.lv. The Managing Authority is also sending out press releases, organising conferences and overseeing other actions in this field.

Through the Evaluation Working Group all ministries, cooperation institutions and planning regions are involved in the result dissemination and best practice application. In addition, a lot of the information is usually shared with the Monitoring Committee leading to wider involvement of general public that is represented through it. The parliament MPs are involved through participation of the Managing Authority members in Parliament plenary sessions.

The implementation of evaluation recommendations are closely followed in Latvia. Tender ToR usually include guidance that recommendations need to be clear, focused on the particular target groups and institutions, and that the level of importance of each recommendation is always assessed. All recommendations are feeding into Recommendation Implementation Plan that is agreed in the Evaluation Working Group. The key areas that are monitored through this plan are:

- ⇒ Importance of recommendation
- ⇒ Who should implement the recommendation
- ⇒ What are the timescales for implementation
- ⇒ Status of the recommendation
- ⇒ Information about the progress of implementation and undertaken activities

Twice a year this Recommendation Implementation Plan is reviewed and each institution is responsible for the recommendations that are related to them. Through this it is monitored whether institutions have implemented the required changes in the planned timescales. The plan also contains information about the status of each of the recommendations. In the first meeting after receiving a completed final evaluation report it is discussed which recommendations are practical and appropriate, because it is possible that:

- ⇒ Some of the proposed actions are already taking place in institutions in a similar form
- ⇒ The action is started to be implemented during the work on evaluation (in the result of the intermediary meetings). In this instance a recommendation might be already noted as implemented when the final report of evaluation is submitted.

During the biannual Monitoring Committee meetings some of the recommendations can be noted as partly implemented or in the process of implementation; but when they are completed, the

Recommendation Implementation Plan also contains notes about the final product/outcome from this implementation. Institutions responsible for recommendation implementation are updating this information twice a year before the Evaluation Working Group meetings and during the meetings all of the recommendations are discussed, their final status is defined, the necessary changes are negotiated or sometimes the recommendation can become out-dated and needs to be excluded.

The same examples of the good studies in the previous section are examples of studies that are well applicable in Latvia. All of the operational studies also have been very highly applicable, because they were ordered to answer some urgent needs for improvements in operation of the evaluation system in the country.

Because of the clear structure and rigid operations that all Cohesion Policy evaluations include, the Managing Authority believes many of these studies have a substantial spill-over effect, where good praxes from evaluations are becoming adopted in other institutions and in various aspects of their operation.

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Lithuania

Elgars Felcis

Context of the Cohesion Policy Evaluation System

From EU funds for the 2007-2013 programming period Lithuania has been allocated around €6.8 billion. €6.7 billion of that is under the Convergence Objective and €109 million – under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective. This is a substantially larger amount of support in comparison to the pre-accession funds and funds received in 2004–2006.

Table 11. The EU funds allocated to Lithuania in programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013

Objective	Fund	Total (billion €)
Convergence	CF	2.3
	ERDF	3.4
	ESF	1.0
European Territorial Cooperation	ERDF	0.11
Total 2007-2013		6.8
Total 2000-2006 (Single Programming Document)		0.89

Source: Self-reported data based on DG REGIO factsheets for both programming periods

Similarly as in some other Eastern European countries, evaluation in Lithuania developed rapidly in a direct result of the EU requirements and regulations for systematic evaluations. Work on strategic planning and public management improvements prior to accession in the EU was a movement towards wider incorporation of evidence-based policies, but none of those actions have been as clearly defined and as regularly carried out as it is with EU Cohesion Policy evaluations since 2004.

While it was not compulsory to carry out evaluations in the two years after the accession, a number of evaluations were completed regarding the overall 2004-2006 period. The quality of products has varied widely, but nevertheless it was an important learning process for all involved parties. For the 2007-2013 programming period the institutional structure was redefined even clearer and evaluations are carried out systematically through this period.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The central body in the system in Lithuania is the Evaluation Unit for Structural Assistance programmes within the Ministry of Finance (Managing Authority). The Unit is coordinating all evaluation activities – prepares annual plans, defines standards and improves evaluation quality through capacity building activities.

All Lithuanian Ministries and other state institutions (intermediate bodies) have one or two civil servants working with evaluation related questions and contract evaluations related to the sectors they are responsible for.

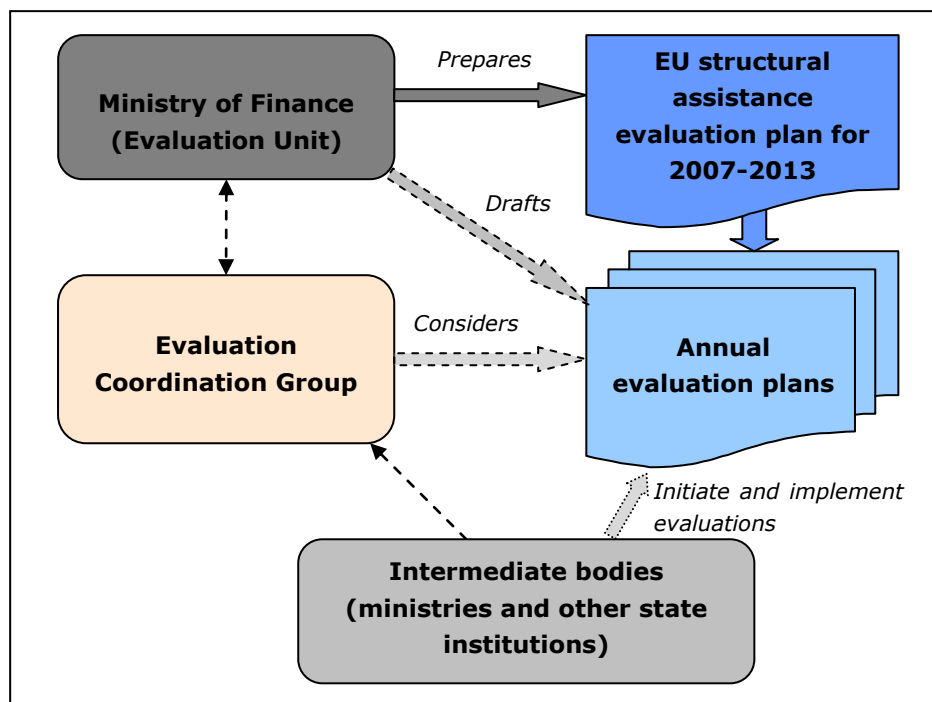
The Evaluation Unit is also leading the Evaluation Coordination Group that is set up for coordination of the whole evaluation system. All intermediate bodies are represented in the Group and meet on a regular basis to review annual evaluation plans and monitor the implementation of evaluations.

As presented at the European Evaluation Society conference in 2010 by the Head of the Evaluation Unit of the Managing Authority in Lithuania, the planning process of evaluations has the following structure:

- ⇒ Above all the EU structural assistance evaluation plan for 2007-2013 (**Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania 2008a**) defines evaluation aims and objectives for the period as well as measures and financial resources for their implementation;
- ⇒ The evaluation plan is implemented through annual evaluation plans that consist of on-going strategic evaluations and of on-going operational evaluations (Annual plans available online: (**Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania 2009b**), (**Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania 2009a**), (**Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania 2008b**)). Institutions responsible for evaluation submit evaluation applications to the Ministry of Finance;
- ⇒ The Ministry of Finance drafts an annual evaluation plan that is reviewed and revised within the Evaluation Coordination Group;
- ⇒ All selected evaluation projects are approved by the Minister of Finance. The implementation stage of evaluations starts after this approval (**Burakiene 2010: 3**)

Above described information can be visualised as shown below:

Figure 7. The EU structural assistance evaluation planning process



Source: (Burakiene 2010)

After the evaluations are planned through the above mentioned structure, implementation of annual evaluation plans in Lithuania consists of the following six key steps:

- ⇒ Submission of applications for funding of evaluation projects;
- ⇒ Allocation of financial resources for evaluation projects;
- ⇒ Organisation of public procurement procedures for evaluation projects;
- ⇒ Selection and contracting of evaluation service providers following the tender procedure;
- ⇒ Completion of evaluations and approval of evaluation reports;
- ⇒ Dissemination of evaluation results and monitoring of recommendation implementation (Burakiene 2010: 4).

Over the last ten years 12 different institutions in Lithuania were involved in contracting evaluation studies. In the current programming period every year approximately ten evaluations are planned and approximately €1 million is dedicated to evaluation studies. From 2007 until mid 2011 approximately 40 evaluations have been carried out. Half of them are contracted by the Ministry of Finance and other intermediate bodies are responsible for one to three evaluations each. Seven institutions in 2010 have been contracting evaluation studies of EU Cohesion Policy programmes.

The Evaluation Unit in the Ministry of Finance has five full time members of staff. Therefore their evaluation management capacity is larger in comparison to other intermediate bodies that are likely

to struggle, since they often have just one person responsible for all evaluation related issues. The Evaluation Unit is providing those other civil servants with some methodological guidelines and trainings to improve the quality of their work, but excessive workload is often the main obstacle for improvements. Other lower level institutions are not envisaged to get involved in contracting evaluations and they are lacking the capabilities for such a role at the moment.

As mentioned above, all evaluations in Lithuania are contracted in the result of open competitions. The reviewing of tenders usually takes up to six months. All processes are carried out in accordance to the National Procurement Law. It is written following the EU directives and there are no additional specific procurement procedures or laws in place. Therefore the procurement procedure is similar to many other EU countries.

The two core principles in selection of applications are the overall quality of the proposal (60%) and its price (40%). The main focus within the 'quality component' is on the overall strength of methodology – how well it is likely to answer the evaluation objectives. Across the contracting authorities the selection principles are standardized on the basis of common guidelines from the Managing Authority. This common regulation is helping the contracting institutions to manage the evaluation process through all its stages.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Approximately 15 companies and institutions have been active in the field of evaluation studies of EU Cohesion Policy programmes in the last ten years. In 2010 evaluation contracts have been signed with six different companies.

Three main types of contractors carrying out evaluations in Lithuania are:

- ⇒ Consultancies
- ⇒ Research institutes
- ⇒ Audit companies

From all contractors, approximately five to six are continuously and actively involved in conducting evaluations. All of these organisations are based in Lithuania – some of them are branches of large multinational companies, while others are local private companies. It is difficult for foreign enterprises to be competitive in tendering for evaluation studies, because all the documentation is prepared in Lithuanian and data needs to be collected within the country. However, there are good examples of attracting foreign experts in some of the evaluations carried out by Lithuanian consultancies.

There have been attempts to involve academia in evaluation research, but the experience has not been successful. No academic research institutes or universities have won contracts for carrying out

evaluations. Possibly, largest barrier for such involvement is the tendering process – many universities are likely not to have time or financial resources to prepare applications and they also face difficulties in ability to engage in such long-term projects. In comparison to enterprises regularly winning evaluation contracts, academia representatives are lacking the specific knowledge and practical experience regarding evaluations of EU structural assistance programmes.

Because of relatively recent traditions in evaluation, the system has gone through a lot of changes and learning process. In the result of active interaction among stakeholders the overall quality of work has improved. Therefore majority of evaluations carried out in the last years prior to 2011 are of considerably higher quality than the initial ones after accession in the EU.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Over the last ten years approximately 80 evaluation studies have been carried out in Lithuania. Majority of them – almost 60 are related to the 2004-2006 programming period. The first evaluation was conducted in 2003 to contribute to Lithuanian Single Programming Document for 2004-2006 period. From the current viewpoint not all of them can be called as evaluations according to EU standards, because at that time guidance and rules for evaluation studies were not clearly defined and contractors also were not as confident about the type of work they were supposed to present.

From the start of the current programming period evaluations are better defined and contracted, and approximately 20 evaluations were completed until 2010. Majority of them (14) were started in 2008 and 2009 and completed only in 2010 due to complicated nature of the subject. Other evaluations are still ongoing and are planned to be completed in 2011 and 2012. The overall activity has been slightly lower than it was envisaged in evaluation plans where approximately 10 evaluations were planned for each year since 2007.

In 2007, 2008 and partly 2009 most of the evaluations were related to ex-post results from the 2004-2006 programming period. Through this, authorities were aiming to pass on acquired experiences and knowledge to the new programming period that has just started. However, through 2009 and 2010 increasingly more evaluations became focused on the current 2007-2013 programming period.

As mentioned before, the quality of 2004-2006 programming period evaluations has been varied. However, through trainings, shared information, discussions and accumulated experience the overall quality of evaluation projects has increased through the years. For example, currently any institution responsible for a particular evaluation:

- ⇒ Uses a standardised quality check-list (mostly the Managing Authority is responsible for updated check-list of all actual evaluations);

- ⇒ Carries out two to three intermediary discussions with the contractor while the work is carried out to discuss the progress and deal with any occurring problems;
- ⇒ Receives an interim report as a part of interaction process and discusses it with the client;
- ⇒ Discusses final results in wider circle of evaluation related professionals.

Contractors use a range of evaluation methods that are ensuring good quality and answering the evaluation objectives. There are examples of macroeconomic analysis use (including econometric modelling), case study approach and other types of evaluation methods. However, most often surveys and/or semi-structured interviews are conducted.

Average cost of an evaluation is approximately €60,000 and average length of a typical project from initiation is six to seven months. As mentioned before, because of the available capacity, the Ministry of Finance is responsible for carrying out larger projects embracing a number of areas or horizontal priorities. Other ministries are exploring smaller scale topics important for their specific fields.

Several examples of good evaluations in Lithuania are described below.

- ⇒ “Evaluation of structural funds’ impact on GDP (2004-2006 programming period)” by UAB “BGI Consulting” in collaboration with Dr. John Bradley from Economic Modelling and Development Strategies, Ireland (**BGI Consulting & Bradley 2009**). This methodologically very strong study (**Bradley & BGI Consulting 2009**) has tailored the econometric analysis model for Lithuanian circumstances to examine the likely impacts of the SPD 2004-2006 on the macro economy in various its sectors.
- ⇒ Ongoing evaluation of the indicators set in the Operational Programmes implemented under the Lithuanian Strategy for the use of European Union Structural Assistance for 2007-2013” by Public Policy and Management Institute (**Public Policy and Management Institute 2010**). The main purpose of this evaluation is to improve the use of indicators set in the Operational Programmes implemented under the Lithuanian Strategy for the use of the European Union Structural Assistance for 2007-2013 while assessing their specificity, sufficiency and compatibility. During this project trainings were carried out involving representatives of all ministries to improve their experience and skills in contracting and managing any evaluation work.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

One of the key bodies in Lithuania contributing to overall development and quality of evaluation culture is the inter-institutional Evaluation Coordination Group (**The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania 2007**) that performs a number of strategically important functions:

- ⇒ Prepares annual evaluation plans;
- ⇒ Analyses the progress of their implementation;
- ⇒ If necessary, reviews Terms of References for planned evaluation projects;
- ⇒ Proposes useful evaluations to responsible institutions
- ⇒ Performs other activities related to coordination of the EU structural funds evaluation

(Burakiene 2010: 4-5).

Because of the relatively small size of the country, there are no higher education programmes related to evaluation in Lithuania. Possible opportunities for additional education in neighbouring Poland are considered, but no real action yet has been taken in this direction. Therefore most of the skills and expertise is acquired through the Evaluation Cooperation Group meetings and other capacity building activities organised directly by the Evaluation Unit. For instance, the Unit members are using the resources of the European Institute in Maastricht and best practice examples from other EU member states.

However, until 2010 three capacity building projects have been implemented in Lithuania. These projects have focused on a number of areas for improvement – internal workshops for civil servants, preparation of methodological guidelines and other evaluation documents, organisation of evaluation publicity events and other evaluation related activities. The last project consisted of three internal evaluations (conducted with assistance of external evaluators) that were carried out in the Ministry of Finance thus strengthening internal evaluation capacity of the Managing Authority **(Burakiene 2010: 5).**

Organisation of seminars or conferences after completion of evaluation projects also contributes to skills improvements and sharing of best practices among all involved parties. The Evaluation Unit has also organised international conferences attracting speakers from several countries and different backgrounds, for example, international evaluation conference in March 2011 where a number of EU countries and European Commission was represented **(Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania 2011b).**

There is no National Evaluation Society established in Lithuania and this is a conscious decision in the result of extensive discussions. A shared opinion is that the current links and cooperation between all people involved in the field of evaluation essentially serves as a network that an Evaluation Society

would provide. In addition, the small scale of the country enables good maintenance and transparency of networks without a formalised Evaluation Society. The informal network is supported by organising different activities in evaluation field like discussions, round tables and presentations.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Evaluation studies and other important information related to evaluation in Lithuania is gathered on the website www.esparama.lt. All reports are available in full text format (predominantly in Lithuanian) and have majority of summaries in English (**Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania 2011a**).

The procedures on dissemination of evaluation results are clearly defined in Lithuania. The institution responsible for carrying out an evaluation is obliged during the following 30 days after acceptance of the evaluation report to:

- ⇒ Organise presentation for target groups and socio-economic partners (defined depending on the specifics of the evaluation theme)
- ⇒ Publish full evaluation results on the website www.esparama.lt (in contrary to many other EU countries the reports are gathered in single e-library instead of being scattered on websites of each operation programme)
- ⇒ To fill the form on implementation of recommendations in a clear format based on:
 - What recommendations are received
 - Which ones are acceptable and how long it will take to implement those
 - If they are not acceptable, a detailed explanation of the reasons needs to be provided

This final form from the responsible institution is afterwards passed on to the Evaluation Unit in the Managing Authority. The collected information from all ministries responsible for implementation of the recommendations is analyzed by the Evaluation Unit and discussed among the Evaluation Cooperation Group. In case of any horizontal recommendations derived, possible improvements in the evaluation system might be pursued. Lithuania has also defined indicators on evaluation applicability – according to this data, in some instances not less than 70% of recommendations eventually need to be implemented. Therefore an extra effort is put into the monitoring of recommendation implementation system. Evaluation Unit carried out internal evaluation on implementation of recommendations in April 2011.

In spite of this clear system of dissemination, the Evaluation Unit is aware of the need to promote awareness of the EU Structural Funds evaluation beyond the evaluation community (at the political level or wider public). Possibly, this could be achieved by including more thematic evaluations

relevant to the decision makers' needs and through better promotion of evaluation as an instrument for evidence-based policies (**Burakiene 2010: 4-5**).

Another major challenge for Lithuania is the application of clearly defined evaluation practices for national budget programmes where expenditure and management would be solely in hands of Lithuanian government. In 2011 some plans already are in place regarding development of methodological guide and pilot evaluations for national policy programmes (**Burakiene 2010: 6**)

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Luxembourg

Context of Evaluation System

Luxembourg is the smallest and at the same time the wealthiest (in terms of GDP) country in the European Union. That is why this chapter and the description of evaluation system performance should be reviewed with great respect to the proportionality principle⁸³.

In Luxembourg, Cohesion Policy has a low impact on economic growth. For the programming period 2007-2013, the overall Luxembourg EU structural funds budget is estimated at around 65 mln €, from which 25 mln € is managed by the OP financed from the ESF, 25 mln € is managed by the OP financed from the ERDF and 15 mln € by the Interreg programme. Compared to the annual national budget of Luxembourg, estimated at around 9 billion €, this makes a ratio of only 0.1%. This ratio increases (to closer to 1%) when taking into account only human capital investment.

Table 12. The EU funds allocated to Luxembourg in the programming period 2007-2013

Objective	Fund	Total (million EUR)
Competitiveness	ERDF	25
	ESF	25
European Territorial Cooperation		15
TOTAL		65

Source: National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013, Luxembourg, October 2007

Concerning the evaluation of Cohesion Policy, Luxembourg conducts the obligatory evaluation studies prescribed by EU regulations. It does not have a special evaluation unit, nor an adequate budget for conduction of large evaluations. Although it seems that the role of evaluation, especially in the area of ESF support, has gained importance over the last 10 years.

Nevertheless, Luxembourg has several national institutions which conduct evaluations, not only for Cohesion Policy, but especially for national policies. This is the STATEC, the national statistic office and the “Observatory for Competitiveness”, which is more related to evaluations focusing on economic and competitiveness interventions. Both institutions are related to the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade. Another institution is the “ADEM”, which deals with evaluations of the

⁸³ As there are very little publications describing Luxembourg Cohesion Policy evaluation performance, the authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to Mr. Bob Simon and Mr. Alain Calmes for their help in the preparation of this chapter.

labour and employment policy⁸⁴. Generally, in the opinion of Cohesion Policy managing authorities, the institutions responsible for evaluation are regularly extended and optimized with staff, infrastructure and equipment. Politicians and decision makers use the results of evaluation studies to make or reform laws and to improve the competitiveness of the country. However, as concluded in the country report for Luxembourg (Mathieu, L., 2010) there is a need to strengthen the culture of evaluation in public administration. Luxembourg was also characterised as a country which uses evaluation on an ad hoc or intermittent basis (Bachtler, Polverari).

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Luxembourg has 3 institutions involved in contracting evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy: The Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade – ERDF, The Ministry of Labour and Employment – ESF and The Ministry of sustainable Development and Infrastructure – Interreg. They are central level⁸⁵ and well established with special dedicated units for Cohesion Policy. Special dedicated units for Cohesion Policy are also responsible for conducting evaluation studies. These are either conducted by the units themselves (internally) or are outsourced.

Other key players in the system of evaluation are the STATEC, the Observatory of Competitiveness and the ADEM, the University of Luxembourg (www.uni.lu) and the CEPS/INSTEAD (www.ceps.lu). The key contact of the ERDF evaluation unit is Bob Simon from the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade. Email: bob.simon@eco.etat.lu Tel: +352/247-84108. Regarding the ESF, the contact person in the Ministry of Labour and Employment is Mr. Alain CALMES (at.fse@weblines.lu).

The estimated total annual spending for the evaluation activities in the field of the ERDF programme is approximately €35,000 per year. Regarding the ESF, the annual average is about €30,000. Because the ESF is quite small compared to the other EU countries, Luxembourg generally conducts major evaluation activities at mid-term and at the end of the whole programme, except for internal evaluations within the ESF unit. The evaluations for the last programme represented around 1% of the global ESF budget. The studies are contracted out by open tender procedures. The most common selection criteria is the price (50-60%) and the experience (40-50%) in conducting evaluations. There are no specific guidelines for contracting evaluation studies in Luxembourg.

⁸⁴ More information at: www.statec.lu; www.odc.lu; www.adem.lu; www.eco.public.lu.

⁸⁵ Due to the small size of the country, the national level has to be seen as a regional level on the EU scale (the whole of Luxembourg is at NUTS2 level).

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Concerning the ERDF, approximately 5-6 firms are active in carrying out evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy programmes. In terms of the ESF, there are three active players. These firms are usually international consultant agencies, like KPMG, Ernst & Young, PricewaterhouseCoopers (for the ERDF) and national consultants (for the ESF). The evaluation studies of these firms were of sufficient quality and met the expectations of managing authorities (it is also emphasised that in terms of the ESF those actors are characterised by an in-depth, specific knowledge of Luxembourg). In Luxembourg, in terms of trends, no specific changes of the supply side of the evaluation market have been observed during last 10 years.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Concerning the ERDF, 3-4 evaluation studies have been conducted during the last 10 years. For the ESF, there have been 4 major evaluations plus the smaller regular ones conducted internally by the ESF unit of the Ministry. No evaluations for Cohesion Policy interventions have been conducted in 2010.

As far as the organisation, scope, topics and methods of research are concerned, in terms of the ERDF, Luxembourg provides the European Commission with obligatory evaluation studies. These studies are prepared mostly by external firms on a national level, addressing very selective topics and are proportional to the available and limited EU budget. The methods used are expert-interviews and theory-based evaluations. In terms of the ESF, the external evaluations are kept at the same pace and number; however, the role of the internal evaluation increases in order to have a better continuous follow-up. The final evaluations embrace the whole ESF programme. Due to the size of Luxembourg, the scope is generally the whole country. The main methods used are based on interviews and modelling.

There is no specific national guidance for assessing the quality of the reports, except for that of the European Commission. First of all, the quality of the reports is checked by the ERDF/ESF managing authority. Later on, the reports are approved by the monitoring committee and by the Minister of Economy and foreign Trade (in terms of the ERDF).

In terms of the ERDF, it is difficult to point out one single evaluation which may be presented as a “best practice example”. Every single evaluation study is written and customized, referring to the current and future economic and social situation of the country and of course to the available EU budget. Regarding the ESF, the most important study is the mid-term evaluation of the last programming perspective.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The website www.feder.lu serves as a platform for sharing available evaluation resources or practices. The website registers about 50 “hits” per day and is often used by beneficiaries of EU support. The equivalent website for the ESF is www.fse.lu.

In Luxembourg there are very little special capacity building activities dedicated specifically to build potential for Cohesion Policy evaluation. Luxembourg gained evaluation knowledge within Cohesion Policy through years of experience and through regular knowledge and information exchange between external consultant agencies, the European Commission and other EU Member States. It should also be taken into consideration that the ERDF managing authority of Luxembourg has 23 years of experience with EU structural funds and evaluations. The situation is similar in the ESF and the overall level of expertise of the civil servants should be assessed as good.

In the field of domestic policies, quite active facilitators are initiatives of the STATEC; the Economic and Social Council have been quite active, as well as the University of Luxembourg and the “Observatory for Competitiveness”.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The effects of Cohesion Policy evaluations are shared mostly through websites and published in papers. The main recipients of evaluation findings (except for the managing authorities) are other public entities, communities, researchers, students, beneficiaries and social partners. Currently, the Ministry of Labour and Employment is building up a network of the main actors to improve the analysis and exchange of the results relating to the labour market of Luxembourg.

Although there is no special system of tracing implementation findings, the recommendations coming from evaluation reports are always given great attention and are used to improve the programmes. The mid-term evaluation of the Objective 2 ERDF programme (2000-2006) may be considered as the “best use of evaluation result”. The ERDF mid-term evaluation found that some axes of the programme haven’t achieved the objectives initially expected. At that time, the managing authority could shift the budget from those axes to other more successful ones, in order to avoid the loss of EU funds. In the end, the entire Objective 2 programme (2000-2006) was completed successfully, without any losses or irregularities. The mid-term evaluation and its update were also important in preparing the current programming period 2007-2013, especially in relation to the ending of zoning and the concentration of resources on specific issues, as recommended by the two

evaluation reports⁸⁶. Mid-term evaluation was also considered to be most useful by the ESF managing authority. This mid-term analysis is being used to ameliorate the future programmes and the daily work of the ESF unit.

In general, civil servants, and especially those within the ERDF managing authority, think that evaluation studies are necessary to identify positive and negative solutions implemented within the EU interventions as well as to improve the performance of the programmes. However, the evaluation practices should be proportional to the available EU budget. The ERDF managing authority of Luxembourg has to deal with a small programme and budget, which is why there is no point in conducting extensive, broad evaluation research. In the 2007-2013 programme period, Luxembourg manages (only!) about 90 ERDF projects. Every beneficiary is well known by the managing authority and contact with them occurs at least monthly. In the point of view of MA, this “communication” aspect is very important and allows to avoid problems and improves the quality of performance. This constitutes an enormous advantage compared to bigger countries and regions.

⁸⁶ Mathieu, L., ITD-EU, EXPERT EVALUATION NETWORK – Delivering Policy Analysis on the Performance of Cohesion Policy 2007-2013, country report: LUXEMBOURG, November 2010.

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Malta

Zuzanna Popis

Context of Evaluation System

Malta joined the European Union along with nine other countries in 2004 and became eligible for the Cohesion Policy support. In the period 2004-2006 the country obtained over €85 million of Cohesion Policy funds. All of the country was supported under “Objective 1” (**European Commission DG Regio 2006**). The support concentrated mainly on infrastructure investments and environmental protection.

A total of €855 million of EU funds have been allocated for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 in Malta (**European Commission 2009**). This consist of: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) €444 million, Cohesion Fund (CF) €284 million, European Social Fund (ESF) €112 million and the European Territorial Programmes €15 million. Since Malta is classified under the convergence objective for the present programming period, it can obtain a maximum EU co-financing rate of 85% of the total eligible costs of projects. This is complimented by national co-financing (15%). Environment-related investment represents a key priority and accounts for 38% of the total allocation; 25% of the total ERDF has been allocated to accessibility and transport; around 22% has been allotted to territorial development and 13% to support enterprise environment (**Cirilli 2010**).

The goals and strategic priorities for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 are identified by Malta’s National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). The country's strategy for Cohesion Policy is implemented through two Operational Programmes:

- ⇒ Operational Programme I Investing in Competitiveness for a Better Quality of Life (co-financed by ERDF and CF), which aims to develop and generate growth based on encouraging competitive economic activities and strengthening Malta’s physical infrastructure, leading to better quality of life,
- ⇒ Operational Programme II Empowering People for More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life (co-financed by ESF), which aims to strengthen social and economic development by improving employment and job opportunities, encouraging a high level of employment and more and better jobs.

Malta’s strategy for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 is based on a thorough research, analysis and wide consultation process and inter-linked with other strategic documents, including the National Reform

Programme, a number of sectoral strategies including the National Strategy for Rural Development and the National Fisheries Strategic Plan.

Cohesion Policy funding is considered to be a substantial, financial source of public interventions in Malta.

Evaluation practice in Malta is closely related to the implementation of EU policies. The country has developed an Evaluation Plan for Cohesion Policy in pursuance of the European Council guidance. Maltese activities in this area serve overall purpose of Cohesion Policy evaluation (which is defined by the regulation EC No.1083/2006) - to assess the implementation of Cohesion Policy using the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and impact.

Evaluation practices in Malta, though quite limited, are not only limited to the Cohesion Policy area, as they can also be found in other policies financed by EU funds, e.g. Rural Development Programme where the responsibility of respective Managing Authority is to carry out monitoring and evaluation activities according to established goals. The nature of evaluations carried out outside Cohesion Policy area depends on the guidelines of the respective Ministries.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

For the last two programming periods there have been only two (though highly active in this field) institutions contracting out evaluation studies of programmes financed by Cohesion Policy funds:

- ⇒ **Managing Authority, Planning & Priorities Co-ordination Department, Office of the Prime Minister** It is an institution devoted exclusively to managing Structural Funds. The main function of the Managing Authority is to act as the counterpart of the European Commission in Malta for issues pertaining to the programming and management of Structural Funds (Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division 2004). The Managing Authority is responsible for programming and implementation of the Structural Funds Programmes. It also organises the entire evaluation process and fulfils a number of other functions .
- ⇒ **Department of Contracts - Ministry for Finance, Economy and Investment.** This institution forms part of the national administration and handles both EU funded and nationally funded procurement.

The evaluation system is complemented by:

- ⇒ **Monitoring Committee**, which in regard to evaluation is responsible for discussing the Evaluation Plan drafted by the Managing Authority in terms of implementation and the effects of evaluation studies in the form of conclusions and recommendations emanating from evaluation studies in relation to the two Operational Programmes.

⇒ **Evaluation Steering Group**, whose responsibility is to ensure an effective coordination of evaluation activities and to enable the flow of information among stakeholders.

European Commission is invited to participate in both these bodies to provide feedback on evaluation plans, guidelines and terms of reference.

The public procurement procedures are based on national regulations. Evaluation studies are usually a subject of an open call on the market and this is determined by the value of particular study. Those EU funded contracts valued up to €47,000 are a subject for a call for a departmental tender, those valued over €47,000 are subject for a contract administered by the Department of Contracts.

The most common offer selection criterion is the lowest price, though technical and administrative criteria are also included in the contract documents and has to be met by the contractor.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The evaluation market in Malta is rather narrow. The limited supply is a result not only of little demand but also of the relatively limited capacity of local private entities to carry out evaluation studies in the Cohesion Policy area.

Most of the evaluations undertaken so far have involved local and foreign consortia. Among the external consultancies were big international firms such as Ernst & Young, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Technopolis or GHK Consulting, organisations from all over Europe (i.e. Italy, France, Germany, Austria, UK, Cyprus) and academic consultancies such as LSE Enterprise.

In the last ten years there has been only six local firms that received evaluation contracts of the Cohesion Policy programmes.

The awareness and knowledge of Cohesion Policy in the evaluation market is basic and general. However, those with biggest expertise in this area are employed within the Public Sector and thus are not eligible to be included in contractors' expert teams. The intricate details and procedures of Structural Funds may not be easily comprehended by the 'outsiders' to the system.

The demand for evaluation exercises which have been commissioned over the years for the Pre-Accession, Transition Facility and Structural Fund Programmes is slowly but steadily increasing. Given that, the development of local evaluation capacity seem to be of greatest importance. To be able not to depend on foreign expertise that much, the Managing Authority included in the Evaluation Plan for the present programming period the objective of strengthening the local evaluation capacity (see further Section Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy of this text). In a further attempt to boost the local evaluation capacity, external foreign experts indicated as key experts have been asked to work in parallel with local contractors on evaluation exercises.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The undeveloped evaluation culture of public administration results in very few evaluations of public policy (including Cohesion Policy) being undertaken. During the past ten years there were eight evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy programmes executed on a local level (see annex). They are mainly contracted out and not carried out internally, mostly due to limited resources in terms of capacity. The other factor determining the size and scope of the studies is budget.

For the 2010 the overall budget of €129 600 was spent on mid-term evaluation (Mid-Term Evaluation for Operational Programmes I and II Cohesion Policy 2007-2013) paying for the 60% of the study. The remaining 40% is to be paid in 2011 after completion of the contract. This study analyses the achievements of the programme and is supposed to formulate specific recommendations for corrective measures at programme and project level as regards the quality of the processes, procedures and documentation. The evaluation will provide, on the one hand, an independent review of the progress towards the key objectives of the OP and, on the other hand it will put forward recommendations to help the administration to improve achievements (**Cirilli 2010**).

On a local scale there were two further evaluations, which are considered to be the highest quality studies executed:

- ⇒ Impact and Effectiveness Study 2004-2006
- ⇒ ESF Tracer Study 2004-2006

The 2007-2013 Evaluation Plan takes into account the size of the Operational Programmes, the local context and the human resources available and sets out few ground-rules for evaluation activities:

- ⇒ combination of top-down and bottom up evaluation methods;
- ⇒ inclusion of key evaluation issues and identified horizontal themes into the proposed research activities;
- ⇒ enhancement of the current monitoring systems;
- ⇒ ad hoc evaluations triggered by under-performance against OP targets.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Since evaluation activities in Malta are relatively limited, the opportunities to deepen the knowledge through trainings and special programmes for evaluators (both commissioning institutions and contractors) are quite restricted. There are no domestic courses or postgraduate study programs available. Those interested in developing the capacity depend on the external foreign trainings, which are not always easy to access. Due to limited resources those are organised only occasionally.

Since Malta doesn't have any organisations promoting evaluation activities, strengthening evaluation knowledge and integrating the evaluation community, these tasks are taken over by the Managing Authority. Among the aims of the evaluation plan 2007-2013 are contribution to evaluation capacity development in Malta and help in development of "evaluation culture" in the country. The priorities are to ensure:

- ⇒ networking (for the evaluators to be able to share and exchange best practices both domestically and abroad)
- ⇒ awareness raising (to be able to ensure there is enough appreciation for the effects of evaluation among the public administration, to convince the decision-makers that evaluation can contribute to the improvement of Programmes' performance)
- ⇒ technical know-how enhancement (to help ensure that: public officials and others with responsibility for evaluation have the necessary knowledge and skills to plan, commission and manage the implementation of evaluation studies and the contractors – to execute the evaluation studies)
- ⇒ proper use of evaluation results (to ensure that relevant procedures are set in place so that evaluation results are part of decision-making process regarding the Programmes).

On the field of awareness raising the Managing Authority has managed to organise the evaluation contracted by them to become a subject for discussion among the members of the Evaluation Steering Groups and the Monitoring Committees. Managing Authority's website is also the platform where summary presentations upon completion are made available to the public.

One of the means of achieving the evaluation capacity growth in Malta is active participation in the activities undertaken by the European Commission on the field of evaluation i. e. continued active participation during evaluation meetings (ESF Evaluation Partnership – DG EMPL and the Evaluation Network Meeting – DG REGIO) or conferences organised by the European Commission and other networks. Until now no formal local networks have been set among the evaluators.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Evaluation reports of Cohesion Policy are not accessible to the general public, however they are disseminated to all members of the Monitoring Committee (MC) and horizontal stakeholders. Also, the summary presentations are available online on the Managing Authority website. Evaluation findings are also presented to the Evaluation Steering Group and meetings in form of seminars or workshops are always organised to disseminate findings to the relevant stakeholders.

Those stakeholders that have to be taken into account of disseminating the evaluation findings are:

- ⇒ Managing Authority (Projects Managers, Heads of Operational Programmes' units, Director General)
- ⇒ Evaluation Steering Group members
- ⇒ Monitoring Committee members
- ⇒ Beneficiaries
- ⇒ European Commission

Although Malta doesn't have the integrated system of tracing recommendations from the evaluation studies, the progress of following-up of the recommendations is monitored by the Monitoring Committee. Evaluations are one of the many potential sources that influence decisions about a programme. The time and resources invested in conducting an evaluation can be wasted if implementing its recommendations is never considered. In Malta's case most of the findings of the evaluation studies of the previous perspective were of particular interest to decision makers designing the Operational Programmes. Therefore evaluations have to be carried out on a constant basis in order to increase the likelihood of obtaining evaluation results which would influence the actions of programmes.

The two studies of the 2004-2006 perspective mentioned before (see Section Products of Evaluation System of Cohesion Policy) are considered to be the examples of the best use of the results.

The **Impact and Effectiveness Study 2004-2006** evaluation focused on an analysis of the impact and effectiveness of a number of ERDF interventions, mainly related to the environment as well as the specific territorial dimension. The evaluators were also requested to make realistic and pragmatic recommendations on how best to improve evaluations in Malta, taking into account the local structures, constraints and limitations of a small administration as well as other territorial specificities which impinge on planning and implementation of programmes and projects. They were expected to draw on issues encountered by them in this particular exercise. In terms of strengthening the monitoring and evaluation function, the evaluators recommended the establishment of a set of indicators to be used for each ESF project in order to facilitate data collection whilst for ERDF they advised that, in view of the ready availability of statistics meaningful indicators should be set for the 2007-2013 period. Such recommendations were taken into account by the Managing Authority for the current programming period.

The second evaluation referred to earlier was a pilot **tracer study for 2004-2006 ESF interventions** under the Single Programming Document. An important aim of the study was to provide also some insight into possible issues and difficulties regarding the proposed development of the fully fledged tracking system which the Maltese Managing Authority intended to undertake for Operational Programme II (2007-2013). Such problems were further investigated in order to for them to be

counteracted in the development of the Cohort Study which the Managing Authority plans to undertake for Operational Programme II (2007-2013).

The tracer study provided interesting results with regard to a number of issues related to the interventions. The Managing Authority has taken up a number of the recommendations made by the evaluators and also internalized a number of measures to facilitate future evaluations. For example, there is an obligation on beneficiaries to collect, process and analyse participants' evaluation sheets. Furthermore, beneficiaries are also required to retain participants' contact details for possible future reference. Participants are also being informed in advance that they may be contacted for evaluation purposes.

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The Netherlands

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Context of Evaluation System

EU Cohesion policy is not significant contribution to overall public policy. For the period 2007-2013 Netherlands will receive 1 907 mln euro (1 660 mln under objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment, 247 from European Territorial Cooperation Objective). All Dutch regions fall under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective.

Under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective, the Netherlands has five programmes: one national programme which is co-financed by the ESF and four regional programmes co-financed by the ERDF. Division of resource between ERDF and ESF is equal.

The scale of available resources for the Netherlands, comparing to period 2000-2006 has decreased. For the 2000-2006 period, the allocation of structural funds for the Netherlands was nearly EUR 3.7 billion. It means that funds for the Netherlands were reduce almost for a half.

Cohesion policy compose rather small part of public expenditures on structural investment. For comparison reasons some main numbers from state budget the year 2011 are presented: national budget was 254 billion euro. Expenditures on employment, culture and sport was 31 billion euro, while on economic affairs: 2 billion euro.

Although, in terms of available resources, Cohesion Policy in the Netherlands is rather minor player, it has significant input to the public policy in general. ERDF strongly supports research and innovation (49% of ERDF allocation) and business support. In these fields Cohesion Policy is significant player.

Cohesion Policy has not essential influence on evaluation culture in the Netherlands. In fact, evaluation culture has been well developed in this country and evaluation practise is permanently incorporated in policy cycle, especially at the stage of policy formulation or making decision of project financing. Thus it is rather to say that evaluation Policy is benefiting from general matured evaluation culture in the Netherlands.

Evaluation culture in the Netherlands is assessed as matured. According to methodology of measurement development of evaluation culture, elaborated by Furbo, the Netherlands are rank among seven countries with most matured evaluation culture (**Furbo et al. 2002**).

This shows, that although the Netherlands are defined as second wave country, development of evaluation practise was supported by favourable conditions. First attempts to establish evaluation culture in Netherlands started in mid 1970s. Main inspiration for evaluation development was rooted in fiscal policy. It was coherent with more general tendency of economizing public policy, introducing “managerism” approach in public policy and development of New Public Management. Evaluation was intended to use as one of instrument of rationalisation of public spending and assessment of its effects. Thus main actors in evaluation were: Ministry of Finance and Netherlands Court of Audit.

Development of evaluation was also supported by recognition policy analyses and evaluation as substantial and acknowledged part of science, especially at Universities, and private research institutions. Evaluation became part of curricula of many university and post-graduate courses for public administration. Thus growing number of well educated professionals in this areas flows into public administration and private institutions, supporting usage of evaluation.

Already in early 1990s. evaluation was seen as accepted and stable element of public policy process. It was institutionalised. Currently evaluation is significant part of policy making process. One of the main institution for evaluation is Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB), which is part of the structure of Ministry of Economic Affairs. CPB is independent, specialized institutions, responsible for developing methodology of research and evaluation and also implementation of scientific research aimed at contributing to the economic decision-making process of politicians and policymakers. Political parties and the government ask the CPB to analyse economic effects of their election platforms, coalition agreements and budgetary proposals. CPB-studies on specific topics (e.g. the welfare state, education, innovation and health care) have an influence on strategic economic thinking and decision-making processes on major projects (e.g. infrastructure) are guided by CPB-cost-benefit analyses (**Ministry of Finance of The Netherlands 2010**). Examples of recent study, closely related to evaluation are:

- ⇒ Knowledge diffusion from FDI and Intellectual Property Rights,
- ⇒ School responsiveness to quality ranking: An empirical analysis of secondary education in the Netherlands,
- ⇒ Contracting welfare-to-work services: use and usefulness,
- ⇒ Measuring the effectiveness of Public Employment Service (PES) workers; an empirical analysis based on the performance outcomes of regional employment offices.

CPB provides methodological advice also for evaluation of Cohesion Policy. Other significant institutions, related to evaluation practice are:

- ⇒ The Court of Audit (**The Court of Audit 2011**), which investigates whether central government revenue and expenditure are received and spent correctly and whether central government policy is implemented as intended,
- ⇒ Ministry of Finance (**Ministry of Finance of The Netherlands 2011**), responsible for financial management of the Netherlands Central Government. The budgetary system in the Netherlands is based on assumption of the increased efficiency of public finance and close link between budget and policy. Thus it is based on such elements like performance indicators and policy evaluation (**Van Der Knaap 2000**).

Strong position of institutions related to public finance in the area of evaluation confirms linkages between development of evaluation culture and the development of public finance policy oriented towards effects and efficiency.

Development of evaluation culture should be analysed in the context of public finance reform. In 1999 new document was prepared by Ministry of Finance, which present proposed reform of state budget toward more results oriented budget: From Policy Budget to Policy Annual Account (Van beleidsbegroting tot beleidsverantwoording - VBTB). This document put much more attention on ex-ante and ex-post evaluation of each of governmental proposal. Thus evaluation became practice of almost all areas of public policy.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In recent years demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy was stable. There are two main actors at national level:

- ⇒ Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (MEAAI) (**Ministry of Economic Affairs Agriculture and Innovation 2011**),
- ⇒ Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (MSAaE) (**Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment 2011**).

MEAAI plays coordination role for Managing Authorities of programmes finance by ERDF and is not directly involved in management. MEAAI's coordination role is vital not only for management, but also evaluation practice. This institution prepared and contracted ex-ante evaluation of four ERDF co-funded programme, as well as Mid Term Evaluation. Ministry acts, as one may say, on behalf of all four Managing Authorities: collects and analyses information on evaluation needs of MAs and proposes comprehensive methodological approach for evaluation. This secure possibility of comparison among programmes and mutual learning between Managing Authorities.

Second institution on national level is Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, which is Managing Authority for Operational Program co-financed by European Social Fund. Both of them were active in 2010 and commissioned evaluations.

At the regional level there are four Provinces in the Netherlands, which plays role of Managing Authorities for four ERDF co-funded programmes:

- ⇒ Operational Programme 'North Netherlands',
- ⇒ Operational Programme 'East Netherlands',
- ⇒ Operational Programme 'West Netherlands',
- ⇒ Operational Programme 'South Netherlands'.

Each of the Programmes covers area of number of Provinces, however role of Managing Authority is executed by one Province. For example, in case of West Netherlands Programme this role is played by City Rotterdam. In 2010 only one of the Managing Authority contracted evaluation. Low level of activity is caused by the fact that Ministry of Economic Affairs in 2010 commissioned one, substantial Mid Term Evaluation for all for Programmes.

For all institutions, involved in evaluation of Cohesion Policy, it is additional sphere of responsibility. Especially for the two Ministries it is an area constituting a minority of their actions. However all of them are institutions with developed capacity in policy designing and implementation. Both institutions are also experienced in contracting evaluation studies

Also regional authorities are experience in conducting evaluation. It should be mentioned here, that traditionally evaluation has developed both at central and regional and local level.

In 2010 all institutions involved in evaluation of cohesion policy spend around 440 thousand euro on evaluation research:

- ⇒ 240.000 was spend by Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment,
- ⇒ 100.000 was spend by Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation,
- ⇒ 100.000 was spend by Regional Authorities.

A tender is the most common procedure, used for contracting out evaluation studies in the Netherlands. Usually three criteria are used for proposal selection:

- ⇒ Price – 20-25%,
- ⇒ Organization – delivery of outputs according to schedule – 20-25%,
- ⇒ Quality – experience of the company and experts in the evaluation research and in the particular area, as well as content of the proposal: understanding the objective of the evaluation and research question.

Thus qualitative criteria for proposal selection are being seen as the most critical one, including previous experience, which is also strong factor taken under consideration. Such construction of the

selection criteria may be seen as mechanism for assuring quality. Contractors, planning conducting evaluation in the future, pay attention to the quality of evaluation studies. Such composition of the tender selection criteria lead to stabilization of the evaluation market. However, on the other hand, it is rather difficult for newcomers to start carrying on evaluation research.

As described in previous chapter, Dutch government has advanced evaluation culture. Evaluation policy and practice in the field of Cohesion Policy is inevitable influenced by this environment. It may be said, that evaluation of cohesion policy is benefiting from overall development of evaluation culture in the Netherlands. Thus public institutions, while commissioning evaluation, utilities general guidelines for evaluation in the area of public policies published by Ministry of Economy (described in chapter 5).

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The Netherlands can be characterised as country with mature evaluation culture. One of the dimension of it is existence of numerous, diversified scope of institutions delivering evaluations research. However number of institutions is stable, due to the mentioned before methods of selection of contractor, with strong emphasis on previous experience.

In the field of evaluation of Cohesion Policy it is up to 15 active institutions. Most of them are private research and policy advice institutions. There is observed limited engagement of academic institutions in the field of evaluation. Most of active institutions are national origin, however some of them are international.

Main contractors are: Research voor Beleid, Ecorys Bureau Bartels, Regioplan, Social Cultureel Planbureau / The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, Berenshot. It should be mentioned, that all of those institutions are active both at national, Dutch market, as well as international, conducting evaluation research also for international organizations (European Commission) or other Governments (e.g. Romania in case of Research voor Beleid).

It was underline by reviewers, that most of the institutions, which are active in the field of evaluation of Cohesion Policy, have very good knowledge of Cohesion Policy, good relations with EU institutions and has an updated knowledge on current policy development in frame of Cohesion Policy.

Main contractors are assessed as experienced institutions with strong capacity to provide good quality research in the area of Cohesion Policy. All of them have also advanced expertise in this area, what seems to be one of most important factor for assuring quality of evaluation research.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Number of the evaluations in the field of Cohesion Policy during last ten years was about 10-15 for ERDF and similar number in case of ESF.

In 2010 for ERDF two evaluation were conducted. Also for the ESF program 2007 - 2013 two evaluations have been finished. At last it should be noticed that at the moment of preparation of the current paper (May 2011) two ongoing evaluations are carrying out, but are not yet finished:

Evaluations conducted in the Netherlands, in the area of ERDF, are mostly focused on governance (mechanism for collections the highest quality projects, burdens of control and administration, coordination, communication. Those evaluation are in limited scope related to outcome and results of Programmes.

In case of evaluation of ESF (actions A and D) research was focused on achievability of the results of the programme and explanation of main reasons of low utilisation of the available funds. Thus it may be stated, that this evaluation was also more focused on state of implementation and governance of the programmes (identification of main barriers for higher utilisation).

In the Netherlands there is not any central database which contains all evaluations conducted in the area of Cohesion Policy. Evaluation are available (if yes at all) on the webpages of the institutions which commissioned evaluation or European Commission in case of ERDF).

There is lack of specific guidelines for evaluation in Cohesion Policy, however more general guidelines was published by Ministry of Economy in 2006.

In 2006 Ministry of Economy published *Directive for policy evaluations (EZ-richtlijn beleidsevaluaties)*. This guidelines was prepare in order to support implementation of result oriented budget (VBTB). Guidance covers such areas as ex-ante and ex-post policy research, various steps of policy research and organisation and quality assurance of the evaluation. This documents contains also methodological requirements for the design and results of research and a checklist for assessing an offer. In case of specific evaluation quality of evaluation reports is assured by specific and detailed description of the requirements in Term of Reference.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In the Netherlands there are not evidences on existing any mechanism of facilitating evaluation culture for Cohesion Policy. Evaluation rather benefits from more general development of practise of evaluation research. Such institutions like Central Planning Office, Court of Audit place number of materials related to evaluations. However there is lack of specific source of information on evaluation for Cohesion Policy. This relatively weak development in terms of mechanism of

facilitation may be link to more general weak infrastructure supporting development of evaluation. There is not a national evaluation society, however Dutch professionals are active in European Evaluation Society.

In case of ERDF there are regular meeting of managers of the programme with representatives of Ministry of Economy, Innovation and Agriculture. Evaluation is one the topics on those meeting.

There is also limited activity in training of the civil servants in the area of evaluation for Cohesion Policy. Main actors in the Cohesion Policy are also not very active in development of evaluation culture. They participate in different events, however they usually not initiating it.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Finding from the evaluations are shared in rather passive way. Main target audience are the persons involved in management of Programmes finance by structural funds. Usually report are not distributed to the wider public. Thus, at least for the ERDF, evaluations are not published on the main web page of the ministry, but they are published on internal webpage, available for persons involved.

Finding of the evaluations reports are discussed by the Evaluation Committee. Finalising Mid-Term Evaluation of ERDF was an occasion for meeting of the Committee. It was first meeting from two years. Relatively weak activity of the Committee is a results of relatively small number of evaluations. As it was mentioned by interviewer, evaluation is not so important topic for discussion.

In case of ESF evaluation reports are available on the web page of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

In the Netherlands there is not any formal system for monitoring recommendation. It is own responsibility of each of the Managing Authorities. However, as it assessed by person from Ministry of Economy, implementation of the recommendation is one of the weakest point. It is difficult to make significant changes in the system of programme management on the basis of evaluation recommendation. Also because evaluations are focused mostly on implementation issues, they provide knowledge already known by main actors. It is really rare that evaluation would discover some facts or causes which were unknown to the programme managers.

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Poland

National Evaluation Unit with Paulina Skórska

Context of the Cohesion Policy Evaluation System

Accession to the European Union was a turning point in the way that Polish public policies are implemented. When the country joined the EU on May 1st 2004, all Polish regions were well below the threshold of 75% of the EU average in gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant.

In the 2004-2006 programming period, Poland disposed EUR 12,8 mln⁸⁷, which enabled the accomplishment of nearly 90,000 projects. The largest portion of EU financial assistance was directed at transport projects and environmental protection⁸⁸.

The allocation of funds for financing of the Cohesion Policy in Poland in 2007-2013 amounts to EUR 85,6 billion, of which EUR 67 billion will be funds from EU budget. This fact makes Poland the largest beneficiary of European Cohesion Policy for this period. The largest financial assistance was directed at transport infrastructure and environmental protection. Poland has translated its strategic development priorities into 21 programmes (five national and 16 regional programmes for all 16 Polish regions) and other European Initiatives (e.g. INTERREG, EQUAL).

The role of the European Funds in the formation of evaluation culture in Poland is overwhelming. In May 2004, when Poland joined the EU, evaluation system in Polish public administration had been virtually non-existent. At the very beginning, evaluation activities were related to the pre-accession instruments such as: Phare, SAPARD and ISPA and undertaken only on an ad hoc, and quite rare basis. Most of the evaluations of pre-accession programmes were contracted directly by the European Commission. Between 1999 and 2004, Polish authorities only contracted about 10 studies - all of them had an ex post nature (assessing the effects of executed programmes). The studies sprang from the programme life cycle, not from a systemic (policy) point of view. This is why they aimed to fulfill the current information needs of the managing units, rather than putting the findings in the wider context of policy strategic development⁸⁹. To conclude - during the pre-accession period,

⁸⁷ The total Mount of public funds (both national and EU), allocated to the implementation of the National Development Plan 2004-2006 amounted to EUR 17,085,8 million. The value of available EU funds is EUR 12,814.9 million.

⁸⁸ http://www.mrr.gov.pl/aktualnosci/fundusze_europejskie_2007_2013/Documents/Fundusze_Polska_CIR_infoPrasowa_1.pdf

⁸⁹ K. Olejniczak, *Mini-Case Study: Building the evaluation system in Poland. Ex Post Evaluation of Cohesion Policy Programmes 2000-06 Co-financed by ERDF.* in: *Work Package 11: Management and Implementation*

evaluation was not used in a systematic and coherent way. In May 2004, when Poland joined the EU, the first task was to build an appropriate evaluation capacity in responsible institutions and to start launching first evaluations.

There are a few factors that support the building of an evaluation culture in Poland. First of all, utilization of evaluation findings requires a good quality research process. High standards of evaluation are created by documents and instruments such as: guidelines on evaluation (from EC and NEU), postgraduate studies, training courses and conferences. One can read about them in detail in later chapters. Instruments which conduce high standards of evaluation, support dissemination of evaluation practices and the development of evaluation culture.

The second factor advantageous to the development of evaluation culture in Poland is connected with the shape of the Polish evaluation system, in the current programming perspective. The Polish evaluation system, which was created in 2007, is strongly decentralised⁹⁰. Competence for the commissioning of evaluation research has been granted to institutions most interested in the conclusions and recommendations coming from evaluation at the appropriate level of implementation. This structure allows evaluation to be as close as possible to the real problems. At the same time – through the involvement of a large group of stakeholders (from the implementation system) - it allows for interception of accountability by institutions representing different levels of implementation.

In spite of the above-mentioned elements, evaluation practice is generally associated with Cohesion Policy and the use of this instrument within domestic policies is rather limited. One positive impact is the fact that the Act on Development Policy Principles places an obligation of performing ex-ante evaluation of operational programmes with the Managing Authorities. It can be considered a foundation for the development of evaluation practices in the field of domestic policies. Simultaneously, it is impossible to interchangeably determine how big a role evaluation studies' results plays in making political decisions. At the moment, the impact of results from evaluation studies in domestic policies can be assessed as limited. On the other hand, those results play a significant part in the administrative decision making process in Cohesion Policy implementation process.

System for Cohesion Policy, 2009:

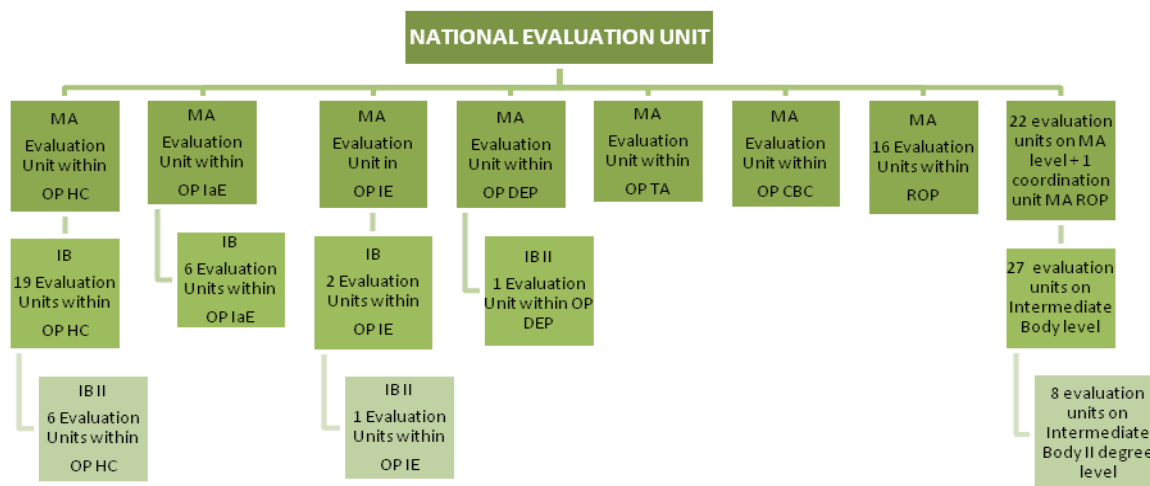
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/projects/practices/download.cfm?sto=1926&lan=7

⁹⁰ As opposed to the centralization of evaluation process at the level of the Ministry of Regional Development in 2006.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The general structure of the evaluation system is presented in the diagram below.

Figure 1. Institutional structure of the evaluation system in Poland



Source: http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Dokumenty_ewaluacyjne/Documents/Process_of_Cohesion_Policy_evaluation_in_Poland_2011.pdf

The most important actors in the Cohesion Policy evaluation system are: the National Evaluation Unit (NEU), and some of evaluation units located in managing authorities and implementation bodies (evaluation units located in managing authority responsible for Operational Programme Human Capital and in Polish Agency of Entrepreneurship Development).

The **National Evaluation Unit (NEU)**, located within the Department of Structural Policy Coordination in the Ministry of Regional Development, is responsible for coordination of the whole system (work of other evaluation units). Furthermore, the NEU conducts horizontal and thematic evaluation research on the level of the National Development Plan (NDP) / National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). The third responsibility is coordination of the development of the above-mentioned evaluation culture within the Polish administration.

Evaluation system, on the level of the NDP and NSRF, is based in the institutional sphere of six thematic steering groups. The work of steering groups is coordinated by representatives of the National Evaluation Unit. Steering groups perform the following functions: identification of evaluation topics, defining the scope of research, monitoring the work of evaluation experts, operationalisation of recommendations, monitoring the process of implementing recommendations.

The Steering Committee for the evaluation process of the NDP and NSRF was established for coordination purposes. Its role is to ensure coherence of the evaluation process of the NDP and NSRF, as well as specifying general, strategic directions of the evaluation process. An important

purpose of its functioning is to engage decision makers in the evaluation, as they are the final and most important recipients of evaluation findings.

Evaluation units are located within each operational programme (national and regional). They are responsible for organisation of the evaluation process within their OP. Evaluation units were established mainly within Managing Authorities, which may delegate competence (and often do so) regarding evaluation to lower implementation levels (to intermediate bodies – IB).

In addition, in 2007 the obligation of preparation of Evaluation Plans was introduced. According to *Guidelines concerning evaluation of Operational Programs*, evaluation plans are prepared on the level of the NDP/NSRF, and on the level of operational programmes (as well as on lower implementation levels in the case of delegating competence). The strategic evaluation plans for 2007-2013 embrace the whole programming period; they determine the general areas of evaluation and the method of system organisation on a given implementation level. Operational evaluation plans indicate specific activities planned for launch in a given year. It can be estimated that spending on evaluation activities for the whole 2007-2013 programming period amounts to nearly PLN 200 mln (about EUR 46 mln).

Most of evaluations are outsourced to independent external evaluators selected in accordance with the Public Procurement Act⁹¹. The selection of an evaluator requires the application of a tender procedure, unless the expense of the evaluation research is less than 14,000 EUR⁹². The requirements and expectations of evaluation research are specified in the Terms of Reference. It should be emphasized that the procedures applied in tenders launched by the Ministry of Regional Development (mostly by the NEU) give potential contractors the possibility of proposing their own unique solutions and methodology, which are - in their opinion - the most appropriate for answering evaluation questions formulated by the administration. The company which wins the contract competes both by offering the best price (40-50 % of the total points) and the best quality of methodology (50-60 % of the total points).

⁹¹ With the exception of about 3% internal evaluations.

⁹² More at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/7/20/39645964.pdf>

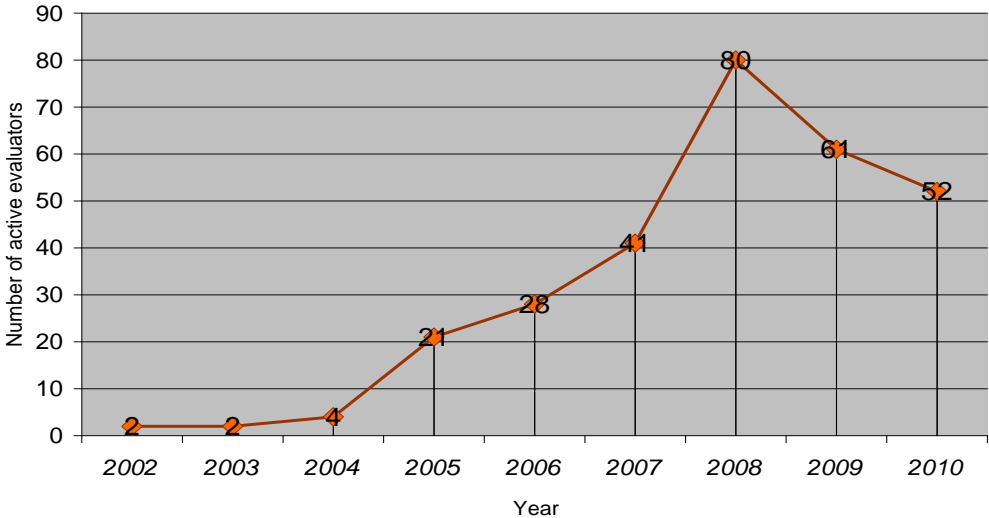
Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The specificity of the Polish evaluation market is that most of the external evaluators are Polish based. The low formal requirements used in public tenders (for instance, small evaluation experience was required) have made it possible for young Polish entrepreneurs to take part and compete for contracts (instead of relying only on big evaluation players from abroad – a situation common in many new member states). Those young companies – specifically as evaluation units – gained intensive training with a “learning by doing” approach. In time, some of them became well experienced and top quality evaluators offering their services at relatively low prices (usually one man-day of work is calculated at around 150 EUR). The characteristic of the Polish evaluation market is that it mostly belongs to private consulting companies as universities and research institutes do not usually compete in public tenders.

In Poland, one may observe that the market is becoming more mature and is beginning to stabilize (at around 60 active companies). Changes in the number of active evaluators since 2002 are shown on diagram below.

Diagram 1. Number of external evaluators active on the market 2002-2010

Number of external evaluators active on the market 2002-2010



Source: self-elaboration on the basis of database of evaluation studies as of January 1st 2011

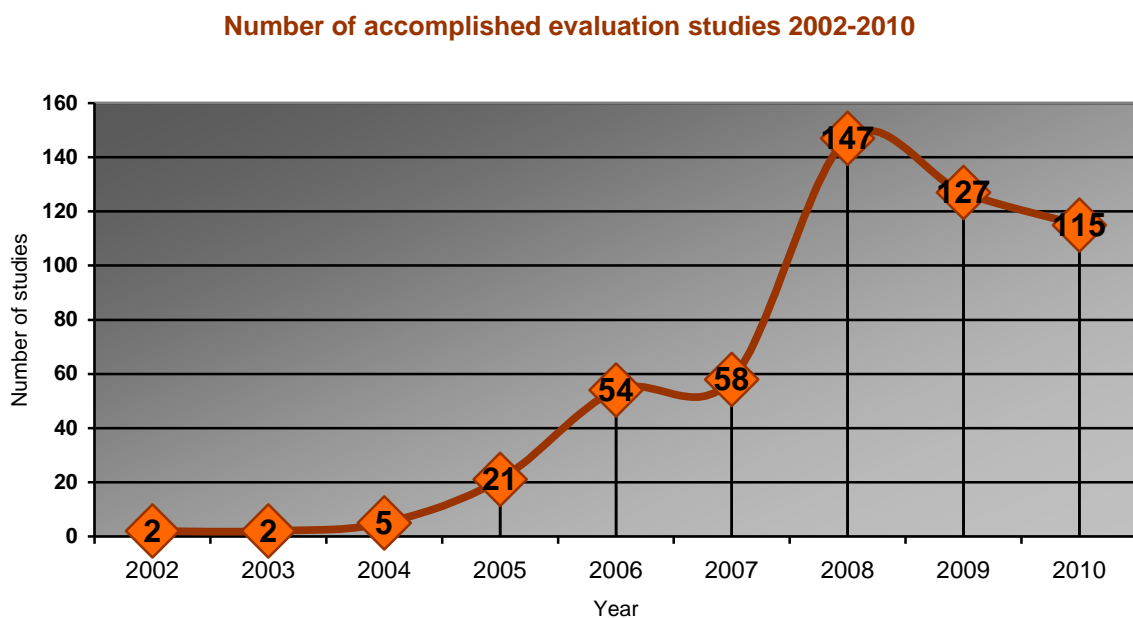
One can observe a trend that number of “big players” on the evaluation market has increased. Simultaneously, there were about 100 evaluators who conducted only one study and 35 companies that carried out only 2-3 research studies. Most of the companies from the group of “beginners” - after their first (usually difficult) experience - will probably not continue their activity on the evaluation market.

Summing up: the evaluation market in Poland is developing quickly; it is extremely competitive, but is still open and mostly funded by nationally based companies.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The number of evaluation studies in the years 2002-2010⁹³ has grown significantly and reached a total of 531. This number does not include evaluations of single projects and embraces evaluations on different levels of implementation in both 2004-2006 and 2007-2013 Cohesion Policy programming perspectives. The graph below presents the changes in the number of accomplished evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy conducted in Poland.

Diagram 2. Number of accomplished evaluation studies 2002-2010



Source: self-elaboration on the basis of database of evaluation studies as of January 1st 2011

The change in the number of conducted evaluation researches may be observed especially between 2007 and 2008 (this increase in the number of accomplished studies was strictly linked to a change in the system – responsibility for evaluation was given to newly-established managing authorities on a regional level). After peaking in 2008, the number of evaluation studies has stabilised at around 120 researches per year. The challenge for all evaluation units is now the quality and value of evaluation findings; so one should not expect significant changes in the number of researches in the future.

Taking the structure of conducted studies into consideration, external evaluation researches account for 97% of all executed researches, while only 3% have an internal character. External evaluations are

⁹³ Researches conducted in the years 2002-2003 were mostly ex-ante evaluations of the National Development Plan 2004-2006

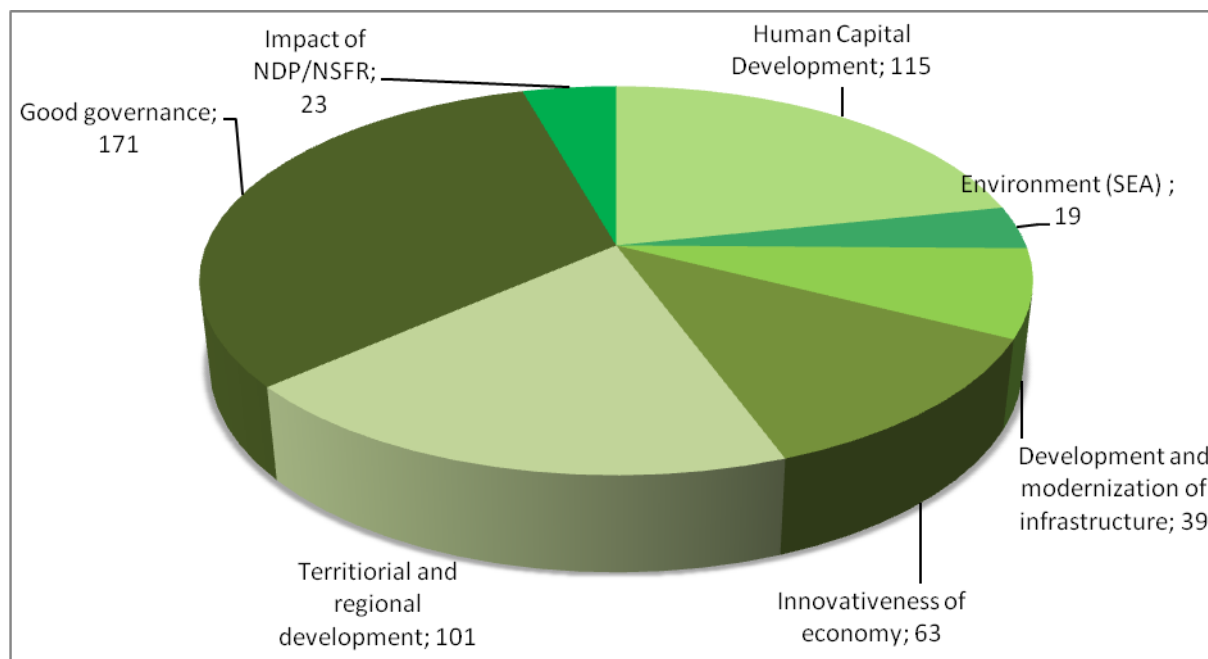
favourable in terms of objectivity. On the other hand, internal evaluations are an excellent instrument for capacity building. The significant advantage lies in the fact that the conclusions and recommendations coming from an internal evaluation are usually more relevant and useful as the administration better understands the context of the decision making process.

When one is considering the timeframe of performing evaluation studies, it should be emphasised that 80% of all evaluations are of an ongoing nature. This is connected with the principle that evaluations should, above all, meet currently emerging information needs. Ex-ante account for 14% and ex-post account for about 5% of all evaluations. It should be also emphasised that, even though, according to EU regulations, ex post evaluation was only the obligation of the European Commission, Poland also decided to conduct its own ex post studies. This was the ex post evaluation of the first programming perspective of Cohesion Policy implementation in Poland. All of those studies were contracted to external evaluators and were conducted between 2009-2010. On this basis, internal meta-evaluation has been carried out by the National Evaluation Unit.

This study becomes one of the most important sources of information for preparation of the next programming perspective strategic documents (the conclusions have been already used when shaping the Polish position for the future of Cohesion Policy). For more information see: http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Ewaluacja_ex_post_NPR/

Taking the topical structure of conducted studies into consideration, “good governance” evaluations, mostly dedicated to analysing implementation issues of Cohesion Policy, have been the most popular. Human capital seems also to be the best evaluated (in terms of the effects of intervention) area of Cohesion Policy support. A relatively small number of studies were conducted in the area of infrastructure and environment. The distribution of thematic areas of evaluation studies is presented in the diagram below.

Diagram 3. Accomplished evaluation studies according to thematic areas



Source: self-elaboration on the basis of database of evaluation studies as of January 1st 2011

The majority (44%) of evaluation studies are medium sized (EUR 8,000 – 20,000), 27% of researches were large (their budget exceeded EUR 20,000) and 18% were small studies. Due to the stabilisation of the system and strong competition on the supply side of the market, a rise in the share of small and medium-sized evaluations should be expected (which is also connected with the decentralization of the evaluation system)⁹⁴.

Most of the performed evaluation studies –especially on the regional level – use typical methods such as IDI, Focus Groups and surveys. At the same time, there is a group of entities which commission and require more advanced methodological approaches from the evaluators (mostly units from the Ministry of Regional Development and Polish Agency for Entrepreneurship Development).

A very good example of the use of advanced methodologies was the process of the ex post evaluation of the National Development Plan 2004-2006. Composing the whole study from thirteen work packages allowed the implementation of very specific and thematically relevant methods from which three were using Propensity Score Matching technique. The final report was prepared in the form of an internally carried out meta-analysis of external thematic researches.

⁹⁴ Separate case are evaluations ordered by NEU. The average cost of this this studies are EUR 50 000 / 60 000.

An interesting approach is also the use of triangulation in macro modeling works (CGE, DSGE and Hermin models). The Ministry of Regional Development contracted out (in the form of a multi-annual framework contract) a systematic macroeconomic assessment of the impact of Cohesion Policy on socio-economic development on both a national and regional level.

The assessment of quality of the prepared evaluation reports is performed by the units commissioning researches and passed on to the NEU. This assessment is performed on the basis of an Evaluation Chart of Process and Results of Researches, which can be treated as guidance for rating of a report's quality⁹⁵.

As an example of an evaluation study which is characterized by an especially high quality of methodology is "The impact of Cohesion Policy on level and quality of employment in Poland"⁹⁶. This study takes advantage of methodology which is the most adequate for the study's purposes, evaluation questions and the type of evaluation (ex-post). Evaluators used meta-evaluation of three macroeconomic models (CGE, DSGE and Hermin model), counterfactual impact evaluation (Propensity Score Matching) and meta-analysis of earlier research results. This study can be treated as a model in the domain of accurately, well-matched methodology and reliably prepared analysis.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There is a variety of evaluation culture facilitators accessible in Poland. First of all, there is a website⁹⁷ for the sharing of evaluation resources and practices between public institutions. There one can find useful information about: evaluation system, systemic documents concerning evaluation tasks, research results and news (eg. announcements about planned researches).

The development of evaluation culture in Poland manifests itself by creating opportunities for the deepening of knowledge and expertise for civil servants. Three different universities successfully organize such studies on a commercial basis: Warsaw University, The Warsaw School of Economics and Kozminski University. The Centre for European Regional and Local Studies (EUROREG) in Warsaw University realize on commission by NEU a 190-hour training course -Academy of Evaluation - inaugurated in 2008. The objective of the course is not only to give the most up to date knowledge

⁹⁵ Tool is available at:

http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Dokumenty_ewaluacyjne/Strony/Dokumenty_systemowe.aspx

⁹⁶ Study available at:

http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Ewaluacja_ex_post_NPR/Documents/raport_koncowy_expost2.pdf

⁹⁷ On: <http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/>

directly from the leading world-wide experts, but also to teach civil servants practical skills which will allow them to put the theory into practice⁹⁸.

Another important instrument for developing the evaluation culture in Poland is evaluation conferences. The number of conferences has increased – especially after the decentralization of the evaluation system in 2007. Before that, in fact only the annual conference co-organized by the NEU and PAED (Polish Agency of Entrepreneurship Development) took place (in 2011 the 7th edition of this joined initiative was held). The tradition of evaluation conferences has been transferred to the regional level and some Marshal Offices decided to organize such events (for example: Podkarpackie, Opolskie, Zachodniopomorskie, Wielkopolskie). Annual conferences seem to be a useful initiative which allows firstly, the summing up of already existing achievements, and secondly, the setting of priorities for the future. The number of conferences has now stabilized (5 per year).

In the area of building the evaluation culture in Polish administration, apart from the NEU and Evaluation Unit in HC OP, special attention should be paid to the Polish Agency of Entrepreneurship Development, which is extremely active and visible in this field.

In 2000, the Polish Evaluation Society was created. It provides publications about evaluation and evaluation standards, which establish principles for the performance of evaluation research.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The results from the evaluation studies in Poland are disseminated in several ways. First of all, the National Evaluation Unit decided to create a database with all finalized evaluation studies conducted by different institutions and on different (higher than project) levels of implementation. This database is available on the Internet⁹⁹ and allows the full version of final reports to be downloaded. This database (which at the beginning of 2011 contained more than five hundred evaluations) is one of the first and most useful sources of information for evaluators, administration, academic researchers and allows open access for the public (mostly journalists).

One example of good practice in the field of evaluation results dissemination is the printing of brochures containing the most important conclusions from individual reports. Those brochures are disseminated during different conferences in order to reach a greater number of stakeholders.

In order to properly coordinate the process of implementation and further monitoring of recommendations formulated within conducted studies, in 2009, the NEU decided to launch a pioneer

⁹⁸ More information on the course available at: <http://www.euroreg.uw.edu.pl/index.php/dydaktyka/akademia-ewaluacji.html>. It should also be emphasized that postgraduate studies on evaluation are not only organized with the use of EU financial resources. At least three different universities successfully organize such studies on a commercial basis.

⁹⁹ Available at: http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Wyniki/Strony/Wyniki_badan.aspx

initiative by building an Integrated System for Managing Conclusions and Recommendations from evaluation researches. The system was created in order to coordinate the process of implementation and further monitoring of recommendations formulated within conducted studies. The main roles in the system are held by Managing Authorities (making decisions on using recommendations followed by monitoring the process of their implementation) and the NEU (managing the recommendation database, analysis and monitoring of key recommendations). They cooperate with evaluators, recipients of conclusions and recommendations, steering groups and monitoring committees. The main instruments of the system are recommendation tables and the Database for Strategic Monitoring of Recommendations managed by the National Evaluation Unit.

On the basis of the Integrated System for Managing Conclusions and Recommendations, one can assess the value of the whole evaluation process. At the same time, a study which can serve as a best practice example as far as the usefulness of results is concerned is: 'Evaluation of benefits gained by EU-15 States as a result of the implementation of Cohesion Policy in Poland'¹⁰⁰. The analysis covers both the benefits gained directly by companies from these countries resulting from participation in Cohesion Policy, as well as benefits obtained by entire economies – the research applied both a micro and macroeconomic approach to the analyzed issue. The success of this study was determined by a few factors. First of all, this study shows pan-european effects of the implementation of Cohesion Policy in Poland, which is strictly connected with the purpose of Cohesion Policy, which is accelerating and facilitating real convergence processes between regions. Secondly, results from this study are communicated extensively as they meet current information needs. Furthermore, they are presented in a simple and concrete way which allows the wider public to understand them. Conclusions from this study are especially useful in the context of the current discussion around the next programming perspective as an argument in favour of keeping the important role of Cohesion Policy.

¹⁰⁰ Research is available at:
http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Ewaluacja_ex_post_NPR/Documents/evaluation_of_benefits_EU15.pdf

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ACT of 29 January 2004 PUBLIC PROCUREMENT LAW, Journal of Law of 2007 No. 82, item 560, Warsaw 2007.

Database of evaluation studies as of January 1st 2011:

http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Wyniki/Documents/Baza_badan_ewaluacyjnych_23112011.xls

Evaluation Chart of Process and Results of Researches:

http://www.ewaluacja.gov.pl/Dokumenty_ewaluacyjne/Strony/Dokumenty_systemowe.aspx

Ex post evaluation of the National Development Plan 2004-2006, MRD, Warsaw 2010.

IBS, *Ocena korzyści uzyskiwanych przez Państwa UE-15w wyniku realizacji polityki spójności w Polsce – 2010 aktualizacja* [Evaluation of benefits obtained by EU-15 States as a result of implementing the Cohesion Policy in Poland – update of 2010], study carried out at the request of the MRD, Warsaw, 2010.

Olejniczak K., *Mini-Case Study: Building the evaluation system in Poland. Ex Post Evaluation of Cohesion Policy Programmes 2000-06 Co-financed by ERDF*. in: *Work Package 11: Management and Implementation System for Cohesion Policy*, 2009:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/projects/practices/download.cfm?sto=1926&lan=7

PAG Uniconsult, *Wpływ polityki spójności na poziom i jakość zatrudnienia w Polsce* [Impact of the Cohesion Policy on the level and quality of employment in Poland], study carried out at the request of the MRD, Warsaw, 2010.

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Portugal

Alicja Weremiuk

Context of the Cohesion Policy Evaluation System

The main factor that determined development of evaluation culture in the Portugal was the Cohesion Policy. There were some evaluation practices (e.g. CBA's for transport projects) but not on a regular basis or widely used. The CP imposed a systematic approach to evaluation and its regular utilisation within the process of the implementation of the EU funds. Currently some evaluation activities are undertaken besides the CP, but they are still interlinked with the CP either directly (financed by the EU funds) or inspired (or somehow imposed by) by the EU interventions. The main exception to this rule is education sector where the evaluation existed and developed irrespective to the CP.

The role of evaluation is increasing (but still not widely diffused besides the CP) and stems from the need of greater accountability which is quite visible trend in Portugal. The subject of evidence based policy is being undertaken by the media representatives but is not discussed within the society. If the crisis is taken into account it has two opposite outcomes to the evaluation culture and practice. On the one hand it increases the necessity of the greater accountability, but on the other hand (at operational level) it restricts the evaluation activities (such as big scale trainings, etc.) due to lack of financing.

As the overall evaluation practice is concerned it is worth mentioning that the National Audit Office has recently created the evaluation unit within its structure and signed the protocol of co-operation with the QREN Observatorio (institution responsible for the strategic coordination and monitoring of the NSRF in Portugal). The Audit Office's interest in evaluation focuses on the assessment of public service. As the politicians are concerned – it can be said that they use evaluation rather in political struggle than as a management tool or arguments in a constructive discussions. The involvement of media is also a problem as they are interested mostly in problems and 'yes/no' answers whereas evaluation focuses more on the 'why and how to improve' questions. As it was mentioned before, their interest is increasing, esp. in the field of the EU funds impact assessment, but in this field there are only few evaluation reports (most evaluation studies until now have focused on the mid-term effects – it means rather results than impacts).

To sum up – **the Cohesion Policy was and still is the main factor of shaping evaluation culture in Portugal**. As its importance is quite big in Portugal (23,8 billion EUR in 2000-2006 from EU funds; 21,5

billion EUR in 2007-2013), its impact would continue. But it need to be underlined that its significance in Portuguese system of policies depends on the area. Currently EU funds are a substantial source of financing in the areas of:

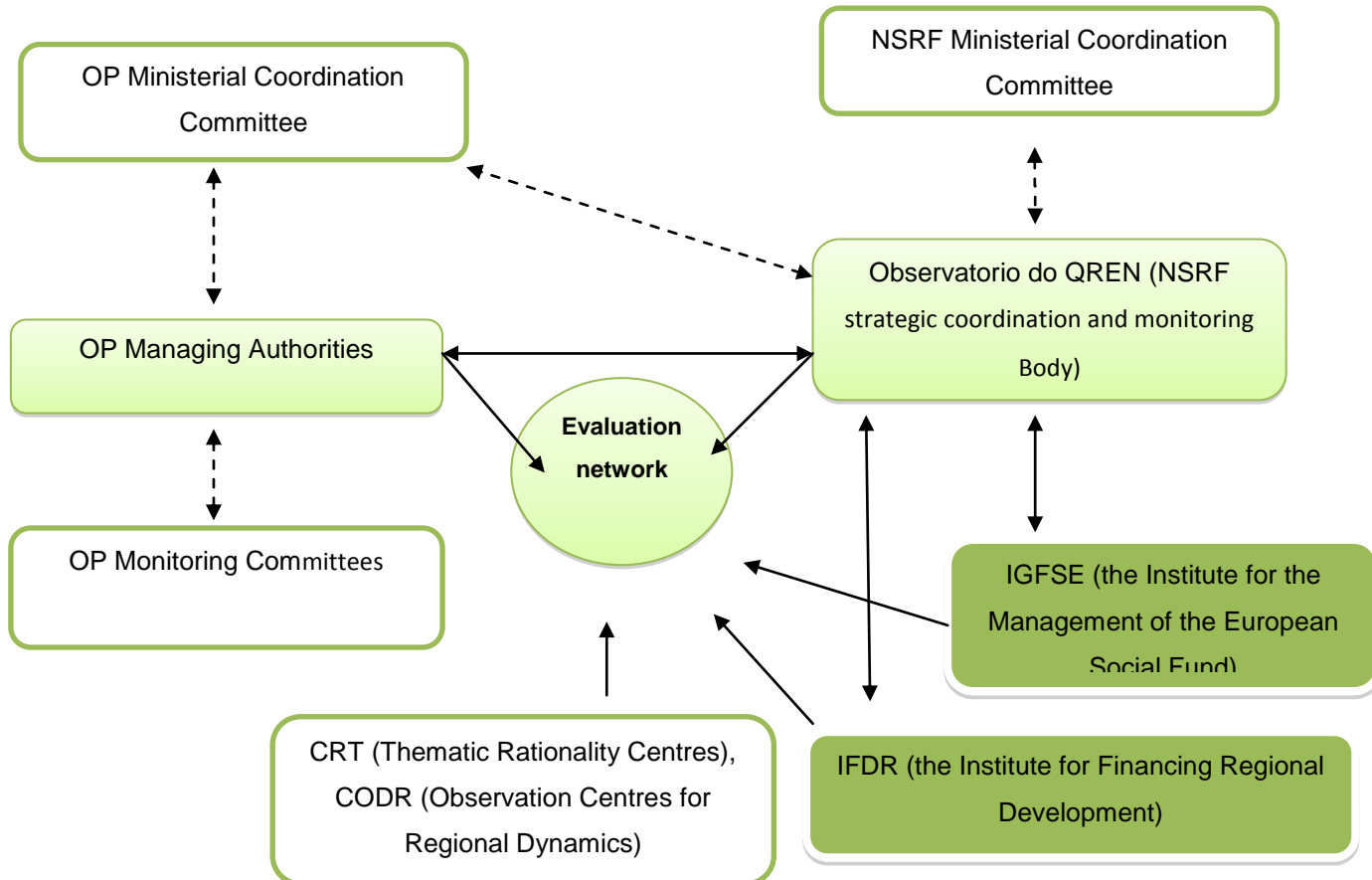
- entrepreneurship,
- human capital (esp. training, vocational education),
- education infrastructure,
- health infrastructure (but it has to be added that few hospitals were financed within the public-private partnership framework - PPP),
- environmental infrastructure,
- culture infrastructure.

As the transport infrastructure is concerned - the importance of EU funding has decreased in the last 10-15 years, since some of the most important investments have already been done in past programming periods, and also due to the growing popularity of the PPP in this sector. If the evaluation practice still develops solely within the CP it would be limited mainly to the areas mentioned above.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The chart below describes the organisation of the evaluation system for the CP in Portugal.

Figure 8. The organisation of the evaluation system for the CP in Portugal



Source: Based on Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2011f

The key player in the CP evaluation system in Portugal is Observatorio do QREN (Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2011b). Its role stems from both the regulations and practice. It coordinates the works of the whole evaluation network.

The Observatorio submits the *Overall Evaluation Plan for the NSRF and OPs 2007-2013 (OEP) (Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2009b)* and the technical specifications for the NSRF strategic evaluations or evaluations that cut across various OPs to the NSRF Ministerial Coordination Committee for approval. It also submits the technical specifications and reports of the OP strategic evaluations to the OP Ministerial Coordination Committee for approval. Besides, it is involved in all the evaluations undertaken within the *OEP*. It plays active role in every phase of evaluation process from planning, through preparing contract agreements and technical specifications (Terms of References, ToRs), selecting the evaluators, monitoring and management of

the studies realisation, assessment of the studies to follow-up and dissemination process. Currently five people are working in the Observatory within the research and evaluation unit.

There are also **twelve Managing Authorities of the OPs** – three at central level (for thematic OPs) and nine at regional (for the ROPs) responsible for initiative and implementation of the OP evaluations, both strategic and operational. They were established for the new perspective but on the ground of the structure for the previous perspective (in the 2000-2006 40 institutions were involved in the CP evaluation system). Those institutions are devoted exclusively to SF evaluations. Their potential (both in terms of quantity and quality) is not very high and the main problem is that the evaluation is not one of the MAs priorities – people dealing with the evaluation are also responsible for other tasks (mainly monitoring and reporting). Analysed institutions have taken part in the *Overall Evaluation Plan* preparation – they were proposing evaluation subjects.

The OP Monitoring Committees focus on the analysis of evaluation plans and results.

Two institutes, that is IGFSE – the Institute for the Management of the European Social Fund, and IFDR - the Institute for Financing Regional Development, are responsible for the overall operational evaluations of the respective funds (ESF and ERDF/CF) that cover more than just one OP.

CRTs (Thematic Rationality Centres) and CODRs (Observation Centres for Regional Dynamics) are involved mainly in the processes of the *OEP* elaboration and collecting the data.

The CP evaluation demand in terms of financial resources **in 2010** amounted to around **520 thousand EUR**.

There are two most common procedures used for contracting evaluation studies in Portugal:

- open tender,
- direct agreement (for contracts below 75 000 EUR).

Even in the case of the latter it is recommended by the Observatorio to choose between several entities using the quality criteria. Only in very specific cases (e.g. measuring macroeconomic impact of the EU funds) one entity is invited to negotiations. It is often public sector organisation.

There exists guidance on offers selecting criteria. The Observatorio prepared two guidance documents on evaluation process¹⁰¹ – one for the implementation of the evaluation plans for the NSRF and the Ops (**Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2009a**) and the other for mid-term evaluations of the NSRF and the OPs (**Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2010**). The latter document updates the first one on the basis of the 1st cycle of the 2007-2013 NSRF and OPs evaluations experience (those evaluations aimed mainly at the

¹⁰¹ The contents and role of those documents would be presented in the summary of this section.

operationalisation of the programmes by analysing the stages of notification, eligibility, selection, internal management, monitoring).

The updated version of the abovementioned guidelines assumes that **the price has 30% share in the offer selection. The other criteria focus on quality:**

- 20% of quality criteria – adequacy and coherence of the offer:
 - adequacy (as ToR is concerned),
 - internal coherence (scope, objectives, questions, methodology used to answer all questions, information sources, products, time framing and budget);
- 50% - methodological conception:
 - adequacy of strategy to answer all questions,
 - adequacy of operationalisation of the abovementioned strategy (it means – auxiliary questions, actors and sources of information, methods of collecting and analysing data),
 - adequacy of the objectives of all proposed methods of collecting data and their relevancy,
 - adequacy of sampling (its dimension and stratification when applicable),
 - adequacy of methods for analysing collected data,
 - adequacy of research secondary products;
- 15% - relevance and credibility of time framework and budget;
- 15% - level of stakeholders participation:
 - stakeholders participation within the process of the evaluation structuralisation phase (meaning deepening the methodology),
 - surveying/questioning the stakeholders within the process of collecting data,
 - stakeholders engagement in the process of results and recommendations validation,
 - diversity and innovation of stakeholders involvement strategies.

In the interviewees opinion, success with applying the abovementioned criteria lays in good reasoning during the assessment of the proposals.

The transparency of the offer appraisal system was assessed positively both by the Observatorio (in the analysis that aimed at summing up the contracting process and methodology applied within the 1st cycle of the 2007-2013 evaluations (**Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico**

Nacional 2011a) and by the representatives of the Evaluation Steering Committees for the 1st cycle of the 2007-2013 evaluations (they filled in questionnaire aimed at assessing the quality of: evaluation planning, selecting the contractors, methodology applied, results, recommendations and final reports). 100% responders assessed the criteria for offer selection as relevant to the evaluation objectives and 92% stated that the detailed selection criteria allowed the objective offers assessment (**Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2011b**).

To sum up, it could be stated that great effort has been taken by the Observatorio in order to enhance the capacity of the demand side of evaluation. This process consisted of:

- preparing very detailed guidelines for the evaluation process (from the contracts and ToRs provisions, through the strategies of monitoring and management of contracts, to assessing the reports quality, dissemination strategies and follow-up of the recommendations implementation),
- help at every stage of the evaluation process (the representative of the Observatorio took part in every activities concerning evaluation of the OPs),
- internal meta-evaluation of the 1st cycle of 2007-2013 evaluations.

It is also worth to emphasize that the described work is constant – the guidelines are updated by the Observatorio according to the experiences gathered both during the participation in the evaluation process and meta-analysis.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The supply side of the market consisted of **43 entities** during the **last 10 years**, while in 2010 8 institutions obtained evaluation contracts. As the 1st cycle of 2007-2013 evaluations is concerned, the Observatorio's conclusion is that the market response to evaluation call for proposals was very weak (only 15 institutions prepare the proposals) – 15 evaluations were realised by 6 entities (**Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2011a**). In the Observatorio's opinion it could have some advantages such as broad point of view (crossing of the information gathered), but on the other hand may result in entities' overload, poor quality of their work, tendency to use the same methodological approach and strengthening the dominant position on the market. Weak market response could stem from rather low evaluation budgets.

The evaluators are national and mainly of consultancy type. Earlier also research institutes or academics were involved in the process, but they do not appear any more in evaluation calls for proposals. It stems from two things. First, during last 10 years the R+D sector has grown substantially in Portugal and as the money is bigger than in evaluation, research institutes are more engaged in this sector. Second thing is referred to academics – according to the 'publish or perish' rule they

need to focus on publishing rather than devoting to commissioned tasks. The Observatorio sees this problem but could not overcome it. But, on the other hand it should be mentioned that in those consultancy firms often work academics.

The contractors' potential is **quite satisfactory as the standard** (programme definition, implementation process, assessing first results) **evaluations are concerned** and **weak in the field of impact evaluations**.

They do have experience in the first type of evaluations, but if the commissioning agent is not active, they tend to do the least as possible. It means that the quality of report depends much on the quality of demand in the meaning of: ToR, realisation process monitoring, contract management and report approval. The problem on the public administration side within the process of evaluation management and monitoring lays in some cultural conditionings – the position of academics or specialists is really high in Portuguese society what means that their opinions is difficult to be questioned.

Another problem (laying on the evaluators side) is too much focus on collecting data. Collecting data was crucial at the beginning of the implementing of the EU funds for 2007-2013, but at this stage it is already done, so the evaluators should concentrate more on analysing data and drawing conclusions.

To sum up, there is still much job to be done to enhance the capacity of supply side, both in terms of the quantity and quality.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

68 evaluations studies were conducted during **last 10 years** (and 19 in 2010). They were external evaluations. As the evaluation type is concerned there were ex-ante, on-going and impact (mid-term updates) ones. The topics varied from infrastructure, through HR and entrepreneurship, to horizontal issues. Their scope covered national and regional levels as well as programmes, its parts and horizontal levels. In terms of costs they could be considered as average evaluations (big in Portugal would be above 100 000 EUR) ranging from 50 000 EUR to 75 000 EUR. The NSRF evaluations were estimated higher, it is for about 100 000 EUR, and the mid-term exercises for 150 000 EUR.

As the **evaluation reports quality** is concerned, it is assessed **satisfactory**, but some flaws are identified.

Firstly, the methodology applied confines to standard toolkit. The Observatorio's summary of the 1st cycle of evaluations identified 5 basic ways of collecting the data (that are individual interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, desk research on documents and statistics). It is going to be improved as in the Observatorio's guidelines for the mid-term evaluations one of the required methodology is quasi-experimental one. (**Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2011a**)

According to the Evaluation Steering Committees representatives questioned by the Observatorio, the methodology applied so far is not innovative (**Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2011b**).

It might stem from the lack of the offer selection criterion focusing solely on the level of methodology innovation and lack of separate criterion on methodology for analysing data.

Secondly, there is a problem with reasoning of the evaluation results and recommendations. According to the Evaluation Steering Committees representatives questioned by the Observatorio:

- the conclusions were only partially supported by evidence from collecting and analysing the data (45% of responders),
- the recommendations were partially comprehensible as the way of application is considered (40%) or not comprehensible at all (6%),
- the conclusions drawn from data collection and analysis were partially relevant (40%).

Such opinions must worry when the final report assessment criteria are known to the evaluators. The criteria are integrated part of the ToR and clearly underline the assessed elements, inter alia such as:

- grounds of the conclusions – should be supported by the data collected and analysed,
- relevance of the conclusions,
- feasibility of the recommendations.

In order to deepen the evaluation quality assessment **the Observatorio plans to conduct the external meta-evaluation study.**

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The Observatorio's page (**Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2011b**) is a platform for sharing evaluation resources and practices. There is information on:

- organisation of evaluation process in 2007-2013,
- evaluation plans for the NSRF and OPs,
- evaluation network meetings,
- guidelines for: implementation of evaluation plans, updating the evaluation plans, selecting the evaluators, evaluation reports assessment,
- summary of the evaluations of the first stage of NSRF implementation,
- results of the questionnaire filled in by the stakeholders of the evaluations of the first stage of the NSRF implementation,

- evaluation reports,
- EVALSED guidelines updated and translated into Portuguese,
- links on evaluation sites,
- evaluation events across the world.

The site is of good quality, contains needed information and is very transparent and easy to navigate.

Also the Observatorio's activities focused on building capacity of the demand side of evaluation (described in the section on demand side) need to be valued very high. But it needs to be underlined that these actions are foreseen for very narrow group of people involved directly in the NSRF evaluation process. And there is still need to create the opportunities for evaluation training/learning for broader group of people (evaluation stakeholders, decision makers, etc.).

Currently the opportunities for deepening evaluation knowledge are not sufficient (no post-graduate study programmes on evaluation are available). Few trainings were organised (or co-organised) by the Observatorio. More activities, esp. in the field of impact evaluations, are in plans, but those plans are in jeopardy because of the financial restrictions. The National Institute for Public Administration (port. INA) organises some courses with evaluation modules (e.g. Planning, implementation and evaluation of public policies) and a 30hours course dedicated to evaluation of socio-economic interventions (introduction part consists of: evaluation practice state of art, evaluation types, evaluation concepts and practice problems; methodological basis: scope and timing of evaluation, utilization and target groups, stakeholders, dissemination, evaluation process and methods; evaluation process: strategic analysis of the intervention, evaluation questions, references, evaluation model, data collection and analysis, assessment and formulation of recommendations, quality of evaluation reports and process; evaluation toolkit – analysis of basic quantitative and qualitative instruments; case studies). There exists the Portuguese Evaluation Society (port. Associação Portuguesa de Avaliação, <http://www.avalportugal.org/>). It was established in 2009 and it has not been very active so far.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There exists Guidance on the evaluation follow-up process (**Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2011c**). First part is devoted to the strategy of addressing the recommendations and suggests to follow such stages:

- preparation of the document with the responses to the recommendations comprising of:
 - the information whether the recommendation is accepted, partially accepted or rejected;
 - the rejection or partially acceptance justification,
 - the description of the ways of implementing in case of accepted or partially accepted recommendations,
 - the status of implementation (implemented/in the course of implementation);
- plan for implementation of the recommendations comprising of:
 - actions to be undertaken,
 - timing,
 - financial budget and/or other resources needed,
 - body responsible;
 - inclusion information of the status of evaluation recommendations implementation in the Annual Implementation Reports on the OP.

Second part of the guidelines refers to the dissemination strategy and comprises of:

- publishing the reports with executive summaries on the websites,
- publishing the documents with the responses to the recommendations on the websites,
- presenting the evaluation results and information on the status of recommendations implementation during the Monitoring Committees,
- letters of acknowledgment, sending the information on the evaluation results and recommendations implementation to all the evaluation stakeholders (also to the people interviewed and questioned),
- presenting the evaluation results and recommendations implementation during the annual conferences on the OPs,

- mailing actions,
- articles in the newsletter and/or bulletins,
- conferences, seminars and peer review sessions,
- press notes,
- references in discussions, publications.

Evaluation reports could be found on the Observatorio webpage, but there are no documents of recommendation implementation. To sum up the 1st cycle of 2007-2013 evaluations the Observatorio prepared also the synthesis report which is also published on the website **(Observatório do Quadro de Referência Estratégico Nacional 2011b)**.

As it was stated in the section on evaluation culture in Portugal, the evaluation target group and at the same time – main readers, are the SF implementation stakeholders. Politicians, media or public opinion are interested in evaluation only to a very limited extent.

As the evaluation utilisation is concerned interviewees underlined that besides the standard evaluation usefulness determinants (right timing, demand, conclusions based on researches, realistic and feasible recommendations) there is also another factor that affects its utilization – well balanced (taking into account also the issues of evaluators independent opinions and external point of view) level of trust between the commissioner agent and contractor.

To enhance the usefulness and utilisation of evaluation, capacity building activities are needed.

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Romania

Iryna Kravchuk

Context of the Cohesion Policy Evaluation System

Currently, the European funds absorption represents an opportunity for economic development of Romania, where their utilization would mean a yearly capital inflow that is 5% of GDP. Direct and substantial contribution that the Cohesion Policy is expected to bring to the modernization and rapid development of Romania, and to achieve real convergence with the rest of the EU, as already happened in New Member States that joined the EU in 2004.

National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 (NSRF) that is main programming document in this area has aim to strengthen the strategic focus of Romania's Economic and Social Cohesion Policies and to make the correct and appropriate linkages to the European Union policies, notably the Lisbon Strategy, which builds policies for economic growth and the creation of jobs (**Government of Romania 2007**).

During the programming period 2007-2013, Romania implements the NSRF, by means of 7 Operational Programmes, under the Convergence Objective:

- Sectoral Operational Programme Transport (SOP Ttransport).
- Sectoral Operational Programme Environment (SOP Environment).
- Sectoral Operational Programme Increase of Economic Competitiveness (SOP IEC)
- Regional Operational Programme (ROP).
- Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD).
- Operational Programme Technical Assistance (OP TA).
- Operational Programme Developing the Administrative Capacity (OP DAC).

The overall Structural and Cohesion Funds allocation for Romania is 19.668 bn Euro of which 12.661 bn Euro represent Structural Funds under the Convergence Objective, 6.552 bn Euro are allocated under the Cohesion Fund and 0.455 bn Euro under the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Objective (including transfers to the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance – IPA, and to the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument - ENPI). A national co-financing in amount of 5.6 billion Euro is added.

Introduction of the PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD programmes, and the associated conditionality with this funding created demand for evaluation (**Knott 2007**). After EU accession Cohesion Policy in Romania actually triggered the evaluation practice through the regulatory implementation of NSRF and Operational Programmes. Unfortunately, until now, the evaluation of the Cohesion Policy programmes didn't create an impulse for the evaluation of national policies. Evaluation is a mandatory function of System of Structural Instruments (SIS) required by the EC, primarily by means of EC Regulation 1083/2006. This requirement is taken over by the national legislation through Government Decree 457/2008. The observance of the European dispositions is further included in the NSRF and the individual OPs.

Development of evaluation in Romania was top-down process in centralized administration context (**Mihalache, 2010: 323**). The evaluation practices in Romania are still limited to the operational programmes and its results haven't been used for public debates. However number of efforts were taken to enhance evaluation capacity of number of institutions. Phare-supported project (RO2003/005-551.02.03 *Improving the capacity for analysis macro-economic forecast and preparation of economic policies*) went beyond the improvement of planning and covered the topics of ex-ante impact assessment, ex-ante evaluation, monitoring and ex-post evaluation. Parliament was another recipient of a Phare-funded project (RO2003/005-551.03.02 *Strengthening the administrative capacity of the Romanian Parliament*), aimed at improving Parliament's administrative capacity, with a focus on supporting the establishment of a mechanism to conduct *ex-ante* impact assessment for new legislation. Building Administrative Capacity Operational Programme under the 2007-2013 NSRF is aimed at assisting the development of evaluation capacity in the public administration.

Evaluations in other policy domains are very rare. As regard the interventions financed from national resources, evaluation practices, particularly at local level is in an early stage. Local institutions rarely allocate a special budget for evaluation activities. Romanian Parliament has reporting and control functions relating to Government activities, but it has not as yet developed a practice of calling on external providers to perform evaluation services. "Reporting culture predominates in the Romanian administration. The type of data covered in reporting is primarily financial, as financial audits are the prevailing form of evaluation currently practiced within the administration." There is activity with regard to appraisal, monitoring and assessment within the governmental apparatus, but the only real demand for evaluation, as understood in a wider programme management context, has so far come from outside the Romanian administration, i.e. from foreign donors." (**Mihalache, 2010: 323**). Evaluations are perceived as mere obligation, reports are not made available to public, politicians are afraid of criticism on the side of media. (**Mihalache, 2010: 323**). Another obstacle to development of evaluation culture in Romania is that in policy making process has traditionally been dominated by a

legislative approach with poor linkage to the budgetary process, a rather reduced role for civil servants and insufficient skills in areas such as impact assessment and financial analysis (**General Secretariat to the Government 2006**).

In spite of many deficiencies the push for evaluation was being driven by a number of different actors: the General Secretariat of the Government (in a bid to improve the public planning policy process); the Ministry of Public Finance (in order to implement the Single Action Plan); the Ministry for Administration and Interior (through the proposed Building Administrative Capacity OP); the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (looking to improve economic forecasting and planning); the Parliament (looking to improve the ex-ante analysis of legislation), and finally the Supreme Audit body (Court of Accounts) (looking to expand its role from purely financial auditing to a performance audit role including evaluation questions) (**Curley & Perianu 2006**).

There is also a number of studies on evaluation capacity-development in Romania that are worth mentioning:

- Evaluation capacity development and institutional reform in Romania by UNDP (**Wiesner 2002**). This study considers evaluation principles and instruments in linkage and interdependency with macroeconomic policy reform; structural and sectoral restructuring; results-based budget management and institutional economics;
- Assessment of the Evaluation Culture in Romania (**Curley & Perianu 2006**) (Phare funded project) that contained assessment of evaluation culture in Romania and sketched out the basis for drafting National Evaluation Strategy.
- Report on Romania Case Study / EStep, Final report on the framework to analyze the development of evaluations capacity in the EU member states, 2007 (**EStep 2007**).

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The evaluation of EU-funded programmes has been operational in Romania for more than 15 years. The EU-funded pre-accession programmes Phare, ISPA and SAPARD had well established co-ordination, implementation and evaluation mechanisms. The monitoring process for Phare, ISPA and SAPARD were managed by Romanian structures, while their external evaluation (interim and ex-post) with the exception of the SAPARD Programme were contracted and managed by the Commission Services in Brussels. After Romania is granted the EDIS (Extended Decentralised Implementation System) accreditation, the management of the Phare Interim Evaluation Scheme was over by the Evaluation Central Unit set up in the Managing Authority for Community Support Framework at the Ministry of Finance **(Curley & Perianu 2006)**.

In 2005, the Ministry of Public Finance adopted a Single Action Plan aiming at improving the management systems for the operation of the EU funds in Romania (pre-accession funds and structural instruments). One of the Single Action Plan's eight specific objectives was to establish a "National Evaluation System," which includes five tasks:

- Elaboration of a National Evaluation Strategy and subsequent actions plans;
- Implementation of the Action Plan for taking over Interim Evaluation (IE) of the Phare Programme;
- Implementation of an Action Plan for establishing the National Evaluation System.
- Implementation of an Action Plan for Raising Awareness on Evaluation;
- Implementation of an Action Plan for Development of Local Evaluation Capacity (within private market) **(Curley & Perianu 2006)**.

Ministry of Economy and Finance in November 2006 launched National Evaluation Strategy 2007-2013. In general terms, the Strategy outlines a pathway intended to lead to a common, integrated approach to evaluation of all public interventions in Romania, whether funded by the EU or the national budget by 2013 **(EStep 2007)**.

Structural Instruments Evaluation System (SIES) in its current form has been defined, put in place and has been operating in Romania since 2007 only. The first evaluation exercises were actually carried out no sooner than 2009. SIES is therefore a relatively new system.

Starting with 2007, when Romania became a Member State of the EU, there are 7 public institutions acting as Authority for Coordination of Structural Instruments and Managing Authorities (MA), each of them being responsible with commissioning evaluations of Cohesion Policy programmes.

The key players are the following:

- General Secretariat of Romanian Government, Authority for Coordination the Structural Instruments;
- Ministry of Economy, Trade and Business Environment for Structural Operational Programme (SOP) Increasing the Economic Competitiveness (IEC);
- Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure for SOP Transport;
- Ministry of Environment and Forest for SOP Environment,
- Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Security for SOP Human Resources Development (HRD);
- Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs for Operational Program (OP) Development of Administrative Capacity (DAC);
- Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism for Regional Operational Programme (ROP1).

The Authority for Coordination of Structural Instruments (ACSI), through Evaluation Central Unit (ECU), is in charge with the NSRF evaluation. During the period 2008-2010 ACSI was responsible for the Phare interim evaluation. As the MA OP Technical Assistance (TA) is organised as department in the ACSI, the evaluation function of this programme is taken over by the Evaluation Central Unit. ECU fulfils a coordination role, extended to planning, designing and implementing evaluations, as well as monitoring/follow up on implementation of evaluation recommendations. ECU is also the evaluation unit for OPTA and NSRF. ECU has playing a significant role in the process of SIES coordination and in providing support to the other actors of the system.

The Government Ordinance 26/2011 places the Authority for Coordination of Structural Instruments (ACSI), as well as OPTA Managing Authority, under the authority of the Prime Minister, as part of the Government Work System. Before that Evaluation Central Unit was located in the Managing Authority for Community Support Framework (Ministry of Finance). It is worth noting, therefore, that the Evaluation Central Unit has no role in evaluating either the SAPARD or ISPA pre-accession programmes (**Curley & Perianu 2006**).

An Evaluation Working Group was set up in 2006 (**Ministry of Finance 2006**) with members from all of the evaluation units with roles in coordinating the evaluation of SIS, sharing best practices, reaching common understanding and agreement on evaluation issues and ensuring a common framework across the evaluation function. The role of the Evaluation Working Group (EWG) is described by its mandate, a document issued in 2006 (**Ministry of Finance 2006**). One of the EWG functions is to provide broad strategic guidance to all MA evaluation units in performance of their duties. The EWG is also providing the opportunity for sharing best practices and exchanging ideas for a better management of evaluations. The EWG website that has just been implemented provides an

excellent opportunity for this working group to coordinate the individual evaluation exercises, share expertise and best practices, as well as for awareness raising to the general public.

Each of the Operational Programmes is implemented by a Managing Authority, in some cases assisted by Intermediate Bodies as established by the Government Decision 457/2008 and the Government Emergency Ordinance 26/2011, which set the institutional framework for the management and coordination of the Structural Instruments. All the Managing Authorities and ACIS are organised at central level, as Directorates in the line ministries.

The main bodies in charge with managing the evaluation function are the evaluation units within the Managing Authorities, supported by the Evaluation Central Unit within the ACIS. The evaluation units are responsible with the planning, designing and commissioning the evaluations of the programme. Not only documentary evidence, but also the interviews have revealed that these structures are proactive in the field, having also gained a significant level of expertise during the first OP interim evaluations they have managed (**Vladescu 2011**). The evaluation function is often combined with related function such as programming or monitoring. The Evaluation Units are located within their respective MA as follows:

Table 13 Evaluation Units in Romania

No.	OP	Evaluation Unit	No. of staff	Notes
1	NSRF	ECU	6	The unit is separated from other units
2	OPTA	ECU		
3	DAC	Evaluation Unit	2, of which 1 is effectively working in the Evaluation Unit, the other is temporarily working in Brussels	The unit is separated from other units
4	ROP	Evaluation Unit	6 of which 2 are temporary vacant	The unit is separated from other units
5	IEC	Monitoring and Evaluation Unit	5	The evaluation unit is not separated from the monitoring unit
6	HRD	Programming and Evaluation Unit	4 of which 1 is temporary vacant and 1 is dealing with programming (this person was employed as of February 2011)	The evaluation unit is not separated from the programming unit
7	Transport	Evaluation and Communication	1	Evaluation is not separated from communication
8	Environment	Programming and Evaluation	2	The evaluation unit is not separated from the programming unit; moreover, staff is also dealing with project selection
9	ETC	Evaluation	2	Evaluation is not separated from other support functions provided to MAs. Staff is also dealing with other tasks.

Source: Table provided by Evaluation Central Unit, General Secretariat of Romanian Government, Authority for Coordination the Structural Instruments

Within each of the MA an Evaluation Steering Committee is set up, with the main role of steering the activities and results of the evaluation process¹⁰²

Several other bodies play an active role in the evaluation process. In effect, all of the bodies that are involved in managing the OP are also involved in its evaluation process – that is, the departments within the MA, Intermediary Bodies, other ministry departments outside the MA, Public procurement units, which provide procurement framework for commissioning evaluations;

¹⁰² In the case of HRD SOP, the role of the ESC is only to support the evaluation process, with no approval function

Departments ensuring the funding for evaluation exercises, as well as the administrative conformity in implementing evaluation projects.

For every OP, two main forums exist where evaluation and its results are discussed and approved – the Evaluation Steering Committee within the MA and the OP Monitoring Committee (MC). MC supervises OP, approves the evaluation plans for OP, approves recommendations of the evaluation exercises¹⁰³, as well as monitors their implementation. MC may request *ad-hoc* evaluations to be carried out and, for some but not all the OP. At NSRF level, a National Coordination Committee fulfils the supervision role¹⁰⁴.

The System of Structural Instruments financially supports the evaluation functions from TA PAs appropriations allocated for evaluations and through OPTA respectively. SIES is an integral part of SIS: evaluation units are included in the MAs' organisational charts, staff is paid for from the MA budget, funds for performing evaluations is provided by the TA PAs. The evaluation units are beneficiaries of the TA PAs, ECU is beneficiary of OPTA PA1. Formal applications for funding have to be submitted in order to obtain the needed budget for performing an external evaluation. One indication was given that the TA application for funding procedure is tedious and it produces delays.

According to the Government Emergency Ordinance 34/2006 regarding the award of the public procurement contracts, there are following types of procurement procedure in Romania: open procedure, restricted procedure, competitive dialogue, negotiation, request for tenders. The evaluation is contracted as services contract and no particular guidance or standard system was drafted. The most common awarding selection criterion is the most advantageous tender from economic point of view.

It should be noted that, the more complex the evaluation contract, the longer the duration of tendering procedure. Examples in this respect are: the contract "Carrying out evaluations during the implementation of the NSRF and OPTA", which included NSRF evaluation, OPTA evaluation, 1 Synthesis Report and 2 ad-hoc evaluations and was awarded in about 11 months, and the contract "First interim evaluation of SOP HRD", which included OP interim evaluation, 2 ad-hoc evaluations and development of administrative capacity in programme evaluation, and was awarded in about 7 months. By comparison, the contracts which focused on individual evaluations (interim, ad-hoc or thematic) were awarded in about 3 – 5 months.

¹⁰³ For some of the OPs (e.g. ROP, HRD SOP), the MC does not have a role in approving evaluation recommendations.

¹⁰⁴ The National Coordination Committee had not convened since 2008.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Approximate there are 15 companies (Romanian and international) independently or grouped in consortia that participated in tenders launched by the MAs and ACIS. In the last 2010 year approximate there were 12 companies (Romanian and international) that obtained evaluation contracts of operational programmes. These participated independently or grouped in consortia.

The local supply side is quite limited at this stage having very few professionals in the field of programme evaluation, most of the local experts having learned the trade through learning-by-doing. A previous TA project that has been implemented by ECU has provided training to a sample of consultants.

The level of participation in the tenders launched for carrying out operational programmes evaluation has demonstrated a high level of interest for such project from the supply side. Nevertheless, the profile of the companies participating in the tenders was merely consultancy, with rare cases when companies specialized in evaluation were attending.

In some cases, the academics were part of the expert teams proposed by the consulting companies. The demand side encourages through the tender documents the participation of highly skilled senior, international experts in the evaluation projects. Same level of encouragement could be beneficial for the local, less experienced, evaluation experts in order to be able to develop the local evaluation culture and, on medium to long term, to lower the costs of an evaluation contract.

Until now, the supply side has not been challenged. Romanian evaluators are on a training track, where foreign professionals bring international experience and provide on-the-job know-how transfer to local evaluators, in the case when teams of experts are mixed. Evaluation exercises requiring high professionalism (e.g. impact analysis) have never been on the agenda because of the limited progress of the SIS implementation. Summing up, we can state that the supply market is lagging behind the demand side of evaluation.

Considering the last set of intermediate and ad-hoc evaluations carried out a significant number of Romanian evaluators started to get experience in the field of Cohesion Policy programmes evaluation. They show a high rate of interest to get more specialized trainings/courses in this field of activity. The latter could be a reason to consider that the local supply side will develop in parallel with the increasing number of evaluation from the demand side.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion policy

According to the evaluation plans established for the period 2007 – 2013 by ACSI and the Managing Authorities, 11 evaluations of operational programmes have been carried out. All Operational Programmes under the Convergence Objective foresee two interim evaluations: one planned for the end of 2009 and one in 2012. The two programmes under the ETC Objectives, for which Romania has the responsibility of conducting evaluations, two interim evaluations are foreseen too, in 2008-2009 and 2012, respectively. The purpose of such interim evaluations would be to improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance and the strategy and implementation of the respective operational programme (but implementation lagging behind has limited the range of evaluation questions). Other types of evaluations are to be triggered by implementation management issues, or significant departures from the goals initially set. In terms of cross-cutting themes, evaluations are to be commissioned by ECU as the evaluation unit responsible for the NSRF evaluation.

In the last year, 10 evaluation studies of operational programmes have been carried out. The evaluation units within each MA, together with ACSI, decided to publish just the executive summary of the evaluation and not the entire report of evaluation. It was not organised a database of evaluation reports. The available materials are published on the web-pages www.evaluare-structurale.ro; <http://www.mfinante.ro/evaluare.html?pagina=evaluare> .

The largest proportion of evaluations is the intermediate evaluation related to all operational programmes. As Romania became a Member State of the EU in 2007 and 2007-2013 is the first programming period for Romania, so no ex-post assessments for the programme closure were performed yet. For this programming period the European Commission is responsible for this ex-post evaluation. There were carried out ex-ante evaluation for all the 7 OPs under Convergence objective and 11 interim and ad-hoc studies covered the current implementation process. All evaluations were carried out with external assistance.

What we may observe from the table (Annexed) that the smallest budget for evaluation is 82565,5 EURO (tender budget), and 69000 EURO (contract budget) (346,775.00 RON (tender budget), 289,800.00 RON (contract budget)) (Interim Evaluation of RO-BG Programme) and the largest tender budget is 1 508 500 EURO (6 335 700 RON) (First interim evaluation of HRD - SOP). The average tender budget is about 352 381 EURO (1 480 001,37 RON) and average contract budget is about 190 094 EURO (798 393, 84 RON) however there are number of evaluation above 476 190, 5 EURO (2 000 000) RON.

Quality of the evaluation reports is assessed by the Quality Assessment Grids (provided in the Evaluation Procedures Manual). They detail the standards which need to be followed in order to

have an evaluation report approved. All Terms of Reference (ToRs) on evaluation include this quality assessment grid so as the awarded evaluators can adhere to it by signing the contract. Although the existence of such a quality grid is welcomed by the commissioners of evaluations, their use seems to pose some practical problems such as: they are difficult to apply for draft versions, some of those who are required to fill it in avoid giving negative scoring as that implies justification, in some cases is only being filled in for the final version of the report without documenting the changes made during drafting/feedback period.

The quality grids are mostly filled in by the evaluation units staff, however of equal importance should be the grids filled in by the official users of the evaluations, this way assessing also if their needs were met by the evaluation reports. The use of quality standards for the evaluation reports should be promoted at the level of evaluation users as they ensure that the decision makers receive a product which they can really use.

In 2006 Evaluation Central Unit together with MA's Evaluation Units drafted the Evaluation Standards covering both the evaluation process, as well as the quality of the evaluation reports. The table in Anex number 2 shows the criteria that evaluation units use for quality assessment of the evaluation reports.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion policy

The Evaluation Central Unit within ACSI is constructing a webpage dedicated to the Structural Instruments evaluation. There is information related to evaluations events, executive summaries of the evaluation reports, information related to Cost and Benefit Analyses. Since 2006, ACSI and the MA's evaluation units meet on regular basis in the framework of Evaluation Working Group. The Evaluation Central Unit in order to raise the public awareness on evaluation has organised a series of Annual conferences in years 2006, 2008 and 2009.

ACSI has taken the lead role in the training management process for the evaluation units – both in what concerns identifying development needs, deciding training topics and actually organising training delivery. Most of the training attended by the evaluation units' personnel was therefore organised by the ACIS, while other training events took place within the evaluation projects themselves, Phare, twinning or other projects.

Currently, ECU is implementing the project "Development of the capacity for the evaluation units within the Managing Authorities and ACSI". One of the tasks in the project is the assessment of the structural instruments evaluation system and will propose a series of improvements of the evaluation system as well as some measures to increase the evaluation knowledge and expertise for civil servants within ACSI and MA's evaluation units.

Evaluation of European Public Policy and Programs is the first accredited program in Romania that are intended to train future experts in evaluating public policy and European programs. This program continues and develops the Project RO/2005/017-553.05.03 PHARE - Development of a Professional Evaluation Community in Romania, conducted by National School of Political and Administrative studies, together with Deloitte Romania. This master's program is equally intended for university graduates under Bologna (3 years) and those who have completed an undergraduate education course four years or more. The program gives them an opportunity to thoroughly study and improve their practical skills in the areas covered by the curriculum. Practical skills will be strengthened through activities with specialists in the country and abroad.

In the academic year 2011-2012, Department of International Relations and European Integration of the National School of Political and Administrative studies proposes masters program that includes assessment of EU Public Policies and Programs (2 years).

In spite of programs and trainings are provided by ECU and universities, experts conclude that “In Romania there is a ‘traditional’ gap between the labour market’s real needs and the way the education system responds to these needs. In terms of evaluation, this gap is due to a lack of dialogue between evaluation practitioners or institutions and the respective education services educating their future employees (both are in their infancy)” **(Mihalache, 2009: 473)**.

There is professional association of evaluators - Romanian Association of Evaluation was founded in 2008 (EvalRom) on the basis of evaluation network functioning since 2006. Number of members reached up to 30 in June 2011. EvalRom is open and flexible network dialogue between various professionals interested in assessment in Romania. The Association contributes to professional development; development of evaluation at national level; contributes to raising awareness for the importance of using evaluation as a tool in public management However, Roxana Mihalache, the head of EvalRom points out on number of challenges hindering networking of evaluators. There is lack of understanding what evaluation means, infancy of evaluation market, resistance to evaluations, reduced number of experienced practitioners capable of building a solid network, passive attitude of potential members” **(Mihalache, 2009: 473)**.

The Working Group for Evaluation (WGE) can be considered also as a “community of practice in evaluation gathering the evaluation managers within the Management Authorities of the Structural Funds in Romania.” But is not a open network for any external person interested in evaluation **(Mihalache, 2009: 473)**.

Effects of Evaluation System for Cohesion Policy

The NSRF evaluation results were disseminated during a live seminar organised on the website www.hotnews.ro. The participants in the seminar included the Project Director, the General Director of ACIS and representatives of civil society and specialised media. Beside the streaming video, the event was published on the website over one week after its completion. The debate generated more than 20 comments and questions from the public during the live-feed, with part of them addressed during the on-line seminar. The AITS (*Audience and Internet Traffic Study*) campaign report revealed very substantial display and viewings, indicating that the event benefited from over 2,500,000 displays and over 6,500 viewings. The executive summary of evaluation reports are published on the MAs web pages and on www.evaluare-structurale.ro

For most of the evaluation reports designed in 2010 (interim evaluations), the main readers of the evaluation report are the evaluation commissioners (evaluation units), the Evaluation Steering Committee and the Monitoring Committee representatives. Nevertheless, the outputs of the evaluation reports were considered by the managers of the MAs. In the case of NSRF evaluation, it was taken the decision to disseminate the evaluation outputs through an online seminar which created the opportunity to involve a larger target group (journalists or general public).

Nevertheless, the forum which is most often used to debrief the evaluation report and its recommendations is the Evaluation Steering Committee. In some half of the evaluation exercises performed in 2010, the recommendations were also presented to the Monitoring Committee, and more such presentations are foreseen for those of the MA who have not done so yet. Further on, the MC decides if a recommendation is accepted or not. Action plans resulting from the approved recommendations were prepared in most of the cases but not always updated throughout their implementation process, since only 2 interim evaluation exercises were completed early enough to allow subsequent follow-up of recommendations.

It is to be noticed that the content of the evaluation report is also dictating the main audience of the evaluation studies. Considering the fact that most of the evaluation exercises performed in Romania in 2010 were interim evaluations, the main audience of these reports were the managers of the concerned MAs, the evaluation units (commissioners of the evaluations and the representatives of the Evaluation Steering Committee/ MCs).

All Evaluation units within each MAs designed its own Evaluation Procedures Manual which sets out the steps of the entire process that aims to implement the recommendations of evaluation.

The objective of this stage is related to implementing the recommendations contained in the evaluation report, in such a way that the impact of this process is leading to achieving maximum benefits for the OP implementation. The outputs of this stage are the action plans to implement the

recommendations and the results of those can be seen as stemming from their actual implementation. Action plans were regularly prepared as an outcome of the debriefing meetings. Procedurally, the action plans follow the required template and are thus satisfying a quality element. Assessing their quality in terms of content is a complex exercise involving judgments of management competencies such as decision-making, system thinking, change management a.s.o.

As regards implementation of the action plans, only limited remarks can be made, as this process is still at an early stage. It is obvious that implementing the actions agreed at the debriefing meeting is a shared responsibility between those concerned by those actions. Each level of the OP management bears responsibility, as for any other of their usual actions and activities. Implementation of recommendations is part of usual management. Heads of departments within the MA are responsible for those actions that concern their departments, the head of the MA is responsible for the overall monitoring and co-ordination of the action plan a.s.o.

Making use of evaluation recommendations is not an easy exercise for the Romanian state authorities. It is the phase in the evaluation process that requires most brainstorming of all phases and significant abilities for synthetic thinking, much like the step of preparing evaluation questions. It is the most demanding in terms of managerial competences for organizational and process development, which is hard to achieve in environments that are heavily dominated by procedures and regulations. Efforts are tremendous to comply with a heavily regulated operational framework, little energy or room is left for process development, as for most of the recommendations there seems to always be some regulation or other constraint that prevents its implementation. The lesson here is that learning how to use recommendations is a process that takes a number of iterations (several completed evaluation exercises) before it can even begin.

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Slovakia

Martin Obuch

Context of the Cohesion Policy Evaluation System

Slovakia as one of very few European Union (EU) Member States did not have till 2010 its own domestic regional policy/strategy to coordinate interventions aimed at addressing regional problems. In May 2010, the National Strategy for Regional Development has been adopted by the Slovak government. Before, number of strategies and instruments had been in place, but missing the overarching coordination mechanism.

Strategic documents for management and implementation of Cohesion policy in the country are strongly sector-oriented. Financial support received under the EU regional policy represents an important source of funding for national policies. The financial allocation for the Slovakia in the programme period 2004-06 was 1.1 bil. EUR. In the current programme period 2007-13, the allocation has significantly increased to 11.36 bil. EUR¹⁰⁵, which compares approximately to size of one state budget. Recent studies show that EU funding has significant weight in financing the development activities. It is estimated that the overall EU and national “expenditure for development” in period 2004-06 was at 2,4% of GDP, whereas the EU funding counted for 1,5% of GDP. Looking at the annual average commitment appropriations of EU funding in 2007-13, EU Cohesion policy counts for 4.5% of GDP (in 2004 prices) **(EPRC & EUROREG 2010)**.

Before accession to EU, evaluation was not part of governance of national policies and programmes. Evaluation activities were performed exclusively within the framework of international aid programmes, particularly pre-accession programmes where the European Commission initiated evaluations. At this moment, the Cohesion policy is main public domain, in which evaluation is regularly performed. At the same time, the overall evaluation activity in relation to the Cohesion policy is rather low as only limited number of evaluations was carried out besides the obligatory ex-ante evaluations.

In 2010, provisions for monitoring and evaluation of public finance were introduced. Public finance management represent a new perspective field for evaluation in future as all budgetary programmes are supposed to be assessed in medium-term perspective. At this moment, the system is in a transitional period. The development of system for public finance monitoring and evaluation can not be attributed only to spill over effects of Cohesion policy. Monitoring and evaluation of the state

¹⁰⁵ ERDF, ESF, CF, EAFRD, EFF.

budget was natural step towards a performance oriented budgeting. The key challenge for effective evaluation of public finance seems to be a capacity of line ministries to manage and perform evaluations. Additionally, mechanisms for coordination between Cohesion policy and public finance evaluations seems to be missing.

Despite the existence of basic framework for evaluation of public policies at national level, evaluation has not become an integral part of policy design and management. There is a limited demand for evidence that could be generated by evaluation and could contribute to better design and management of policies and programmes. Most EU and domestic policies still focus on financial and operational aspects of implementation rather than on strategic and qualitative issues. Fluctuation of staff in charge of evaluation of Cohesion policy, especially in programme period 2004-06, also contributed to the fact that evaluation has not taken roots in the policy making yet. Stakeholders with a real potential to promote evaluation practice in the country have not realised the opportunities evaluation provide. Moreover, politicians and decision makers are not fully aware of purpose and use of evaluation. In conclusion, the potential of evaluation to effectively support policy design and management based on evidence has been used only to very limited extent. On the one hand, this reflects the approach to policy making and at the same time negatively influences the quality of management of policies financed from EU and national resources.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Evaluation in the Slovak Republic has been strongly linked with the financial assistance from EU. In the pre-accession phase, specific attention was given to regular assessment of PHARE programme according to pre-defined evaluation criteria. Till 2003, the European Commission was in charge of tendering, contracting and management of evaluations activities. Under the central management of evaluation of PHARE programme, selected consortium covered all beneficiary countries. With an introduction of the extended decentralised implementation system, tasks in field of evaluation were delegated to national authorities. After 2003, the Aid Coordination Unit located in the Office of Government of the Slovak Republic was in charge of interim evaluations of PHARE programme and Transition Facility.

Before the accession to EU, several alternatives for a placement and development of evaluation coordination unit for Cohesion policy were considered. Finally, the coordination of evaluation functions in 2004-06 was given to the Managing Authority for the Community Support Framework (MA CSF), which later transformed into the Central Coordination Authority (CCA). Besides the coordinating role, CCA carries out evaluations at level of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). At the level of operational programmes (OPs), only managing authority (MA) can initiate an evaluation of programme or its part. In context of Cohesion policy, 8 central state institutions have

been involved in contracting evaluation studies. These are, except for the Office of Government, line ministries which are basically responsible for design and implementation of national policies in the corresponding sector. Management of Structural Funds is only part of their agenda, however it represents important source of funding of national policies. The institutions are in principle well established and function for longer period of time. Organisational units responsible for implementation of Cohesion policy, including evaluation, were created only in 2003 or 2006. They are functionally separated from other units dealing with national policies.

CCA responsible for implementation of NSRF and the national system of management of Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund in period 2007-13, has very important role in the system of evaluation of Cohesion policy. Formally, it is supposed to carry out evaluations of NSRF, coordinate evaluation activities at NSRF and OP level as well as provide methodological guidance to stakeholders involved in evaluation. So far, the priority has been placed on the development of a basic framework for evaluation of Cohesion policy.

In 2007-13, MAs carried out limited number of operative evaluations, specifically oriented on the management and implementation system. Most of evaluations were carried out (started) in year 2010, in total 21 evaluations of operational programmes (**Reference 2**). As a matter of fact, all institutions with evaluation function in relation to Cohesion policy performed at least one evaluation in 2010. There was rather high share of internal evaluations on the total number of evaluation activities performed in 2010 (8 internal evaluations). The amount of financial resources actually spent on all external evaluations was approximately 160.000 EUR including VAT. The average budget spent for a single evaluation in 2010 was more around 12.000 EUR.

Budget allocation primarily determines the way an evaluation is tendered. Practically all evaluations carried out in current programme period were operative evaluations under 30.000 EUR. Till the end of 2010, this amount was a threshold for contracts with low value. Therefore, MAs could apply a simplified procurement procedure - market survey. In principle, they had to invite at least three economic operators to submit an offer. In terms of selection criteria used for selection of offers for evaluation studies; the situation in the Slovak Republic is very peculiar. The only criterion for selection of offers is the lowest price, while the quality of offers (methodology) is not assessed at all. This approach can sometimes produce substantial financial savings, but at the same time seriously endangers the quality of evaluations. The act on public procurement provides the basic framework for contracting evaluations. By now, there is no standard system or guidance for relevant institutions how to organise public procurement specifically for evaluation services.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In Slovakia, start of evaluation activities is strongly connected with implementation of pre-accession instruments, particularly PHARE programme. Evaluations centrally managed by the Commission were led by international experts with relevant experience and know-how in the domain. Limited number of local experts, after receiving initial training, participated in the evaluation activities and gained some practical experience. After decentralisation of the implementation system of PHARE and during the implementation of the Transitions Facility, the ongoing evaluations were performed mainly by local companies. Some local experts with experience from PHARE evaluations entered the market with their own companies and some were contracted as experts on project basis. In summary, there were 7 companies involved in evaluation of PHARE and the Transition Facility, out of which 3 were local firms.

Due to limited supply on local market, it was necessary to include international evaluation providers in ex-ante evaluations for the preparation for 2004-06 period. Gradually, the market was overtaken by local companies. The main barriers for foreign companies specialised in evaluation to enter the Slovak market were selection criteria neglecting the quality of offers and restricted budgets for evaluations. During the first programming period, companies with previous experience from PHARE or Transition Facility had a strong competitive advantage. Gradually, the increased evaluation activity (although overall not high) attracted other companies to enter the market. These were mainly consultancy companies with no previous experience in evaluation or social research.

At this moment, we estimate that there are approximately 20 companies and institutions that have carried out at least one evaluation study in the framework of Cohesion policy. In principle, they are private companies operating in Slovakia. The only exception is the Slovak Academy of Sciences, which executed the ex-ante evaluation of NSRF in cooperation with a foreign partner. In 2010, there were up to 10 firms contracted to carry out an evaluation of operational programmes. Taking into account relatively small number of Cohesion policy evaluations commissioned, the market is very fragmented. The current situation has implications on possibilities for specialisation of evaluation providers and overall quality of supply side.

Development on supply side reflects into considerable extent the role of evaluation in the Cohesion policy context and situation on demand side. It is important to emphasise that evaluation activities are in general performed according to evaluation plans drafted in 2008 when capacity of MAs in the field was critically low.

By now, the evaluations during programme period were mostly short-term activities addressing operational issues rather than systematic function supporting the strategic management of programmes. From this point of view, evaluation providers have been able to respond to MAs

requirements as they primarily concerned the implementation system and absorption capacity. Services delivered within the evaluation contracts were predominantly management services that did not require in depth knowledge in evaluation. The core business for majority of companies involved in the evaluation of Cohesion policy is management and consultancy for development and implementation of Structural Funds projects. There are very few private companies trying to systematically work and build their own capacities in the field of evaluation. However, due to high competition on local evaluation market they are forced to diversify their activities in order to survive. Specificities of the evaluation market in the Slovak Republic undermine professional development on the supply side. Consequently, firms involved in evaluation of Cohesion policy are in principle able to satisfy needs of managing authorities related to operational issues, but do not have capacities to undertake evaluations based on advanced research methods. Evaluation of Cohesion policy effects will require experience and know-how of research institutions and academia. This type of institutions was not involved in Cohesion policy evaluation¹⁰⁶ since impact evaluations were not initiated yet.

Because of low profile of evaluation in 2004-06 period and high fluctuation of staff, including evaluation managers it was necessary to set up practically new framework for evaluation of Cohesion policy. At the beginning of programme period 2007-13, there was very little experience and know-how to build upon. Compared to pre-accession phase and 2004-06 period, currently there are more evaluation activities performed by more evaluation contractors involved. Higher quantity of evaluations and competition did not lead to higher quality of evaluation studies carried out. From the quality point of view, the supply side is stagnating partly due to purpose and scope of evaluations defined by MAs and methods employed by evaluation providers.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Institutions responsible for management of PHARE programme and Transition Facility concluded 10 interim and ex-post evaluations in last 10 years. In the context of Cohesion policy, we can identify two types of evaluations. The first group consists of obligatory evaluation activities defined in EU regulations having standardised purpose and focus. These are ex-ante evaluations that were carried out during the programming of 2004-06 and 2007-13 periods. In the process of preparation for EU accession, Slovakia benefited also from technical assistance for programming and ex-ante evaluations. In the shortened programme period, one evaluation was carried out for each operational programme funded from ERDF or ESF. Additionally, there was evaluation of the National Development Plan. This makes in total 7 ex-ante evaluations for 2004-06. Similar approach was taken in 2007-13 programme period, when Slovakia opted for separate ex-ante evaluation for all 11

¹⁰⁶ The exception is the Slovak Academy of Science, which executed the Ex-ante evaluation of the National Strategic Reference Framework.

programmes. Above the requirements defined in the regulation, ex-ante evaluation of the NSRF was conducted. In summary, 19 ex-ante evaluations of Cohesion policy programmes were carried out.

For the Slovak Republic as new EU Member State, there was no specific requirement in terms of timing, purpose and focus of evaluation studies during the programme periods. In general, it has been up to responsible institutions to decide what and when to evaluate. As a matter of fact, most evaluations in 2004-06 took a place in final stage of implementation of OPs (after 2007). We identified about 20 evaluation studies related to implementation of Structural Funds. Formally, no ex-post evaluations were initiated. However, MA for CSF in 2008 commissioned 3 evaluations officially labelled “ongoing”, which made some attempt to summarise the experience from the first programme period¹⁰⁷.

In the programme period 2007-13, the performance of managing authorities in the field of evaluation has been balanced, but overall limited. MAs completed in average 2 evaluations per a programme as by the end of 2010 the CCA registered 23 evaluations. Most studies had an operative character. In general, they focused on assessment of following aspects: financial and physical progress, system of management and implementation and appraisal of programme and project indicators¹⁰⁸. Within the framework of Cohesion policy, there was in total performed 16 evaluations in the year 2010.

Ex-ante evaluations were in both programme periods delivered exclusively by external evaluation teams. While external ongoing evaluation of programmes was preferred in the first programme period, in 2007-13 there is significant share of internal evaluations. This fact is worth of notion as indicative financial allocations for evaluations increased substantially in 2007-13. At the same time managing authorities had no previous experience in doing evaluations internally.

Studies are traditionally carried out at the level of programme. No cross-programme studies focusing on specific theme were commissioned so far, however few are foreseen at level of NSRF. Since the purpose and focus of ongoing evaluations has not changed significantly compared to 2004-06, evaluators still employ very similar methods. The most often used are: analysis of secondary data, interview and survey. No demand for evaluations serving enhancement of accountability and gaining new knowledge made application of advanced methods and experimental designs irrelevant. Despite the fact that financial resources initially earmarked for evaluation activities in 2007-13 were substantially higher, average size of a contract compared to 2004-06 is smaller. Moreover, share of internal evaluations, which represent no costs for commissioning bodies increased visibly in last 12

¹⁰⁷ Impact evaluation of Structural Funds on NUTS II and NUTS III regions, Evaluation of Structural Funds management and implementation system and system of indicators, Impact evaluation of measures with higher co-financing rate from Structural Funds on Roma marginalized communities.

¹⁰⁸ Additionally, coordinators of horizontal priorities in 2007-13 have undertaken up to 10, mostly internal, evaluations.

months. Consequently, any evaluation with initial allocation above 30.000 EUR is in the given context considered a bigger one. On the other hand, price offers of evaluation providers are usually well below original allocations as the lowest price is only selection criterion.

According to the Methodological Guideline no. 5 on Content of evaluation plan issued by the Central Coordination Authority, an evaluation plan must include quality standards for evaluation. The standards are based on the European Commission evaluation standards, defining standards for process of evaluation and evaluation report.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The basic framework for evaluation of Cohesion policy has been set up only in 2008. It concentrates on division of competences and procedural aspects of evaluation activities and establishes the Central Committee for Evaluation. Its main role is to act as an advisory body for CCA for evaluation activities. The responsibilities of the Committee include discussions on problems related to evaluation of NSRF, OPs and horizontal priorities as well as cooperation on evaluation related matters. Although not specifically created to serve as a platform for sharing evaluation resources or practices, it has a potential to support networking between relevant stakeholders represented in the Committee. In practice, the Central Committee for Evaluation was established, but never had a chance to meet.

CCA, which is responsible for coordination of evaluation activities and provision of methodological guidance, collects and publishes selected information on evaluation of Cohesion policy. On annual basis, the Monitoring and Evaluation Units updates its evaluation plan and elaborates summary report on evaluation activities at NSRF, OP and horizontal priorities level. These documents are published on the NSRF official web site (www.nsrr.sk), in the sub-section dedicated specifically to evaluation. The sub-section offers official documents, guidelines and reports from NSRF evaluations. At this moment, the web site only partly supports sharing experience and know-how. It does not provide links to reports from OP evaluations or other resources, therefore is of limited added value. Activities to facilitate sharing evaluation resources and practices seem to be limited in scope and active involvement of relevant stakeholders.

There are different approaches to increasing knowledge and capacities of staff responsible for evaluation of Cohesion policy. At the level of NSRF, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit staff is able to participate at training courses on organised abroad. In contrary, OP evaluation managers had very limited opportunities to benefit from specialised training. Some took a part in training abroad, some attended international conferences and some participated in ad-hoc training sessions in the country.

Currently, there are no opportunities for continuous deepening evaluation knowledge and expertise for civil servants in Slovakia¹⁰⁹.

Public institutions did not contribute to building evaluation culture by organising thematic events, commissioning of specialised studies or development of new methodologies. Two evaluation societies, established in 2007, are functioning in the Slovak Republic¹¹⁰. In general, their activities focus on promotion of evaluation culture in the country. Therefore, their activities can be considered relevant also for Cohesion policy. Moreover, institutions and individual responsible for evaluation of Cohesion policy represent one of key target groups for societies. Number of activities performed by the societies is rather limited; therefore have only some effects on building evaluation culture in the country.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Limited experience in the field of evaluation influenced also the way results of Cohesion policy evaluation were presented and communicated. In the programme period 2004-06, minority of reports was made available immediately after the completion of evaluations. Usually, it took several months to publish an evaluation report, but not all reports were made available. In 2007-13, the overall approach to dissemination of evaluation findings has positively changed. MAs often inform about completion of evaluation studies on their official web sites, in the news section. The information includes a direct link to the report. So, interested professional and wider public can access evaluation report anytime. The only exceptions seem to be outcomes of internal evaluations, which are often not available. Additionally, MAs actively communicate findings of finalised evaluations to Monitoring Committees. Normally, the evaluator is invited to the Monitoring Committee session to present overall evaluation and particularly conclusions and recommendations. Members of a Monitoring Committee have a chance to ask questions and discuss. In principle, main target groups for evaluation studies are programme managers and Monitoring Committees. The main reason for making evaluation reports available to wider public is a transparency. Unfortunately, professional public and politicians are not specifically addressed by communication activities on evaluation.

Currently, there is no standardized system for implementation of recommendations. Basically, it is up to MA to decide which recommendations to accept and how to respond to them. The approaches to

¹⁰⁹ Central Coordinating Authority has recently organised two training sessions on evaluation of Structural Funds.

¹¹⁰ Slovenská spoločnosť pre evaluáciu (Slovak Society for Evaluation), Mr. Martin Obuch – chairperson, www.sspe.sk and Slovenská evaluačná spoločnosť (Slovak Evaluation Society), Mrs. Dagmar Gombitová – chairperson, www.evalucia.sk

implementation of evaluation outcomes vary substantially. From highly formalised procedure (action plan) to internal working session and informal treatment of comments. The approach does not seem to be the key factor to determine a good utilisation of evaluations. It is rather the involvement of OP higher management in design, implementation and use of evaluation.

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, in the function of MA for OP Education, serves as positive example of evaluation utilisation. In 2009, it initiated the Evaluation of effectiveness of OP management system. Although, there were no major deficiencies in implementation of the programme, MA felt that management and implementation can be improved. Based on the assessment, evaluators formulated several recommendations for enhancement of the system. These were seriously analysed and discussed at higher management level. Consequently, concrete tasks were assigned to individual departments in order to improve the functioning of the management system. Actual implementation of recommendations into practice was regularly checked by the MA.

In this case, the key factor seems to be relevance of the evaluation, in other words evaluation responded to real needs of the institutions in charge of programme management and implementation. Additionally, the evaluation had clearly defined purpose and users of evaluation. It allowed the evaluator to produce outcomes in line with the client's expectations and needs. This was possible because relevant stakeholders (decision makers) were involved in design of the evaluation. Presence of decision makers (MA management) was crucial for utilisation of recommendations in the final stage of evaluation.

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Slovenia

Tomasz Kupiec

Context of Evaluation System

As a rule, just like in all countries that have joined the EU in 2004 (or later), the Cohesion Policy constitutes an extremely important element in the system of public policies of Slovenia. The Cohesion Policy is taken into account as a point of reference and an important development tool during work on strategic documents. The duration of Slovenia's development strategy (SDS), adopted in July 2005, is convergent with the current EU financial perspective, and the NSRF is mentioned in this strategy as not the only development investment instrument, but the one of major importance in this field.

The Cohesion Policy budget in Slovenia for the 2000-06 and 2007-13 perspectives amounts to EUR 237.5 million and EUR 4,205.3 million respectively. According to the estimates made for the needs of the NSRF, the Structural Funds in 2007-2013 should represent ca. 30% of the entire public structural expenditure in Slovenia in the supported areas.

The Cohesion Policy has played a decisive role in the development of evaluation policies in Slovenia. Prior to the emergence of programmes co-financed by the EU funds and accompanying obligation to carry out evaluations, there was practically no activity in this area.

The evaluation has emerged along with the Cohesion Policy, and the causal factors were formed by the obligation, resulting from relevant regulations, to evaluate programmes and to assure appropriate funds under the conducted interventions.

Within 7 years that have lapsed since the emergence of Structural Funds, the practice of conducting evaluation research has not been disseminated beyond the Cohesion Policy. Although there is the Institute of Macroeconomic Analyses and Development (Urad RS Slovenije za makroekonomske analize in razvoj) in the country, which prepares annual reports and other thematic analyses for the needs of the Government, yet they are not evaluations in the common meaning of the word, but a research in which an element of evaluation can be found, if any. A similar situation applies to other public policies.

Within the Cohesion Policy alone, where evaluations are conducted, they do not generate great interest apart from the group of direct recipients under the Managing Authorities and Intermediate

Bodies for particular Operational Programmes. It cannot be said that findings of evaluation research are used as subject of debates or basis for decision-making for politicians.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

From the beginning of Cohesion Policy operation in Slovenia the number of entities acting as contracting entities of evaluation research is relatively low and can be estimated at 5-7. In 2010 only one institution – *Government Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy, GOSP (Služba Vlade za lokalno samoupravo in regionalno politiko)* has ordered an evaluation since there was only one evaluation that has been implemented in the area of Cohesion Policy.

A small number of contracting entities results from the adopted centralised institutional structure for the needs of Structural Funds management. All three Operational Programmes that are being implemented under the current perspective are managed by one entity – GOSP¹¹¹.

Ministries are the institutions that order evaluations. Apart from the above-mentioned GOSP, they were, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. There is also another group of entities that participated in the structuring of research-orders, although they were not the direct employers since the financing was under the responsibility of GOSP.

GOSP is the key and, in principle, the only active entity of the demand side on the Cohesion Policy evaluation market. A section responsible for the evaluation of all three Operational Programmes currently under implementation was established within the office structure. The group of entities ordering evaluation research will probably not be extended, at least under the current financial perspective. It results from the fact that GOSP is the only administrator of Technical Assistance funds in the field of evaluation, and pursuant to the framework agreement entered into in 2010 all evaluations in the field of the Cohesion Policy will be contracted and financed by the Managing Authority – GOSP, and the other entities, mainly the ministries performing the role of Intermediate Bodies in the implementation, will be involved in the evaluation process only in an indirect manner.

The expenditure incurred in relation to the implementation of evaluation research in the area of Cohesion Policy in 2010 was very low and amounted to EUR 38,400. It resulted from the delay in the conclusion of a four-year framework agreement covering the implementation of all three evaluations. In consequence, only one research has been carried out in 2010.

¹¹¹ This solution is very similar to the one adopted in the preceding perspective (2004-2006), when there was one institution responsible for the preparation of the Single Programming Document and management of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in the country as well.

Therefore, the above-mentioned amount is not a good determinant of the size of evaluation market. In the two evaluation plans adopted for 2007-2013 the amount of EUR 3.6 million was reserved for the implementation of research. At the same time, the value of the framework agreement equals EUR 1,296,000, which gives EUR 324,000 per year. The latter amount seems to reflect the actual size of the market. In 2011 three evaluations of a total value of ca. EUR 270,000 will be implemented.

Open tender is the most popular procedure for evaluation contracts. This procedure was also used for the needs of concluding framework agreement covering all evaluations of the Cohesion Policy in a four-year perspective. The subject matter of the contract was divided into seven thematic sections, and in five of them one contractor has been selected whereas three potential contractors who will compete with each other for each contract have been selected in the other two. Contracts under tender collection procedure are also used, and this procedure assumes the obligation to organise a call for proposals for at least 3 tenderers.

The MA for the Operational Programme in the current financial perspective has drawn up the evaluation guidelines, which have the features of a manual on evaluation and monitoring, but this document does not refer to the matter of preparing contracts and criteria to assess the tenders to carry out evaluations. The applied criteria are based on the provisions of the Evalsed manual. The price usually represents 60% and quality criteria 40%¹¹².

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The number of entities that were active on the evaluation contractor market in the field of Cohesion Policy can be estimated at 7-10¹¹³, including two entities that can boast with three conducted evaluations. The same two entities have dominated the evaluation market for Operational Programmes in this financial perspective¹¹⁴.

The number of companies that carried out evaluations in 2010, obviously, amounted to 1, which results from only one contracted research. The fact that there were 3 entities applying in the aforementioned tender is a better reflection of the demand on the evaluation market. It should be also pointed out that despite the announcement was published in the Official Journal of the EU due

¹¹² Such proportion between the price criterion and the quality criteria also applied for the selection of partners under the framework agreement.

¹¹³ The necessity of estimation results from the fact that it is not possible to unambiguously distinguish evaluations from other studies and analyses. For the same reason, only the number of employers and conducted evaluations are covered by estimations.

¹¹⁴ With a low number of evaluation contractors, the information from the Slovenian Evaluation Society (**Slovenian Evaluation Society 2011**) about the establishment of a network of over 350 evaluators and persons interested in evaluation looks interesting.

to the high estimated contract value, the interest in it was expressed by no entity from outside Slovenia.

The evaluation contractors are primarily companies that both specialise in the research, analyses, environmental impact assessments and the ones that conducting a broader counselling and training activity. There were also individual cases of evaluations (in the previous perspective) whose contractors covered a research institute and a non-profit organisation. However, the representatives of science are involved in research more often as research team members, although counsellor-lawyers from counselling companies are clearly dominant in them as well.

From among the indicated number of entities, only a few most active ones have the appropriate potential and experience assuring that credible and reliable reports will be drawn up.

With a relatively low demand (the number of contracting entities and the number of conducted evaluations), dynamic growth on the side of supply should not be expected, either in terms of quantity or quality. The number of entities that appeared in the previous financial perspective (2004-2006) has stabilised, and there are no prospects for its growth. The language barrier probably also causes that there is no interest of foreign entities.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

So far, under Cohesion Policy in Slovenia, ca. 17-20 evaluations have been carried out, of which only one – *Periodical Evaluation of the Operational Programme of Environmental and Transport Infrastructure Development* – in 2010. In addition, ca. 60 other analyses and expert's reports for the needs of implementing the Structural Funds can be found in the base gathering evaluations.

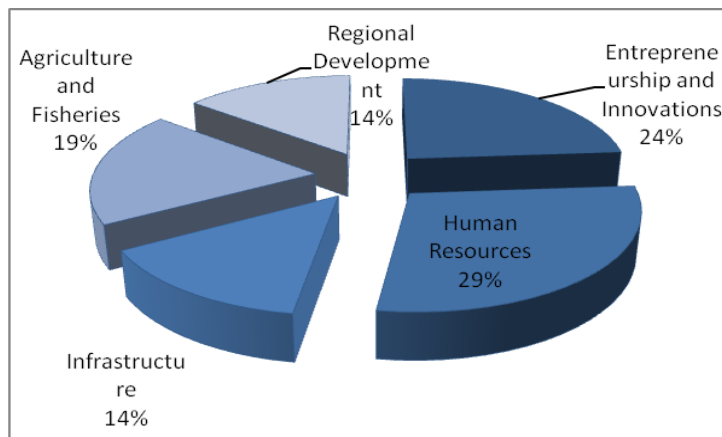
Slightly less than a half of conducted evaluations concerns the 2004-2006 period, the rest is formed of the products of the current financial perspective¹¹⁵. All the previous evaluations were external ones. Although internal evaluations are appreciated by the representatives of the MAs for the Operational Programmes, they are not possible due to too scarce human resources.

Ex ante evaluations represent about 1/3 of the former research (with over a half in the current perspective)¹¹⁶. Among the other evaluations, process evaluations and evaluations of effects have more or less an equal share. The latter ones concern the programmes of the previous perspective, mainly from the area of the ESF. Classified as process ones, the evaluations from the current perspective in certain cases also contain the element of initial assessment of results.

¹¹⁵ The list does not include the research of pre-accession funds since the relevant holistic data are not available. However, traces of evaluation activity can also be found in this period, e.g.: *Ex-post evaluation of PHARE national and CBC programmes launched in the period 1999-2001 and for multi-country programmes launched in the period 1996-2001*.

¹¹⁶ Including the environmental impact forecast.

Figure 9 Thematic areas of evaluation

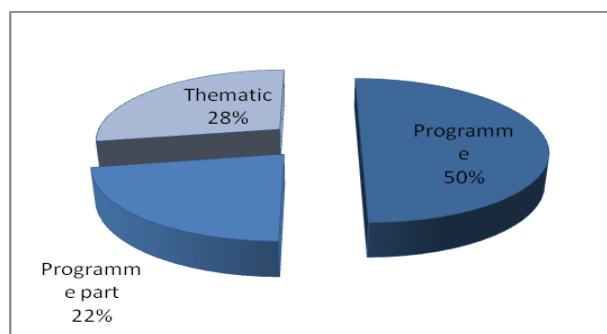


Source: own elaboration on the basis of the evaluation base (**Služba vlade RS za lokalno samoupravo in regionalno politiko 2011**)

The evaluations are quite evenly distributed between several thematic areas. The evaluation in the field of human resources (ESF) and entrepreneurship have the largest share. In the subsequent years, the number of evaluations in the field of regional development might increase whereas the share of the area of agriculture and fisheries will decrease due to their exclusion from the Cohesion Policy framework.

Due to the centralised implementation system for the Cohesion Policy, in which all the programmes are managed at the national level and have national range, most evaluations covered the entire country as well. Most conducted evaluations cover an entire programme, the other evaluations refer to a programme part (measure, priority) or are thematic ones (Figure 2).

Figure 10 Scope of evaluations



Source: own elaboration on the basis of the evaluation base (**Služba vlade RS za lokalno samoupravo in regionalno politiko 2011**)

An evaluation budget is in most cases within the range of EUR 30,000-60,000, but there are also cheaper evaluations (from EUR 15,000) and more expensive ones with costs reaching up to EUR 120,000.

The past evaluations do not feature a sophisticated methodological apparatus. The most popular tools include interviews, on site visits and document examination. It can be observed that qualitative approach is more popular than the quantitative one. Macroeconomic modelling has emerged only at the stage of *ex ante* analyses whereas the (quasi)experimental approach has not been used yet, although the evaluations of effects were conducted. This situation may be improved in the near future due to the fact that the research contracting entity resigns from broad freedom in the selection of methodology in favour of more detailed and restrictive requirements.

No formal assessment and control system for the received reports has been developed for the needs of evaluation. Some hints about how the report assessment procedure should look like can be found in the evaluation plans for 2007-2013. In practice, the assessments are made by the persons representing the bodies involved on the side of the employer in the supervision over the research implementation in receipt of the report, i.e. the members of the evaluation team, the representatives of the Managing Authority and the Intermediate Bodies. Although it has not been practiced yet, it is planned in future to order external reviews for some reports.

The evaluations conducted so far are to some extent insufficient, and the contracting entities are not fully pleased with them. Although the evaluations are correct, they lack an in-depth analysis and explanations underlying the observed phenomena. The *Periodical Evaluation of the Operational Programme of Environmental and Transport Infrastructure Development (OIKOS 2010)* was indicated as an example of a good evaluation when compared to the other ones.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

No practice, mechanisms of regular exchange of experience in the field of evaluation between public institutions has been created. There is no network of institutions, and no meetings or conferences devoted to evaluations are organised. It can be safely assumed that it follows, first of all, from a very limited group of contracting entities – the entities potentially interested in such cooperation. Public institutions also do not get involved in the publications or support for studies on the development of evaluation methodology. However, on the website administered by GOSP and devoted to the Structural Funds there is a base for the collection of all evaluations and other analyses in the field of Cohesion Policy of the current and previous financial perspective, which is a positive trend that should be highlighted.

The domestic training market offers no opportunities for acquisition and deepening of the knowledge in the field of public policy evaluation. The potentially interested entities are forced to seek relevant training offers outside Slovenia. Although, the Department of Social Science at the University of Ljubljana offers studies in the field of policy analysis and public administration, yet they focus to a greater extent on political science rather than on the methodology of evaluation.

The Slovenian Evaluation Society (SDE) has been functioning since 2008. The Society has over 10 members and declares that it has built a network of over 350 evaluators and persons interested in the field of evaluation¹¹⁷. In comparison with the overall picture of evaluation in Slovenia, the SDE's activity is considerable. The Society has organised ca. 15 discussion panels, workshops and lectures and has published ca. 20 studies. Annually, 20 newsletter editions are prepared and a library is maintained – a base of links to external publications and evaluation-related material. However, it should be pointed out that the Society gathers people with very diverse experience, not always connected with the evaluation of programmes under Cohesion Policy, and because of that the subjects of organised panels, lectures and publications often do not contribute to building the potential of the Cohesion Policy evaluation. Establishing cooperation with GOSP could serve the increase in the usefulness of SDE activity, but it has not been established.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The strategy for dissemination of evaluation results in Slovenia has not been formalised, and the catalogue of actions taken in this field is quite modest. It was agreed under the plans of evaluation for all Operational Programmes of the current perspective that the final evaluation reports will be forwarded to the so-called *Interdisciplinary Team* consisting of the persons responsible for monitoring and assessment in particular ministries. A meeting concluding an evaluation is organised each time, in which the representatives of the evaluation group, the MA and the IBs take part. The evaluation conclusions are also presented at the MC session. Finally, the reports are made available by publication on the website.

In individual cases, a brochure disseminating the main research findings was published; this action is also supposed to be taken for the evaluations currently under implementation. An attempt to reach more recipients is also made by means of presentation of evaluations during the *Info-day* – a conference presenting the effects of implementing individual Structural Funds.

However, the main recipients (if not the only ones) of evaluation reports are currently constituted by the persons directly involved in the implementation of Operational Programmes – the representatives of the MAs and the IBs. There is no noticeable interest of the representatives of

¹¹⁷ Covering for example the recipients of the newsletter.

other ministries; the evaluation is not a subject or basis for discussion at a higher political level. Except for individual examples of general reference, the subject of Cohesion Policy evaluation does not exist in the press.

However, the usefulness of evaluations can be considered substantial from the point of view of the level of use of the conclusions arising from the evaluations. The drawn conclusions meet the expectations of the recipients and are mostly (over 90%) implemented on time. The description of procedures and competences in the scope of implementation, monitoring of implementation of recommendations and reporting in this respect can be found in the evaluation plans of individual OPs. In practice, this process runs efficiently mainly owing to the involvement by recipients of recommendations – the MAs and IBs – from an early stage of research implementation.

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Spain

Alicja Weremiuk

Context of Evaluation System

According to the analysis of evaluation in Spain and its international benchmarks prepared by the expert panel chaired by Juan Antonio Garde (established in order to assess the necessity of creation of the National Agency for the Evaluation of Public Policies and Quality of Services) (**Comisión para el Estudio y Creación Agencia Estatal de Evaluación de la Calidad de los Servicios y de las Políticas Públicas 2004**) the main evaluation experiences of Spanish central government were of sector-specific approach and referred to the following sectors:

- education,
- healthcare,
- employment matters,
- public employment service,
- public-sector science, technology, research and development,
- international cooperation for development.

‘Other experiences include:

- evaluation of allocation and use of Community funds by the Ministry of Finance, pursuant to the applicable Community law;
- service quality evaluations instituted by the Ministry for Public Administration in an effort to raise satisfaction among citizens as customers of public bodies, and the role of the service inspectorates in all territorial ambits of government;
- budget, accounting and legal control and evaluation of spending and subsidies policy carried on by the directorate general of budget and the central government comptroller general at the Ministry of the Treasury;
- the audit and jurisdictional functions of the Tribunal de Cuentas (the Spanish Court of Audit) for external oversight of the economic and financial affairs of the public sector; and
- ex ante evaluation and impact analysis of interventions set out in briefing papers and economic memoranda written in support of government legislative proposals.’

According to this study, the Cohesion Policy was only one of the evaluation exercises in Spain. The reverse point of view was presented by the interviewee who stated that evaluation culture in Spain developed thanks to the European Union funding in 90's. (Also in **Furubo, Rist, & Sandahl, 2002** Spain has been described as a country where internal pressures on evaluation were weak and external strong.) It could be assumed that the Cp was one of the main factors determining the development of evaluation culture, but not the only one.

The cohesion policy was very important in the Spanish system of policies, now with the process of development its importance is decreasing. 2007-2013 European Fund allocation for Spain (over 35 billion EUR) is 0,2% of overall GDP. But, when the quality is concerned, cohesion policy still plays the great role in national system of policies. Its added value lays in the enhancement of administration, usage of analysis in the decision policy.

Now, **the overall evaluation practice in Spain, not concerning only the CP, is being developed.** In 2006 the National Agency for the Evaluation of Public Policies and Quality of Services was established (<http://www.aeval.es>). The creation of the AEVAL was a key step in the process of institutionalising evaluation in Spain as the institutions conducting evaluations existed previously, but they were generally confined to individual sectors or tied to spending policies.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The key player in the CP evaluation system in Spain is the SGPTEPC (the Sub Directorate General of the Territory Programming and Evaluation of the Community Programmes) within **the DGFC** (the Directorate General of Community Funds) (**Dirección General de Fondos Comunitarios 2011**) in the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which is responsible for the evaluation of the MENR and evaluations within the ERDF and CF co-financed programmes. It is well established institution as most of 15 people working on evaluation has more than 10 years experience in the field.

There exists also within the Ministry of Labour and Immigration **the UAFSE** (the Administration Unit for the European Social Fund) which is responsible for the overall ESF evaluation. According to the Evaluation Plan 2 people are working there on evaluation tasks.

Besides the DGFC and UAFSE there are the Managing Authorities of OPs that deal with evaluation. 6 of them at central level in the ministries, 17 at regional level and 15 at local level.

These institutions are devoted exclusively to Structural Funds evaluations and majority of them focus on fulfilling the requirements when evaluation is concerned.

The CP evaluation demand in terms of financial resources is very small – e.g. **in 2010** it amounted to around **40 thousand EUR**, which is due to the fact that in this year only internal evaluation were undertaken as a consequence of budget restrictions after the crisis.

Although it should be noticed that in previous years the evaluations were conducted by the external experts. In that cases the most common public procurement procedure was open tender in which price had 50% of importance.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In **Furubo et al., 2002** Spain got 0 points for the supply of domestic evaluators in different disciplines. From that time the big effort has been undertaken in order to improve the supply side of evaluation. It is worth noticing that now there are about **20-25 entities** dealing with evaluation.

15 of them are SMEs focusing only on the consultancy connected to the SF interventions (e.g. controls, evaluations, management). They are national and consultancy type, where the top levels are academics.

In the beginning only SMEs were interested in the SF evaluation market, but during the last years the big companies started to participate in evaluation calls for proposals. It was due to the crisis - budget restrictions meant less work, so they needed to find new areas of activities.

According to the interviewee potential and know-how of evaluation entities is very good as they do have 15 years experience on a wide range of the SF areas such as control, evaluation and management.

In 2010 as the DGFC did not conduct external evaluations, they coped with control and management.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There have been approximately **100 evaluation** studies conducted during **the last 10 years** in Spain, whereas **in 2010 only 4 were executed** by the DGFC. The ex-post studies for 2000-2006 were left to the European Commission.

Majority of the 100 studies were external and only some internal (e.g. these in 2010). As the evaluation type is concerned there were ex-ante, on-going and impact (mid-term updates) ones. The topics varied from infrastructure, through HR, regional development, R&D, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship, environment to horizontal issues. Their scope covered national and regional levels as well as programmes, its parts and horizontal levels. In terms of costs they could be considered as big evaluations (big in Spain would be about 150 000 EUR). The database of the 2007-2013 evaluation reports is available on the DGFC website (**Dirección General de Fondos Comunitarios 2010**).

As the methodology is concerned - wide range of methods were used, but rather typical ones. E.g. the quasi-experimental exercises have not been applied yet.

The practice of assessing the quality of the reports consists mainly in discussions during the meetings with the stakeholders.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Public institutions were not very active in developing evaluation culture in the field of the Cohesion Policy programmes. There exist web pages of the DGFC and UAFSE, where the evaluation plans, evaluation reports and methodological guidelines are published. The findings are discussed during the regular meetings. Some trainings and seminars are organised, but not on a regular basis.

In Spain there exists the Spanish Evaluation Society (Sociedad Evaluación Española) (**Sociedad Española de Evaluación de Políticas Públicas 2011**). It is quite active in organising conferences, seminars and workshops, also in promoting evaluation trainings and courses organised by other entities, as well as in publishing the articles on evaluation in its magazine.

There are master studies on evaluation of public policy (but limited to Latin America) organised by the International University of Andalusia. In 2011 4th edition is organised (**Centro Superior de Estudios de Gestión 2011**).

More regular and broader activities aimed at evaluation capacity building are currently undertaken by the National Agency for the Evaluation of Public Policies and Quality of Services, but they do not focus exclusively on the CP. It prepared in the co-operation with the National University of the Distance Education the expert course (with university title) on evaluation of the public policy and services. Its programme is based on 500 study hours (and values 20 ECTS) and comprises of 6 modules:

- public policies – including also aspects of modernisation of public administration,
- policy, programmes, services and institutions evaluation – its significance; usage of evaluation in the situation of uncertainty; concepts, definitions and types of evaluation; policies and programmes evaluation models; services evaluation models; perception of public service;
- evaluation process – evaluation commissioning, evaluation planning, ethics of evaluation, selection of policy to be evaluated;
- methodology – evaluation models – causal vs. associative, qualitative vs. quantitative; quantitative techniques of collecting data and their analysis; qualitative techniques of collecting data and their analysis;

- communication and utilisation of evaluation results – evaluation dissemination plans; evaluation reports; role of assessment, valorisation and recommendations; successes and failures of public policy;
- evaluation practices.

The 2011 tuition fees for 40 students were financed by the National Institute of Public Administration.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Evaluation reports could be found on the DGFC and UAFSE webpages, but there are no documents of recommendation implementation. The evaluation target group and at the same time – main readers, are the CP implementation stakeholders.

The recommendations are assessed during regular meetings of the evaluation stakeholders. Status of their implementation is monitored within the follow-up evaluations.

The mid-term review from 2005 is considered to be the best practice of utilised evaluation study as its results were applied for the 2007-2013 perspective setup.

In the interviewee opinion, communication and dissemination activities are needed to enhance the usefulness and utilisation of evaluation.

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Sweden

Katarzyna Wojnar¹¹⁸

Context of Evaluation System

For the programming period 2007-2013 the overall Swedish budget for Cohesion Policy is €3.7 billion out of which €1.9 billion is financed by the EU. The Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective has been allocated €1.6 billion and European Territorial Cooperation Objective €265 million. These resources are divided between 8 regional programmes, one national programme funded by the ESF and 13 Territorial Cooperation programmes in which Sweden is a partner **(European Commission 2009)**. In comparison to national resources, out of which just investments are 104 billion SEK, the role of Cohesion Policy in Sweden is fairly marginal and it's not a major source for funding public development policies **(Statistics Sweden 2011)**. Though there are some areas where the Cohesion Policy is noticeable, namely in creating regional development policy, as it was very weak before. This impact is linked to the fact that in the Swedish model of territorial administration structure formal range of power on the regional level is relatively limited. The division of competences can be described as an hour-glass model in which the state is powerful, the region is weak and the municipality is powerful **(Ministry of Finance of Sweden & Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions 2008)**. With the lack of powerful authority on the regional level bottom-up initiatives concerning the coordination of planning and development activities Cohesion Policy have contributed to the renewal of regional policy and labour market policy in Sweden. Both on the level of intellectual input and learning processes, but also financially, like for example in sparsely populated areas in the North.

Therefore the role of Cohesion Policy in shaping evaluation culture of public policies in Sweden is relatively small. Evaluation culture in Sweden, a country with one of the highest taxes and shares of public sector spending in the economy, goes a long way back. Its shape and content have been formed for decades and the main driving force was the need of ensuring legitimacy of public spending. That is why in the context of deeply-rooted and comprehensive *ad hoc* policy commission system evaluation plays very important role as a base for the government decision-making process **(Furubo, Rist, & Sandahl, 2002: 115-127)**. In the 1980s the Swedish government introduced

¹¹⁸ The author would like to express her sincere appreciation of the input, valuable and comprehensive information and help in understanding the Swedish context of Cohesion Policy Evaluation to her interviewees: Göran Brulin (Tillväxtverket), Kim Forss (SVUF), Göran Hallin (Kontigo), Sven Jansson (Svenska ESF-Rådet), Martin Lindquist (Tillväxtverket).

management-by-results, that is performance management system - a way of managing public administration policies in an open process of inquiry in which information is very much focused on users (**Forss & Bandstein 2007**). At that time international mainstream promoted the institutional model of independent and system design oriented evaluation. Currently the situation is opposite. While international debate around evaluation is more focused with user-oriented performance management, Swedish evaluators are more interested in institutional issues and evaluation activities tend to become more centralised (**Forss & Bandstein 2007**).

Public administration in Sweden is not run in a form of big projects or programs. It's run by on-going implementation of long-term public policies. A lot of these policies are implemented by 245 public agencies that have some independence from the central government. This is due to the fact, that administration system in Sweden is highly decentralised and based on the principle that policy and administration are essentially separate matters, which is reflected by a strong conceptual and organisational distinction between ministries and agencies (Furubo et al., 2002: 115-127). Contrary to other countries where the evaluation has often followed a particular reform, programme or project, what has shaped the evaluation system in public sector in Sweden was the obligation of these public agencies to continuously report the progress of policy implementation in a particular area. The major change that we see today is that this responsibility of reporting the results has been centralised and overtaken by specialised and independent evaluation agencies in a number of policy fields: growth policy, foreign aid and development cooperation, health, culture, environment, labour market, education, R&D, infrastructure, etc. The main focus is still on policy level. The reasons that the government aims at establishing external evaluation system are related to increasing public debate around the results, receiving reports which are more relevant to policy discussions as well as getting an aggregate overview of impacts.

Another observed phenomenon is that the role and demand for evaluation in Sweden is growing, as the model of Swedish welfare-state is currently questioned (**Esping-Andersen 1990**). This process is characterised by departing from social-democratic political ideology towards a more pragmatic approach, that would provide solutions to social and economic problems of unemployment, efficiency of social security and healthcare systems, integration of immigrants on the labour market or the actual outcomes of Swedish development cooperation projects. Therefore politicians and policy makers became more keen on using evaluation as a tool of improvement of public interventions (**Lähteenmäki-Smith 2008**). In the culture of political consensus, characteristic for Sweden, evaluation is also acknowledged as a potential tool of providing evidence for a fruitful and constructive public debate (**Forss 2005**). Sweden has definitely a comprehensive and long tradition of evaluation, which is performed and executed by different agents, like *ad hoc* policy commissions, sectoral agencies, research bodies, the National Audit Office and Parliamentary Auditors.

Although not having shaped the Swedish model, evaluation of Cohesion Policy in Sweden has a valid impact on evaluation practice, which was acknowledged by the chairman of the Swedish Evaluation Society. The way of thinking that was developed through evaluation of Cohesion Policy is quite demanding when it comes to how the evaluation should be done, whereas in Sweden, evaluation has always been very much action-oriented. There have also been quite significant changes between programming periods, as the main focus moved from mid-term approach towards a more dynamic system of on-going evaluation. Current evaluation units have very high ambition to make evaluation an efficient supporting tool in this programming period.

Unfortunately the Cohesion Policy doesn't have much political recognition in Sweden neither in the conservative party which is now in power nor in the social-democratic party. Therefore there exists a demand for policy-relevant evaluations, that are not technical but rather hands on and will deliver arguments to convince the prime minister, and leaders of conservative and social-democratic parties to support Cohesion Policy.

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Unlike regular public policies, EU funds in Sweden are usually tied to very specific projects and programmes and are partly outside the mainstream of public policies. They have their own system of evaluation that is more focused on programme or project perspective. This system is also different in institutional terms, as it is often the implementing organisation that commissions the evaluation. Moreover, these institutions are at different levels of institutional hierarchy. So these are mainly the public agencies that work with the sectors of regional, growth and development policies.

The system of contracting evaluation studies of Cohesion Policy on the programme level in Sweden is centralised, which means, that for each programming period the managing authority of a particular fund (ERDF, ESF) was responsible for contracting. Consequently in 2007-2013 programming period these institutions are Tillväxtverket - Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (managing authority ERDF) and Svenska ESF-Rådet - Swedish ESF Council (managing Authority ESF and). Tillväxtverket is an agency which aims to contribute to development of entrepreneurship, growing enterprises, creating sustainable and competitive business and industry. It is a new institution that operations include the areas of responsibility previously belonging Nutek and the Swedish National Rural Development Agency as well as the Swedish Consumer Agency's tasks concerning commercial and public service. Tillväxtverket has around 300 employees in 11 offices around the country. It's a key institution in developing Cohesion Policy evaluation system in Sweden, as it is responsible for commissioning evaluation, capacity building, promoting on-going evaluation in line with the EC guidelines, guarantee the quality and learning during and between programming periods (**Tillväxtverket 2011b**). Svenska ESF-Rådet is responsible for the management and evaluation of the

Integration Fund and the Social Fund in Sweden. The purpose of the Council's work is to strengthen the individual's positions in working life and hence contribute to increased employment and growth. It consists of one central office and 8 regional offices in the administrative provinces of Sweden **(Svenska ESF-rådet 2011)**.

Other institutions that contribute to the design of the evaluation of Cohesion Policy in Sweden are APeL, CAFO, Tillväxtanalys, KK-stiftelsen, NTG Partnerskap and Vinnova. APeL FoU is a national research and development centre for interactive and critical research in workplace learning, sustainable regional development and growth that aims at assuring development of people and organisations at various levels **(APeL FoU 2011)**. CAFO is the Centre for Labour Market Policy Research, an independent research unit linked to the Department of Economics and Statistics at Linnaeus University in Växjö. It was established as a common platform of research and evaluation of labour market policy in Sweden and is well known for its excellence, high quality and sophistication of conducted analyses **(Linnaeus University 2011)**. Tillväxtanalys is a government agency responsible for the evaluation and analysis of growth policy issues. The Agency's objective is to strengthen Swedish competitiveness and create the conditions for more jobs in growing companies throughout the country. It conducts evaluations, analyses and statistical studies with a broad Swedish and international perspective **(Tillväxtanalys 2011)**. KK-stiftelsen, the Knowledge Foundation, is the public research grant foundation for universities with the task of strengthening Sweden's competitiveness and ability to create value. It supports research that is conducted at Sweden's universities and new universities provided that industry provides a matching amount and actively participates in order to achieve development. Therefore it helps Sweden's universities create internationally competitive research environments, work long-term on strategic profiling and increase cooperation between academia, industry, institutes and society **(KK-stiftelsen 2011)**. NTG Partnerskap is the National Thematic Group Partnership for the support and development of projects within the EQUAL Programme. Collaboration in thematic groups took a form of partnerships between the projects, researchers, consultants, companies, support organisations, etc **(NTG Partnerskap 2011)**. Vinnova, the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems, aims to increase the competitiveness of Swedish researchers and companies through innovation linked to research and development. Thanks to a very advanced and comprehensive practice of long-term impact evaluation of innovation, its internal system of on-going evaluation was used a model for Cohesion Policy evaluation in Sweden **(Vinnova 2011)**.

The overall amount spend on evaluation of national public policies in Sweden is approximately 5-6 billion SEK. The central government institutions, 245 public agencies, National Audit Board and the rest of central administration spends around 2 billion SEK a year on evaluation. If the 286 municipalities are taken into consideration together with other public and semi-public institutions

commissioning evaluation that would probably triple the amount spent by the public sector. The spending on evaluation of Cohesion Policy is smaller. Tillväxtverket has a budget of approximately 36 million SEK for the new programming period (6 years) for evaluation of implementing organisations on a programme level and the performance of the 8 programmes. On a project level, especially the large projects spend around 3-4% of their budgets on evaluation, that is about 140 million SEK. So all together that it's 180 million SEK on evaluation for the 6 years.

While public procurement procedures for commissioning evaluation of national public policies in Sweden are usually in the form of open calls for proposals or they are simply performed internally by sectoral evaluation agencies, it is different in case of evaluation of Cohesion Policy. At a programme level, there is a two step public procurement procedure. In the first step the managing authority selects 5-7 consultancies in an open call for tenders and they are offered long-term cooperation contracts. In the second step these institutions can participate in a closed call for tenders for a particular evaluation study. So each study is a subject of competition to a closed list of companies that have a long-term cooperation agreements with the commissioning institution. The long term contracts are valid for about 1 year. At the moment selected evaluators are: Sweco Eurofutures, Ramböll Management Consulting, PwC Sweden, the international consulting companies and smaller Swedish companies and research institutions like Kontigo, Oxford Research, Ledningsconsulterna, Nordregio. Tillväxtverket has also direct agreements with universities such as Linköping University, Malmö Högskolan and Luleå Technical University, for the support of state agencies, especially through meta-analysis and evaluation.

There are 3 main criteria to compete with in the public procurement procedure and these are: former experience and record of achievements, methodology and price. Price is always the least important and usually does not exceed 30% of the overall score. Other two criteria, that is experience and methodology vary in importance depending on a particular assignment. What is important are the experts and individual researchers that the evaluation companies are cooperating with as well as the expert data base that they have.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In terms of evaluation of public policies in Sweden in general it is necessary to underline, that a large number of evaluation studies is done by the already mentioned central policy research and evaluation agencies within their own financial and staff resources. They rarely commission evaluations. Apart from that in Sweden there are around 50 companies that are relatively small and employ around 15-20 evaluation specialists each. There are around 10-15 large management consulting firms and in particular audit firms like McKinsey (**McKinsey Sweden 2011**), Ramböll (**Ramboll Group 2011**), Nordic Consulting Group (**Nordic Consulting Group 2011**) and other which

have broad range of consulting services in management including evaluations. The universities are often indirectly engaged in evaluation studies through their employees who as individual experts do evaluations within consulting companies (**Bachtler & Polverari 2004**). Individual evaluators are assembled in the Swedish Evaluation Society, that has around 600-700 members, and a bit more than half are the ones who are professionally active in this sector. Very often it is the case that proficient evaluators have their own companies that do not employ permanent staff. Individual experts are the most flexible actors performing evaluation studies.

The number of companies and institutions active in the field of evaluation has significantly increased over the last 10 years due to the recognition and growing role of evaluation. In the last programming period there were only 15-20 firms that were active in that field. That has increased to 30 companies today. Also large universities became more interested and active in the field of evaluation. As stated before, currently there are around 7 companies that have long-term cooperation contracts and carry out most evaluation studies that are commissioned on the programme level.

Formally around 80-70% evaluation studies are being conducted by private companies. Some of these companies would be one-person consultants, medium companies and of course large firms. The remaining 30-20% would be universities. On the other hand the knowledge base is very much dependent on individual experts and academics. If one counts in individual experts that are active in carrying out evaluation research, than more than 50% of studies is carried out through academic manpower and expert-base. So the market consists of a number of evaluation companies, that contract experts from universities to particular assignments.

There are several institutional actors on the surface, but behind the scenes there is another circuit characterized by the free flow of individual experts. It's actually a bit peculiar in the public procurement procedure as it is often the case that different companies cooperate with the same experts. This is due to the fact, that Sweden is a relatively small country in terms of population and there are few experts that specialize in narrow fields like venture capital or innovation-oriented entrepreneurship. So sometimes regardless of tendering companies, it is almost sure which experts will actually design and perform a particular evaluation study. The knowledge capacity is therefore of an oligarchic structure. Because of much focus on learning and demand for the reports to be prepared in Swedish the experts need to be Swedish.

The evaluation market is growing and it has been growing quite fast. During the last 10 years management consulting and audit companies have taken greater interest in evaluation. Individual experts as well as smaller companies had a larger share of the market 10 years ago, so we can talk about consolidation of the market structure. Recently there have been also several merges, namely large corporations like PwC or Sweco have bought smaller, specialized, expert-oriented and university based companies. The impact of this market consolidation is the oligarchic structure of the

market. It is actually noticeable in a standardisation of evaluation reports, especially on project level. Some of the reports look the same, and these reports are not really interesting. Bigger companies tend to have more standardised report templates, however several small companies have delivered very interesting reports. This process is new and dynamic, as there are also some new actors and players so it is still too early to define the actual structure of the market.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The number of commissioned evaluation studies in the previous programming period was relatively little, as there were just 12 studies at programme level (6 ex-ante and 6 mid-term evaluations) and about 50 at project level. Currently, for every programme there are foreseen 8 evaluation studies at programme level. Until now there are 4 reports for each of the programmes, so that gives 32 reports. Additionally there were 6 thematic reports, 3 reports on integration of immigrants, a report on sustainable environmental development and one on gender equality, 4 reports on ESF implementation organisation. That gives around 50 reports. In 2010 there were around 18 reports commissioned – 8 basic reports (one evaluation for each programme), 5 thematic reports, one for the ESF and four Interreg evaluations.

This is a relatively small number in comparison to the general evaluation activities in Sweden, namely around 2000 evaluations commissioned every year by the central administration. It has been estimated that the 245 public agencies spend annually approximately 2 billion SEK on evaluation. Additionally the Parliament and central government commission around 400 studies a year at an average cost of approximately 500.000 SEK, plus another 3000 evaluations for municipalities, at an average cost of around 100.000 SEK. The total volume in the public sector is estimated at 7 billion SEK (€800 million) (**Forss 2008**).

There was a visible frustration with the traditional system for follow up, evaluation and learning carried out in the last programming period, as the Cohesion Policy didn't have very high legitimacy in Sweden. The management said that in this programming period the evaluation needs to improve. There was a need for improvement that led to changeover from a regulated mid-term evaluation to on-going evaluation in projects and programmes both in terms of shift from regulatory imperatives towards a more flexible, demand-driven approach to evaluation. Tillväxtverket was given a mission to organise learning through on-going evaluation and create learning environment, which is outlined in **Svensson et al. 2009**, that argues to grasp the challenges of the structural funds there is a quest for a new generation of evaluation and that the idea of a cause and effect chain is not easily applicable to social issues (**Bruhin 2010: 10**). This new approach is supposed to improve the structural funds as a learning organisation, a process increasingly central in the regional growth and labour market policies. It shifts the practice from punishing for mistakes towards continuous reflection on

how the work at a given time or in a given context has been conducted. It also changes the role of evaluator who must be engaged in the processes they are evaluating and needs to develop a structured processes for reception of experiences and knowledge (**Bruhin 2010: 10**).

80% of evaluation efforts in Cohesion Policy in Sweden are on-going evaluations related to the culture of learning through on-going processes and improving implementation all through the programming period. What lacks are good ex-post long-term impact evaluations from the previous programming period and it's really hard to assess what was to learn from that experience and what were actual impacts of previous operational programmes. Approximate budgets of commissioned evaluation studies vary depending on a type and topic of evaluation. It ranges from narrow and precise analyses of cooperation with business and IT in projects (300 thousand SEK) to big long-term contracts for 5 years of on-going evaluation are sometimes worth even 5-6 million SEK, like an on-going interactive research on venture capital.

In terms of methodology unfortunately there is little experimental evidence-based methods, it's more about comprehensive analysis and case studies. Using sophisticated mathematic and econometric modelling is avoided on purpose, as it is the simple, understandable and ready to use evidence that is demanded. For example it's hard to make counterfactual studies about the innovation policy and projects, as innovation is an event that might be described within the black swan theory. Innovation processes take quite a lot of time so it's really hard to trace the actual impacts and link results to particular interventions. Because of the fact that innovation is also very contextual it is hard to find adequate control groups. Much focus is thus now put on triangulation of data and approaches, that have a solid theoretical base. Currently, the Commission and national stakeholders are keen on theory-based and evidence-based impact evaluation that produces solid narratives about different interventions (**Bachtler et al. 2000**).

Reporting system in Sweden is not standardised and therefore all studies vary very much in terms of ways of data collection, carrying out surveys and interviews, so the contractors are actually quite flexible with what they propose and do, what analytical tools they use and how they present and disseminate results. One major problem that needs solution is system of indicators described as rather poor, neither reliable nor valid. It's actually a major problem that the Cohesion Policy is so keen on indicators that are questioned by the experts in Sweden, like the indicators for job creation. Some Swedish experts have actually made a simulation with these indicators and according to their outcomes there should not be any unemployment in Europe.

In Sweden there are no common standards of evaluation quality, but this issue has been investigated, however in domestic evaluation, not in the Cohesion Policy. There have been studies on the quality of evaluation in the fields of development cooperation (**Forss et al. 2008**), agriculture policy and education (**Björk et al. 2009**). The main conclusion from these studies was that there were

large number of studies of inferior quality and some studies that took a more *longitudinal* approach, particularly in development cooperation. It was noted that over time (period of 20 years) there were fewer really bad studies, so in terms of the bottom line the quality has improved. On the other hand, investigation identified that earlier there was a number of really excellent evaluations and now there aren't as many. So in general a quality convergence around the medium standard is observed. The evaluations commissioned by the central government were criticised for relying on one source of methodology and didn't exploit more innovative approaches such as experimental or quasi-experimental methodologies.

Studies considered to be of the highest quality are the ones that use multiple data sources and methodologies, represent interactive action research approach and involve all groups of stakeholders into investigation process. One of such reports is the Part 3 of on-going Evaluation of Regional Programme of Norra Mellansverige (2007-2013) done by IM-gruppen/PwC (**IM-gruppen & Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2010**). The report is praised for being was a very solid theory-based impact evaluation of innovation that was based on a survey of 80 companies and 20 deep interviews with enterprises that were partaking in innovation projects, project leaders, academic experts and regional and local authorities. Other excellent studies were *Developing better conditions for regional innovation* (2000-2006) (EuroFutures AB 2006), *Efforts made to promote enterprising and entrepreneurship* (2000-2006) (IM-gruppen 2006) and *First annual in-going evaluation report on the endeavour comprising the twelve regional co-investment funds finances by ERDF* (2007-2013).

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The availability and access to evaluation results of Cohesion Policy in Sweden is very good, clear and simple, although only few resources are available in English. As Tillväxtverket is a central institution responsible for evaluation and learning in implementation of Cohesion Policy programmes it also coordinates dissemination and capitalisation of generated knowledge. All publications related to structural funds are available in Tillväxtverkets online library, which has an intuitive and user-friendly search engine allowing to find publications according to title, keywords, topic, type of stakeholders interested, evaluation company/author, year, language, words in abstract, ISBN. Every publication has a comprehensive bibliographic fiche with abstract and downloadable PDF file or ordering form if hard copy is preferred (Tillväxtverket 2011a). Apart from reports, Tillväxtverket together with experts and evaluators produces textbooks (**Svensson, Brulin & Jansson 2009**) and readers (**Tillväxtverket 2010**). The agency also encourages academic evaluators to produce reviews of evaluation reports and make courses in evaluation, partake in discussion networks that give critical feedback on evaluation results (**Jansson & Brulin 2010**). It is however considered, that more could be done. There was a request from the Commission to take a more active part in the public debate and provide

information on how programmes are conducted. The agency is very much focused on practical learning, so it organises lots of regional learning conferences where evaluation results are discussed with stakeholders. There was only one national conference on evaluation, as more interactive and direct contacts with the stakeholders are preferred.

In terms of education in the field of evaluation in Sweden there are a couple of masters programmes – Master Programme in Public Administration in the University of Gothenburg School of Public Administration (**University of Gothenburg 2010**), Distance Master Programme in Evaluation and Management at the Mälardalen University (**Mälardalen University 2010**). There also specialisation paths or single courses at the University of Stockholm (**Stockholms universitet 2011**), in Master Programme for Public Health (**Umeå universitet 2011a**) and Social Science Department (**Umeå universitet 2011b**) of Umeå University, labour market policy courses and Master Programme for Public Health (**Lunds universitet 2011**) at Lund University, Master Course in Product and System Innovation (**Blekinge Institute of Technology 2011**) in Blekinge Institute of Technology, many sectoral courses and general in social science (**Luleå University of Technology 2011a**) and public administration (**Luleå University of Technology 2011b**) at Luleå University of Technology and also in pedagogics at Dalarna University (**Högskolan Dalarna 2011**).

Tillväxtverket cooperates with 7 different universities that offer general or sectoral evaluation courses. But the most important is the Postgraduate School at Linköping University in interdisciplinary research within the HELIX VINN Excellence Centre (**HELIX VINN Excellence Centre 2011**) established to create a long-term research and innovation partnership between university, private companies and public sector organizations with a focus on the management of mobility of people and ideas as driving forces for individual and organisational learning, health, and entrepreneurship. Together with VINNOVA and Tillväxtverket the Centre has developed a model and approach of on-going evaluation and interactive research in big public interventions to investigate regional development systems and established a research-education programme to create a new generation of professional evaluators (**Tillvaxtverket 2011**).

Since the 1980s there existed an informal network of evaluators in Sweden, association of people interested in evaluation who were meeting once a month to have seminars and activities. Over the years a member base expanded to around 700 experts and it was decided that the association needed more formal framework so it was institutionalised as a Swedish Evaluation Society (**The Swedish Evaluation Society 2007**). The Society decided not to formulate their own evaluation standards, because there are a number of institutions that have done studies on the quality of evaluation in their sub-systems in their field and each of them has different demands, expectation and standards about what they find of high-quality evaluation. But common values of utility, accuracy, ethics are all important subjects. The Society has taken the approach that they want to

have an on-going discussion about the evaluation and its quality. There already are a number of good guidelines by American, UK or Australian Evaluation Associations that are taken into consideration also in Sweden.

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

As mentioned above, in case of Cohesion Policy in Sweden one can talk about a decently developed and well-targeted system of dissemination of evaluation results. Intuitive and user-friendly online libraries and databases, focused and learning-oriented seminars and conferences, synthetic reports and course books for evaluation students are all part of intentional activities aiming at strengthening the effects of evaluation studies. It also involves active role of evaluators who are supposed to present their research outcomes before the regional partnerships (**Tillväxtverket 2011c**) that prioritise between projects. The evaluators also take part in regional learning conferences, meetings with members of managing authorities and regional discussions on how to conduct projects and programmes. These activities have influenced the regional policy in Sweden in general, because now the government has asked each of 8 regional administration boards to share learning through evaluation and it has influenced the government to make firmer learning procedures at the regional level in Sweden. What is more, there are special support projects, the so-called team-groups which are focused on learning and strategic impact and it's a very important path of driving the programme. Moreover, Tillväxtverket has published at least 3 books in Swedish about experience from implementation of the programmes: one about learning through on-going evaluation (**Svensson, Brulin & Jansson 2009**), one about programme-driving analysis: to own, govern and evaluate large projects (**Svensson & Brulin 2011**) and one about learning evaluation through follow-up studies (**Svensson, Brulin, Jansson, et al. 2009**). Book publishing means that evaluation of cohesion policy has officially entered the public debate.

What is also particularly good is that public opinion in Sweden traditionally has a strong interest in how the public money is spend, so if there is a big evaluation of a particular public interest there is a big probability that it will be picked up by major newspapers and presented in the media. It of course doesn't mean that all evaluations get this kind of attention, but if there is some kind of public interest, evaluation reports generate public debate and they are publicised in some form. Some of studies are more technical and hermetic in both their outcomes and language and therefore not interesting for the general public. But that is actually considered as justified, as some evaluations are targeted mainly at projects and programme managers, policy makers and major stakeholders so sometimes there is no reason to bring them to the whole population.

A unique and specifically Swedish type of disseminating effects of evaluation, where it really gets much attention and publicity is the Almedalsveckan (Almedalen Week) (**Almedalen Week 2010**), an

annual event taking place in the city of Visby on Gotland. Almedalsveckan is called a "rock festival for politics", where representatives of major political parties in Sweden have one day each to have dialogue with media and public, so they take turns to hold speeches, seminars, breakfast meetings and other political activities. It gets a lot of public attention and is considered the most important forum event in Swedish politics. In 2010 almost 1 400 events were arranged and an estimated of 11 000 journalists, lobbyists, local and national politicians and representatives of non-governmental organisations took part. The origin of the Almedalen Week is the speeches held by Olof Palme every summer in Visby, beginning in 1968.

Politicians and decision makers in Sweden tend to be selective and rely partly on political interest and partly on evidence-based decision making. It is seen as a normal phenomenon in the political process, as sometimes the most rational behaviour in the organisation is indeed not the one that the evaluators are recommending, as there are also other variables to be considered, namely flexibility and structure of their organisation, competence and number of their staff, financial resources, political directives. Evaluation is seen as knowledge and process that contributes to decision making, but it cannot fully shape it.

The evaluation report indicated as the most influential for the Cohesion Policy in Sweden was the first evaluation of the implementation organisation that Sweco Eurofutures has carried out and had a visible impact on the whole system (**Sweco Eurofutures 2008**). Going from the past to the present programming period there were a lot of conflicts between regional and national level and Sweco Eurofutures study has immediately presented obstacles for the programmes to work. Evaluators arranged a national conference about how to get started and that was very important to stop the conflicts and get everything working. Another important report was by Ramböll Management Consulting AB, the first report on venture capital funds. It meant a lot for solving conflicts and creating mutual understanding of the roles and commissions for running venture capital (**Avdeitchikova & Ramboll 2010**).

From the point of view of the main Cohesion Policy evaluation actors the main challenges for its future in Sweden are related to shifting legitimisation and recognition of Cohesion Policy effects and impacts in Sweden both by the government and the society. The ambition is to produce theory-based impact evaluations with solid narratives that state what works. Promotion of evaluation will be focussed at getting policy makers used to obtaining a second opinion and the context of the projects that have been already implemented before prioritising projects for the future. During implementation people and institutions should be able to continuously learn from the evaluation on how to get quality in the projects. The existing Swedish model is considered as very good in theory. But in the opinion of main actors several things need to be improved, especially academic base and

public debate. Another issue is the utilisation of the project results is on the side of evaluators who should formulate their conclusions and recommendations in a more communicative and simpler way.

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The United Kingdom

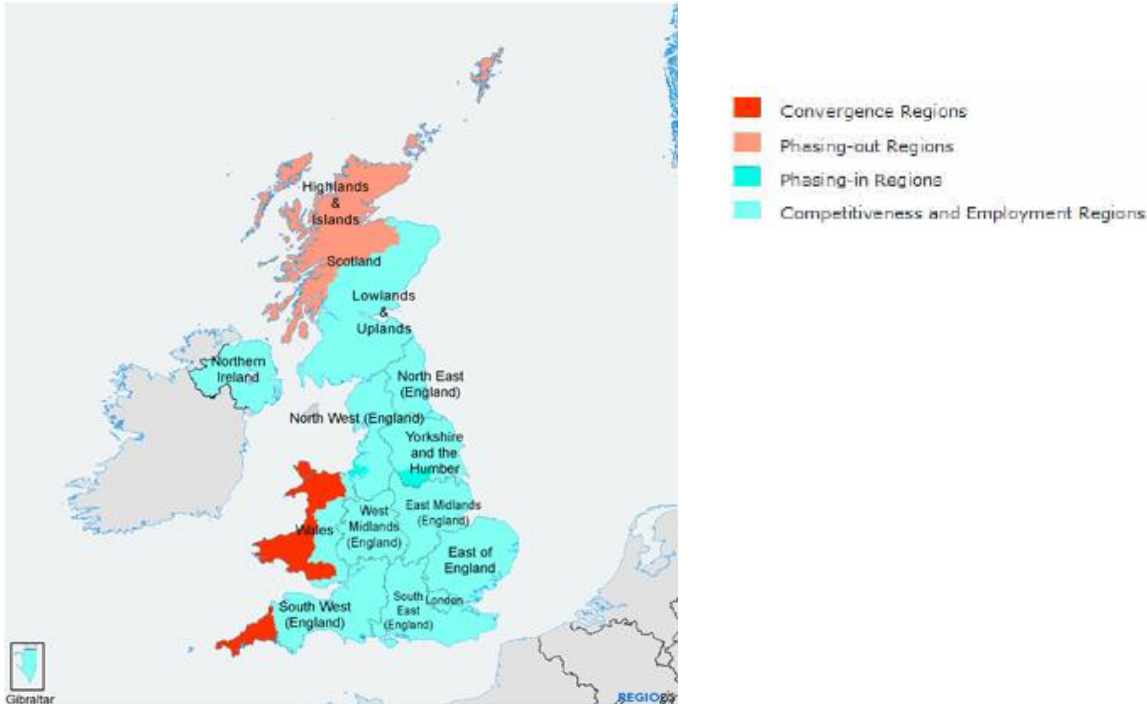
Joanna Hofman

Context of Evaluation System

Between 2000 and 2006, the UK received over 11.3 billion EUR from the EU Cohesion Policy, including 6.2 billion Euro for Objective 1 regions and over 5 billion Euro for Objective 2.

For 2007–2013, the UK has been allocated around 10.6 billion EUR in total Cohesion Policy funding: 2.9 billion EUR under the Convergence Objective, 7 billion EUR under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective and 722 million EUR under the European Territorial Co-operation Objective. The overall support from the Cohesion Policy has been somewhat less significant in comparison with the previous programming period.

Figure 11 Eligible areas in the United Kingdom under the European Competitiveness and Employment Objective 2007-2013



Source: DG REGIO

The UK has 22 regional programmes under both the Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objectives. Of these, 16 receive funding from the ERDF, with 6 programmes funded by the ESF. West Wales and the Valleys, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and the Highlands and Islands fall under the Convergence Objective, which covers approximately 10% of the UK’s population. East Wales, Lowlands and Uplands of Scotland, Northern Ireland, Gibraltar, East England, East Midlands, London, Merseyside, North East England, North West England, South East England, South West England, South Yorkshire, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humberside fall under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective.

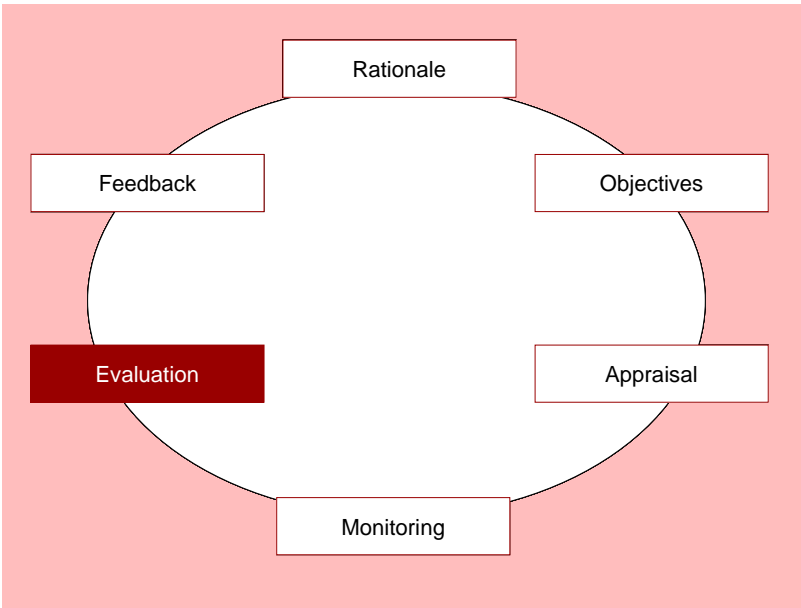
Table 14 Funds for the UK, in millions EUR, 2007–13

Objective	Fund	EU	National Public	National Private	Total
Convergence	ERDF	1.8	1.3	0.5	3.6
	ESF	1.1	0.6	0.2	1.9
Total Convergence		2.9			
Regional Competitiveness and Employment	ERDF	3.6	3.7	0.2	7.5
	ESF	3.4	3.5	0.02	6.9
Total Regional Competitiveness and Employment		7			
Total European Territorial Co-operation	ERDF	0.7	-	-	0.7
TOTAL		10.6	9.1	0.9	20.6

Source: (European Commission DG Regio 2009)

The evaluation practice in the UK is by no means limited to the EU Cohesion Policy – on the contrary: all public policies undergo scrutiny at various stages of their implementation and evidence based policy is well embedded in the British culture. The ROAMEF framework (see the figure below) sets standards for policy making in the UK and places evaluation at its focal point.

Figure 12 The ROAMEF policy cycle



Source: (HM Treasury 2011)

According to **Davies 2004**, the system of policy evaluation in the UK is well developed and supported by the UK government. The main objective of the system is to improve effectiveness and efficiency of public interventions. Among the evaluation methods used in the UK (and recommended by the government) are: experimental and quasi-experimental designs, social surveys, qualitative methods, economic evaluation methods, benchmarking, regulatory impact assessments and performance management procedures. Evaluation studies are conducted both internally and externally and they are increasingly subject to quality control by the Cabinet Office, HM Treasury, and the Office of National Statistics. According to Davis, the “quality control is organised by providing up-to-date guidance on evaluation methods, professional development courses for government analysts, and advice and consultation from [...] central agencies.” (**Davies 2004: 22**)

It is therefore not surprising that according to **Furubo et al. 2002**, the UK scored 15 out of 18 points, and this placed it at the 6th place in the ranking of 22 countries on the indicators of an evaluation culture. The strong position of the UK in the ranking is understandable, given the level of government’s involvement in encouraging and promoting evaluation among civil servants, government officials, and policy makers (see more on this below).

Demand side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

In principle, all government departments and agencies are involved in contracting evaluation studies. With regard to the structural funds programmes, the most important stakeholders are: Department for and Local Government which is in charge of ERDF funding (Department for and Local Government 2011) and Department for Work and Pensions responsible for the ESF (**Department for Work and Pensions 2011**). However, all implementing institutions in the UK from Managing Authorities to all project sponsors are required to undertake or commission evaluations of their programmes and projects respectively.

Institutions involved in evaluating Cohesion Policy programmes in the UK operate in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, reflecting the regional and decentralised implementation structure. In England, apart from the central government, up until now Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) have been responsible for the regional development, including the implementation and evaluation of the structural funds in regions (see more on the RDAs evaluations below). These relatively new structures (created in 1999) were abolished by the new government in 2011, a fact which will certainly have an impact on the implementation and evaluation of structural fund programmes in England. It is however too early to give any indication on how the new system will look and what the implications for evaluation practices will be. For the remainder of the current programming period the central government took over the responsibilities of RDAs (including

evaluation) reducing the additional level of management and eliminating important stakeholders in evaluating European programmes in England.

While the data obtained for the UK is incomplete and relies on the responses from the Welsh and English authorities only, it illustrates the strength of the supply side of the evaluation market: with approximately 200 institutions involved in contracting evaluation studies at programme and project level. The size of evaluation contracts varies from massive projects (worth of over £1 million to small assignments amounting to £30,000. The annual budget for programme level evaluation in Wales amounted to £300,000 in 2010 (and another £300,000 at project level). In England (for ESF studies only) the annual budget also exceeded £300,000¹¹⁹. This is just a fraction of the market. On the other hand, the economic crisis has resulted in government seeking savings and implementing austerity measures across the country and one can already observe that some evaluation work has been suspended, cancelled, or its budget has been cut back.

Contracts for evaluation services in the UK are granted through tenders that determine the most economically advantageous offer. There are several guides helping commissioners to contract evaluation services, ranging from those related to public procurement in general, and to those specifically focused on evaluation services. They are briefly presented below.

Introduction to Public Procurement (**The Office of Government Commerce 2008**) provides a general overview of available public procurement procedures:

- The Open Procedure – where all interested candidates must be invited to tender and which does not leave any room for pre-qualification or pre-selection.
- The Restricted Procedure – where interested candidates are invited to submit an expression of interest in which they reply against defined criteria relating to their organisation's technical capability and financial standing. Shortlisted candidates are then invited to tender. There is no scope to negotiate with tenderers following receipt of bids.
- The Competitive Dialogue Procedure – which is a flexible procedure, suitable where there is a need for authorities to discuss aspects of the proposed contract with candidates. Shortlisted parties are then invited to participate in dialogue, which may have several stages. This helps to refine the requirement through supplier input and gives the opportunity for meaningful negotiations. Once this stage is concluded, suppliers are invited to submit a final tender – see the figure below.
- The Competitive Negotiated Procedure (with a call for competition) should be limited to very specific circumstances and should only be used where other procedures will not work. It may

¹¹⁹ Data from DWP only (excluding RDAs expenditures).

be valid when: competition is not viable or appropriate; other procedures have not produced an acceptable tender; work is needed for research and development purposes; or where prior overall pricing is not possible.

For straightforward procurements, such as commodity goods and services, the authorities may choose between the open and restricted procedures. For complex procurements contracting authorities are normally expected to use the Competitive Dialogue procedure which gives them more flexibility (**The Office of Government Commerce 2008**).

In fact, the competitive dialogue is a popular procedure to contract evaluation services.¹²⁰ Invitation to tender documents (ITT) are developed and sent to the shortlisted candidates providing clear instructions on how to submit tenders, deadlines for receipt, draft contractual terms and conditions, and any associated pricing and technical schedules etc. The Magenta Book provides instructions on what should be included in the content:

- the background, rationale and objectives of the policy to be evaluated, its target recipients, delivery method and intended outcomes;
- the extent of the existing evidence base related to the policy;
- the evaluation objectives and research questions;
- the audience and intended use of the evaluation;
- the available information, such as monitoring data collection processes already set up;
- the possible evaluation approach, research design and methods;
- the required capabilities, skills and experience of the proposed evaluation and team;
- the required evaluation outputs (including datasets) and the milestones to be met;
- data archiving requirements;
- the indicative budget and timetable.

The ITT also includes the main award criteria, weightings and any sub-criteria to be applied to the selection of a tender. The shortlisted bidders who received an ITT submit their completed bids which are assessed according to criteria set out beforehand which allow for selecting the most economically advantageous tender (**The Office of Government Commerce 2009**).

The following criteria are most often used in selecting external contractors for evaluation services:

- quality of tender [70-80%] including several sub-criteria such as:

¹²⁰ However, some institutions, such as DWP, have research frameworks in place through which they receive requested expertise and services from companies listed in the framework.

- method statement – description of activities to deliver requested services [30-40%];
- project team's and organisation's experience and relevant expertise [15%];
- project and resource plan [15%];
- quality assurance and risk [10%];
- price [20-30%].

As mentioned earlier, the selection procedure consists of two stages: in the first phase bidders are assessed according to criteria quoted above. Only the top scoring tender submissions are invited to an interview and separate evaluation criteria are developed for this stage.

Also the UK Evaluation Society (UKES) developed guidelines for those who commission evaluation services – see more on these in the section on evaluation facilitators below.

Supply side of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

A general market overview in the UK shows that it is characterised by low barriers to entry. There are over 150 firms offering consultancy services, including evaluation and research. In addition to firms, there is a historically strong involvement of universities and research institutions in delivering and assessing public policies in the UK. With regard to the size of the players on the market, they can be assigned to three main groups:

- large consultancy firms, such as PwC, Deloitte, KPMG, Ernst&Young;
- medium-sized companies, such as Ecorys, DTZ, SQW, Rocket Science, London Economics, GHK Research and Consulting, NatCen, Coffey International Development, etc.;
- small entities, including firms (e.g. Oxford Economics), or independent evaluators and academics.

It should be noted that the middle market is particularly strong in the UK: it includes several low-cost players who are nevertheless well-established and have extensive experience. Another interesting characteristic of the evaluation market in the UK is the fact that many small and medium firms have historical links with universities which gives them a very strong competitive advantage over their competitors.

When looking at the evaluation market in the UK one should also keep in mind its geographic aspects. While large firms and academics are actively engaged in evaluations across the country, only a limited number of medium and small-sized enterprises go beyond their local (regional) market. The majority of actors are concentrated in and around London and the South East of England, in the North West of England and in Scotland.

Having said this, the evaluation market in the UK is well developed and strong. The best illustration of this is the fact that, on the basis of data from the Welsh authorities, there were approximately 20 companies or research institutions carrying out evaluation studies in 2010. In England, there are around 30 companies listed in the DWP's research framework that provide evaluation expertise and services in the field of employment.

With regard to the code of conduct for evaluators, the UK Evaluation Society developed guidelines to be applied when carrying out evaluation research. The key guiding principles include:

- being open to dialogue with commissioners throughout the process informing them of progress and developments;
- be realistic about what is feasible to achieve and their capacity to deliver within the time-scale and budget agreed;
- being able to demonstrate comprehensive and appropriate use of all the evidence and that evaluation conclusions can be traced to this evidence;
- being prepared to argue the case for the public right to know in evaluation in specified contexts.

Products of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

The evaluation reports related to the EU Cohesion Policy in the UK are published by various institutions and there is no single gateway where all evidence would be gathered. Another feature of the British system is a focus on the current programming period: information on the 2000-2006 European funding and the evaluation reports concerning this period is not easily (if at all) accessible. This is mainly because structural fund operations were often evaluated as part of wider interventions in a particular subject area and according to Tyler there were nearly 300 evaluations of economic development interventions across the UK (**Tyler 2010**). Only in England, in the last five years there were approximately 16 ESF type evaluations published by DWP.¹²¹

The information presented in this section relates mainly to the current programming period (2007-2013) while effects of evaluations from previous years are presented in the section on effects of evaluation system below.

While the data is still incomplete, there were at least 15 contracts related to the new round of the structural programmes in the UK. An initial analysis of these reports supported by the overview of evaluation work in the UK (**Tyler 2010**) shows that apart from the obligatory ex ante evaluations current studies were predominantly concerned with process and delivery issues and reviews to

¹²¹ This number does not include evaluations conducted by RDAs.

assess if the scope and content of interventions remain appropriate given the changes in economic environment.

Table 15 Evaluation studies in 2010

Region	Number of contracts related to the Cohesion Policy 2007-13
England	Approximately 15 contracts
Northern Ireland	No information available
Scotland	2 contracts (both projects underway)
Wales	4 contracts (incl. 2 projects underway)
Total:	>15

Sources: (England, ERDF evaluation; England, ESF evaluation; Northern Ireland, ERDF evaluation; Northern Ireland, ESF evaluation; Scotland, evaluation; Wales, evaluation)

All of these evaluations have been contracted out and they are almost evenly split between those related to human resource and regional development. There are several examples of the high quality reports produced so far, including:

- the evaluation of the SMART programme in Scotland (using a specially designed evaluation framework to guide the research);
- the 2005 mid-term evaluation update for the Objective One programme in Wales (an extensive piece of research using specially designed questionnaires to measure deadweight, leakage and other parameters);
- Cohort Survey of ESF Participants in England (providing evidence of the longer term outcomes of ESF participants).

With regard to assessing the quality of the reports, the authorities in England use a simple feedback form/quality report at the end of each project.

Facilitators of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

There are numerous resources and platforms to share evaluation practices and promote consistent and thorough evaluation methodologies in the UK. It is fair to start the review from the Magenta Book which is a cornerstone for evaluation practice in the UK.

The Magenta Book is HM Treasury¹²² guidance on evaluation. It is aimed for Central Government but it is also helpful for all policy makers at local and regional levels. As mentioned earlier, the Magenta Book helps with designing and managing evaluations, as well as with the presentation and interpretation of evaluation results. It explains why evaluation should be taken into account before and during the policy design phase, and how it can help to improve the quality of results.

¹²² HM Treasury is the United Kingdom's economics and finance ministry.

The first part of the Book is dedicated to policy makers (it clarifies what evaluation is, and what benefits it can bring). It explains in simple terms the requirements for good evaluation, and easy steps that policy makers can take to make a good evaluation of their intervention more feasible. The second part of the book is designed for policy analysts. Thus, it is more technical discussing in more detail different stages of an evaluation process, how to answer evaluation questions using different methods and designs for evaluation research and analytical tools allowing for interpretation and assimilation of evaluation evidence (**HM Treasury 2011**).

The Green Book is another key document, also developed by HM Treasury for Central Government, providing a framework for the appraisal and evaluation of all policies, programmes and projects. It has a more economic focus and sets out the guidance to identify, assess, measure and value the impacts and/or benefits of public sector investments at the beginning or end of an intervention/investment. It sets out the key stages in the development of a proposal from the articulation of the rationale for intervention and the setting of objectives, through to options appraisal and, eventually, implementation and evaluation. It describes how the economic, financial, social and environmental assessments of a proposal should be combined and it aims to ensure consistency and transparency in the appraisal process throughout government. A number of accompanying guidelines complement the Green Book with suggestions for valuing environmental impacts, assessing competition impacts, adjusting for risk and optimism bias, etc (**HM Treasury 2003**).

Such additional guidelines were developed for RDAs mentioned above, to assist them in making assessments of the impact of their interventions. The Impact Evaluation Framework (IEF) ensures that evaluation of the impact of RDA interventions is robust and takes place on a consistent basis to promote a better understanding of what works and why (**PA CONSULTING & England's Regional Development Agencies 2006**). In a nutshell, the metrics to assess impact of an intervention are:

- Gross Value Added (GVA), which can be calculated through:
 - Direct estimate;
 - Jobs created / safeguarded;
 - Company accounts;
 - Skills upgrades.

- Social Impact – RDA interventions may have an impact on levels of crime, the health of residents or social cohesion through grater participation in community or voluntary activity. While there is no single indicator or index that can capture these impacts entirely, it is

expected that evaluations recognise where there are significant social impacts and, if possible, measure them.

- Strategic Value Added (SAV), which was introduced in 2005 to capture the effects of the wider coordinating, catalytic and influencing role of an RDA and its investments, and which would not be recorded if only direct outputs of support are measured.

IEF compliant methodology for RDA evaluation includes the following:

- the use of beneficiary surveys to collect data to estimate the metrics described above;
- Information to ensure that additionality of interventions is taken into account – including a description of the appropriate benchmarks to use where primary data is not available. Calculating additionality involves assessing variables such as:

- Deadweight: what level of outputs and outcomes would have happened anyway without the project, and in what time period?
 - Leakage: Have the outputs/outcomes benefited non-target group(s) and/or area(s) at the expense of the target group and/or area? If yes, by how much?
 - Displacement: Has the project reduced existing activity from within the target group or area? If yes, where and by how much?
 - Substitution: Has the project resulted in organisations/firms substituting an activity or input for a similar one to take advantage of public funding? If yes, where and by how much?
 - Multiplier: How much additional economic activity is generated through purchase along the supply chain, employee spending rounds and longer term effects?
- A methodology for including persistence of impact of any intervention, including some appropriate benchmarks to use;
 - Information on how impact should be apportioned when funding comes from a variety of sources.

The documents mentioned above provide a basis for anyone involved in commissioning or conducting evaluation studies in the UK. However, apart from written guidelines and frameworks for evaluating public interventions, there are also institutions and networks that support the development of evaluation practice. Probably one of the most important is the UK Evaluation Society **(UK Evaluation Society 2008b)**.

The UKES was founded in 1994 as a professional membership organisation to promote and improve the theory, practice, understanding and utilisation of evaluation and its contribution to public

knowledge. It provides a forum to consider differences and similarities in the problems facing various groups of practitioners. Currently, the UKES aims to:

- advance and improve the theory and practice of evaluation;
- increase understanding and utilisation of evaluation evidence and its contribution to public knowledge;
- promote cross-sector and cross-disciplinary dialogue and debate on evaluation.

The UKES provides a wide range of activities, from developing evaluation know-how through publications and conferences to developing links and relations with the key players in the field of evaluation.

Good Practice Guidelines developed by UKES aim to support the work of evaluators, commissioners of evaluation, evaluation participants and those involved in self-evaluation. The guidelines attempt to capture a diverse range of principles and frameworks for action that have been useful for evaluations in a variety of contexts. They provide a reference point from different perspectives for a range of stakeholders involved in the evaluation process. The guidelines are intended for use in evaluations taking place in any domain or discipline, not necessary related to the EU Cohesion Policy.

In addition to the annual evaluation conferences which are renown amongst all involved in evaluation practice in the UK and abroad (**UK Evaluation Society 2009; UK Evaluation Society 2010**), the UKES develops a national programme of training and regional events run by the regional/country networks providing platforms for networking and exchanging professional opportunities. Links to shared resources and good practice guidelines are provided on the UKES Website (**UK Evaluation Society 2008b**).

The UKES has developed broad links with similar institutions abroad, such as the European Evaluation Society and International Organisation for Cooperation on Evaluation.

As shown above, the UK has no specific forum or platform for sharing evaluation practices with regard to the EU Cohesion Policy. Similarly, there have been very few activities related to developing an evaluation culture in the field of the Cohesion Policy, as evaluation practice in the UK has a much broader scope. Among those rare activities related purely to the EU Cohesion Policy is a new project “ESF-Works”, supported by the EU, which is the showcase and forum for policy and practice lessons from the 2007-2013 ESF programme in England. The project highlights stories of the people supported by the ESF and shares resources, including evaluation and research reports detailing the evidence of the impact of the ESF across England (**ESF Works 2011**). Also, there is evidence on networking, regular meetings and information exchange between authorities responsible for the ESF

evaluation (in England, Scotland and Wales), although these meetings have a rather informal character.

With regard to the professional development of those involved in evaluation, UK universities offer many postgraduate courses related to public policy and social research methods in general (**Postgrad 2011**). More specifically, there are several courses entirely dedicated to evaluation. For example:

- University of London offers Master of Science (MSc) in Policy Analysis and Evaluation (**Centre for Longitudinal Studies 2011**);
- London Metropolitan University provides MSc in Social Research and Evaluation (**London Metropolitan University 2011**);
- University of East Anglia offers MSc in Impact Evaluation for International Development (**University of East Anglia 2011**).

Effects of evaluation system for Cohesion Policy

Before any evaluation study is contracted in the UK, its target audiences are identified and the report is expected to provide answers to their needs. For example, ESF evaluations in England are most often targeted at policy makers in the ESF Division (DWP). In terms of disseminating evaluation findings, there are no formal strategies to follow. As mentioned earlier, the evaluation reports are presented to the stakeholders and published online and in print. Often, workshops and seminars are organised to disseminate evaluation results but this is not a standard practice.

Similarly, there is no formalised system or procedure to follow up the implementation of recommendations stemming from the evaluation work. This is not to say however that the evaluation reports are not used after they are published. On the contrary, the evaluation work is usually taken on board but it does not happen in an automatic (or structured) way: follow-up activities depend on a particular study and recommendations it provides. An example of an evaluation study which provided a basis for numerous follow-up activities is the Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities evaluation conducted in England (**Department for Work and Pensions 2010**).

Another example of how the wealth of evaluation studies is used in the UK is the consolidated work for the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform that has considered data from approximately 270 IEF compliant evaluations (see above) and many more non-IEF compliant evaluation covering a range of economic development interventions across the UK since 2000 and measuring impact of RDAs spending on public investments (in many cases including ERDF and ESF types of expenditures). This and similar studies of a meta-evaluation character show how the evaluation reports are used to learn lessons from the past and apply them in a new policy cycle.

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Conclusions

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When putting together the stories from each country we hoped to find overarching pattern of practices and factors that shape evaluation development across member states. There are few general observations that emerges across the countries

Our main reflection is that the development of evaluation practice in the field of Cohesion Policy is quite impressive, especially when we take into account timeline and context in which it has been taking place. 11 years is a relatively very short time when comparing to the national evaluation systems of countries advanced in evaluation. They have been developing their expertise from mid-1970-ties, while USA has been growing its evaluation practice for over half a century! Moreover for majority of the counties in the enlarged European Union evaluation was a brand new phenomena, unknown for their traditional administrative cultures. So for them the development of evaluation was taking place together with an enormous effort of modernizing public administration and switching toward performance-oriented management. Last but not least, the progress we made is also impressive when we realise that current, relatively coherent evaluation practice has been developed across 27 different member states. Our administrative cultures and structures differ quite significantly since they are results of unique national history and processes. Despite this fact, in the field of evaluation of Structural Funds, we managed to come up with solutions that value our uniqueness but in the same time allow us to talk with one “evaluation language”, compare and combine our finding, exchange practices.

Indeed, we can state that the current situation and the advances in the field of evaluation can be assessed as very positive. Stating that, we also see three some shortcomings cutting across our European system.

First limitation that we observed is the relative isolation of practice of Cohesion Policy evaluation from the practices of national policies. In case of those countries of the EU-15, with tradition of using evaluation, this can be explained by often-marginal role of Cohesion Policy resources (in comparison to national policies) and specific requirements concerning the use of EU funds (usually different than those in domestic policies). As far as new members terms are concerned isolation have simple explanation – lack of evaluation practices (except first spill-over effects in domestic policies).

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Second, quite surprising observation is that Cohesion Policy evaluation practice is more dynamic and often more advanced in new member states than old member states. This can be explained by the amount of resources available to those countries. The scale of the EU intervention in EU-12 member states is highly visible and structural funds are high in political agenda. Moreover, new member states entered the EU in the moment when evaluation started to gain on importance within the European Commission. As “beginners” EU-10 countries were usually more open to changes and actively incorporated this new instrument.

Third limitation that we have observed across all 27 member states is that although practice is dynamic, it is still not very advanced (especially in terms of research methods) when comparing to United States or to evaluation practices of national policies in old member states. This can be naturally explained by a relative youth of the Cohesion Policy practice. However we believe that we could go beyond simplistic and schematic practices simply by absorbing lessons from outside of our field.

To sum it up, the overview of the practices across 27 member states show that we made an impressive progress, we keep moving forward, we have a good base to improve further and we could use this positive momentum to overcome our current shortcomings and move to the more advanced and useful practice.

Having this in mind, in our last chapter, we would like to provide readers with a material for discussion of possible and desired advances in evaluation practice of Cohesion Policy. Therefore, instead of going one by one through the blocks of our analysis (context, supply, demand, etc.) we decided to look across them, using as guidance a normative point of view – desired vision of evaluation practice. We will start with a statement of a general vision of evaluation in public policies. On this basis we formulate a key challenge for the evaluation practice in the European Union. Then, based on observations from our review as well as earlier literature, we list factors that are crucial for facing this challenge. Finally, we discuss each factor in details. We provide evidences that confirm its importance, we consider its current state across the European Union and we propose some tentative solutions and directions of developments.

Let us start with the declaration of the vision. We see evaluation as an integral element of the result-oriented policies. Our vision bases on four key statements. They are, to large extent inspired by recent EC documents (**European Commission 2011; 2010**), body of knowledge from the field of modern public management as well as empirical finding from analyses and research done on the Polish system of Cohesion Policy. Let us briefly present these four points.

Firstly, we see public interventions as optimistic theories about desired socio-economic change. These theories are experiments, verified in certain time and context (country or region) by a real life

application and results. In other words, policies and programmes are constant trial and error process (**Bardach, 2006**).

Secondly, we believe that effectiveness of these experiments over time can be substantially and continually improved only by systematic “policy learning process”. This means use of evidences from evaluations and other reliable sources for an adaptation of strategies and programmes. Thus, for us evaluation is one of the feedback mechanisms that provide evidences and facilitate reflection in the complex, multiannual policy learning process (**Mulgan, 2011, p.viii**).

Thirdly, we are convinced that system of effective management of public intervention requires three, interconnected functions. First function is planning, that is making choices on targeting interventions at key needs. Second is implementation function that assures smooth use of resource. Third function – reflective function is responsible for knowledge production and accumulation. It provides critical assessment of the operations of the system, both strategic and operational activities (**Olejniczak, in press**). This last function is, in our opinion, crucial for the system because by feeding other functions with knowledge it allows the improvement of the system over time.

Based on the above-presented framework, we are deeply convinced that the question of key importance for evaluation practice in the field of Cohesion Policy is: **How can we make evaluation research a useful feedback in the policy learning process?**

The body of evidence collected in this publication as well as earlier studies indicates that four things that matter for a dynamics of this feedback mechanism:

- **Questions matter** - Importance of the topics addressed by research, cooperation and involvement of stakeholders during the question formulation (ownership of questions) and the clarity of the questions raised;
- **Answers matter** – Strength of the evidences provided by the studies, clarity of communication of findings, timing of results in reference to decision-making cycle;
- **Process of decision-making matters** – accumulation of knowledge and evidences from evaluation, understanding of institutional setting and culture of decision-making;
- **People and structures matter** – knowledge and experience of the civil servants responsible for evaluation contracting and execution accompanied by the stability of institutional structures.

We discuss each of these things in the next sections of the chapter. We do it based on the evidences collected from 27 member states, the Polish evaluation system as well as findings from outside of Europe. We are deeply convinced that this can move us towards more effective public policies.

Questions matter

The literature and practice of scientific research states clearly that cornerstone of the good research study is the curiosity of the researcher and how well he or she transforms this curiosity into the research questions (**Booth et al., 2008; White, 2009, p.4; Yeager, 2008**). Good research questions are a compass that guides the scientific exploration up to the clear, informative answers. They are indispensable in making a learning journey efficient and effective (**Yeager, 2008, p.45**).

Putting this in the context of evaluation we can see three aspects of the problem:

- The ownership of the questions,
- The correspondence of the questions with information needs,
- The craft of asking questions.

First aspect is the ownership of the questions. In the field of evaluation practice, the studies are driven not by a curiosity of single person, but by the information needs of the people and institutions involved in policy system. The formulation of research questions is a result of the discussions and compromise between different stakeholders of the policy and, too lesser extend, the researchers who execute the study. In fact the use of findings as well as dissemination of knowledge gathered during the research starts before the actual evaluation is launched. For these process the partnership is needed.

Reason for that is the creation of the demand for knowledge. Not always involvement of stakeholders during the whole process of evaluation can be assured. However there are at least two moments where partnership is of crucial importance, mainly formulation of the terms of reference and (later) discussion of the results joined with formulation of recommendations. In a day to day life when one asks the questions he waits for the answer and later feels obliged to carefully listen to the feedback information. This simple mechanism works the same in evaluation and brings about ownership of the question and later the ownership of the answer (conclusion and recommendation). However there is an issue of quality of this demand. The higher in the institution hierarchy is the “owner” the better for future use of findings. The more curiosity concerning the effects of the actions, the more result oriented conclusions and recommendations will be delivered.

Review of 27 countries shows that most of the member states came up with solution that provide a very good platform for institutionalised dialogue on evaluation focus. These are steering groups for evaluation studies. In some of the countries monitoring committees play significant role in the whole evaluation process (i.e. in Lithuania, Latvia or Germany). This constitutes friendly environment for demand creation. However, since steering groups consist of mostly middle level management directly involved in running the particular intervention, they naturally tend to focus evaluation

questions on their main concern – fulfilment of the EC requirements and smoothness of the implementation process. This narrows down the topics of the studies to mostly procedural issues or studies that are obligatory (ex-ante and mid-term). We come back to this in the next section.

Second aspect is the match between information needs and the content of the questions. In other words, how well the topics of the contracted studies address the real information needs of the programmes and policies.

When we look at the current practice of evaluation across 27 member states we see that topics of evaluations concentrate on the similar issues. However, in our opinion the main shortcoming of the thematic scope of evaluations across EU member states is a dominance of studies focused on the implementation arrangements. In other words, evaluations focuses much more on funds delivery process than on their results and impacts.

Our analysis shows that vast majority of evaluations have been addressing questions that matters for managers. These are operational issues, bottlenecks and procedures of specific programmes or part of interventions. As we already pointed this out, it could be due to the fact that formulation of questions (ownership of the questions) is done in forums dominated by low level managers and experts involved in day-to-day implementation. Another explanation could be the high number of on-going evaluations in the overall population of studies. This type of evaluation usually implicate in some way process orientation of the researches. Nevertheless the strong domination of process studies across Europe up to year 2009 is slightly worrying. Of course implementation matters. But the ultimate goal is not money spending but positive socio-economic change. Thus, what really matters is the understanding what works and how it works. So far evaluations provided very limited knowledge on those issues. Since 2010 we can observe some positive signs on the slow change in this matter. More ex-post studies appeared (this type of evaluation was conducted i.e. in Latvia, Romania, Poland, Hungary and Belgium) despite the fact that there was no obligation for UE Member states to conduct this kind of researches (regulation place the responsibility only on the EC). We hope that this trend could be strengthened in the upcoming years.

Last but not least the problem is limitation made by some of countries only to obligatory evaluation (enforced by European Commission) and lack of thematic evaluations analysing particular subjects in wider context (e.g. in context of domestic policies).

The final aspect of the “questions matters” theme is a craft of formulating research questions. Literature of the topic gives us some guidance on this. First important thing is a proper identification of the type of question we want to ask. Not all the problems are researchable (White, 2009, p.59-88).

That means that some issues cannot be answered because of lack of data or simply because of the nature of the problem. Furthermore, there are different types of research questions: descriptive, relational or normative (Yeager, 2008, p.51). Each of this type focuses the attention on different issue – exploration and description of the phenomena, finding relations and explaining causality between events or assessing the quality of the observable. Each of them determines different strategies of data collection and analysis. The challenge of evaluation research is that it usually requires addressing whole set of questions: description (what happen?), causation (why?) and assessment (Is it good or not?) Moreover it adds one more type – prescriptive questions (Now what?) (Olejniczak, 2007). Recognising the character of questions (is it researchable at all) and their types is of crucial importance for both process of research and its results.

This moves us to the second issue in the craft of asking questions – the importance narrative logic. Both academic books and evaluation classics underlie the importance of storytelling (Booth et al., 2008; Patton, 2008). The number of key questions should be very limited (preferably 3 to 5) and they have to form a logical order, they have to correspond with each other and base on each other. Patton (2008, p.5) put it as a simple: “What? → So What? → Now what?”. The logical chain of questions forms a backbone of later evaluation report.

Finally the craft of asking questions includes the discipline of wording and focusing (White, 2009, p.99). It requires defining all terms used in questions, trying to be as specific as possible and, most of all, trying to focus the question, tie it to the time and space.

Knowing the postulate of the literature and practice of research we can now have a look at the *state of art* of asking questions in the field of Cohesion Policy. This issue has not been explored in a systematic manner across all 27 member states. However, based on the review of available evaluation reports we can make some tentative observations (example of this kind of analyses is study *Evidence-based Cohesion Policy and its role in achieving 2020 objectives* prepared by Polish Ministry of Regional Development)

First, there are cases of rising questions that cannot be answers in a non-speculative way. Usually it is an issue of the lack of data or timing – the questions of effects are asked too early in the life-cycle of the programme (e.g. asking about observable effects of programmes during the first call of projects). Second, it seems that narrowing down the number of question is a challenge. Terms of Reference often include long list of research questions of an unclear types. Furthermore, the research questions are sometimes mixed with simple survey questions. In practice, this multitude of mixed questions combined with time pressure forces contractors to make informal, on the fly choice on how to focus research. And since descriptive questions as simpler in answering than explanatory and prescriptive questions, contractors usually choose the latter. As a result, most studies are descriptive in nature, overloaded with inconclusive information and not very revealing for the staff involved in the policy-

making. Pointing out these shortcomings we can say however, that the craft of asking questions is improving over time, especially in those countries with institutionally stable evaluation units and experienced staff.

After discussing the importance of questions and current state of art in this field let us present some suggestions for improvement.

When looking at the issue of question ownership we can state that most of the member states have the good basis for creation of the demand and ownership of the questions exists (presence of steering groups, active role of monitoring committees in the field of evaluation). What could be improved are the proportions in the composition of participants of the process. We propose first of all, stronger involvement of decision makers in the process of elaboration of Terms of References. By creating an ownership of the question asked the demand for future knowledge from high-level officials is brought about. In consequence it should have positive impact on the use of forthcoming findings.

In order to increase the quality of the demand, the fundamental change in perception is needed. Current EU evaluation is focused on accountability (**Batterbury, 2006**) understood in a very narrow way – as compliance with process. In current approach every failure is perceived as mistake and crime. This blocks innovation and possible return of investments. When the decision makers feel constant pressure on smooth “money spending” they will not ask the questions on the effects. When the punishment for losing one euro is bigger than the press for efficient and effective use of one million euro, for the decision maker and managers the choice is simple. They will ask process oriented-questions which will allow them to limit the negative consequences. As there is strong resistance for limiting the control/audit burden our proposal is to balance this situation by introducing benefits for civil servants for achieving the desired effects – let us call it a “success fee”. Simultaneous reasonable, positive increase of pressure on achieving the results would be also of great importance in order to create the demand for result-oriented knowledge.

This links us to the thematic reorientation of studies from process to effects and mechanisms. We should encourage stakeholders to take more attention to those issues. This is complex and difficult task but possible to realization. Following activities should be done to make it happens:

- Benefits of this approach should be represent and promote (i.e. better quality of public interventions in long-term, possibility of create better dialogue with society based on results from this kind of evaluation, more effective use of funds - very important in the times of economic crisis)

- Engage the stakeholders into evaluation process from the very beginning to the final part of evaluation process (from formulating questions in ToR to discussion about a recommendations)
- Create a potential of knowledge about an evaluation among stakeholders (i.e. specific, specialized trainings devoted to this group)

Positive experience derived from research made by several Member States encourages verifying the previous approach and considering promoting the implementation of ex-post evaluation among EU Member States. Last but not least there should be more evaluations on strategic level and thematic scope focused on particular topics and in the wider context. Right now, too many of evaluations are too much focused only on one specific programme or intervention.

As concern the craft of asking questions we think that some very practical improvements in this field could include three very practical developments. First, it seems that Contracting Authorities of evaluations could put more effort on grouping questions. We understand that questions are usually the result of different information needs put forward by different stakeholders however the unit that prepares the final Terms of Reference should put more attention in integrating the list of questions into logical concise. As Polish and international practice shows, it is good to think about main questions as titles of the chapters in the final report. Our second point is to raise the awareness of different types of questions and the relations between them. Identifying types of questions should help in spotting the missing issues, the eventual imbalance between description and explanation and prescriptions (that is recommendation – the ultimate goal of evaluation). It eventually would be also useful in constructing logical chain – narrative of the report from the research. Finally, the craft of asking questions can be improved by keeping the discipline of explaining all the terms used in each question. A Contracting Authority can do this, or it can be required from potential contractors at the stage of the tender. That should help in developing joint understanding of the research scope between stakeholder and contractors as well as on spotting the concepts that are fuzzy, difficult to explore and potentially risky for the final clarity of the study findings.

Answers matters

If we want evaluation to be a useful learning tool, the answers given by evaluation reports need to meet certain conditions, that means:

- Answers should be credible – the finding and recommendations of the studies should base on sound research procedure and logic of reasoning;
- Answer should be understandable – they should be presented and communicated in clear way;

- Answer should arrive on time – timing of study findings should be attuned to the decision-making process.

Let us discuss each of these aspects in more details.

The role of credibility of evaluation findings in the utilization of evaluation studies is well documented in the literature (**Ferry, Olejniczak, 2008; Shulha, Cousins, 1997**) as well as backed up by common sense. At the end of the day, we tend to use source in which we trust.

This, however, triggers very practical questions as: "What makes a study trustworthy?". It is its research design, methods as well as execution of the research process. Literature on social research provide us with some practical indicators (**Bryman, 2004, Part 2; Spencer et al., 2003; Olejniczak et al., 2011**):

- proper fit of the methods to the topic and subject of research;
- Triangulation of data and methods which balance limitations of methods and sources and provide more complete picture;
- Execution of a systematic inquiry, which means being methodical in evaluation process and keeping discipline in using the chosen methods;
- Intellectual self-reflection and self-criticism at every stage of the evaluation inquiry. This allows us to build a coherent story from a body of observations and opinions.
- Transparency of the analytical process, which means clear presentation of applied procedure, clear base of assessment, well-explained chain between observations, claims and conclusions.

Having this in mind let us look how the current situation in the Cohesion Policy looks like. The overall picture is quite disappointing. Most of the studies use very narrow spectrum of methodologies. These are desk research, interviews with programmes staff, questionnaires (usually with effective and ineffective applicants, sometimes with potential applicants), and basic descriptive statistics. At the country or regions level there is a quite well developed modelling practice however application of this method is limited to macro-analysis, which contribute to only a small part of the volume of studies. Although case studies are quite popular, their selection and execution is again quite simplistic (some positive exceptions can be seen in Sweden). There are only rare, isolated examples of using such advances in modern evaluation as: theory-driven evaluations (Poland, The Netherlands), counterfactual approaches (Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, Poland), system thinking (Austria), deliberative studies and action-research approaches (Sweden). Some promising methodology seems completely absent from current Cohesion Policy practice, for example: advanced qualitative data analysis (coding), positive psychology (appreciative inquiry) and mixed-methods

designs. Lack of in-depth analysis and explanations underlying the observed phenomena are quite common, in many cases evaluators usually rely on once source. We can also see general problem with reasoning. The point made by one interviewee that *“conclusions are partly supported by analysis while collected data are often not very relevant”* apparently holds in many countries for many studies. Normative claims (that is assessment of the quality of programme, effectiveness, utility, etc.) are also often made without clear statement of what is in fact the comparison point (is it benchmarking with other programme, pre-post comparison, etc.).

Based on the observation of relatively low advances in methodologies across member states, we would like to propose following recommendations for strengthening credibility of evidences. We should put much more effort in our research of the Cohesion Policy programmes, namely in:

- Revealing causality between interventions and the socio-economic changes in the area covered by interventions
- Explaining the mechanisms of those socio-economic change (how things work and in what context)
- Exploring complexity, grasping a multi-faceted and dynamic socio-economic reality in a more holistic way.

We should try to reach beyond current, simplistic spectrum of approaches and methods. There is a lot out there, to be explored. Recent debates in the world community of evaluation and even social research include such interesting issues as:

- Application of theory-driven approach to impact analysis of complex public programmes **(Astbury, Leeuw, 2010; Donaldson, 2007; Leeuw, Vaessen, 2009);**
- Developments in experimental and quasi-experimental approaches and counterfactual analysis Martini **(Martini, 2011; Torgerson et al., 2010)**
- Alternative approaches to causal investigation in a social, multifaceted environment (e.g. General Elimination Methods, Modified Success Case Method) **(Cook et al., 2010, Annexe);**
- Advances in using complexity theories and system thinking in conducting utilization-focused evaluations **(Patton, 2010; Williams, Hummelbrunner, 2010),**
- Attempts of combining strength of quantitative and qualitative approaches in a coherent manner (mixed-methods) **(Creswell, Clark, 2010; Greene et al., 2001)** and even reaching beyond social research towards natural other disciplines **(Repko, 2011);**

- Use of new generation of logic models and in developing evaluation designs as well as visualizing research process and results (**Knowlton, Phillips, 2008; Wheeldon, Ahlberg, 2011**).

The application of new methods could be in practice reached by granting during tenders additional points for innovative methods and facilitating debates and conferences at the European level.

When introducing new practices to Cohesion Policy evaluation we should avoid one-method dominance across the systems of evaluation, because it would narrow down the perspective and risk omitting important investigation trails. There is no optimal approach. The only “golden standard” is that methods should be appropriate to the topic and subject of research (Donaldson et al., 2008). In fact, optimum solution is a methodological triangulation, flexibility and diversification. This should be obviously accompanied by looking at the world “through many eyes”, that is data triangulation.

The second aspect of what determines utility of evaluation findings is a language of evaluation. The way the reports are written matters. This is an extremely important problem closely related to issue that evaluation process in most of countries seem to be technocratic and closed. Proper choice of way and style of communication could fix problems generated by mentioned negative character. Use of inadequate language could be final nail in coffin of evaluation process.

As pointed out by researchers implementing the project commissioned by the Polish Ministry of Regional Development, *“improper way of speaking/writing about evaluations hampers the use of its results and dissemination of its conclusions to the public”* (**Piekot et al., 2011**). Evaluator mainly chose to use a scientific language, which is precise and specialized. On the other side a main recipients, like stakeholders, journalists and officials are not so familiar with the complicated language. They expect most important conclusions and recommendations prepared in plain language. If the results of evaluation research remain incomprehensible they will not be discussed in the public debate and used in decision-making process.

Importance of way of writing and presenting evaluation results it's also emphasized in academic handbooks. Grob (2010) explains well how language of evaluation or even such thing like number of pages and proper graphical layout can improve use of report.

To conclude, it is necessary to support initiatives aimed at reform of evaluation language. It is hard to deny the use of complex academic language in some analytical or methodological parts of evaluation. But strategic fragments like summaries, conclusions and recommendations, should be written in accessible simple, comprehensible language. Special emphasis should be placed on assuring clear message for two groups of recipients – for decision-makers and for the media that mediate in a dialogue with the society.

In context of language and communication solutions attention should be focused on good practices that can be observed in some EU Member States, for instance like in Sweden or Poland.

The final decisive factor of utility of evaluation's answers is timing. Process of evaluation should be planned and incorporate into the programme life cycle. This is and an obviously observation that there are no profits from knowledge which comes too late, even if evaluators provide a plenty of useful conclusions and recommendations. Proper timing is a sine qua non condition of utility of the findings.

In the context of Cohesion Policy this means that already at the beginning of programming, a specific evaluation plan must be defined. Assuming that flexibility in the area of evaluation will be preserved (understood as an opportunity to conduct ad hoc studies), adoption of a holistic and detailed evaluation plan will contribute to the improvement of the quality of programme delivering.

Although challenging in application, we do think that these issues are of crucial importance for not only the development of evaluation practice itself, but also for the development of Evidence-Based Policies, both within and outside the domain of Cohesion Policy.

Decision-making process matters

In the decision making process different types of knowledge are used. Decisions are results of accumulation of evidences – one report cannot change the things but number of reports and other sources showing same problem from different angles can. In Cohesion Policy practice we often overestimate the role of evaluation in providing information for decision making. This overestimation in consequence brings about unjustified disappointment with evaluation. One should remember that evaluation is one of the most important sources of information but not the only one. Equally important are: performance monitoring (in terms of day to day management), socio economic analysis of the context of the intervention (defining needs to be addressed and redefining the objectives) as well as foresight studies (future needs and challenges). Evaluation gives us a strong feedback on the effects of our past experiences. The past is however not in the focus of decision makers - the future is! (**Górniak & Mazur 2011**).

To make the evaluation more attractive and useful for decision-making we must orient the whole evaluation process to the future! We have to treat the evaluation as a part of the knowledge base for decision-making. In this context there are five essential issues.

First, we should make each research future oriented. From the very beginning the evaluation should be planed with the view on how and when the results will be used (see the section questions meter).

The critical point is however the elaboration of the recommendations. Recommendations have to be

tailor made to the current and forthcoming decision making context. Experiences shows (**Gaffey, 2011, Bienias 2011, European Commission, 2011**) that external evaluators are not able to do it alone.

Second, we should work on accumulating knowledge. There are thousands of evaluation researches in the field of Cohesion Policy. One, new single research does not make a significant difference. The potential of evaluation is in accumulated knowledge and in drawing the recommendations from previous studies. Surprisingly not in many countries the research data base which allows for such a overviews exist (good examples here are for instance:). Drawing the lessons from the number of evaluation studies is also not so much common (interesting examples are here DG Regio ex post evaluation as well as the report prepared by Polish Presidency).

Third, we could make the knowledge more accessible and systematic. In most of the member states (however not in all) the full version of evaluation reports are publicly available – mostly via Internet. However not in many cases the evaluation databases are accessible on-line (all the existing reports in one place are available for instance in Lithuania and Poland). In most countries documents are available only in the native language. In some member states exists the good practice of provision of the summary in English, this allows for the use of findings in other member states (i.e. in Lithuania, France or Poland)

Fourth, we need to combine or cross-reference our field of evaluation with knowledge coming from other sources. From the decision maker point of view evaluation is an information, that may help him or her to limit the risk of making wrong decision. This risk can be minimised when we triangulate the evaluation knowledge with information coming from other sources (socio-economic analysis, researches, expert knowledge, foresight studies). To some extent those information may verify each other and to some extent are complementary – allowing to see the bigger picture. In the current practice of Cohesion Policy (according to regulation as well as EC guidelines documents) two sources of information are mandatory – evaluation and performance monitoring. Within the scope of Cohesion Policy only this two sources are being used in most of the member states. We may observe the constant improve of their use (especially visible in the new member states) but we also need to think about developing other instruments.

Fifth, we could work towards better understanding how to communicate with decision-makers, when and how to approach them. Evaluation is to deliver the right information to the right person in the right moment and in the right manner. The information should be reliable and relevant fitting well into decision-making context. Delivered to the person who is responsible for making a choice. Delivered on time not too early, as it may drown within the ocean of other important information and not too late – after the decision has been already taken. The delivery should be adjusted to the requirements of very specific receiver - decision maker. Current practice shows that evaluation has

problems with meeting some of the above-mentioned preconditions for the effective use. There are some good practice examples from the current round of ex post evaluations (**Gaffey, 2011, Bienias, 2011**). These are rather examples of single researches than systemic approach.

In order to make each research future oriented civil servants who know well the current decision making context should cooperate with external evaluators during the phase of drafting recommendation. More internal evaluations should be prepared.

To better accumulate the knowledge we need to gather the existing researches. This seems to be of crucial importance both on national and EU level. The EU level database could for instance accumulate only those evaluations that passed the scientific review of their quality.

Access to the evaluation resources is a precondition for their use. We strongly believe that all the reports (together with methodology and data sets annexes) should be obligatory accessible by Internet. The provision of English summary should be the obligation. One website in each member state should provide the information about all evaluations dedicated to Cohesion Policy. The creation of evaluation databases should be recommended. Database in the European Commission (except gathering the most reliable evaluations) should provide the access (links) to all national evaluation resources.

In order to move further in building strong evidence based cohesion policy decision makers cannot limit themselves only to using evaluation and performance monitoring. When the new intervention logic is implemented (**Barca, McCann, 2011, European Commission 2011**) the analysis of the context (choosing the needs, assessing the impact of other factors) as well as foresight studies / forecasts (to establish relevant targets for the desired results) will be equally important. European Commission should play a leading role in promotion of the new instruments in this regard (first in guidelines than as a standard). Evaluation experiences are perfect base for moving towards the policy analysis.

In order to reach the decision makers with the knowledge coming from the evaluation we need to translate it into the form and language, which is understandable to this special client. We have already discussed that issue. Here, let us only point out that for this target group a specific communication form is required. It is a 1-2 pages note that provides clear policy messages (coming mainly from evaluation but also enriched with other relevant information) into the current decision making content. It should be prepared solely by administration (not the evaluator) and only for internal use. If possible, proposals for future actions should be prepared in variants for the choice of the given decision maker. The activity described above could be treated as a proposal. Generally, reaching the decision makers should be separate part of the obligatory strategy for dissemination and use of evaluation findings. Such a strategy should be an integral element of each evaluation process.

People and structures matter

Our comparative review of countries clearly indicates evaluation practice in the field of Cohesion Policy is demand driven. Requirements of the European Union combined with the initiative of civil servants create a push for evaluation activities. That means that experience and knowledge of civil servants working in evaluation units is crucial for the performance of the system because:

- Experienced, devoted staff of evaluation units is more proactive in undertaking longer term evaluation activities;
- Experienced civil servants are able to better formulate evaluation questions and target the study on the real information needs;
- Knowledgeable civil servants are more demanding and able to execute from contractors the higher quality of a research;
- Experienced staff of evaluation units applies better strategies of dissemination and is more effective in reaching with findings key decision-makers and stakeholders.

Knowledge can be obviously built by education and training. Therefore the first issue we looked at is the trainings and continuous education offered for civil servants in the field of programmes evaluation. Recent study confirmed that the determinants of effective education go beyond the program content and process of teaching. The absorbed knowledge is used in workplace when a trained civil servant operates in a favourable organizational climate (openness to change, tolerance, support from supervisors) and participates in professional networks (**Muszyńska et al., 2011**). This leads us to next issue - exchange of information (in the form of publications, guides, conferences) and networking both within an organization and between organizations (and even countries). Finally, knowledge and experiences accumulate over time. Thus, the last determinant is the institutional stability. This point is confirmed by earlier studies that showed how instability of institutions and high staff fluctuation in evaluation units deteriorated system and caused the repetitions in capacity building (**Olejniczak, in press, Rados, Kaufmann, 2009**).

When assessing current evaluation training and education opportunities across countries we can clearly see the groupings that have deeper roots in the administrative culture and tradition.

Old member states with a tradition of performance management have usually a well developed and rich offer of education in the field of public policy analysis and evaluation. Civil servants interested in improving their evaluation skills can sign for open, standard academic (university based) initiatives, not related to Cohesion Policy (MA courses post-graduate programmes, intensive training programmes, PhD courses devoted to evaluation). In some countries (e.g. Italy, France) there are also specific trainings devoted to Cohesion Policy evaluation, however they are sporadic. Thus, the needs

of the civil service in those countries are fulfilled independently from Cohesion Policy system, mostly by academic institutions, as a part of the overall education opportunities in the field of public management and policy analysis.

In the new member states however needs of public administration seems to be ahead of the offer of national academic system. Programmes of higher education did not catch up with the shift in public management practice. With the exception of Poland there are no long-term education programmes offered in evaluation. As a result, the main initiators of trainings are ministries and agencies involved in Cohesion Policy management. Central evaluation units often play major role. They organise, at least once a year, trainings for the network of civil servants. The system in New Member States base mostly on short trainings, often tailored to the current needs of a particular institution. They focus on designing and managing evaluations (part of monitoring and evaluations). Some countries try to go beyond that formula. Czech Republic has been experimenting with e-learning courses on programme evaluation. In Poland, Ministry of Regional Development established a one-year, post-graduate programme on Cohesion Policy Evaluation. It is a closed programme (available only for civil servants), co-financed by the European Union and run by the EUROREG, University of Warsaw. Nevertheless, the overall picture is that education and training of evaluation is definitely both driven by Cohesion Policy and developed by it.

When it comes to networking and stability of institutions, we can conclude few things. First, in a majority of countries, both old and new member states, evaluation associations play a visible role. They are not limited to the Cohesion Policy exclusively but aim much wider – at evaluation of all public activities from different topics (e.g. health, education) and different levels (policies, programmes even projects). As a result they are interesting and valuable platform of meetings between practitioners and experts that go beyond Cohesion Policy practice. Those meeting also go beyond national borders since associations invites international experts. Second, in new member states usually the central evaluation units are active animators of networking activities, knowledge exchange between the units and institutions involved in Cohesion Policy. Third, despite the variety in the level of activities across member states we can state that in general the structures for networking and communities of practice are available and operating. In addition to these national-based developments a networking takes place at pan-European level. To the most important networks, which were pointed out in many interview, we should include Dg Regio Evaluation Network and Dg Employment Evaluation Partnership meetings. In many member states (especially small one) those networks were described as main facilitators for building the capacity within the public administration. Also smaller networks proved to be quite fruitful (for instance Visegrad Evaluation Group). The final observation relates to institutional stability. It seems that is was a problem mainly of the new member states. However, after initial turbulence, during the last 3 years

the structures slowly settle down and maintain their continuity both in terms of unit location and staff fluctuation.

Based on the above discussed issues we would like to put forward following recommendations for the future development of civil service personnel devoted to evaluation of Cohesion Policy.

We think that in education we should move from short-term, method-oriented trainings towards more holistic and integrated approach. Rich experience in teaching evaluation coming from academic institutions of old member states as well as American and Canadian Universities (Campbell et al., 2011; LaVelle, Donaldson, 2010; <http://www.ipdet.org/>) provides us with quite good ideas on what civil servants should learn. However it should be adapted to the specific situation of civil servants working on evaluation of Cohesion Policy interventions, namely two things. First, the fact that they do not execute the evaluation analyses by themselves. Thus, they do not need a technical know-how on how to apply in analysis particular research methods. Secondly, due to the multi-sector nature of Cohesion Policy interventions they are exposed to variety of topics, tools and research issues. Thus, they need a cross-sector and interdisciplinary knowledge.

Based on the above, we would suggest that the key topics for the education and training could be:

- Learning how to develop research questions, focus them, group them in a coherent story, negotiate their scope with different institution involved in the process of Terms of Reference development;
- Learning how to assess the overall appropriateness of research designs used by contractors and the quality of presented evidences. That include an up-to-date overview of different methods and approaches available in evaluation as well as knowledge when methods can be applied, how different methods can be combined (triangulated) in one research design, to strengthen the body of evidences;
- Learning how to disseminate effectively the results of evaluations, how and when feed the complex decision-making process with the findings from studies.

When it comes to skills, on the top of the list seem to be: critical thinking, communication and team working.

Thanks to the developments in the field of andragogy as well as empirical findings from recent research on teaching evaluation we also know how to teach effectively. What works best is learning by doing approach (also called “clinical approach”) that is having a mixture of introductory lectures and then applying the concepts in a problem solving of real life cases (**Lee et al., 2007**). Adult practitioners learn better when they can work in groups with peer professionals, discuss their point of views and get immediate feedback from experts (**Knowles et al., 2011**).

The curriculum of training discussed above seems to work well not with the formula of one day training but rather form of university-based post-graduate courses or summer schools. We see that some of the countries as well as European Commission move towards this direction (This kind of courses was conducted for instance in Hungary and Italy)

As concern the networking, we would recommend to continue with developing current practices, mainly more informal network of civil servants that allows to ask peers from other institutions and countries about advice and facilitate know-how exchange.

European Commission in the preface to the guidelines document for the next programming period **(DG Regio 2011)** stated that:

"...The Commission sees as one of its main tasks the facilitation of exchanges of experience across Member States and reaching out to the academic community to make the best ideas available for the policy. We will continue to learn, to fail in some cases but aim to improve systematically our policy. We must remain open to include new ideas in order to maintain the relevance of our approach and of the guidance provided..."

This publication as well as the conclusions proposed by the editors corresponds with this declaration. We hope that the book will facilitate the exchange of experience among Member States and help us to make evaluation research a useful feedback in the policy learning process. The evidence gathered during the research process confirm that the European Commission proposals concerning further development of evaluation in the next programming perspective are moving us in a right direction. In the conclusions of the book we sometimes go further, proposing even more ambitious solutions. Even if not feasible for the quick implementation, they could serve as food for thought in building long term development strategy for making the Cohesion Policy more evidence based.

The overview of the practices across 27 member states shows that we are moving forward and we have a good base to integrate knowledge coming from our practice as well as from outside of the Cohesion Policy. It is worth to continue this development and always remain open to include new ideas...

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