

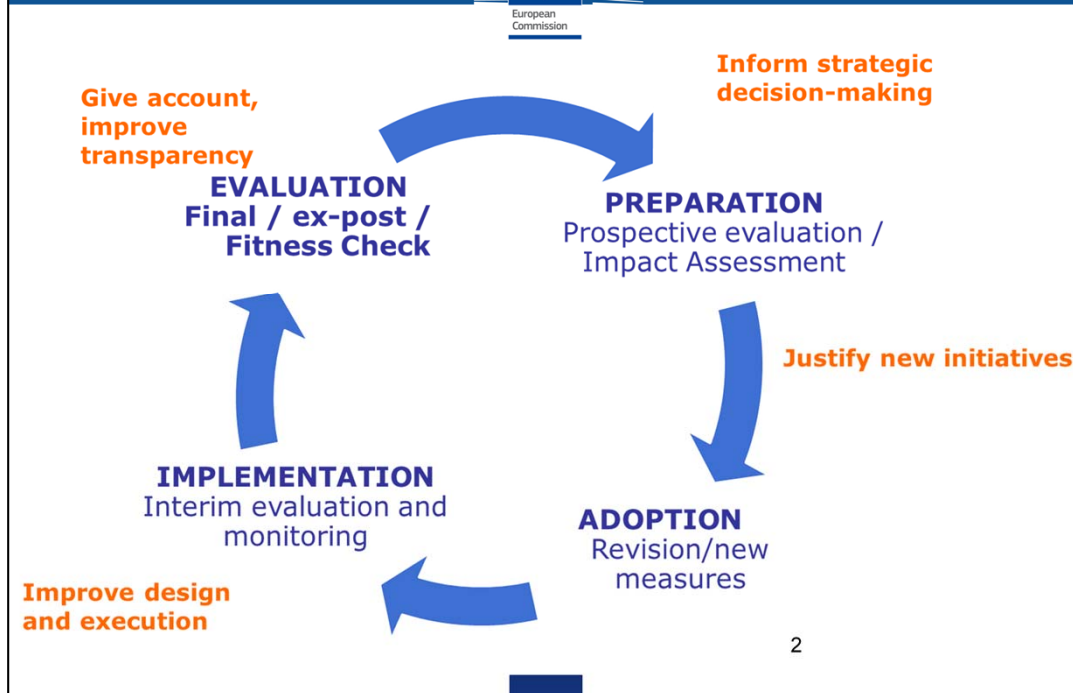


Evaluation in the Commission

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Evaluation in the policy cycle



Evaluation serves four main purposes.

- **Transparency, accountability.** Society has a right to ask the administration to give account of what was done and achieved, so as to reduce asymmetries in information.
- Evaluation is also used by the Commission for **internal, organisational learning purposes**, to improve the quality of an ongoing intervention and prepare the next one. It therefore provides managerial information for those running the programme or activity, i.e.: are we on the right track? Is the intervention still relevant, effective and efficient?
- **Efficient resource allocation** between interventions, between the separate elements of a specific programme or activity, or between activities.
- Last but not least: **inform decision-making, input to political priority-setting.** Evaluation is a decision-making tool. It does not replace, but supports decision-making, both at a strategic (planning) level, and at the level of the design of a new intervention. [It aims to raise the quality of the debate, taking into account the principles of Better Regulation and administrative simplification (which is not to say that it can replace political decisions).]

Evaluation therefore has an important role to play in decision-making at strategic, operational and budgetary level.

[A study (2005) on the use of evaluation results in the Commission revealed that, in practice, evaluation is most commonly used at operational level for the design or improvement of specific programmes or activities, and less so for strategic decision-making purposes.]

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS TO EVALUATE:

- **Internal Control Standard 14 requires:**

"Evaluations of expenditure programmes, legislation and other non-spending activities are performed to assess the results, impacts and needs that these activities aim to achieve and satisfy"

- **Evaluation standards**

- **Financial regulations and associated rules of application**

- **Article 318 TFEU**

"The Commission shall [also] submit [...] an evaluation report on the Union's finances based on the results achieved"

Smart Regulation



Smart Regulation (October 2010)

*Target the whole policy cycle by attaching more importance to **retrospective evaluation***

*A **shared responsibility** with the Member States, the European Parliament, the Council*

*Strengthen the voice of citizens and **stakeholders***

Introduced "Fitness Checks"

Announced revision of the evaluation guidelines



Regulation which is of the highest quality

The Commission's Communication on Smart Regulation also proposes other ways to improve the quality of regulation....

Better – to Smart : key issue in Barroso's commisions. Barroso 1 was IA – Barroso 2 has looked at evaluation.

In his political guidelines (3 September 2009), President Barroso announced that: “We need to match this huge investment in ex ante assessment with **an equivalent effort in ex post evaluation** – to ensure that our proposals really do deliver what they promise and to enable us to revise and correct them where they fail to work as expected.”

When presenting his political programme to the EP in September 2009, the President furthermore stated that he intended to “place ex post evaluation directly under his responsibility, to reflect the importance he gives to it”.

Similarly, the inclusion of explicit evaluation requirements in the EU Treaties, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, also reflects the growing importance which is being attached to retrospective evaluation.



Evaluation - key element of Smart Regulation:

- Timely input to decision making – learning from past BEFORE going forward
- Evaluate all activities addressed to 3rd parties
- Stronger focus on regulatory measures



Why do we need new guidelines?

- Bring up-to-date with Smart Regulation developments
- Go beyond the "state of play" – look at what lies behind change
- Improve consistency across Commission
- Improve quality and quality assurance

1) Embed evaluate first; make sure evaluation answers IA and vice versa – complete the policy cycle/SR cycle

There can be a tendency to look forward and focus on new initiatives. But changes are costly and take time to implement – so they need to be justified and greater attention needs to be paid to looking back before moving forward. There is a need to confirm the place of evaluation in the framework for EU action, to commit the appropriate resources and make sure that evaluations are conducted before proposing further action or change.

2) Go beyond the state of play

evaluations often present the state of play, they do not always include sufficient analysis of why something has happened, whether some of the change can be attributed to EU action and the extent to which the change fulfilled all initial

expectations. Despite the commitment to evidence-based policy making, evaluations are not always supported by sufficient data and stakeholder opinion.

3) Consistency in a decentralised system

Over time, there have been both consistent and diverging trends in Directorates General evaluation practices as they have evolved to accommodate new demands and developments, as well as the nature of different policy areas. This has led to differences in the planning, scope, method, content and final quality of evaluations. Not all EU legislation contains a clear commitment to conduct future retrospective evaluation, realistically scheduled so that the necessary data and information should be available.

4) Need clear and common scrutiny process to ensure high standard, critical approach and independent

At present, quality assurance is undertaken by the Directorate General's evaluation function and/or the steering group. Sometimes Directorates General draw on a wider group of resources, for example, by involving external stakeholders in steering groups or by involving academics in the quality assurance of a given evaluation.

According to the evaluation standards, the steering group jointly produces (together with the officials managing the evaluation) a quality assessment of the final evaluation report. This quality assessment should critically assess the evaluation process undertaken, the information sources used, the analysis produced and the conclusions drawn. The quality assessment is not always published, in contrast to the IAB opinions, which are

systematically made available
alongside the final impact assessment and any associated
Commission proposal.



Retrospective evaluation:

« a *critical, evidence-based judgement* of whether an intervention has met the *needs* it aimed to satisfy and *actually* achieved its *expected* effects. It goes beyond an assessment of whether something happened or not, and looks at *causality* – whether the action taken by a given party altered behaviours and led to the expected changes and/or any other unintended or unexpected changes »

Source: Commission Communication COM (2013) 686



Proposals:

- Strengthen "Evaluate first" principle
- Improve transparency and accessibility
- Greater consistency in evaluation process
- Encourage participation by interested parties
- Minimum analysis:
effectiveness, efficiency, relevance,
coherence, EU added value
- Greater role for steering group

These Guidelines are intended **for internal use by the Commission services**, providing an introduction to evaluation.

Encouraging those who are interested to get involved in evaluation.

Suggest standard steps intended to make it easier for anyone interested: to know what is being evaluated and when the evaluation is taking place, to provide their input, to see all consultation results and a summary assessment of them and to understand whether action may follow-on from the evaluation. This would involve the central publication of:

- 5yr evaluation plan providing a clear and comprehensive overview of all planned evaluations;
- Evaluation mandates, published early in the process,;
- The final evaluation report together with an assessment of its overall quality.

Improving the coverage and usefulness of evaluation: seek to improve the strength and consistency of evaluations by:

- Making sure that all evaluations address key questions on the performance and continued need for EU action. 5 minimum criteria,(effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value) or provide good reasons to justify why any of these elements has not been evaluated.

- Defining the essential requirements for the conduct of an evaluation, distinguishing it from studies or reports containing only some evaluative elements.
- Ensuring good advance planning and organisation of the collection of relevant data as well as good organisation of consultation of stakeholders and the general public.

Improving co-ordination within the Commission, bringing together the different policy makers involved at an early stage and facilitating coherence.

These actions should further strengthen the role of evaluation and ensure that inputs are fully utilised in evaluations, improving the evidence base and providing more useful results. In turn, this would fulfil the commitment to "evaluate first" and complete the Smart Regulation cycle – evaluation results would systematically feed into any later impact assessment of policy options where change is envisaged.



All views welcomed

- *Will the suggested changes make it easier for you to follow the process and get involved in evaluation?*
- *When do you think stakeholder input is particularly useful in the process? How much advance notice do you need to prepare your input?*
- *Where and how is it best to publish the evaluation results so that they reach the widest possible public?*
- *How important is it for you to know what follow-up action is planned?*
- *Have we covered all the relevant issues – or is something missing?*
- *Are you aware of 'good practice' elsewhere that could motivate other improvements?*

We would like to hear all views and comments on how EU actions should be evaluated – based on your experience of EU evaluation, your experience in a national/local setting, just your general thoughts and opinions.