

## Preliminary information on the 2016 Evaluation Conference

The competition forms part of the preparations for a conference on "Effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy", to be organised by the European Commission. It will take place in the first half of 2016 (probably May). The location is not yet decided.

In the context of future requirements for the evaluation of Cohesion Policy interventions, the conference will be a showcase for the best available evaluations, a place to discuss good practices in evaluation planning, and an opportunity to broaden the actors involved in evaluation of cohesion policy and to put Managing Authorities and evaluators in contact. Much can be learned from the efforts already made, and the conference aims to provide an opportunity for dialogue and debate on the methodologies used and the results obtained. The event seeks to bring together a worldwide audience, including academics and professionals from universities, think tanks, public authorities, government agencies and the private sector, to discuss how different lessons could be applied in evaluation and policy design. The promise of evidence based policy remains an elusive goal in many areas of public policy, not least Cohesion Policy. Communication among evaluators and those who use evaluations is necessary to yield lessons for designing and using evaluation of cohesion policy.

The conference will discuss the following aspects:

- Methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy,
- Quality of evaluation plans,
- Quality of ex ante Evaluations.

Within this overall framework, various sections will be organized to look in detail at the following topics:

1. Research and Innovation;
2. ICT;
3. Enterprise support;
4. Employment, Skills and Social Inclusion;
5. Large Infrastructure (environment, transport);
6. Institutional Capacity Building.

More information on the sessions and workshops will follow during 2015.

### Submissions:

Please submit your evaluations or proposals between 1/1/2015 and 31/12/2015 to:

[regio-eval-conference@ec.europa.eu](mailto:regio-eval-conference@ec.europa.eu)

Please clearly express to what strand of the competition you would like to take part:

1. Best Completed Evaluation (Strand A)
2. Best Evaluation Proposals (Strand B)

### Contact and information:

For regular updates on the competition and the 2016 conference, visit the page:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/evaluations/conferences/evaluating-effects/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/conferences/evaluating-effects/)

If you have any further questions, please send an e-mail to:

[regio-eval-conference@ec.europa.eu](mailto:regio-eval-conference@ec.europa.eu)



## Evaluating Effects of EU Cohesion Policy

Competition for the best evaluations and evaluation proposals

### About

The Directorates-General for Regional and Urban Policy and Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission will organise a conference on "Effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy" in 2016. The conference will be a showcase for the best evaluations, a place to discuss good practices in evaluation planning, and an opportunity to broaden the actors involved in the evaluation of Cohesion Policy. It will bring together those responsible for managing Structural Funds and evaluators. In preparation for the conference, the European Commission invites those interested to take part in a competition for the best evaluations of EU Cohesion Policy.

The competition will be organised in two strands:

1. **Best Completed Evaluation (Strand A)**
2. **Best Evaluation Proposals (Strand B)**

For both strands of the competition, the subject of evaluation will be the effectiveness of operations co-financed by Structural or Cohesion Funds by using at least one of the following three methods:

- A. Ex-post cost benefit analysis (CBA),
- B. Theory-based evaluations,
- C. Counterfactual evaluation.

The authors of the best evaluations and evaluation proposals will be invited to present their contributions at the Evaluation Conference that the European Commission will organise in the first half of 2016. About 500 participants will be present, including evaluation practitioners from the EU and beyond, representatives of public authorities in the Member States responsible for managing cohesion policy programmes, and academic experts - all working in and experienced with cohesion policy. The conference aims to shape Cohesion Policy by bringing together academics and practitioners.

## Characteristics and requirements for the competition

Participants can submit proposals for either of 2 competition strands:

### *Best Completed Evaluation (Strand A)*

This strand of the competition is for evaluations that **have been completed by the final deadline for submission (31.12.2015)**. The evaluation can be carried out by any individual or company as long as it assesses **the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy interventions**, primarily but not exclusively in the areas of Research and Innovation, Enterprise support, ICT, Large Infrastructure, Employment, Skills and Social Inclusion, or Institutional Capacity Building. The evaluations will be assessed by a jury of international evaluation experts. Please find more information in the call for papers.

### *Best Evaluation Proposal (Strand B)*

In this strand of the competition, we ask for proposals for the evaluation of EU Cohesion Policy interventions. One condition to participate in this competition is that the evaluation has not already started. In particular, it would be welcome if the proposals concentrate on the areas of Research and Innovation, Enterprise support, ICT, Large Infrastructure, Employment, Skills and Social Inclusion, or Institutional Capacity Building. Furthermore, we are also looking for proposals that make use of new data and creative research designs. We encourage applicants to have a look at the data available on the European Commission's websites. The already available materials will be supplemented with the new results from the Ex-post evaluation 2007-2013 as they emerge. These results could be used as well as datasets from national or regional authorities who manage Cohesion Policy programmes. The proposals will be assessed by a jury of international evaluation experts. The authors of the best proposals will then be invited to present their proposals in a poster session at the conference in 2016.

This competition is open to all individuals and the participation of young researchers and PhD students is strongly encouraged.

The prize is acknowledgement of excellence by recognised international evaluation experts. There will not be a monetary prize for the two strands. At least the six best contributions for each strand will be selected, but the jury retains the possibility of widening the number of contributions selected in the case of many excellent entries. The authors will be invited to take part in the conference in 2016 with costs for travel and accommodation paid for by the European Commission according to European Commission rules.

### *Requirements for participation*

*For Strand A:* Participation in this competition is open on equal terms to all natural and legal persons coming within the scope of the Treaties.

*For Strand B:* Participation in this competition is open on equal terms to all individuals coming within the scope of the Treaties.

### *Selection Criteria*

Both types of competition are assessed by the same criteria:

- **Quality of the Methodology**

This criterion will assess the appropriateness of the methodology of the whole evaluation and the specific methodologies for certain parts of it. In the overall framing of the exercise, it is important to underline how current discussions on evaluation and public policy analysis methods could be applied to get more knowledge on the impact of EU Cohesion Policy. Creativity and the use of different methods (using at least one of Ex-post CBA, Theory-based evaluations, Counterfactual evaluation) are considered relevant elements for the quality of the work. Concerning Strand B, the use of new data, available on the websites of the European Commission or from national authorities, would be a plus.

- **Practical Relevance**

Practitioners from all institutions are not only interested in the academic debates and how to incorporate new methods and findings into practical work, but also on the results obtained from such an evaluation (or potential evaluation). This is why the second important criterion is about the potential policy significance of the findings for future Cohesion Policy. What kinds of investments promise more effects than others? What are the hidden factors under certain conditions that could significantly affect job creation? These might be some of the questions whose answers could really make a change in future EU Cohesion Policy.

### *Form of Submission*

#### **Best completed evaluations (Strand A):**

- 1) Executive summary with the following structure:
  1. Research Question
  2. Description of the Subject of Evaluation
  3. Methodology
  4. Data
  5. Policy Significance

The paper should be written in English and have a length of 3000 words maximum (excluding Annex and Bibliography).

- 2) Full evaluation report in the original language in which it was produced.

#### **Best evaluation proposals (Strand B) should be sent in the following structure:**

- 1) Executive summary with the following structure:
  1. Research Question
  2. Description of the object to be evaluated
  3. Methodology
  4. Data
  5. Plan of Actions

The paper should have a length of 3000 words maximum (excluding Annex and Bibliography), and it should be submitted in 2 versions.

- Version 1: in English;
- Version 2: in the official language of the applicant.