PRESENTATION ON THE PEER REVIEW MEETING HELD BETWEEN 4-5TH MAY 2017, MALTA

28th September 2017
The Peer Review Meeting was held in Malta between 4th and 5th May 2017.

The main aim was to promote a two-way learning approach through discussions on how to mitigate challenges, promote good evaluation practices, and discuss identified issues and potential way forward.

Present to this meetings were representatives from DG REGIO, DG EMPL, Key Experts, the Managing Authority (MA), as well as members from the Ismeri Europa team.

The review was held on a period of two days:
- First day: Concluded thematic evaluation from the 2007-2013 programming period;
- Second day: Terms of Reference for a counterfactual impact evaluation for the 2014-2020 programming period.
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- The first day of the meeting was devoted to the *Thematic Evaluation on Operational Programme I – Initiatives for Competitiveness and Improvement of Quality of Life*.

- The evaluation process, including the drafting of the ToRs, evaluation of the bids received, and the implementation of the Contract took place between 2011 and 2016.

- The documents which were presented to the key experts included:
  - Tender dossier;
  - Budget allocated for this evaluation;
  - Number of bids received and their respective financial offers;
  - Bid of the winning bidder;
  - Evaluation reports.
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- On the basis of the above, each individual key experts compile an evaluation grid, including a scoring mechanism, which were presented in advance of the meeting to the MA.

- The assessment criteria covered issues such as:
  - Rationale;
  - Objective and scope;
  - Tasks and evaluation questions;
  - Approach, methods and data;
  - Timing, deliverables and budget;
  - Competencies and management;
  - Assessment on the technical and financial offer;
  - Assessment of the final evaluation reports.
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The general findings were the following:

- **Award criteria**: The limitations encountered were due to restrictions in the national public procurement policies, such as the compulsory use of the cheapest technically compliant award criteria at the time.

- **Timeline**: The evaluation was lengthy which may have had an impact on its effectiveness.

- **Objective and scope**: The broad objectives in the TORs resulted in a reporting challenge to the consultant and the resulting effectiveness of the evaluation and its use.
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- **Approach and methods**: Rather than focusing on the beneficiaries (project managers), more attention to the final recipient should have been provided in order to have a better picture of the real impact achieved on the ground.

- **Data availability**: The problem of data availability was assessed, resulting in the need to start collecting data on projects from an early stage. The MA should strengthen its use of data available at ministerial or national level through various sources.

- **Evaluation findings**: The findings were broadly presently and therefore limited judgement was given on the targets and how meaningful they were.
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- The second day focused on a planned evaluation whereby the ToRs of the tender for *The Provision of Service for Data Collection and Analysis and Assessment of the Methodological Approaches and Tools to carry out a Counterfactual Impact Assessment (CIE) and/or Other Impact Evaluations* were presented.

- The discussions focused on the possible areas where a CIE can take place taking into consideration: (i) restrictions in the national procurement regulations, (ii) (limited) availability of data on both the controlled and treated groups.

- Therefore two case studies, one focusing on ESF and another one on ERDF, were presented to the key experts and possible methods, data required, etc. were discussed.
Lessons Learnt (1/2)

- Each evaluation should ensure that an appropriate methodology for data collection to allow analysis and interpretation of such data.

- To have an impact on decision and policy making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and presented in a clear and consistent manner.

- Evaluation should contribute to the knowledge building within the MA and relevant stakeholders.

- The peer review meeting helped the MA to reinforce the idea that the evaluator is to be regarded less of a policeman and more of a way-forward looking agent.
Lessons Learnt (2/2)

- There is the need for more synergies between evaluations, rather than evaluations being stand alone processes during the programming period.

- As a way forward, the MA is currently carrying out an internal assessment to review the Evaluation Plan/s.

- The ToRs of the CIE will be revised on the basis of the outcome of the meeting and further internal discussions, and discussed with the Commission.
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