Evaluation brief: *Mid-Term Programme Management Evaluation of the Austrian Genome Research Programme GEN-AU* (Austria)

Key words: basic research, networks, collaboration, awareness, excellence, management evaluation, logic chart analysis, international comparison, case studies, social network analysis

1. Introductory information

- Austrian Genome Research Programme is a programme financing basic research in cooperative projects, pilot projects and networks, and incorporating further measures to improve the visibility and understanding of genome research.
- The interim programme management evaluation of Austrian Genome Research Programme was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Austria and supervised by Vienna Science and Technology Fund.
- The final study was published in 2005 in German authored by Joanneum Research.
- The evaluation was carried out for six months with a budget of €70,000.

2. Summary

The main objective of the evaluation is to assess the design, appropriateness (strategic fit, operational fit) and management of the programme in order to suggest if it should be continued and what design and implementation changes should be made.

The study applies a broad multi method approach: desk research (planning material, minutes of project meetings, background studies), logic chart analysis (visualise the objectives, activities, outcome and impact to operationalised evaluation questions and fill in indicators), international comparison (similar contexts and ambitions, learning for GEN-AU), interviews (context actors, stakeholders, management team, scientific advisory board, participants, target groups, international scientific experts), case studies (one project per type of funded activity) and a survey based social network analysis (to explore if there is adequate policy networking).

The study concludes that the programme fits the overall political strategy for Austrian Research and also the context of the science system in Austria. It finds a lively environment of exchange, collaboration and excellent research and predicts a lasting impact. The improvements suggested concern mainly aspects of management, such as the quest for more transparency, a different institutional implementation design, improved communication and a better integration of the ELSA projects (dealing with ethical, legal and societal aspects of the programme) into the mainstream of the activities.

This measure is not an innovation measure as such, but a basic research oriented top down programme with implication for economic development at later stages. The evaluation captured its design and management, not the impact. It is an excellent example of a sound match of evaluation methods and processes on the one hand and evaluation questions and the nature of the measure (goals, instruments, target groups, context) on the other hand. The multi-method approach enabled the evaluators to gather qualitative and quantitative insights to improve design and management. In addition, due to the logic chart approach that included the impact dimension, it enabled the evaluation to set up some preliminary ideas for the design of an impact assessment later on in the process. The logic chart approach applied was exemplary, to

be used as communication tool but also as a tool to establish what is measured and why and what the measurement represents in the programme flow. This also allowed a critical appraisal of the programme logic itself. There were some limitations in that few case studies were carried out and the network analysis lacked a clear baseline and a rationale for the interpretation of the findings (as comparable network structures to assess the findings were not available). Further, it was problematic to conceptually embed the role and limitations of the programme and its effects in the innovation system more broadly.

3. Further information

- Full case study can be found at: (url)
- Link to the evaluation study: http://www.fteval.at/files/evstudien/GENAU.pdf
- Link to the Managing Authority that commissioned the evaluation: http://www.bmwf.gv.at/