



# 9<sup>th</sup> CONFERENCE

on the Evaluation  
of EU Cohesion Policy

## Shaping Transitions with Evidence

16-17 September 2021  
Porto, Portugal

### Workshop 5B:

**Challenges and opportunities of Cohesion policy evaluations**

Thursday 16 September 2021

16:15 – 17:30 GMT+1

**#CohesionEval2021**

Regional and  
Urban Policy

## Housekeeping

- **In the room:** microphones available
- **Online:** Post questions in the Zoom “chat”  
Moderator will ask online questions to panellist.
- Video and presentations will be online here: [Conference Website](#)

**Twitter:** #CohesionEval2021 - #CohesionOpenData - @RegioEvaluation



**CHAIR: David Alba**, Team Leader, Evaluation and European semester Unit, DG REGIO, European Commission

**PANELLISTS:**

- **Carla Leal**, Director of the Strategic Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, Cohesion and Development Agency, Portugal
  - **Stephane Jacobzone**, Head of Unit - Evidence, Monitoring and Evaluation OECD
  - **Elliot Stern**, Emeritus Professor of Evaluation Research, Lancaster University UK
  - **Jan-Philipp Kramer**, Principal, Head of EU-Office Competence Centre EU Services
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# WORKSHOP 5B

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF MS EVALUATIONS

*Assessing the territorial dimension,  
disseminating lessons learned, measuring impact  
An OECD cross country perspective*

Stéphane Jacobzone  
Senior Advisor  
OECD Public Governance Directorate

9th Conference on the Evaluation of EU Cohesion Policy,  
16-17 September, Porto Portugal

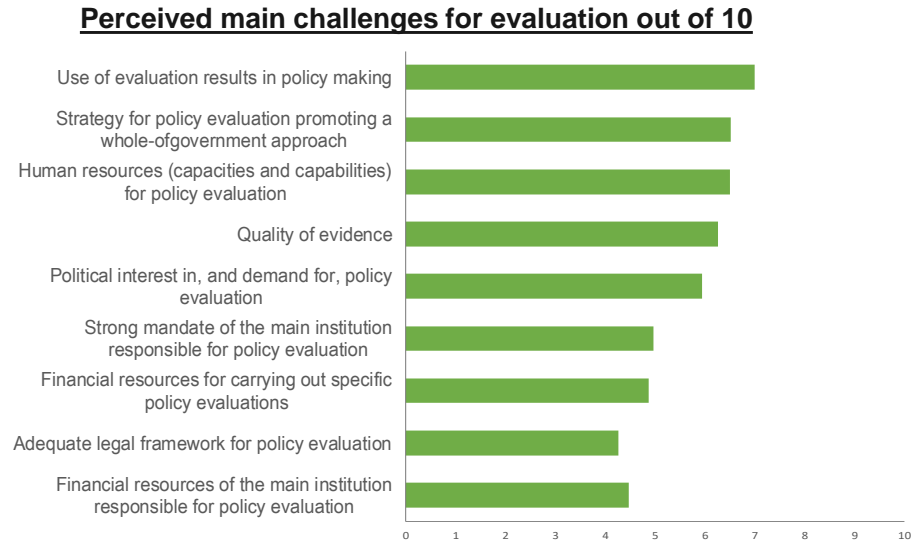


# AN OECD CROSS COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE ON POLICY EVALUATION

## *OECD 2020 : Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation*

- ✓ 42 countries, overview of challenges, development of evaluation across countries
- ✓ **Key actors: Centres of government (impact of laws), Ministry of Finance (expenditure effectiveness), others (including regional policy)**
- ✓ **A focus on the institutionalization, quality and use of evaluation**

- ✓ **Common challenges**



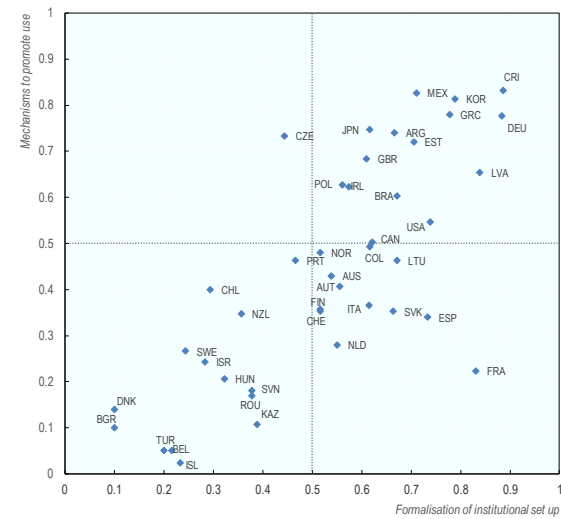
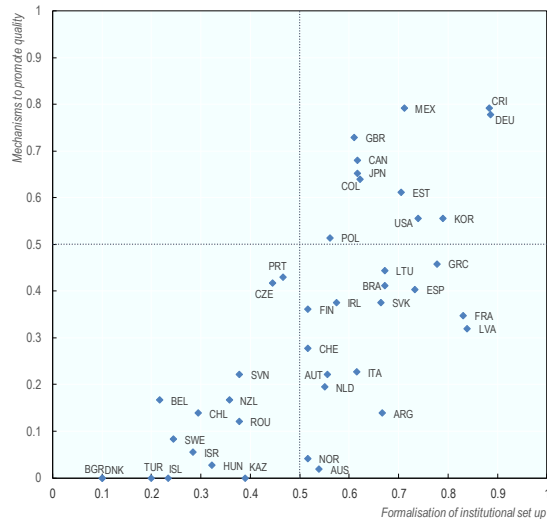


# AN OECD CROSS COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE ON POLICY EVALUATION

## A mapping of key practices in terms of

- ✓ Institutionalisation
- ✓ Quality
- ✓ Use of Policy Evaluation

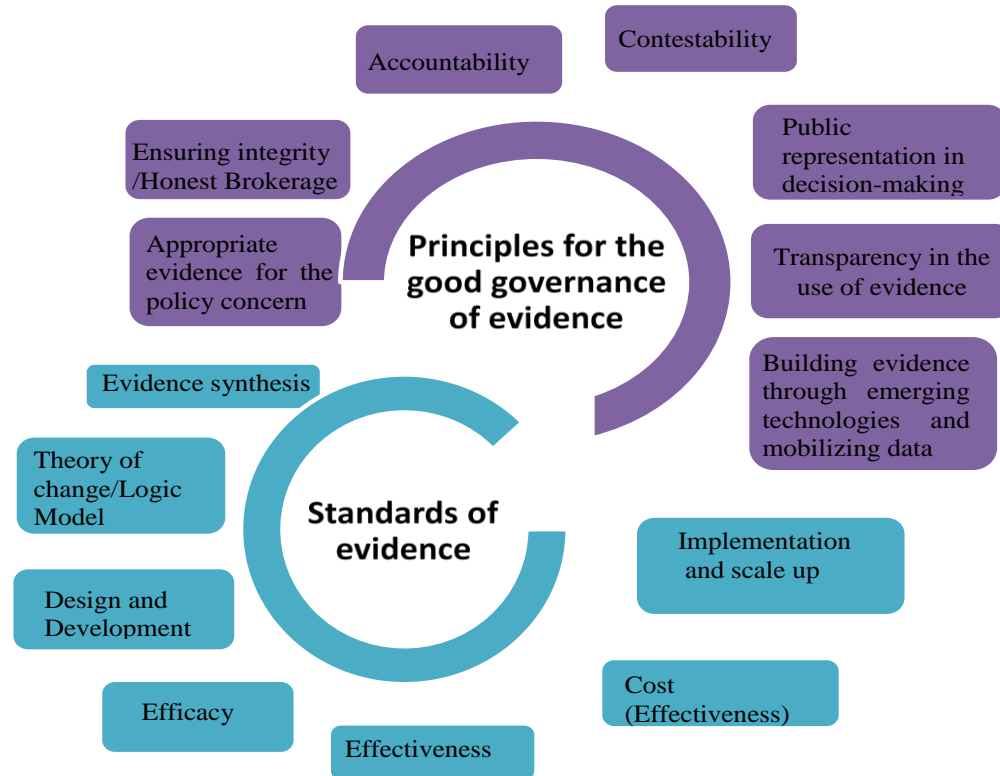
## Some clear correlations across practices at the aggregate level





# STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES FOR POLICY DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

*Achieving the promise of “evidence informed policy making”*





## EVALUATION OF COHESION POLICY IN PERSPECTIVE

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*Early efforts from the 1990s (Gaffey) : MEANS programme of evaluation guidance,*

*Some key characteristics*

- ✓ Very strong **evaluation logic** (given as best practice example in OECD 2020 standards publication), and a focus on outcomes/results orientation
- ✓ Impact of a “programme” at meso level, vs impact of the “regional policy” from a macro perspective (Lembcke Mennon 2016 OECD)
- ✓ **Open debate, open access, open coordination**
- ✓ Evaluation is practiced, is available with earmarked resources and follows high standards

*Key question remains:*

- ✓ Articulation with national programmes for effectiveness (performance oriented budgeting, spending reviews, national evaluation structures)
- ✓ Trickle down effects, or “separate universe” ?





## ADDRESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION GAP!

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*Evaluation of individual CP interventions is often state of the art,  
But .... implementation gaps remain across countries  
..... And COVID 19 has created new challenges*

- Embedding the practice in the machinery of government at national and local level
- Success is contingent on **quality** and **impact**
- Data has gone digital, challenges of achieving **Open Government Data** (Covid).
- Quality and use **cannot be written in law**:
  - They need a **supporting environment**
  - They require **skills and political attention**
- **Investing in human capital and governance systems**
  - ✓ Skills in the policy professions (UK), US implementation of Evidence based Act
  - ✓ Skills for demand / use of evidence: skill set for EIPM
- **Preserve strong accountability frameworks**
  - *Improved trust and the capacity to implement reforms*
  - *Communicate better to citizens*



THANK YOU

[Stephane.Jacobzone@oecd.org](mailto:Stephane.Jacobzone@oecd.org)



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# Evaluation of the territorial dimension of Cohesion Policy: The Portuguese case

Workshop 5B : Challenges and  
opportunities of Cohesion policy  
evaluations

September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021

# 1. How we planned the evaluation

## (Global Evaluation Plan of Portugal 2020)

Scope	How it considers territorial dimension	Type and number of Evaluations
<b>Thematic</b>	Accounting, when possible, for outcomes/findings at regional level and regional factors explaining the observed results	Process (8) Impact (15)
<b>Territorial</b>	Focusing on (multilevel) governance of territorial instruments	Process (3) Impact (1)
<b>Programme</b>	<p>In all 7 Regional OP, territorial dimension of findings is considered “by design”</p> <p>Meta-evaluation of previous thematic and territorial evaluations + Evaluation of Specific Objectives not covered by thematic and territorial evaluations</p>	Impact / Meta-analysis (13)
<b>Global</b>	Accounting, when possible, for outcomes/findings at regional level (NUTS II)	Impact (3) Meta-evaluation (1)

# 1a. Territorial approach of Portugal 2020

Thematic OP and Regional OP

Policy Instruments

**Territory-Based Integrated Policies**

Integrated policy instruments policies operationalized from within territories

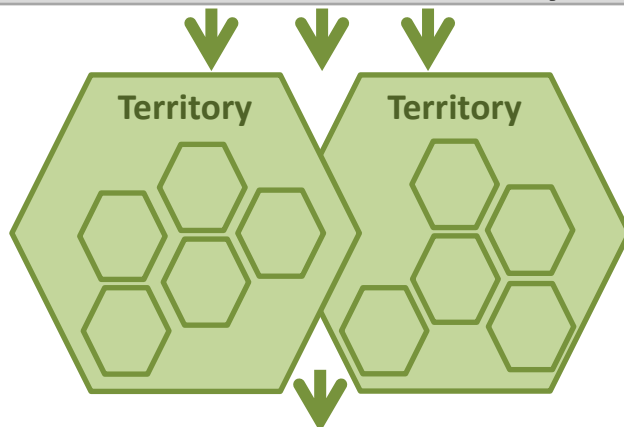
Policy instruments: ITI, CLLD and Integrated Urban Development

**Territorialized Policies**

National policies delivered at regional level through multilevel governance

Policy Instruments: Territorial Pacts for Employability; TEIP; CLDS; RIS3; Choices Programme; Clusters;...

Positive differentiation of low density territories



Regional socioeconomic development - Economic convergence and territorial cohesion

# 1b. OP Meta evaluation: Making use of Thematic Evaluations (meta-evaluation)

**Option 1.** Appraisal, by the evaluator, of the regional implications of the findings and conclusions of thematic evaluations (may include mobilizing more recent data)

**Option 2.** Assessment, by the evaluator, of the regional implications of the findings and conclusions of thematic evaluations, making use of new data collection (interviews, focus groups, etc.)

**Option 3.** Partial test of the theory of change developed in the thematic evaluation, making use of new data collection

**Option 4.** Full review, focusing on the region, of finding and conclusions of thematic evaluations, building on the methodological design and tools used in the thematic evaluation being reviewed

## 2. How we take into account the territorial dimension when evaluating cohesion policy

### When...

#### ... designing Evaluation Plans

**Type of Evaluations** (Thematic Evaluations, OP Evaluations, Territorial Evaluations)

#### ... designing the evaluation

**Evaluation Questions** (addressing different territorial needs/specificities)

**Methodological design** (should be able to account for territorial specificity)

#### ... carrying out the evaluation

**Data collection** (ensuring regional representativeness and territorial specificity when collecting primary data)

**Access/availability of secondary data at regional level** (register and administrative data)

**Analysis breakdown** by region and outcomes heterogeneity

**Drawing up conclusions and recommendations** taking into account regional specificity

**Steering Group** representing regional and local stakeholders

#### ... *follow-up* process

**Address recommendations** to those who may be responsible for their implementation at regional level

### 3. Challenges and opportunities when assessing the territorial dimension in Cohesion Policy evaluation

#### SCOPE

- Challenge of reconstructing complex Regional OP ToC, with many investment priorities and varying degrees of interdependence and complementarity
- Trade off between Thematic and Territorial scope, high coverage of specific objectives/focus of thematic evaluations, with regional analysis

#### DATA

- Improve the availability of information disaggregated by region and regional context indicators
- Improve regional representativeness when collecting primary data (eg. Surveys)
- Which indicator to assess the regional dimension of policy interventions

#### KNOWLEDGE

- Encourage higher education courses, academic studies and increase the knowledge base in the field of regional development
- Greater involvement of academia in the evaluation of Cohesion Policy (and public policy in general)



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**Thank you**



# Helpdesk Support for Evaluation Quality: Learning Lessons and Looking Forward

Elliot Stern

Emeritus Professor of Evaluation Research

Lancaster University UK

## *Evaluation of cohesion policy – an evolving picture*

Evaluation supports *both* accountability *and* learning. What is distinctive in CP is how understandings of accountability and learning are evolving:

- From conformance checking, validation & spending budgets, to effectiveness, results and delivering on strategic goals
- From regulatory compliance to contributing to national and territorial policy & policy development
- From assessing *what* has been done, to learning *how* to do things better including implementation & delivery so as to optimise results

*Uneven but recognisable progress!*

## *Helpdesk being 'demand-led' has mirrored this evolution*

Demand has expanded in scope over programming periods:

- From Final Report quality>>>Terms of Reference>>>Evaluation design  
>>> evaluation capacity development for MAs
- From *only* measuring impact >>> to *also* explaining *how* impacts can be improved

More recently a new emphasis on:

- How to *manage, interface* and *develop* capacities on evaluation 'supply' side
  - How to *improve policy* through evaluation

## *'Standout' lessons: institutionalisation*

- Evaluation competencies and awareness of evaluation potential in MAs and national governments really matter
  - Need for dedicated staff – not 'ghost' staff with another 'day job' - with relevant *evaluation management* expertise
    - Evaluation has to be integrated into programming and policy development cycle i.e. engagement with policy stakeholders and appropriate positioning in MAs
  - Because of complex or extensive interventions, evaluations may cut across MAs & require joint evaluations – challenge of coordination and control

## *'Standout' lessons: results, impacts and effectiveness*

### *Barriers to overcome:*

- Non-alignment of evaluation and programming timescales:

Building knowledge across programming periods; evaluation stages; and across evaluations

- Uneven understanding of how to evaluate 'results' and 'impacts':

Differentiating Theory of Change; Theory Based Evaluation and Theory Based Impact Evaluation; clarifying what CF evaluation can/cannot do

- Managing scarce evaluation resources:

Importance of skilful contracting, network building and careful choice of unit of analysis i.e. what to evaluate, with what focus & detail

## *'Standout' lessons: Availability of data and evidence*

- Evidence from previous evaluations and existing research not always incorporated and used
- In order to explain, sectoral, territorial and socio-economic 'theory' as important as programme theory in ToCs
- Secondary data (e.g. indicator/databases) is often not well-prepared or quality checked/cleaned in advance - can waste evaluation time
- Primary data collection (case studies, interviews, surveys) also needs to be planned and budgeted for, at level of portfolio and individual evaluation

## *Looking forward: evaluating in uncertainty*

### *Anticipating the unpredictable – normalising shocks:*

- Programme modifications – responding to new circumstances

### *Striving for integration:*

- Horizontal focus on climate change, net zero, sustainable development, preventing discrimination and integrated territorial development

### *Challenges of coordination:*

- Complementarities and synergies between funds
- Centrality of governance capacities – networking, partnership management as well as multi-level governance...

## We can anticipate a need for..

- Less rigid evaluation portfolios - ability to refocus existing evaluation plans and initiate new evaluative activities
  - Contributing to mid-term reviews and reprogramming
- Ongoing engagement with government & stakeholders – not just at planning stage
  - Methods better able to track change over time and deal with complex, non-static systems – e.g. energy transitions as well as sustainability, innovation, coordination & governance capacity



# Spreading the word!?

Disseminating evaluation results and the presentation of lessons learned

**Dr. Jan-Philipp Kramer, Head of EU-Services**

9th Conference on the Evaluation of EU Cohesion Policy

Porto | 16 September 2021

# Why do we evaluate?



Written by Mark M. Rogers and illustrated by Lawson Sworth

*"I can honestly say that not a day goes by when we don't use those evaluations in one way or another."*



# Evaluation in the ERDF programme cycle – an evaluation cycle dilemma?

**Differing EU & MS perspectives: How can they become more aligned?**

## EU

### EC Evaluation Cycle

Longer time-horizon of evaluation: seven-year cycle (programming period)

Evaluations of, e.g., 2007-2013 period used to inform 2020-2027 period.

Tradeoff:

Better insight on long-term policy impact, however

Framework conditions could have significantly changed by then.

## Member State

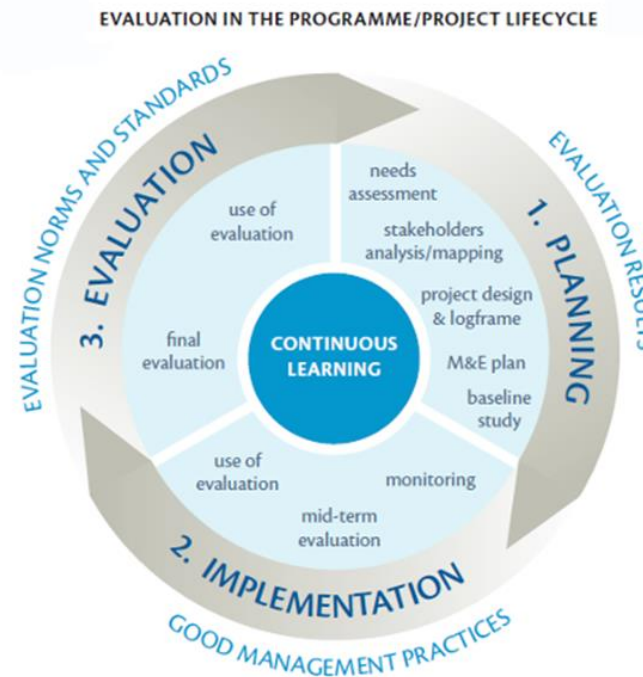
### MS Evaluation Cycle

Time-frame not always specifically defined, thus question is: **when to evaluate?**

**Too early:** not enough can be said about impact

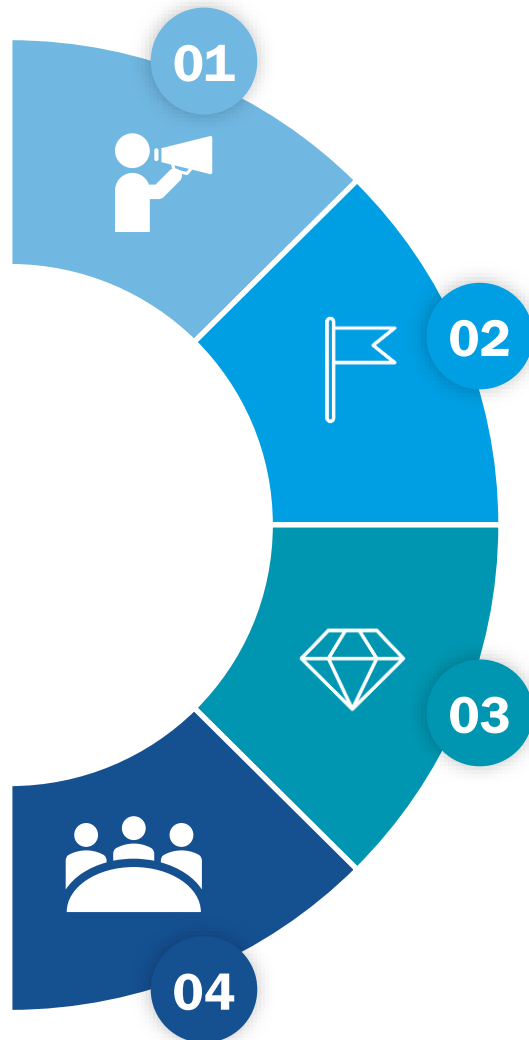
**Too late:** does not inform the next policy cycle

Moreover: how can EU evaluations increasingly contribute to MS policy decisions?



# General success criteria for dissemination of evaluation findings

“Evaluation findings are useful but being useful is not the same thing as being used.” - Sir George Alleyne



## 01 Concision, transparency & widespread diffusion

01 Succinct reports, transparency of processes and findings, as well as wide-ranging dissemination can increase the use of evaluation results.

## 02 Devising a communications plan, early on

02 Critical to develop a communications plan early on, even while still designing the evaluation approach.

## 03 Contextualisation: what does it mean for me?

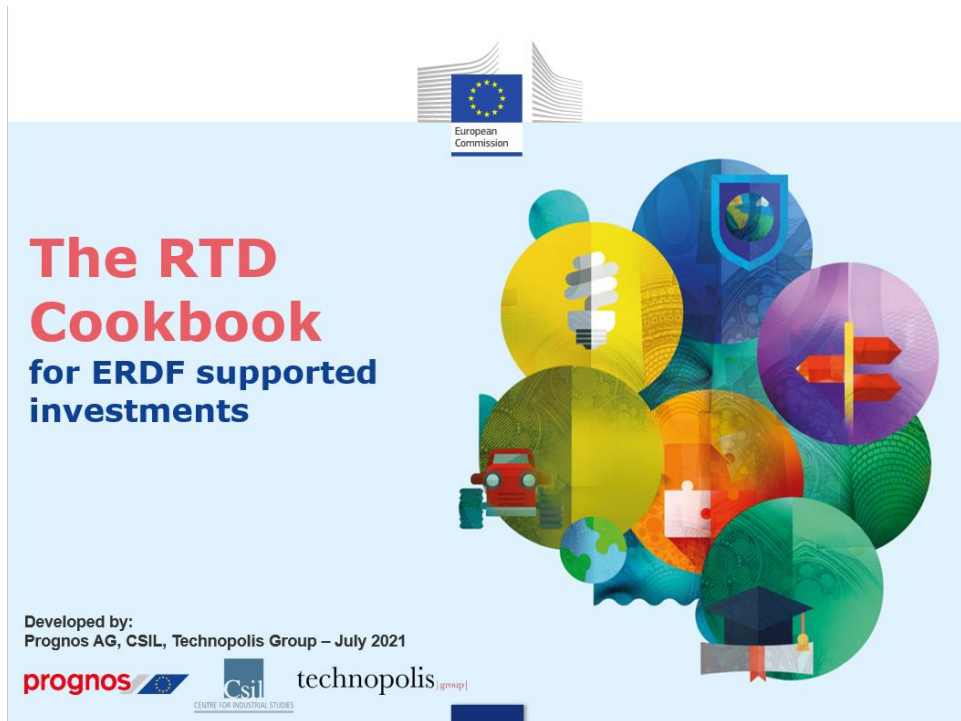
03 Helpful to contextualise insights and recommendations gathered from the evaluation to the reality of local stakeholders

## 04 Spaces for dissemination

04 Results and findings can be more effectively disseminated if forums or other structured spaces exist at the country level

# Good Practice? **The RTD-Cookbook**

Source: Ex-post evaluation of investments in Research and Technological Development (RTD) infrastructures and activities supported by the ERDF in the period 2007-2013



## The RTD Cookbook is a **Decision-aid tool for policy makers**

- 1 It identifies learnings and insights from the ex-post evaluation\* and thus serves as a decision-aid tool for policy practitioners in the next programming period.
- 2 It highlights significant contextual factors (i.e., pre-conditions, supporting factors & risks) that help identify good-practices in order to avoid common pitfalls.



\* Ex-post evaluation of investments in Research and Technological Development (RTD) infrastructures and activities supported by the ERDF in the period 2007-2013; on behalf of DG Regional & Urban Policy of the European Commission (2021)



# How was the **RTD-Cookbook** developed?

## Client

Requested a **RTD Cookbook** that captured the findings of the cross-case-study theory of change analysis:

- Identify where, how and why the policy interventions worked effectively (**key success factors**) and
- Where, how and why they did not (**pitfalls**)

Contractors shall describe “in which context and under what conditions” the intended effects were produced.

## Evaluators

**Purpose** of Cookbook:

- Not to provide *formulas*, but to pose the *right questions* that can be applied in different settings & contexts.



Are **support and advisory services** equipped with **sufficient dedicated staff** that are well-trained?



Have we **coordinated the various RTD support programmes** in our region & country in order to ensure their effective alignment and complementarity?

**Validation** of Cookbook: two interactive seminars

1. *Insights from the field*: Policy practitioners & stakeholders
2. *Strategic level*: Policy experts & academics

**Form** of Cookbook:

- Not a 100-page document. Rather: *clear, concise & to the point*.
- Visually appealing & based on real grassroots experiences.

# Key take-aways

## What policy-makers & “buyers” of evaluations should do?



Consider timing of evaluation



Provide a clear evaluation focus



Ensure sufficient resources dedicated to evaluation

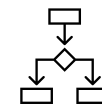


Plan for proper utilisation of results



Publish and effectively communicate (create spaces for) evaluation findings

## What evaluators should do?



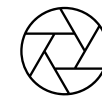
Be result-driven & creative in the presentation of evaluation findings



Offer insights on key contextual factors that can be considered in different settings



Ask the right questions rather than provide formulas



Integrate evaluation findings in the policy cycle



Ensure that learning occurs in networks



# Thank you very much!



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