

# Evaluation planning: process and building blocks

**ANDREA NALDINI**

**Training for Managing Authorities**

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# Why the evaluation plan

## **Formal reason**

- Regulation requirement (CPR Article 44(5))

## **Essential reasons**

- Planning contents and timetable of the evaluations
- Defining governance and organizational framework of the evaluation activities
- Estimating and allocating resources for evaluation
- Favoring the involvement of the stakeholders
- Designing initiatives for evaluation capacity

# How an evaluation plan may appear

According to the indications of the EC, an evaluation plan may be structured in three main sections:

## 1. INTRODUCTION

## 2. THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

- a) **Governance of the evaluation** - How the evaluation of the ESIF is organised at national level and at the OP level; role and responsibility of the different actors (MA, evaluation unit, MC, etc.); management of the evaluation plan (monitoring and updating)
- b) **Involvement of the stakeholders** - Who and how has been involved during the preparation of the plan and will be involved during the plan's implementation,
- c) **Strategic approach to the evaluation** - How the evaluations have been identified and what are the most important and strategic elements of the plan (e.c. policy priorities, key evaluation questions, main issues of the past periods, contents of the planned evaluations and their methodological approaches)
- d) **Evaluation implementation and quality** - How the evaluations will be implemented and arrangements to ensure their quality (e.g. Independence, calls for tender, data availability, quality insurance, etc.)
- e) **Dissemination and use of the findings** - The strategy to diffuse results and use findings of the evaluations, role of the Monitoring Committee and other venues to discuss results
- f) **Evaluation capacity** - the planned initiatives (e.g. training, steering groups, workshops with academy) to reinforce evaluation capacity according to the specific needs
- g) **Available resources and timing of the evaluation** - The estimated financial resources for implementing the evaluation plan and the timetable

## a) PLAN OF THE EVALUATIONS

- **Set of fiches resuming the planned evaluations** (e.c. title, schedule, objectives and expected contents, EQs, methodological approach, data to be used, budget)

# How to approach the plan: some suggestions

- 1. Define an «evaluation strategy»** and not a list of evaluations; it is necessary reflect on how to organise and cumulate knowledge to better implement and design programmes
- 2. Do not see the evaluation as the unique tool**; evaluation has many limitations and other sources (monitoring, existing literature, surveys, etc.) can help decision makers, but evaluation is the only scientific method designed to understand how a programme works
- 3. Use the plan to generate a friendly and equipped “evaluation environment”**: the success of the evaluations depends on data availability, selection of good evaluators, participation of stakeholders, readable and effective report, use of results, etc.
- 4. Remind that the “ownership” of the evaluations is shared** with financing bodies, implementers, beneficiaries and other stakeholders who determine the success of the programme; their involvement is crucial.

# Drafting an evaluation plan ....

- **Is not a solitary or desk activity**, but requires interactions with implementers, stakeholders and data owners
- **Needs some basic knowledge of evaluation**, e.g. the use of the evaluation criteria, logic tools to interpret the OP (e.g. ToC), main methodological approaches
- **Requires a little of abstraction**, as in every planning activity you are trying to 'organize the future' and in doing this experience and informed decisions help
- **Has to respect some basic rules** (regulation requirements, national agreements, scientific standards, a consistent timetable)

..... however, when needed, it can be **updated and upgraded!**

# Main steps to plan evaluations

## 1 WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW

- Reviewing what you already know
  - Reviewing EU, National, OP strategic priorities
  - Interviewing MA and implementers
  - Identifying and involving stakeholders
- ↓
- *Evaluation questions and a first set of possible evaluations*

## 2 EVALUATIONS

- Associating evaluations to key questions and criteria
  - Covering needs and requirements
  - Separating implementation and impact evaluations
  - Identifying appropriate methodological approach and unit of analysis
- ↓
- *Final set of questions and evaluations, methodological approaches*

## 3 WHEN EVALUATE

- Reviewing institutional and implementation agenda
  - «Time to impact»
- ↓
- *Timetable of the planned evaluation*

## 4 FEASIBILITY

- Available data and data to be collected or made available
  - Duration and cost
- ↓
- *Data needs and budget*

# How to think about the evaluation framework

- An **evidence-based policy system** needs three main ingredients:

- a) qualified evaluation managers,
- b) good quality evaluations,
- c) use of the findings.



Evaluation capacity  
Quality assurance  
Involvement of stakeholders

- Cultivating the **evaluation “environment”** is important:

- Evaluation has to be recognized as **independent, authoritative and reliable**;
- Administrations and stakeholders **should know how evaluation works** and what can deliver;
- Stakeholders should consider **participating in evaluation as important and useful**;
- Political representatives should **accept and discuss reliable evaluation findings**;
- Academy and sectoral experts should be **ready to contribute to evaluation**.
- Evaluation is a **multi-actor activity** and needs coordination and operational arrangements with implementers, policy-makers and stakeholders
- **Selection of evaluators** has to be quick and efficient

Some critical activities

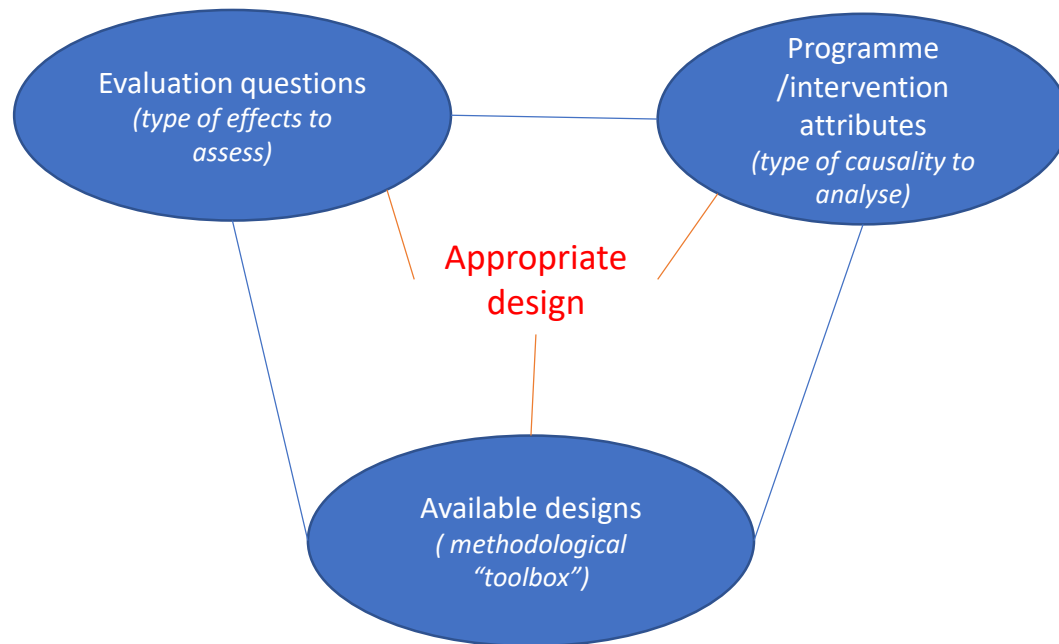


# The methodological design of the evaluations

Question → type of effect to assess

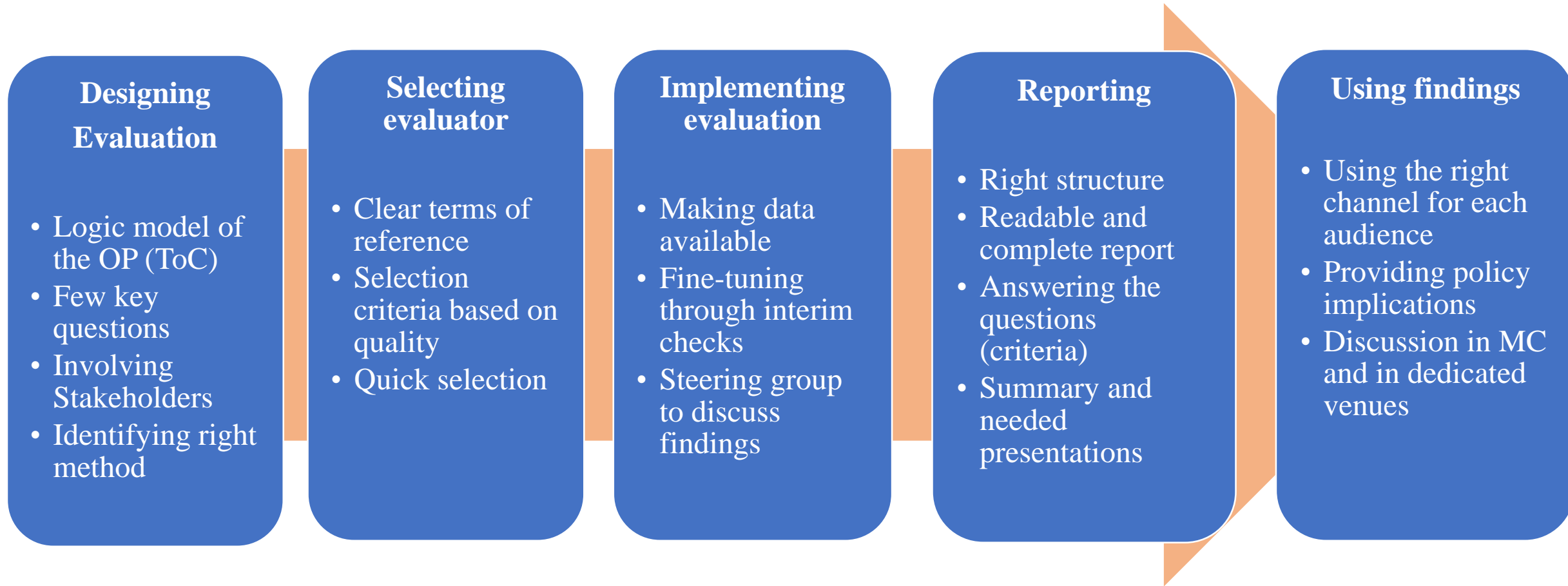
Intervention → type of causality to analyse

Design → proper approach / method



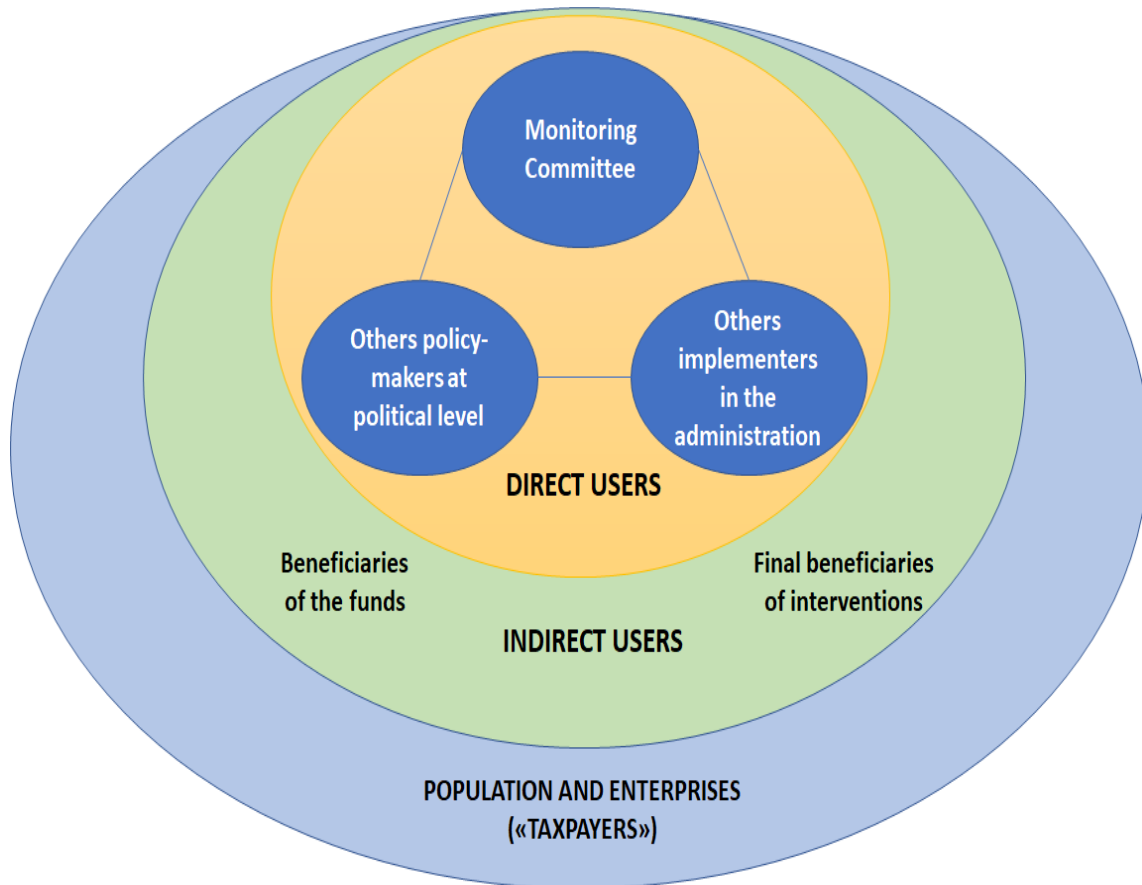
- 1. Evaluation questions**, implementation or impact evaluation; “what” results, “why” and “how” these results
- 2. The characteristics of the programme**, type of causalities to analyse (e.g. recurring causality and many beneficiaries, or multi-dimensional causality and few beneficiaries)
- 3. The available designs**, “toolbox” (e.g. statistical, counterfactual, theory-based, case study, etc.) from where picking up the most appropriate method.

# Evaluation quality: working on the process

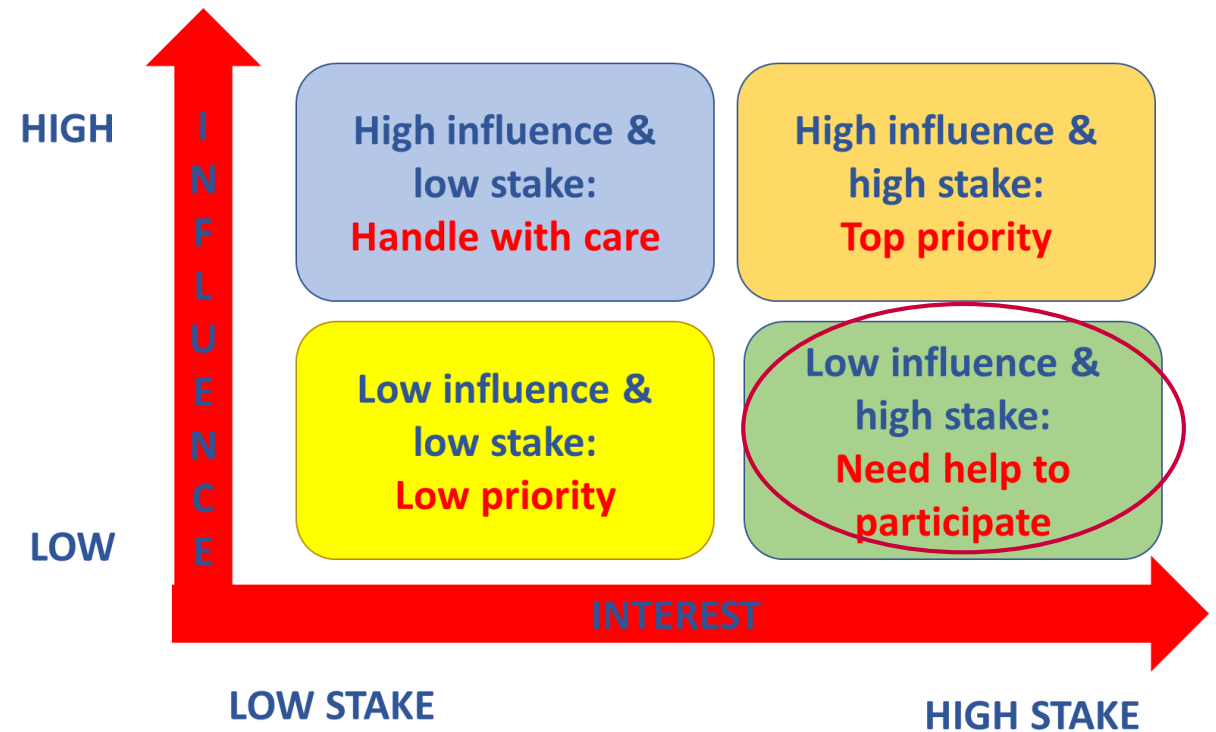


# Involving the stakeholders

## Understanding the differences



## Managing the differences



# Adapting the plan during the programming period

- The 2014-2020 period knew dramatic changes in the economy and the society but often EPs did not react and change. Changes occurred only to adjust delays in the implementation of the plan.
- How a plan can be flexible, adaptable and open to revisions?
  - Transforming internal reflections on operational and strategic choices into evaluation questions
  - Monitoring and publishing the progress of the plan
  - Keeping stakeholders involved and active
  - Defining easy procedures to update the plan and implement evaluations
  - Planning some evaluations to be detailed in the future