

Evaluation Helpdesk

Review of evaluations so far assessed

Terry Ward
Applica

Evaluation Network Meeting
Brussels, 11 October 2019



Progress in carrying out evaluations

- Up to end of August, Helpdesk identified 212 evaluations on ERDF+Cohesion Fund OPs for 2014-2020 plus 8 on 2007-2013+2014-2020
- plus 183 on ERDF+ESF OPs plus 10 on both periods
- Total 413 evaluations on ERDF-financed OPs covering 2014-2020
- From evaluation plans reviewed by Helpdesk (75% of total), 2268 evaluations planned on OPs
- Planned schedules for undertaking evaluations indicate widespread delays
- By now twice as many evaluations should have been carried out
- Delays caused largely by late start of programmes – so few outcomes to evaluate
- Either big increase in evaluations from now to end of period
- Or substantial revision to evaluation plans

Progress in carrying out impact evaluations

- Of the 2268 evaluations planned – 1475 on impact alone or combined with procedure and/or monitoring – 65% of total
- Of the 413 evaluations identified – only 59 on impact, just 14%
- Indicates:
 - either big increase in impact evaluations to end of period
 - or substantial revision of evaluation plans
- Evaluations identified by Helpdesk on 2007-2013 period suggests former
- Of 248 evaluations published since January 2015 – 199 on impact, 80%
- If plans realised, around 1900 impact evaluations still to be carried out on 2014-2020 period
- Of 413 evaluations undertaken so far – over quarter in Poland, 12% in both Germany and Spain – half in 3 countries
- In 5 countries, less than 5 evaluations so far

Summary of evaluations reviewed

- Of the 413 evaluations identified:
 - 339 summarised
 - 249 reviewed and assessed for reliability of findings
- Of the 59 impact evaluations identified:
 - 54 summarised
 - 51 reviewed and assessed for reliability of findings
- But of the 193 evaluations of ERDF+ESF OPs, 53 on ESF measures
- So 360 evaluations identified on ERDF/CF measures:
 - 294 summarised
 - 210 reviewed and assessed
- And of 59 impact evaluations identified, 43 on ERDF/CF measures:
 - 39 summarised
 - 36 reviewed and assessed
- Minority of evaluations use more advanced methods of theory-based, counterfactual or CBA

Assessment of evaluations

- Assessment involves examining 4 criteria:
 - Clarity and suitability of evaluation design
 - Appropriateness and correctness of the techniques applied
 - Availability and quality of data used
 - Validity of findings
- Each given score between 4 (high) and 1 (low) – 3+ average=“reliable”
- Validity of policy conclusions also assessed and scored in same way
- In addition two questions considered:
 - Are the results of the analysis soundly based and properly interpreted?
 - Has proper account been taken of other factors, apart from the measure being assessed, which could affect the results?

Impact evaluations failings

- Result of assessment (always by 2 people and often 3):
 - of 36 evaluations of ERDF measures assessed – 10 judged to be “reliable”
 - more accurately, 26 judged from details given in final report to have findings of uncertain reliability because of approach adopted, methods used and way applied, and data employed
- Most common failing – failure to properly assess effect of factors on outcomes other than measure being assessed
- May be because approach adopted doesn't allow for this - e.g. common to assess effects of measures by comparing outcomes to targets
- Or assume outcomes must be result of measure – e.g. if an enterprise supported creates jobs then it must be because of support
- Or effect of measure is judged only on basis of surveys or interviews of recipients of support:
 - e.g. would you have carried out investment/installed energy-saving devices without support?

Other failings

- Other failings more technical:
 - for theory-based evaluations to fail to spell out theory – of mechanisms or channels by which measure leads to outcome or causal chain
 - for counterfactual evaluations to fail to define appropriate control group
 - for CBA - to fail to take account of all costs and/or benefits – e.g. cost of maintenance once infrastructure built or social or environmental costs
- Often problem with data availability:
 - because of late start of programmes and insufficient evidence on outcomes
 - because of lack of (suitable) data on key factors – e.g. due to problems with monitoring system
 - because of inability to access data – e.g. due to confidentiality issues or admin. complications
- Result - use of inferior or inappropriate data

“Reliable” impact evaluations

- Of the 10 “reliable” – or not seemingly unreliable evaluations:
 - 5 relate to 2007-2013 in assessing impact – only consider implications for 2014-2020
 - 1 is ETC evaluation
 - 1 is based on macroeconomic model to simulate effects of funding on GDP, employment, etc. – reliability depends on assumptions built into model and closeness to reality
- Leaves 3 evaluations:
 - on support for innovation activities – mainly on 2007-2013 but also on 2014-2020
 - on support for shift to low carbon economy
 - on environmental protection measures
- Conclusion: so far little to go on to assess effects of ERDF and Cohesion Fund in different policy areas

**Thank you
for your attention!**