

Evaluation Helpdesk

**Review of impact evaluations carried out by
Member States**

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**Evaluation Network Meeting
Brussels, 29-30 November 2018**



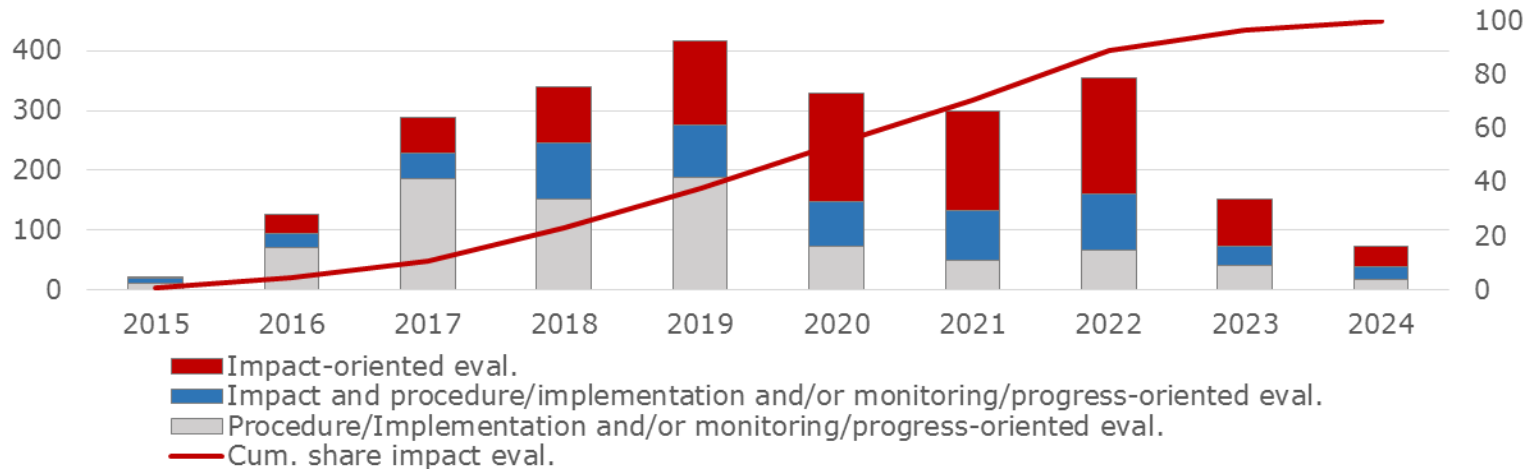
Helpdesk activities – a reminder

- Primary goal of Helpdesk: to improve evaluations carried out on Cohesion policy programmes
- In addition to reviewing all evaluations published by MS since January 2015 and assessing evaluation plans, including proposed evaluations, Helpdesk:
 - undertakes peer reviews by experts of selected evaluations
 - provides expert support to individual MAs on particular evaluation issues
 - organises training courses each year on important aspects of evaluation

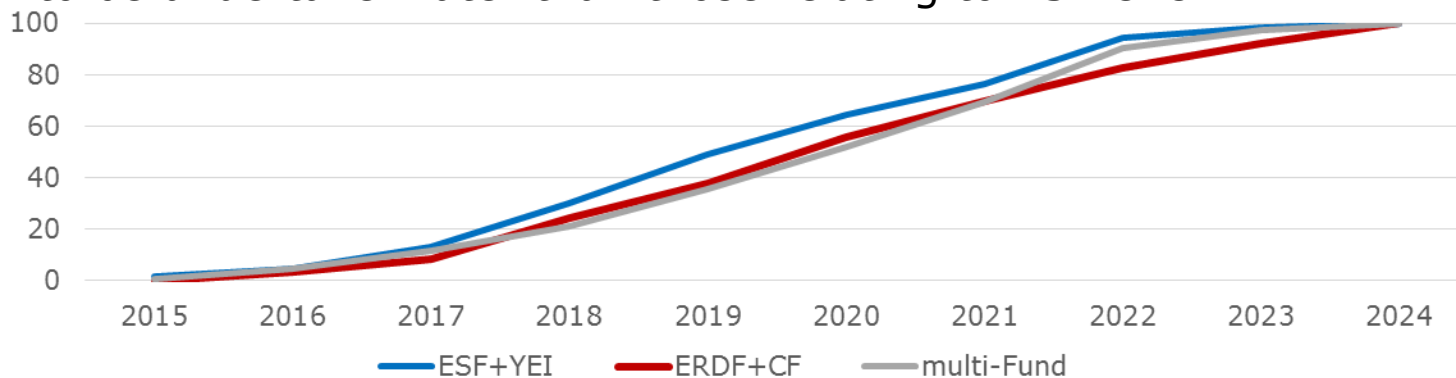
Review of impact evaluations planned

- 2,688 evaluations planned in 2014-20 period in plans reviewed = three times number identified in 2007-13 period (917)
 - 749 evaluations relate to ERDF OPs (28%), 420 to ESF OPs (16%) and 1,519 to OPs using mixed funding (57%)
- Of these, 1,737 are impact evaluations = over 7 times number identified in 2007-13 (231)
 - 455 evaluations relate to ERDF OPs (26%), 262 to ESF OPs (15%) and 1,020 to OPs using mixed funding (59%)
- Over a third (37%) of impact evaluations planned also concerned with process and progress
 - share of these is smaller for ERDF OPs (29%) and ESF OPs (22%) and larger for OPs using mixed funding (49%)

➤ Most impact evaluations planned to be undertaken after 2020

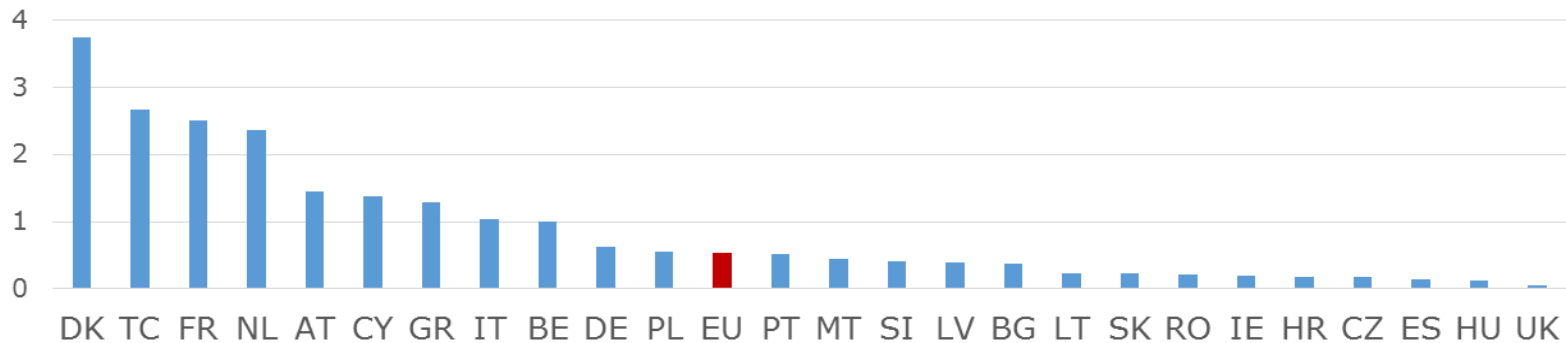


➤ Impact eval. relating to ERDF OPs and OPs using mixed funding planned to be undertaken later than those relating to ESF OPs

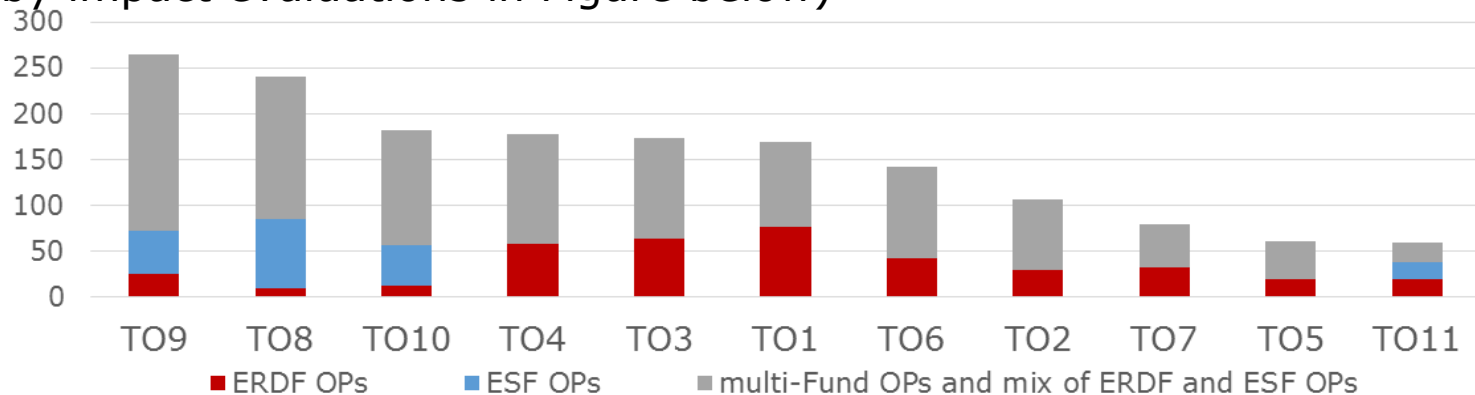


Significant difference in planned evaluation activity

- between countries (in terms of no of impact evaluations planned per EUR 100 Million of EU Funding in Figure below)



- between Thematic Objectives (in terms of no of times TOs are addressed by impact evaluations in Figure below)



- In relation to EU funding, evaluation activity of ERDF programmes is:
 - 'high' in
TO2 (in PT, SI, RO, LV, HU, ES and IT) and in
TO5 (in CY, PL, LT, GR, HR and FR)
 - 'intermediate' in
TO1 (but in RO, LT, BG it is higher and in DE, HU lower),
TO3 (but in SK, IT, CZ it is higher and in RO, SI lower) and in
TO4 (but in UK, DK, NL, BE it is higher and in LT lower)
 - 'low' in
TO6 (except in DE, FR and HU) and
 - 'very low' in
TO7

Quality of planned impact evaluations – Review in 2 steps

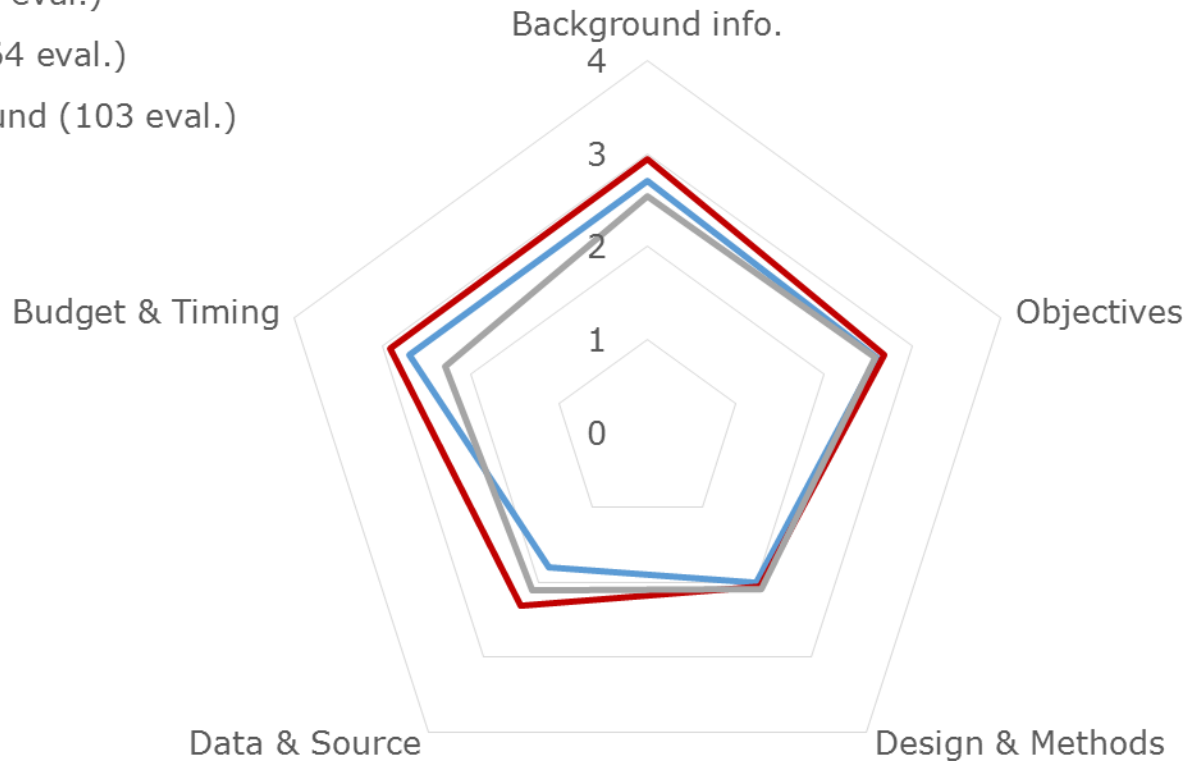
- First step - review of initial evaluation plans. Focus on the main areas that needed to be covered by the plans. 242 plans reviewed: 89 ERDF OPs, 58 ESF OPs, 95 multi-Fund OPs. Findings:
 - Plans relatively coherent/complete in respect of division of responsibilities & coordination, use made of evaluation findings & communication, management & planning and less in respect of skills and expertise available
 - Plans incomplete/incoherent in respect of evaluation design, methods and data.
- Second step - detailed inspection of planned impact evaluations of revised plans. 177 evaluations analysed. Focus on evaluation approach, methods, data (= main areas of weakness in initial plans) but also background info, budget and timing. Scores applied from 4 ('good') to 1 ('poor'). Findings:
 - Revised evaluation plans relatively coherent in respect of background information of evaluations, budget and timing.
 - Weaknesses remain in evaluation design, methods & data.

Scores - planned impact evaluations

— ESF (10 eval.)

— ERDF (64 eval.)

— multi-Fund (103 eval.)



Quality of impact evaluations already undertaken by MS

- 505 evaluations reviewed of those published since January 2015 (683), of which:
 - 233 impact evaluations - 98 'pure' impact evaluations and 135 including process and implementation and/or progress and monitoring
 - 42 impact evaluations relating to 2014-20 programmes, 181 to 2007-13 programmes and 10 to both
 - 118 impact evaluations relating to ERDF OPs, 60 to ESF OPs, and 55 to OPs using mixed funding or to multiple OPs
- Focus areas of review: Clarity and suitability of evaluation design, Appropriateness & correctness of the techniques applied, Data quality & availability, Validity of findings, Validity of conclusions – scores applied from 4 ('good') to 1 ('poor')

Findings

- Increasing use of more advanced methods
- But many evaluations of poor quality: two-thirds assessed as having major shortcomings - findings considered of uncertain reliability

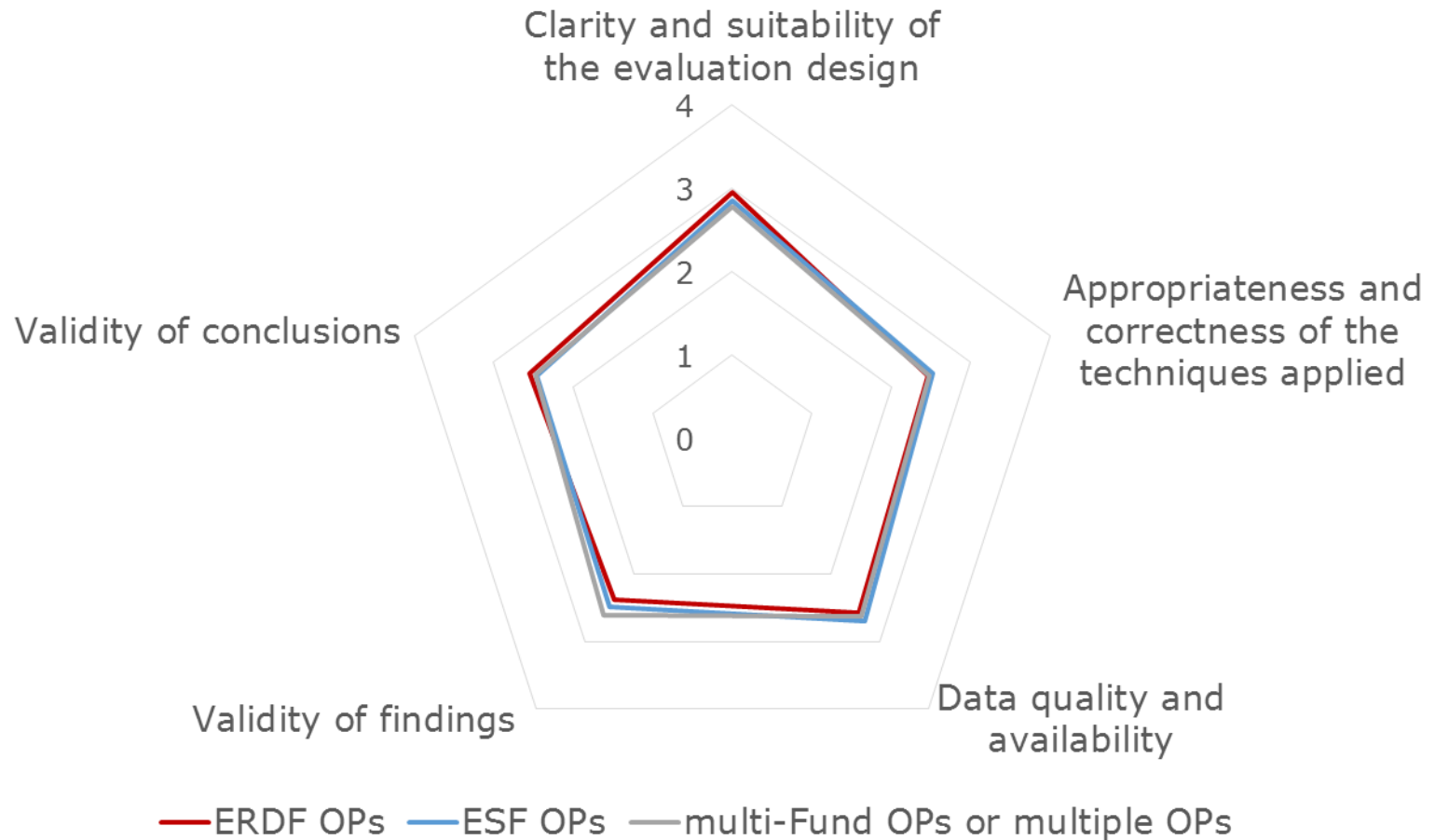
share of 'reliable' evaluations
(in brackets: total number of
eval. reviewed)

	2007-13	2014-20 (*)	Overall
ERDF OPs	35% (110)	18% (17)	32% (118)
ESF OPs	37% (38)	32% (22)	35% (60)
multi-Fund OPs	29% (42)	54% (13)	35% (55)
Overall	34% (181)	33% (52)	33% (233)

(*) include 10 evaluations relating to both periods (4 ERDF, 2 ESF, 4 multi-Fund)

- Validity of findings affected by shortcomings in data quality and appropriateness/correctness of techniques applied

Average scores of impact evaluations



Way forward – Time for action to correct weaknesses

77% of impact evaluations planned for after 2018 according to plans. Time to take action to improve them and ensure more reliable findings.

- **Objective:** purpose not indicated, often vague, lack of focus ➡ be clear about what 'you' want to find out from evaluation, use existing knowledge and evidence from past evaluations to identify 'real' gaps.
- **Eval. questions:** sometimes not indicated, too many, too broad, not always coherent with objectives and/or budget & timing ➡ identify key questions and justify why, limit number of questions, use existing knowledge to define them, ensure your expectations are understood and suitably reflected in proposed analysis (in inception report).
- **Eval. methods:** details provided often insufficient to judge suitability, techniques applied inappropriately, over-reliance on single methods – no 'triangulation', no justification of choice of method. ➡ In ToR, indicate possible methodological approaches but give scope for evaluator suggestions, require '*demonstration*' that proposed methods are most appropriate for answering eval. questions.

- **Data:** often too 'basic', over-reliance on monitoring data & indicators, beneficiary views, unclear how interviewees selected, often survey responses not specified or too few, insufficient data for appropriate control groups in CIE → early planning of data needs crucial e.g. for CIE, identify data required, check availability and define data sources in ToR, formulate a timely plan to fill gaps in data and correct deficiencies.
- **Findings and conclusions:** validity of findings often affected by shortcomings in methods and data, findings not always interpreted correctly, ways in which intervention has given rise to the outcomes identified not explained → Do not accept report if not satisfied with it.



Essential to supervise evaluation process from beginning to end

Thank you
for
your attention