

Glossary

EXTRACTS of the

MEANS Collection Volume 6

Evaluating socio-economic programmes

Glossary of 300 concepts
and technical terms

MEANS is a programme of the European Commission.
It is aimed at improving Methods for Evaluating Structural Policies.
The MEANS Programme and Collection was supervised by
Phillipe Goybet and Miguel-Angel Benito-Alonso,
Unit for the Coordination of Evaluation in the Directorate for Coordination
and Evaluation of Operations of DG XVI.
Coordination-evaluation@fmb.dg16.cec.be

The realisation of the Programme was entrusted to the
Centre for European Evaluation Expertise (C3E)
under the direction of Eric Monnier and Jacques Toulémonde.

Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this
book lies solely with the authors of the text:
C3E – 13 bis Place Jules Ferry – F – 69006 Lyon – France – c3e@c3e.fr

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Internal logic of an intervention

■ Need

Besoin ■

Problem or difficulty affecting concerned groups, which the public intervention aims to solve or overcome.

Ex ante evaluation verifies whether the needs used to justify an intervention are genuine. Mid-term evaluation may involve a survey on addressees, to reveal their needs and opinions. Needs are the judgement reference of evaluations which use relevance and usefulness criteria.

■ Strategy

Stratégie ■

Selection of priority actions according to the urgency of needs to be met, the gravity of problems to be solved, and the chances of actions envisaged being successful.

In the formulation of a strategy, objectives are selected and graded, and their levels of ambition determined. Not all territories and groups are concerned by the same development strategy. Ex ante evaluation examines whether the strategy is suited to the context and its probable evolution.

■ Context

Contexte ■

The socio-economic environment in which an intervention is implemented.

The term is used in its broadest sense. For example, in the case of interventions in favour of SMEs, the context includes the macro-economic situation and the framework conditions (tax laws, company law, etc.).

Related term(s):

- Framework condition
- Socio-economic environment
- Condition-cadre
- Environnement socio-économique

■ Objective

Objectif ■

Clear, explicit and initial statement on the effects to be achieved by a public intervention.

If the objectives are not stated implicitly, an evaluation (and particularly ex ante evaluation) may help to clarify them. A quantitative objective is stated in the form of indicators and a qualitative objective in the form of descriptors, e.g.: 30% of all outputs must be accomplished by the end of the third year; the public intervention must first benefit the long-term unemployed. Specific objectives concern the results and impacts of an intervention on direct addressees. A global objective corresponds to the aim of the intervention. The aim of an intervention is to produce an impact expressed in global terms, e.g. reducing regional disparities in development levels. Objectives may also be intermediate. Objectives which specify outputs to be produced are called operational objectives.

If the objectives of a public intervention have not been clearly defined beforehand, the evaluation can try to clarify them afterwards. In that case, it is preferable to refer to implicit objectives.

Related term(s):

- Aim

- Goal
- Global objective
- Intermediate objective
- Specific objective
- Operational objective
- Implicit objective

■ Policy priority

Priorité politique ■

The funding authorities' wish that evaluation should examine certain impacts which were not stated as objectives when the intervention was launched, but which represent political priorities at that level.

For example, in the framework of its economic and social cohesion policy, the European Union demands that evaluations systematically take into account impacts on the environment, on the competitiveness of SMEs, on the creation and maintenance of jobs, and on equal opportunities between men and women.

■ Verifiable objective

Objectif vérifiable ■

An objective stated in such a way that it will subsequently be possible to check whether or not it has been achieved.

A way of making an objective verifiable is to quantify it by means of an indicator linked to two values (baseline and expected situation). An objective may also be verifiable if it is linked to a descriptor, i.e. a clear and precise qualitative statement on the expected effect.

Related term(s):

- Quantitative objective
- Objectif quantitatif

■ Implementation

Mise en oeuvre ■

The operational process needed to produce expected outputs.

In the context of European Union socio-economic programmes, implementation comprises all or part of the following tasks: mobilising and distributing allocated inputs; assigning management responsibilities to operators; selecting calls for tenders for project promoters; and, lastly, selecting and financing projects. To monitor and improve implementation, a monitoring committee is set up, a system of information monitoring is launched, and audits and evaluations are performed.

Related term(s):

- Implémentation

■ Input

Ressource ■

Financial, human, material, organisational and regulatory means mobilised for the implementation of an intervention.

For example, sixty people worked on implementing the programme; 3% of the project costs were spent on reducing effects on the environment.

Monitoring and evaluation focus primarily on the inputs allocated by public authorities and used by operators to obtain outputs. In this Collection, private inputs mobilised by assisted firms, for example, are considered to be results of public intervention.

The above definition gives a relatively broad meaning to the word "input". Some prefer to limit its use to financial or budgetary resources only. In this case, the word "activity" can be applied to the implementation of human and organisational resources. The term "financial outputs" is sometimes used in the sense of consumption of budgetary inputs.

Related term(s):

- Activity
- Financial realisation
- Means
- Resource
- Activité
- Intrant
- Moyen
- Réalisation financière

■ **Effect**

Effèt ■

Socio-economic change resulting directly or indirectly from an implemented intervention.

Effects include the results and impacts of an intervention, whether positive or negative, expected or not. In certain cases, the term "effect" is wrongly used to include outputs.

■ **Output**

Réalisation ■

That which is financed and accomplished (or concretised) with the money allocated to an intervention.

A project promoter undertakes to produce an output in immediate exchange for the support granted. If this is not accomplished, the support is withheld or must be partly or entirely refunded. Operators are responsible for outputs and must regularly and systematically report on them to the monitoring committee. Outputs may take the form of facilities or works (e.g. building of a road, rehabilitation of an urban wasteland; purification plant; tourist accommodation). They may also take the form of immaterial services (e.g. training, consultancy, information).

Related term(s):

- Product
- Realisation
- Extrant
- Produit

■ **Result**

Résultat ■

Advantage (or disadvantage) which direct addressees obtain at the end of their participation in a public intervention or as soon as a public facility has been completed.

Results can be observed when an operator completes an action and accounts for the way in which allocated funds were spent and managed. At this point s/he may show, for example, that accessibility has been improved due to the construction of a road, or that the firms which have received advice claim to be satisfied. The operators may regularly monitor results. They have to adapt the implementation of the intervention according to the results obtained.

Related term(s):

Immediate outcome

■ **Impact**

Impact ■

A consequence affecting direct addressees following the end of their participation in an intervention or after the completion of public facilities, or else an indirect consequence affecting other addressees who may be winners or losers.

Certain impacts (specific impacts) can be observed among direct addressees after a few months or in the longer term (e.g. the monitoring of assisted firms after two years). In the field of development support, these impacts are usually referred to as sustainable results.

Some impacts appear indirectly (e.g. turnover generated for the suppliers of assisted firms). Others can be observed at the macro-economic or macro-social level (e.g. improvement of the image of the assisted region); these are global impacts. Evaluation is frequently used to examine one or more intermediate impacts, between specific and global impacts. Impacts may be positive or negative, expected or unexpected.

Related term(s):

- Global impact
- Intermediate impact
- Outcome
- Specific impact
- Sustainable result
- Impact global
- Impact intermédiaire
- Impact spécifique
- Résultat durable

■ **Unexpected effect**

Effet inattendu ■

An impact which is revealed by evaluation but was not foreseen when an intervention was launched.

Unexpected effects are revealed by inductive analysis techniques (particularly case studies). They are not part of the objectives. A positive unexpected effect may become an implicit objective. Negative unexpected effects are also called perverse effects. For example, if assistance is granted for the development of a territory and, for that purpose, the territory is classified "disadvantaged", it will become less attractive for business as a result.

Related term(s) :

- Perverse effect
- Side effect
- Effet pervers
- Retombée

Structuring techniques

■ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

Forces, faiblesses, opportunités, menaces ■

Analysis of internal factors which can be relied on (strengths) or which need to be compensated for (weaknesses), as well as external factors which are favourable (opportunities) or unfavourable (threats).

This is an evaluation tool which is used to check whether a public intervention is suited to its context. The tool structures debate on strategic orientations.

■ Logical framework

Cadre logique ■

Tool used to structure the logic of a public intervention.

It is based on a matrix presentation of the intervention, which highlights its outputs, results, and specific and global impacts. Each level of objective is associated with one or more verifiable indicators of success, as well as with the conditions and risks influencing success or failure (confounding factors). This tool is frequently used for the evaluation of development support projects. By contrast, it is ill-suited to the evaluation of socio-economic programmes because its level of simplification is too high.

■ Objective tree

Arbre des objectifs ■

Hierarchical classification of the objectives of a public intervention, linking each specific objective to its global objective.

The objectives tree of a programme makes the overall logic explicit. It is used for clarification.

Measures and information systems

■ Indicator

Indicateur ■

Measurement of an objective to achieve, a resource mobilised, an output accomplished, an effect obtained or a context variable (economic, social or environmental).

The information provided by an indicator is of a quantitative nature and is used to measure facts or opinions (e.g. percentage of regional enterprises which have been assisted by public intervention; percentage of trainees who claim to be satisfied or highly satisfied). An indicator must, among other things, produce simple information which is easy to communicate and easily understood by both the provider and the user of the information. It must help the managers of public intervention to communicate, negotiate and decide. For that purpose, it should preferably be linked to a criterion on the success of the intervention. It must reflect precisely whatever it is meant to measure (validity of construction). The indicator and its measurement unit must be sensitive, that is to say, the quantity measured must vary significantly when a change occurs in the variable to be measured. Indicators may be specially constructed by the evaluation team and quantified by means of surveys or statistical data. They are often borrowed from the monitoring system or statistical series. An indicator may be elementary or derived from several other indicators in the form of ratios or indexes.

Related term(s) :

Quantitative data
Sensitivity
Donnée quantitative
Sensibilité

■ Measurement unit

Unité de mesure ■

Used to observe a phenomenon, change or variable, and to place it on a quantitative scale.

A measurement unit allows for quantification. An elementary indicator is associated with a measurement unit and has only one dimension (e.g. km of motorway; number of training courses). Some measurement units are divisible and others not (e.g. 20.3km were built; 30 trainees were qualified). Measurement units must be harmonised if indicators are to be comparable.

Related term(s):

Quantification
Quantification

■ Descriptor

Descripteur ■

A description, in the form of a concise, clear and stable statement, of an objective to achieve or an impact obtained.

For example, one can examine the impact of a measure in terms of equal opportunities, and conclude by choosing a pre-established descriptor such as: (1) "the measurement enabled most women addressees to qualify for jobs considered to be reserved for men", or (2) "the measure attracted a large proportion of women addressees who wanted to qualify for jobs considered to be reserved for men".

The organisation of descriptors in the form of a structured grid may constitute the first step in the construction of an indicator. If several descriptors have been established beforehand, they can be used to construct an observation grid. By means of this grid a phenomenon or change can be observed and described in a qualitative and structured way. Evaluation cannot afford to exclude from its scope of analysis an important objective or impact simply because it is difficult to measure quantitatively when in fact it is considered to be important. In that case, it is preferable to collect qualitative data and to structure them by means of descriptors.

Related term(s) :

Observation grid
Qualitative data
Statement
Donnée qualitative
Enoncé
Grille d'observation

■ Scoring

Notation ■

Choice of a level on a scale graduated in quantitative measurement units (e.g. a scale of 0 to 100 or -3 to +3) in order to represent the significance of an effect, need or element of quality.

It is possible to construct an observation grid which is sufficiently structured to directly produce a score. The person who chooses the score is called the scorer or the assessor. Statistical analysis of results studies scoring systems.

Related term(s):

Rating

■ Monitoring information system

Système d'information de suivi ■

Measures taken so that operators can collect and store information on inputs, outputs and results, and so that they can process and transmit this information regularly to the managers (e.g. progress reports).

The monitoring information system also includes the monitors' syntheses and aggregations, periodically presented to the authorities responsible for the implementation (reviews, operating reports, indicators, etc.). In European Union socio-economic programmes, the key element in an information system is a system of indicators.

Related term(s):

System of indicators
Système d'indicateurs

■ Operating report

Tableau de bord ■

Presentation of essential information for the monitoring of an intervention, in the form of a small number of periodically quantified indicators.

The operating report concerns the inputs mobilised, the outputs achieved and the results observed. It also consists of a few statistical indicators used to monitor important elements in the context (provided the information can be obtained without too much delay). The operating report is part of the monitoring information system. It is often produced by means of data base management software. The advantage of an operating report is that it allows for the continuous visualisation of the main parameters of public intervention as well as rapid feedback.

■ Statistical team

Observatoire ■

The organisation or system used to regularly gather or disseminate statistical information on a given theme and over a long period (e.g. statistics on equal opportunities; environmental statistics in a nature reserve).

Due to its permanence, a statistical team can produce chronological series, something which an evaluation that takes place in a limited timeframe cannot do. When they exist, statistical teams are interesting sources of secondary data for evaluations.

■ Comparability

Comparabilité ■

Quality of an indicator which uses the same measurement unit to quantify the needs, objectives or effects of several different interventions.

Comparability is useful for establishing norms for judgement (e.g. the average cost of jobs created by the intervention can be favourably compared to that of similar interventions). Efforts made to improve comparability involve the harmonisation of measurement units and result, initially, in the definition of standard indicators, i.e. indicators that can be used in several regions with the same definition for the same sector of intervention (e.g. number of SMEs assisted, defined and calculated in a comparable way). Secondly, comparability can be extended to key indicators, that is, indicators which can be used in several regions and sectors of intervention.

Related term(s)

Harmonisation
Standard indicator
Harmonisation
Indicateur standard

■ Field of intervention

Champ d'intervention ■

A set of interventions which are similar enough for their indicators to be harmonised and for comparisons to be made between different evaluations.

For example, the same programme can predict outputs in the field of research and development, in that of transport infrastructure, in that of training, and so on. Within the framework of European cohesion policy, fields of intervention are grouped together into three main categories: basic infrastructure, productive environment and human resources.

Related term(s):

Secteur d'intervention

Indicators

■ Context indicator

Indicateur de contexte ■

Measurement of an economic, social or environmental variable concerning an entire region, sector or group in which public intervention takes place (e.g. per capita GDP, annual number of jobs created in the region).

Context indicators may describe a basic situation before an intervention and a desired situation after intervention. They are generally quantified on the basis of data from statistics offices or statistical teams. They apply to an entire territory or group, unlike programme indicators which apply only to addressees actually affected by an intervention.

■ Baseline

Situation de base ■

State of the economic, social or environmental context, at a given time (generally at the beginning of the intervention), and from which changes will be measured.

The basic situation is described by context indicators which describe the economy, socio-economic environment, concerned groups, etc.

Related term(s):

Point zéro
Situation de référence

■ Programme indicator

Indicateur de programme ■

Indicator which concerns the inputs and outputs of the intervention as well as the results and impacts on its direct and indirect addressees.

Programme indicators may include derived indicators measuring efficiency, effectiveness or performance. They are quantified by monitoring information systems and also by evaluation when it produces primary data. When they concern effects, programme indicators measure only those which affect direct and indirect addressees.

■ Generic indicator

Indicateur générique ■

Indicator which uses the same measurement unit to quantify the impacts resulting from several outputs of various kinds (e.g. value-added generated by outputs in the domains of fishing, tourism and new information technologies).

■ Key indicator

Indicateur clé ■

Indicator likely to play an important part in comparisons between different interventions and in the synthesis of conclusions of several evaluations.

Within the framework of European cohesion policy, key indicators are, for example, the budgetary absorption rate or number of SMEs assisted (for the monitoring of implementation), or the cost per job created or per capita GDP (for the evaluation of impacts). Key indicators must be both standard and generic indicators.

■ Absorption rate

Taux de consommation budgétaire ■

Budgetary inputs mobilised in proportion to the inputs initially allocated.

Related term(s):

Taux d'absorption

■ Completion rate

Taux de réalisation ■

Percentage of initially planned outputs and which have been completed.

The completion rate of a major infrastructure project is calculated in terms of the stages of work which were initially planned and were actually completed. The completion rate of an intervention is the average of the completion rates of the projects comprising that intervention. The completion rate is a key indicator for monitoring the implementation of an intervention.

Related term(s):

Taux d'avancement

■ Coverage rate

Taux d'atteinte du public éligible ■

Percentage of the eligible group which was actually affected by an intervention.

The coverage rate is a result indicator which is important to quantify for monitoring purposes. The exposure rate will be referred to indicate the portion of the population targeted, which received information on the programme.

Related term(s):

Exposure rate
Taux de couverture
Taux d'exposition

Evaluation criteria

■ Criterion

Critère ■

Character, property or consequence of a public intervention on the basis of which a judgement will be formulated.

For example, an employment incentive programme may be judged in terms of "costs per job created" or "percentage of support benefiting the long-term unemployed" (in the latter case, it is assumed that the higher the percentage, the better the intervention).

An evaluation criterion must be explicit, that is, it must clearly show why the intervention will be judged better or worse. Criteria frequently used in evaluation are performance, effectiveness, equity and sustainability. Thus, evaluation criteria may refer to different social values.

To be used in an evaluation, a criterion must be accompanied by a norm (level of success at which an intervention will be considered good in terms of this criterion). An intervention is generally judged in terms of several criteria.

Related term(s):

Social value
Valeur sociale

■ Norm

Norme ■

Level that the intervention has to reach to be judged successful, in terms of a given criterion.

For example, the cost per job created was satisfactory compared to a national norm based on a sample of comparable interventions.

Related term(s) :

Standard

■ Weighting

Pondération ■

Used to state that one criterion is of more or less importance than another one in the formulation of a global judgement on an intervention.

The weighting of criteria can be formalised by expressing it as a percentage (the total being 100%). Multicriteria analysis also uses weighting.

■ Rationale

Raison d'être ■

The fact that an intervention can be justified in relation to needs to satisfy or socio-economic problems to solve.

Ex ante evaluation verifies the real existence of these needs and problems, and ensures that they cannot be met or solved by existing private or public initiatives. Thus, the inadequacy or shortcomings of other initiatives (whether private or public) are a fundamental element in the programme rationale, by virtue of the principle of subsidiarity.

Related term(s) :

Raison d'être

Bien-fondé

■ Relevance

Pertinence ■

Appropriateness of the explicit objectives of an intervention, with regard to the socio-economic problems the intervention is meant to solve.

Questions of relevance are particularly important in ex ante evaluation because the focus is on the strategy chosen or its justification. Within the framework of mid-term evaluation, it is advisable to check whether the socio-economic context has evolved as expected and whether this evolution calls into question the relevance of a particular initial objective.

Related terms:

Appropriateness
Adéquation

■ Internal coherence

Cohérence interne ■

Correspondence between the different objectives of the same intervention.

Internal coherence implies that there is a hierarchy of objectives, with those at the bottom logically contributing towards those above.

Related term(s):

Consistency

■ External coherence

Cohérence externe ■

Correspondence between the objectives of an intervention and those of other public interventions which interact with it.

If a national policy and a European Union socio-economic programme are implemented in a complementary manner in the same territory for the purpose of developing SMEs, it can be said that there is external coherence.

■ Complementarity

Complémentarité ■

The fact that several public interventions (or several components of an intervention) contribute towards the achievement of the same objective.

Complementarity may be functional, if the objective is functional (e.g. developing a sector of activity, creating a network). It may be territorial, if the objective concerns a territory (e.g. integrated local development policy).

■ Synergy

Synergie ■

The fact that several public interventions (or several components of an intervention) together produce an impact which is greater than the sum of the impacts they would produce alone (e.g. an intervention which finances the extension of an airport which, in turn, helps to fill tourist facilities, also financed by the intervention).

Synergy generally refers to positive impacts. However, phenomena which reinforce negative effects, negative synergy or anti-synergy may also be referred to (e.g. an intervention subsidises the diversification of enterprises while a regional policy helps to strengthen the dominant activity).

■ Effectiveness

Efficacité ■

The fact that expected effects have been obtained and that objectives have been achieved.

Effectiveness can be assessed by answering the following questions, for example: "Could more effects have been obtained by organising the implementation differently?" or "Which are the most successful operators or measures?". An effectiveness indicator is calculated by relating an output, result or impact indicator to a quantified objective. For example: the objective in terms of number of firms created was as high as 85%; the placement rate obtained by operator A is better than that obtained by operator B. For the sake of clarity, it may be useful to specify whether one is referring to the effectiveness of outputs, results or impacts.

Related term(s):

Efficacy
Success
Effectivité
Réussite
Succès

■ Efficiency

Efficiency ■

The fact that the effects were obtained at a reasonable cost.

Efficiency may be assessed by answering the following questions, for example: "Could more effects have been obtained with the same budget?" or "Have other interventions obtained the same effects at a lower cost?". An indicator of efficiency is calculated by dividing the budgetary inputs mobilised by the quantity of effects obtained. For example: the average cost of training a person who has been jobless for a long time is 2,000 euro; the intervention should achieve a cost per job created of less than 30,000 euro.

For the sake of clarity, it could be useful to specify whether the efficiency referred to relates to outputs, results or impacts. The efficiency of outputs is called the unit cost.

Related term(s):

Cost effectiveness
Unit-cost.
Value for money
Coût-efficacité
Coût unitaire

■ Sustainability

Durabilité ■

The ability of effects to last in the middle or long term.

Effects are sustainable if they last after the funding granted by the intervention has ceased. They are not sustainable if an activity is unable to generate its own resources, or if it is accompanied by negative effects, particularly on the environment, and if that leads to blockages or rejection.

Related term(s) :

Viabilité
Pérennité

■ Performance

Performance ■

The fact that effects were obtained at a reasonable cost and that the addressees are satisfied with them.

For example: a water purification programme has a high performance rate if the per capita cost is limited compared to similar interventions, if the purification plants built comply with quality standards, and if the rivers concerned are less polluted.

Efficiency and performance are two similar notions, but the latter extends, more broadly, to include qualitative dimensions. In certain contexts, performance concerns outputs and results but not impacts. In other contexts, the term applies mainly to either outputs (World Bank – Operations Evaluation Department) or impacts. The meaning of the word performance is not yet stable; it is therefore preferable to define it whenever it is used.

■ Utility

Utilité ■

The fact that the impacts obtained by an intervention correspond to society's needs and to the socio-economic problems to be solved.

Utility is a very particular evaluation criterion because it disregards all reference to stated objectives of an intervention. It may be judicious to apply this criterion when objectives are badly defined or when there are many unexpected effects. The criterion must, however, be used with caution to avoid the evaluation team being influenced by personal considerations in their selection of important socio-economic needs or problems. Some authors have argued for a form of goal-free evaluation.

Related term(s):

Goal free evaluation
Evaluation affranchie des objectifs

■ Subsidiarity

Subsidiarité ■

The principle which justifies that a public authority decides to implement an intervention rather than to leave it up to private initiative or another public authority.

The principle of subsidiarity justifies public intervention when there are shortcomings in the private sector and when other public administration levels would not have been as effective. Subsidiarity is part of the rationale of an intervention.

In the European context, subsidiarity means, for example, that the Community acts in those cases where an objective can be achieved better at the European level than at the level of Member States taken alone. This corresponds to the notion of Community value added which is frequently considered a criterion to take into account during the evaluation of programmes.

Related term(s):

Community value added
Valeur ajoutée communautaire

Evaluation issues

Utility of evaluation

■ Evaluation

Evaluation ■

Judgement on the value of a public intervention with reference to criteria and explicit standards (e.g. its relevance, its efficiency).

The judgement primarily concerns the needs which have to be met by the intervention, and the effects produced by it. The evaluation is based on information which is specially collected and interpreted to produce the judgement.

For example: evaluation of the effectiveness of a programme, cost-benefit evaluation of a project, evaluation of the validity of a policy, and evaluation of the quality of a service delivered to the public.

Certain definitions exclude the judgement dimension and limit evaluation to the measurement of the intervention's effects. Other, more restrictive definitions, limit evaluation to the ex post estimation of effects.

In certain contexts, evaluation focuses not on a public intervention but on a public organisation (e.g. evaluation of a university or a hospital). More generally, the term is used in human resource management for the evaluation of a person (e.g. annual evaluation interview) or in the financial domain to estimate the value of an enterprise.

Journalistic use of the word is often in the sense of a vague estimation ("the number of victims is estimated at 1,000 people") or a monetary estimation ("this table is valued at 1 million euros").

Related term(s) :

Appraisal
Assessment
Appréciation
Examen

■ Feedback

Rétroaction ■

Feedback exists when the observation of results and impacts in the field is used to adjust the implementation of an intervention, or to make more radical changes, including calling into question the existence of the intervention.

Feedback is the main purpose of evaluation when it has a managerial and/or formative perspective. It corresponds to an instrumental use.

Related term(s) :

Feed-back

■ Organisational learning

Apprentissage organisationnel ■

The fact that lessons drawn from experience are accepted and retained by institutions or organisations responsible for intervention. The learning goes beyond feedback in so far as the lessons are capitalised on and can be applied to other interventions.

Direct learning (called "single loop learning") exists when the users learn that the intervention has been a success or failure. This can lead them, for example, to reduce the budgets allocated to the least successful interventions.

Indirect learning (called "double loop learning") exists when users realise that they must call into question their basic assumptions (their action theory). This may cause them, for example, to reorganise implementation of the least successful interventions.

Related term(s) :

Single loop learning
Double loop learning
Apprentissage en simple boucle
Apprentissage en double boucle

■ Accountability

Rendre des comptes ■

Obligation, for the actors participating in the introduction or implementation of a public intervention, to provide political authorities and the general public with information and explanations on the expected and actual results of an intervention, with regard to the sound use of public resources.

From a democratic perspective, accountability is an important dimension of evaluation. Public authorities are progressively increasing their requirements for transparency vis-à-vis taxpayers, as to the sound use of funds they manage. In this spirit, evaluation must help to explain simply where public money was spent, what effects it produced and how the spending was justified. The addressees of this type of evaluation are obviously political authorities and, in fine, citizens via the media.

For example, a training organisation reports on the number of trainees who benefited from its services and the qualifications obtained. A managing authority reports on the cost per net job created due to the intervention. The Commission publishes a report on progress made in terms of economic and social cohesion.

Related term(s) :

Imputabilité
Redevabilité,
Rendu-compte
Responsabilité

Types of evaluation

■ Overall evaluation

Evaluation d'ensemble ■

Evaluation of an intervention in its totality.

Overall evaluation focuses on all actions financed as part of a public intervention. It encompasses all the tools used, all groups targeted, all eligible territories, all expected impacts and all relevant themes. Overall evaluation often constitutes the first step in the screening of an evaluated field, before a second stage of focalisation, which takes the form of in-depth or thematic evaluations.

Related term(s) :

Global evaluation
Screening
Radioscopie

■ Thematic evaluation

Thematic evaluation ■

Evaluation which transversally analyses a particular point (a theme) in the context of several interventions within a single programme or of several programmes implemented in different countries or regions.

The theme may correspond to an expected impact (e.g. competitiveness of SMEs) or to a field of interventions (e.g. R&D). The notion of thematic evaluation is similar to that of an in-depth study (e.g. impact of support for R&D on the competitiveness of SMEs), but it is a large scale exercise when conducted on a European scale.

■ In-depth evaluation

In-depth evaluation ■

Consists of focusing evaluation or a part of an evaluation precisely on a category of outputs, a group or on category of impacts. This permits a more detailed analysis, unlike overall evaluation which aims at being exhaustive.

Overall evaluation of a programme may be accompanied by an in-depth analysis of one or more questions. A decision may, however, be taken to launch an evaluation devoted entirely to the in-depth analysis of a single question. By focusing on a specific question it is possible to use more demanding and therefore more reliable evaluation techniques, particularly for observing the behaviour of addressees, for observing a comparison group or for analysing net effects. Since in-depth analysis focuses essentially on the observation of effects in the field, these studies concern intermediate and ex post evaluation.

Related term(s) :

Scoping
Focalisation

■ Ex ante evaluation

Evaluation ex ante ■

Evaluation which is performed before implementation.

For an intervention to be evaluated ex ante, it must be known with enough precision; in other words, a plan, at least, must exist. If the intervention still has to be planned from scratch, one would refer to a diagnosis of needs. This form of evaluation helps to ensure that an intervention is as relevant and coherent as possible. Its conclusions are meant to be integrated at the time decisions are made. Ex ante evaluation mainly concerns an analysis of context. It provides the relevant authorities with a prior assessment of whether development issues have been diagnosed correctly, whether the strategy and objectives proposed are relevant, whether there is incoherence between them or in relation to Community policies and guidelines, whether the expected impacts are realistic, etc. Moreover, it provides the necessary basis for monitoring and future evaluations by ensuring that there are explicit and, where possible, quantified objectives.

Related term(s) :

Prior appraisal
Needs assessment
Appréciation ex ante
Evaluation a priori,
Diagnostic

■ Mid-term evaluation

Evaluation à mi-parcours ■

Evaluation which is performed towards the middle of the period of implementation of the intervention.

This evaluation critically considers the first outputs and results, which enables it to assess the quality of the monitoring and implementation. It shows the translation into operational terms of initial intentions and, where relevant, points out de facto amendments to objectives. Through comparison with the initial situation, it shows the evolution of the general economic and social context, and judges whether the objectives remain relevant. It examines whether the evolution of policies and priorities of other public authorities raises problems of coherence. It also helps to prepare adjustments and reprogramming, and to argue them in a transparent manner. Mid-term evaluation not only relies strongly on information derived from the monitoring system, but also on information relating to the context and

its evolution. Mid-term evaluation has a formative character: it provides feedback on interventions of which it helps to improve the management.

Mid-term evaluation is a form of intermediate evaluation. Other intermediate evaluations may be performed during the first or last years of implementation.

Related term(s) :

Evaluation intermédiaire

■ On-going evaluation

Evaluation chemin-faisant ■

Evaluation which extends throughout the period of implementation of an intervention.

This form of evaluation accompanies the monitoring of outputs and results. It is too often confused with monitoring. The advantage of on-going evaluation is that it allows for good collaboration between the evaluation team and programme managers, which in turn favours a better appropriation of conclusions and recommendations.

On-going evaluation may be seen as a series of in-depth studies, comprising successive analyses of evaluative questions which have appeared during the implementation. For example, an on-going evaluation of development support for tourism has successively considered the following questions: "how has the public reacted to the proposed support?" (first year); "is the evolution of the tourist market making the assistance useless?" (third year); "which of the assisted projects can be considered cases of best practice to reproduce?" (fourth year).

Related term(s) :

Rolling evaluation
Evaluation in itinere

■ Ex post evaluation

Evaluation ex post ■

Evaluation which recapitulates and judges an intervention when it is over.

It aims at accounting for the use of resources, the achievement of expected effects (effectiveness) and of unexpected effects (utility), and for the efficiency of interventions. It strives to understand the factors of success or failure, as well as the sustainability of results and impacts. It also tries to draw conclusions which can be generalised to other interventions. For impacts to have the time to materialise, ex post evaluation must be performed two to three years after implementation of an intervention. For the purpose of analysing impacts, ex post evaluations are likely to involve field surveys and to take place over long periods of time.

Related term(s) :

Evaluation a posteriori

■ Meta-evaluation

Méta-évaluation ■

Evaluation of another evaluation or of a series of evaluations.

The criteria for judgement are generally reliability, credibility and utility. The term is sometimes applied to the auditing of an evaluative function of an organisation (verifying that the rules concerning evaluation have been applied professionally). Sometimes meta-evaluation is used to refer to a synthesis based on a series of evaluations.

Organisation of evaluation

■ Self-evaluation

Auto-évaluation ■

Evaluation of a public intervention by the organisation which participates directly in its implementation.

This mode of organisation is rarely found in the context of programmes financed by the European Union. Due to cultural and geographic distance, it is more frequent in projects to assist developing countries.

■ Internal evaluation

Evaluation interne ■

Evaluation of a public intervention by an evaluation team belonging to the administration responsible for the programme.

Internal evaluation may be independent if the evaluation team has no hierarchical relation with the actors implementing the intervention. Otherwise, it would be self-evaluation.

Related term(s) :

In-house evaluation

■ External evaluation

Evaluation externe ■

Evaluation of a public intervention by people not belonging to the administration responsible for its implementation.

For example, a team composed of private consultants, researchers or people belonging to public organisations unrelated to those responsible for the intervention.

■ Commissioner

Commanditaire ■

Person or organisation which decides (or co-decides) to launch an evaluation.

A commissioner has the advantage of making his or her decision visible by establishing a mandate. A commissioner may decide to steer the work of an evaluation team her/himself, or to constitute a steering group or evaluation authority for this purpose.

Related term(s) :

Mandant

■ Evaluation team

Equipe d'évaluation ■

The people who perform the evaluation.

An evaluation team selects and interprets secondary data, collects primary data, carries out analyses and produces the evaluation report. An evaluation team may be internal or external. It may consist of a group of several organisations (consortium) or contract out the work. It may even consist of a single person. In this Collection, the term "evaluation team" has been used rather than "evaluator". The latter term, found in the management model, cannot easily be applied to the other two models (pluralistic and democratic evaluation) in so far as it is an evaluation authority which makes the final judgement on the basis of the work produced by an evaluation team.

Related term(s) :

Evaluator

Evaluateur

Chargé d'évaluation

■ Steering group

Groupe de pilotage ■

Limited group composed of officials from those administrations most directly concerned by an intervention, sometimes accompanied by experts.

The steering group meets frequently and its working procedures are fairly informal. The steering group acts as a mediator between the commissioners and the evaluation team, but also between the different partners concerned by an intervention.

■ Evaluation Committee

Instance d'évaluation ■

Steering group extended to include the main stakeholders in an evaluated intervention.

An evaluation may involve any person who is potentially a user of its recommendations, any person who has an interest in the information produced, and any person who is likely to win or lose in the process. The main categories of stakeholders are funding authorities, managers, operators and concerned groups. Stakeholders invited to join an evaluation authority express their hopes and fears ; they improve the relevance of the questions asked and their presence makes the evaluation more credible. A wider diversity of points of view facilitates their confrontation within the steering group, and helps to raise the degree of consensus in the interaction and the robustness of interpretations. Provided it can take advantage of the different points of view, pluralistic evaluation enhances the richness and credibility of its conclusions. When the expectations of several partners are taken into account, conclusions are more readily accepted and viewed with greater interest.

■ Evaluation setting

Dispositif d'évaluation ■

All the modes of organisation of a given evaluation (relations established between the commission, the steering group and the evaluation team, involvement of stakeholders, organisation of work, schedule and evaluation method).

The term evaluation protocol applies more restrictively to only the technical aspects of the system, without referring to its organisational aspects.

The setting put in place for a given evaluation is integrated into evaluation system which is applied to the institutional context of the intervention evaluated.

■ Evaluation system

Système d'évaluation ■

All the rules, institutions, procedures and resources which organise the evaluative function in a given institutional context.

The evaluation system of European economic and social cohesion policy specifies the moment at which each programme must be evaluated, as well as the responsibility at the different evaluation stages. The system varies depending on the country. Each evaluation may be subject to a particular setting provided that the basic principles of the system as a whole are respected.

What is evaluated

■ Scope of evaluation

Champ ■

Precise definition of the evaluation object, of what is evaluated.

The scope of the evaluation must be defined in at least four respects: operational (all or part of the domains of intervention, one or several related policies), institutional (all or part of the authorities), temporal (period taken into consideration) and geographical (one or more territories or parts of territories, a particular region, town, nature reserve, etc.).

In the context of European cohesion policy, the evaluation object may be a programme, a measure or a project. To remain sufficiently general, this book uses the term public intervention and applies it, generically, to any evaluation object.

Related term(s) :

Evaluand
Evaluanda

■ Policy

Politique ■

A set of different activities (programmes, procedures, laws, rules) directed towards a single goal or general objective.

These activities are often accumulated incrementally through the years. European economic and social cohesion policy is scheduled according to a precise time-frame, with a pluri-annual budget. This is not the case for the majority of policies, in the traditional sense of the term.

■ Programme

Programme ■

Organised set of financial, organisational and human resources mobilised to achieve an objective or set of objectives in a given lapse of time.

A programme is delimited in terms of a schedule and a budget. Programme objectives are defined beforehand; an effort is then made systematically to strive for coherence among these objectives. The three main steps in the life-cycle of a programme are design, implementation and ex post evaluation. A programme is always under the responsibility of an authority or several authorities who share the decision-making. Within the framework of European social and economic cohesion, programmes are generally broken down into axes, measures and projects

Related term(s) :

Axis
Programme cycle
Axe
Cycle de programmation

■ Measure

Mesure ■

Within the framework of European economic and social cohesion policy, the basic unit of programme management, consisting of a set of similar projects and disposing of a precisely defined budget.

Each measure has a particular management apparatus. Measures generally consist of projects. Many measures are implemented in the form of calls for projects.

Related term(s) :

Action
Action

■ Project

Projet ■

Non divisible operation, delimited in terms of schedule and budget, and placed under the responsibility of an operator.

For example: creation of a new training branch, extension of a purification network, carrying out of a series of missions by a consultancy firm. Within the framework of European economic and social policy, the operator requests assistance which, after a selection procedure, is either attributed or not by the managers of the programme. Particularly careful ex ante evaluations are made of major infrastructure projects, using the cost-benefit analysis technique.

■ Intervention

Intervention ■

Any action or operation carried out by public authorities regardless of its nature (policy, programme, measure or project).

Within the framework of European Economic and Social Cohesion policy, interventions take the following forms: Operational Programmes and Community Initiatives and Support Programmes for technical assistance measures and innovatory actions. Means of interventions employed are grants, loans, subsidised interest rates, guarantees, participation in equity and risk capital schemes or other forms of financing. Finally, the major domains of intervention are basic infrastructure, the productive environment and human resources.

In this Volume, the term intervention is systematically used to designate the object of evaluation.

Activities related to evaluation

■ Audit

Contrôle ■

Verification of the legality and regularity of the implementation of resources.

Auditing makes a judgement in terms of general criteria and standards, known and clarified beforehand, applicable to an entire political or professional field, and not specific to a public intervention. For example, in the case of assistance to a SME, an audit will check whether eligibility criteria have been met and whether the beneficiary firms have complied with the rules governing the use of assistance. The auditor is thoroughly familiar with the standards (e.g. legal or accounting knowledge) and his or her intervention is mandatory and inspires respect and authority. The main purpose of an audit is to find mistakes and evidence of dysfunctioning. The idea is to obtain a dissuasive effect.

With time, the terms "control" and "audit" have extended further afield to encompass more activities than those corresponding to the original definition provided above. For example, certain audits or controls check whether the outputs have been produced with an adequate degree of efficiency and quality. Others examine whether the results and performance are sufficient compared to those obtained by other similar interventions.

Control and audit also apply to the verification of the existence and good functioning of monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Related term(s) :

Control
Audit

■ Monitoring

Suivi ■

An exhaustive and regular examination of the resources, outputs and results of public interventions.

Monitoring is based on a system of coherent information including reports, reviews, balance sheets, indicators, etc. Monitoring system information is obtained primarily from operators and is used essentially for steering public interventions. When monitoring includes a judgement, this judgement refers to the achievement of operational objectives. Monitoring is also intended to produce feedback and direct learning. It is generally the responsibility of the actors charged with implementation of an intervention.

For example: monitoring of the consumption of budgets, monitoring of the meeting of deadlines, monitoring of the percentage of SMEs in beneficiary firms, monitoring of the level of qualifications obtained by trainees.

Related term(s) :

Management audit
Performance audit
Audit de performance
Contrôle de gestion
Pilotage
Monitoring