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Evaluation : goals and principles

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Main goals

« ..improve the quality, effectiveness and consistency of the assistance from the Funds and the strategy and implementation of operational programmes... » - art 47(1) regulation 1083/2006.

- Evaluation is a decision making tool :
- To be carried out together with the design of projects / programmes;
- To interactively feed the decision making process
- Requiring initiative and strong ownership and commitment from the competent authority (decision maker)

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Learning tool instead of irritating bureaucratic requirement :

Evaluation is **not** :

1. A bureaucratic duty decoupled from the actual decision making process (cf SEA)
2. An audit or a control « blaming » the responsible authorities for possible weaknesses

- Diffusion of lessons learnt
- accountability

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“Realistic” evaluation - the logical framework

The diagram illustrates the logical framework of a program, divided into three horizontal levels:

- Society Economy Environment:** Contains the box "Needs problems issues".
- Programme:** Contains boxes for "Objectives", "Inputs", and "Outputs".
- Evaluation:** Contains boxes for "Relevance", "Efficiency", "Effectiveness", and "Utility Sustainability".


Vertical arrows indicate the flow of information and influence:

- From "Needs problems issues" down to "Objectives".
- From "Objectives" down to "Relevance".
- From "Relevance" up to "Objectives".
- From "Objectives" to "Inputs".
- From "Inputs" to "Outputs".
- From "Outputs" to "Outcomes/Results".
- From "Outcomes/Results" to "Impacts".
- From "Efficiency" up to "Inputs".
- From "Effectiveness" up to "Outputs".
- From "Utility Sustainability" up to "Outputs".

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Connection Between Levels and Effects on Intervention

Level of assistance	Objective	Indicators
NSRF ➤	Sustained economic growth in a region	GDP per capita
Operational Programme ➤	Improve competitiveness of SMEs	Value added in manufacturing sector
Priority axis ➤	Reinforce research, technological development and innovation	Innovation rate (e.g. patents)
Operations	Increase technological level of firms	Networking/ Collaborative projects

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Evaluation and monitoring

- Evaluation shall be objective and evidence-based :
 - Need for sound monitoring and reliable **indicators**;
 - Appropriate targets
 - Independent experts
- **Proactive** attitude needed to detect possible future difficulties : from mid term evaluation to on-going evaluations

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From mid-term to ongoing evaluation

From regulation-based to needs-driven:

- Departure from goals initially set
- Significant programme revision
- Points of interest (eg specific themes)
- Improving programme performance

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Two types of evaluation

- **Strategic** : focus on specific themes of strategic importance for operational programmes. Contributes to the strategic reporting.
- **Operational** : review the quality and relevance of objectives, analysing data on financial and physical progress and providing recommendations
- Evaluations carried out at the initiative of :
 - The member State;
 - The Commission – already several studies going on

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Operational evaluation

a) **Where the monitoring systems reveal a significant departure from the goal initially set**

- financial + physical monitoring data
- 10%-20% departure (specific features of OP, scale of intervention – proportionality principle)
- “early warning mechanism”: in good time to allow programme adjustments
- Linked of course to programme revision...

b) **When programme revisions are proposed**

Significant changes:

- Financial: between priority axes
- Content-related: revision of objectives at programme or priority level

Nature of evaluation follows reason for revision:

- Socio-economic changes, programme environment
- Changes in Community, national or regional priorities
- Implementation difficulties

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Beyond Legal Requirements: Policy-Oriented Evaluations

- Evolution of socio-economic situation, change of policy priorities, continued relevance of strategy
- Specific themes (eg innovation, SMEs)
- Contribution to strategic reporting (Art. 27 and 28)

Progress towards meeting objectives: outputs, results

- Interface between monitoring and evaluation (quantification of impact indicators)
- Delivery mechanisms
- Efficiency related issues

=> Draw conclusions to improve the quality and effectiveness

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Administrative capacity

- Dedicated staff within the managing authorities;
- Coordination and consistency throughout the evaluations;
- Appropriate training and commitment
- EC support : guidance (working documents) and availability for support (geographical and evaluation units)
- The evaluation approach should not be dedicated to the mere cohesion policy but disseminate throughout the entire administration

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Evaluation Plans

- Not mandatory, but suggested – good evaluations can have long lead times!
- Suggested content: proposals, resources, capacity-building
- Goal: good evaluations, not perfect plans
- « Living » document, updated over time

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Cost benefit analysis

For major projects

- Different purpose : project related
- Specific expertise required
- Tailored sectoral guidelines
- Attention to be paid to the underlying assumptions
- Economic expertise needed within the administration
- Financial and economic analysis to apply for national projects