EVALUATION
UNIT NCA

EVALUATOR'S GUIDE

COLLECTION OF EVALUATION TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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EVALUATOR'S GUIDE - COLLECTION OF EVALUATION TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

”
GET INSPIRED ON HOW TO INCREASE THE QUALITY OF EVALUATIONS AND EVALUATION OUTPUTS. BE CREATIVE KNOWLEDGE-BROKERS.
“

The Guide you are reading has three goals.

1. First, it should serve as an inspiration on how to approach evaluations in the Czech settings of the European funds.

2. Second, it has an ambition to be useful (at least in part) for a wide range of users, from national policy analysts to project-level evaluators.

3. Third, it seeks to increase the quality and usability of evaluation outputs by setting minimum standards for the most commonly used methods or by suggesting how to write evaluation reports in a better way.

Our vision was to gather the many years' experience from the Czech evaluation environment and evidence-based policy and share it. We did not wish to reiterate information that can be found in other, more scientific literature. Our aim was to write down practical instructions that stem from our hands-on experience and by doing so to enhance the work on evaluations and make them as widely applicable as possible.

The authors built the Guide on two sources: (i) own experience with the writing / project management / procurement / evaluation of evaluations in the Czech environment of state administration (at the Ministry of Regional Development-National Coordination Authority (MoRD-NCA), managing authorities of operational programmes and in external companies), and (ii) available Czech and foreign literature (methodologies, evaluations, professional articles, etc.).

THE GUIDE IS DIVIDED INTO THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS:

1 Evaluation unit and its activities

The chapter describes the key role of the evaluation unit as a mediator of mutual understanding between the client (main stakeholder) and the contractor. This chapter also explains the role of the evaluation unit in preparing evaluation plans and assessing their achievement.

2 Procurement of evaluation contracts

In this chapter, you will find detailed information, tips and advice on public contracts on evaluations, their preparation, evaluation of tenders and implementation. The chapter also gives advice on how to approach different types of clients/stakeholders.

3 Minimum methodological standards

The chapter will take you behind the scenes of the methodology, help you formulate the right evaluation questions, and use the design matrix. It describes in detail and sets the minimum standards for some widely used methods. However, it also deals with methods that should find greater application in evaluation practice.

4 Evaluation outputs

In this part of the Guide, you will find recommended requirements for the content and arrangement of evaluation outputs. Its aim is to help evaluators prepare evaluation outputs so that they are clearly arranged and their readers can easily find and understand the main messages of the evaluations.
The chapter also shows how to formulate conclusions and recommends the way to work with them.

5 Communication of evaluations

The chapter deals with the range of communication tools available to the evaluator for disseminating evaluation conclusions among their intended audience.

6 Data

This part of the Guide characterizes the types and sources of data usable in evaluations. It also describes how to clean and anonymize them. The chapter also attempts to grasp the phenomenon of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

7 Some theory in conclusion

The chapter is intended for those who want to fall back on correct definitions of terms and criteria used in evaluations. The chapter explains how the intervention logic is set for the post-2020 programming period and what types of evaluations are available.

8 Message for partners

This is a message for evaluation clients, especially policy and decision makers, as well as evaluation contractors. The chapter wants to help us to understand each other and to be able to communicate our mutual expectations.

WHO IS THE GUIDE FOR?

This Guide is primarily intended for evaluators and evaluation units of the managing authorities of operational programmes. It provides mainly general standards, experience, specific examples, instructions, and cases of good and bad practice. It serves as a supplementary text to the Methodological Guideline[1] for Evaluations. In contrast to the Methodological Guideline, it does not set requirements, it only offers inspiration and recommendations.

The Guide may become very useful for beginning evaluators (in the managing authorities, or anyone who wants to deal with evaluations, both in the area of EU funds and, for example, in evaluating other public / national / regional policies). Such users could especially appreciate Chapter 7 "Some theory in conclusion" which can serve as a summary of the most fundamental information about evaluations and the most important evaluation criteria. They can also learn about methods, data, or types of outputs.

However, the Guide can also be beneficial for any evaluator or analyst who is looking for tips and ideas on how to improve the specifications of evaluations, improve the implementation of evaluations, preparation of evaluation outputs, their communication, etc.

Other users may include entities/persons who, exceptionally or regularly, come into contact with evaluation units and their work, are clients of evaluation activities or users of evaluation outputs. For these groups, this Guide can not only expand their knowledge of evaluations but also help to better formulate their needs and specify their requirements for evaluation outputs or the form of communicating the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

We must also not forget the contractors of evaluations, to whom the Guide can help to understand the needs of the contracting authorities and what influences them. One of the two parts of Chapter 8 "Message for partners" has been created especially for contractors who will find tips on how to improve communication with the contracting authority and mutual understanding, which in turn will lead to better evaluation outputs.

The second part of Chapter 8 is intended mainly for a specific group of clients (evaluation users) consisting of policy makers and decision makers. The Guide could help them understand the benefits of well-crafted evaluations.

1 Methodological Guideline for Evaluations in the Programming Period 2014–2020 Version: 4. MoRD, March 2016. For the 2014–2020 programming period, the Methodological Guideline is available here: https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/fondy-eu/2014-2020/metodicke-pokyny/metodika-evaluaci. The methodological guideline for the post-2020 period is yet to be approved.

WHO IS WHO OR EXPLANATION OF THE TERMS USED

In the Guide, you will often come across terms such as client, user, reader, partner, or contracting authority. Here we will explain what we mean by each term and what the relationships are between the terms.

Client

We use the term client from the perspective of evaluation units. A client of an evaluation activity is any person, group of persons, entity or group of entities, considered to be the main (future) user of the evaluation outputs or evaluation conclusions and recommendations[2]. In some cases, the client is known already during the preparation of the evaluation plan and is the one who requests (procures) the given evaluation, in other cases, the client must be identified when drafting the evaluation's terms of reference (ToR). The client is the one for whom the given evaluation is intended above all and who is expected to work the most intensively with its outputs[3].

Stakeholder = partner

By a stakeholder we mean a person, a group of persons, an entity or a group of entities that the evaluation concerns, i.e. it is an interested party. It can be cooperating departments of the ministry, the professional public, makers of related strategies, representatives of NGOs, etc., i.e. anyone who should be involved in at least some part of the evaluation process, or who should be interested in the outputs of the given evaluation.

User = reader

A user is understood as a person, a group of persons, an entity or a group of entities, expected to work with the outputs of the evaluation (to any extent). It is any reader of the evaluation outputs (the client is one of the user types, specifically the main user). These may be entities that are affected by the evaluation (e.g. cooperating departments of the ministry, target groups of the performed intervention, etc.), or the professional or lay public that is interested in the results of the evaluation and the spending of public funding. Different types of the evaluation outputs should then be adapted (in the choice of language, level of detail, graphics, etc.) to the group of users that we assume will be the reader of the given type of output.

Contracting authority = commissioner, order party

For the purposes of this Guide, we understand a contracting authority to be a person, a group of persons, an entity that is responsible for the factual formulation of the evaluation's ToR and for communication with the evaluation contractor. It is the factual initiator and is responsible for ordering the given evaluation[4].

Contractor

A contractor means the supplier who has been assigned the evaluation (or part of it) on the basis of one of the types of a tendering procedure. It is, therefore, an external evaluator.

2 These are not clients from the point of view of contractors (external evaluators) or clients of services which may be the subject of evaluated interventions.

3 For example, from the point of view of the NCA Evaluation Unit, the client can be an organisation unit that sets up the methodological environment of the EU fund implementation, or the management of a section that needs evaluations to make strategic decisions, etc.

4 For example, in the NCA, it is most often the NCA Evaluation Unit (NCA EU) which identifies the needs of the client, formulates the ToR, mediates communication between partners and the contractor, etc. However, it can also be other departments that cooperate with the NCA EU in preparing the evaluation's ToR.

1

EVALUATION UNIT AND ITS ACTIVITIES

An evaluation unit carries out internal evaluations or, through tendering procedures, also implements external evaluations.
It should meet regularly with relevant partners and clients and provide them with useful information for decision-making.

An evaluation unit should be a knowledge-broker, i.e. play the role of an interpreter between the world of evaluators and the world of clients. At the same time, it should help to build an evidence-based culture in the given country.

1.1 Evaluation unit

The main tasks and activities of evaluation units are described in the Methodological Guideline for Evaluations[5]. This document focuses on other possible activities that an evaluation unit should perform if it wants to deliver quality evaluation work.

BASIC ROLES

- The evaluation unit prepares and implements internal evaluations.
- It prepares and coordinates externally commissioned evaluations. It guides contractors towards a successful delivery.
- It communicates and provides the evaluation results to the widest possible range of partners. To this end, it convenes a working group and participates in other platforms (monitoring committee, etc.).
- It prepares its activities with the help of an evaluation plan. The evaluation plan informs the partners about the planned, ongoing and completed evaluation activities.
- It regularly evaluates its activities in a concise and comprehensible summary of the main findings and conclusions.
- It collaborates with other evaluators and analysts in order to effectively build an evidence-based policy of the EU funds.

PREREQUISITES FOR ITS OPERATION

In order for evaluation units to perform their functions, they need sufficient facilities, human capital and financial resources. The correct and quality functioning of evaluation units requires:

Staff capacity and facilities

If the evaluation unit is to truly fulfil its role in terms of carrying out evaluation activities, it must have sufficient staff with the relevant expertise and factual knowledge. Long-term experience - institutional memory is important. Logically, the larger the range of topics or the larger the operational programme, the more people responsible for evaluations should be allocated. For large programmes, it is ideal to set up a separate unit.

Monitoring, evaluations, analyses

Monitoring provides the necessary data which can then be used in processing the evaluations. Evaluation activities require cooperation with monitoring, which can be ensured, for example, by combining the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation in one department or by their very close cooperation. Evaluation staff should participate in the setting-up of the monitoring system[6].

5 Methodological Guideline for Evaluations in the Programming Period 2014–2020 Version: 4. MoRD, March 2016. For the 2014–2020 programming period, it is available here: https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/fondy-eu/2014-2020/metodicke-pokyny/metodika-evaluaci. The methodological guideline for the post-2020 period is yet to be approved.

6 It is ideal if, in addition to these two units, there is also an analytical unit which makes quick analyses from available data or existing professional literature - this is experience of the evaluation unit from the Czech-Polish managing authority.

Expertise in evaluation

In order for the evaluation unit to be able to fulfil its roles in a qualified and effective manner, it is necessary that its members have sufficient training in the field. If they do not have it, they need to be trained in relevant courses. The evaluation unit should increase its expertise and professionalism on a long-term and continuous basis and participate in training events or become members of professional evaluation societies (e.g. the Czech Evaluation Society (CES), the European Evaluation Society and other)[7].

Budget

Evaluation activities must be allocated with sufficient funds[8]. In this regard, we recommend conducting e.g. preliminary market consultations to determine and verify the price[9].

Adequate hardware and software

The evaluation unit cannot do its work without the appropriate hardware (computers with sufficient processor power, memory size, etc.) and software (statistical or cartographic programmes, questionnaire programmes, text mining, etc.).

EVALUATION UNIT AS A KNOWLEDGE-BROKER

Evaluation unit as a knowledge-broker[10] should act as an interpreter between the technical world of evaluators and statistical experts, and the reality world of policy and programme makers.

> „THE EVALUATION UNIT IS TO FUNCTION AS A KNOWLEDGE-BROKER – AN INTERPRETER BETWEEN THE ANALYTICAL WORLD OF THE CONTRACTOR AND THE PRAGMATIC WORLD OF THE CLIENT."

In order for an evaluation unit to become a "knowledge-broker", it must:

- identify the client, i.e. the main user of the evaluation,
- know the needs of the users.

7 Training workshops and courses are offered, for example, by:

- Czech Evaluation Society - czecheval.cz
- Czech Statistical Office - statistics courses for university graduates (www.czso.cz/csu/czso/specializovane_statisticke_studium_pro_absolventy_vysokych_skol)

Courses and seminars abroad:

- CEU Summer School (https://summeruniversity.ceu.edu); courses organized by EIPA (www.eipa.eu), the international evaluation organization IPDET (www.ipdet.org), the European Evaluation Society (www.uropeanevaluation.org) or the international evaluation society IDEAS (www.ideas-global.org).

Events organized by the European Commission:

- https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/guidance/impact_deeper nebo https://crie.jrc.ec.europa.eu/

8 According to MS2014+ data, the average price of a one-year evaluation of the NCA Evaluation Unit in the 2014–2020 programming period is around CZK 1 million.

9 For example, Public Procurement Methodology http://www.portal-vz.cz/cs/Jak-na-zadavani-verejnych-zakazek/Metodiky-stanoviska/Metodiky-k-zakonu-c-134-2016-Sb-,-o-zadavani-verejnych-zakazek

10 OLEJNICZAK, Karol. 2nd evaluation conference of the NCA EU. Prague, 2016.

- https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1356389016638752?journalCode=evia
- https://prezi.com/l7yh8lk9n0b_/2016-v44_next-frontier-for-evaluation-units/

Furthermore, the evaluation unit needs to:

- obtain trustworthy knowledge and pass it on to users,
- gather this knowledge over time,
- build networks between contractors/experts and users,
- promote an evidence-based culture.

The evaluation unit should be able to translate information from the academic, analytical "language" into one that is understood by non-analysts, and vice versa.

”
EVALUATION UNITS MUST KNOW
THE VIEWS, NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS
OF CLIENTS.
“

The evaluation units must first know the needs and expectations of clients, not only factual needs, but also needs related to how the needed information should be identified, or in what forms the identified information should be transmitted. On this occasion, it is important to emphasize the necessary cooperation of clients, their openness, willingness to meet with evaluators and share information with them.

WHERE THE EVALUATION UNIT SHOULD ACT AS AN INTERPRETER

This approach will make it possible to transform evaluation units from mere buyers of expertise and producers of isolated reports into coordinators who manage knowledge flows towards policy makers. What does it all entail?

”
THE ROLE OF A KNOWLEDGE-BROKER IS
IMPORTANT IN EVERY PHASE
OF EVALUATION.
“

Preparing the intent/terms of reference for an evaluation
(also Chapter 2 Procurement of evaluation contracts)

It is a situation where the evaluation unit should be able to lead its client/partner with the right questions to such a subject of evaluation that will be beneficial for the client. This phase is not easy at all. Quite often, the client wants to evaluate everything from A to Z and is not able to clearly prioritise.

Such lack of prioritisation then results in general evaluation reports that usually do not bring anything new. It is very useful to find out what the client is concerned about and what he already knows about the problem and what he does not know, so that the evaluation can focus primarily on those aspects.

The evaluation unit should ask the client mainly the following types of questions: *What do you already know about the problem? Where do you perceive problems and why do they occur? What do you not know about the problem and what do you need to find out? How do you plan to work with the evaluation outputs, or who will work with them? Where are you really able/willing to change something based on the new knowledge?*

In the case of external evaluation, the evaluation unit must be able to transform the ToR into tender specifications. The tender specifications should then contain all the essential facts influencing the scope, focus and chosen methods so that the contractor can submit an adequate tender. This activity may sometimes include a difficult situation where the evaluation unit has to explain to the client that some of his requirements are not realistic.

The information provided in the tender specifications fundamentally determines the scope of work that is the object of the given contract. The scope of the work then determines the prices of performance offered by the individual bidders, considered in the process of evaluating bids.

However, there are usually areas that cannot be presented or described in the tender specifications, still, this information should be communicated to the selected contractor so that he better understands the contracting authority's need and better understands the issue (for example at the initial meeting).

Initial meeting

After selecting the contractor, the evaluation unit mediates and conducts communication between the client and the evaluation contractor. It happens that the client does not tell the contractor everything and the contractor then unnecessarily searches for information that is not needed or is already known.

The contractor, on the other hand, often does not ask enough questions about the needs, context and situation (either because he feels that everything is said in the tender specifications, or because he does not want to seem not to understand the topic). The initial meeting is intended for the two parties to make sure that they are "on the same boat" and understand the ToR (their scope and depth) in the same way. The tender specifications, however detailed they may be, do not capture all the expectations of the contracting authority.

The form of the evaluation outputs, their structure and content and their visual form should also be discussed at the initial meeting. The initial meeting should be recorded, noting the agreed partial steps of the evaluation and the agreed internal deadlines for both parties. The record should be confirmed by both parties and the set deadlines should be binding for both parties.

Participating in the contract execution

The evaluation unit should, if possible, be an active participant in the performance of the evaluation contract. It is, of course, necessary to consider each contract on a case by case basis to see where this is appropriate and where it would not disrupt the evaluation process and its results. Through its active participation, the evaluation unit will have access to the information obtained (e.g. by participating in interviews, co-moderating workshops, piloting questionnaire surveys, etc.). Thus, it will have the necessary control over the course of the evaluation, over the methods used, it will know whether the evaluation is heading towards the agreed specification and, at the same time, it will contribute to the achievement of the evaluation objectives.

It happens that even if the goal of the contract is clarified and defined, the contractor does not have sufficient sensitivity and knowledge of the topic to properly determine, for example, questions for a questionnaire or interview. Therefore, the evaluation unit should lend a helping hand here to ensure that the questionnaire or interview is directed towards obtaining answers to the client's need. Example: In an interview, the first question asked by the contractor is *"Do you find the methodology useful?"* However, we know that a large number of respondents do not read the methodology, even if they should. Therefore, it is appropriate to ask the questions step by step and first find out whether the respondents work with the methodology, at what moments, and if not, why it is so. The fact that, for example, 50% of respondents do not work with the methodology, is an important conclusion about the usefulness of such tool.

Collection point for comments

If more than one person, unit, department, or even section of a ministry is involved in the evaluation, the evaluation unit needs to collect all the suggestions, harmonize them and communicate them to the contractor. Sometimes this fails due to a lack of time and short deadlines. Unfortunately, it means that the contractor does not communicate with one responsible person but must take into account many comments and expectations that may be contradictory in practice.

Therefore, we recommend setting up an internal project team for each evaluation with clearly defined roles of each person involved. It is important to designate one contact person for the contracting authority, who will be responsible for the quality of the submitted comments. This member of the contracting authority's internal team should be able to filter out comments that are in conflict with the tender specifications and not pass them on to the evaluation contractor at all.

Completing the contract, presenting the evaluation

If the evaluation unit moderates the discussion between the client and the contractor throughout the contract performance, there should be no surprises in the evaluation outputs and conclusions at the end of the evaluation. Sometimes it happens that, despite all efforts, the outputs do not meet the contracting authority's expectations. The evaluation unit should deal with such situations and not leave them to the evaluation contractor. Also in this phase, it is sometimes necessary to explain to the client that his requirements are unfortunately not realistic or are beyond the scope of the ToR.

The role of the interpreter should be active even in the presentation of the evaluation results. It is necessary to agree on the presentation with the contractor so that it is as useful as possible for the client. The evaluation unit knows its partners/clients best and should know which form of output is useful for them (a brief one-page summary, power-point presentation, an interactive workshop or a completely different form).

Work with the evaluation conclusions and recommendations

(Also subchapter 4.5 Conclusions and recommendations.)

The recommendations, their formulation and concretization are a big issue. It turns out that leaving the formation of recommendations only to the external contractor is not entirely effective. Such recommendations are often very general, with no added value for the contracting authority, while the contractor has plenty of information about what works and what does not from the field.

The formulation of recommendations should be given sufficient space at the end of the evaluation. It is ideal to allocate at least two or more months for an internal discussion on the conclusions and proposed recommendations between the client, contractor, or also other stakeholders[11]. It is also appropriate to prioritize the recommendations if a large number of them emerge from the evaluation. The contracting authority then has a clear idea of which recommendations are key and where its attention should be focused first.

The format of interactive workshops, world cafés or other methods where clients go through an experience and where room is provided for a deeper discussion has proven very successful in this. Such moments of evaluation tend to be the most useful and then have the greatest impact in practice. We consider it very appropriate in the internal debate to select from the recommendations the priority ones, realistic ones, the currently relevant, and then to elaborate them into specific tasks.

11 An example could be to set up the submission of comments on outputs so that this process is repeated until all comments of the contracting authority are settled (experience of the evaluation unit of the Czech-Polish managing authority).

1.2 Evaluation plan

The setup of an indicative evaluation plan is the first step in the evaluation process. It should be set already when defining the objectives of the programmes / Partnership Agreement. The obligation to draw up an evaluation plan is laid down in the common provisions regulation[12] and further elaborated in the Methodological Guideline for Evaluations[13].

> THE EVALUATION PLAN IS A CONCISE AND CLEAR TOOL ABOUT WHAT THE EVALUATION UNIT IS PREPARING AND WHEN OUTPUTS CAN BE EXPECTED.

The evaluation plan is an important tool for communication between the evaluation unit and its stakeholders, users of evaluation results. The preparation of the plan should be the latest time for the evaluation unit to intensively collect suggestions for evaluations topics.

Communication should take place on an ongoing basis so that it is possible to respond flexibly to requirements and suggestions. The evaluation plan should consist of clear information about what the evaluation unit plans to implement and when, in what financial volumes and with which partners it plans to cooperate. The aim is to create a brief overview of evaluation activities as an input for further discussion.

MAIN EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

In the evaluation plan, we recommend setting a timetable for the following evaluations:

- result and impact evaluation (mandatory based on the Regulation),
- efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, EU-added value and economy (mandatory based on the Regulation)
- implementation setting (process evaluation),
- evaluation of the level of satisfaction (of beneficiaries and applicants, with the monitoring system, with working conditions),
- evaluation of absorption capacity, i.e. whether there is a demand for specific programmes or calls.

12 Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

For the 2014-2020 programming period, the common provisions regulation is available here: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/CS/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1303&from=cs. For the post-2020 period, the regulation is still to be issued.

13 Methodological Guideline for Evaluations in the Programming Period 2014–2020 Version: 4. MoRD, March 2016. For the 2014–2020 programming period, it is available here: https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/fondy-eu/2014-2020/metodicke-pokyny/metodika-evaluaci. The methodological guideline for the post-2020 period is yet to be approved.

WHAT WORKED FOR US IN THE PREPARATION AND UPDATE OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

The evaluation plan should be prepared and updated in close cooperation with all partners. The ideal form is personal consultations and meetings with the main clients and stakeholders of evaluations.

> **USE THE EVALUATION PLAN FOR PERSONAL MEETINGS WITH KEY CLIENTS.**

It is not enough to send the evaluation plan to the partners by email to update it or indicate their needs. Partners or clients are not evaluation experts and they often perceive such activity as an additional administrative burden. Moreover, they have plenty of their own tasks. The preparation or updating of the evaluation plan should be used as an opportunity for face-to-face meetings and discussions with key partners. At the meeting, find out what the partners need, what they are concerned about. This way you can get to know your partners better and offer them help with the evaluation.

The main evaluations, i.e. in particular those resulting from the Regulation or which are crucial for the implementation of the programme, should be well thought out already at the beginning of the programming period. It is necessary to carefully consider how the data needed for the evaluation will be obtained, which interventions and topics will be evaluated and how, or to ensure cooperation with relevant partners.

> **PLAN THE EVALUATIONS IN THE LONG TERM AND IN LINE WITH THE PROGRAMMING CYCLE SO THAT THEIR RESULTS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE RIGHT TIME.**

Evaluation planning should also be informed by experience with the cycle of the programming period. It is important to design the schedule of the individual evaluations so that their outputs are available at the right time and can be used for further decisions[14].

14 The programming period can be divided into several phases. In terms of evaluations, the preparation of the new period is characterized by ex-ante evaluation, or the use of result and impact evaluations from previous periods. In the initial phase of the programming period, the focus is on process evaluations. Result or impact evaluations can be carried out only from the middle of the period on. Impact evaluations, however, require a time lag after the end of the intervention for the impact to materialize.

As for process evaluations, it is worth thinking about how to continuously obtain feedback from applicants, beneficiaries or the implementation structure.

”
GET REGULAR, ONGOING, AND LONG-TERM FEEDBACK ON THE PROCESSES IN THE PROGRAMME.
“

For example, consider whether you need one long-term contract and cooperation with one contractor to evaluate the processes on an ongoing basis[15]. Or whether the evaluation unit is able to collect the data and feedback itself and only needs help from the contractor with some elements - a mixed evaluation[16].

It has not proven successful to address this issue with one-off evaluations which expect the contractor to understand the very complex mechanisms of EU funds within a few months.

We recommend planning process evaluations from the beginning of the period and seeking feedback from the main actors (applicants, beneficiaries, staff of the implementation structure - managing authorities, intermediate bodies and others) regularly, continuously and in the long term.

The main body collecting cross-sectional information on the satisfaction of applicants, beneficiaries and the implementation structure is the Evaluation Unit of the National Coordination Authority. It will coordinate these activities so that the relevant groups of interviewers are not unnecessarily burdened. The managing authorities will then complete the activities with surveys on specific topics.

”
HAVE ENOUGH CAPACITY FOR UNEXPECTED EVALUATIONS.
“

Keep a sufficient reserve of capacities in the evaluation plan for ad hoc evaluations (e.g. with regard to experience from previous periods/years). During the period, there may be requests for evaluations that were not known at the beginning of the period.

15 Experience of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

16 Experience of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) - feedback is collected annually in the form of an electronic questionnaire with a relatively high response rate of about 35-50%. If the evaluation unit has sufficient capacity, it is a good option, the disadvantage is that it is only data from questionnaires and there may be a need to complete the survey qualitatively.

One of the ways to design the indicative list of evaluations in the evaluation plan so that it is clear and functional is to list the individual activities in an Excel spreadsheet[17].

”
SUMMARIZE THE EVALUATION PLAN IN A TABLE.
“

The data that could be monitored are:

- *Number and name of the evaluation*
- *Fund; policy objective, specific objective*
- *The aim of the evaluation*
- *Subject of the evaluation*
- *Type of evaluation*
- *Design and methods of research*
- *Outputs*
- *Data requirements*
- *Cooperating entities*
- *Beginning, end, status of the evaluation*
- *Budget*

17 This is the solution of the MLSA evaluation unit.

EVALUATION OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

According to the Methodological Guideline for Evaluations[18], the evaluation unit evaluates its evaluation plan. It evaluates which activities were carried out and how, which ones were not and why, and what adjustments or new activities must be implemented in the next year or years.

”
BRIEFLY AND CLEARLY PRESENT THE MOST IMPORTANT EVALUATION FINDINGS OR CONCLUSIONS. MAKE THE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFIC, WRITE THEM IN COMMON LANGUAGE WITHOUT ABBREVIATIONS AND GENERAL PHRASES.
“

The evaluation also includes a brief and concise summary of what was achieved in the previous year. The aim of the summary is to clearly and comprehensibly inform clients or partners about important and interesting facts discovered in the implemented evaluations, to present the most important findings and conclusions and to state the most important recommendations. Such form of summary should be regularly presented to members of the monitoring committee.

18 Methodological Guideline for Evaluations in the Programming Period 2014–2020 Version: 4. MoRD, March 2016. For the 2014–2020 programming period, the Methodological Guideline is available here: https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/fondy-eu/2014-2020/metodicke-pokyny/metodika-evaluaci. The methodological guideline for the post-2020 period is yet to be approved.

Example 1 - A good example of such evaluation[19]:

Summary of the NCA Evaluation Unit activities

In 2019, the Evaluation Unit of the National Coordination Authority carried out 8 evaluations which were mainly focused on evaluating processes and obtaining evidence for the preparation of the post-2020 programming period. Below is a summary of selected evaluations.

Recommendations for setting the structure of EU funds in 2021+: stability, predictability, continuity.

It is important to avoid headlong changes, to prepare everything from a long-term perspective. Any changes should be based on objective analyses and take into account a longer horizon than one period.

It is essential to maintain the know-how carried by key employees. It is necessary to retain existing workers and to choose an appropriate motivation system for that purpose. For smooth implementation, it is appropriate to choose rather informal communication and sharing of opinions among the different entities.

The background study for the preparation of the 2021+ implementation system was focused on good practice from other EU Member States. It dealt in detail with the forms of implementation structures and evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of the individual implementation models on specific case studies. It also focused in detail on partial elements of the system, such as financial and integrated instruments or the legislative background of EU funds.

Recommendations for the methodological environment: Evolution, not revolution.

The evaluation recommends simplifying and clarifying the methodological environment and focusing it on the beneficiary as the main user of the system. The idea of a single methodological environment (SME) has been accepted by the partners, nevertheless, it is perceived as extensive, confusing and unnecessarily detailed. In the future, it should be based on recommendations and provide guidance and examples of good and bad practice. Thus, an overall reduction in the number and extent of methodological guidelines at all levels is desirable.

An important element is communication but it is often mentioned by partners as a problem. It is not about a lack of tools and channels but about their functioning. Interactive discussions, exchange of experience in the form of traineeships, organization of training workshops, etc. should be supported. Methodological assistance should be focused on a narrower range of e.g. problematic topics. Partners expect greater professional support from the MoRD in cross-cutting and problematic topics.

Partners agree with the existence of a single monitoring system. However, there are reservations about its functioning in terms of its robustness, response time, accessibility of the system or its individual elements. Their distrust in the system stems from technical problems at the beginning of the programming period. Therefore, the recommendation is to have a technical solution for the monitoring system prepared well in advance for the period 2021+.

The evaluation of the single methodological environment aimed to evaluate which elements worked and which did not, with a view to recommending a reduction in the administrative burden.

To enhance the role of financial instruments, it is crucial to create a user-friendly and supportive environment and to ensure better promotion of this type of support.

Financial instruments (FIs) should be designed as more user-friendly compared to subsidy calls and almost indistinguishable from commercial products for the beneficiaries. The structure of FI providers/managers must be more unified. It is not necessary to have a separate instrument with a manager for each area. The use of FIs would also be enhanced by their more targeted promotion and explanation of their advantages and benefits.

The evaluation of FIs aimed to recommend areas where it would be possible to implement financial instruments in the period 2021+.

19 Source: Summary for the PA Annual Report for 2019. MoRD, 2020.

Example 2 - A good example of such evaluation[20]:

EVALUATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

To enhance the role of financial instruments, it is crucial to create a user-friendly and supportive environment that needs to be simplified and unified, and it is necessary to focus on better promotion of this type of support.

- **Subject:** The study provides an overview of the areas (sectors), beneficiaries and activities where it is appropriate to implement financial instruments (FIs). The study outputs also show under what conditions the potential final beneficiaries are willing to apply for support in the form of financial instruments. This overview will be used for the purpose of designing the future partnership agreement and the future architecture of the programmes after 2020.
- **Key findings:**
  - In the Czech Republic, the beneficiaries are strongly dependent on subsidies and reluctant to use alternative forms of financing, especially in a situation where the administrative burden of using the FIs is almost identical to the subsidy financing (at least as perceived by the applicants). The FI promotion is insufficient.
  - FIs in the Czech Republic and in the EU are considerably fragmented, there are 40 different types.
  - No new FI or fund supporting the same area or activity should be created (see, for example, the area of energy savings currently spread over four operational programmes, all of which are preparing or implementing a separate FI).
  - It is necessary to set the FIs so that they do not crowd out commercial financing but help to activate other sources usable for project/investment financing.
  - In the next period, it is necessary to simplify the processes of using FIs, to improve promotion and increase pressure on consolidation of the instruments and on utilising the FIs.
- **Working with findings and results:**

  FIs should be designed as more user-friendly compared to subsidy calls and almost indistinguishable from commercial products for the beneficiaries.

  - Potential beneficiaries must be aware of the fact that the Government wants to use this form to support selected activities and areas.
  - The conditions for the use of repayable assistance must not change.

  The structure of FI providers/managers must be more unified. It is not necessary to have a separate instrument with a manager for each area.

  - An option is to introduce an implementation architecture with a fund of funds - or to unify the provision of FIs so that they are not primarily single-type, but enable a combination or selection according to the needs of the beneficiary.
  - Capital FIs are a key type for achieving progress in the use of FIs.
  - Support for capacity building and knowledge transfer among ministries is also important.

  The use of FIs would also be enhanced by their more targeted promotion and explanation of their advantages and benefits.

  - The offer of communication channels informing about the possibilities of FIs must be more broadened: e.g. a dedicated website, social networks, contextual advertising, direct mailing, and collaboration with associations, consulting companies, and interest associations.
  - We recommend targeting the communication at the individual groups of beneficiaries and guide them towards the main information source.

20 Own summary based on an evaluation of financial instruments. DELOITTE. Assessment of areas suitable for a repayable form of aid in the period 2021+. MoRD, 2019

Example 3 - A bad example of such evaluation:

- *“The evaluation conclusion formulated in both interim reports contained a finding that the physical progress corresponds to the expected state of implementation partly. Each report identified target values of indicators for which there is a risk of underperformance or overperformance”. - taken from a Report on the Implementation of the PA Evaluation Plan. MoRD, 2019.*

  Problem: The text does not say anything about what was actually found. It is meaningless. The reader does not know what the expected state was, nor does he learn which indicators are risky.

- *"The purpose of the inquiry was to obtain feedback on the calls from the applicants/beneficiaries. The information sought concerned primarily the comprehensibility of the calls.”- taken from the Report on the Implementation of the PA Evaluation Plan. MoRD, 2019.*

  Problem: what information? Were the calls comprehensible or not? What did the applicants and beneficiaries complained about most often? Again, this is meaningless information that cannot be used because it does not say what was done well and what was not.

1.3 Working Group

The roles and composition of the working group members are described in the Methodological Guideline for Evaluations[21]. The Guide focuses on good practice in working group meetings.

> WORKING GROUPS ARE AN IMPORTANT MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. THEIR ESSENTIAL ASPECTS ARE AN INTERACTIVE FORM AND INFORMALITY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENCOURAGE LIVELY DISCUSSION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING.

The working group undoubtedly has a popularizing function, it should inspire stakeholders/partners to demand further findings. The working group is also important for disseminating evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. In order to make the working group as useful as possible for the partners, it is advisable to involve some of the following elements.

SUITABLE ELEMENTS

Communication of results

We recommend regularly preparing brief summaries of evaluations for the group meetings - what the evaluations found, what is new, what the main recommendations are. The aim is not to formally inform, but to really acquaint your partners well and clearly with the conclusions.

Informality

It is advisable to build contacts with partners both on official platforms and outside them. If possible, we recommend making these groups as informal as possible. The aim should be an open debate and an opportunity for discussion. A suitable tool is to arrange the group meeting as off-site (away days).

Interactivity

Powerpoint is not the only option, the working group should not be a one-way channel for information transfer. Also with regard to the usual duration of these events, we recommend a stronger involvement of the participants. Working in groups, a use of interactive methods (projective methods, involvement of participants, etc.) have proven successful.

21 Methodological Guideline for Evaluations in the Programming Period 2014–2020 Version: 4. MoRD, March 2016. For the 2014–2020 programming period, it is available here:https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/fondy-eu/2014-2020/metodicke-pokyny/metodika-evaluaci. The methodological guideline for the post-2020 period is yet to be approved.

1.4 Evaluator's independence

The independence of the evaluator is ensured and protected by both the European Commission (Commission) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Both see independence as key.

> "WHEN IT COMES TO THE CREDIBILITY OF EVALUATIONS, THE EVALUATOR'S INDEPENDENCE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT STANDARDS OF EVALUATOR'S WORK."

The European Commission recommends that evaluations be carried out by external experts or bodies other than those responsible for implementing the programme[22]:

- The evaluators must be functionally independent of the bodies responsible for the preparation and implementation of the programme.
- Independence is essential if evaluators are to constructively criticize and provide expert opinions on the various elements of the programme.

The level of independence should be such that there is no doubt that the work is carried out objectively and the results of the evaluation are unbiased and not subject to endorsement by the departments responsible for implementing the programme.

It is important to realize that it must be ensured that evaluators are sufficiently acquainted with the interventions they will be assessing. It is also essential that the evaluator has access to the relevant information needed to evaluate the interventions (this should be provided to the evaluator by the authorities responsible for programming and implementing the programme).

If the evaluation activity is assigned to the same department or unit in the same organization (for example in the case of small implementation structures), doubts may arise as to the functional independence of the evaluation activity. For this reason, independence needs to be ensured by clear measures. In the Commission's view, the use of the following measures would be good practice:

- a clear (written) job description for the person/persons carrying out the evaluation activity,
- exclusion of the above-mentioned person/persons from the competence of the evaluated body (department, unit).

22 European Commission. Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation. European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund. March 2014, available from: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf.

The concept of the evaluator's independence as described by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in the publication Norms and Standards for Evaluation, drawn up by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)[23], is stricter:

- Independence of evaluation is necessary for credibility, influences the ways in which an evaluation is used and allows evaluators to be impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation process.
- Independence comprises two key aspects – behavioural independence and organisational independence.
- Behavioural independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party. Evaluators must have the full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development, and must be able to freely express their assessment. The independence of the evaluation function underpins the free access to information that evaluators should have on the evaluation subject.
- To ensure organizational independence, the central evaluation unit needs to be positioned independently of the management bodies so that it can bear its own responsibility for the whole evaluation agenda and have sufficient financial resources for its activities.
- Organizational independence requires that management of the evaluation unit is positioned independently from management functions, carries the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda and is provided with adequate resources to conduct its work. Organizational independence also necessitates that evaluation managers have full discretion to directly submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of decision-making and that they should report directly to an organization's governing body.
- Independence provides the evaluation unit management with a free hand in commissioning, producing, publishing and disseminating evaluation reports to the public without undue influence from any party.

Example from abroad:

- *Evaluation units in the Netherlands are subordinated directly to the Minister to whom they report, and at the same time they report to the Parliament. The evaluation unit has both functional and financial independence (the minister cannot cancel or dismiss evaluators or withdraw funds from them).*

23 UNEG, OECD. Norms and Standards for Evaluation. 2016. Available from: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INSPIRATION

Evaluation Units as Knowledge Brokers: Testing and Calibrating an Innovative Framework
Karol Olejniczak, Estelle Raimondo, Tomasz Kupiec

- https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1356389016638752?journalCode=evia

Next Frontier for Evaluation Units
Karol Olejniczak

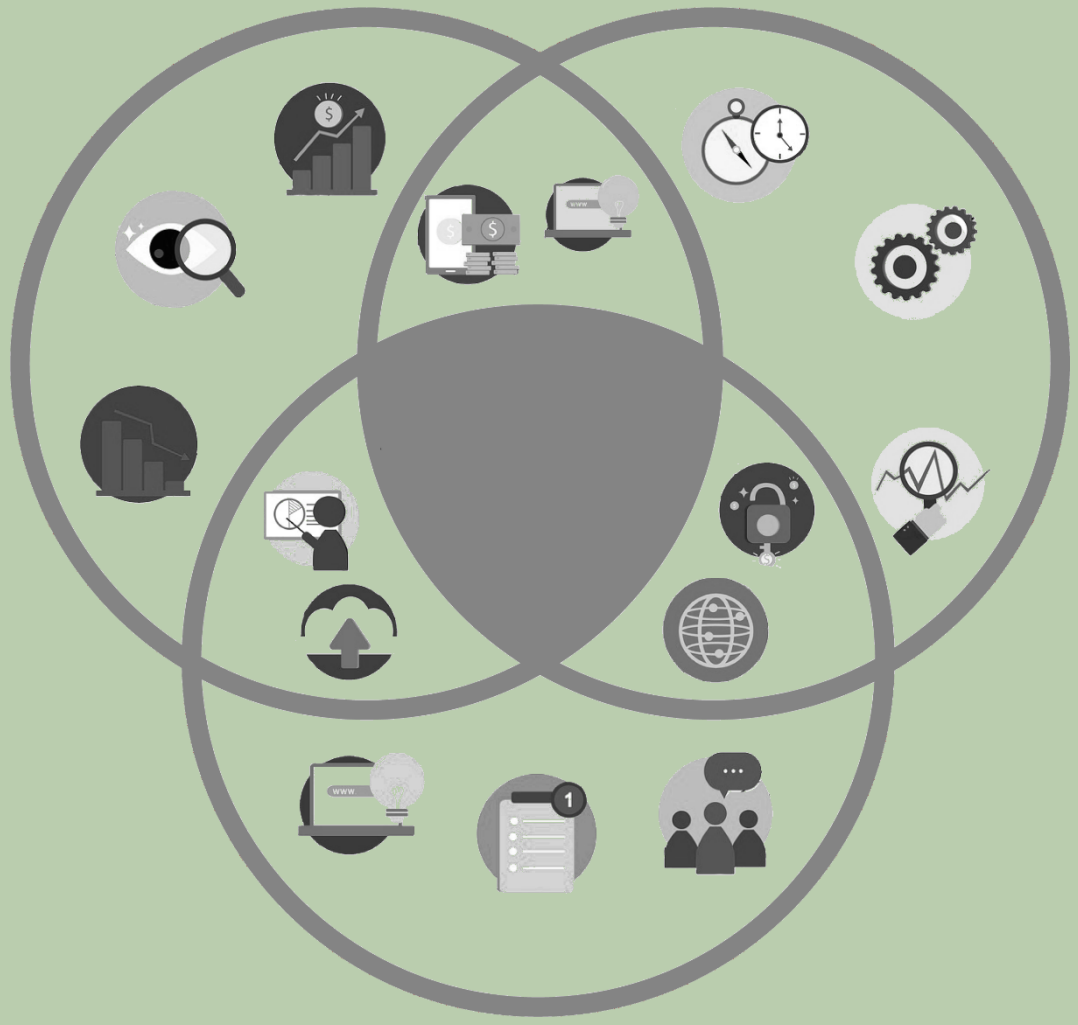
- https://prezi.com/l7yh8lk9n0b_/2016-v44_next-frontier-for-evaluation-units/

2

PROCUREMENT OF EVALUATION CONTRACTS

The quality of tender specifications directly affects the quality of the evaluation outputs. If, as contracting authorities, we require quality outputs, we must write the tender specifications well and choose the best form of tendering procedure and have the evaluation criteria set well.

In the following chapter, you will find what should be contained in good tender specifications and what to avoid, what are the advantages and disadvantages of different types of tendering procedure, or specific examples of evaluating the quality of bids.



THE FOUR MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROCURING AN EVALUATION [24] ACCORDING TO THE CZECH EVALUATION SOCIETY (CES)

1 START PREPARING THE EVALUATION ON TIME

It is right to prepare the evaluation together with designing the intervention that will be the subject of the evaluation.

2 COMMUNICATE

Communicate with potential contractors. Evaluations are not a serial product, use preliminary market consultations and negotiated procedures without prior publication to find the most suitable solution.

Communicate continuously and openly with the management of your own organization, which is the user of the evaluation outputs, so that you always know the needs.

3 SEEK FLEXIBILITY

Too strict contractual conditions can significantly complicate the evaluation process, not only for the evaluation contractor, but also for you as the contracting authority.

During the evaluation, there is almost always a situation that you did not anticipate in the procurement.

4 LEARN CONTINUOUSLY

The preparation of the procurement and the supervision of the evaluation delivery by the contracting authority presuppose a high level of expertise.

[24] Methodology for Evaluation Procurement CES, 2018, p. 3. Available in Czech at: https://czecheval.cz/cs/Aktivity/Metodika-pro-zadavani-evaluaci

2.1 Preparing an evaluation

Issuing invitations to tender for public contracts and awarding them is an integral part of evaluation activities. Most evaluations are currently outsourced[25] (69% of all evaluations of EU funds[26]). Recommendations on how to procure evaluations and hold invitations to tender can be found in the CES Methodology for Evaluation Procurement[27]. This Guide provides well tested procedures and examples of good practice.

„THE PREPARATION OF AN EVALUATION BEGINS WITH THE INTENT."

Prior to drafting the tender specifications, it is appropriate for the evaluation unit to prepare an evaluation intent (ideally based on the client's needs and in cooperation with him). The aim of the intent is to clearly define and clarify why the given evaluation needs to be carried out, what we expect from it, who it is intended for and how its outputs will be used. The intent should be approved by the management or the client so that the evaluation unit has an appropriate mandate for its work and the client cannot change the goal during the implementation of the evaluation.

„EARLY INVOLVEMENT OF PARTNERS INCREASES THE "OWNERSHIP" OF THE EVALUATION BY THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TO WORK WITH THE EVALUATION RESULTS."

It is advisable to involve partners in the preparation of the evaluation as soon as possible. Personal meetings and discussions with them have proven successful. At such meetings, the evaluation unit can ask what the client exactly expects from the evaluation, why he needs it, what he will use it for. Based on this information, the evaluation unit should propose a specific solution - the intent of the evaluation and subsequently the tender specifications. The information contained in them is absolutely essential and determines the scope of the work that is the object of the contract.

„PAY DUE ATTENTION TO THE TENDER SPECIFICATIONS."

25 The reason is an independent expert view and the use of capacities that the organization does not have internally.

26 According to data from MS2014+ as of December 2019.

27 Methodology for Evaluation Procurement CES, 2018. Available in Czech at: https://czecheval.cz/cs/Aktivity/Metodika-pro-zadavani-evaluaci

Based on the information obtained, the potential contractors prepare their bids, the contract price and the range of methods to perform the task. If the needs of the contracting authority change during the implementation of the contract, the contractor is not able to respond adequately to the changes.

”
YOU MUST INVEST YOUR TIME AND EXPERTISE IN PREPARING AND IMPLEMENTING AN EXTERNAL EVALUATION.
“

The evaluation unit cannot expect that it will not have to pay attention to the contract and that the external evaluator (contractor) will, without consultation, produce a quality evaluation report that will have the expected benefits and findings. Ongoing communication and consultation on the given topic is an integral part of a well-conducted contract. Unfortunately, many contracting authorities do not reckon with that and are surprised during the evaluation when the contractor expects feedback on the activities or outputs provided. The contractor can never take over this role from the contracting authority. The contractor can never really have a sufficiently detailed awareness of the evaluated area.

”
UNDERSTAND PROJECT MANAGEMENT.
“

In order to be able to manage and coordinate the contract well, it is appropriate for the evaluation unit to understand the basics of project management. Every evaluation is a project and, therefore, basic knowledge of project management should be among the prerequisites. The individual stages of the contract are interconnected, they have their own schedule, and deadlines must be met on all sides.

”
ALLOCATE SUFFICIENT TIME FOR IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION.
“

Furthermore, it is necessary to allocate a sufficient time frame and financial resources for implementing the evaluation. It is not possible to expect the contractor to be able to evaluate the entire operational programme within three months for CZK 300,000. It is also necessary to guide the contractor on an ongoing basis and to communicate appropriately with him in order to ensure the best possible performance of the contract.

The preparation of tender specifications should not be prolonged. Nevertheless, the contracting authority should define its needs clearly, in detail and comprehensibly. The ToR should be clearly demarcated and the contracting authority should always prioritize what it requires from the contractor and why and how it will subsequently work with the information obtained. Evaluations that have dozens of evaluation questions are impossible to achieve in practice and their conclusions and recommendations stay only at a general level.

2.2 Analysis of stakeholders

It is important to communicate evaluations to the widest possible range of clients. These stakeholders have different interests, needs and expectations. In preparing and communicating the results of some complex and risky evaluations where a conflict of opinion is expected[28], it is appropriate to work with a so-called stakeholder analysis[29].

„USE STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS."

It is the identification and analysis of entities that are either actively involved in the evaluation or their interests are affected by its implementation. Often, they can also influence the course or results of the evaluation. The aim is to assess that influence and plan a strategy for dealing with them. Who is a potential stakeholder? The primary clients may be the relevant departments of the ministry, methodologists, inspectors, project managers, strategic departments and others, both in the positions of non-executive staff, heads of units, department directors, and at the level of deputy ministers or even ministers.

From a broader perspective, stakeholders can also be divided according to their relationship to the intervention as follows:

- Bodies responsible for coordinating interventions of EU funds, Council for ESIF, MoRD, MoRD-NCA.
- The managing authority (MA) responsible for the intervention proposal - MA management, working and advisory groups superior to the MA (such as the monitoring committee, working and advisory groups of MAs).
- The MA responsible for implementing the intervention - the implementation component of the MA (methodologists, project managers, financial managers, inspectors, evaluators), working and advisory bodies of the MA, or the intermediate body of the intervention.
- Subject-matter relevant sections or departments of the ministry.
- Institutions and individuals who are directly affected by the interventions (beneficiaries, applicants, entities and individuals close to them), as well as those whose application was rejected, target groups.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), evaluation societies, the public, i.e. the part of the population that has a general interest in the interventions carried out and their aspects, such as the efficiency of the use of public funds, transparency of processes, etc.

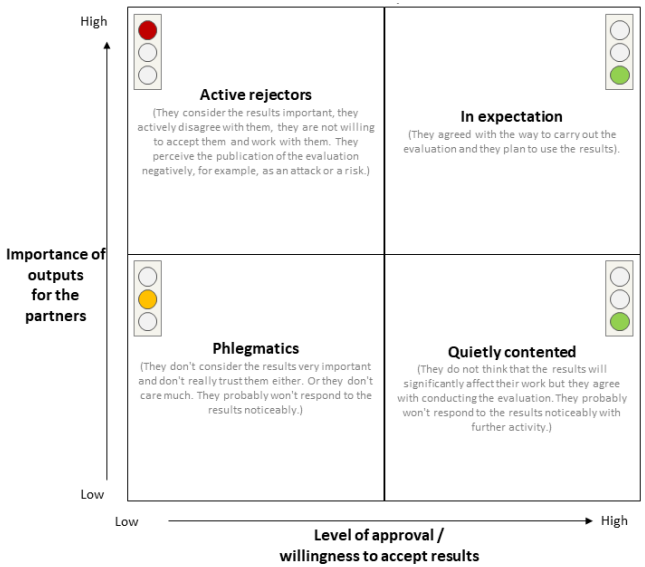
28 Risky evaluations - evaluations that can be risky e.g. in their acceptance due to very negative findings and results.

29 The method is taken from project management and is applied to the context of evaluations.

Preparing an evaluation

The method divides partners into four basic categories. It is appropriate to approach the partners depending on the category in which they are included. The evaluator can expect the greatest support from the so-called "active allies" who will be involved in the preparation and implementation of the evaluation. On the contrary, "negativists" may see the evaluation as a risk to their work and will try to make sure that the evaluation is not carried out at all. If this group represents a high level of risk, it is appropriate to actively work with that risk.

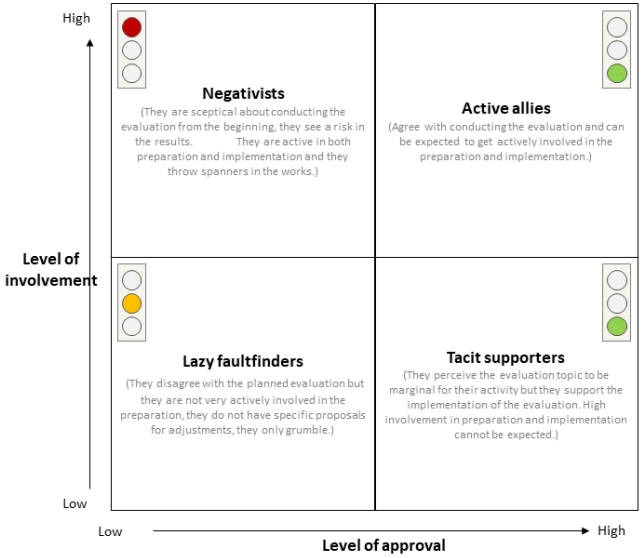
Presumed involvement of partners in the preparation/implementation



Completing an evaluation

A very similar situation occurs after the evaluation is completed. Again, it is necessary to consider whether to actively address the risks that could arise from the so-called "active rejectors". On the contrary, support will come from partners "in expectation", who are looking forward to using the evaluation results in practice and adjusting their daily activities.

Expected reactions of partners to the evaluation outputs



2.3 Tender specifications

DO NOT FORGET

Clearly defined object of the contract and its outputs

First of all, it is necessary to define well the subject of the evaluation, from which the contractor will understand the needs of the contracting authority. If, as contracting authorities, we require a good offer from the contractor, it is necessary to prepare a comprehensible invitation to tender, from which it must be clear what we need to know the answers to.

The tender specifications should also clearly define the outputs of the contract and the evaluation process (e.g. the agenda of the initial meeting and what we require from the contractor, how the conclusions and recommendations will be discussed, how the comments on the final report will be settled - we want a personal meeting with a presentation, we require a graphic leaflet, etc.). If we do not define these parameters in the invitation, the contractor has no motivation to offer them or to reckon with them in the delivery of the contract.

Initial meeting and initial report

It is good to give yourself enough time for the initial meeting and the initial report. It has proven good to want the initial report in the form of a specification of the offer or minutes of the meeting. Extensive reports are an unnecessary burden for both contracting authorities and contractors.

Time to prepare conclusions and recommendations

In order to make the recommendations as practical as possible, it is appropriate to hold several meetings between the contracting authority, the contractor, and possibly other partners. There is no time for that within the usual deadlines, when the final report is still being commented on. Therefore, it is advisable to have the contractor available also after the submission of the final report (another month or two), so that it is possible to present the evaluation to the partners, discuss it and finalize (specify)[30] the recommendations.

Define available data sources and items

In order for the contractor to be able to offer quality performance and to be sure that the required or proposed design is realistic, it is necessary to indicate the available data sources. Therefore, the contracting authority should always describe well in the tender specifications what data or data items are available. Ideally, the specifications should state: the structure of the datasets, whether contact details will be available for the questionnaire survey, whether the contractor himself will search for respondents or informants or will receive contacts from the contracting authority, etc.

No copying

Every set of tender specifications is unique and the needs of each contracting authority are different. So there should be no simple copying of tender conditions or other parts into the invitation itself. Evaluation questions should truly correspond to the real needs of a particular contracting authority.

30 This practice proved successful, for example, in the OP Czech Republic - Poland.

WATCH OUT FOR

The timing of bid submission

Sufficient time should be provided for the submission of bids after the launch of the call - not only the ministries but also companies run various processes before deciding whether to prepare a bid at all. The contractor needs enough time for that. Furthermore, it is appropriate to consider in which part of the year the invitation is published (e.g. a holiday season, Christmas holidays, etc.). The deadline for submission of tenders should be adjusted accordingly.

Specific deadlines for outputs

We do not recommend writing specific dates in the tender specifications or contract. Often, there is a delay in the procurement and the deadline is not realistic and it is not easy to move it. Therefore, it is better to write deadlines more generally: e.g. submission of the final report within 6 months of the entry into force of the contract.

Short deadlines for incorporating comments

We recommend giving the contractor a long enough time to incorporate any key comments appropriately. Several-day deadlines do not allow this.

Flash news

It is advisable to define the method of communication with the contractor already in the tender specifications. It can be regular meetings or flesh news - e.g. by e-mail. Whatever the form, it is good to discuss what the current status of the contract implementation is, what the contractor did over the given time and, especially, what are the risks and obstacles that need to be addressed.

Meet your deadlines

Sometimes the contracting authority strictly checks whether the contractor has settled the comments within a short period of time (e.g. 5 days), while the authority itself is late with comments. The contracting authority should also meet the deadlines agreed in the contract, inter alia, so as not to delay the run of the entire contract.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Disseminate information on planned evaluations

Make sure you have the invitation parameters set well (e.g. CPV codes; CPI/NACE codes, etc.). If possible, communicate the content of the evaluation plan to the evaluation community in a timely manner.

Set the qualification and evaluation criteria adequately

If we demand quality from the contractor, it is necessary to choose the best quality contractor. This is only possible through correctly set qualification and evaluation criteria.

Don't cling to exact wording

Just as we expect some flexibility from contractors, contracting authorities should behave openly and not cling to exact wording. If the contractor proposes modifications to the evaluation goal or its process, they should be approached with an open mind. Mutual flexibility will be to the benefit of quality performance.

Feedback

The making of evaluations and their terms of reference is about learning. Let's learn and do it better. Let's exchange feedback both with contractors and inside the evaluation unit. What have we done well as an evaluation unit and what can be done better or otherwise next time?

2.4 Procurement/selection procedure

There are various forms of selection procedures to hire an external evaluator. The simplest form is orders or small-scale contracts. Unfortunately, due to the financial volume, the large number of contracting authorities in one organization and the necessity to add up the estimated values of all identical types of contracts[31], these types of procedure are of little use. The Guide presents practical experience with the most used types of selection procedure and to-date experience of evaluation units. It does not seek to provide a full-fledged range of all possible forms, nor to be a substitute for training related to the Public Procurement Act.

OPEN PROCEDURE

Where and when to use it

It can be used for a contract with a clearly defined subject-matter and schedule. If the open procedure is used for a long-term (e.g. several-year) contract, the risk of changes in the needs of the contracting authority increases and the new needs cannot be sufficiently addressed (the subject of performance or its scope cannot be changed).

What to watch out for

This is a demanding form of procurement because the approval process is often lengthy and demanding due to internal rules in ministries. If the contracting authority plans to carry out a larger number of expensive evaluations, it is more appropriate to use one of the other forms of procurement below.

FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Where and when to use it

It is suitable where the contracting authority will repeatedly or continuously award more public contracts that have the same object or are somehow related.

What to watch out for

It is necessary to set the tender specifications, qualification, object of the contract and evaluation criteria very carefully and properly. In Czech legal practice, the object of the contract cannot be modified much during implementation, which may have disadvantages for a multi-year contract.

Advantages

It is a contract that covers a longer period of time and more public contracts that would otherwise have to be awarded separately. Thanks to that, the selected contractor can get better acquainted with the needs of the contracting authority and better understand the evaluated areas.

Drawbacks

The disadvantage is the limited market, as the framework agreement does not allow new contractors to be continuously added (unlike the dynamic purchasing system). This, of course, increases the demands on its correct setting at the beginning and increases the risks of a poor or insufficient selection of the contractor(s).

31 For specific wording see Section 19 (Estimated value of public contracts of a regular nature) of the Public Procurement Act No 134/2016 Coll.

DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM (DPS)

Where and when to use it

It allows the contracting authority to award public contracts easily and repeatedly. DPS is suitable when the contracting authority expects to award different types of contracts, or it must add up the estimated prices of contracts of different actors in the organization with different evaluation and analytical needs.

What to watch out for

If you choose categories, you need to define them well. For example, the breakdown by difficulty of the methods (basic methods, more difficult statistical methods, etc.) has not proven to be the best choice[32]. The reason is that in the end, more or less the same contractors qualified for the first two categories (it turns out that most of the market has similar experience with both basic methods and more complex statistical methods). On the contrary, it seems more advantageous if there are evaluation companies in the first category and primarily sociological companies in the second[33]. It is advisable to continuously check whether the qualified companies have the required experience at all times (as experience is borne by specific people who may change over time). What also turns out to be important is the setting of the main DPS qualification which defines the types and quality of contractors. In the individual mini-tenders, it is no longer possible to request a qualification.

Advantages

It allows the contracting authority to create a group of qualified contractors to choose from. The number of contractors is not limited because the form of the tendering procedure allows new contractors to enter the DPS on an ongoing basis.

In experience[34], the preparation time of the individual mini-tenders is shortened compared to classic open procedures. Still, it takes at least six months from the preparation of the intent to the signing of the contract with a specific contractor. DPS significantly reduces the administrative burden also on the part of evaluation contractors in preparing the individual offers.

Drawbacks

Each mini-tendering procedure must be announced and evaluated separately, which, in an effort to maintain quality and use qualitative evaluation criteria, can increase the time required (but the time is still shorter than in the case of above-limit public contracts). In addition, each contract is awarded to a new contractor who has to get acquainted with the evaluated area again. Another risk is the fact that for some contracting authorities, it is not possible to procure a recurring annual survey in the DPS but it is necessary to issue an invitation to a separate mini-tender each time (however, this practice differs across contracting departments).

32 Experience of the NCA Evaluation Unit

33 Experience of MLSA

34 Experience of the NCA Evaluation Unit

PRELIMINARY MARKET CONSULTATIONS

Act No 134/2016 Coll., on public procurement[35], Section 33, allows the contracting authority to carry out so-called preliminary market consultations. These allow the contracting authority to verify in time whether the ToR are well and clearly set, or also check whether the schedule or the estimated price of performance are set correctly[36].

Where and when to use it

It is applied when the contracting authority does not have sufficient information of its own about the problem to be evaluated, and the information is not even publicly available to a sufficient extent. The aim is to increase the awareness of the evaluation unit about the required performance, or to identify other solutions. The contracting authority is obligated to indicate in the tender specifications the parts formulated on the basis of the preliminary market consultation and to list the (natural or legal) persons who participated in the preliminary market consultation and the essential information that was received.

What to watch out for

After taking over the information from the consultations, the contracting authority is responsible for not favouring the specific contractor who provided such information. Communication (Section 211 of the Act) is carried out in writing, oral communication is captured in written records, minutes or sound recordings.

35 http://www.portal-vz.cz/cs/Jak-na-zadavani-verejnych-zakazek/Metodiky-stanoviska/Metodiky-k-zakonu-c-134-2016-Sb-,-o-zadavani-verejnych-zakazek

36 NCA EU tested a written form similar to a questionnaire survey. The advantage was the speed, simplicity and transparency of the procedure.

2.5 Evaluating the quality of bids

Evaluation of the quality of offers is an independent discipline that requires at least a basic knowledge of the issue and great expertise and experience of the evaluators. If the evaluation unit does not have such experts, it should hire them from among the experts of the Czech Evaluation Society or other independent evaluators (such evaluators then cannot submit a bid to the tendering procedure).

”
FOCUS THE EVALUATION CRITERIA ON THE QUALITY AND FEASIBILITY OF THE EVALUATION.
“

The use of evaluation criteria is very different among the contracting authorities. Some still evaluate the price only, which we consider inappropriate, even uneconomical, when requesting a service. Quality services, to which evaluation belongs, cannot be acquired through competition for the price only. It is considered good practice to have the price-quality ratio at 40%:60%, ideally 30%:70%[37]. For some topics, it is good to further reduce the price side.

The peer review of the European Commission, which took place in the Czech Republic in 2019, recommended that evaluations related to research and development be evaluated only for quality due to the specificity of the issue.

”
THE PRICE OF AN EVALUATION CONTRACT DIRECTLY AFFECTS ITS QUALITY. DETERMINE IT ADEQUATELY.
“

It is equally important to determine correctly the estimated price of the evaluation. If we demand quality evaluation from contractors, it is necessary to provide them with sufficient time and financial resources[38]. If you are not sure about the price of the contract, carry out preliminary market consultations or market research, and determine the price based on them. Newly, the Public Procurement Act makes it possible to set a fixed price and compete for the highest quality offer (see Section 116, para. 4). However, the application of this variant in practice is not yet known.

37 E.g. the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT) most often uses the evaluation criteria ratio of 60-20-20, where 60% is for quality, 20% for experience and 20% for price. If experience is not evaluated, then the ratio is usually 70% for quality and 30% for price.

38 According to MS2014+ data, the average price of a one-year evaluation in the 2014–2020 programming period is around CZK 1 million. The evaluations of the NCA Evaluation Unit had the same average price of a one-year evaluation contract.

Experience of persons involved in the implementation

This criterion should be used only when we require unique experience or know-how. It is not suitable for evaluating experience with common or standard methods (e.g. focus group, interview, questionnaire). The criterion should be set as "demanding enough" to provide a qualitative distinction between candidates (if it is met by all candidates, it does not work as it should)[39].

In this criterion, we recommend not increasing the administrative burden of the entire contract more than necessary. The high administrative complexity of retrieving evaluations from previous contracting authorities may discourage some bidders.
The reason is the fact that it is very difficult for the contracting authority to verify whether the person has performed the method in high quality. An alternative may be to require contacts for references that the contracting authority can verify itself (or only request a reference list)[40].

Example:[41]

A higher score will be awarded to the bid whose team has one person with a university degree in law who has experience in providing legal advice on European funds for the last 4 years (this includes experience both with ESIF and Norwegian, Swiss or similar funds). The advice may be related to the implementation of the funds' regulations in the national environment of a Member State, advice on public procurement or State aid, etc.).

Will the number of years of experience of the given expert be assessed?

- *for 1 year – 2 years of experience, the offer will receive 3 points,*
- *for 2 – 3 years of experience, the offer will receive 5 points,*
- *for 4 and more years of experience, the offer will receive 7 points.*

It is possible to evaluate a maximum of 1 such expert in the offer, points for more experts do not add up.

The experience will be proven by the curriculum vitae of the expert, either by the title of the position or its description, or other information in the CV. The CV will contain a solemn declaration about authenticity of the data and will be signed by the expert.

39 The criterion can also be used as part of the qualification criteria.

40 The criterion is used, for example, by MIT when, based on previously implemented evaluations, different experience of bidders for a given contract can be expected. If it is assumed that the candidates' experience will be equal or very similar, the criterion of experience evaluation is not used.

41 Experience of the NCA Evaluation Unit

Quality and feasibility of the evaluation

The contracting authority will use this criterion to verify whether the tenderer understood the ToR correctly, how much time he devoted to drafting the evaluation offer and how much practical experience he has with the implementation of the required methods or designs. It is to be considered whether to limit the number of pages of the proposal (e.g 10-30 pages depending on the complexity of the task). The criterion is suitable for a wide range of evaluations.

Example:[42]

The contracting authority will evaluate the quality of the settings of the entire evaluation design. The contractor will state in the offer how it will proceed - what documents it will analyse, from which actors it will obtain data, it will describe the chosen methods of data and information analysis, provide a draft timetable, etc. This task has two goals - to define the scope and schedule of work and to explain the proposed methodological procedure of the contractor.

The quality and feasibility of the overall approach concerns both the proposal of the design and the allocated time. The highest score will be given to the offer, the procedures and methods of which will best lead to answering the above questions and will be feasible within the given time. The quality and feasibility of the methodological approach can be described on a maximum of 20 standard pages of text.

It must be clear from the offer that the contractor has thought about the proposed solution and is aware of the circumstances under which the procedure can be implemented and of the advantages and disadvantages of the procedure, and works in advance with potential risks (a statement of risks and active and appropriate work with them will be evaluated positively by the contracting authority). Minimum structure of this part of the offer: Design of the work procedure indicating the methods and/or procedures of data collection and identification of the types of respondents (e.g. representatives of managing authorities, beneficiaries). Timetable of the work and explanation (justification) of the individual steps of the contractor.

The offer is exclusive for this task and fully reflects all elements of the ToR.

- *The contractor will justify its procedure, the justification is clear, realistically verifiable and comprehensible, it reflects the knowledge of the issue and of the field. It is not a routine transcription of generally known facts, the contractor reflects the requirements stated in the task specification and the needs of the contracting authority.*
- *The contractor is aware of external influences that have a direct and indirect impact on the proposed design, and especially on the interpretation of results. The contractor works with these influences, tries to eliminate them, or realistically incorporates them into the design. It is not a mistake to admit deficiencies, on the contrary, the contractor is expected to work with them actively.*
- *The offer describes data collection and a proposal of the data analysis, and states where the contractor will obtain the data from (whether it is a publicly available source or further investigation - with which tool and on which target group the investigation will be carried out).*
- *The offer contains a work schedule together with specific proposals for practical implementation (who will participate in the evaluation; who will coordinate the implementation, etc.).*
- *The proposed design or the partial steps are realistically set with respect to the given timetable stated in the invitation to tender.*

The most advantageous tender will be the one that is detailed, unambiguous, logically consistent, and justified; realistic in terms of time; providing clear information on the actual implementation of the analysis.

In this criterion, however, we warn about the bad practice of some contracting authorities who see a better offer in the one that has "more offered methods". The fact that the offer has more methods does not mean that the performance will be of better quality.

42 Experience of the NCA Evaluation Unit

Quality of the field survey

A variant of how to assess quality is to evaluate the key part of the performance, e.g. the design of scenarios for semi-structured personal interviews or focus groups. The advantage is a far more specific design than the general evaluation design.

Example:[43]

The contracting authority will evaluate the overall implementation proposal in terms of its linkage to the contract objective and its logical interconnection. A higher score will be given to an offer that:

1. *will propose a more appropriate scenario of an in-depth semi-structured interview with supported persons, i.e. will better reflect the evaluation questions - in the scenario, it better transforms the evaluation questions into sub-questions so as to enable the fulfilment of the specified evaluation tasks, it proposes a more logical structure of the interview in blocks and arranges the questions; more appropriately adapts the wording of the questions to the characteristics of the respondents; and, where appropriate, suggests better options that take into account the diversity of the target groups supported. Moreover, it will propose a more suitable method of recruiting respondents, which will take into account the specifics of the individual groups represented in the survey.*
2. *will propose a more appropriate scenario of a focus group with supported persons, i.e. will better reflect the evaluation questions - in the scenario, it better transforms the evaluation questions into sub-questions so as to enable the fulfilment of the specified evaluation tasks, it proposes a more logical structure of the scenario in blocks and arranges the questions; more appropriately adapts the wording of the questions to the characteristics of the respondents; and, where appropriate, suggests better options that take into account the diversity of the target groups supported. Moreover, it will propose a more suitable method of recruiting respondents, which will take into account the specifics of the individual groups represented in the survey.*

Evaluation of the candidate's competencies through testing

An alternative to quality assessment and evaluation is to assess the candidate's competencies using a test or task. Such task can take many forms.

The first option may be to test the knowledge of the required methods and/or design. Risks: There is a risk that to prepare the bid, the candidate will use the expertise of someone who may not be part of the evaluation team at all after winning the contract, or will be involved only formally and sporadically. So testing before awarding a contract is never reliable when seeking a high quality of the actual performance.

Example:

Test: Focus Group & Questionnaire Survey

1. *Order the sequence of the phases of a research conducted through a focus group:*

   (2 points - no error, 0 points - one or more errors)

   Presentation of data

   Meeting moderation

   Selection and recruitment of respondents

   Research proposal

   Data analysis
2. *For which of the above phases do you define research questions?*

   (2 points - correct, 0 points - incorrect)

43 Experience of MLSA

The second variant is to test the competence of the candidate through a model task for the candidate. Risks: If a hypothetical subject of evaluation is created, it is necessary to consider whether the contracting authority can do without a proposal for the performance of the object of the contract.
If the contracting authority requires both a performance proposal (which it does not evaluate, however) as well as an evaluation proposal for a hypothetical example, there is a risk of a high administrative burden for the contractor. Quality contractors may not sign up at all. There is also a risk that the candidate who best fulfils the required task may have a worse offer of performance. Then, paradoxically, this evaluation criterion may not lead to the selection of the best quality offer.

Example (specification of a model task, the type and location of projects are fictitious):

In the village of Dolní Morava, a project for the repair and modernization of ski infrastructure was supported and implemented in 2007, including an accommodation facility. Its aim was to contribute to an employment increase in the services sector in the area (especially Dolní Morava and its immediate surroundings). A similar project on the modernization of ski infrastructure around the town of Karpacz (PL) was unsuccessful in applying for a similar grant, the aim of which was also to contribute to increasing the employment in the service sector in the territory addressed.

The task is to design a research method that will answer the following evaluation question: How did the repair and modernization of the ski infrastructure in the village of Dolní Morava contribute to the creation of new jobs in tourism in A) Dolní Morava and B) in the immediate vicinity?

Furthermore, the candidate shall state how he would proceed in the implementation of the research (description of the steps) and, on the basis of desk research, he will add an argument-based hypothesis of the answer, explaining the reasons for the answer to the evaluation question. For the elaboration of the task, the contractor may rely on data provided on the contracting authority's profile (data for the model task), he may also work with other data. The quality of the data used is subject to evaluation.

2.6 Contract coordination

Coordination of the contract is another key part of the evaluation process, which requires a very active participation of the evaluation unit members in order for the evaluation to be successful.

An introductory meeting should be used to clarify and agree on the work procedure. At the introductory meeting, we recommend defining mutual expectations in detail, verifying mutual understanding, the scope of the performance of the object of the contract and clarifying the positions in project teams. The contracting authority should provide all relevant data at the beginning of the evaluation.

”
INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS ARE TO VERIFY A PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCOPE OF PERFORMANCE AND TO CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS.
“

We recommend that you do not request an unnecessarily large number of documents for the contract, which no one reads in the end, and focus mainly on a quality and intelligible final report and an executive or other summary. Contracts are usually divided into several stages, the basic division is the introductory (entry) phase, the interim and the final phase. Therefore, contractors were required to produce entry, interim and final reports. For shorter evaluations (approximately six months), we recommend that you abandon this practice.

”
DO NOT CREATE PAPER FOR THE SAKE OF PAPER.
“

For shorter evaluations (approximately six months), we recommend that you withdraw from this practice and replace the reports with interim presentations and meetings where the contractor informs about the progress of work. In general, when implementing a contract, we recommend minimizing bureaucracy and letting the supplier focus on writing the final report and summary.

”
ENSURE THE COOPERATION OF PARTNERS IN TIME.
“

Third party cooperation is often required to carry out the evaluation. It can be another authority, a supplier of another contract or a neighbouring department of the same ministry.

In any case, it is necessary to start arranging the cooperation long enough in advance (before the evaluation).

If you need third-party data for the evaluation, we recommend having them ready when inviting tenders for an external contract. It happens that when the contracting authority expects to obtain the data later, unexpected complications arise and the performance of the contract is postponed or is at risk of cancellation.

An ambiguous division of roles between the evaluation contractor, the evaluation unit and the client leads to misunderstandings, or worse, a delivery of outputs other than expected. The internal evaluator should play the role of an interpreter - see The evaluation unit as a knowledge-broker (*Chapter 1 "Evaluation unit and its activities"*).

”
EVALUATOR AS AN INTERPRETER.
“

The contractor does not know the internal operation of the organization enough to fully understand what is behind the ToR exactly (although it may be quite clear and obvious to the evaluation unit because it subconsciously knows many unsaid things from everyday practice). The internal evaluator should be a mediator of communication between the factual expert (client) and the contractor. His task is to make sure that the internal client does not demand something outside the scope of the ToR or does not have unrealistic requirements. The other task is to make sure that the contractor delivers a quality and methodologically well-executed performance that meets the client's needs.

2.7 Contract for work

The contract for work stipulates in its provisions the conditions and obligations of the contracting authority and the contractor in performing the contract. It is one of the basic tools for supervising the progress of the contract.

What should the contract for work cover:

- The contracting authority's right to verify that the people who were part of the selection procedure are really working on the evaluation. However, it is also appropriate to consider allowing exceptions (e.g. for administrative tasks, transcripts of investigations, etc.). Also a requirement for adequate compensation in the event of a change in the contractor's team.
- Compliance with the GDPR, i.e. the definition of confidential information and specification of work with personal data.
- Reference to and obligation to comply with the evaluator's code of ethics.
- Licensing arrangement, ownership rights to outputs (e.g. ownership rights to outputs handed over by the contractor to the contracting authority in connection with the provision of the service passes to the contracting authority on the day of acceptance of the performance. The contracting authority may provide the authorization forming part of the license, in whole or in part, to a third party, even free of charge.
- Withdrawal from the contract
- Sanctions

GOOD PRACTICE CONCERNING PROVISIONS AGREED IN THE CONTRACT

Tying the payment terms to the acceptance procedure

It is good practice to introduce acceptance of performance without reservations, with reservations or to allow non-acceptance. We recommend providing a sufficient time for both the contracting authority and the contractor to settle or agree with the comments (a period of 5 working days is usually very short).

Example 1:

The performance is accepted without reservations - in the acceptance procedure it was found that the provided performance fully meets the contracting authority's requirements.

The performance is accepted with reservations - in the acceptance procedure it was found that the provided performance is functional, but does not fully correspond to the specification of the work according to the contract and the offer.

- *If the acceptance procedure results in acceptance with reservations, the performance is not considered properly and flawlessly provided and the contractor undertakes to eliminate the performance defects specified in the acceptance protocol within X working days (the deadline should depend on the size and complexity of the contract and be adequately long) from the return of the work at the latest. In such case, the contractor has the right to invoice a price corresponding to the part of the performance that the contracting authority considers to have been duly and flawlessly provided. The contractor is entitled to invoice the remaining part of the price only after removing all defects specified in the acceptance protocol. In case of a failure to meet the deadline for elimination of defects, the penalty conditions for delay shall apply.*

The performance is not accepted and is returned for revision – in the acceptance procedure it was found that the provided performance is not functional, or does not correspond to the specification of the work according to the contract and the offer.

Example 2:

Each of the expected outputs of the individual partial performances listed in Article X will be accepted on the basis of the following acceptance procedure:

- *within X (e.g. 14) working days from the date of receipt of the output, the contracting authority shall submit its comments on the content or structure*
- *within X (e.g. 14) working days from the date of receipt of the contracting authority's comments, the contractor shall settle the comments and send them to the contracting authority for final revision.*
- *The contracting authority will verify the settlement of comments within X (e.g. 5-10) working days, and will either approve the submitted output or return it for completion.*
- *If the output is returned for completion, the contractor shall settle the contracting authority's comments within X (e.g. 5-15) working days and hand them over to the contracting authority for revision, then the previous point is repeated until all the contracting authority’s comments have been settled by the contractor.*

2.8 Opponent group

The opponent group performs the role of professional supervision over the implementation of the evaluation. Its members are most often chosen by the contracting authority from among representatives of the relevant departments of the ministry or relevant experts, so that various points of view are included.

> **OPPONENT GROUPS ARE ONE OF THE TOOLS TO SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EVALUATIONS.**

With regard to the focus and scope of the evaluation, the expert opponent group performs, for example, the following activities:

- it comments on the draft ToR for the evaluation/ tender specifications,
- it may propose the composition of the evaluation committee,
- participates in the preparation of the evaluation methodology and monitors the compliance with it during implementation,
- makes sure that the implementer works professionally and independently (it does not interfere with the evaluation itself, only monitors the fulfilment of the ToR, or recommends what else to take into account in the evaluation).

The general rule is: the less formal the opponent groups are kept, the better.

The opponent group can be:

Subject-matter opponent group

It is usually composed of people who are in charge of the subject side of the evaluation. These can be methodologies, supervisors of calls, or supervisors of interventions. Depending on the focus of the evaluation, they may be from the same organization or from other managing authorities.

Methodological opponent group

It is usually composed of experts (internal/external) on the methodology of evaluation design/research. These should be external experts who can afford to independently assess the proposed evaluation design with regard to the feasibility or availability of data for the proposed method. If such experts are used, it is necessary to address their conflict of interest in writing (they must not bid for the contract). In simpler methodological tasks, such group may carry out a simpler verification of the size of the proposed sample for the survey. In more complex evaluations, it can make, for example, a highly laborious assessment of the contractor's counterfactual approach. In more complex cases (and if resources for such a solution can be found) it is good to contact foreign experts (e.g. the Evaluation Unit of DG REGIO and its evaluation suppliers offer such assistance, without high costs on the Czech side).

WHERE TO GET MORE INSPIRATION

Methodology for commissioning evaluations of the Czech Evaluation Society. CES, 2018.

- czecheval.cz/dokumenty/Metodika_na_web_FIN.pdf

Methodology for evaluation of non-competitive projects of the OP Employment 2014-2020.

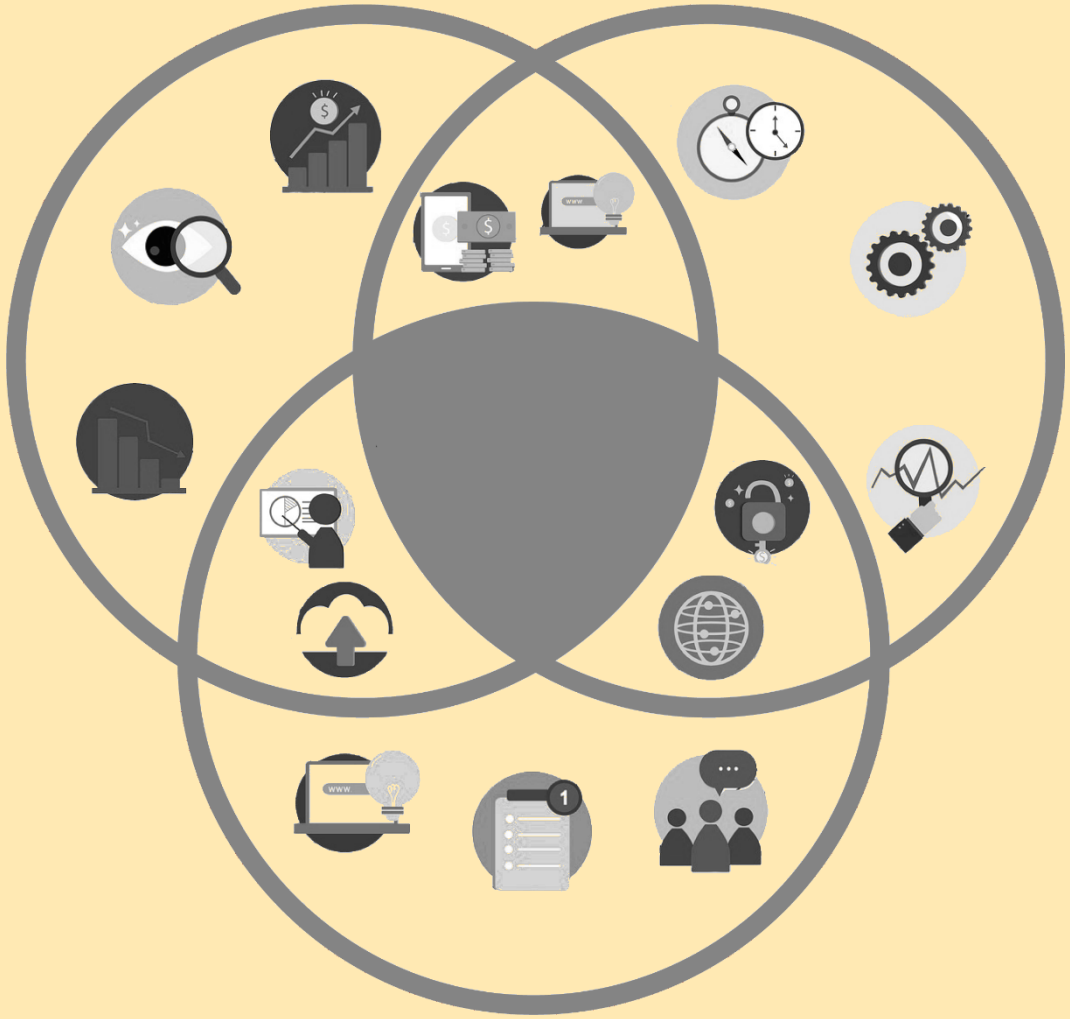
- https://www.esfcr.cz/documents/21802/11646967/Metodika_pro_evaluaci_nesouteznich_projektu_OPZ.pdf-1/b455344a-012f-415d-b2a9-a313704e6abb?t=1565781790323

3

MINIMUM METHODOLOGICAL STANDARDS

An important factor in evaluation activities is the quality of evaluation outputs. Problems with quality can arise from the ToR of the evaluation, others are caused by the unequal quality and standard of the applied methods and designs. Inconsistency appears both on the part of contracting authorities and contractors.

This Guide aims to compare these expectations and create minimum standards for the most commonly applied methods and designs. The aim is not to explain and describe these methods academically, but rather to capture the flaws that appear in evaluations.



3.1 Evaluation questions

Determining the right evaluation question (EQ) is one of the key parts of the evaluation process. The Guide offers a summary from a seminar of the NCA Evaluation Unit from 2016 on the formation of EQs.

> ”
> EVALUATION QUESTIONS DETERMINE THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EVALUATION AS WELL AS THE CHOICE OF METHODS AND DESIGN.
> “

When preparing an EQ, it is also necessary to think about the design of the evaluation. If the evaluation unit is methodologically strong enough, it is advisable to define the design together with the EQ as much as possible to ensure that we get answers to what we need. Another option is to leave more space to the external contractor in the offer. But there is a risk that, due to the pressure on the price, the contractor will try to reduce costs in the way it handles the design. As a result, the evaluation may develop in a different direction than intended by the contracting authority.

It is necessary to involve all relevant partners in the preparation of the EQs so that the evaluation is able to respond to their needs. These needs must be coordinated and, depending on the number of requirements, a decision must be made on what can be implemented. The EQs must then be operationalized. EQs should reflect the evaluation budget (we do not ask about more than what we can pay for). It is a bad practice to transfer EQs in the same form into a questionnaire or interview scenarios and focus groups.

The tool for creating good EQs is their two-phase preparation:

- In the first so-called divergence phase, create a list of questions (e.g. by brainstorming), assess and group these questions according to topics, criteria, etc.
- In the second so-called convergence phase, try to narrow down the number of the questions by selecting the most important ones and eliminating the unimportant ones (even though they may be interesting) and testing whether the questions can be answered and whether the probable answers will help you.

TYPES OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS[44]

Descriptive questions

They find out what exists, describe the situation, state or occurrence of a phenomenon: *What are the objectives of the programme? What are the main activities of the programme? How do participants get into the programme?*

Normative questions

Questions about what should be, they are used frequently in a performance audit: *Are we doing what we should be? Are we achieving our goals?* Normative questions are a measuring against set criteria or standards.

Impact/causal questions (cause and effect)

They find out what change has been achieved by the intervention. Their aim is to find out the results or impacts of a project, programme or policy. *What impacts or side effects (positive or negative) did the interventions bring?*

GOOD PRACTICE

Why = objective of the evaluation

First, the following questions need to be answered: *Why are we doing the evaluation? What do we expect from it (what do clients, stakeholders expect? are their needs or expectations in harmony, or is there a contradiction?)? How will the outputs be used, who will work with them and with what purpose*? This will show us the breadth and depth of the evaluation. It is necessary to know in advance what information we need from the evaluation (causality, impact, process settings, etc.). We recommend clarifying what is already known and not known about the issue, so that the evaluation can be as targeted as possible. Sometimes it is not possible to find out all the information from one evaluation and it is necessary to carry out more investigations or evaluations. It happens that EQs for an impact evaluation contain questions about the process. However, a process evaluation requires different approaches and methods.

Intervention logic

(Also subchapter 7.4 "Intervention logic / theory of change".)

To set good EQs, it is useful to know the intervention logic for the intervention, activity or programme that we are evaluating. The contracting authority, evaluator and client must understand the objectives of the evaluated intervention in the same way because the EQs must be relevant to the objective (of the intervention, programme, policy).

44 MORRA IMAS, Linda G., RIST, Ray C. The Road to results, Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. The World Bank, 2009. p. 223-228.

Involvement of partners

EQs should be communicated or, if possible, prepared together with relevant partners (stakeholders who will work with the results of the evaluation or can otherwise be affected by the evaluation). This part can take a lot of time but it can facilitate real involvement and interest of stakeholders in the evaluation outputs ("ownership" will increase).

Operationalization

It is necessary to operationalize the EQs, i.e. to break them down into statements, simpler questions (sub-questions) or to determine variables that can be answered measurably. It is also necessary to clarify what the specific terms in the EQ mean (e.g. what is meant by competitiveness, efficiency, sufficiency, etc.).

Tender specifications

From the tender specifications, even with the help of EQs, it should be possible to derive a realistic definition of the scope of the evaluation work itself (preparation of the tender, realistic pricing of the works, etc.).

A GOOD EVALUATION QUESTION

- is an open question or offers a meaningful (subsequently evaluable) range of evaluation criteria,
- does not offer a yes/no answer (unless it is normative),
- is specific enough to make it clear what we are asking / what answer we need,
- is realistic, or there should be a strong presumption that the question can be answered,
- we ask about the areas where we have data, or are able to ensure the necessary data,
- there is a limited number of evaluation questions.

BAD PRACTICE

What EQs are not

EQs are not questions for the questionnaire or the scenario for interviews or focus groups. EQs show the area that needs to be covered. However, an interview or scenario for a focus group must always be sensitively created for the various respondents, the questions have their sequence, logic. Same as a questionnaire. A direct question, which is formulated as an EQ, does not work as well as a direct question to a respondent. It is a bad practice to copy EQs from the terms of reference of other tendering procedures. EQs should truly correspond to the real needs of the contracting authority.

BAD EXAMPLES OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Are the topics sufficiently covered?

- Problem: General and too broadly formulated task.

  The generality lay in that the strategic documentation did not determine specific and measurable goals in the field of information and communication activities. It is not possible to define what "sufficiently" means.

BAD EXAMPLES OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Did newly established companies using the services of business incubators (BIs) show better results than comparable companies established outside BIs?

- Problem: The EQ could not be answered due to the lack of data for unsupported entities (the assumed CIE - counterfactual impact evaluation - could not be carried out).

Do employees follow the set procedures? Do MAs use exceptions from procedures? Do they exist? Are they used often? What are the criteria (or processes) for using an exception? What are the common reasons for using exceptions? Do exceptions point out weaknesses in process settings? What weaknesses?

- Problem: The original hypothesis that exceptions to established procedures are being approved, which indicates poorly set internal processes, was not confirmed by the evaluation. The main reason why the hypothesis was not confirmed lay in whom the evaluator asked - the OP staff. Another problem is the high number of questions that are not even EQs but would rather fit in a process audit (the aim of the questions is not to streamline the process but to clearly answer whether the obligations are being fulfilled or not).

3.2 Evaluation design

An important parameter of an evaluation is its research design. The evaluation design is to ensure that the information/data obtained makes it possible to answer the evaluation questions. The design is determined by the type of the evaluation question and determines suitable evaluation methods. Designs can be divided into quantitative and qualitative.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

If we have previously divided the evaluation questions into three types (descriptive, normative and impact), we can divide the quantitative design into[45]:

Experimental design

It assumes the use of randomization - random ex-ante inclusion of units in the intervention or control group - i.e. group without intervention (the participants have the same chance to get into the one or the other group). This design is generally considered to be an arrangement with the strongest internal validity. However, it is also very difficult to use it in the environment of EU funds, as it is necessary to ensure an element of randomization and also identical conditions for both groups before starting the evaluated intervention. It is mostly used in medical and pharmaceutical research. Experimental design helps to answer causal, impact questions.

Quasi-experimental design

There is no random inclusion of the population in the intervention or control group. It is possible to use naturally existing comparator groups or to create such a group artificially. In any case, the groups cannot be considered identical. Quasi-experiments include a simple comparison before and after an intervention without a control group, however, its internal validity is low. Quasi-experimental design is also suitable for answering causal questions[46].

Non-experimental design

It is based on observed data and used in situations where there is no control group or measurement of results over time. This design provides a detailed description of the intervention and of verifiable results. Emphasis is placed on the description: description, characteristics, relationships or occurrence of the investigated phenomenon. The evaluator relies on its own data collection or on existing data (from previous surveys or other studies). Alternatively, he can try to isolate the impact of the intervention on the results using analytical (e.g. regression or theoretically based) methods and available data. Non-experimental evaluation design will answer normative and descriptive evaluation questions[47].

45 MORRA IMAS, Linda G., RIST, Ray C. The Road to results, Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. The World Bank, 2009. p. 249-251.

46 This design includes, for example, Difference-in-difference; Instrumental variables; Propensity scores; Regression discontinuity. BetterEvaluation. Available from: https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/rainbow_framework/understand_causes/compare_results_to_counterfactual.

47 This includes, for example, process tracing, expert panels and other. BetterEvaluation. Available from: https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/rainbow_framework/understand_causes/compare_results_to_counterfactual.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research focuses on discovering, understanding the experiences, views and ideas of participants. Qualitative research examines meanings, sense, experience. Research designs include, for example, case studies, ethnographic research, grounded theory and other.

MIXED RESEARCH DESIGN

A combination of approaches of both research designs.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VALIDITY

The evaluation design should be built in such a way as to guarantee the so-called internal validity, i.e. that no further explanation can be found for the observed results other than the intervention. External validity is also important. If it is achieved, the evaluation results can be, to some extent, generalised to similar phenomena or facts.

TRIANGULATION

Triangulation is a combination of multiple methods and resources, which allows cross-validation of evaluation results. Evaluation questions need to be viewed from different angles based on different methods. The choice of methods must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The concept of triangulation needs to be applied not only to the use of methods but also to data sources, etc. It is also possible to use the application of identical methods by different evaluators.

DESIGN MATRIX

It is good practice to create a design matrix[48] when preparing an evaluation. The design matrix has several roles: to operationalize evaluation questions (create sub-questions), to clarify data sources, to clarify the size of samples and to select a suitable method of data collection and analysis. A side effect of the design matrix is its use for communication of evaluation objectives between evaluators, contractors, clients and other stakeholders. The design matrix can be adjusted to the needs and situation.

> DESIGN MATRIX IS A TOOL THAT CONNECTS EVALUATION QUESTIONS WITH DESIGN, EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION TOOLS.

Design matrix can be used in a minimalist or a maximalist form. Nevertheless, such a design should always be created separately for every evaluation. If the evaluation is internal, the design matrix should already be part of the evaluation intent, if the evaluation is external, the design matrix can be created by the contractor when drawing up the initial report or offer (in such case, however, it should be later specified).

Design matrix is a good tool for clarifying well the needs of the contracting authority or client.

48 MORRA IMAS, Linda G., RIST, Ray C. The Road to results, Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. The World Bank, 2009. p. 241-244.

A design matrix usually has the following interconnected parts[49]:

Question	What is the main evaluation question?
Sub-question	What sub-questions do we ask?
Type of question	Is the sub-question normative, descriptive, or causal?
Benchmark or indicator	Do we monitor data using an indicator or a benchmark (e.g. average)? What findings will we consider positive?
Milestone or standard (normative)	By what standard or milestone do we measure the normative question?
Baseline	Are there baseline data?
Source of the data	What data sources will we use?
Design	What evaluation design will we use?
Sample or census	How big a sample do we need?
Data collection tool	What methods will we use to collect data?
Data analysis	Which data analysis is most appropriate?

Example of a simplified design matrix.

Process evaluation - Evaluation of platforms for the preparation of calls[50]

Question: What is the approach of managing authorities to organising such platforms?

Sub-questions	***Type of question***	***Data sources***
What are the types of platforms across the OPs? *What are their characteristics (how many platforms are there, how many members, what is the subject of the meetings, how often are the meetings held, etc.)?*	*Descriptive*	*Desk research* *Interviews with MAs*
Why did the MAs decide for the given type of platform arrangement (one versus several platforms)? *Why are there platforms outside the single methodological environment (SME)?*	*Descriptive*	*Interviews with MAs*
What are the benefits and limitations of each type of platform (one platform versus several platforms versus platforms outside the SME)?	*2 questions in one: causal and descriptive*	*Interviews with MAs* *Focus groups* *Questionnaire survey*
Was the partnership principle fulfilled in the 2007-2013 programming period?	*Normative*	*Desk research* *Interviews with MAs*
How does the MA limit the risk of clientelism in platforms?	*Descriptive*	*Interviews with MAs* *Focus groups* *Questionnaire survey*

49 An example of a more comprehensive design matrix for quasi-experimental impact evaluation assessing a secondary vocational education programme can be found in MORRA IMAS, Linda G., RIST, Ray C. The Road to results, Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. The World Bank, 2009. p. 556-561. For the design matrix proposal see MORRA IMAS, Linda G., RIST, Ray C. The Road to results, Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. The World Bank, 2009. p. 243.

50 Evaluation of platforms for the preparation of calls. MoRD, 2017. Available from: https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/evaluace-platforem-pro-pripravu-vyzev .

3.3 Methods of data collection and analysis

There are a number of methods of data analysis and collection available in evaluation practice. They must be selected on the basis of knowledge of the evaluated problem and its formulation by means of an evaluation question. The methods can be simply divided into quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative methods ask about numbers, percentages or amounts and are implemented on large samples. We can generalize the findings (provided there was a representative selection). Qualitative methods are implemented on smaller samples and are interested in uncovering the "black box" - how does the intervention work, why is it so? They are interested in the reasons why people have some opinions, attitudes or beliefs and what importance they attach to them, but the findings cannot be generalized.

	Quantitative	**Qualitative**
Purpose of the evaluation	Explain and predict Confirm a hypothesis / test a theory	Describe and explain Build a theory / hypothesis
Process characteristics	Known variables Set procedures and methods Smaller importance of the context Objective view	Unknown variables Flexible and emerging methods Ties to the context Subjective view
Data and their collection	Numerical Sufficiently large (representative) sample Standardized tools	Text / image Informative / small sample Freely structured or non-standardized interviews and observations Case studies, participatory methods, expert assessment
Data analysis and interpretation	Statistical analysis Emphasis on objectivity	Search for topics and categories Awareness that the analysis can be subjective and potentially distorted
Presentation of conclusions	Numerical Statistics / aggregated data Formal, scientific style	Words, pictures Narration Personal, literary style

3.3.1 Quantitative research methods

Quantitative research focuses on measuring and assessing statistical variability and the interdependence of variables. It follows a precisely planned procedure. The goal is to collect highly structured data and a deductive approach. The researcher begins with a hypothesis which he then tests using the data[51]. Quantitative research uses various methods of data collection and analysis. The chapter deals with statistical data analysis, counterfactual design and the most common method of data collection, a questionnaire survey.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Description of the method

Descriptive statistics are part of a statistical survey that is often unjustly overlooked. Descriptive statistics can answer many (not only evaluation) questions, using seemingly primitive measures such as average, weighted average, mode, median, standard deviation, etc.

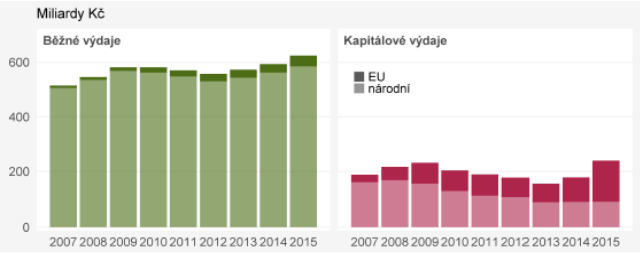
What we should know about the statistical data used[52]:

- For what purpose/goal were the data collected? Who (organization, individual) was responsible for the collection?
- What data were collected and what should they measure (definition)?
- When were the data collected and what collection methods were used?
- How are they arranged? Are they consistent with other sources?
- What other information is available (field reports, publications based on the data collected, etc.)?

Real-life examples

An example of good practice in the application of descriptive statistics is the "Public Expenditure Analysis", where simple calculations and a suitable display of time series data can demonstrate how crucial a role is played by EU funds in the individual parts (or state budget subsections) of our economy.

Current and capital expenditure: national and EU, 2007-2015[53]



51 HENDL, Jan, REMR, Jiří. Research and evaluation methods. Portal, 2017.

52 NEKOLA, Martin. Presentation in the course Evaluation II, Training system in the programming period 2014–2020. 2018

53 JANSKÝ, Petr, KŘEHLÍK, Tomáš. Analysis of public expenditure. MoRD, 2019. Available from: https://www.dotaceeu.cz/en/europe-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/verejne-vydaje-a-fondy-eu-2007%E2%80%932015.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS (CBA)

Description of the method

Cost-benefit analysis is a very useful tool for assessing the impact of public policies, especially ex-ante, i.e. before the actual implementation of the evaluated measures. Its aim is to translate all the effects of the measure on all the entities concerned into a simple monetary expression which represents its overall societal impact.

Although the method consists in using a monetary unit to express impacts, it is very different from purely financial analyses. Its advantage is the effort to include in the final quantification the societal value of impacts, for which their monetary value is not directly apparent or is difficult to determine. An important aspect of the method is also the inclusion not only of the impact of the measure on the target group (direct impacts), but also on all other entities that are in some way affected by the implementation of the measure (indirect impacts).

Thanks to the conversion of all impacts to a common unit, it is possible to use CBA to compare the societal benefits of different solutions, or different parameterizations of the tools of the measure. This comparison can also be made across sectors.

The advantage of CBA is the possibility of a relatively simple interpretation of the resulting indicators, of which the most commonly used ones are net present value (NPV) and benefit-cost ratio (BCR).

The net present value represents the difference between the total benefits and costs of the evaluated measure for the entire evaluated period, where both the benefits and costs are discounted to the present value. The cost-benefit ratio expresses the benefit associated with the unit of costs spent on the evaluated measure.

The ease of interpretation of the monetary result is useful in deciding on the implementation of policies and measures, but it carries the risk of neglecting the impacts that could not be quantified. The impacts of measures that cannot be quantified and converted into monetary terms therefore need to be thoroughly qualitatively described and it must be clearly shown how fundamental an impact they can have on the monetized result of the analysis. The impact of non-monetized impacts on the result must be considered from two perspectives - in terms of the impact on the overall advantage of the evaluated measure and also in terms of the distribution of positive and negative impacts of the measure on different groups of the population.

The cost-benefit analysis has a long tradition and a strong position in the Anglo-Saxon world where it is a standard step required in the process of approving public policies and measures. The European Commission is also trying to promote the use of CBA. In the Czech Republic, the performance of good cost-benefit analyses has been relatively rare so far, although the requirement to perform CBA is part of formal processes (e.g. of the Regulatory Impact Analysis), including formal requirements for its quality.

CBA is performed in the following steps

1. Specification of the measure	*As with any other impact assessment, it is necessary to answer the question of what problem we are trying to solve with the assessed policy and what means or measures we have at our disposal. It is essential to identify the key players and the relationships between them, as they will also allow us to see the indirect, unintended impacts of the measure on different groups of the population. In the first phase, it is necessary to define well the combinations and parameters of specific measures that we are considering. We compare the variants with each other and with the state at the beginning (so-called baseline), or with the state that would occur if we did nothing (so-called counterfactual).*
2. Impacts	*We are looking for all conceivable impacts of the given measures on all affected actors. It is necessary to use all available sources of information on possible impacts, such as scientific literature, past and foreign experience and consultation with experts. It is also necessary to monitor the distribution of the costs and benefits of the measures among different groups of the population, i.e. who gains from the implementation of the evaluated policies and who loses.*
3. Monetary expression	*The listing of all impacts is followed by an effort to identify their strength and value. We seek to answer the questions: what is their value for the society and what is their financial expression? In this step, the impacts will be divided into three categories: (i) monetized impacts, the value of which can be expressed financially, (ii) quantified impacts that can only be quantified in some physical units, and (iii) non-quantified impacts that we know about but we cannot quantify their size in any way. All the biggest and most important impacts should be monetized in the CBA so that they are reflected in the final statement.*
4. Results	*After discounting the benefits and costs for the entire evaluated period, we obtain a monetized result of the analysis (net present value, benefit-cost ratio), supplemented with possible effects of other impacts that cannot be included in the monetized result. These influences must be well described and it must be indicated how they will affect the result. A useful part of the results is the distribution analysis which draws attention to the possible distributional effects of the policy implementation, where different groups of the population are affected by the policy in different ways (typically younger and older generations, men and women, low- and high-income groups).*
5. Reliability	*Given that the analysis of the benefits and costs of policies and measures that are yet to be implemented involves a number of uncertain estimates, it is necessary to assess the reliability and credibility of the simple monetary result we have reached. It is important to look critically at the quality of the data and, in this light, at the assessment of the key cost and benefit items that determine whether the implementation of the measure is worthwhile. It is also crucial to identify the risks that can fundamentally affect the result, and try to prevent them if possible. Not only the resulting analysis, but also the actual process of creating a CBA can be very useful in formulating and evaluating policies. It will enable us to be well aware of the relationships between the actors, it will lead us to an explicit identification of all direct and indirect impacts, we will realize the importance of the individual impacts and how they are distributed in the population.*

Proper implementation of the CBA can be very time and data consuming, especially due to the need to find the best way to quantify the strength of the impacts and their monetary expression. However, a diligent and honest approach is a necessity because without including all impacts or with their incorrect monetization, the result can be misleading and, as it is easy to comprehend, it can be easily misinterpreted.

CBA can be used not only for ex-ante evaluation, but also during or after the implementation of projects or measures. Ex-post performance of a cost-benefit analysis is very useful, for example, for adjusting the parameters of a measure or for gaining experience or data and quantifying the impacts for future analyses. CBA can form the quantitative part of the overall evaluation of projects.

Minimum standards for a CBA

There is a large amount of professional literature and practical manuals for performing a cost-benefit analysis. We recommend the Methodological Manual of the Czech Priorities organization[54], which briefly summarizes the basic principles of the CBA and provides links to a number of other more extensive documents.

Real-life examples

For an example of a good impact assessment using cost-benefit analysis methods, we can look at quantifying the societal costs of gambling in the Czech Republic (Winkler et al., 2015)[55] here:

- https://www.nudz.cz/files/common/winkler_problemove_hracstvi.pdf,

or an analysis of financial costs of and revenues from increasing the capacity of kindergartens (Kalíšková, Münich, Pertold, 2016)[56] here:

- https://idea.cerge-ei.cz/studies/2016-03-verejna-podpora-mist-ve-skolkach-se-vyplati-analyza-vynosu-a-nakladu.

54 The Manual is available on request from the Czech Priorities organization, www.ceskepriority.cz

55 WINKELR, Petr, BEJDOVÁ, Markéta, CSÉMY, Ladislav, WEISSOVÁ, Aneta. Problematic gambling - Societal costs of gambling in the Czech Republic. National Institute of Mental Health,2015.

56 KALÍŠKOVÁ, Klára, MÜNICH, Daniel, PERTOLD, Filip. Public support for places in schools pays off: a cost-benefit analysis. IDEA, CERGE EI, 2016.

COUNTERFACTUAL ANALYSIS

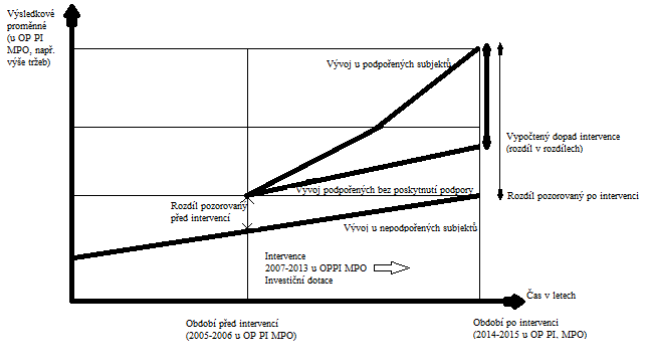
Description of the method

Counterfactual impact evaluation (CIE) is a quantitative tool for measuring the impact of public intervention. It is able to compare the result indicators of supported and unsupported entities, and thus quantify the impact of the intervention. This method has come to the fore especially in recent years in connection with more frequent evaluations of the impacts of EU funds, and its implementation is also supported by the European Commission (2012). In the Czech environment, the CIE method has been repeatedly explained in certified methodologies that are available online (e.g. methodologies of Čadil et al., 2016; Horák, 2016; Srholec, 2016; Hora et al., 2014, or Potluka and Špaček, 2013)[57].

In essence, the CIE expresses the difference between the situation observed after the intervention (observable; factual) and the situation that would have occurred if the intervention had not taken place (non-observable; counterfactual). The following figure captures the essence of counterfactual impact evaluation.

The essence of counterfactual impact evaluation[58]: At the beginning, we have two groups of entities, one supported by the programme and one unsupported (control group), and for them we measure the result indicators. The indicators will be measured again after the intervention.

Subsequently, we calculate the differences between the two periods (before and after the intervention) as well as between the two groups (supported and unsupported entities), and we obtain the final impact of the intervention, i.e. the so-called difference in differences (DID)[59].



Source: Dvouletý et al. (2019, p. 6)[60]

The CIE method is very demanding on prerequisites (especially on the representativeness of the data set, impartiality and undistortedness), data, and its implementation. For this reason, it is very important to know its basic characteristics before starting the evaluation (ideally while preparing the programme).

For its implementation, we need in particular a group of supported and unsupported (control) entities and their result indicators before and after the intervention. CIE is a quantitative method, so for its calculation we need to have a sufficient number of entities in both groups, otherwise its internal and external validity is at risk. The easiest case for evaluation is the

57 For more information on publications see “Real-life examples and other sources of inspiration” at the end of this section on CIE.

58 Example of providing an investment subsidy from the Operational Programme Enterprise and Innovation.

59 POTLUKA, Oto, ŠPAČEK, Martin. Procedures and methods of counterfactual impact evaluations for the Operational Programme Employment in the period 2014-2020. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2013. Available from: https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/848077/Metodika_CIE_MPSV_131015.pdf/cbe02b6d-4042-6801-14a5-1f40cd597a7d.

60 Our own work based on Dvouletý et al. (2019, p. 6): DVOULETÝ, Ondřej, ČADIL, Jan, MIROŠNÍK, Karel. January 2019. Do firms supported by credit guarantee schemes report better financial results 2 years after the end of intervention? The BE Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy, 19(1), 20180057.

situation where individuals are selected for the programme at random, i.e. when it is a so-called natural experiment. In such situation, we only need to compare the result indicators of both groups of subjects. However, a more frequent case in European funds is a situation where entities (participants) are selected for the programme on the basis of certain criteria and an appraisal process. Then we must use more complex statistical methods (methods of statistical matching, regression discontinuity or instrumental variables), which will allow us to capture the factors that influence the participation of entities in the programme and the result indicators we monitor. Taking these factors into account in the analysis is very important, as it can affect the CIE results. However, there is no statistical test or way to make sure that all relevant (and available) factors have already been taken into account. This places high demands on the experience of the evaluation team, as knowledge of the programme plays an important role. Furthermore, it is necessary to pay attention to a correct interpretation of the results with respect to the time period in which we measure the impacts of the intervention. This is crucial especially in situations where it may take some time for the effects of the intervention to materialize (e.g. education, business support for science and research, investment). Choosing the right time period (evaluation framework) is also important for the correct interpretation of the results (Khandker et al., 2010)[61].

Minimum standards for a CIE

Principles for implementing CIE - questions we need to answer before implementing a CIE:

Result indicators: Are there result indicators (so-called hard data) that allow us to estimate the impacts of the intervention in the two time periods before and after the intervention?

Control group: Do we have a control or comparison group of entities that were not supported by the intervention (e.g. unsuccessful applicants, a randomly selected group from the population), and do we have data available for it?

Methodological approach: Is this a natural experiment or is there an appraisal process to select participants for the programme? What method of taking into account the appraisal process is suitable for our evaluation?

Statistical power of analysis: Do we have sufficient data for supported and unsupported entities? What is the percentage of entities in the analysis compared to the total number of supported entities?

Time period: Are we monitoring the likely impacts of the intervention after its end, e.g. one to two years after the end of the programme? What impacts of the intervention does our evaluation capture?

61 Shahidur R. Khandker, Gayatri B. Koolwal, Hussain A. Samad. Handbook on Impact Evaluation: Quantitative Methods and Practices. The World Bank, 2010.

CIE check-list[62]

Statistical matching (Propensity Score Matching – PSM)

A statistical method that allows us to match supported and unsupported entities based on observable (available) characteristics and thus statistically ensure that these characteristics do not differ from each other (e.g. educational attainment, age, gender, company size).	*What should not be omitted?* *matching regression model* *evaluating the quality of the matching of both groups (e.g. by comparing the average bias, by statistical testing of differences between the two groups)* *presentation of the statistical significance of estimates (e.g. F-tests, t-tests, standard errors of estimates)*

Method of instrumental variables (instrumental variables – IV)

A statistical method that can be used if we have available variables (instruments) that have had a significant impact on obtaining public support (e.g. the scoring of a project by different evaluators or preparation of the project by a consulting agency). However, the selected instruments must not affect the examined result indicators.	*What should not be omitted?* *regression model* *availability of instrumental variables (instruments)* *explanation, assessment and testing of the validity of the instruments* *presentation of the statistical significance of estimates (e.g. F-tests, t-tests, standard errors of estimates)*

Method of regression discontinuity (regression discontinuity design – RDD)

A special case of using the instrumental variables method, which can be used when a clear dividing line (e.g. the score of applications) has been set for awarding support to the intervention entities, and the line closely separates supported entities from non-supported entities. The result indicators of entities above/below this line can then be very easily compared and the impact of the intervention can be evaluated locally. However, the calculated impacts cannot be extended to all supported entities.	*What should not be omitted?* *regression model* *availability of the line and its explanation* *data for entities occurring in the zone close to the line* *presentation of the statistical significance of estimates (e.g. F-tests, t-tests, standard errors of estimates)*

62 POTLUKA, Oto, ŠPAČEK, Martin. Procedures and methods of counterfactual impact evaluations for the Operational Programme Employment in the period 2014-2020. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2013. Available from: https://www.mpsv.cz/documents/20142/848077/Metodika_CIE_MPSV_131015.pdf/cbe02b6d-4042-6801-14a5-1f40cd597a7d.

Real-life examples and other sources of inspiration

- Evaluation of the impacts of support for business research and development (R&D), see for example the study by Čadil et al. (2016), Brown et al. (2018), or the study by Sidorkin and Srholec (2017) published in English.
- Evaluation of the impacts of business support allocated through the Operational Programme Enterprise and Innovation (OP EI), see Hruška et al. (2018), https://www.mpo.cz/assets/cz/podnikani/dotace-a-podpora-podnikani/oppik-2014-2020/evaluace-a-analyzy/2018/10/03_Zaveracna_zprava_final.pdf
- Evaluation of the short- and medium-term impacts of active employment policy (AEP) programmes, see Hora et al. (2009; 2018), or Dvouletý and Hora (2019), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330413128_Zhodnoceni_krathodobych_a_strednedobych_dopadu_vybranych_programu_APZ_realizovanych_v_roce_2014_s_durazem_na_situaci_dlouhodobe_nezamestnanych

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Description of the method

Questionnaire survey is one of the most used methods of data collection. It is usually used to collect a large number of responses, so we are talking about a quantitative method. However, it can also be used to collect qualitative responses, depending on its application. Questionnaire surveys are most often conducted by means of the so-called CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing)[63], i.e. interrogation via the internet, typically by sending a link to a pre-prepared questionnaire but they can be successfully caried out as CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) or CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing).

The compilation of a good questionnaire has its principles, the observance of which increases the willingness of the respondents to answer, as well as answer truthfully, or even write more in open answers. When compiling the questionnaire (especially a longer and more branched one), it is practically impossible to capture all illogicalities / bad linkages. In such case, its thorough piloting is a matter of course. If the piloting is planned, the evaluation team should be given sufficient time to carry it out before the actual survey.[64]

63 When applying the CAWI questionnaire survey, it is good practice to use a tool that allows (i) repeated reminders to those who have not yet replied to the questionnaire, (ii) saving the questionnaire during completion and returning to it later, and (iii) continuous saving of the answers. All this increases the response rate and thus the explanatory power of the questionnaire. This requires more than an ordinary questionnaire environment, advanced options are offered, for example, by SurveyMonkey, LimeSurvey or Google Forms.

64 Pitfalls of interpretation of questionnaire surveys: Daniel Prokop, Blind Spots, 2019.

Minimum standards of a questionnaire

- Operationalization of evaluation questions. Proposal of questions for the questionnaire survey.
- Defining the sample size, sample selection and the required response rate (see below). Taking the necessary steps to maximize the response rate.
- Pilot survey, questionnaire testing. Modifying the questionnaire according to the test results.
- Ensuring a high response rate (reasonable length of the questionnaire, address and description, anonymity, incentives, an official letter for the credibility of the questionnaire, etc.).
- Using a professional application for data collection (e.g. Limesurvey, Survey Monkey[65]).

Minimum structure of a questionnaire

- The introductory letter and instructions for completion are brief and concise, contain elements that should ensure a higher response rate, and other important information such as a description of the purpose of the survey, the use of the survey data, deadline for completion, or contact person details in case of problems. It is also good practice to attach an official letter to the e-mail, giving patronage to the survey implementers. Furthermore, it is good practice to send the final version of the evaluation or analysis to all respondents addressed (not just those who answered).
- Introductory questions - easy, impersonal, factual.
- Central part of the questionnaire (most important and more difficult questions)
  - Alternate positive and negative questions.
  - Alternate closed and open questions, keep the number of open questions to a minimum (max. 3).
  - Questions that relate to one issue should be grouped together.
  - Intensify sensitive questions gradually and don't put them at the beginning.
- Final part - socio-demographic issues.

65 The protection of personal data entered via Survey Monkey is ensured by a declaration of its operator on participation in the so-called Privacy Shield.

What the questionnaire should / should not contain

What should the questionnaire contain?	What should the questionnaire not contain?
Short and straightforward questions.	Double (triple) questions.
Unambiguous questions.	Wrong answer offers.
Understandable questions.	Overlapping categories.
Questions that the respondent can give a relevant answer to.	Questions that ask about more than one thing at a time.
Only absolutely necessary questions.	All-embracing, vague questions.
Branching of the questionnaire according to the answers (if relevant).	Questions on someone else's opinion.
Questions formulated as questions, preferably with a question mark at the end.	Questions in jargon or slang.
Sensitive questions should be "softened".	Hypothetical questions.
	Misleading questions.
	Questions containing uncertain assumptions.
	Questions suggesting an answer.
	Questions with a negative.

Terminology

Population: The set of units we want to examine - we assume that our statements are valid for this set. A set of units from which we select a sample.

Sample (sample set): The set of subjects that represent our sample in the research, the units that we actually examine.

Representativeness: The sample can be generalised to the population. Can the result of the research be applied to other elements of the population?

Data collection procedure

Target group of respondents: When looking for answers to specific questions about certain areas, we should always examine the groups of people who are related to them. The main prerequisite for a well-managed research is a correct definition of the target group of respondents, which will provide relevant information. Without this step, the research cannot be considered full-fledged.

Sample selection: For an evaluation to be successful, it is important to choose correctly the entities to be examined. In other words, when examining a problem, we do not usually collect data on the entire population. The topic is usually observed on a set of units that form a research sample. The keystone is to choose the right strategy in order to eliminate selection errors and to make sure the set is representative.

The way in which the units for research survey can be selected is basically twofold:

- random - probabilistic sampling
- non-random - non-probability sampling

The difference between them is that in the first case, the probability of selecting each part of the population for the sample is determined. As a result, we can use mathematical calculation to estimate the magnitude of the error caused by the sample survey. In the non-probability sampling, we do not have mathematical-statistical support for estimating the error.

i. Probabilistic (random) sampling

Its goal is to give all units in the population the same probability of getting into the sample. The choice of respondents is decided by chance. Each element (unit) of the population has the same chance to get into the sample. The most common ways of random sampling of respondents are[66]:

- Simple random sampling: It is suitable for researching general problems. Respondents are selected at random, without any rules. Simple random sampling can be compared to drawing lots, where each respondent has the same chance to be selected. In this way, all the characteristics of the population can be easily covered, the results can be generalized. Everyone has the same chance to fill out the questionnaire. With a sufficient sample size, all the prerequisites for obtaining responses from different groups are included.
- Systematic random sampling: It is set to select every n^{th} case. For example, every tenth unit. This is typically used by companies and organizations that maintain a database of potential respondents (registered users of a particular service, customer list, own contact database). From these potential respondents, every n^{th} case is selected and the questionnaire is sent to it for completion.

66 There are several variants (Random interval sample, Random-start and fixed-interval sample, Stratified random sample, Random cluster sample, Multistage random sample), especially if we want to cover different groups.

ii. Non-probability sampling

Its aim is to select respondents with some predefined intention of the researcher in order to represent the characteristics selected by the researcher. It cannot be used to characterize a larger population, but can be specifically targeted[67].

iii. Census

Why is it not appropriate to send the questionnaire to the whole population? Sample surveys usually achieve better response rates and accuracy. In addition, frequent questionnaires "overwhelm" respondents who become distrustful of the questionnaires and are reluctant to complete them. If a census has a low response rate, its results may be questioned with respect to the representativeness of the sample.

Sample size: The size of the sample depends on the size of the basic population and the required reliability of conclusions (confidence level, confidence interval). It also takes into account the expected response rate. A poorly chosen sample of respondents can complicate or completely devalue the researched problem. Sometimes 20 respondents are enough (small population) and sometimes 500 are too few (large population). There are online tools for calculating the sample size, just search for "sample size calculator"[68] and enter the variables.

If n = 220 and the expected response rate is 70%, we will address 315 respondents (220 / 0.7). If we expect the response rate to be 30% (which is a typical rate), we should address 733 respondents[69].

Indicative sample size based on the confidence interval and level

Population size / CI	97 % (+/- 3)	95 % (+/- 5)	90 % (+/- 10)
500	345	220	80
1 000	525	285	90
3 000	810	350	100
5,000	910	370	100
10,000	1000	400	100
100 000	1100	400	100
1 000 000	1100	400	100
10 000 000	1100	400	100

67 The non-probability sampling methods may include the following sampling: Purposeful, Convenience, Snowball, Voluntary.

68 One of the calculators is online at the JRC link here: https://crie.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sampleSize/samplesize.php, CES recommends: https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm.

69 NEKOLA, Martin. Presentation in the course Evaluation II, Training system in the programming period 2014-2020. 2018–2020. 2018

Questionnaire response rate: The problem of questionnaire surveys is their low response rate. Tips to increase the response rate:

- explain to the respondents what the results will be used for exactly,
- if an institution with which the respondents normally communicate (for example, the managing authority or the NCA) participates in the questionnaire survey, provide this information to the respondents.

Errors: It is also necessary to reckon with errors in a questionnaire survey. The most common errors are:

- Sampling random error = no sample represents the whole population exactly. This error cannot be completely eliminated but can be reduced by determining an appropriate number of objects in the sample.
- Systematic error due to low response rate = some refuse to participate, they cannot be contacted. An error arises when those who refused have different characteristics from those who responded. It is, therefore, important to monitor the characteristics of the respondents who answered[70].

70 HENDL, Jan, REMR, Jiří. Research and evaluation methods. Portal, 2017.

3.3.2 Qualitative research methods

While quantitative methods answer the questions "how much?", qualitative methods answer the question “what importance do respondents attach to the measured quantities?” and the question "why?". In qualitative research, it is important to take into account the contextual conditions of creating a global picture. The data are mostly interpreted not by statistical methods but by explaining the connection of behaviour and phenomena with the context of the case, with other behaviour and phenomena.[71]

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Description of the method

An interview can be used if we need to find out as many details as possible about the life or work area of the respondent, his experience, opinions, attitudes, motives, assessments. It is used when the target group has a narrow professional focus or is busy (managers), when it is a sensitive topic, or when it is assumed that the dynamics of a discussion group would be counterproductive. The number of interviews depends on the research needs. One-on-one interviews have the advantage in the depth that can be reached. Interviews can be structured to a varying degree. An informal interview is usually unsuitable due to its generality and low level of targeting at the result, on the contrary, a fully standardized type of interview does not give the interviewer the opportunity to deviate from the pre-prepared structure and ask for important details that only emerged during the specific interview.

71 HENDL, Jan, REMR, Jiří. Research and evaluation methods. Portal, 2017. p. 60.

Recommended interview types[72]

Type of interview	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
Interview with instructions (structured or semi-structured)	Topics are specified in advance. The interviewer determines their sequence.	The specification of topics increases the unity of the information gained. Logical inconsistencies can be corrected.	Risk of omitting important topics. Different perspectives of respondents reduce comparability.
Standardized open interview	Questions are given in advance. The questions are open-ended.	Respondents answer the same questions. The influence of the interviewer is reduced. The possibility of analysis is improved.	Lower flexibility of the interview with certain individuals. Standardized wording of the questions reduces naturalness and relevance.

Other specific types of interviews are

- In-depth interview - focuses on details of the identified topics.
- Interview with key respondents - focuses on specific topics with regard to the importance and often busyness of these respondents.

Minimum standards of an interview

- The individual interview should take place in person. Only if the respondents are unavailable, should a telephone interview be conducted. Personal meetings inspire more confidence and provide greater opportunity to obtain better data.
- They should have a very carefully prepared scenario which should be commented on and piloted (if it is not possible on the target group, at least alternatively on colleagues). Scenarios are not just rewritten evaluation questions. The questions must be chosen so as to guide the respondent, to provide time to get talking and build trust between the interviewer and the respondent.
- An essential part is a professional and experienced moderator.
- Optimal conditions should be created for it (transport accessibility, undisturbed environment, time, light, heated room, personal space, refreshments, etc.).
- The moderator must know the topics discussed and get acquainted with the objectives of the evaluation or survey. If there are more moderators, it is necessary to train them and communicate this basic information to them.
- The interview can be recorded (after prior approval) and then rewritten, or a detailed written record should be

72 Based on HENDL, Jan, REMR, Jiří. Research and evaluation methods. Portal, 2017. Edited.

taken from it. A more common option is the participation of two evaluators - the interviewer/moderator and the recorder.

- Transcripts (written records) from individual interviews should then be analysed in detail, including the moderator's or recorder's notes (recording other facts, such as mood, overall impression, factors influencing the quality of the interview, etc.). Statistical software is usually not used for the analysis, as it would destroy and lose the essence of a qualitative analysis, i.e. depth and context. It is necessary to have transcripts of the individual answers. The main benefit of these transcripts is the possibility to return to them at any time during the evaluation and look for other important meanings, connections that might otherwise (due to seeming insignificance) pass unnoticed.

Examples of bad evaluation practice for an individual interview

- Not every conversation between two or more people can be considered an individual interview.
- If I don't record the whole statement, including all the details, something important is likely to slip away. Writing down three keywords in an Excel spreadsheet cannot be considered a transcript of an interview.
- If the moderator does not know the reason for the evaluation and the topics to be asked, there is a risk that he will not collect the necessary data and information from the field and, therefore, it will not be possible to answer the evaluation questions and the ToR will not be fulfilled.

FOCUS GROUP

Description of the method

A focus group has the advantage of group dynamics over an individual interview. It has some elements identical with the individual interview - scenario, prior preparation, transcripts or written records and analysis.

What IS a focus group?	What IS NOT a focus group?
6-12 participants, 60-120 min., homogeneous group composition. The discussion is conducted based on a pre-prepared scenario. Questions like "Why…", NOT questions "How much" (the result is "words/opinions", not "numbers"). Participants have direct experience with the discussed problem, their experience is similar (everyone has their own story).	Any discussion with more people. Brainstorming. Workshop. Group interview (the story is compiled by the participants together). "A loose cannon" (discussion without a goal, a scenario).

It has higher demands on human capacity (the moderator should be a more experienced person, literal transcripts require an

additional person, the moderator focuses on the flow of discussion, the assistant makes detailed written records and addresses any operational or logistical problems). It should also be piloted in advance.

Strengths	Limitations
Gaining a detailed description and insight into the "black box" problem, understanding the behaviour and actions of participants. The interaction among the participants reveals what could not be discovered in an interview. Possibility to ask additional questions, get "under the surface". Exploration of an unknown problem (generating hypotheses for subsequent quantitative research).	Time consuming, less transparent. It is not generalizable, it is not representative of the population - it is not hard data. A risk that the researcher will influence the course and result (do not underestimate the role of the moderator!) - subjectivity.

Minimum standards for focus groups

Design and preparation of focus groups:

- The point is to obtain as exhaustive data/opinions on the issue as possible, i.e. the goal in planning is representativeness of opinions.
- We do not seek population representativeness, as we will not generalize.
- We need to form a homogeneous focus group with a confidential and safe atmosphere, e.g. avoid making focus groups where respondents are together with their superiors.
- We choose 1-3 main criteria and additional secondary criteria, according to which we will divide the respondents into groups. The main starting point for the choice of the criteria is the problem examined, not the population.
- In one focus group, everyone should have similar personal experience with the topic.
- The number of focus groups covers the main possible attitudes and opinions.
- One focus group is insufficient in most cases, 4-12 focus groups should be sufficient.

Example of the design: Topic - infant milk

Target group = mothers with at least 1 child under 6 months, consuming infant milk

Main criteria: mother's age, number of children

In total, there will be 6 focus groups (FGs)

NUMBER OF CHILDREN / MOTHER'S AGE	***The first child (first-time mother)***	***More children (already has some children)***
18-23	*FG 1*	*FG 4*
24-30	*FG 2*	*FG 5*
31-38	*FG 3*	*FG 6*

Scenario for the moderator:

- It is important to have different scenarios for different groups of respondents (e.g. users vs non-users of a service).
- The scenario contains an estimated time for each question/ activity/ topic.
- The scenario contains the exact questions we will ask, not the evaluation questions. The question must be specific, sensitively worded and understandable.
  - The questions are formulated so as to meet the basic rules of questioning

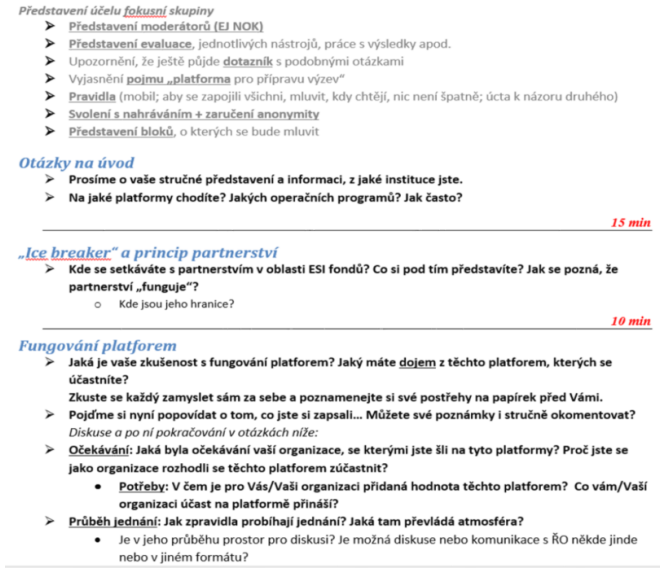
    (no misleading, ambiguous, yes/no questions, etc.).
  - We ask about the direct experience or opinions of the participants, not mediated ones

    (no questions like "Why didn't your superior apply?").
- Consider using projective techniques.
- Rules of discussion: the opinion of the other is respected, everyone has the opportunity to express themselves, no answer is wrong.

The scenario has the following basic parts:

- INTRODUCTION (purpose, rules, consent to recording, etc.).
- INTRODUCING AND ICE-BREAKER (relaxation, creating the atmosphere, everyone gets to speak).
- MAIN QUESTIONS (main discussion questions; the scenario also includes specifying questions, focus on understanding the answers, or on assessing the degree of consensus of the group).
- CONCLUSION (brief summary, asking if anyone wants to add something, thank-you).

Example of good practice[73]*:*



Představení účelu fokusní skupiny

- **Představení moderátorů (EJ NOK)**
- **Představení evaluace**, jednotlivých nástrojů, práce s výsledky apod.
- Upozornění, že ještě půjde **dotazník** s podobnými otázkami
- Vyjasnění **pojmu „platforma** pro přípravu výzev"
- **Pravidla** (mobil; aby se zapojili všichni, mluvit, kdy chtějí, nic není špatně; úcta k názoru druhého)
- **Svolení s nahráváním + zaručení anonymity**
- **Představení bloků**, o kterých se bude mluvit

Otázky na úvod

- **Prosíme o vaše stručné představení a informaci, z jaké instituce jste.**
- **Na jaké platformy chodíte? Jakých operačních programů? Jak často?**

15 min

„Ice breaker" a princip partnerství

- **Kde se setkáváte s partnerstvím v oblasti ESI fondů? Co si pod tím představíte? Jak se pozná, že partnerství „funguje"?**
  - Kde jsou jeho hranice?

10 min

Fungování platforem

- **Jaká je vaše zkušenost s fungování platforem? Jaký máte dojem z těchto platforem, kterých se účastníte?**
  Zkuste se každý zamyslet sám za sebe a poznamenejte si své postřehy na papírek před Vámi.
- **Pojďme si nyní popovídat o tom, co jste si zapsali… Můžete své poznámky i stručně okomentovat?**
  Diskuse a po ní pokračování v otázkách níže:
- **Očekávání: Jaká byla očekávání vaší organizace, se kterými jste šli na tyto platformy? Proč jste se jako organizace rozhodli se těchto platforem zúčastnit?**
  - **Potřeby: V čem je pro Vás/Vaši organizaci přidaná hodnota těchto platforem? Co vám/Vaší organizaci účast na platformě přináší?**
- **Průběh jednání: Jak zpravidla probíhají jednání? Jaká tam převládá atmosféra?**
  - Je v jeho průběhu prostor pro diskusi? Je možná diskuse nebo komunikace s ŘO někde jinde nebo v jiném formátu?

Tips for moderating

- It is always better to make an audio recording (it is data to which we need to return during the analysis), but recording often limits the openness of the discussion.
- Involving a moderator and an assistant is ideal (the moderator focuses on the discussion, the assistant makes written records and solves problems).
- Moderate less than more, but according to the scenario.
- Concentrate mainly on:
  - involving all participants (including introverts),
  - time - all planned topics should be discussed,
  - group dynamics and the naturalness of the discussion,
  - adhering to the topic and purpose of the discussion,
  - understanding the answers and opinions.

Analysis

- After each focus group, the moderator and the assistant summarize and note their first impressions (this cannot be done in retrospect).
- Main analysis = coding of detailed records of the focus group.
- Focus on the breadth and depth of the opinions obtained, not on the number of respondents with a given opinion.
- Perceive the differences between the various groups of respondents.

73 Developed for the purpose of the "Evaluation of the platforms for the preparation of calls". MoRD, 2017.

What to watch out for when including focus groups in the tender specifications

PREPARATION

- Are they suitable for our evaluation questions?
- Do not underestimate careful explanation of your goal to the contractor: the moderator must understand the purpose of the evaluation, he is the one who has to understand the respondents.
- In the tender specifications, reckon with 1-2 pilots

RECRUITMENT

- Who will recruit the respondents - the contractor or the contracting authority?
- How difficult is our target group to recruit?
- Who will arrange the venue for implementing the focus groups and where will the focus groups be

PARTICIPATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

- Do we want to look at some focus groups?
- Is it appropriate for us to be present (anonymity)?

TRANSCRIPTIONS / RECORDINGS

- Are the collected data really anonymized? If we require them, are we sure that they cannot be misused (e.g. shared folders, audit)?

CASE STUDY

Description of the method

The Case Study method is an increasingly used method in the social sciences. After its methodology was elaborated, the case study became an independent and important evaluation method. In Methods of Research and Evaluation[74], J. Hendl and J. Remr state that: "*The case study generally focuses on proposing a case story and illuminating a phenomenon, based on an in-depth, real-time or retrospective analysis*." For the purposes of a case study, the case or phenomenon is studied in the natural context of real life with the participation of real actors. It is most often used to find out why and how some phenomena (interventions) work. According to the authors, the results of case studies cannot be generalized, but on their basis it is possible to propose theories and create hypotheses about causal relationships.

A case or phenomenon (i.e. the main object of a study or a unit of analysis) can be, for example, an individual, target group, organizational structure, legislative measure, political decision, the functioning of processes, a project, programme, region, state. It is assumed that by understanding one case we will better understand other, similar cases[75].

74 HENDL, Jan, REMR, Jiří. Research and evaluation methods. Portal, 2017.

75 HENDL, Jan. Qualitative research. Basic methods and applications. Portal, 2005.

In the case study, depending on the type of question, we can use all methods of data collection, both qualitative and quantitative, but beware of the following methodological errors:

1. Choosing an inappropriate case. The choice of the case must be thoughtful and justified.
2. Collecting a large amount of data that are not relevant to the case and will not allow you to find answers to evaluation questions.
3. Unclear boundaries of the studied phenomenon, it must be clearly defined.
4. Lacking rigorousness of execution. This can be prevented by triangulation and validation of qualitative data.
5. Ethical problems of the chosen procedure, disregard of GDPR, failure to obtain informed consent.
6. Placing the obtained data and partial conclusions resulting from them into an inappropriate theoretical framework. This can be prevented by reviewing the conclusions, verifying them on data[76].

"Role play"

Case studies can use the method of "role play" where participants take on the roles of specific people in order to better understand the examined situation and the attitudes of other participants. In case studies, we strive to use many sources of data, information (evidence), documentation, interviews, focus groups, observations, even in combination with quantitative methods. The use of a larger range of methods leads to a comprehensive view of the object of the study and increases the credibility and robustness of the case study conclusions.

Types of case studies

Case studies can be divided according to:

- the number of cases examined to individual and multi-case studies,
- the method of observation, where the viewpoint is whether we carry out studies as one-off or long-term, whether we are trying to retrospectively reconstruct the case, or whether we are predicting how the case will develop.

Internal validity is strengthened, for example, by a comparison of cases or a time series analysis. Reliability is then enhanced by repeating the same case or similar cases. It is, therefore, based on data that are richer and more detailed but at the expense of the possibility of generalization. Everything is thoroughly documented in the final report.

76 Prepared on the basis of: MAREŠ, Jiří. Drawing up case studies for research purposes. The Pedagogika journal, vol. 65, 2015.

Based on their use, case studies can be[77]:

Name	Use
Descriptive	A detailed, comprehensive description of a phenomenon,
Exploratory	Search for causal relationships, search for the structure of a case,
Explanatory	A credible and convincing explanation of relationships, usually based on multiple hypotheses that compete with each other,
Instrumental	A study of a specific representative of a general phenomenon, understanding how and why the phenomenon works,
Evaluating	Description of a phenomenon, search for causal links, explanation of the phenomenon and evaluation according to certain criteria.

Minimum standards for a case study

- The topics chosen for case studies are rather specific and narrow.
- How to conduct a case study? Case study is an evaluation design rather than a stand-alone method. Its actual start should be preceded by thorough preparation (desk research, telephone questioning, questionnaire, etc.), including the formulation of hypotheses that will be tested in the field. Its implementation then depends on the type of evaluation. However, it almost always requires the personal presence of the researcher/evaluator on site (at the project, in the municipality, at the target group, etc.), who tries to test the initial hypothesis, looking for examples of good/bad practice using a combination of several methods (or several different stakeholders).
- Case studies are always recorded in the most detailed and thorough way possible (case studies must be documented in the evaluation reports).
- In most cases, the evaluator is expected to carry out a personal visit when conducting a case study for evaluation purposes. The personal visit is preceded by a thorough preparation of various freely available and pre-requested documentation. The personal visit is assumed to include personal interviews with several different actors of a specific "case" (so-called informants).

77 Prepared on the basis of: MAREŠ, Jiří. Drawing up case studies for research purposes. The Pedagogika journal, vol. 65, 2015.

- Perhaps even more important than interviews is the actual visit of the evaluator (interviewer) to the site, including observation and perception of the context/atmosphere.
- The evaluator must reckon with a situation where the informants may not have enough time or may not be willing to participate in the case study in addition to their normal duties. For this and other reasons, it is necessary to involve more persons or the whole team in the case study.

When conducting a case study, respect the following procedures:

- Define in advance the criteria you will use to search for cases.
- Use more sources and methods (triangulation) to collect data, work with all the collected data (even those that may seem surprising).
- Keep a careful and thorough record of the case study performed, make sure there is no distortion.
- Consider all the main "competing" explanations and any influences that may have distorted the results.
- Store the collected data in a database for any later analyses.

Examples of good practice

In the "Background study for the preparation of the implementation system for the 2021+ period"[78], the evaluator addressed, despite difficult circumstances, various stakeholders in the given Member States:

- academics who have published articles on European funds in the country,
- consultants from consulting firms focused on consulting in the field of European funds,
- representatives of associations, trade unions and other organizations related to European funds (e.g. associations of municipalities),
- experts on the issue in the given country (lawyers, etc.),
- representatives of beneficiaries and applicants.

Thanks to that, the evaluator was able to define the positive and negative aspects of implementation at the end of the evaluation. He had a deep insight into the implementation of EU funds in the countries concerned.

Examples of bad case studies

- A case study based on only one interview or one observation or on hearing only one version of the story.
- Absence of the evaluator in the field, insufficient verification of data, lack of understanding of the situation on the spot.

78 Ernst & Young. Background study for the preparation of the implementation system for the 2021+ period (Architecture 2021+). MoRD, 2019. Available from: https://dotaceeu.cz/cs/evropske-fondy-v-cr/narodni-organ-pro-koordinaci/evaluace/knihovna-evaluaci/podkladova-studie-pro-pripravu-systemu-implementac.

3.4 Ethics of evaluation

The general rules that all evaluations must follow are defined in the Evaluator's Code of Ethics[79].

The Code of Ethics sets out three main areas of ethical rules for conducting evaluations:

- expertise,
- integrity,
- responsible approach to carrying out evaluations.

> THE PRINCIPLES OF ETHICS IN EVALUATION ARE GAINING IN IMPORTANCE WITH THE GROWING VOLUME OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND ITS AVAILABILITY, IN LINE WITH THE EFFORT TO ENHANCE THE EVALUATION CULTURE.

The Guide presents five basic ethical rules of research, defined in Hendl J., Remr J. (2017)[80].

1. **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND HARMLESSNESS.** Participants must be aware that their participation in the research is voluntary, the research must not harm them.
2. **INFORMED CONSENT.** A statement that the participant agrees with the research.
3. **ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY.** Protection of the interests of research participants must be guaranteed. Based on experience, we recommend that the contracting authority does not request individual data for respondents. The contracting authority should always receive the data in an anonymised form.
4. **ADVICE.** The researcher must inform the participant (at least) about the basic intentions of the research.
5. **DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORT CONTENT.** The researcher's obligation not to modify the data, not to inform only about the results that "suit".

79 The Evaluator's Code of Ethics was adopted by the Czech Evaluation Society in December 2011. The purpose of the Code is to commit to specific values which strengthen the credibility and transparency of evaluation and evaluators in the Czech Republic and which the evaluators respect in their professional practice. Upholding those values in evaluation practice is the task of each individual evaluator. The Code of Ethics was the starting point for the formation of subsequent standards for conducting evaluations, approved in 2013.

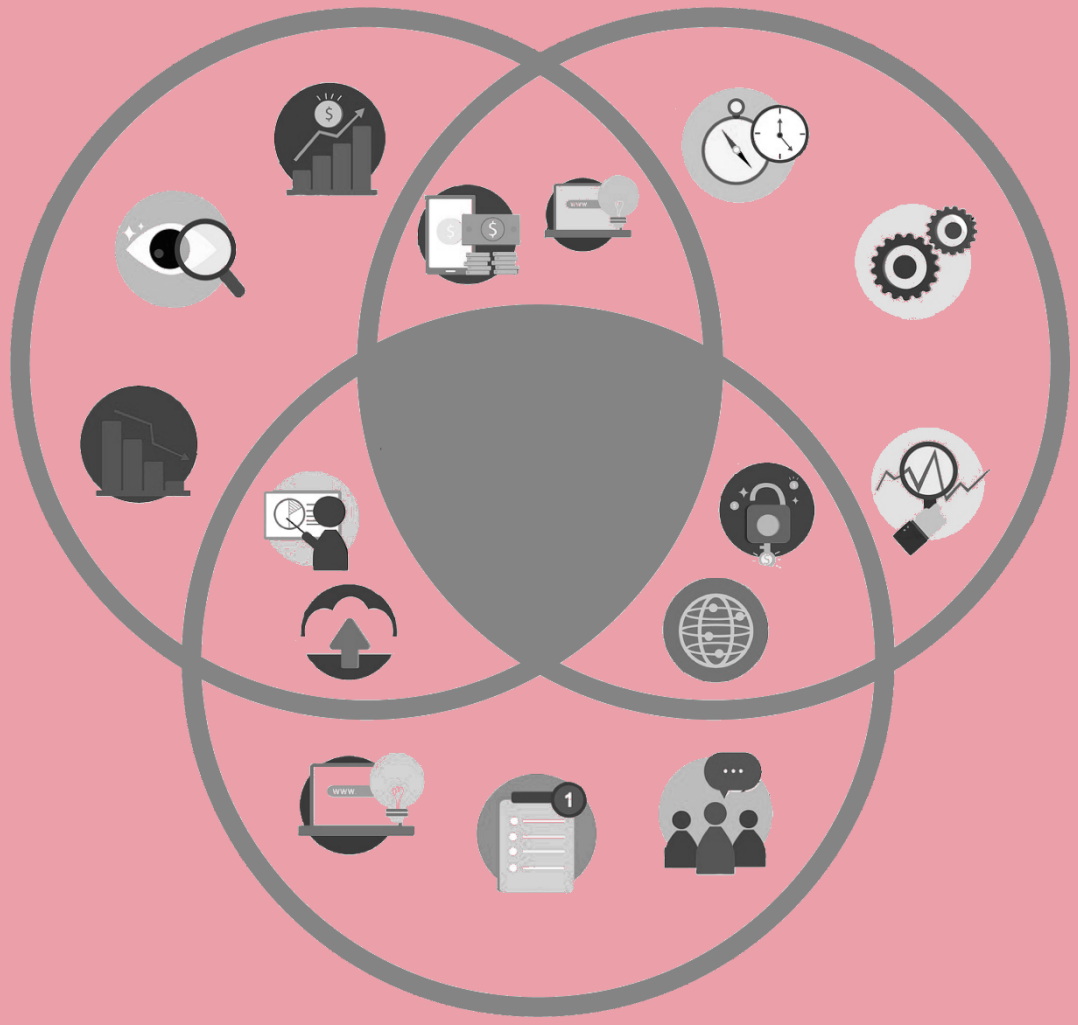
80 HENDL, Jan, REMR, Jiří. Research and evaluation methods. Portal, 2017.

4

EVALUATION OUTPUTS

It is one thing to have well-written tender specifications, perfectly applied methods and robust analyses. It is another to present the results of the evaluations so that the evaluations are read, heard and accepted.

The communication with evaluation users must have a familiar form for them. It should provoke questions and subsequent discussion. That can be achieved with more structured and concise executive summaries and final reports, summaries written in simple language, and graphic elements that will capture the readers' attention.



If we want to fully exploit the potential of evaluation, it is not enough to pursue only the quality of evaluation methods and their use but also the quality of outputs.

It is important what form and content we choose to inform about the course and results of the evaluation so that the acquired knowledge is used in the best possible way. We should start from the needs and nature of the intended recipients of the evaluation.

> **REPORTS AND OUTPUTS FROM AN EVALUATION MUST CONVEY THE ESSENCE, CONCLUSIONS, RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE READERS AS EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE.**

Although this is the last step in the whole evaluation process, it is appropriate to agree in advance on the structure of the outputs and the methods of presentation.

4.1 Initial report

The initial report should be the result of the initial meeting where the contracting authority and the contractor clarified and agreed on the scope and procedure of the work. The aim of the initial report is mainly to present the planned evaluation design and a detailed evaluation methodology (methods and techniques of data collection, presentation of the tools for data collection, identification of key actors).

Furthermore, the initial report should also include an elaboration of evaluation questions, the evaluator's findings to date and, where appropriate, hypotheses relevant to the individual evaluation questions.

Data sources and literature sources (including requirements for the provision of sources by the contracting authority) must not be missing.

Another part is the project management, a detailed division of roles among the members of the evaluation team and their professional profiles.

4.2 Final Report

TIPS FOR THE FINAL REPORT[81]

1. Try to learn as much as possible about "your" readers, the purpose of the report is to communicate with them.

2. Write simply:
   - use a simple language familiar to the readers,
   - use abbreviations and acronyms as little as possible,
   - reduce contextual information to a level that will enable the readers to understand it (more can be added in an appendix),
   - describe the design and methods of evaluation only to the extent that assures the reader of the credibility of the results.

3. Advise readers of limitations in the interpretation of results.

4. Divide the report by evaluation topics or by evaluation questions. In each section, first address the more important issues and facts, then the less important ones.

5. Conclusions and recommendations must be supported with findings.

For the final report, the authors of the Handbook on Project Cycle Management of Development Projects[82] recommend the principle 1:3:25:

- 1 page of contents,
- 3 pages of executive summary,
- 25 pages of the actual report (without attachments).

> **„USE THE PRINCIPLE 1:3:25.“**

The three-page summary should briefly present the main findings in order to facilitate access to the evaluation conclusions for those who do not have time to read the whole report, but the results of the evaluation are important for them (senior management, deputy ministers, directors). It should include key conclusions and recommendations that can provide decision makers with something important. The report itself should then elaborate these conclusions and recommendations and put them into context. A technical report should then be used to describe the methodology and methods and procedures in more detail.

81 MORRA IMAS, Linda G., RIST, Ray C. The Road to results, Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. The World Bank, 2009. ZYKÁN, Tomáš. Available from: www.tomaszykan.cz/simplexity.

82 SVOBODA, Daniel, RUŠAROVÁ, Kristina, CHALOUPKOVÁ, Petra and BANOUT, Jan. Handbook on Project Cycle Management of Development Projects. Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, 2018. Available from: http://www.dww.cz/docs/pcm_handbook_2018.pdf. Or also: https://stephanieevergreen.com/the-1-3-25-reporting-model.

Inspiration: https://stephanieevergreen.com/the-1-3-25-reporting-model/.

We recommend breaking down the final report as follows:

Executive summary	Max. 3 A4 pages The most important findings and conclusions The most important recommendations (set in context, including an indication of their seriousness and urgency) Brief description of the evaluation context and of the evaluated intervention Purpose and objective of the evaluation, brief description of the methodology (if necessary for understanding and validating the conclusions and recommendations)
The report itself	Max. 25 A4 pages Context, purpose, subject of the evaluation and content of evaluation questions - a brief summary of basic information about the evaluation (approx. 1-2 pages) Evaluation methodology in case it is necessary to understand the context of the evaluation (max. 1 page)
The report itself	The analytical part which contains the interpretation of data includes: ▪ findings, ▪ conclusions, ▪ recommendations prioritized according to severity, urgency and relevance, and structured according to evaluation topics, evaluation criteria, logical units or evaluated problems. For each recommendation, it must be clear which findings and conclusions led to it. It is good practice to set a maximum of 10 main recommendations. Other sub-recommendations may be annexed to the report.
Technical report	See page 85.
Annexes	List of interviews and/or focus group discussions (respecting GDPR) Anonymized transcripts of interviews and written records from focus groups (non-public)[83]

83 If there is a concern that anonymization will not be observed, then provide at least a summary.

Checklist before submitting the report[84]

- Does the report read well? Is it understandable? Does the language used correspond to the readers of the report?
- Is the text logically, clearly structured?
- Does the report meet the requirements of the contracting authority?
- Does it contain a description of the steps taken during the evaluation?
- Is the text not overloaded with unimportant or repetitive information? Are some parts of the report unnecessary?
- Are the data carefully anonymized?
- Does the report contain all the information that is important for the reader to be able to understand the evaluation carried out?
- Are the results of the evaluation interpreted appropriately to its subject?
- Are the recommendations clearly supported by correct findings and conclusions?
- Were the findings and conclusions based on triangulation?
- Can the addressee of the report reconstruct the evaluation process and verify the conclusions based on the information contained in the report?

84 Inspiration also at: Stephanie Evergreen – https://stephanieevergreen.com/evaluation-report-layout-checklist.

4.3 Technical report

The technical report should include what did not "fit" in the final report. It should describe the methodology and methods and procedures in more detail. Moreover, it should contain extended answers to evaluation questions and the performed analyses that led to the definition of conclusions.

Technical report	Information on the design and methods of the evaluation - describing the methods of data collection and analysis
	Context, purpose, subject and content of the evaluation questions - extended version
	Performed analyses based on the obtained data - formulas, calculations, charts, etc.
	Conclusions and recommendations
	Description of how the members of the evaluation team were involved in the evaluation process
	A sample of questionnaires and sets of questions, scenarios of interviews or focus groups
	Information on the contractor, the contracting authority and other stakeholders
	List of the literature used
	List of abbreviations and acronyms
	Cheklist of requirements according to the tender specifications

4.4 Executive summary

The executive summary must enable the reader, who cannot devote more time to the evaluation, to understand the main message of the evaluation.

> „
> **BE INSPIRED BY JOURNALISTIC STYLE, START WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT THING - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**
> “

Write the text of the summary in a catching, clear and comprehensible language. Don't assume that the readers will understand everything by themselves. Ideally also use visualization. Put numbers in tables and other types of visualizations for better clarity. Work with captions - expect that some readers will only look through the text briefly. The only thing that will remain in their memory are, as in the newspapers, the headlines. If the text is uniform, they will remember nothing in the end. Avoid general captions. Headlines like "Introduction", "Summary" will have no effect. Conclusions and recommendations should be as specific as possible. A recommendation such as "adjust the methodology" will not help anyone if the methodology has been the subject of the evaluation. Indicate what specifically needs to be adjusted and why.

What should an executive summary look like[85]?

1. CONCLUSION

Don't keep anyone in suspense and summarize the most important things right at the outset. Write the main idea as a headline.

2. CONTEXT

Next, let's introduce the so-called trigger, the essence of the story, i.e. something interesting that appears in the data. If we want to convince someone, we need to present to them objective information, facts and the situation we started from.

3. PROPOSAL

Here, we present the conclusions and recommendations. What do we propose to change, maintain, do? How is it different from the current situation? What does the proposal require? In this part, it is possible to provide solution variants. What are the benefits of the proposal? What will change for the better? What will be simplified?

85 Taken from a training and the website www.tomaszykan.cz/simplexity. For more inspiration see e.g.: Unlearning Our Social Scientist Habits http://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/view/68/71

4. METHODS USED

Outline the methods used and other relevant information very briefly at the end.

Example 1

Example of a not entirely good summary:

1. Manažerské shrnutí

1.1. Definice analytických metod realizace projektu

Při realizaci projektu byly Dodavatelem využity zejména následující metody:

- desk research (jak primárních, tak sekundárních dat);
- individuální hloubkové rozhovory (celkový počet cca 60 s více než 80 stakeholdery);
- fokusní skupina (pro oblast dopravy, počet účastníků 12);
- dotazníkové šetření (pro oblast podpory podnikání, využito spolupráce relevantních subjektů a střešních organizací).

Dodavatel při zpracování jednotlivých zjištění a doporučení vždy použil triangulaci metod nebo zdrojů dat a informace ze sekundárních zdrojů podrobil kritické oponentuře. Předkládaný dokument a závěry v něm uvedené tak představují nezávislý expertní názor autorského týmu.

1.2. Hlavní závěry

Současný stav implementace finančních nástrojů v České republice a celkově v EU je poznamenán značnou roztříštěností. Součet nástrojů na úrovni EU, regionálních aktivit a národních nástrojů (včetně spolufinancovaných z EU) a/nebo poskytovaných privátními subjekty činí zhruba 40 různých FN. Na druhé straně lze jasně identifikovat nedostatečnou propagaci možnosti FN využít. V České republice je také silně zakořeněná dotační závislost příjemců a nechuť využívat alternativní způsoby financování. Zejména v situaci, kdy je administrativní náročnost využití FN téměř totožná s dotačním financováním (alespoň ve vnímání žadatelů), způsobuje výše uvedený souhrn překážek nižší zájem o FN.

Jednoznačným cílem pro příští období tak musí být zjednodušení procesního fungování využití FN, zlepšení a zintenzivnění jejich propagace a zvýšení tlaku na konsolidaci nástrojů a využívání již fungujících namísto vytváření dalších izolovaných FN nebo fondů podporujících stejnou oblast nebo aktivitu. Nové nástroje by měly existující možnosti efektivně doplňovat, ne jim konkurovat. Konkrétním příkladem může být oblast energetických úspor aktuálně rozmělněná mezi 4 operační programy, kde u všech se připravuje nebo implementuje samostatný nástroj.

Zároveň také potřeba vnímat nutnost nastavení finančních nástrojů tak, aby nevytěsňovaly komerční financování, ale naopak přispívaly k aktivizaci dalších zdrojů použitelných k financování projektů/investic.

Na základě analýzy jednotlivých oblastí NKR Dodavatel identifikoval možnost využití FN (včetně podoblastí s limitovaným potenciálem) v celkem 22 případech. Vzhledem k nepříliš vhodnému rozdělení oblastí v NKR (matice věcných oblastí vs. segment podpory podnikání de facto ve všech oblastech) Dodavatel identifikoval vhodné podoblasti/aktivity primárně ve věcných oblastech. Tyto pak doplnil o další v souvislosti s podporou podnikání jako takovou – bez ohledu na sektor. Dle zadání se primárně jedná o návrh kombinací finančních nástrojů a dotací (v jedné nebo dvou operacích). V případech, kdy Dodavatel neidentifikoval nutnost kombinované podpory, navrhuje pouze čistý finanční nástroj. Přehledné shrnutí oblastí s potenciálem pro využití FN představuje následující tabulka.

Oblast NKR	Podoblast	Aktivita
Trh práce a zaměstnanost	**Sociální podnikání**	Podpora stávajících sociálních podniků v další expanzi služeb nebo výroby
Trh práce a zaměstnanost	**Zapojení zaměstnavatelů do odborné a kvalifikační přípravy**	Podpora adaptability a vzdělávání pracovní síly

Example 2

An example of what a summary could look like. This is a revision of the previous summary. The example shows a general form of a summary. The conclusion of the example is not completed because the original (bad example of a) summary missed some significant conclusions from the evaluation.

1 Využití finančních nástrojů v ČR skrývá značný potenciál

MANAŽERSKÉ SHRNUTÍ

1.1 Roztříštěnost nástrojů a nedostatečná propagace brání jejich vyššímu využívání

Nízké využívání finančních nástrojů (FN) v České republice a celkově v EU je poznamenán jejich značnou roztříštěností. Celkově je jich více než 40 a jsou nedostatečně propagovány. V České republice je také silně zakořeněna dotační závislost příjemců a nechuť využívat alternativní způsoby financování.

Jednoznačným cílem pro příští programové období tak musí být:

Zjednodušit procesní fungování FN

V současnosti je v očích zájemců administrativní náročnost při získání FN oproti dotačnímu řízení téměř totožná a odrazuje je tak od vyšší míry využívání.

Konsolidovat a využívat stávajících nástrojů

Případné nové nástroje by měly stávající efektivně doplňovat, nikoli jim konkurovat. Zároveň by neměly vytěsňovat komerční financování, naopak přispívat k aktivizaci dalších zdrojů financování.

Zintenzivnit jejich propagaci

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Etiam egestas wisi a erat...
neboť o tom jak zlepšit propagaci, jsem se v Manažerském shrnutí nedočetl! ☹

4.5 Conclusions and recommendations

Evaluations mainly provide answers to whether funds are managed responsibly and/or suggestions on how to learn from experience. It is important that the conclusions of evaluations can be put into practice. This is done by implementing recommendations from evaluations. Here is an explanation of terms used in connection with evaluation results[86]:

> RECOMMENDATIONS MUST BE SPECIFIC AND FEASIBLE SO THAT EVALUATION CLIENTS CAN MAKE EFFECTIVE DECISIONS ON THEIR BASIS.

FINDINGS

They describe what the evaluation found out. They may indicate the extent to which the individual evaluation criteria have been met. Findings should be supported by verifiable information (evidence) and based on multiple sources.

CONCLUSIONS

They are based on an expert assessment of the findings. They should be related to the individual evaluation criteria or to the sub-goals of the evaluation, or to the individual objectives of the project, programme or policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

They support practical steps, indicate what the evaluators suggest in their report that the client, a key stakeholder, should do.

Recommendations must be:

- sufficiently clear, comprehensible and specific,
- adequately supported by findings and conclusions,
- designed with an understanding of the context,
- operationalized and targeted so that it is clear who should do what and when,
- set so that their implementation can be monitored, measured and evaluated.

86 MORRA IMAS, Linda G., RIST, Ray C. The Road to results, Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. The World Bank, 2009. p. 471.

GOOD PRACTICE IN WORKING WITH RECOMMENDATIONS[87]

Time to prepare recommendations

”
SPECIFY THE RECOMMENDATIONS ONLY IN THE LAST PHASE OF THE EVALUATION.
“

Give yourself enough time to prepare the recommendations. Contractually commit the contractor both to the implementation of the evaluation and to the time period for creating and concretizing the recommendations and tasks. The actual formation of recommendations can take several weeks, even months.

Discussions with relevant partners

”
DISCUSS THE RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE EXTERNAL CONTRACTOR, THE EVALUATION CLIENT AND OTHER RELEVANT PARTNERS.
“

It happens that the evaluator proposes either very general recommendations or recommendations that cannot be implemented for many reasons.

Therefore, in addition to the external evaluator, the recommendations should be discussed with other relevant partners. This procedure is a prerequisite for the recommendations to be put into practice.

It is often not clear who is responsible for defining recommendations and specific tasks. Recommendations and tasks should arise from a mutual interaction between the contractor (who knows the data and information from the field), the evaluation unit and the subject-matter supervisors (who have practical experience with what is and is not usable in practice).

Using interactive forms of discussion

”
TEST THE RECOMMENDATIONS BY DISCUSSING THEM IN WORKSHOPS.
“

The recommendations can be tested at seminars, presentations or workshops where the main results of the evaluations will be presented and consulted. The aim is both to verify the applicability and correct direction of the recommendations and to ensure their consistent interpretation.

87 https://docs.google.com/document/d/19w7yqUX0BJXxtd9ZmrHRpa79najXueC3SJXqXUhDmmw/edit#

Prioritization of recommendations

> PRIORITIZE THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND SET TASKS FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT ONES. LIMIT THE NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

It is ideal if the contracting authority is able to incorporate all the recommendations. However, in practice it is difficult to work with a large number of recommendations[88]. Therefore, it is appropriate to prioritize the recommendations - select only those that are the most relevant, urgent or realistic to implement.

In this respect, it is good to minimize the number of recommendations from an evaluation. Usually, there should be no more than about 6-10 main recommendations.

Timetable

The recommendations should include a timetable (at least indicative) for their implementation[89], or specify the "sequence of steps" to be taken.

BAD PRACTICE IN WORKING WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

Bad practice are recommendations that are either not well linked to the conclusions and analysis in the report as well as those that are difficult to translate into specific tasks because they are too general and not targeted.

Example:

Recommendation: Redefine and in particular specify the roles of each of the existing platforms and of key actors involved in the implementation of the territorial dimension on the basis of experience from the current period. The aim is to reconcile what the individual actors expect from each other and from the existing platforms as such (regional standing conferences, national standing conference).

Explanation: the recommendation is very general and the client does not learn any new information from it. But the client expected the contractor to indicate what needed to be redefined and how to specify the roles.

88 In the 2014-20 programming period, when the evaluation unit carried out a large number of evaluations, it had many recommendations. For example, the NCA EU had around 224 recommendations in the middle of the period, i.e. in 2019.

89 Taken, and adjusted, from the Use of Evaluations in the Norwegian Development Cooperation system, RAND Europe, 2013.

4.6 Visualization of outputs

Visualization is a separate discipline; the use of the right graphic elements can significantly improve the quality of information transmission. There are different types of readers, some remember the graphic design and quick message, some, on the contrary, need to be better and deeper informed and are willing to read longer texts. At the same time, different kinds of information require different forms of presentation in order to be absorbed. Information provided in multiple forms and with the help of visualization will be remembered by the reader more easily.

”
WHAT CAN BE DISPLAYED GRAPHICALLY SHOULD BE VISUALIZED.
“

Visualization needs to be well explained and described, so don't suppose that everyone will understand your chart. There are examples of good practice in visualizing evaluation outputs, here are some basic rules. These rules apply to all graphic elements.

”
YOU NEED TO HAVE A FEEL FOR VISUALIZATION.
“

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Pictures (photographs) are used to document a state of play, to capture the current situation.

2. Charts serve as a simpler display of any data (e.g. the development of a phenomenon over time or the share of a whole).

3. Tables serve as a display of real data (they can almost always be replaced with charts).

4. Maps (layouts) serve as a spatial representation of a phenomenon.

5. Graphic elements should be numbered, properly titled (at least saying what, where, when), and indicate sources. Headings should contain the main message, have the same formatting (size, orientation of images) and be consistent across the document (if I decide to use images / graphs e.g. in shades of blue, I should maintain this throughout the report). It is good to remain self-restrained in graphics (pastel colours do not look professional).

6. Graphic elements should not have boundaries, they should be "dissolved" on the background. If the graphic elements contain any captions inside the picture, they should be sufficiently legible (size, contrast). It is advisable to use highlighting elements (to highlight the place where the reader's attention should be focused).

SIX PRINCIPLES OF GOOD VISUALIZATION[90]

1 Use simple charts that everyone will understand. It is the best way to convey an idea. Complex charts, which only a few experts understand, will not do the job. Different charts emphasize different aspects of the information displayed, visualizations of different complexity work for different purposes. It is your responsibility to display the data in a way that illustrates the conclusion you want to convey to the audience but does not manipulate the data. It is also up to you to choose the type of visualization that is appropriate for your format and audience. For example, simpler charts that can be quickly understood and described are useful for presentations, while for more detailed reports you can choose more complex visuals that the readers can immerse themselves in and build up a picture for themselves.

2 Don't go overboard with colours! Data visualization experts often use only grey and blue, highlighting only what they want to draw readers' attention to. Use colours so that they help to convey information: only as many colours

3 Strip the charts of excess distractions such as borders, lines, excess decimal places, and so on. Describe the data directly in the chart (rather than in a legend) to make it as easy as possible for the reader.

4 Do not use pie charts if you are comparing more than 2-3 numbers and if the accuracy of the comparison is important. They are hard to read - it is very difficult for the reader to estimate the individual slices of the pie. Classic bar charts will do you a much better service.

5 Never use 3D charts. They make it more difficult to read values, they distract and can create a wrong impression and interpretation of data.

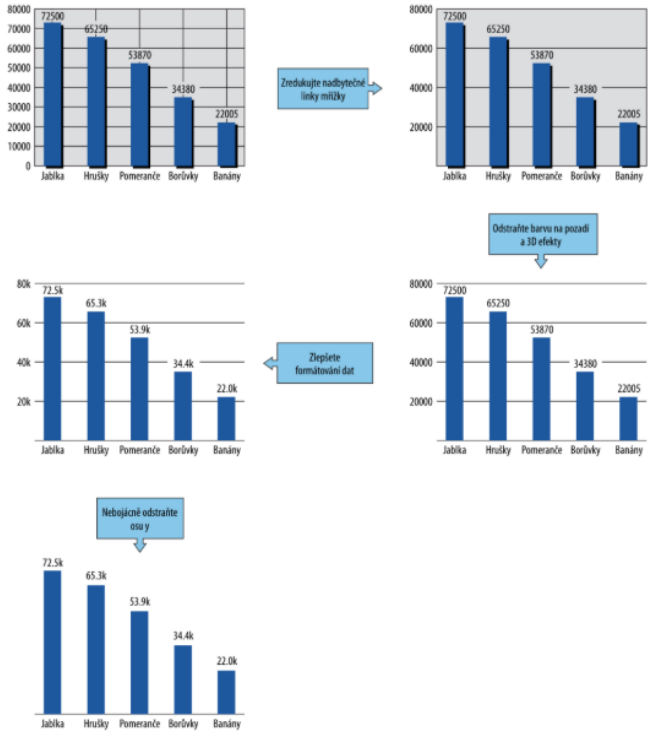
6 Always explain the charts and tables, give them a title as a caption and a comment. Visualizations should speak for themselves, however, never expect the reader to automatically read everything from the chart.

[90] Inspiration also at: Stephanie Evergreen – https://stephanieevergreen.com/updated-data-visualization-checklist/.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD AND BAD PRACTICE[91]

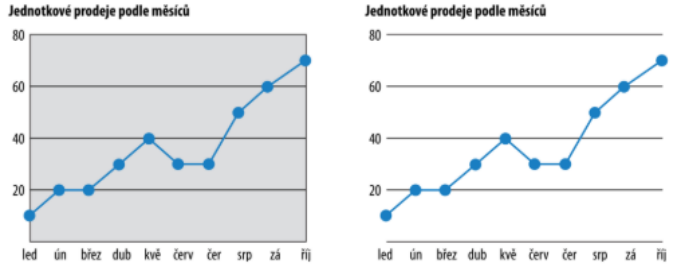
Example 1

Get rid of excess data in charts and increase the data-ink ratio. By excess data in charts we mean decorative elements, three-dimensional effects, etc.

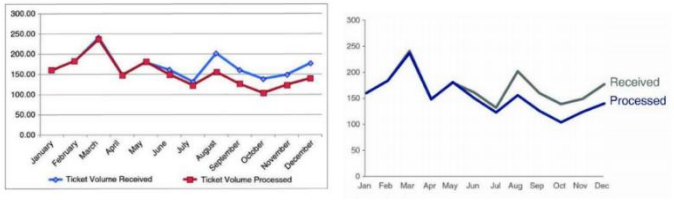


Example 2

Make data visible by means of contrast. If the data with captions are in little contrast to the surrounding elements, readers may overlook the most important data in the chart. A white background and a low-contrast grid can help.



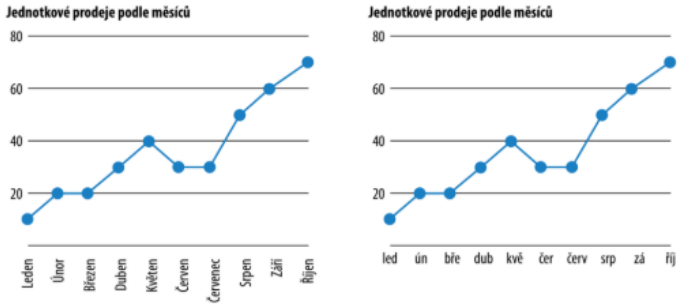
First, take a look at the first chart. Is it comprehensible to you at first glance? Do you know what it wants to tell you?



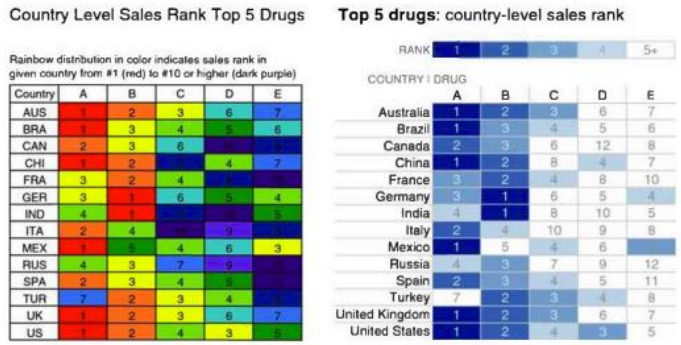
Remove the boundaries, decimal points and horizontal lines (they only divert attention from what the chart is supposed to convey); remove the numbers (there are unnecessarily many of them, if we want to draw attention to numbers, then only, for example, at the output, not everywhere).

91 KNAFLIC, Cole Nussbaumer. Storytelling with data. Wiley, 2015.

Straighten the axis labels so that they are easier to read and one does not have to bend their head to read them, etc.; label the data directly in the chart, not somewhere at the bottom or below the chart so that the reader's eyes do not have to jump up and down.



Ideally, enhance the data development you want to point out with colours. Compare both charts. The first is too colourful, you do not know where to focus, what is essential. In contrast, the second chart suggests that the darker parts deserve your attention. It is obvious at first glance.



Example 3

Do not use pie charts. Why is it not appropriate to use them? Take a look at the two charts. Can you tell the change?

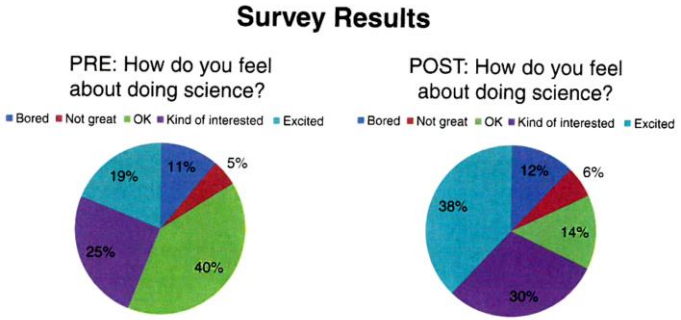
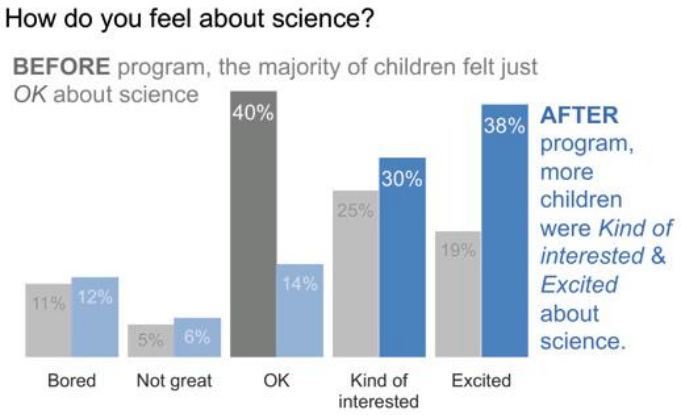


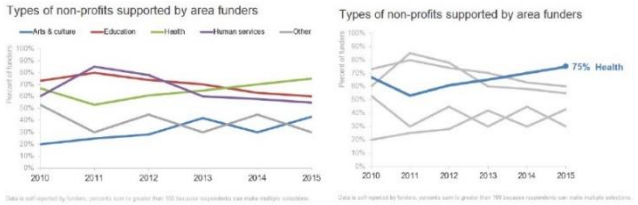
FIGURE 0.4 Example 2 (before): showing data

In fact, a classic bar chart display is clearer.



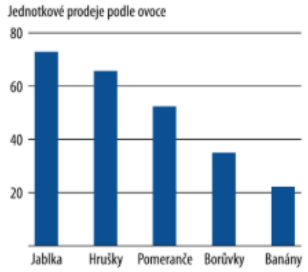
Example 4

Guide the reader to the essentials. In the first chart, the reader does not know what to focus on. There are many stimuli that are difficult to compare. Therefore, it is good to do the interpretation for the reader and focus his attention on the essentials we want to emphasize, here it is the development in the health sector.



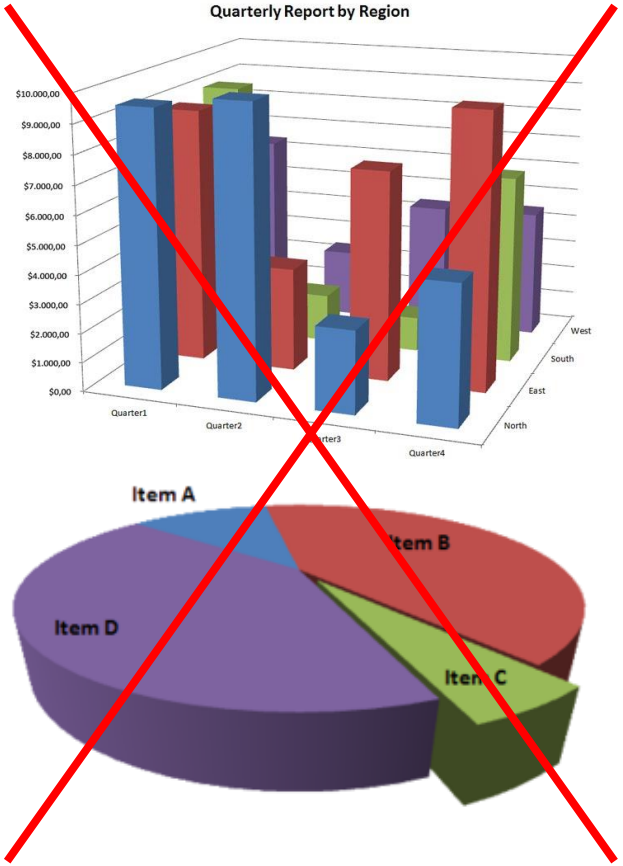
Example 5

Sort the data. If you sort the data in the chart according to the displayed metric, the chart will be clear and understandable. Readers want to see which values are the highest and the lowest. You should not have to rake about the chart and look for basic data in it.



Example 6

Avoid 3D effects. 3D effects are something that was popular in 1999, but they don't add anything to the chart. Do not use 3D charts under any circumstances!



WHERE TO GET INSPIRATION

General inspiration for visualizations:

- The Truthful Art: Data, Charts, and Maps for Communication, Alberto Cairo.
- Visual Learning Center. The resource to help you become a better visual Communicator - https://visme.co/blog/.
- Cole Nussabaumer Knaflic. Storytelling with data; Wiley, 2015. Also blogs and videos: http://www.storytellingwithdata.com/.
- https://serialmentor.com/dataviz/.
- Office for National Statistic, https://style.ons.gov.uk/category/data-visualisation/.
- https://stephanieevergreen.com/qualitative-chart-chooser-3/.

Instructions for working with data are offered in Petr Bouchal's presentation:

- slideshare.net/petrbouchal/vizualizace-dat-2016-ff-uk.

How to design tables - Matthew Ström here:

- medium.com/mission-log/design-better-data-tables-430a30a00d8c#.hfgns1b9x.

Instructions for presenting data - Paul Bolton for the British Parliament:

- researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN05072.

Images for free use: https://pixabay.com/en/.

4.7 Quotes in the report

Each evaluation report must be supported by other relevant literature. There is perhaps no part of human endeavour for which there is no relevant literature. Very often, there are evaluation reports dealing with similar topics or dealing with the same topics elsewhere. Such reports are an important basis for later evaluation activities, and the evaluator should read through them before starting the evaluation itself.

The second relevant source of information for evaluations are professional (academic but also science-popularizing) articles. The third important source are methodologies, manuals, guidelines, regulations, laws and more. All these sources, as well as other literature used in the evaluation, must be properly cited.

Other sources dealing with citation standards:

Kratochvíl, J. How to cite. Masaryk University, 2014. Available from:

- https://kuk.muni.cz/animace/eiz/pdf.php?file=publikacni_etika/citace.pdf.

How to cite. Central Library of the Czech Technical University. Available from:

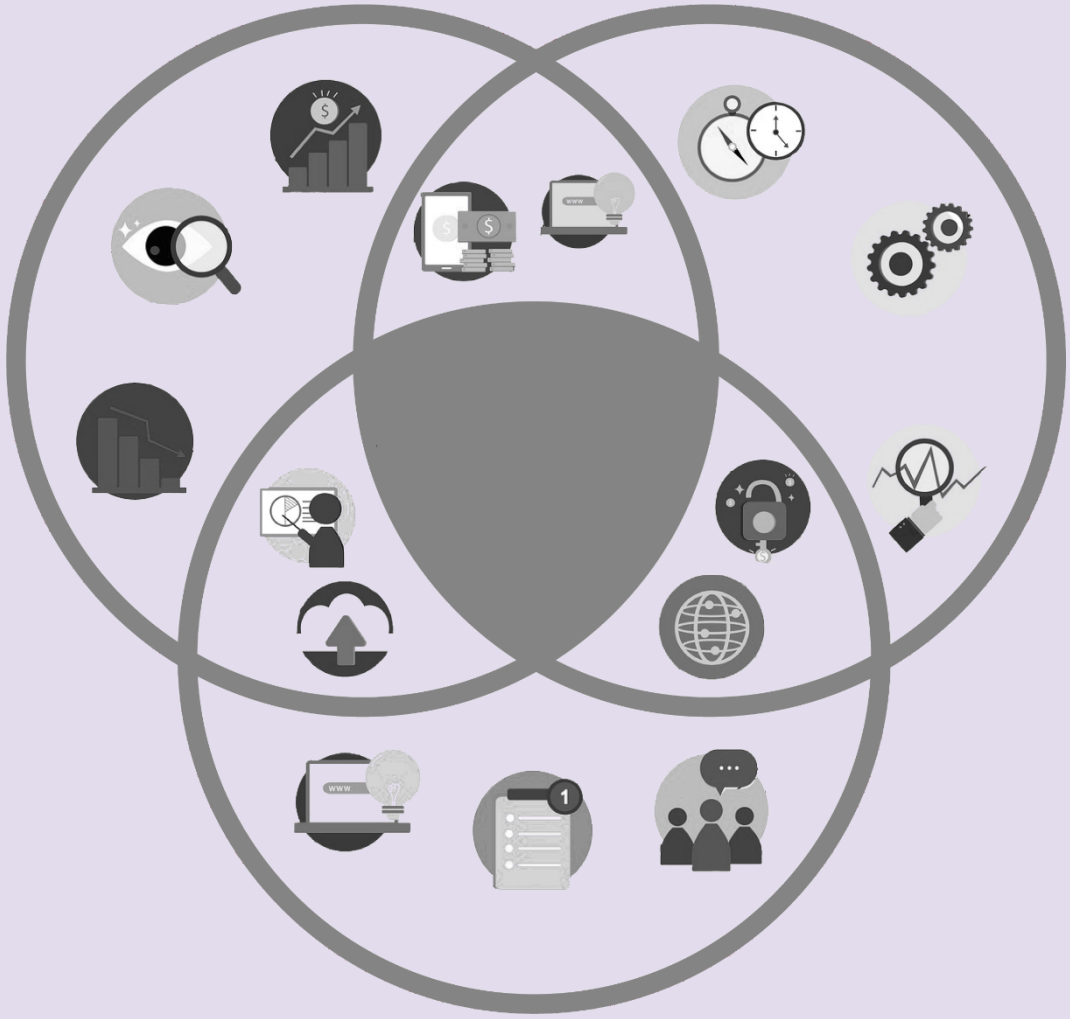
- http://knihovna.cvut.cz/seminare-a-vyuka/jak-psat/jak-citovat.

5

COMMUNICATION OF EVALUATIONS

Perhaps the most important part of evaluations is the last one. You can design and carry out an excellent evaluation, still, it can end up in the drawer without anyone reading it, anyone following its conclusions or recommendations.

In this chapter, we will look at how to communicate evaluation correctly, how to ensure its popularization and how to work with the conclusions and recommendations that arise from it.



5.1 Communication of evaluations

"*Ask the manager how he wants the recommendations to be presented to him. He will answer that simply above all. But, at the same time, he will expect that all relevant detail will be included. He needs to be sure that your recommendation can be relied upon, that you considered alternatives and arguments for and against your solution. And all this in a few pages that are not overloaded with information but intuitively understandable*." [92]

> "
> WE ALL LONG FOR SIMPLICITY.
> "

A clear idea stands out at first glance. It is intuitively understandable, straightforward and elegant. But serious messages are seldom that simple. If you are presenting complex outputs, it is no wonder that you are afraid of simplification and hasty conclusions[93].

WRITE SIMPLY[94]

1. Use a simple language familiar to readers.
2. Use abbreviations and acronyms as little as possible.
3. Reduce contextual information to a level that will enable the readers to understand it (more can be added in an appendix).

> "
> SIMPLICITY AND COMPLEXITY ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE.
> "

92 ZYKÁN, Tomáš. Available from: https://www.tomaszykan.cz/simplexity/#simplexity.

93 ZYKÁN, Tomáš. Available from: https://www.tomaszykan.cz/simplexity/#simplexity.

94 MORRA IMAS, Linda G., RIST, Ray C. The Road to results, Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. The World Bank, 2009.

FIVE STEPS TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

1 THINK AS THE AUDIENCE

Imagine those you present the outputs to. The biggest mistake happens right at the beginning. You often communicate what is important to you, not what interests your audience.

2 STATE THE MAIN IDEA

Describe what your recommendation is and communicate it so that you get attention, the reader believes you, and is able to identify with your message.

3

CREATE a coherent and gripping **STORY** that will guide the reader step by step to your conclusions and recommendations.

4 MAKE OUTPUTS SIMPLE AND ENGAGING

Shape the ideas into a simple and readable form. Support the outputs with visualisations. Use captions and write the main findings in a comprehensible and simple language. The conclusions must be understandable at first sight.

5 MAKE THE READING EASIER FOR THE CLIENT

Readers of evaluation outputs are mainly stakeholders or managers or members of monitoring committees. All of these readers have limited time to read documents, so make it as easy as possible for them to reach the most important things.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Communicate mandatory outputs and add other features. Mandatory outputs from evaluation activities are:

Evaluation plan and its evaluation

Although its content and format are laid down in a methodology[95], it is possible to use and add any suitable communication tools.

Final report and executive summary

The content and form of the executive summary and of the final report are detailed in Chap. 4. Executive summaries and final reports are communicated mainly to their stakeholders, evaluation platforms and other evaluation units. Their key parts - the main findings, conclusions and the most important and relevant recommendations make up the content of the evaluation of the evaluation plan.

Working group, monitoring committee

Working groups or other platforms are an important means of communication. They should be interactive and as informal as possible. It is important to encourage lively discussion and knowledge sharing. They should inspire stakeholders/partners to demand further findings. Working groups or other platforms are also important for disseminating evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Other recommended communication tools include:

Summary of evaluations

Write it so that it can form a separate document. Indicate which evaluations were carried out during the period, with what findings, conclusions and recommendations. The reader should have a sufficient idea of the evaluated intervention, the context and purpose of the evaluation so that he understands the key findings, conclusions and recommendations and their relationship to the evaluated intervention.

Presentations, workshops, sharing the evaluation story

It is good practice to disseminate findings, conclusions and recommendations from evaluations through a public presentation. The more interactive the form is, the better. Rather than using a presentation, tell the "evaluation story" that listeners will remember and think about. The aim is to provoke discussion, questions. This will facilitate a real change, rather than the "formalistic" monitoring of conclusions and recommendations[96].

Leaflets, visual summaries, onepagers

The aim is to summarize briefly and clearly the main findings and the most interesting information from the evaluation. In the case of external evaluation, it is possible to request the delivery of presentable visuals from the external evaluator (but this requirement must already be in the tender specifications); in the case of internal evaluation, it is up to the capacity and capability of the evaluators to transmit the message the best possible way (visually, graphically)[97].

95 The content of the evaluation plan and its evaluation is defined in a methodological guideline and described in more detail in Chap. 1.2 and 1.1 hereof.

96 Inspiration at: https://russelldavies.typepad.com/planning/2015/11/doing-presentations.html.

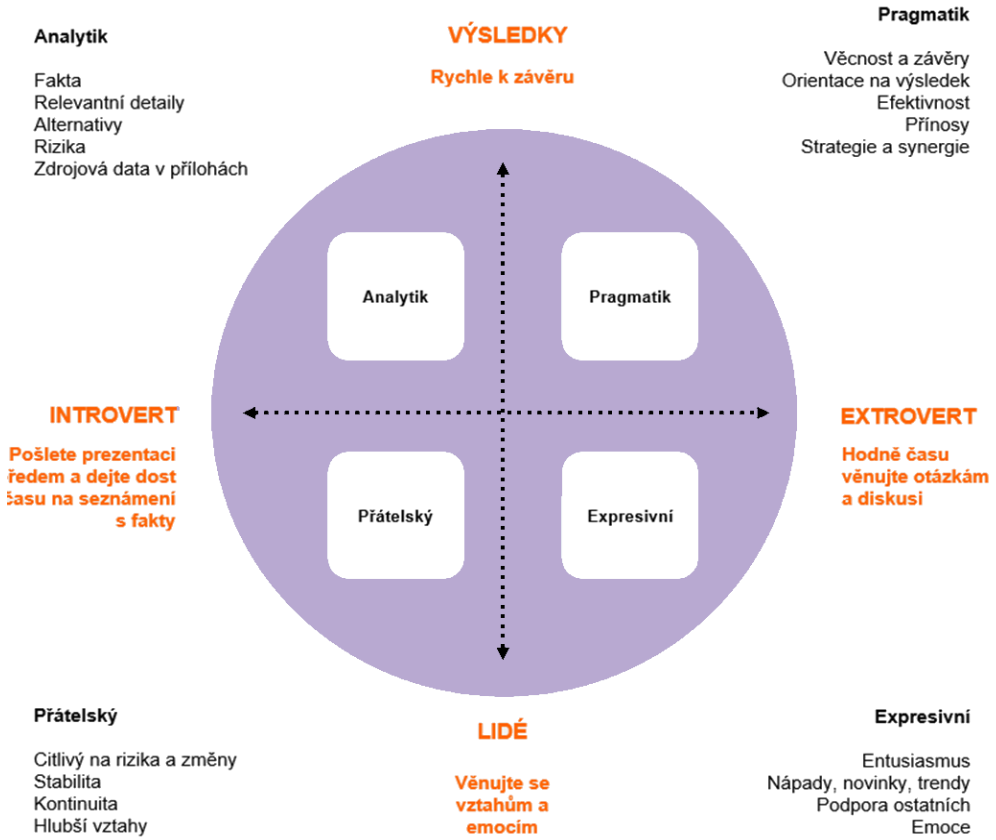
97 Inspiration at: https://communitysolutions.ca/web/evaluation-reporting-guide.

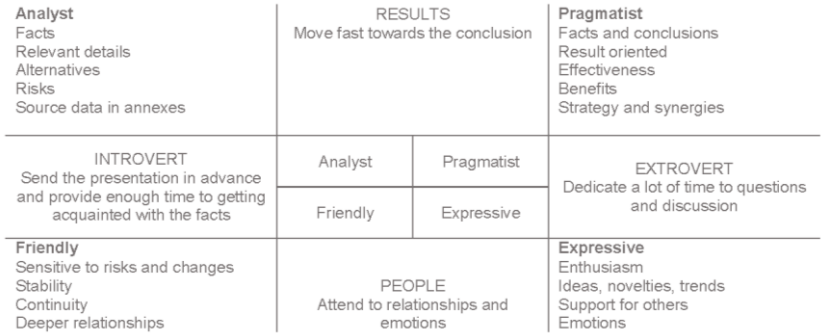
OUR AUDIENCE[98]

Try to learn as much as possible about the readers, the purpose of the document is to communicate with them.

The most common presentation mistake is not sizing up our audience well. The following diagram will help you quickly identify the communication style that is right for your audience.

Start by identifying a key person in the audience. It is usually the one who decides or the one whose thinking you need to change the most. Think about the communication style the person inclines to and then adjust the presentation or output to suit the person as much as possible.





98 ZYKÁN, Tomáš. Available from: https://www.tomaszykan.cz/simplexity/#simplexity.

STORYTELLING[99]

It is the return to and rediscovery of a deep-rooted tradition of telling stories. It is the most natural human activity as well as art.

According to cultural theories, people try to understand the world around them through stories, and the interest in storytelling and listening is the same across cultures. The most popular motifs include adventure. But the story alone is not enough. You must be able to draw people into it and take them through up to the end. For example, The New York Times use the formula: the basic element - the problem - the result, where the starting entity faces a problem that is finally solved, ideally with the help of a specific product or service.

Be brief

Do you know what the vast majority of users will do when they come across an article? They speed through it to see how long it is. In today's constant time pressure, everyone is anxiously considering how to invest their free time. When they encounter an endless story, they run away before they reach the end.

Be visual

Every text needs to be animated. An article is much more catching when it offers visual motifs and not just a sea of text. The more dynamic the content, the better. The basis is, of course, pictures, a step higher are charts. But be careful. Too much of a good thing can harm your endeavour.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE NEGATIVE FINDINGS

Communication of evaluations gets difficult especially when communicating negative feedback, negative evaluation results: the thing that does not work, is not well set or does not bring the results it should. Here is an inspiration on how to communicate negative findings effectively:

Explain why the report is interesting

First, explain why the information is interesting to the readers or listeners. What it can bring to them - will it make their processes more efficient? Will the administrative burden be reduced?

Start with the positives

Don't start with problems but first try to summarize, describe what works, what has been successful and what is being done well. Only then move on to things that failed, and it would be appropriate to change them. But propose a solution at the same time.

Instead of negatives, look for room for improvement

Only after you have given positive news should you ask the audience if they think there is room for improvement. And that you offer some inspiration. It is worth considering whether to construct the communication as presenting room for improvement rather than things that are wrong and negative. This can reduce the natural tendency of listeners, often those responsible for the subject being evaluated, to resist feedback.

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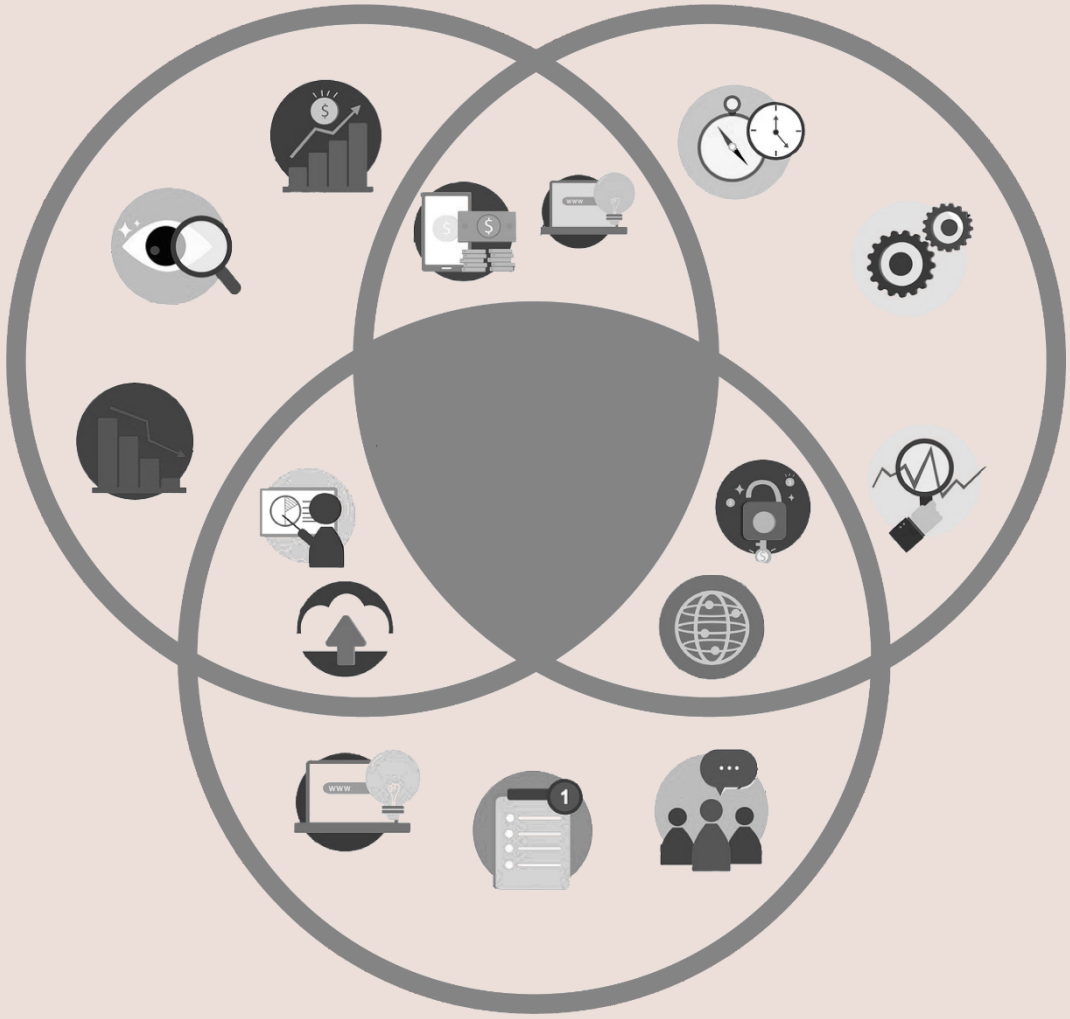
[99] ZYKÁN, Tomáš. Available from: https://www.tomaszykan.cz/simplexity/#simplexity.

6

DATA

Data are essential for evaluations. Problems related to data, or their (non)availability, can render the evaluation impossible, make it very complicated (both on the part of the contracting authority and the contractor), or prolong it. An extreme case may be that the lack of data makes the intervention impossible to evaluate.

Consistent planning concerning data contributes significantly to the quality of evaluation work. In addition to the correctly chosen method, the success of the evaluation is highly dependent on the availability and quality of the data provided.



6.1 Data

Data sources for planned evaluations should be addressed during the drafting of the evaluation plan so that the collection of the necessary data can be ensured in time through monitoring or from other sources. An essential task is also to determine the baseline values of the variables so that their change can be assessed in the future.

> "THE CORNERSTONE IS DATA FROM TRUSTED AND QUALITY SOURCES."

1. PRIMARY DATA

The source of primary data are individuals, households, companies, etc. Information is obtained in the field (questionnaires, interviews, etc.). This is information gathered for the needs of a specific evaluation. It is appropriate to use a representative sample according to statistical rules so that the conclusions of the (quantitative) research can be generalized.

2. SECONDARY DATA

These are already existing data, e.g. from the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), Eurostat, the monitoring system or already completed surveys or evaluations.

SOURCES OF SECONDARY DATA

Data from monitoring the implementation of European funds:

- Monitoring system (MSC2007 for the programming period 2007–2013, MS2014+ for the programming period 2014–2020) - it contains data collected for monitoring, management, evaluation and reporting on the implementation of European funds
  - The project and its characteristics - title, description, status
  - The applicant / beneficiary and its characteristics - applicant's registered office, economic form
  - Financial indicators - grant applications, grant award decisions / contracts, payment requests, certification
  - Indicators - baseline, achieved and target values
  - Calls - description of the call, eligible applicants, territory
- The ESF 2014+ Information System (IS ESF 2014+) is used by representatives of beneficiaries to register supported persons and calculate indicators for the needs of project implementation reports.

Data from previous evaluation surveys

Data collected in previous surveys are a neglected source of data. Their disadvantage is the possible outdatedness and therefore incompleteness for subsequent uses. Their "ownership" is also a limitation, and even here the processor has a reasonable obligation to inform the data subject about the secondary processing of data for other evaluation purposes.

Administrative data

They are collected by ministries, state, regional or local administrations, schools, hospitals, banks and insurance companies, energy market operators, retail chains, etc. The data are obtained in the form of reports, notifications, questionnaires, records, various forms of submission or return or as an output of administrative proceedings (e.g. tax returns, waste reports). Administrative data are collected on the basis of a legislative obligation or on the basis of specific needs of institutions. There are more than a hundred sources of administrative data in the Czech Republic[100].

The availability of administrative data is significantly reduced by legal restrictions (e.g. GDPR), as well as the form in which the data are provided. They are often in paper or pdf form, which prevents their further processing (e.g. annual reports of business entities are available but do not support their mass data processing).

The use of administrative data as secondary data is regulated by the Act on the State Statistical Service. The Act directly defines which data originating from administrative data may be requested for further processing. The sharing of administrative data, which the CZSO performs to a large extent for its statistical purposes, enables their multiple use and reduction of the administrative burden both on the part of those who need the data and on the part of respondents, together with considerable financial savings of the state as well as respondents. For the purposes of evaluations, administrative data are not freely accessible for many of the reasons mentioned above.

Statistical data

These are data obtained through the state statistical service. It is an activity that includes the acquisition of data, the creation of statistical information on the social, economic, demographic and environmental development of the Czech Republic. In the Czech Republic, the authority to perform the state statistical service[101] is held, in addition to the CZSO which has a coordinating role, by 11 ministries (Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of the Interior), the Czech Telecommunications Office and the State Reserves Bureau.

The CZSO conducts statistical surveys of two types:

- with the reporting obligation, i.e. those that are contained in the Statistical Surveys Programme which is approved in the form of a decree. The obligation to provide the required data therefore follows from the law,
- without a reporting obligation, where the respondent may refuse to participate in the survey.

CZSO data can provide a good contextual framework for evaluations because they are constructed with regard to:

- comparability over time, in territory, international comparability (for selected indicators),
- long-term time series (to detect development),

100 TRENDOVÁ, Pavla. No statistical report can do without metadata. Statistika a my, 10/2017 (a monthly of CZSO). Available from: http://www.statistikaamy.cz/2017/10/bez-metadat-se-neobejde-zadny-statisticky-vykaz/.

101 The State Statistical Service is an activity that includes the extraction of data, the creation of statistical information on the social, economic, demographic and environmental development of the Czech Republic and its parts, the provision of statistical information and its publication.

- clear methodology, i.e. the explanatory power of numbers can be derived.

For the purposes of statistical surveys, the CZSO uses, for example, the following administrative data:

- the annual income tax return, including annexes,
- the value added tax return,
- payroll sheets of employees.

For the census of population, houses and flats in 2021, the CZSO will use, in addition to data from public administration information systems (basic population register, IS of civil registration, IS of foreigners and real estate cadastre), e.g. the following sources of administrative data:

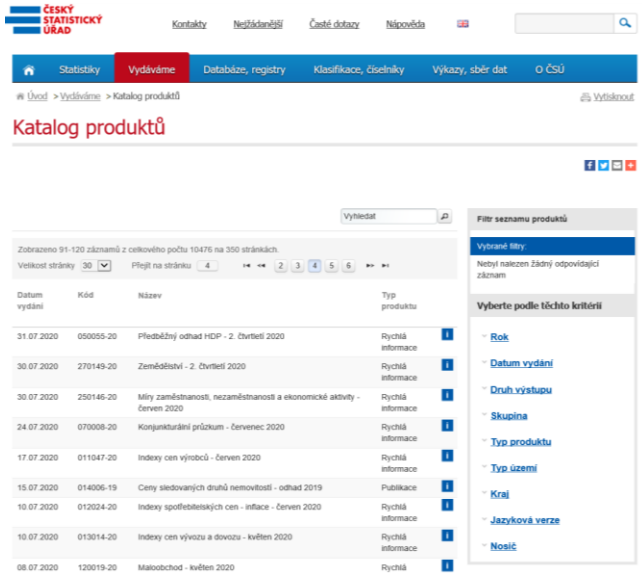
- single information system of labour and social affairs (maintained by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs),
- combined data on pupils and students of all types of schools and data from the register of schools and educational establishments (maintained by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports),
- integrated information system of the Czech Social Security Administration (CSSA) maintained by CSSA,
- automated tax information system (maintained by the General Finance Directorate)
- Central Register of Insured Persons (maintained by the General Health Insurance Company).

The CZSO provides the following information, consulting and advisory services:

- preparation and processing of information according to individual requirements on the basis of written requests, or concluded contracts on the provision of data,
- consultations on data availability,
- selections from databases of individual statistics, from regional databases, censuses and other surveys carried out,
- microdata - for scientific purposes only,
- operation of the so-called SafeCentre for academic needs, as defined in the Act on the State Statistical Service, which enables the transmission of confidential statistical data (not allowing direct identification of the reporting unit) for the purposes of scientific research. These services are not available for evaluations that are not understood by the CZSO as research activities (i.e. they are not performed strictly for scientific purposes).

All information on the CZSO website is available free of charge. The CZSO will provide already created and processed statistical information on media other than the Internet (printed publications, CDs) to anyone upon request. The price for these products is set in advance and is listed in the Product Catalogue. Data that the CZSO processes according to individual customer requirements are also provided for a fee. For these purposes, the CZSO has published a Price List which contains the price range of the services provided.

The CZSO also provides online services from the so-called Product Catalogue at the link: https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/katalog-produktu. The required output can be ordered via e-forms.



Many producers of European and world statistics (EUROSTAT[102], OECD[103] etc.) provide statistical data freely on the Internet.

Basic and other registers

An overview of state administration registers can be found at:

- https://www.statnisprava.cz/rstsp/redakce.nsf/i/rejstriky.

Microdata

The term microdata means any individual data relating to an individual legal or natural person[104]. According to Eurostat's definition, microdata are a set of records containing information on individual persons, households or legal entities. Microdata are used in official statistics to create aggregated information. According to Act No 89/1995 Coll., on the State Statistical Service, access to confidential information is restricted in order to protect the anonymity of individual persons or legal units. Even researchers who can use the so-called Safecentre for scientific purposes under the same Act do not have access to microdata enabling direct identification of an individual legal or natural person. The CZSO seeks to prevent indirect identification as much as possible using appropriate methods.

Big Data

A source of data with huge potential is the so-called Big Data. These are created through the use of modern communication and information technologies, social networks and the internet. User interactions with information and communication technology (mobile phones, ATMs, wi-fi networks, camera systems, reservation and ordering systems, roaming) can be used, for example, for analyses of tourism, attendance of cultural events, monuments or visits to cities. The so-called web-scraping (i.e. automatic acquisition and processing of information from websites) can be used to analyse, for example, the offer of job opportunities in the labour market.

102 EUROSTAT, Statistical Office of the European Union, available here: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/purchasing-power-parities/data/main-tables.

103 OECD, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, available here: https://stats.oecd.org/.

104 The term individual data is defined by Act No. 89/1995 Coll., on the State Statistical Service, as amended.

Open data

According to Section 3, Paragraph 11 of Act No 106/1999 Coll., on free access to information, open data are "… information published in a manner enabling remote access in an open and machine-readable format, which can be used in any manner or for any purpose and which is registered in the national catalogue of open data." Open data are a highly effective way of publishing public sector information. As of 9 January 2020, the National Catalogue of Open Data could be searched for 134,804 data sets from 39 providers at the address https://data.gov.cz/. Open data are mainly used to improve services for citizens. They can also (to a limited extent) be used for analytical and statistical purposes.

Very valuable data sets include:

- the register of territorial identification, containing geographical data on the territory (borders, location) up to the level of buildings,
- treasury monitor, containing budgetary and accounting data of the state, state organizations and municipalities,
- data500 and Data50, containing geographic (GIS) data on natural features and infrastructure.

Open data are also provided by the CZSO. They are listed in the CZSO product catalogue. These are data published elsewhere, but the format of open data is more suitable for analyses in Excel or statistical programmes.

Open data are also published by the European Union on its portal of publicly accessible data here: http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/home. European data published by the EU on cohesion policy can be found here https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu.

Annual and other reports

They are a good public source of information, especially about companies. Their great disadvantage is the impossibility of their mass processing due to their non-database format. The monitoring system monitors selected data on companies directly in project (grant) applications and subsequently in submitted reports (so-called company variables).

Purchase of private data and services

There are a number of companies in the Czech Republic, which do business in data. For example, the Czech Statistical Office uses data supplied by the company BisNode on the basis of a tender. Cooperation with data companies can save the state administration at least considerable human resources, i.e. its own capacities that would have to be allocated for specialized collection of data in the long term.

6.2 Data anonymization[105]

Primary data mainly contain data that can enable the identification of respondents. Such data should only be handled with informed consent of the respondents to the processing of personal data, and measures must be taken to protect personal data against misuse.

Published evaluation outputs must contain only anonymized data (unless the corresponding informed consent of the respondents has been obtained).

A database is not anonymous if it allows identification of the natural persons to whom the data in the database relate on the basis of direct or even indirect identifiers.

- Direct identifiers are, for example, names, personal identification numbers (national IDs), addresses, telephone numbers, photographs of respondents, etc.
- Indirect identifiers make it possible to identify a person by linking other known information, such as information on employment, location of residence, location of employment, etc. or by using an exceptional value of some characteristics. Indirect identification can also result from a combination of multiple characteristics.

BASIC METHODS OF DATA ANONYMIZATION

1. Removal of direct identifiers. In some cases, it is possible to replace them with anonymous codes.

2. Removing or replacing links to other available non-anonymous databases or information.

3. Aggregating the data or reducing the details of a characteristic. Some data can be grouped into categories that refer to broader groups of subjects without losing informative value, e.g. instead of the full date of birth indicate only the year.

   Attention should be paid, for example, to geographical identifications, as the designation of smaller settlements often leads, in combination with other characteristics, to the identification of persons.

4. Treating the extreme values of characteristics. The risk of identifying individuals on the basis of atypical, exceptional values can often be eliminated by introducing lower and upper limits on the range of the characteristics.

105 Prepared according to “Data management during a research project”, available from: http://archiv.soc.cas.cz/management-dat-v-prubehu-vyzkumneho-projektu.

6.3 GDPR

A great challenge for working with data is posed by the GDPR, i.e. the General Data Protection Regulation[106]). Many issues remain unclear in this area, nevertheless, here is some current experience. The GDPR area needs to be addressed at two levels.

EXTERNAL RULES FOR WORKING WITH PERSONAL DATA

This means ensuring compliance with GDPR and work with data when awarding a public contract. The procedure must be described in the contract with the contractor[107]. Data are transmitted on encrypted data carriers with a sufficiently strong password. At the end of the contract, it is necessary to verify with the contractor that personal data have been removed.

INTERNAL RULES FOR WORKING WITH PERSONAL DATA

It is an internal procedure for working with data. The NCA evaluation unit has established an internal procedure which has been agreed with internal lawyers and the GDPR Officer at the Ministry of Regional Development (MoRD)[108]. Of course, it may not cover all cases of other evaluation units[109].

- Justify working with data. Unless there is a legislative or legal justification, the situation is much more complicated because the informed consent of the respondent is required.
- Define the data that the evaluation unit works with.
- Define who has access to the data and how the data are secured.
- Define standardized procedures for working with personal data:
  - Standards of internal work with personal data,
  - Standards for the transfer of personal data to third parties.
- Remove the data.
- Other specificities deserving to be covered (e.g. the Survey Monkey platform stores data in the USA, which can be problematic).

106 More information on GDPR can be found on the website of the Office for Personal Data Protection. Available from: https://www.uoou.cz/gdpr/ds-3938/p1=3938/.

107 Example of the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT): It is treated in the contract with the contractor. The passage relating to the GDPR was consulted in detail with the MIT Data Protection Officer.

108 The procedure of the NCA Evaluation Unit can be provided upon request.

109 Example of MIT: Internal rules for working with personal data are set at the level of the entire Ministry. Each employee underwent training on handling personal data (+ additional external training of the evaluation unit members). The evaluation unit has no special regulation.

6.4 Data cleaning

Data cleaning means finding and eliminating errors and inconsistencies in the data set so that incomplete, inaccurate or irrelevant data do not affect the conclusions of evaluations.

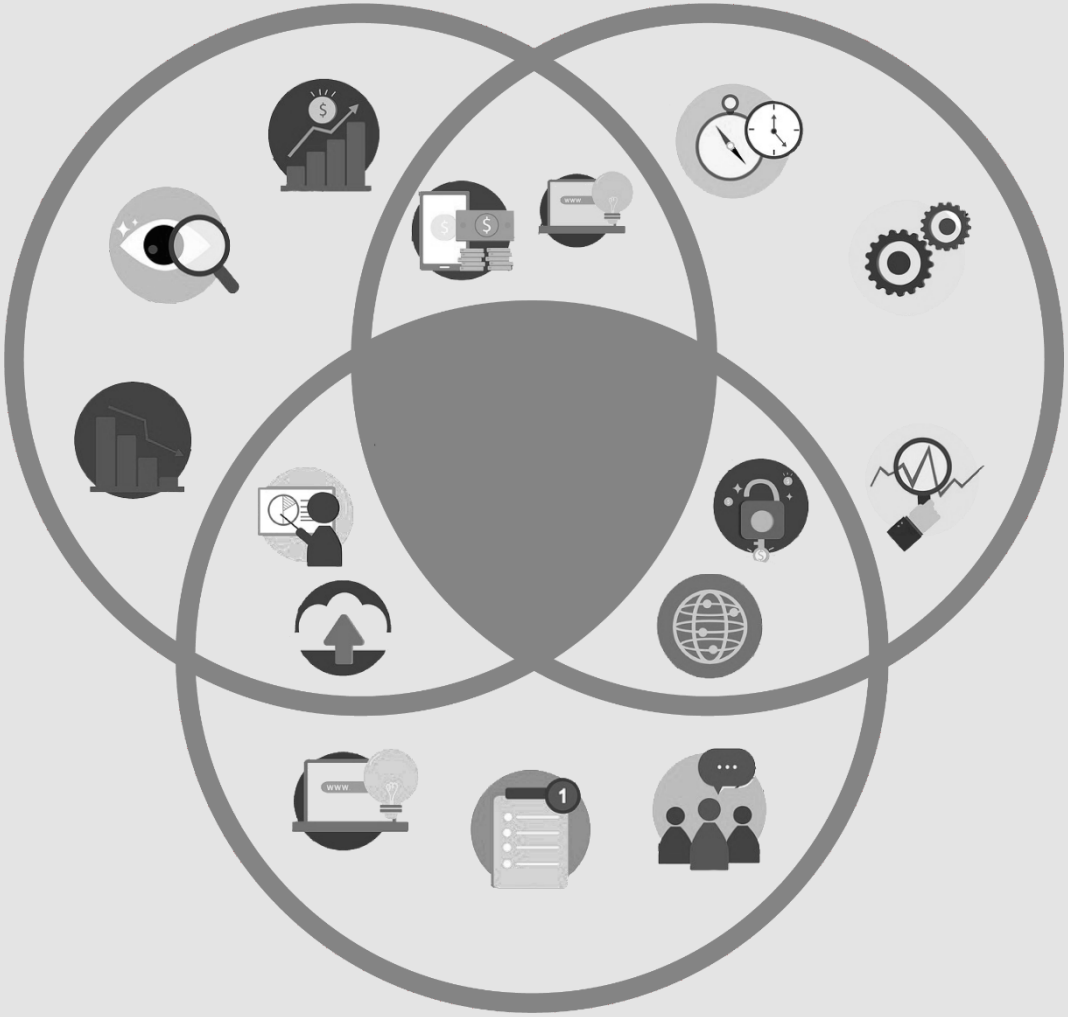
1. Back up your data before cleaning.

2. Make a list of all variables including description, and their encoding scheme.

3. Decide which variables are key to the evaluation and must have their values complete.

4. Pay attention to extreme values - they can affect statistical calculations.

5. Consistently approach missing or incorrect values (remove or correct them if they are known).



7

SOME THEORY IN CONCLUSION

This chapter offers a theoretical basis. The reader should learn what evaluation is, what types of evaluation there are, and understand what its boundaries are and what lies beyond them.

The programming period can be divided into several phases. In terms of evaluations, the preparation of the new period is characterized by ex-ante evaluation, or the use of result and impact evaluations from previous periods. In the initial phase of the programming period, the focus is on process evaluations. Result or impact evaluations can be carried out only from the middle of the period on. However, impact evaluations require a time lag after the end of the intervention for the impact to materialize.

7.1 Definition of basic terms

”
EVALUATION IS A SOURCE OF EVIDENCE.
“

EVALUATION

It is one of the ways to support a decision-making process with concrete knowledge. It is an integral part of a set of programmes, projects or measures that seek change. It is a systematic activity that helps in decision making. Evaluation seeks to:

- bring useful ideas for improving interventions,
- eliminate or minimize implementation failures,
- increase the effectiveness of the interventions carried out.

Evaluation is frequently confused with other activities that often use similar language, similar methods. In many cases they achieve similar results. But there is a big difference. The definition of evaluations differs in the literature and in the specific practice of national and international organizations (OECD, European Commission) and societies (CES, EES). For the needs of the Guide, we drew the definitions of evaluation, monitoring and audit from the publication by Hendl, Remr (2017)[110].

Evaluation is a process based on thorough collection of primary and secondary data and their professional evaluation with the aim of obtaining a reliable basis for strategic management.

Evaluation means the processing of information obtained from monitoring and outside it, the interpretation of information and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations to improve implementation. Evaluation requires prior monitoring, definition of a clear purpose of the evaluation and relevant settings for providing feedback. Evaluation contributes to economical management of public funding. Evaluations in the area of EU funds evaluate aspects such as strategic, policy, programme and project settings, their intervention logic, implementation and its effects and many other things.

Since the 2014–2020 programming period, evaluations have been an integral part of the implementation of operational programmes on the basis of the so-called general (common provisions) regulations of the European Commission. They are carried out on the basis of evaluation plans usually drawn up by the managing authorities, but they have a number of mandatory features. These include the evaluation of programmes according to 3E criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, economy), relevance, coherence and EU added value. As they are mandatory, these criteria are defined in the methodological guideline for evaluations 2021+. The features also include the mandatory aspect of evaluating the impact of the implemented programmes as of a specific date set in the common provisions regulation.

110 HENDL, Jan, REMR, Jiří. Research and evaluation methods. Portal, 2017.

MONITORING

It is one of the conditions for conducting quality evaluations, it represents one of the key sources of information and data. Therefore, monitoring means setting up a system for collecting data and information, and the actual gathering and collecting of data and information. In order to set the monitoring adequately, it is necessary to have a link to objectives and measurable indicators and to create an appropriate system of monitoring and continuous recording of the monitored data and information[111].

Monitoring is a continuous activity. It uses mostly quantitative methods, it gathers data. It does not identify causal links. It works with predetermined goals, it does not work with changes that the intervention brought about in the target group. Thus, it cannot in itself provide the information that evaluation brings - that is, an explanation of why a given intervention works or not, how and for whom.

Basic characteristics of monitoring and evaluation[112]

Monitoring (M)	Evaluation (E)
M is continuous or periodic.	E is performed periodically, at a certain time, or ad-hoc.
M uses quantitative methods.	E uses both quantitative and qualitative methods.
M does not identify causal links.	E also explores causal relationships, it conducts research in broader linkages.
M works with predetermined targets, planned values and collects data on progress against them.	E also assesses the validity, realism, achievability and relevance of the predetermined targets and indicators.
M assesses the course of the intervention on the basis of established physical and financial indicators.	E uses M as one of the sources of data and information with which it works and draws conclusions and recommendations from them.
M monitors the progress against financial indicators, physical M monitors the achievement against physical indicators.	E also uses other sources of data and information (statistics, own surveys).
M continuously monitors the achievement of financial and physical indicators which are set, and prepares regular reports on implementation.	E evaluates the implementation system and, if necessary, proposes solutions to problems and removal of obstacles, evaluates progress towards objectives of interventions, priorities and programmes, even in relation to a wider environment, identifies reasons for (non)achievement of objectives.
M focuses on planned results and milestones.	E identifies the planned and unplanned effects of the intervention, in a broader context.

111 Methodological Guideline for Evaluations in the Programming Period 2014–2020 Version: 4. MoRD, March 2016. Available from:https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/fondy-eu/2014-2020/metodicke-pokyny/metodika-evaluaci.

112 Methodological Guideline for Evaluations in the Programming Period 2014–2020. Version: 4. MoRD, March 2016. Available from:https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/fondy-eu/2014-2020/metodicke-pokyny/metodika-evaluaci.

AUDIT

It is also an integral part of the system of European funds. Moreover, audit begins to adopt some methods typically associated with evaluations or similar terminology. A close similarity between audit and evaluation can be found in issues of the so-called normative nature.

Audit focuses on the organization and its functioning. Its purpose is assurance and consulting. The common goal is to ensure the economy and efficiency of the funds spent. Common characteristics: analytical and systematic approach, emphasis on objectivity, independence and added value, with a view to providing information to the management for informed decisions. Audit and the need for it is anchored in the law for various organizations (public, financial sector).[113]

113 KAČENA, Lukáš. Presentation: Evaluation vs Internal Audit. Available from: https://czecheval.cz/přílohy/lkacena_evaluace_vs_interni_audit_ces.pdf.

7.2 Types of evaluation

In the previous section, we explained what evaluations are and their borderlines and extension to other important components of the implementation of EU funds. Below we will focus on the typology of evaluations according to various criteria.[114]

IN TERMS OF THE PURPOSE

Formative evaluation

It is carried out in the initial stages of programme planning or during its implementation. It aims to improve the implementation of the programme. Typical questions of formative evaluation are: What works? What needs to be improved? How can improvement be achieved?

Summative evaluation

It is carried out after or at the end of the implementation of the programme or its part in order to evaluate whether the set outputs and objectives have been achieved and to assess the benefit of the programme for the defined target groups. Typical questions of summative evaluation are: What are the results? Under what conditions were the results achieved? At what costs?

Evaluation can also be a combination of both, it can be summative for an already completed part of the programme and, at the same time, formative for implementation in the future.

IN TERMS OF THE EVALUATOR

Internal evaluation

It is performed by the employees of the organizational structure. The advantage is a detailed knowledge of the environment, goals and mission of the programme, a shorter process as it does not require preparation and implementation of a public contract, and more effective communication of the results (i.e. their better use).

External evaluation

It is carried out by evaluators who are outside the structure of the contracting organization. External evaluation is performed on the basis of a tendering procedure. The advantage of this type is an independent expert view (sometimes these evaluations are referred to as independent) and the use of capacity that the organization does not have internally. External evaluations usually better reflect industry standards. On the contrary, the disadvantage is the extensive time required for the preparation and implementation of the public contract and the possible lack of knowledge of the programme implementation context on the part of external evaluators.

Mixed evaluation

It is performed both by the employees of the given organizational structure and, partly, by external evaluators who mostly act as methodological supervisors. This creates a combination of the positive factors of both variants and develops methodological knowledge of the internal evaluation unit.

114 Methodological Guideline for Evaluations in the Programming Period 2014–2020 Version: 4. MoRD, March 2016. Available from:https://www.dotaceeu.cz/cs/fondy-eu/2014-2020/metodicke-pokyny/metodika-evaluaci.

IN TERMS OF THE PROGRAMME PHASE (PROGRAMME CYCLE)

Ex-ante

The ex-ante evaluation takes place at the beginning of the programme cycle when preparing the programme strategy. In general, the ex-ante evaluation focuses mainly on verifying the correct setting of the intervention logic and the relevance of the strategic objectives of the programme, including verification of the correct setting of the indicator system. During the ex-ante evaluation, it is also necessary to define the assumptions and hypotheses under which the given intervention can be successfully implemented and fulfil the set purpose. The ex-ante evaluation should also assess feasibility of the indicative evaluation plan.

Ad-hoc

Ad-hoc evaluation is carried out during the programming period in connection with monitoring the current state of the programme implementation and, in particular, if the monitoring reveals a significant departure from the goals initially set. The reason for carrying out an ad-hoc evaluation may also be a proposal for a revision of the programmes.

Ongoing

Regularly repeated evaluation is carried out during the period to improve the programme implementation system, i.e. it is not induced by identified deviations or problems. It is usually performed as a periodic evaluation of a certain topic, part of the programme, etc.

Mid-term

The mid-term evaluation at the middle of the period or after the completion of a main phase examines the progress made towards the set objectives, the course and results of monitoring and the implementation system. It is based mainly on data and information obtained from monitoring, but also from ex-ante evaluation and contextual / socio-economic data.

Final evaluation

Final evaluation is performed at the end of the intervention or period. It evaluates the results achieved and identifies examples of good practice and the potential for transferability of the procedures used. Its task is also to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

Ex-post

This is a subsequent evaluation carried out after the end of the intervention or after the end of the programme (usually 2 to 5 years after their end). It assesses the effects and impacts of interventions and their sustainability. It focuses on the factors of success and failure and on the conditions for the sustainability of results. It seeks to draw conclusions that can be generalized and applied in the next period.

IN TERMS OF THE PURPOSE/FOCUS

Strategic evaluation

It is usually carried out in order to evaluate the development of a programme or group of programs in relation to priorities or strategies.

Operational/process evaluation

This evaluation is focused on the current needs, it is mainly an operational evaluation whose purpose is to support the programme implementation.

Thematic evaluation

It focuses on one or more topics that are common to several different programmes or interventions (e.g. equal opportunities evaluation).

Impact/result evaluation

It is an evaluation assessing whether the planned impacts/ results/ effects have actually been achieved.

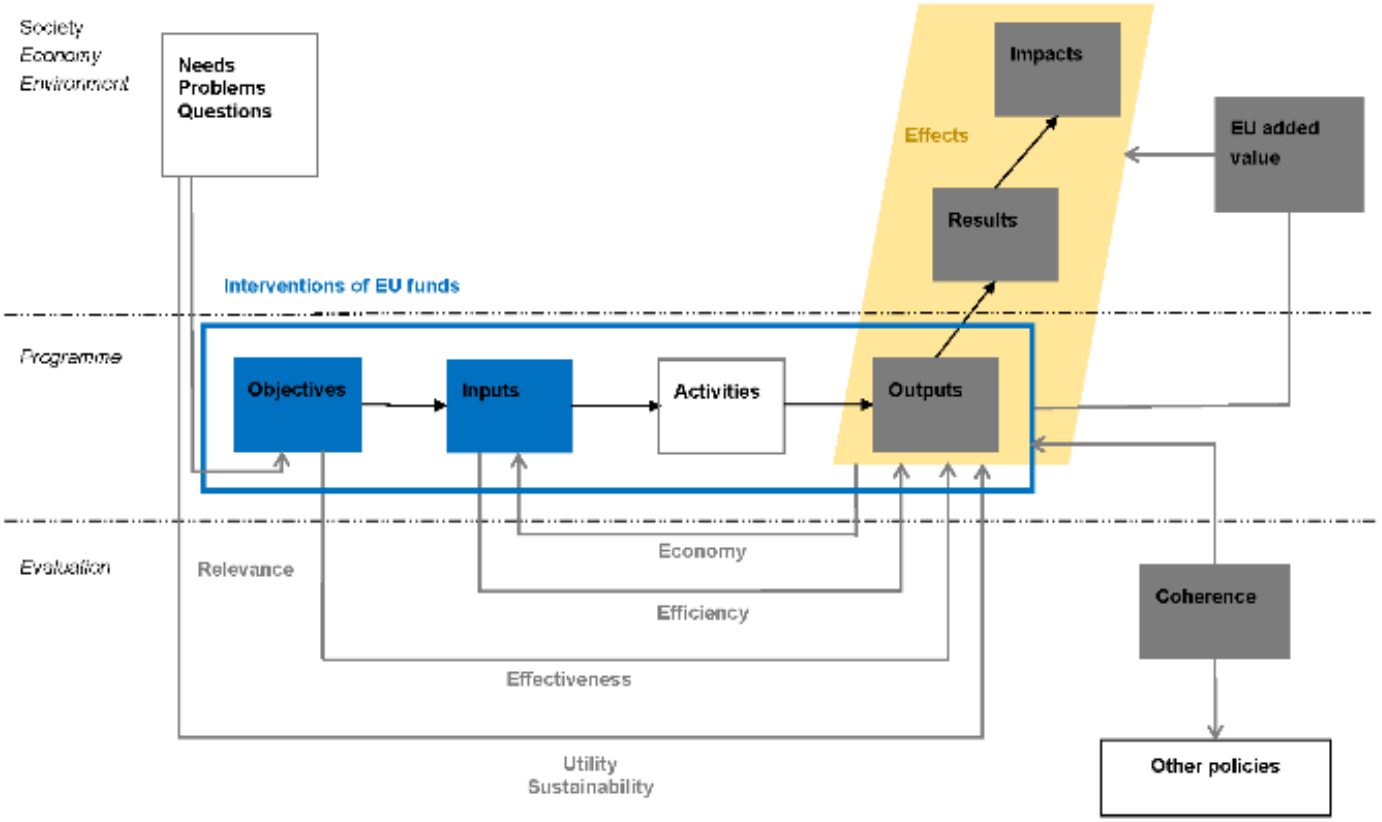
Self-evaluation

It is an evaluation of individual projects, requested by the MA from the grant beneficiary.

7.3 Evaluation criteria

The common provisions regulation for the new programming period 2021-2027 slightly modifies the evaluation criteria. In addition to effectiveness, relevance and efficiency, it has introduced new criteria, namely EU added value and coherence. Not all of these criteria need to be covered in one evaluation.

Below we will try to define these terms (translate them into the Czech context). Despite the fact that the Commission removed from the regulation the obligation to evaluate the criteria of sustainability and economy, we believe that evaluation units should continue to examine them.



THE 3E PRINCIPLE

In evaluations, the concept of "3E" represents the main evaluation criteria of Effectiveness – Efficiency – Economy.

Effectiveness

It focuses on the relationship between interventions and their results, i.e. it assesses whether the implemented interventions have fulfilled their purpose, i.e. whether and to what extent the objectives of the programme have been met, whether the achieved results have contributed to those objectives, whether and what results have been achieved. Thus, effectiveness measures reality (outputs and results achieved by interventions) against the set objectives.

Efficiency

It extends the whole concept of evaluation with expressing the ratio in which inputs are converted into outputs and results. It is an assessment of the ratio of resources (the funding spent, time and work) to the set outputs and objectives of the programme/intervention. The evaluation of this criterion seeks to answer whether it was possible to achieve a higher output for the given inputs which are fixed (invariable) and whether the interventions contributed to the best achievement of the outputs/results with the given amount of funding, or whether the inputs (funding, work and time) could have been spent more efficiently.

ECONOMY

It involves an assessment of the results achieved by the programme or the intervention against the funds spent. We therefore assess whether the given result could have been achieved at lower inputs. The criterion relates to the minimization of the costs of achieving the output or result. We evaluate inputs in relation to outputs and results, where the outputs are fixed (unchangeable) and the inputs (i.e. funds) change, i.e. we are interested, for example, in whether the given output and result was achieved at a price typical at the place and time.

	Examples of questions
Effectiveness	To what extent have the planned results been achieved? Did the achieved results contribute to the objectives of the programme? To what extent has the output been achieved thanks to the intervention and not to external factors?
Efficiency	Was it possible to achieve better results at the same cost? To what extent are the costs of the intervention commensurate with the results it has brought?
Economy	Has the intervention been planned and implemented with regard to an efficient use of funds? Could the intervention have been implemented at a lower cost? Do the benefits of the programme outweigh its costs? What is the return on funding for the programme?

ADDITIONAL MAIN CRITERIA

The main evaluation criteria (effectiveness - efficiency - economy) are usually supplemented by the terms "utility" and "sustainability".

Utility

It relates to the usefulness of the programme or intervention and evaluates the relationship between the problems that were to be addressed by the interventions and the results of the interventions. That is, whether the interventions were meaningfully targeted in terms of the needs of society and target groups in line with the current socio-economic needs of the beneficiaries or areas; we are interested in the wider socio-economic effect. However, the correct focus alone does not necessarily reflect the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions, given the influence of other internal and external factors.

Sustainability

It refers to whether a given activity will reach / has reached its goal only temporarily or for a longer period. The criterion assesses whether the outputs and in particular the results achieved exist or will continue after the end of the implementation of the intervention/programme, while meeting all the previous criteria (effectiveness, efficiency and economy). For the ex-post evaluation, this means whether the implemented interventions and the achieved results still meet their purpose even after a certain time, and whether the positive effects generated by the implementation of interventions persist.

	Examples of questions
Utility	What are the positive or negative impacts of the intervention? Do the positive impacts outweigh the negative ones?
Sustainability	Do stakeholders keep the results of interventions functional? To what extent do stakeholders make further use of the results of interventions? Do the beneficiary institutions have sufficient management/professional capacity for follow-up activities? Will the results of the interventions be maintained after the end of the financing?

Relevance

It relates to the need for a programme or intervention. It is an assessment of whether the set goals are (still) needed and valid, or whether there are any new facts that would affect them.

Relevance	Examples of questions
	Are the objectives achieved in line with the needs and priorities of the target groups, relevant policies and strategies? Is the timing of interventions in line with the needs of the target group?

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

EU added value

It is achieved when the EU programme/interventions achieve changes that would not be achievable by national programmes/interventions. It is achieved if the EU intervention:

- is the only possible way to complete the missing links and exploit the potential of a barrier-free Europe,
- offers better value for money because it allows so-called externalities (spillovers), allows concentration of resources and capacities,
- reduces inequalities, promotes more valuable standards.

It is not necessary to evaluate it, for example, using CIE, but in the minimum standard, added value can be evaluated with quantitative and qualitative data and a description of the likely role of the EU intervention[115].

Added value	Examples of questions
	What is the added value of an EU intervention compared to what can reasonably be expected from Member States acting at national or regional level? What would be the most likely consequences of stopping existing EU interventions?

Coherence

It assesses how appropriately/inappropriately two or more different components of an intervention/interventions work together, looking for synergies or inconsistencies within one or between different interventions. Coherence can be assessed internally (e.g. how different components work within one intervention) and externally. External coherence can cover the combined effect of different interventions on one sector / same target group, the interaction of national and international programmes, etc.

Coherence	Examples of questions
	What are the synergistic/antagonistic links of the programme to superior EU and national policies/ priorities/ programmes? How does this intervention work together with other interventions that have similar objectives? How is this intervention internally coherent? To what extent is this intervention coherent with international commitments?

115 European Commission. TOOL #47. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-47_en_0.pdf.

7.4 Intervention logic / theory of change

When designing any evaluation activity, it is necessary to understand the logical basis of the intervention - the theory of change / intervention logic, which is already an important (and integral) part of planning any interventions for the 2021+ programming period. The theory of change / intervention logic describes and explains the mechanism by which project activities will contribute to achieving the planned effects, results and impacts of the project. The main aspects involved are chronological and causal links, but also external preconditions and the overall context. It is crucial that the theory of change is prepared already in the planning phase of the project/programme. If it is designed well (and if the project/programme is also well drawn up), it is a great help for setting evaluation questions, monitoring indicators, identifying areas where evaluation data will need to be collected, setting priorities for their collection and creating the basic structure of data analysis and of reporting evaluation findings.

We should know the answer to three basic questions:

- What do we want to change and can change? - Defining specific problems that we want to change with interventions and are able to do so.
- How do we want to achieve this? - The mechanism of the intervention's effect through clear measures and activities.
- How do we verify that we have been successful? - The system of evaluating the achieved outputs and results, or impacts.

An intervention logic must include, or be complemented with, correctly set indicators that will ensure the measurability of outputs and related results in a direct link to the objectives of the programme.

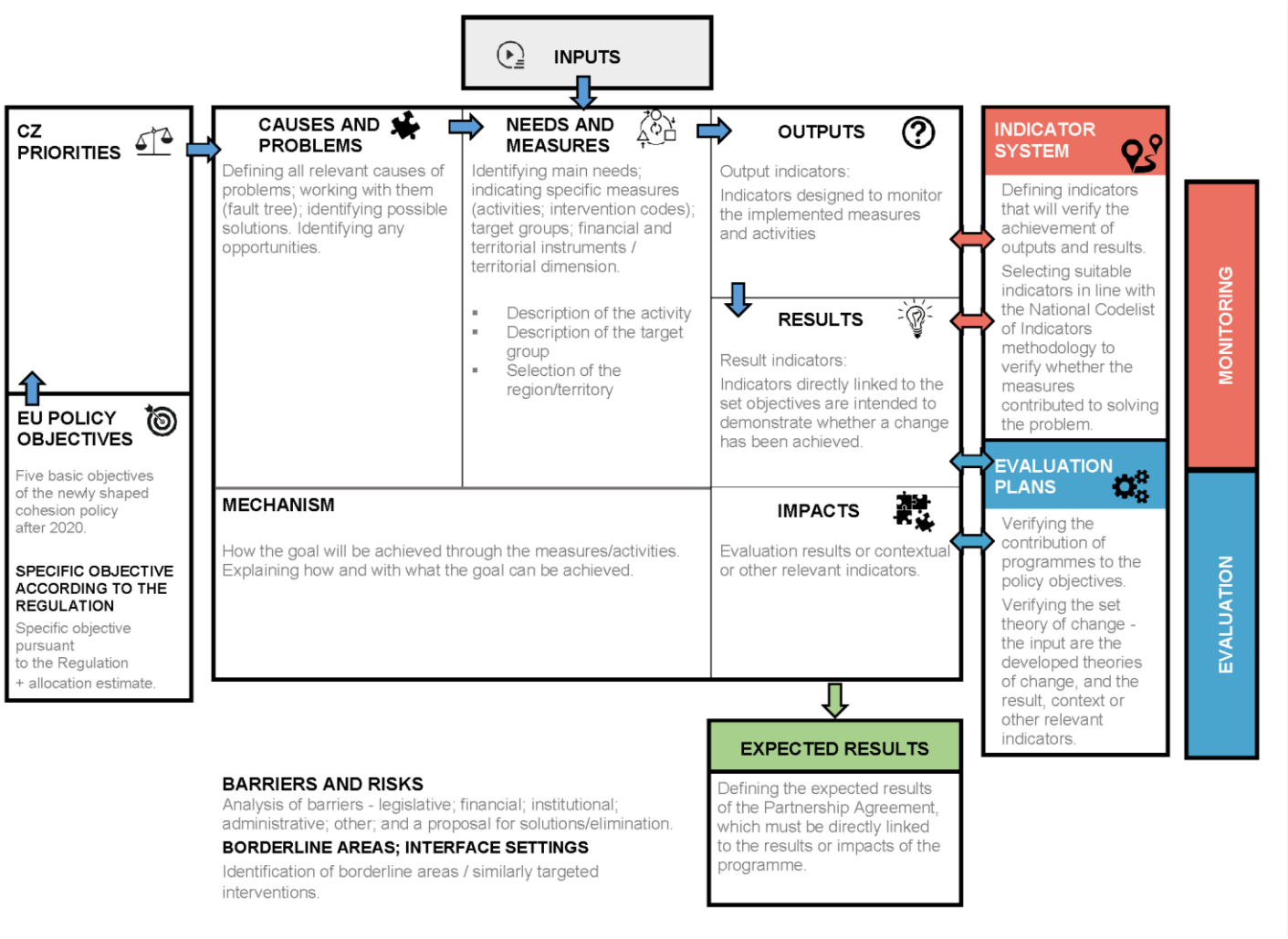
It is important for evaluation practice to define the terms output, result and impact. The definitions below are taken from the publication by Hendl J., Remr J. (2017)[116].

- An output is the immediate effect to which the intervention and its individual activities lead. Output data are usually accurate and easily accessible. Identifying the outputs helps to answer the question "Have the promised actions been carried out?". The outputs usually say nothing about the success of the intervention.
- A result is the change that has occurred thanks to the intervention. An analysis of results focuses on changes in behaviour of the target group after the intervention (or on institutional changes).
- An impact can be defined as a long-term sustainable effect produced by the intervention. Impacts are usually not monitored at the level of the target group but at hierarchically higher levels (e.g. unemployment in the region, living conditions). Impacts are derived from the results and can be monitored only in retrospect after the end of the intervention.

116 HENDL, Jan, REMR, Jiří. Research and evaluation methods. Portal, 2017.

An ideal part of a theory of change or intervention logic should be an ex-ante evaluation which, among other things, verifies the correct setting of the indicator system and its evaluation.

Below is the concept of the MoRD-NCA intervention logic for the period 2021+ and its main building blocks. It is briefly summarised in the following figure.



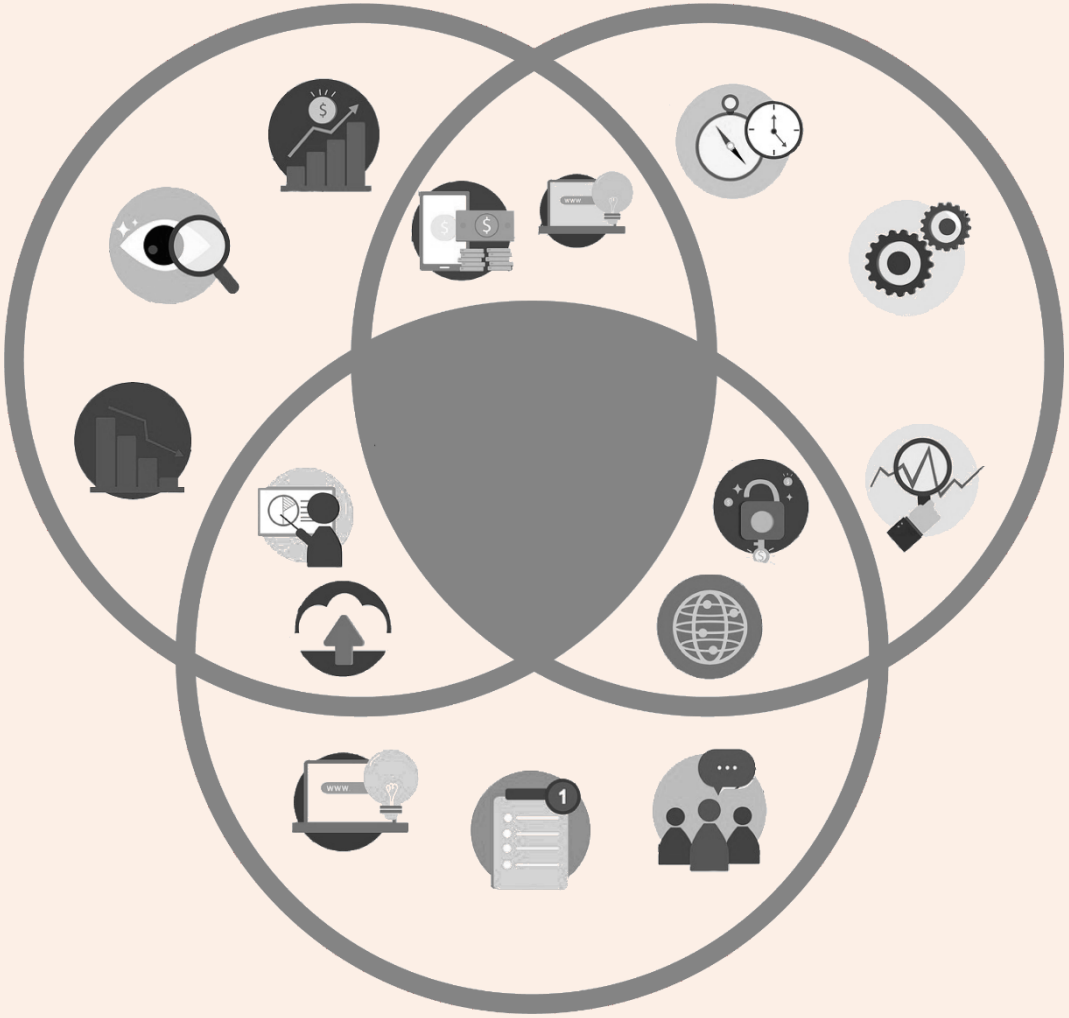
8

MESSAGE FOR PARTNERS

Evaluation activity and the quality of evaluations depend on two factors: the demand from relevant stakeholders and decision makers and their knowledge and awareness of evidence-based policy, and the quality and professionalism of contractors.

In the following chapter, evaluation units can find a summary for their partners, clients and decision makers.

There is also a brief message for contractors, the aim of which is to explain the expectations of contracting authorities and draw attention to the most common flaws in contracting authority-contractor communication.



8.1 Message for policy and decision makers

WHY ARE MONITORING AND EVALUATION IMPORTANT?

Due to the growing complexity of the world, economic, social and environmental challenges, governments are facing an increasing pressure on better results for less funding. Through monitoring and evaluation, it is possible to get assured that policies are prepared on the basis of identifying what works and what does not, which is key to achieving long-term results.

> ”
> EVALUATIONS ARE A KEY TOOL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE AND POLICY MAKING.
> “

WHAT CAN EVALUATIONS OFFER YOU?

- Support for strategic planning and policy-making based on evidence of the results of interventions and policies.
- Increased accountability and legitimacy of public policies, interventions or use of public funds.
- Promoting learning and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policies[117]. But also support of arguments for negotiating budgets, policies or programmes.

HOW CAN THIS BE ACHIEVED?

Give support to departments focused on monitoring, evaluation and analyses. You will get supporting evidence for your decision-making.

The following 3 aspects are key:

1. **Build the institutional set-up**

   and independence of these units with the necessary human resources, expertise and financing. Personnel stability will help to preserve the acquired expertise.

2. **Create demand.**

   Ask for evidence, data, results and impacts. Actively demand the application of conclusions and recommendations in practice. This will support the use of evidence and evaluations in the preparation and implementation of policies and programmes.

3. **Actively participate in the implementation of evaluations.**

   This will help evaluators better target evaluations to your needs. Be open to conclusions you don't expect.

117 OECD. Policy Monitoring and Evaluation. Available from: http://www.oecd.org/gov/policy-monitoring-evaluation.htm.

8.2 Message for contractors

The Guide you are reading is intended primarily for sharing good practice among evaluation units. However, we would like to take this opportunity to dedicate one chapter to evaluation contractors as well. We have long perceived the need to support dialogue between contracting authorities and contractors in order to improve the evaluation culture, or for greater mutual understanding, which will ultimately help the implementation of effective and useful evaluations.

The following text offers several hints on what we, the contracting authorities, would appreciate in the contractors. Where relevant, we will refer you to a specific chapter of the Guide for more detailed information on the topic.

> „LET'S DO EVALUATIONS THAT ARE MEANINGFUL AND USEFUL FOR CLIENTS."

Let's not cling to the literal wording but focus on the purpose of the evaluation and its benefit for the client. This is the only way we can build together a sustainable and useful evidence-based culture in the Czech Republic. If we already have a client who is really interested in evaluation and needs to find out what to do better, the chance is wasted if his expectations are not met.

A problem arises when the recommendations are too general and vague, unfeasible (for time, legislative, administrative, financial, etc. reasons) or do not correspond to the evaluation's ToR and the (related) requirements and expectations of the contracting authority. In such case, we discourage clients and partners in the long term from believing in evaluations and considering them a meaningful tool for learning, streamlining processes or verifying results and impacts. Of course, it is also necessary for the contracting authority to provide sufficient time and budget for the evaluation, to make the given scope of evaluation feasible.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO MAKE YOUR COLLABORATION MORE EFFECTIVE

1. Offer (tender)

Among other things, an offer is good when it is comprehensible (readable, logical, consistent and the contractor clearly explains why it is appropriate to implement the given steps, methods or design). The contractor should study (to a reasonable extent) the object of the contract and its context. It is certainly not good practice to copy an offer from other contracts that have nothing to do with the object; or listing as many evaluation methods as possible in the tender without an obvious relation to the object of the contract and without justifying their specific application. We also recommend not setting the tender price too low, as then there is a greater risk of lower quality of the evaluation and of not meeting the expectations of the contracting authority. The MoRD-NCA has long promoted evaluating the evaluation contract tenders for quality.

2. Initial meeting

Here we recommend the same to both the evaluation unit and the contractor. Clarify expectations, inquire, and make sure you understand the scope and depth of the ToR the same way. The worst thing that can happen is when a discrepancy occurs during or even at the end of the contract.

Here are some instructions that might help you:

- Make sure you understand the ToR the same way. Explain to each other how you comprehend the ToR. It is best to clarify any disagreements at the initial meeting and not postpone them until later.
- The better you apprehend the expectations and needs of the client, the better you will be able to implement the entire contract. The contracting authority, even if it tried hard, is not able to state exactly all its expectations, needs and understanding of the problem in the invitation to tender or tender specifications.
- Ask about specifics.
  What does the contracting authority know? Where does it suspect problems? What information does it have about what works and what doesn't? Does it need to confirm its assumptions or perform a deeper analysis? In which topics does it need more detailed information? What kind of information would help it to make the right decision? What kind of recommendation would be useful for it?

3. Implementation

Inform the contracting authority about what is happening. What you already know, what problems you have in the field and how they will be solved. The more you communicate during the process, the less "surprises" will appear at the end of the contract.

4. End of contract

The winding-up of the contract often depends on how well the initial meeting was used. How well you, as the contractor, understood the needs and expectations of the client. Write reports clearly, comprehensibly, specifically. Recommendations should be as specific as possible. Make sure they are applicable in practice.

Tailor the presentation to the client. Will there be senior management at the presentation? Then make the presentation more general and illustrate it with practical examples. Will there be regular and operative staff at the presentation? Then provide a lot of technical detail, what exactly was found in the field. Will both groups be in the audience? First, make a brief summary of the essentials taking 10 minutes, and then go into the details. Leave the methods to the end[118].

118 For more see also the section on executive summary and final report and recommendations (Chapter 4 "Evaluation outputs").

5. Feedback

We recommend that both parties take the time to provide feedback at the end of the contract. Tell your contracting authority what worked well and what could be done differently, so that next time the evaluation is even better targeted, useful and usable.

What did you miss? What did you need to be different? Were the ToR clear enough? Was the communication comprehensible? Be open to feedback as well. The aim is to learn. If we, as evaluators, are to build an evidence-base culture in the Czech Republic, let's start with ourselves and learn from each other and bring better evaluation results every time.

6. Get trained

We recommend joining professional associations at the national or international level. Follow trends in the field of evaluation. At least go to courses and conferences that are free or affordable. It will also help you better understand your client's needs.

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