



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Developing a flexible support package for EU Member States: EMCDDA's 'realistic' policy evaluation approach

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- Brendan Hughes
- Eoghan Quigley and
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and

- the many people involved in drug policy at the national level with whom we have worked



Aims

Based on European experience:

- Highlight the challenges to conducting useful evaluations of drug policy, focusing on **drug strategy evaluation** and the **perspectives of the public officials** involved;
- Illustrate how targeting support to this group may help to address these issues and help foster an evaluative culture and improve the evidence over time.



The EU context

- **Evidence-based policy & importance of evaluation generally accepted**
- **Subsidiarity & proportionality - drug policy responsibility of Member States**
- **Diversity - languages, cultures, populations, economic, political and legal systems**
- **EMCDDA mandate - to provide factual, reliable, objective, impartial information on the drugs situation**
 - Promote / support / train / capacity building



A plethora of evaluation guidance

Directorate General External Relations

Directorate General Development

EuropeAid Co-operation Office

Joint Evaluation Unit

**EVALUATION METHODS
FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION'S
EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE**



**FRENCH GOVERNMENT
TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC ACTION PORTAL**

EVALUATING PUBLIC POLICY



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https://ec.europa.eu/evaluation/evaluations/index.cfm?pg=home

Administration EMCCDA sites and ap... Private DB

Evaluations

Evaluating the implementation of EU framework programmes to guide future policy

Home High Level Group Monitoring Horizon 2020 Evaluation Past Evaluations Evaluation Network Documents

Evaluations are an essential part of the EU's Framework Programmes. They create a crucial evidence base to steer the implementation of research and innovation programmes, as well as guide future Framework Programmes.

Latest Documents

The Commission is now carrying out an int



HM TREASURY

The Magenta Book
Guidance for evaluation

If only it was that simple



"SEE - IT WORKS IN MY
FANTASY RESEARCH LEAGUE."



Evaluation in practice



"If You Can't Measure It,
You Can't Manage It!"

Peter Drucker



Ireland
Montenegro & Serbia
Cyprus & Estonia

Ireland - RAPID EXPERT REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL DRUGS STRATEGY 2009-2016

Features

- EMCCDA staff part of independent review team
- Time constraints
- Limited data – time lag issues
- Strong political support
- Basis for new strategy
- Largely based on stakeholder opinion



Findings

- Stakeholders very engaged
- Performance indicators often not aligned with actions
- A lack of data to measure progress
Review Group
- Over the 7 year strategy the system had become fragmented
Paul Griffiths
Scientific Director, EMCDDA (Chairperson)
Professor John Strang
Director, National Addictions Centre, Kings College London
- Strategy appropriately focused at start but needed mid-year review
Nicola Singleton
General Manager, EMCDDA
- Importance of alignment with other strategies for intersectoral co-operation
Technical Support to the Review Group
Dr E. B. O'Connell, Scientific Director, EMCDDA
Final report, August 2016

Ireland - RAPID EXPERT REVIEW

Lessons Learned

- **Even without data important lessons for a new strategy can be identified.**
- **The process itself can be valuable in engaging stakeholders & getting their buy-in to the new strategy.**
- **Having external experts involved in the review was important for wider stakeholder acceptance of the findings.**
- **Time invested in presenting / disseminating the findings enhances usefulness.**



Montenegro & Serbia – Mid-Term Evaluation Issues & lessons learned

- Limited understanding / experience of evaluation
- Absence of data
- Language issues
- Short time-frame
- A lot riding on it

Nevertheless....

- Stakeholders engaged
- Stimulated an important reflection drug policy
- Fed into next action plan
- and ticked an important box!



Cyprus & Estonia – Internal Evaluations

Issues & lessons learned

- Real desire to learn from evaluation
- Data limitations – broad impact measures remote from activities
- Lack of logic models

Nevertheless

- Open to advice and support
- Taking forward lessons into next action plan
- Used it to engage other departments & wider team



The evolving EMCDDA support package



Key messages

- ❖ There is **no single “correct” way** to do an evaluation of drug policy
- ❖ Need for multiple measures and consideration of short and long term changes and unintended or unforeseen consequences
- ❖ Evaluation should not be seen as a one-off event but an **on-going process** intertwined with policy or strategy development and implementation.
- ❖ Evaluation needs to be accompanied by a commitment to and the opportunity to **take action on the findings**. This may effect choice of evaluation design.



EMCDDA support to policy evaluation – recent developments

Target audience = those who commission & use evaluations

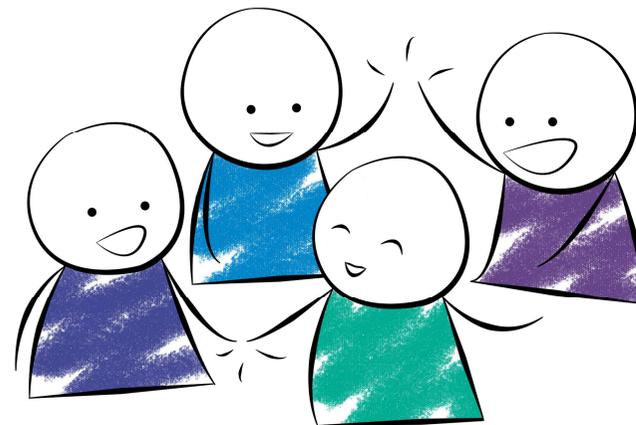
Reactive support

Tailored support on request

- Meetings, seminars, reviews, papers, comment & advice

Proactive support

Training & materials



Proactive support



- Introduction
- EU evaluations
- National evaluations
- Resources
- Glossary

What is drug policy evaluation and why is it important?

Evaluation is essential for effective policymaking, helping ensure that policies and programmes have the desired effect, provide value for money and do not have negative unintended consequences. The importance of evaluation has been recognised in all EU drug strategies and in the strategies of many Member States.

To support those considering or involved in commissioning, managing or undertaking policy evaluations, this page provides access to a range of materials, including a 7-step guide, examples of strategies and evaluations in Europe and potentially useful data sources.

Spotlight: Evaluating drug policy: a seven-step guide to support the commissioning and managing of evaluations



Evidence of impact?

Well it's difficult to demonstrate 😊 but:

- **References to independent review in new Irish strategy**
- **Repeat requests**
- **Follow-up attendance at workshop**
- **Workshop feedback**



The workshop was very practical, containing both theoretical frameworks as well the opportunity to discuss and explore by ourselves.

[Introduction](#) [EU evaluations](#) [National evaluations](#) [Resources](#) [Glossary](#)

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Learning from other country's experiences — the pitfalls and strengths of various approaches. Also the reality of actually carrying out this kind of work — it helped manage expectations.

Working in country teams was very useful — it meant new knowledge could be applied to a real world situation straight away, which reinforced learning.



Conclusions

- **Policy unit staff an important, but often changing, group**
- **Have (& promote) realistic expectations**
- **Focus on wider range of indicators (it is not all about impact assessment)**
- **Structures as well as programmes matter**
- **Build monitoring and preparation for evaluation into the entire strategy process**
- **Invest (time & resources) in use of the evaluation**
- **Think long-term – developing an evaluation culture**



... standing on the shoulders of giants

“it is difficult to bring improvement in long-standing stubborn problems as poverty, violence...(drugs). Evaluation contributes to make small continuing improvements in current policies... so that is worth the efforts”
(Weiss 1993)

Communication of findings is the key aspect in the adoption by policy makers of evaluation of public policies (Mandell 1989)

‘It’s in the interaction and not in the moment of the delivery of the final report that lies the usefulness of an evaluation process’
(Patton 1982)



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Thank you for your attention!
Any questions?

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