

Integrated Approach to Evaluation of Structural Fund and National Expenditure: Lessons from the Irish Experience

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Presentation Structure

- Development of evaluation systems in Ireland
 - EU Structural Funds system
 - National system
- Current Practice
- Reflections on the Irish experience

Development of EU Structural Funds Evaluation System

- Ireland an Objective 1 region 1989 to 1999
- 2 CSF programmes (1989-1993, 1994 -1999)
 - EU funds = 1.7% of GDP
 - Focused on economic convergence and tackling unemployment
- Evaluation context
 - Little prior tradition of evaluation
 - Low evaluation capacity baseline
 - No national evaluation system

Evaluation Influences

- Evaluation impetus driven by
 - compliance considerations
 - EU Commission pressure and support
 - political priority attached to EU funds

- Leading to
 - gradual creation of evaluation structures (CSF1)
 - major expansion in evaluation capacity and output (CSF2)

Key Milestones in Evaluation Capacity Development

- Establishment of 3 internal OP Evaluation Units
 - ESF (1992), Industry (1993), Agriculture (1995)

- Outputs
 - Indicators and monitoring systems
 - Detailed measure level and thematic evaluations

- Appointment of 6 OP external evaluators
 - Advisory and “watch-dog” functions

Key Milestones in Evaluation Capacity Development

- Establishment of CSF Evaluation Unit in 1996
 - Attached to Ministry of Finance
 - Function: co-ordination of OP work and good practice promotion
 - Outputs: reviews of existing practice and guidelines

- CSF mid-term evaluation 1997
 - Innovative, transferable methodology
 - Recommendations implemented

- Meta-evaluation of system carried out in 1998
 - Some deficiencies in system identified
 - Lessons informed design of 2000 to 2006 structures

Integrated 2000 to 2006 NDP Evaluation System: Key Features

- Ambitious National Development Plan (NDP) put in place by Government
 - €51 bn. public investment programme
 - Mostly nationally funded
 - EU Structural Funds (€4 bn. CSF) a sub-set of this
- Structural Funds monitoring and evaluation system extended to NDP
 - Represented a significant extension of EU system to cover 20% of national budget
 - Centralised system, 1 Evaluation Unit (NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit) based in Finance Ministry
 - Evaluations covered all NDP investment
 - In practice, more emphasis put on EU-funded elements

Development of National Evaluation Systems

- Expenditure Review Initiative (ERI)
 - Non-EU evaluation system introduced in 1997

- Origins
 - Increased emphasis on public service management
 - Public management reforms in early/mid 1990s
 - International developments in public management

- ERI influenced by Australian system

- A “whole of government” evaluation strategy

ERI: Key Features

- Aim was to review all expenditure areas every 3 years
 - Programme of reviews agreed by each Ministry with Finance Ministry (MOF)
- Central Steering Committee and secretariat in MOF
- Reviews undertaken by line ministries and by programme managers
- MOF represented on steering committees

ERI Developments

- System had limited success
 - 3 year target not met, significant delays
 - Reviews focused on minor programmes
 - Quality highly variable
 - Limited influence on resource allocation
- Replaced in 2006 by “Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative”
 - Somewhat wider evaluation focus
 - Each Ministry now required to undertake one review of a major programme annually
 - Progress remains uneven

Post-2007 Evaluation System

- Ireland now eligible under regional competitiveness and employment objective
 - EU funding of just €900 mn. for 2007 to 2013
 - Limited evaluation requirements under EU regulations
 - Evaluation of EU programmes a managing authority responsibility
- Earlier NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit replaced by Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit in MOF
 - Responsible for evaluation of all national programmes
 - Main focus of Unit now on Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative
 - Coordination
 - Issuing guidelines
 - Technical advise, including for EU programmes
 - Unit also has important role in project evaluation area

Reflections on Irish Experience

- EU requirements and external influences a key driver
 - EU funds contributed to development of capacity and expertise
 - Increased awareness and understanding of evaluation amongst policymakers
 - Led to creation of internal evaluation structures
 - And improved supply-side capacity in response to evaluation demand

- Important long-term benefits of Structural Funds

Reflections on Irish Experience

- Ireland now in a “post Structural Funds” era
 - Evaluation system no longer organised around EU Funds
 - NDP 2007-2013 evaluated under Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative arrangements
- Some signs of a loss of momentum in evaluation practice
 - Degree of commitment of policymakers to evaluation remains somewhat unclear
 - Current economic difficulties means heavy emphasis is on expenditure control and reduction
- Some way to go for evaluation to be firmly integrated in Irish governance system

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