**Evaluation Helpdesk
2021-2027**

Contract No 2023CE16BAT077

Task 2.a: Support to Member States

Summary report of workshop

GREECE
18-19 September 2025

Divani Caravel Hotel

2 Vassileos Alexandrou Ave

16112, Athens - Greece

European Commission

APPLICA

ISMERI EUROPA

QUADRANT CONSEIL

CONTENTS

1. Summary of the workshop

1.1. Participants

Officials from 17 different Managing Authorities, 8 Executive Units in Ministries and 4 Special NSRF Coordinating Services, officials from DG REGIO and DG EMPL, experts in evaluation and members of the Evaluation Helpdesk. There were overall 56 participants. The full list is included in section 5.

1.2. Purpose of the support

The overarching aim of the workforce was to develop capacity to plan, design, commission, and use evaluations that are both technically sound and policy-relevant.

The main points of the support are summarised below. A detailed presentation by Elliot Stern and Thomas Delahais is included in the Annex.

1.3. Summary of the discussion

Day 1 focused on the early stages of the evaluation process—scoping and commissioning. Participants explored common challenges in procurement, such as limited resources, lack of expertise, administrative rigidity, and uncertainty about how evaluations will be used. The experts stressed that well-designed Terms of Reference (ToRs) are central to effective commissioning: concise (five to ten pages), tailored to potential service providers, and written with clarity about objectives, scope, and anticipated use.

The sessions then turned to scoping evaluations through programme theory and the policy cycle. Using the Theory of Change approach, participants examined how to define appropriate evaluation questions (EQs) linked directly to policy priorities and stakeholder concerns. This discussion moved evaluation design beyond formal criteria like effectiveness or efficiency toward more context-specific, learning-oriented questions.

Group works in the afternoon were structured around four case studies—support to innovative SMEs, thermal renovation of housing, health infrastructure, and social housing for vulnerable and allowed participants to practice developing ToRs and EQs collaboratively.

Day 2 was devoted to quality assurance and evaluation use. The experts proposed a broad view of quality: not only compliance with methodological standards but also – and above all - reliability, transparency, trust, and adaptability. Quality begins with good planning and must be maintained through organisational routines, peer review, and clear ground rules ensuring independence and data access.

A final plenary on making evaluations useful emphasised that evaluations should be conceived as multi-purpose tools—serving accountability, programme management, learning, and policy planning. Usefulness should be built in from the start through stakeholder engagement, iterative feedback, and a balance between the "accountability" and "learning" lenses.

2. Agenda of the workshop

Day 1 – 18 September 2025

Time	Activity
09:30 – 9:50	Introduction by Greek authorities, DG REGIO (Enrico Pesaresi) and DG EMPL (Jorge Villanueva Garcia, Johannes Ziemendorff)
09:50 – 11:00	**Plenary**: Commissioning the evaluation. Challenges in procurement. Building on existing knowledge. The most important questions your ToR should answer. Anticipating evaluation use.
11:00-11:20	*Break*
11:20-12:30	**Plenary**: Scoping the evaluation; choosing a unit of analysis; specifying the overall evaluation approach and a suitable 'menu' of methods: the role of programme theory.
12:30-13:00	**Arrangement of and introduction to group works**
13:00-14:00	*Lunch*
14:00-15:30	**Group work**: Scoping the evaluation using the programme theory based on case study. Using scoping work including the programme theory to write the ToR.
15:30-15:45	Break
15:45-16:45	**Group work**: Asking evaluation questions jointly with key stakeholders guided by the programme theory. Identifying areas for inquiry. Exploration of methods to answer the questions
16:45-17:00	**Plenary**: *Wrap-up*

Day 2 – 19 September 2025

Time	Activity
9:30 – 10:00	Interim review of Day 1 by Helpdesk experts and DG REGIO and DG EMPL representatives
10:00 – 10:45	**Plenary**: Quality assurance
10:45 – 11:30	**Group work**: Identifying potential quality issues and ways to address them
11:30-11:50	Break
11:50-13:00	**Group work**: Strategies for evaluation use
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:30	**Plenary**: Presentation by 4 groups, feedback
15:30-15:45	Break
15:45-16:15	**Plenary**: Wrap-up and outstanding issues

3. Report on the support by the national authority requesting the support and organising the event

The purpose of this note is to summarise at the end of the meeting the main points discussed, the key issues emerging from the discussion and the future steps recommended.

Note prepared by
- **Eni Koukoula- Konstantina Dimitraka** (Special Service for the Coordination of ESF Actions - Unit C ESF+ Actions coordination of evaluation) - **Dimitra Chalikia- Eleftheria Efthymiou** (Special Service for the Coordination of Planning, Evaluation and Implementation- Unit C – Evaluation, Enabling Conditions and Indicators)

Main points addressed in the meeting (max. 150 words)

Day 1 – 18/09

<u>1st Plenary Session</u>

- Focus on commissioning evaluations and the challenges Managing Authorities face during procurement.
- Practical advice was shared on effective commissioning and the preparation of concise, clear Terms of Reference (ToRs).
- Discussion on evaluation scope and how to define evaluation questions so that they address the most important priorities for the ones commissioning the evaluations.

<u>2nd Plenary Session</u>

- Designing evaluations with a focus on the Theory of Change and the Policy Cycle.
- Importance of evaluation questions and identification of all necessary linkages (external environment, programme level etc.)
- Strong participant interest in understanding the link between evaluation questions and the policy/ programme priorities.
- Emphasis on stakeholder involvement, underlining how they can provide valuable input both before and during evaluations.

Day 2 – 19/09

<u>3rd Plenary Session</u>

- Exploring the definition of Quality in Evaluation in the process of design, implementation and communication and how the approach is evolving beyond compliance to include reliability, trust, and usefulness.
- Making evaluations useful by planning for practical application and usability from the start, rather than only at the dissemination stage.

Main take-aways form the discussion (max. 150 words)

<u>Plenary Sessions</u>

The first plenary session focused on commissioning evaluations and the challenges that Managing Authorities face during procurement. A key point was how evaluation questions should be narrowed down to address the most important issues for the ones commissioning the evaluations (MAs etc) when preparing the Terms of Reference (ToRs).

Participants expressed strong interest in better understanding the link between evaluation questions and the policy/programme priorities.

Another important topic was stakeholders' involvement, highlighting how stakeholders can provide valuable input both before and during an evaluation. Different approaches to commissioning, such as open calls for interest, were also discussed.

The sessions also addressed the Theory of Change, with participants eager to learn how to apply it effectively and formulate valid evaluation questions for their ToRs.

<u>Workshops- Group Work</u>

The workshops were enriched by the field experience of participants, who represented the Managing Authorities from all the CPR Funds - sectoral and regional programmes - but also the Executive Units from Ministries (policy makers) and NSRF Coordination Services. This diversity brought fruitful perspectives to the discussions. The four case-study exercises (on topics having been decided before, in collaboration among coordination Evaluation Units with the Evl Helpdesk experts) carried out through collaborative group work, demonstrated the value of combining practical managerial insights and stakeholder's perspective with structured evaluation approaches.

Any other comment (max. 150 words)

The 2-day workshop was well balanced between theory and practice, allowing participants to engage actively and energetically.

The case studies used in this session were well designed, but having time to be prepared a few days before the workshop would make them even more effective.

The next steps include disseminating the workshop results to all the members of the GR National Evaluation Network and ensuring that the completed group case-studies are shared with all participants. This will help consolidating the knowledge gained and support the practical application of the workshop's outcomes.

Furthermore, GR responsible authorities will work on submitting new support requests, building upon what has already been provided by the EC Helpdesk during the last months.

4. Evaluation of the support

After the workshop participants were asked to complete the evaluation form set out below which was also published online.

During this workshop I learned   O nothing/almost nothing   O a fair amount   O a lot

(indicate which option applies)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Comment
The objectives of the workshop were clearly defined					
The content was well organised and easy to follow					
The issues covered were relevant to me					
The learned will be useful for my work					
The time allocated for the workshop was adequate					
There was a good balance between plenary sessions and group discussion					

What did you like most about this workshop?
_____

What aspects of the workshop could be improved?
_____

Any other comment?
_____

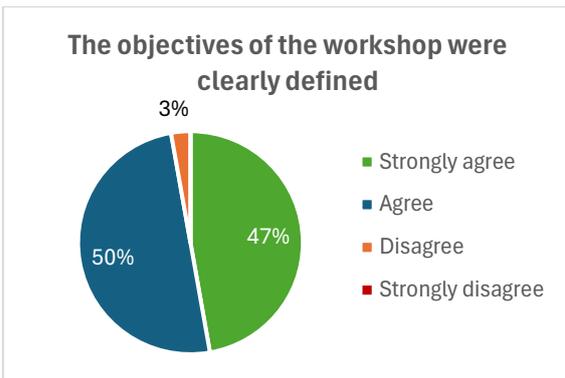## THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

In total 36 responses were received. The results are summarised below.

During this workshop I learned

- a lot
- a fair amount
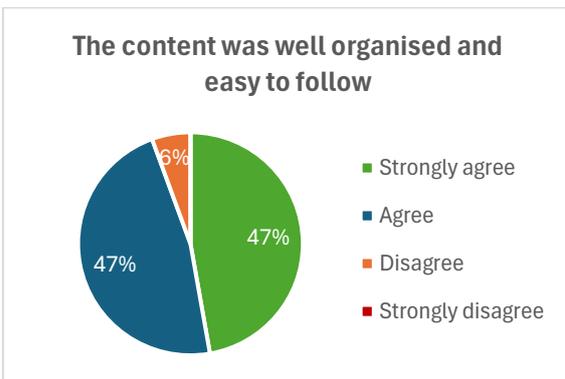- nothing/almost nothing

3%
47%
50%
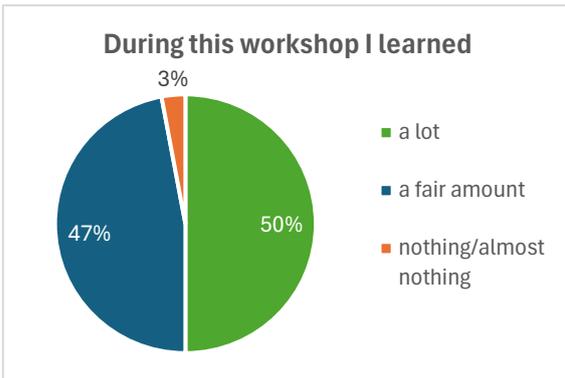
Knowledge acquired during the workshop

The workshop seems to have been effective for nearly all as 50% of respondents said they learned a lot and 47% a fair amount. One participant said to have not learned a lot although the topics covered were relevant.

The objectives of the workshop were clearly defined

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
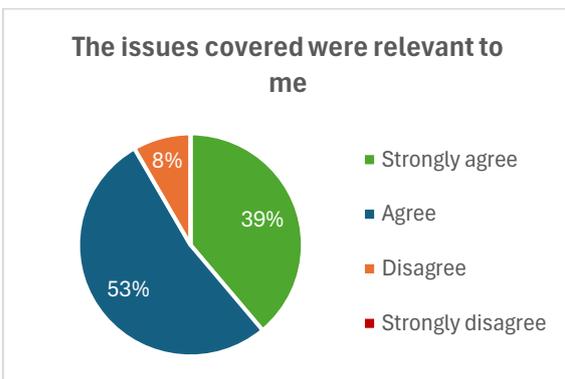- Strongly disagree

3%
50%
47%

Clearness of workshop objectives

All respondents except one agreed that the objectives of the training were clearly defined. 47% of them strongly agreed with the proposition and 50% agreed. The respondent disagreeing did not provide any further details.

The content was well organised and easy to follow

- Strongly agree
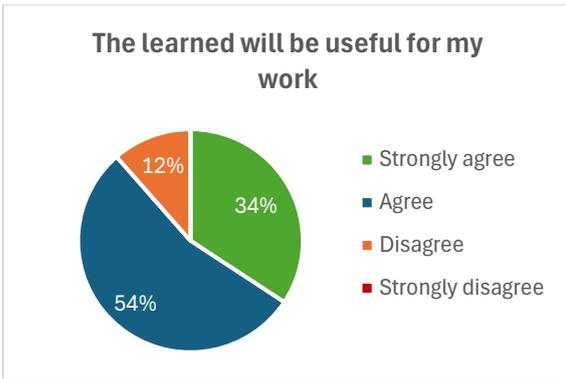- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6%
47%
47%

Organisation of content

The content of the training was well organised and easy to follow for most respondents. 47% of them strongly agreed with the proposition and another 47% agreed. Two respondents disagreed and one mentioned the content was well organised but one '*must be very well educated to follow'*.

The issues covered were relevant to me

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
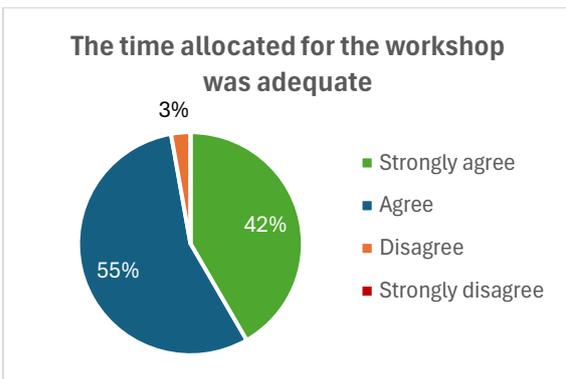- Strongly disagree

8%
39%
53%

Relevance of issues discussed

The topics discussed were relevant for 92% of the respondents with 39% strongly agreeing with the proposition and 53% agreeing. Three respondents were disagreeing. More specifically, the issues discussed in group work were not relevant to them.

The learned will be useful for my work

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12%
34%
54%

Usefulness of learned for work

88% of respondents considered that what they had learned during the two-day workshop would be useful for their work, with 34% of them strongly agreeing with the statement and 54% agreeing. The three respondents disagreeing are those who found that the issues discussed in group work were not relevant. One mentioned in addition that although interesting, the learned would not be '*easily applicable*'.

The time allocated for the workshop was adequate

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

3%
42%
55%

Appropriateness of timing

The time allocated to for the workshop was appropriate for all respondents except one with 42% of them strongly agreeing with the proposition and 55% agreeing. The respondent disagreeing found the workshop should have been longer than 2 days.

Balance between plenary sessions and group discussion

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree

5%
42%
53%
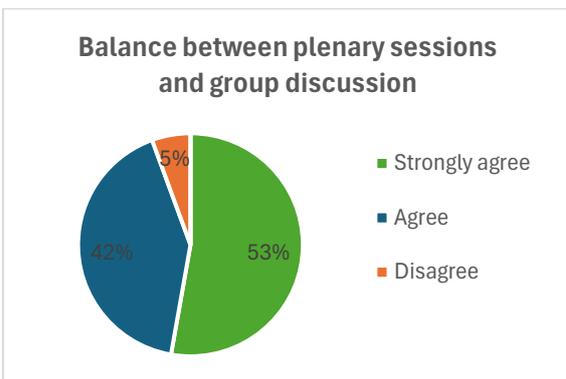
Balance between plenary session and group discussion

There was an adequate balance between discussion in plenary sessions and in groups for most respondents with 53% of them strongly agreeing with the statement, and 42% agreeing. Two respondents disagreed. They are those who found that group work was not useful for them.

Participants were asked in addition what they liked most about the training and what could be improved. Their replies to these open questions are included in the tables below.

What did you like most about this training session?
the plenary sessions
The fact that it was not a theoretical seminar, but had direct practical application of theory, through working groups.
The group discussion
The diversity in the professional background of the participants. Different experiences, alternative treatment of case study data
The chance to put in use through the group tasks of all the issues we had previously discussed in the plenary sessions.
The interaction between the colleagues.
the approach of the evaluation subject by the moderators
The chance to interact and collaborate inside the working groups with colleagues from different services
the speakers were very well trained
The issues addressed did not always remain in a theoretical basis. The experts were listening to the GR case and offered possible options and advice.
The interaction and the use of the information provided by the Evaluation Helpdesk during presentation during working groups.
the interaction between participants
The practical examples and group discussions were particularly useful, as they demonstrated how theory can be applied in practice.
The expert speakers were well prepared and aware of the diversity of the attendants. Also the group sessions were really useful to practice on evaluation methodologies.
The application of theory through the group discussion
the experience of the seminar speakers
that is was divided in presentation of the issue and on working in case studies.
I liked the immediacy of the group discussion and their subject.
Our work on the case study was quite interesting
Exchanging views and collaborating with colleagues
experts, brainstorming
GROUP DISCUSSIONS
The part with case-studies and the interaction between instructors and the participants
The group exercise
The fact that the tutors have inspired the attendants with a quite new insight of the evaluation procedure!
the Well-organized discussion in workshops
The teamwork that on specific case studies

What aspects of the training could be improved?
Experiment with the application of evaluation methods and verify advantages and disadvantages, highlight in which European evaluation research they have been used and with which SWOT results with respect to the context of use
Better grouping of participants
Knowing the "learners" prior experience level, in order to divide the groups with appropriate balance.
I think it would be useful to increase group work.

What aspects of the training could be improved?
the thematic sessions - workgroups. Not possible to follow and practically participate due to not relevant subject neither to projects I deal will not to my interests
- The training is too generic / theoretical and far from the MA reality
- The case studies we worked on should have been distributed well before the event
- tangible examples of an evaluation that actually took place for a ERDF / ESF Programme should be provided, possibly as a full-scale case study. The case study should concern a country with similar characteristics.
Smaller groups for the workshop
Theory analysis based on real examples
It could be more focused on the practical problems we are facing while planning and tendering evaluations that have to do with regulatory constraints both in the Member State level and EU level.
Longer duration
I think that the case study issues can be more simplified and less chaotic as a lighter first step in the understanding of evaluation difficulties
Some questions in the leaflet that was given for the group work wasn't clear
More exercises / case studies to work on
The material for the case studies, and any other supporting document could have been disseminated earlier so as to give time for adequate preparation to participants.
to emphasize good practices from other member states
I believe that the seminar should be more focused on examples relevant to the experiences and framework of the NSRF Services.
The case studies could be shared in advance to allow better preparation, and additional time for presenting and discussing the answers would be appreciated.
It could be more focused to more specific audience
Analysis of a case study by the experts
Broader subject matter in the seminar's case studies (e.g. large infrastructure and transportation projects)
There should have been a presentation and synthesis at the end
The training should be adapted to the local context. The MAs perform horizontal evaluations. A full-scale, real-life case study (eg from a previous programming period) would be very useful.
To work in smaller groups
Maybe the questions of the case-studies could be more specific and so vague (the articulation)
Perhaps more example cases on infrastructure projects.
Nothing needs to be significantly improved. Everything is at a sufficiently adequate level.
Focus on small evaluations (budgetary and content-related) that concern mainly the regional programs.

Additional comments
Thank you for the opportunity to meet all tutors and colleagues
It was a different experience on the topic - from many others from the previous years. More interesting approach, more interactive and a bit focused on GR cases.
Overall, it was a very valuable and well-organised workshop. I look forward to similar events in the future.
Effort to focus on evalauations more relevant to the regulatory obligation of the M.A.
No

Additional comments
The instructors were so communicative and very helpful and near the audience
Everything was quite well organized indeed.
No thank you very much

5. List of participants

First Name, Name	Institution
Greek Authorities	
Polyxeni Achyropoulou	Special Service for Institutional Support and Information Systems / Sub-directorate for Information Systems;
Agapi Adamopoulou	MA for Regional Program "South Aegean"
Anthoula Anagnostaki	MA for Sectoral Program "Digital Transformation";
Emmanuel Apostolou	MA for Regional Program "North Aegean"
Marianna Arvaniti	MA for Sectoral Program "Environment and Climate Change"
Lamprakis Avdelas	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Environment and Energy"
Nikos Baltogiannis	MA for Regional Program "Ipeiros"
Chara Baxivanaki	MA for Sectoral Program "Digital Transformation"
Apostolos Biniaris	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Transport and Infrastructure"
Olga Daniilidou	MA for Migration & Home Affairs Funds
Konstantina Dimitraka	Special Service for the Coordination of ESF Actions / Unit C
Yannis Dimitrelos	Special Service for the Coordination of Planning, Evaluation and Implementation/ Unit C
Stavros Divanis	MA for Sectoral Program "Human Resources and Social Cohesion"
Kyriaki Dokoumetzidou	MA for Sectoral Program "Transport"
Christina Dritsa	MA for Sectoral Program "Transport"
Eleftheria Efthymiou	Special Service for the Coordination of Planning, Evaluation and Implementation/ Unit C
Ioanna Fanariotou	MA for Regional Program "Western Greece"
Dimitra Halikia	Special Service for the Coordination of Planning, Evaluation and Implementation / Head of Unit C "Evaluation, Enabling Conditions and Indicators"
Eleni Kallinikou	MA for Migration & Home Affairs Funds
Konstantina Kapella	MA for Regional Program "Crete"
Ioannis Kartsakis	MA for Regional Program "Thessaly"
Glykeria Katifori	MA for Regional Program "Western Greece"
Konstantina Kolokotroni	MA for Sectoral Program "Environment and Climate Change"
Polyxeni Kosma	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Climate Crisis and Civil Protection"
George Kostaras	MA for Regional Program "Central Macedonia"
Eni Koukoula	Special Service for the Coordination of ESF Actions / Head of Unit C "ESF+ actions coordination of Evaluation and Indicators"
Maria Kouzakou	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Labor and Social Security"
Elli Krasopoulou	MA for Sectoral Program "Just Development Transition"
Gianna Krokou	MA for Regional Program "Attica"
Sofia Liappa	MA for Sectoral Program "Competitiveness"
Vanessa Linardou	MA for Regional Program "Ionia islands"

First Name, Name	Institution
Theodosia Maganari	Special Service for the Coordination of Planning, Evaluation and Implementation/ Unit E
Elisavet Mavridou	Special Service for the Coordination of Planning, Evaluation and Implementation/ Unit D
Styliani Moschovaki	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Health"
Ioanna Niachopetrou	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Education, Religious Affairs and Sports"
Eftyxia Papaxatzopoulou	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Environment and Energy"
Stavroula Psarrou	MA for Sectoral Program "Environment and Climate Change"
Evgenia Ringa	MA for Sectoral Program "Competitiveness"
Aggeliki Romanou	Special Service for Institutional Support and Information Systems / Sub-directorate for Institutional Support
Antonis Sakellaris	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Health"
Vasiliki Staikou	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Social Cohesion and Family Affairs"
Petros Stavrou	Special Service for the Coordination of Planning, Evaluation and Implementation/ Unit C
Stergios Titakis	Special Service for Institutional Support and Information Systems / Sub-directorate for Information Systems
Alexandra Tseliou	Special Service for the Coordination of Planning, Evaluation and Implementation/ Unit D
Sofia Tsitouridou	MA for Regional Program "Ipeiros"
Anastasia Tzeli	Special Service for the Coordination of Regional Programmes
Nikolaos Vasileiou	Executive Unit of the Ministry of "Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy"
Aikaterini Voulodimou	MA for Sectoral Program "Civil Protection"
Aspa Zotou	Special Service for the Coordination of Planning, Evaluation and Implementation/ Unit C
Commission	
Enrico Pesaresi	DG REGIO / Deputy Head of Unit B1
Jorge Villanueva Garcia	DG EMPL
Johannes Ziemendorff	DG EMPL / Deputy Head of Unit G5
Evaluation Helpdesk	
Elliot Stern	Lancaster University
Thomas Delahais	Quadrant Conseil
Andrea Naldini	Ismeri Europa

Annex 1 – Presentation given at the workshop
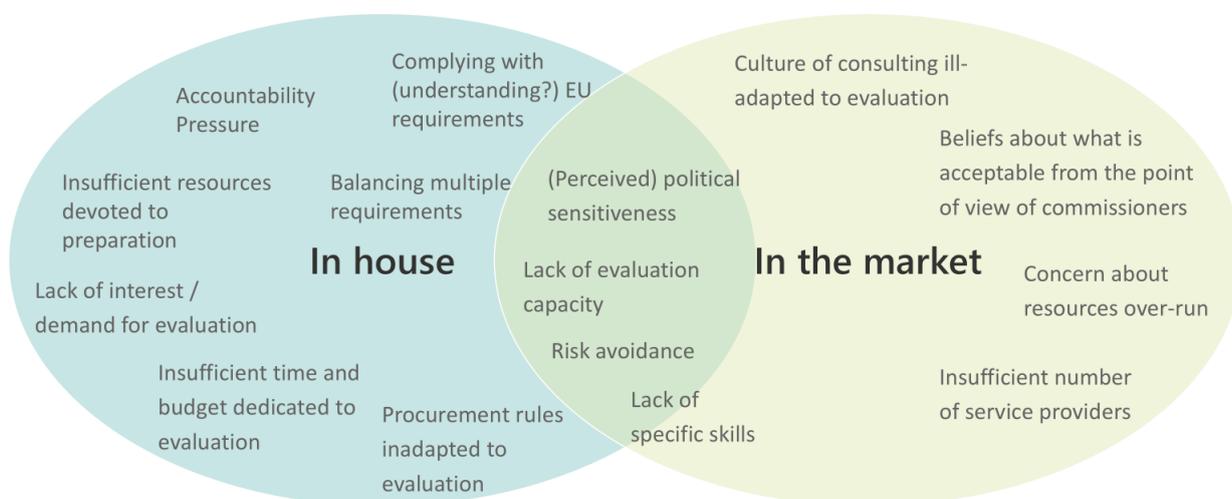

09:30 – 09:50
Introduction

Introduction by Greek authorities, DG REGIO (Enrico Pesaresi) and DG EMPL (Jorge Villanueva Garcia, Johannes Ziemendorff)

09:50 – 11:00
Plenary

Commissioning the evaluation. Challenges in procurement. Building on existing knowledge. The most important questions your ToR should answer. Anticipating evaluation use.

Common challenges when commissioning evaluations…

Accountability Pressure

Complying with (understanding?) EU requirements

Culture of consulting ill-adapted to evaluation

Insufficient resources devoted to preparation

Balancing multiple requirements

(Perceived) political sensitiveness

Beliefs about what is acceptable from the point of view of commissioners

In house

Lack of evaluation capacity

In the market

Concern about resources over-run

Lack of interest / demand for evaluation

Risk avoidance

Insufficient time and budget dedicated to evaluation

Procurement rules inadapted to evaluation

Lack of specific skills

Insufficient number of service providers

The common pitfalls of the commissioning process

- ToRs are written (and bidders write a proposal) while the evaluation scope, information needs, and potential uses, **are still mostly unknown**

- Contractual arrangements are made at the beginning of the evaluation on methods, agenda, team… **but may be obsolete early on**

- The selected proposal may not be adapted to the actual needs that appear **after the data collection has started**

- Some important aspects (e.g. quality of collaboration) **cannot be guaranteed through ToRs**

- It is difficult to address quality issues when the choice of service provider was **intrinsically inadequate**

For consultants, ToRs are a guessing game. What do you think they are looking for in ToRs?

Go to wooclap.com and use code KOCZUC

Definitions...

- Commissioning is the process through which evaluation needs are turned into evaluation services

- It involves:
  - identifying and clarifying those needs
  - considering how they could be answered through evaluation services
  - specifying a series of administrative and technical arrangements through which these services can be delivered
  - assessing different proposals – and purchasing services

- Good commissioning entails preparatory (planning) and follow-up work (quality assurance)

Main advice

- ToRs should be short! 5 to 10 pages is enough. Detailed information can go in the appendix

- ToRs should be thought with their users in mind, **i.e. service providers**. What do THEY need to know:
  - To decide to answer (do they have a chance to win that bid?)?
  - To make a relevant proposal?

- ToRs are a process:
  - Tell users in advance (evaluation plan for year X, PIN),
  - Use questions to clarify ToRs,
  - Offer possibility to counter-argument

The 6 W's of Commissioning Evaluations

Why are we evaluating? For what uses?

Who will be involved?

hoW much resources will be invested?

What is to be evaluated?

When are deliverables expected?

hoW should the evaluation be performed?

What do you need to do to write good ToRs?

- Definition of object: stakeholder mapping, problem definition, clarification of intervention's expectations
  - What are we talking about? How different from initial plans?
- Consultation of potential users
  - Is there something to learn? What are the current concerns? Is there a decision to be made? Etc.
- Initial portfolio review
  - What is there to evaluate? How does the current state of progress affect the evaluation?
- Agreement on priorities
  - What is most important to evaluate? What should the evaluation focus on?

- Technical feasibility assessment
  - Is there data to evaluate, or can we access that data easily?
- Simulation/planning of methodological approach
  - Do we have an idea of how this evaluation could be carried out?
- Budget simulation
  - Do we have an idea of the cost of this evaluation? How does it fit into our budget?
- Simulation of selection
  - What does good look like, what 'markers' of quality, how does this translate into criteria?
- Consultation with procurement
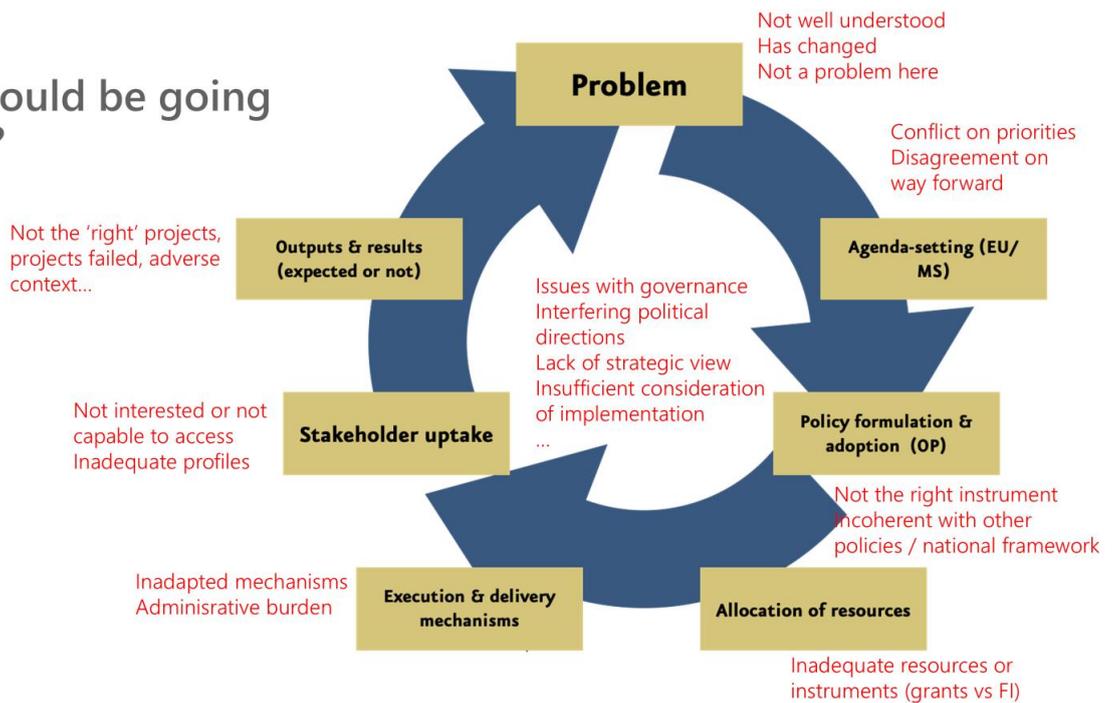 - Does it work – administratively, legally?

What is to be evaluated?

- The Evaluation Plan gives an idea of what *could be* evaluated, **but the choice of the evaluation scope and evaluation questions should always depend on the context** at the moment of commissioning

- What is to be evaluated should depend on:
  - Potential uses / concerns
  - Actual progress of implementation
  - Availability of Data / Methods / Expertise
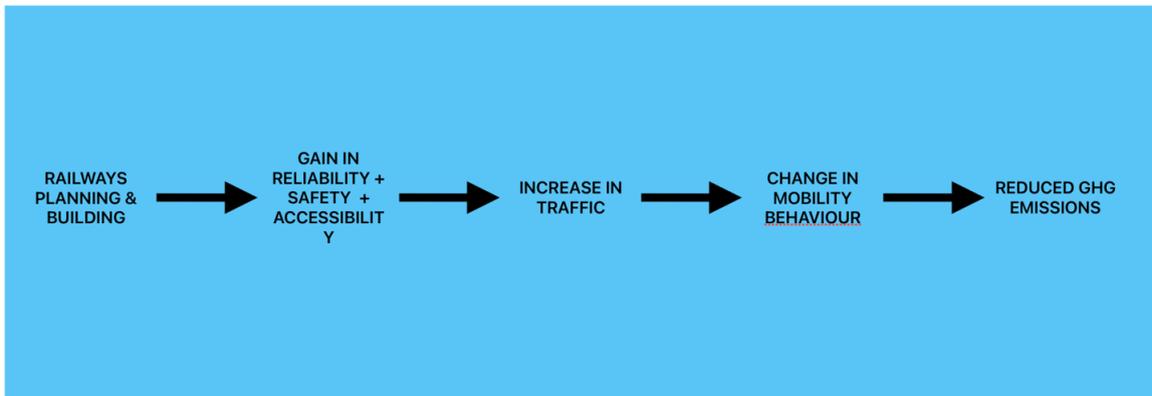
Evaluation in the policy cycle
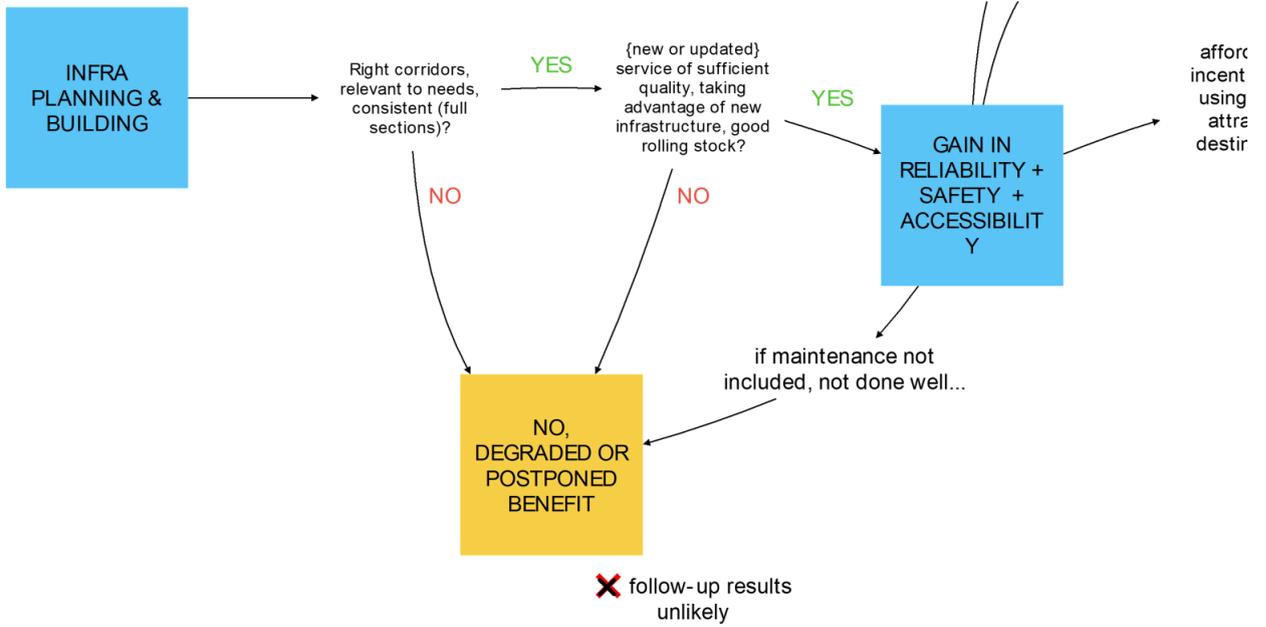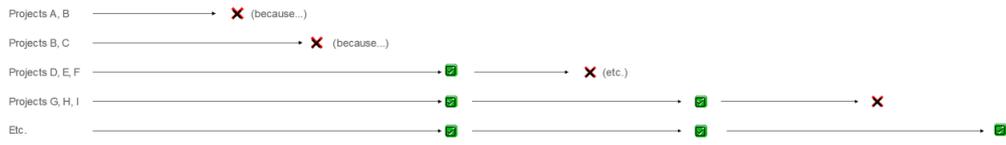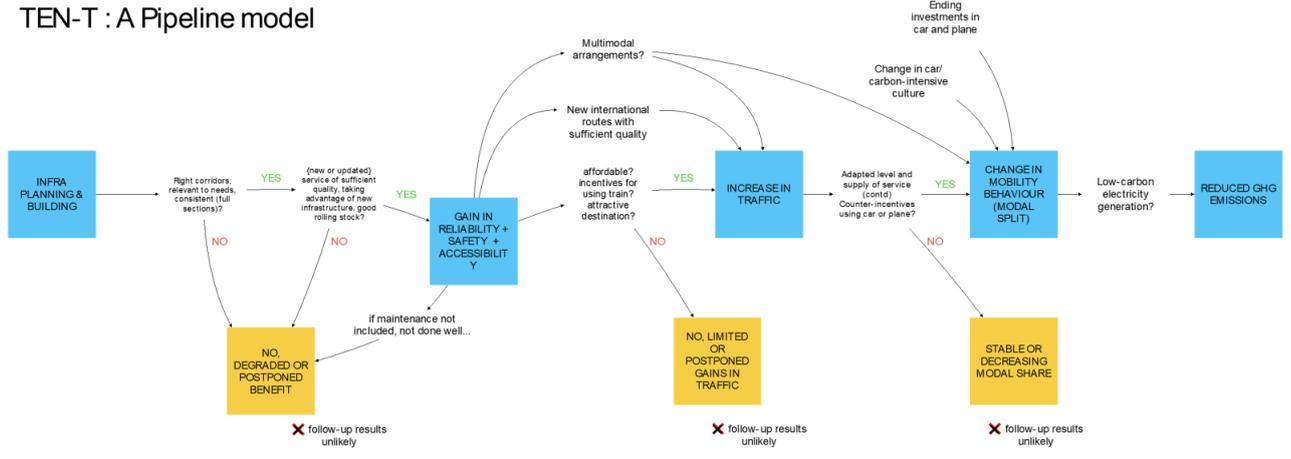

What could be going wrong?

Make a case for use

Defend choices
"Defend and justify our choices before decision-makers or partners and revise them if necessary."

Inform strategy
"Stimulate strategic reflection by management (at operative, executive, or top level)."

Learn lessons
"Learn lessons and put good practices to work when carrying out interventions."

Better appraise and design
"Provide better insights at the appraisal phase (better ex-ante evaluation of projects) and improve the design of future interventions (wider range of methods, feasibility, etc.)."

Support discussions
"Substantiate internal and external debates on the best policy guidelines or ways to solve development problems."

Strategic uses
Internal uses or uses that target institutional partners, to support sectoral policies and strategies

Continuous-improvement uses
Primarily internal uses, to improve future projects and interventions

Monitor over time
"Help in project implementation monitoring, especially by providing the data needed to make informed choices."

Management uses
Primarily internal uses, to better monitor and manage ongoing projects and interventions

Dialog uses
Mostly external uses, aimed at strengthening or stimulating partnerships in the projects and policies supported

Dialog with partners
"Facilitate dialog with partners, in particular by building a relationship of trust."

Support decision-making
"Support decision-making on appraisal, progress, or renewal of projects."

Reflect with the team
"Facilitate reflection within teams on the purpose and quality of the action, by providing internal feedback."

Strengthen capacities
"Help strengthen the capacity of the stakeholders involved"

The following persons helped develop this map of uses: Thomas Delahais, Agathe Devaux-Spatarakis, François Jégou, Jade Joviado, Camille Laporte, Léa Macias, Fiora Noël, Karen Rousseau, Claire Zanuso.

AFD

Clarify assumptions to support scoping

RAILWAYS PLANNING & BUILDING → GAIN IN RELIABILITY + SAFETY + ACCESSIBILITY → INCREASE IN TRAFFIC → CHANGE IN MOBILITY BEHAVIOUR → REDUCED GHG EMISSIONS
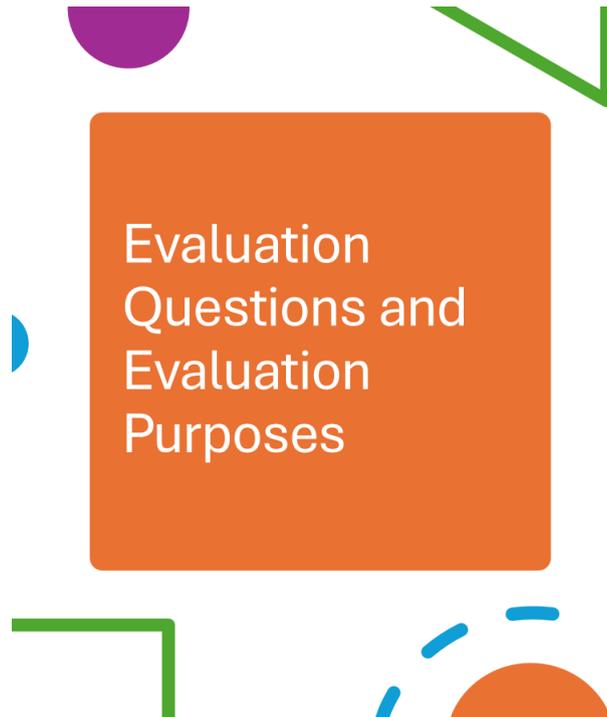
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TEN-T : A Pipeline model

Break

11:20 – 12:30
Plenary

Scoping the evaluation; choosing a unit of analysis; specifying the overall evaluation approach and a suitable 'menu' of methods: the role of programme theory.

Evaluation Questions and Evaluation Purposes

EQs fall into broad types, related to the purpose (or purposes) of an evaluation. These will include:

- Accounting for Results
- Better Management and Delivery
- Learning and improvement
- Capacity development and sustainability

It is also worth differentiating between 'High Level' EQs from subsidiary EQs – in order to decide on evaluation priorities and where efforts should be concentrated
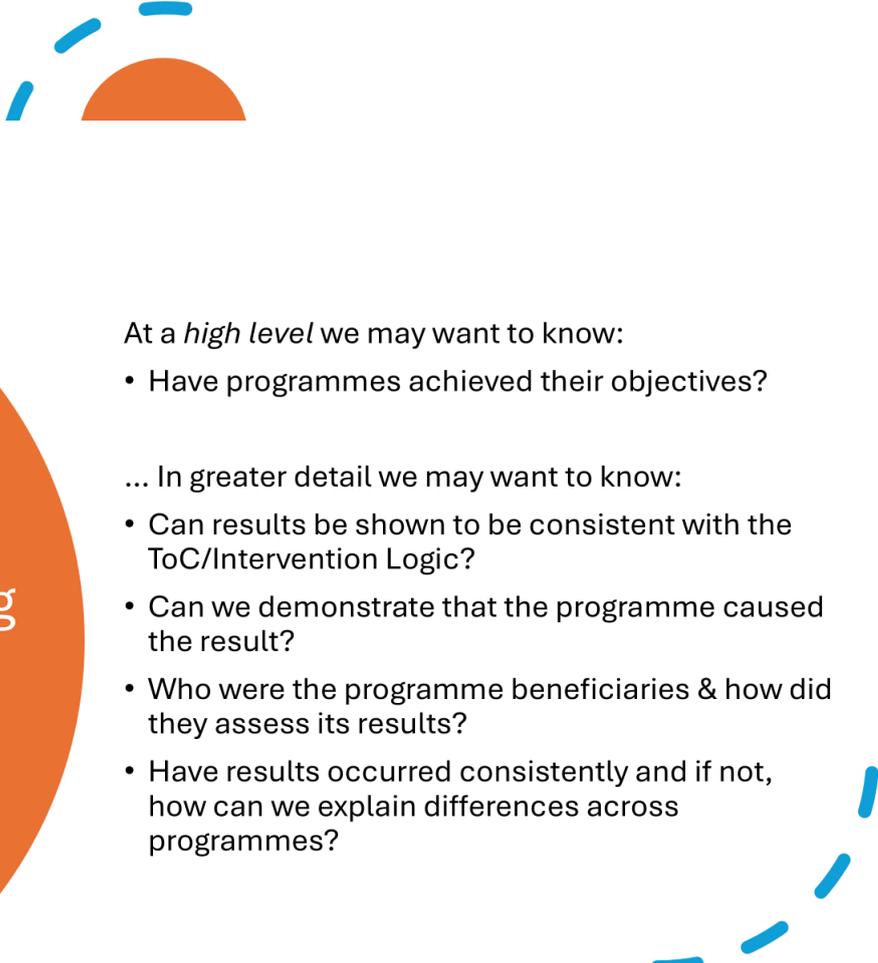
Accounting for Results

At a *high level* we may want to know:

- Have programmes achieved their objectives?

... In greater detail we may want to know:

- Can results be shown to be consistent with the ToC/Intervention Logic?
- Can we demonstrate that the programme caused the result?
- Who were the programme beneficiaries & how did they assess its results?
- Have results occurred consistently and if not, how can we explain differences across programmes?

Better Management and Delivery

At a *high level* we may want to know:

- How well-managed was the programme?

In greater detail we may want to know:

- Were resources well-targeted?
- Were resources efficiently spent?
- Did delivery/implementation proceed as planned?
- Were mid-course corrections needed and why?

Learning and Improvement

	At a *high level* we may want to know:
	What have been the lessons for programming and policy in future?
	In greater detail we may want to know:
	Could a similar programme be better targeted and delivered if it was to be repeated?
	Are there new ideas about how to achieve similar results through other means?
	Do these kinds of programmes contribute sufficiently to strategic policy goals?

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Capacity development and sustainability

At a *high level* we may want to know:

- Has the programme helped create new capacities and networks?

In greater detail we may want to know:

- Will new capacities continue to generate the kinds of results that the programme intended?
- Are these capacities likely to be self-sustaining and economically viable?
- Have capacities been created in civil society or in public administrations?
- If there is little evidence of sustainability, why is this?

Designing Evaluations

A 'design' is more than a method

A design involves a deep understanding of what we want to know, the programme context in which we are working and of the capabilities of different families of methods

Interview surveys, case-studies, statistical analyses of labour market data, observational studies, all can be part of different designs

On the basis of this understanding, we can consciously choose which of the many ways we could evaluate any programme

The Design Triangle
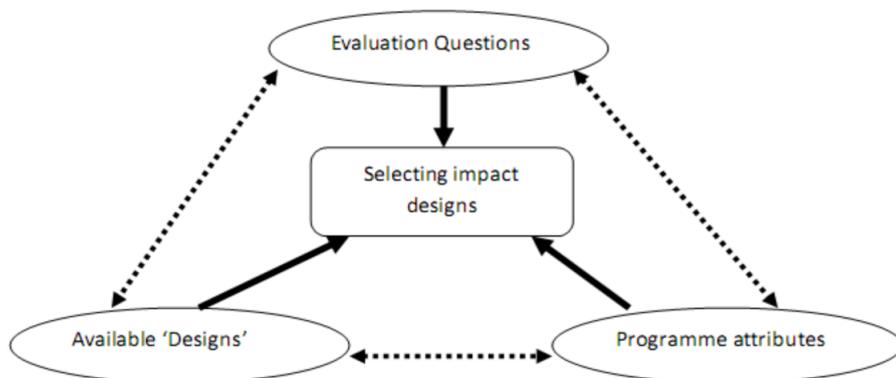
The Design triangle suggests that...

We need to match:

- Evaluation Questions (what we want to know)

with the
- Characteristics of Programmes (the 'object' to be evaluated)

with
- Available designs and their capabilities (what these designs can do given the Evaluation Questions being asked and the characteristics of Programmes)
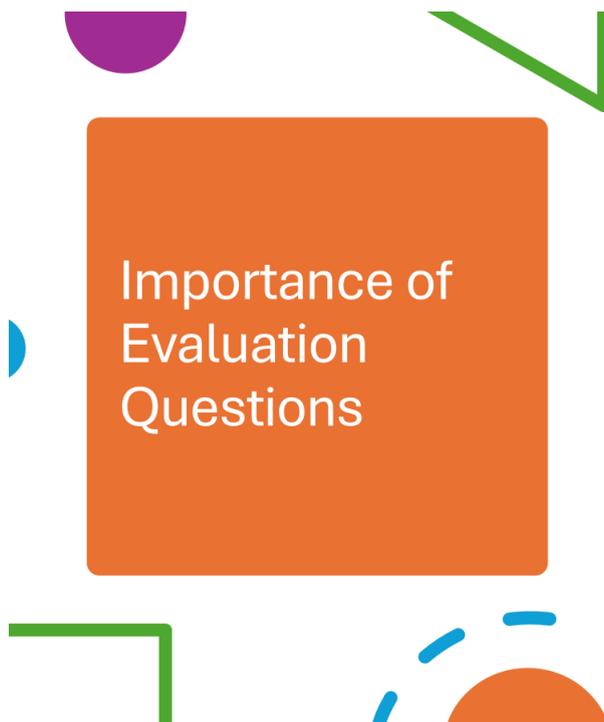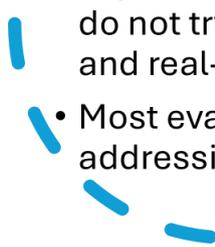
Importance of Evaluation Questions

- Historically evaluations were structured around generic criteria such as Effectiveness; Relevance; Efficiency; Coherence; and Sustainability
- These criteria-led evaluations often produced evaluations that lacked specifics and were not useful for policy purposes. Nowadays we tend to operationalise criteria into more specific *Evaluation Questions*
- Evaluation Questions (EQs) are also a crucial link between evaluation purpose and how we make methodological choices

Evaluations need to answer clear and answerable questions!

Importance of Evaluation Questions

- EQs are not the same as an 'interview question' – they are 'high-level' question able to be analysed and studied
- EQs focus on the relationship between a programme and real world 'consequences' 'effects' and 'results'
- EQs that only focus on the internal operations of a programme and do not try to illuminate the relationships between programmes and real-world effects are not EQs!
- Most evaluations will have a number of prioritised EQs – each addressing a specific point of interest in a programme

# Centrality of Evaluation Questions
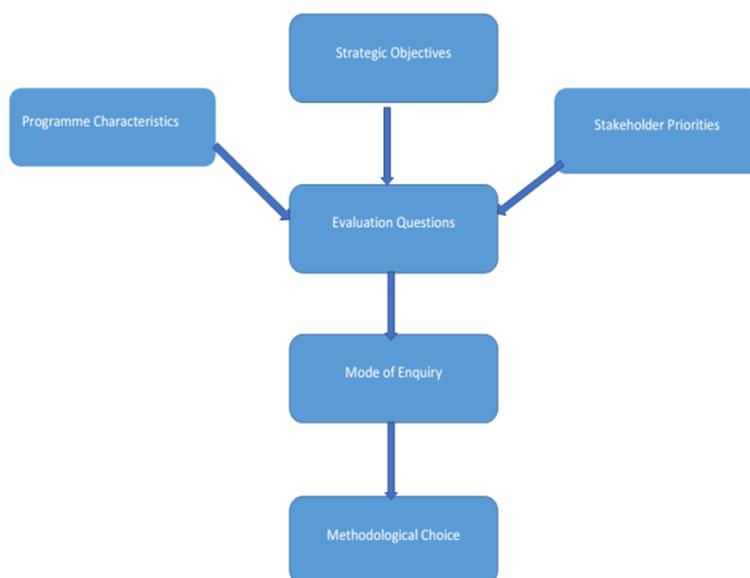
Evaluation Questions and Strategic Objectives

- Strategic Objectives refers to the policy goals that justify a programme – in our case through the various programme priorities – strengthening research; access to ICTs; enhancing competitiveness; promoting social inclusion etc. - that are intended to contribute to 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'

- Evaluation Questions need to relate to these goals and priorities although monitoring/indicator exercises that are not necessarily evaluative will also address results

Programme Characteristics

- Evaluation Questions have to take account of programme characteristics
- There are many ways to characterise a programme – in terms of sectors; objectives, their degree of innovativeness etc.
- For the purpose of specifying EQs, characteristics should first be understood in terms of an 'intervention logic', 'theory of change' or 'programme theory' set into a wider context
- Theories of Change can be variously described but usually cover the sequencing of a programmes cycle set into a wider socio-economic and regional context

Programme Characteristics
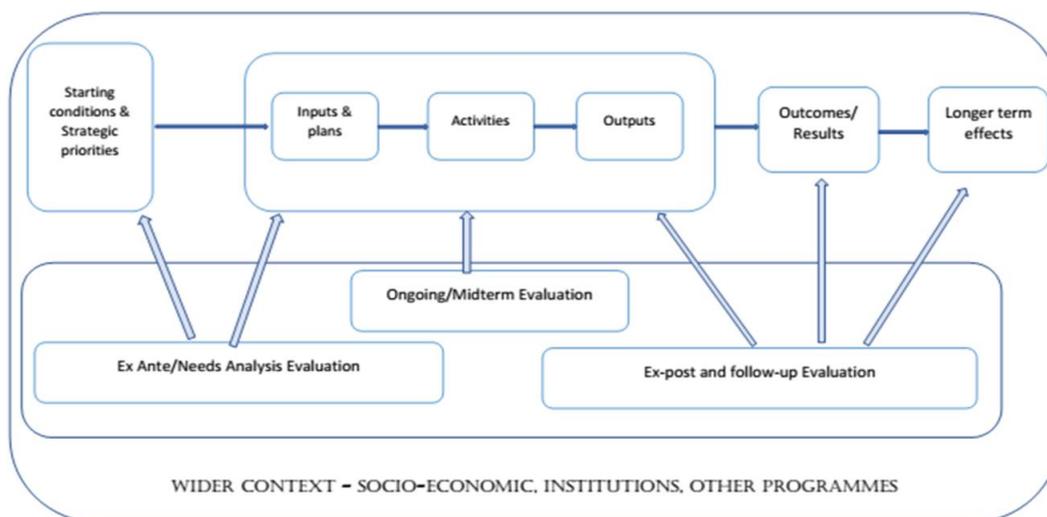
Programme Characteristics

When we discuss methodological choices there are other kinds of programme characteristics that also have to be considered. These include for example:

- Innovativeness of programme goals and delivery
- Simplicity or complexity of the intervention
- Types of outputs envisaged – whether they are material, behavioural, new services, new institutional arrangements
- Timescales and trajectories of change
- How bounded or embeddedness programmes are in relation to other programmes, activities and systems

Stakeholder priorities

- Evaluations like programmes have stakeholders
- Stakeholders will want answers to *their* questions
- Stakeholders are the users of evaluation – they are also often the gatekeepers to evaluation data and provide necessary cooperation for evaluators
- The credibility and legitimacy of an evaluation will often depend on how far the questions of stakeholders are prioritised
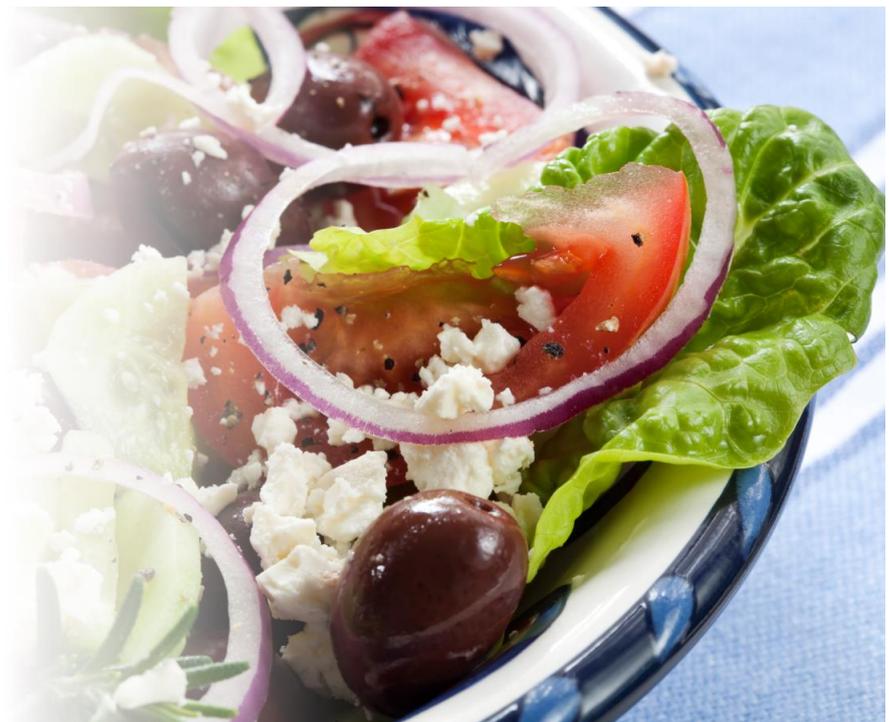
12:30 – 13:00

Introduction to group works

Scoping the evaluation; choosing a unit of analysis; specifying the overall evaluation approach and a suitable 'menu' of methods: the role of programme theory.

Lunch

14:00 – 15:30
Group work

Scoping the evaluation using the programme theory based on case study. Using scoping work including the programme theory to write the ToR
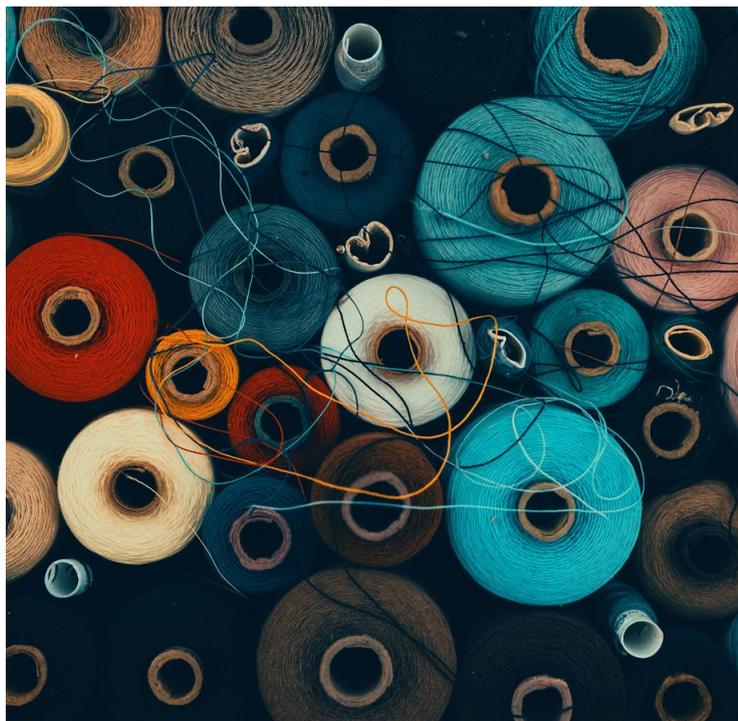
Break

15:45 – 16:45
Group work

Asking evaluation questions jointly with key stakeholders guided by the programme theory. Identifying areas for inquiry. Exploration of methods to answer the questions

16:45 – 17:00
Wrap-up

Day 2

09:30 – 10:15
Discussion

Interim review ενδιάμεση ανασκόπηση of Day 1 by Helpdesk experts and DG REGIO and DG EMPL representatives

10:15 – 11:30

Plenary

Quality Assurance

A good evaluation is an evaluation…

1. That is implemented according to what was initially planned?
2. That follows a set of recognised rules and standards of quality?
3. That implements a cutting-edge methodology/μεθ αιχμής?
4. That provides a fair assessment / καλή εκτίμηση of the situation?
5. That provides new perspectives on the intervention / that makes you think?
6. That is being used?
7. That is an opportunity for dialogue among stakeholders?
8. Which results stakeholders trust?
9. …

Go to wooclap.com and use code KOCZUC

Allez sur **wooclap.com** et utilisez le code **KOCZUC**

A good evaluation is an evaluation that...

4 provides a fair assessment of the situation? `815 pts`	**8** which results stakeholders trust? `440 pts`	
5 makes you reflect on the intervention ? `644 pts`	**7** helps stakeholders talk to each other? `431 pts`	
6 is being used by actors `624 pts`	**1** is implemented according to the initial plan? `364 pts`	
2 follows a set of recognised rules and standards of quality? `565 pts`	**3** implements a cutting-edge methodology? `317 pts`	

wooclap   Votes 2 / 2   + Messages 🔒 🔍 100% 🔍 ⛶   42 / 62 ⌨

Definition of quality is shifting

COMPLIANCE TO TOR?
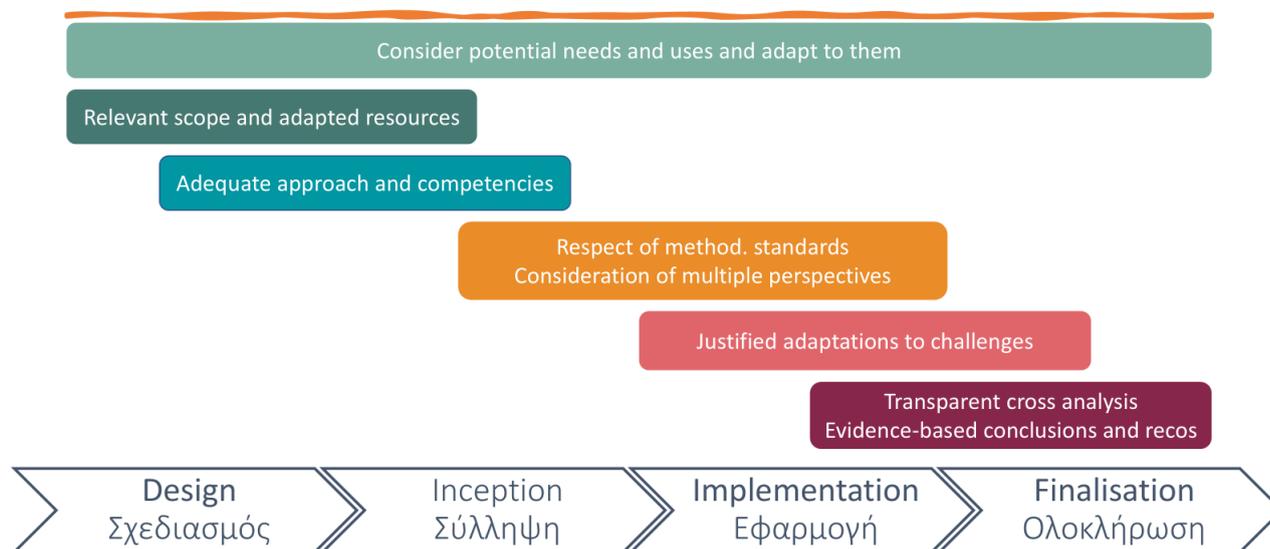ΣΥΜΜΌΡΦΩΣΗ

RELIABLE BY DESIGN
ΑΞΙΟΠ ΣΧΕΔΙΑΣΜΌΣ

TRUSTABLE IN PRACTICE ΑΞΙΟΠ ΕΦΑΡΜΟΓΉ

USEFUL

Quality in the evaluation process

Consider potential needs and uses and adapt to them

Relevant scope and adapted resources

Adequate approach and competencies

Respect of method. standards
Consideration of multiple perspectives

Justified adaptations to challenges

Transparent cross analysis
Evidence-based conclusions and recos

| Design Σχεδιασμός | Inception Σύλληψη | Implementation Εφαρμογή | Finalisation Ολοκλήρωση |

Quality starts with good ToR!

✓ Set the evaluated programme in a clear policy context

? Ask clear evaluation questions

▤ Give reasonable expectations of what the evaluation should cover

⚙ To do all of the above, clarify the Theory of Change behind the intervention

💡 Hint at how the evaluation could be used

The case for quality assurance

- Quality control is like the cavalry; it is always late

- Quality goals are adaptive, they change along the evaluation process and must be negotiated

- Quality as usefulness is uncertain and means seizing opportunities as they arrive
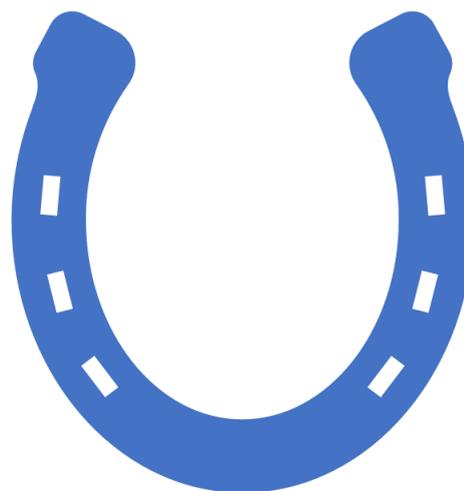
Choosing the best proposal

- As any evaluation process, choosing the best proposal means **formulating explicit criteria**: administrative, technical, financial

- These criteria can be pondered; some criteria can lead to the exclusion of proposals

- Those aspects easiest to assess are not necessarily those most relevant to choose

- Paradox of multicriteria analysis: mediocre proposals on all aspects can be retained over those with a few excellent points

Some criteria to assess the approach

There is an **overall strategy** to answer evaluation questions (not a mere list of tools and methods)

Each tool or method is justified by **information needs in answer to EQs**

The approach is consistent, and you can see how the different phases fit together

There is an **initial discussion of challenges** to the robustness of the evaluation process, or to the generalisability of its finding, and solutions are provided

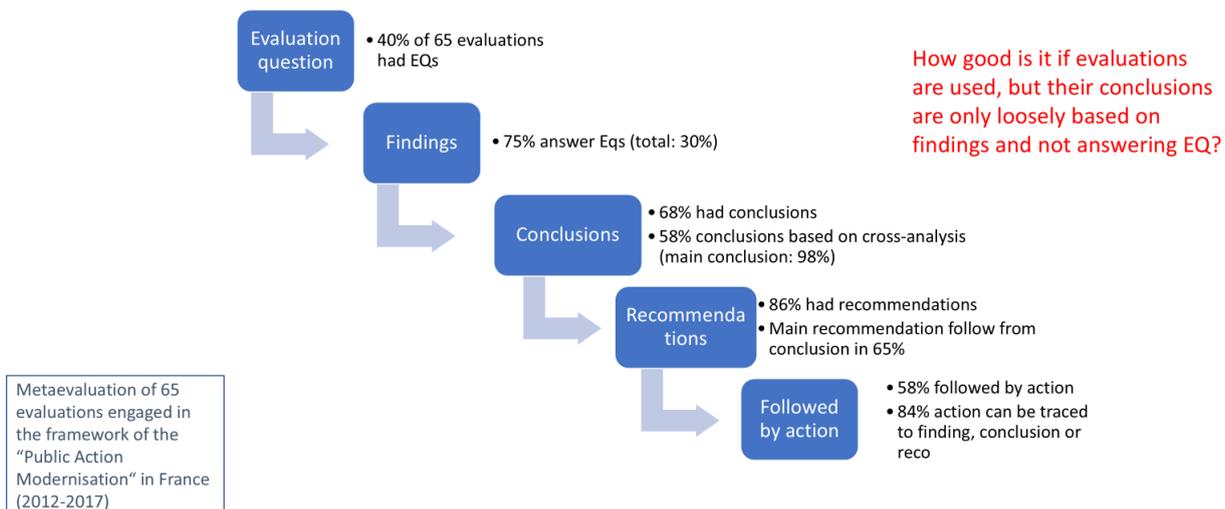The approach and methods are **illustrated with examples** or samples of original work

A few tips to receive better proposals

- Inform potential bidders **early enough** ('prior information notice')
- Write ToRs in ways that will **arise intellectual interest of providers**
- Make **documentation available**, including through open data
- Make explicit that **providing original analysis in proposal will count** in selection
- **Encourage** bidders to answer **collectively** when different skills are needed
- Do not forget **feedback to non-retained**
- Ask **bidders** what they think about your ToRs and ways to make them more attractive

A few tips to make better choices

- Use **thresholds** to avoid very bad proposals or bidders competing exclusively on price
- For bigger evaluations, consider **different steps in bidding**, e.g. an open call for interest; publication of ToRs and selection of 3 best proposals; audition and adaptation of proposal; award of the contract
- **Maintain long-term relationships** beyond bids; learn which providers are most likely to respond to which ToRs
- Open the selection process to **a jury** involving different stakeholders

Quality: beware of the weak link!

Evaluation question
- 40% of 65 evaluations had EQs

Findings
- 75% answer Eqs (total: 30%)

Conclusions
- 68% had conclusions
- 58% conclusions based on cross-analysis (main conclusion: 98%)

Recommendations
- 86% had recommendations
- Main recommendation follow from conclusion in 65%

Followed by action
- 58% followed by action
- 84% action can be traced to finding, conclusion or reco

How good is it if evaluations are used, but their conclusions are only loosely based on findings and not answering EQ?

Metaevaluation of 65 evaluations engaged in the framework of the "Public Action Modernisation" in France (2012-2017)

Evaluation Quality as an Organisational Reflex

- The focus of most quality initiatives is on managing individual evaluations or a portfolio of evaluations
- Quality Assurance is also an organisational matter
- Are there organisational procedures, routines and budgets necessary to underpin quality?
- Are guidelines in place about reviewing existing evidence, using peer review panels, choosing methods, involving partners and stakeholders?
- Have ground rules been negotiated – to ensure data access, ensure evaluation independence, disseminate reports

Break

11:45 – 12:30
Group works

Identifying potential quality issues and ways to address them

12:30 – 13:00
Plenary

Designing for policy use

Making Evaluations Useful

- Using evaluations constructively is often something we think about at the end of an evaluation – how to disseminate results
- In our experience at the Helpdesk this is often too late!
- So what we want to do today is to present the case for planning useful and useable evaluations from the very beginning of evaluations
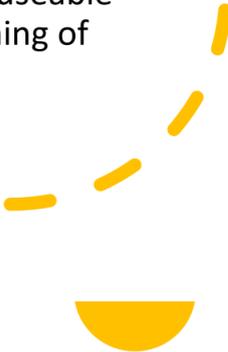
Making Evaluations Useful

- Evaluations cost much time and many €uro –
- but they are not always useful or used……

- Two reasons:
  - We don't always remember the *full range* of purposes that evaluations can help achieve
  - We don't tend to plan the engagement of stakeholders across the programme & policy lifecycle to take advantage of these purposes

Making Evaluations Useful

- Evaluation is a 'multi-purpose tool' – not just an administrative burden - when used well!

- Purposes can include:
  - Accountability for monies spent
  - Management & implementation support
  - Programme review –mid-course correction
  - Policy strengthening
  - Policy planning

Making Evaluations Useful

Not every evaluation fulfils every purpose!

- Depends on national priorities & capacities
- Extent to which programmes are innovative or uncertain
- Also depends on characteristics of programmes

Programme characteristics matter...

- A standard programme – offering loans or subsidies or delivering a service through a single administrative 'channel'

Or

- An infrastructure investment in road, rail & electricity grids

Or

- An innovative 'Just Transition' initiative that engages many stakeholders – enterprises, citizens & public agencies...

Or

- An RTD investment that depends on new governance arrangements supporting joint decision making & cooperation

- Some programmes are likely to have short term results while others have intergenerational ambitions
- Some programmes are free-standing while others are integrated into national, and European strategies
- Some are inter-regional and transnational
- Some involve communities and 'bottom-up' inputs, others do not
- And most disruptive nowadays is how often circumstances change and policy goals also have to adapt………..

Evaluation Helpdesk 2021-2027

Making Evaluations Useful

! Some programmes/policy instruments more likely to need mid-term review and redirection than others…….

⚠ Although in times of geopolitical uncertainty many more will need *evidence-based* redirection

👥 And different programmes involve different types and numbers of stakeholders in evaluations

🏛 National governments, regional authorities, service providers, SMEs, beneficiaries, universities, municipalities, trade associations, civil society…….

Design principles for useful evaluations….

- Identifying where and when use should be prioritised
- Identifying potential users and stakeholders
- Identifying what potential users want to know
- Matching policy and programme lifecycle with timescales for evaluation 'delivery'
- Designing a process of engagement that identifies both information needs *and* sites for ongoing dialogue

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Making Evaluations Useful

- Why 'dialogue' and 'engagement'?
- Often in evaluation we apply a 'learning' lens as well as an 'accountability' lens
  - An accountability lens emphasises reports and analysis at the end of a policy-cycle, but a learning lens emphasises engagement and dialogue
  - Partly because it is difficult to know all the questions to ask when new programmes are launched
  - Partly because interpreting results of evaluations is often a multi-party endeavour
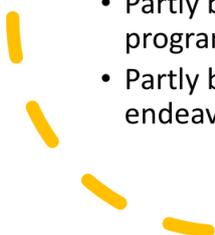
Evaluation Helpdesk 2021-2027

Lunch
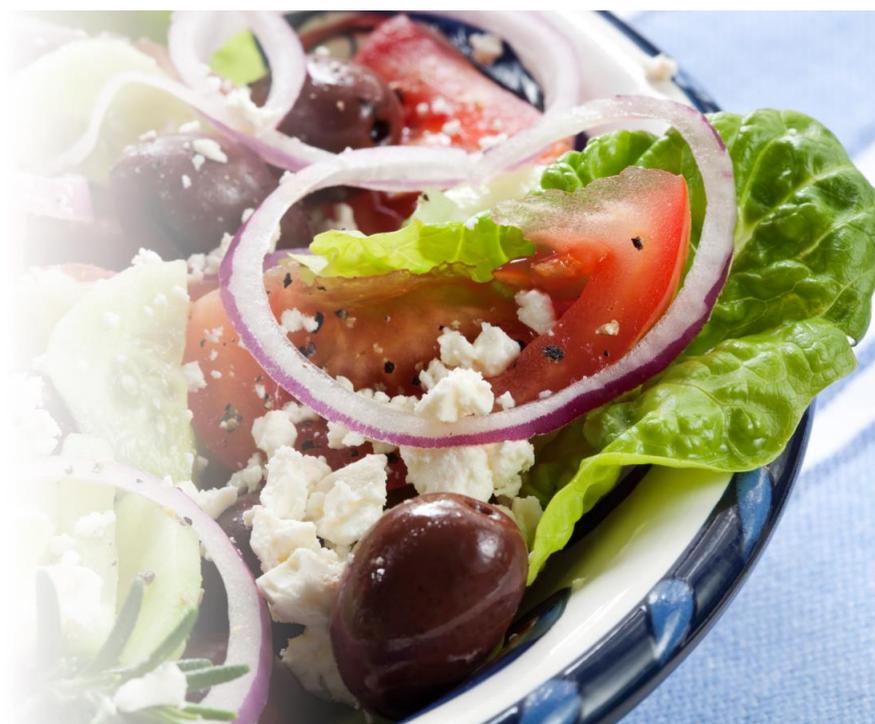
14:00 – 15:00
Group works

Strategies for evaluation use

15:00 – 15:45
Feedback

Presentation by 4 groups, feedback

15:45 – 16:00
Plenary

Tips and tricks

Evaluation Helpdesk on
Cohesion Policy
https://www.linkedin.com/
groups/14420317/

Evaluation Helpdesk (2025)