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Learning document

Pillar II: Action oriented evaluation
2nd Learning Journey Piedmont

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Brief introduction

This document highlights the most relevant learnings from the second learning journey held in Turin in November 2017 around the second pillar: **Action-Oriented evaluation**. The incorporation of evaluation to decision-making processes to coordinate changes around those instruments at the different managing levels is an important aspect of the management of policy instruments and policy mixes. Indeed, collecting evidence is not enough for policy learning and introducing change, since it is important to convert the evidence into applicable knowledge. For doing so, different aspects need to be taken into account and this document briefly describes some of such elements discussed in the learning journey.

These learnings are organised around different building blocks: Learning around types of changes derived from evaluation activities; learnings around the relevance of coordination mechanisms; and learnings around factors that influence the use of evaluation for improving instruments and policy mixes.

The ideas reflected in this document come mainly from presentations and discussions that took place during the learning journey.

Learning around types of changes derived from evaluation activities

Evaluation is an intelligence tool that governments can use, among others, to enhance the information basis for innovation policies and inform their decisions around instruments and policy mixes. Evaluations can lead to termination of some instruments if they are judged as failures, or provoke no changes if instruments are judged to be functioning perfectly. However, usually evaluation activities can lead to changes in instruments and policy mixes, since results can highlight issues that are not functioning or may function better. Evaluation can help to respond to questions such as: is the instrument achieving its objective? And is it achieving with an efficient use of resources? What could be made to improve them?

Evaluation results can lead to different types of changes in instruments and policy-mixes after the assessment is made. Changes can be made to instruments' contents (for example, types of beneficiaries or the configuration of a policy-mix) but also to the process – how the instrument is managed, the timing of the calls for proposals, etc. Likewise, learnings produced by evaluation activities can lead to changes at the strategic and operative levels (Kupiec, 2015). Strategic decisions refer to major changes, such as the objectives and the target priorities. Operative changes involve minor changes such as, for example, improving dissemination activities for beneficiaries and changing a monitoring indicator.

Through discussion and presentations made in the learning journey we learnt that there have been several changes in most Manumix regions policy-mixes due to previously carried out evaluation activities. Much of those changes have been at strategic level. For example, there have been changes in technological domains supported by instruments in Piedmont and Basque Country and incorporation of wider society goals in Wales. Thus, we could conclude that, although there is still much to learn, specially related to decisions around policy mix level rather than at instrument level, evaluation developed in regions does have an impact in the design and implementation of instruments for Advanced Manufacturing.

	Strategic decisions/changes (e.g.. rationale of intervention, priorities and objectives, budget, supported project types)	Operative decision/changes (e.g.. training for beneficiaries, monitoring indicators, dissemination activities)
BASQUE COUNTRY	Increase of projects' budget (Hazitek, BI, Gauzatu) Changes in characteristics of supported programmes, e.g.. Technologies, S3 priorities (Hazitek, BI, Gauzatu) Changes in types of beneficiaries: types of companies (Hazitek, Gauzatu)	Changes in management's procedures: digitalization, phasing (Hazitek, Gauzatu)
LITHUANIA	----	----
PIEDMONT	Reshaping of technological domains according to S3 priorities (Poli d'innovazione) Funding allocation (ROP, Innovazione MPPI, IR2) New actions in the policy mix (ROP)	Activities to achieve a wider involvement of beneficiaries (Manunet) Output indicator of OP Performance framework Simplification of procedures (IR2)
WALES	Incorporation of wider society goals and cross cutting goals Setting out evaluation direction and methodology	-----

Learnings around the relevance of coordination mechanisms

One of the relevant elements for making actionable the evidence collected through evaluation is the coordination mechanisms that exist in regions. As the baseline study elaborated in the project shows, there are diverse ministries and government units involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the instruments included in the Manumix region's policy-mixes for Advance Manufacturing. Likewise, different layers of political and public officials take part in such processes and some of those instruments and their framework strategies interact with instruments from other government levels – in a very direct mode in some cases like in Piedmont.

Hence, coordination mechanisms established horizontally (between departments and units) and vertically (between different levels within the same government and between different territorial levels) become a key element not only for managing the policy-mix but also for evaluation results to have an impact in decisions around instruments.

In the learning journey the regions presented the decision making process related to evaluation of their policy-mixes and how results are incorporated in the decision making of instruments. Manumix regions have established specific coordination mechanisms between the political decision makers and technical staff responsible for implementation of instruments. In all cases program managers and program owners are involved in steering groups and similar working groups that analyse evaluation results and discuss them and draw conclusions and recommendations. These results and possible change proposals are discussed then with political representatives that decide upon the changes made to instruments. In some cases, like in Piedmont, political representatives have an active role and have even proposed changes themselves in some of the instruments. Other coordination mechanisms are also in place with beneficiaries, like in the case of Piedmont, where changes to one of the instruments were made from a proposal made by clusters.

Another important aspect highlighted by some of the regions is that decision and change process varies substantially when it refers to a particular instrument of the policy mix or to the RIS3 strategy. The former needs much more discussion involving a wider group of stakeholders and policymakers through the mechanisms established for RIS3 management and evaluation governance structures and mechanisms. On the other

hand, the RIS3 strategies and other similar planning document constitute an important coordination mechanism for all instruments, since possible changes to instruments made after evaluation are always framed and aligned with such Plans.

Learnings around factors that influence the use of evaluation for improving instruments and policy mixes

During the learning journey a discussion was set up around elements that influence in the uptake of evaluation results in the decision making process. Concretely, following some studies (De Laat & Williams, 2014; De Laat, 2015) the discussion revolved around the quality, fit and complementarity of evaluation with other management tools; the support of senior staff to evaluation exercises, the involvement of relevant policymakers that influence the decision making in the evaluation process and the relevance of timing in evaluation.

One of the relevant elements highlighted by participants in the discussion is that although an adequate timing of evaluation is relevant to take advantage of its results and thus it is important to adapt to the timings of decision periods, evaluation is always welcomed regardless of this fact. In other words, although evaluation results may not have an impact at certain period of time (for example because changes to some instruments may be made only when annual budgets are being defined) the learnings for such evaluation may influence instruments in the middle term (for example, for the next budgetary term). Learnings that come from evaluation activities and its influence on practice transcend specific timings of instruments and policy mixes. In the words of from one of the participants: "Evaluation never comes late, it always adds value".

Another important feature highlighted by participants is to create awareness about the relevance of evaluation in the governments. Moreover, the design of evaluation should be included right in the beginning when designing plans and instruments. However, it is not always easy to achieve this, because although there may be a general consensus in a government body about the importance of carrying out evaluation activities, there are different elements that difficult it. On the one hand sometimes there is a lack of knowledge about how to best develop evaluation, which types of evaluations to use and how to develop them. Evaluation is also difficult because there are different factors that influence on a policy and instrument and even more in a policy-mix. Further, most governments are still not used to use it in a regular basis. And lastly, there may also be some kind of fear of being judged. Thus, it is important to acknowledge these elements to overcome them and work on creating an evaluation culture and complement it with training on evaluation in order to promote the use of evaluation as one more management tool when dealing with innovation instruments.

Other important element is the involvement of all stakeholders and policymakers involved in the instrument and the policy mix in the evaluation of them. This may be done through different means and degrees – direct involvement of those who design and implement instruments and more indirect involvement of beneficiaries-; but it is important that they are involved in order to facilitate the implementation of actions that may derive from evaluation results.

Lastly, all regions agreed that they all need to learn more about evaluation methodologies and best practices in evaluation uptake in order to improve their evaluation strategies and the incorporation of results to improving instruments, and specially, policy-mixes.