



Entre les lignes

Letter of the European Social Fund in France

Editorial

All documents cited in this issue of « Entre les lignes » are online here : www.fse.gouv.fr in the evaluation section



Three years after the first issue of "Entre les lignes", focussing on evaluation, it was useful to assess the monitoring and evaluation procedure implemented in the ESF programme 2007-2013. More than ever, improving transparency and added value in ESF funding is on the agenda.

tem and make it a more reliable one. Priority should now be given to improve the quality of data submitted and, in particular, with regard to the outcome of participants, and to take into account transversal priorities, including equality between men and women.

In addition, the next programming period will have to be prepared with two challenges in mind: the first will be to take advantage of the stricter regulation requirements in order to develop a more simplified and adequate information system. The second issue at stake is to allow each and every stakeholder to make use of the evaluation results in order to analyse the implementation of their own operations and improve the monitoring.

I would like to take the opportunity, in this special issue of "Entre les lignes", of paying tribute to the on going work carried out by the Scientific Evaluation Committee, which includes representatives of the major partners involved in the implementation of the programme as well as specialists in the field, and who allowed the monitoring and evaluation system to be improved with the aid of transversal analyses. The latter, which involve ESF communication, equality between women and men within the programme, as well as the role of the ESF in the management and monitoring of active inclusion measures, are extremely useful for the improvement of the current programming period and to debate the next programme in a spirit of clarifying roles, acquired simplification and efficiency. They will soon be completed by an evaluation on the participants of operations in the field of vocational training and by a comparative European analysis of our monitoring and evaluation system.

Quantitative and qualitative studies will thereby set up, in a clear and articulate way, a working base to build up tools to help in decision-making and to guide planning choices for the next programming period.

In order to do so, we have set up an information system capable of contributing to highlighting the options in implementing the programme. This is based on the regular analysis of achievements and results, whether they be in terms of job opportunities, training and qualification or access to employment. Input for the information system depends on each participant in the programme "playing the game" by providing information and entering data on indicators.

Three years on, we have come a long way. The results from participants are now the trademark of this programming period. Together, we have moved a significant step forward with the compilation of a sizeable volume of data which allow us to calculate the results required to follow up and evaluate the programme.

Thanks to this dynamic data entry process, strengthening the efficiency of the French ESF programme is now a priority for both France and the European Union, from distribution of funds and controlling the reliability of expenditure to measuring and assessing effective results. New regulation proposals put forward by the European Commission for 2014 which aim to regulate funding according to the results obtained have now reinforced this requirement.

This development requires us to move on to a second stage in order to structure our monitoring and evaluation sys-

tem and make it a more reliable one. Priority should now be given to improve the quality of data submitted and, in particular, with regard to the outcome of participants, and to take into account transversal priorities, including equality between men and women.

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Bertrand Martinot, Delegate General for Employment and Vocational Training

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Profile of the participants

According to the cumulative data submitted from the annual implementation report 2009 to 29 September 2011, and according to the rules drafting the annual implementation reports³, the programme has hosted 2.4 million participants, (51.4% women),

- 20% of these participants are in employment (46% women) and 2.6% are self-employed,
- 58.5% are job seekers (53% women) and 39% of the job seekers have been searching a job for more than one year,
- a little more than 20% of the participants are inactive and 7% of the participants are inactive in training,
- 38.9% are young participants in the 15-24-year age bracket (46% women) while seniors who are older than 55 years make up a little more than 4% of the participants (52% women),
- migrants represent 7.5% of the participants and minority groups 2.6%, the proportion of disabled persons make up 3.2% of the participants. 16% of the participants receive social security benefits (49.6% women),
- 40% of participants have received education up to the general certificate of secondary education level (50.6% women), more than 14% of participants have completed the final year of secondary education (54% women) and 6.1% have followed studies in higher education (51% women).

Participants' outcomes

- 19.4% of participants find employment or set up their own business (17.8% for women who find it more difficult to start their own business: 1.9% instead of 3%⁴),
- 7.9% join a training course to obtain new qualifications or opt for work experience certification (VAE), (7.4% for women),
- 2.6% obtain a training certificate (2.3% for women),
- 69% experience a positive outcome, 40% of whom have "another positive outcome". These figures are respectively 70% and 41.5% for women.

Other positive outcomes

From a cumulative point of view, and for the three years in which annual implementation reports have been drafted, 41% include "other positive outcomes" and 26.3% "other outcomes". This observation has two explanations:

- Some outcomes cannot be dispatched in the categories listed in table D2. For example, the category "certified training" turns out to be too limited with regard to training schemes, language-learning programmes or courses on basic skills which do not necessarily lead to a certificate on completion of the training course. In the same way, opportunities resulting from vocational training courses or social mobility processes, access to social rights or freedom of social mobility constraints, may not be included in this classification.
- In addition to these justified reasons, there is undoubtedly a lack of attention paid to the quality of data entries. Undefined outcomes need to be only those which can not be objectively classified in the standard outcome format of table D2.

³ Annual intermediate or final result for records of persons receiving aid, subject to management desk checks on expenditure (CSF) in 2009, 2010 or 2011.

⁴ Prospects for the whole range of participants are taken into account here and are not to be confused with the proportion of female business creators assisted by the ESF.



A large-scale system of monitoring and evaluation to analyse results concerning participants

More than 41,000 files allow the monitoring of participants in the ESF's operations and 600 users play an active role. The system of monitoring and evaluation, which was implemented for the ESF, now offers an unprecedented amount of information in France. Since 2008, government services and intermediary institutions have become involved: more than 80% of the records are subject to a complete data entry¹, after management desk checks (CSF).

A critical mass of data has thus been gathered to establish the profile of participants and their outcomes. It provides the opportunity to build up the values obtained for the programme's 24 targets².

Widely shared results

The current system of monitoring and evaluation provides access to transparent information which makes the results of the ESF's intervention more visible. At the same time, the indicators constitute a shared reference: the values obtained are analysed within the framework of different managerial debates and discussed in meetings regarding methodological support led by consultants of the Amnyos Edater consortium in charge of evaluation.

No less than 152 regional meetings were held between the second half-year of 2008 and the end of 2011. The meetings have offered the opportunity of looking at the results objectively, putting them into perspective and allowing them to make sense by comparing the results on a regional basis. They have also been the opportunity to begin reflecting on the issue of ESF's added value which is summarised in the consultants' annual evaluation report for the year 2010.

A dynamic process of data entry that needs to be consolidated

Data entry of indicators has progressed substantially since 2008 for all regions and operators. It thus gives a new legitimacy to the scale of the results obtained. This strong commitment of stakeholders to recording data is closely linked to their understanding of the need and advantage of having precise and complete data available for the analysis of the ESF's role and to continuously make optimal use of it.

¹ Which corresponds to 13,000 records of "assistance to persons" having been subject to management desk checks on expenditure (CSF) in 2009, 2010, 2011, and the recording of whose data is complete.

² The data produced take into account the total of three annual implementation reports 2009, 2010 and 2011. They are finalised on the processing date.

The system has now reached a cruising speed which does not, however, avoid certain weaknesses:

- data entry is a long-term procedure and some operators are still late in submitting their results;
- the choice of drafting annual implementation reports on the basis of records of projects, which have been subject to management desk checks on expenditure (CSF), can make the results vary according to the rate at which records are processed. One must be cautious when analysing results and by taking this variable into account;
- some indicators associated with quantified objectives are weaker than others. For example, objective 4, which measures the rate of redeployment with a target of 60%, reveals a cumulative result of 16% that is dependent on the small number of records submitted and to the nature of identified outcomes.

In order to make the analysis of resulting objectives more relevant and have a stronger foundation, efforts must from now on concentrate on the regular data entry of transversal priorities⁵ and the analytical axes of records⁶ in 'Presage'. This latter category represents approximately 70% of the records today. Efforts must also concentrate on the quality of data submitted.

Evaluation to improve monitoring?

The issue which is really at stake for the future is the stakeholders' ability to widely use the results in order to analyse, or even influence the conditions involved in implementing their own policies associated with the operations jointly financed by the ESF.

However, adjusting and implementing evaluation procedures still vary according to regions and the different categories of participants. They need to progress and be consolidated, particularly for the analysis of the achievement of objectives and to redefine the level of motivation required to do so. The use of ESF funding assumes, in fact, that it should target those population groups which are sometimes left out in the mainstream.

In a context stressed out by budget cuts, as the effect of the ESF represents a very small proportion of funds allocated to employment and professional training, there is a need for careful rethinking in order to obtain maximum efficiency. Evaluation plays an important role in this option.

Yet, have we achieved results based management? If the ways in which funds are allocated and expenses audited are still a major concern, and this is normal when statutory requirements are taken into account, the results based approach has become a part of the structural funds system, but a lot of progress still needs to be made in this direction.

In order to achieve this:

- operators will have to produce a record of results, according to the scale of their programme, before any funding can be renewed;
- it is on the basis of results, that the managing authority of the programme will have to select priorities among which ESF can effectively operate.

The five qualitative studies and the three annual evaluation reports have produced a sizeable amount of material for analysis. Certain studies, such as the analysis of the great number of active inclusion services at a local level, have been the subject of much debate as well as resulting in written contributions on the part of the Association of the Regions of France, the Association of the Departments of France and the Alliance of Cities for employment. They have been appended to the final report.

The conclusions and recommendations of these studies are ready for use in order to highlight the debate on the contents of the new programming procedure.

Enhancing the results of evaluation

In the immediate future, initiatives have to be taken in order to take better advantage of the results of the monitoring and evaluation system, as well as the qualitative studies. From now until the end of the programme, the summary of all this information will be circulated and discussed in order to make the ESF evaluation more widely known than just to an inner circle of specialists.

The two evaluation components



ESF evaluation is based on the European statutory framework which involves improving quality, efficiency and operational coherence, as well as the strategy of implementing the operational programme.

For the period 2007-2013, the ongoing evaluation of the national operational Programme "Regional competitiveness and employment" is made up of two components, in accordance with the Regulation 1083/2006 (Art. 47).

Operational:

The evaluation system aims at conducting an ongoing analysis of the programme's results. In order to follow the programme's implementation, the indicators of context, programme and result according to priorities, as well as qualitative indicators, have been developed within the framework of the national and regional socio-economic structures and the major priorities of European employment strategy. They are the foundation of the analysis of the programme's efficiency.

Strategic:

The evaluation analyses the relevance of the programme and its coherence according to national and European policies. It may or may not highlight the ESF lever effect on policies and target population groups. Finally, its aim is to highlight the added value of the European Social Fund. It produces transversal analyses of specific themes to explain the monitoring of the programme.

At the same time, the evaluation must provide for modifications, if necessary, in programming procedures.

The two strategic and operational components are complementary; they contribute to an integrated and ambitious evaluation system.

⁵ Equality between men and women, equal opportunities, handicapped persons, sustainable development, innovation, transnationalities, ageing active population.

⁶ Assessment procedures of records according to theme, operation, target public, location.

The monitoring of quantified objectives and indicators

“An exhaustive list of the results of the 24 quantified objectives can be found in the online annual evaluation report on the website fse.gouv.fr”

Monitored since 2009, the indicators provide for the comparison of the situation achieved with the target defined by the operational programme. As soon as they correspond to a record of sufficient data, they allow recent trends, (records whose management desk checks (CSF) was carried out in 2010 and 2011), to be compared with general trends of cumulative data since 2009. This analysis produces the following observations according to the field involved:



Two indicators, (15, 16), relate to training programmes concerning job seekers. It appears that the result relating to seniors has remained below the target, probably due to the lack of programmes targeting this particular population group. On the other hand, the proportion of the least qualified in assisted programmes is very close to the target and reflects a real priority for the Regions.

It may be noted that access to the work experience certification (VAE) concerns a number of participants who are much higher than the target (indicator 10).

This trend increased in 2010-2011, even if some of these programmes only concern preliminary information on skills certification prior to registration.

Lifelong learning

Two indicators (2, 3) refer to access of employed persons to training according to target categories of the population: seniors and the least qualified. The target concerning seniors aims for a figure of 35% of trainees in programmes designed for the professional training of persons in employment. Today, the cumulative rate is 24%, even though there was an increase in 2010 (27%). It reflects a problem of targeting in these population groups regarding programmes run by the OPCAs (accredited training and fund collecting bodies) and businesses. The target of the least qualified is around 53/54%. It has not been reached either: additional efforts are needed so that the ESF can help to reverse national trends of access to training which tends to benefit persons under the age of 45 and who have already completed training courses.

Concerning business creation

Three indicators refer to business creation. The number of accompanying operations implemented (indicator 7) is regularly lower than the target even if it is close to it. However, the proportion of female business creators among the total number of creators with ESF assistance (indicator 9) is 40%. This is higher than the target on a cumulative basis and during a recent period. The duration rate of 3 years for businesses created by assisted creators (indicator 8) was calculated for the first time for the annual implementation report (RAE) 2010 and is higher than the target (70.4% compared to a target of 64%).

Vulnerable groups

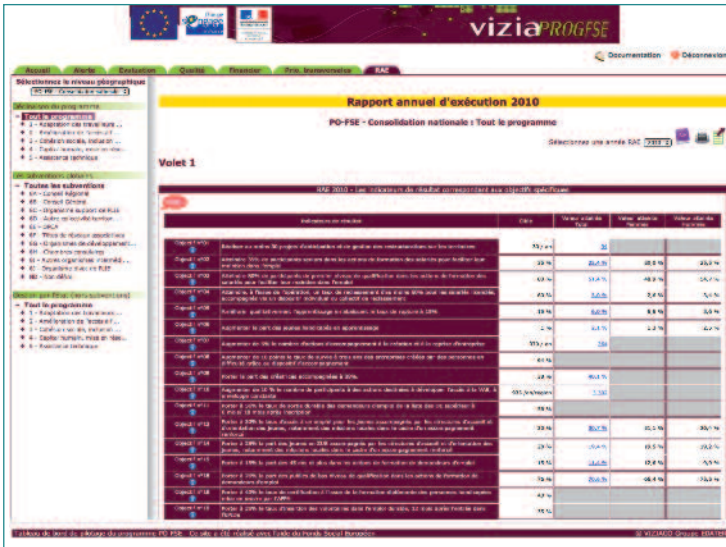
the rate of access to long term employment, as a result of going through an employment insertion company (indicator 21), remains largely below the target rate and has not improved recently, (although other positive outcomes, such as continuing a career as a result of a co-financed programme, have increased). As far as outcomes of the PLIEs (local schemes for active inclusion) in long-term employment are concerned (indicator 22), they show a rate of 35% for a target of 42%. PLIE outcomes in training (indicator 23) are well below the target value which reveals the problem of coordination between access to work and qualifying training. The outcomes of operations implemented within the framework of departmental plans of insertion – PDIs - (indicator 24) have developed following the redefinition of “other positive outcomes” of the PDIs, at the time of rewriting targets of the operational programme within a more limited framework. The rate, which today is below the target value, will have to be monitored along with trends over the next two years in order to evaluate the result associated with funded operations. The context of the economic crisis therefore seems to have an impact on the results of access to long-term employment in general. However, this seems to vary according to regions, territories and operations. The EPIDe programme (indicators n° 19 and 20), which aims to reinsert young people in the specific framework of supervision by personnel in the Armed Forces, reveals some good results in terms of insertion in long-term employment while lowering the rate of withdrawal.

The fight against early school leaving and for basic skills

The rate of retraining due to an early school leaving campaign (indicator 25) is around 90%, a figure higher than the target. The new indicator 26, which was introduced recently, measures the proportion of participants in the “Compétences clés” (basic skills) programmes which open up job opportunities at the end of the programme. This rate, which is 26.4% for the data of the annual implementation report (RAE) 2010, is below the target of 30%. (Analysis of the annual evaluation report 2011).

Tools available for the evaluation service: the D1D2 interface and ViziaprogFSE

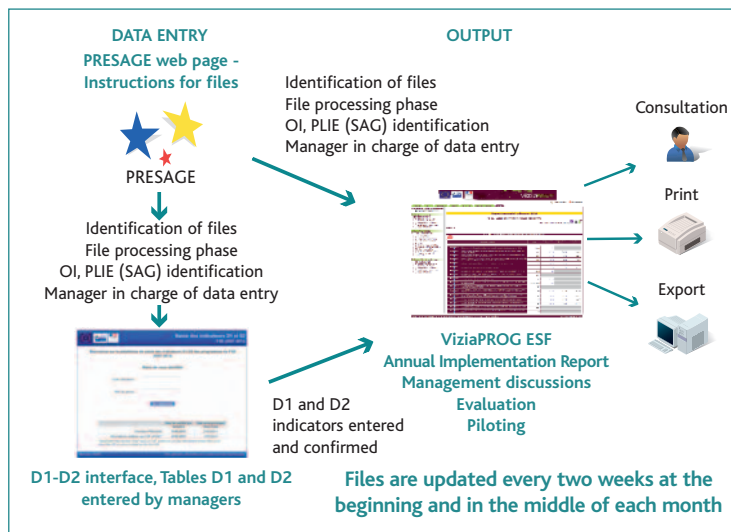
What is the D1D2 interface and Viziaprog used for?



Since April 2009, with the aid of the **D1/D2 data entry interface**, all programme managers can submit information supplied by project coordinators in their results (tables D1 and D2 concerning the characteristics and outcomes of participants). This interface integrates various checks on the coherence of data recorded.

ViziaProgFSE has the facility of reproducing results of the monitoring and evaluation system via a series of computer-generated performance indicators which are organised in the form of thematic tabs (quality, evaluation, transversal priorities, finance, the annual implementation report). Since 2009, delegates of managing authorities and, since November 2011 all intermediate bodies, can consult the platform at all levels of the programme, including all types of measures, and for all categories of operators.

These two tools have been regularly adapted



- to facilitate the work of users: details of the labels of the classification tree; addition of a tab 'annual implementation report' whose tables are ready for comment regarding the regional annual implementation reports; access to the lists of detailed records;
- to make the data reliable with coherence filters and rules concerning the recovery of records;
- to adjust to the new management rules, particularly for resource sharing of the PLIEs and records which span several calendar years.

At a time when electronic transmission is used for all data, the new programme will require the implementation of a uniform and rationalised monitoring system.

“ The ESF Viziaprog (ViziaprogFSE) tool is of particular use to the members of the regional, multi-fund, evaluation committee of Languedoc-Roussillon. As a matter of fact, the SGAR, (the General Secretary for Regional Affairs), DIRECCTE, (local public management body for businesses, competition, consumers, work and employment), and regional teams have the task of analysing the different data output which ViziaprogFSE makes accessible in order to define which documents are the relevant ones to be made available for these future regional evaluation committees to improve ESF results based monitoring. ”

Erika DELPECH, Languedoc Roussillon Regional Council, Association of Regions, France

Thematic evaluation

Thematic evaluation depends on the ongoing evaluation of the programme's achievements and, at the same time, provides for the improvement of important and sensitive issues, whether they concern this programme or the future, in association with the new programming period 2014-2020. Under the monitoring of the Scientific Committee for Evaluation and its technical groups, the evaluation consortium AMNYOS EDATER produces the studies. Three evaluation projects have now been completed (Reports are online on the ESF website) and two others are in progress.

Available evaluation projects

The evaluation of communications associated with the Operational Programme (2009).

This evaluation project, which was planned for the Programme and is a statutory one, aimed at producing an analytical overview of the ESF's communication operations in order to identify good practice, success factors and the types of difficulties encountered.

At the national level, it emphasised the importance of networking and the professionalization of partners, particularly with regard to the use of homogeneous and transposable tools.

At the regional level, it revealed the necessity to strengthen the professionalism of teams and to ensure the quality of regional communication plans with common initiatives. It also demonstrated the need to simplify access to information and messages to the public, in order to reinforce the visibility of the ESF.

The evaluation project suggested making the network more active and to involve institutional partners to strengthen the visibility and profile of the ESF. It directly contributed to the operational plan 2010-2013 and its recommendations are subject to ongoing monitoring.

The evaluation project "the ESF and equality between women and men" (2010).

This evaluation project assessed that it has become possible to follow and efficiently measure the respective roles of men and women in the programme. Inclusion of this variable is, however, very different in territorial strategies: some regions have defined clear targets in order to take it into account; others have

included it transversally in all their operations or have issued calls for specific projects. In addition, others have stuck to "ritual compliance". Furthermore, managers have made little use of available operational levers; such is the case of the preferential rates co funded by the ESF and subsidised for outstanding projects.

Evaluation focuses on the necessity to adapt the operation to the level of both the programme and the projects: it proposes to mainstream the strategy, and to organise specific management at the regional level. It recommends using the planned preferential rates better, capitalising and circulating tools, and improving collectively methods of approaching this variable in funded projects.

Recommendations arising from the evaluation were sent to managers in a memo dated 4 March 2011 for them to use the available levers for the current programming operations, (preferential rates of joint funding), to finalise their results with the data from operations involving equality and to strengthen partnerships with the services of regional delegates involved in women's rights. This memo is on line with the perspectives, in the future, of introducing aspects of transversal financial monitoring of projects into the monitoring system ("gender budgeting").

The role of the ESF in the monitoring and management of territorial supply of services for inclusion (2010).

With schedules in mind and the need to try and increase added value for the ESF, this evaluation project aims to contribute to the debate on the next programming period 2014-2020: the retrospective analysis opens up prospective scenarios. From the point of view of strategic monitoring, the extension of the process towards focusing and targeting objectives, which had already started in 2007, and by proposing specific operations for

the next programming procedure, the study highlighted a deep conflict between two approaches: either the ESF should be the "scorer" of specific added value in relation to public policies or, in the name of the "reality principle" associated with the crisis of public finance and the increase in social needs, the ESF could intervene more with regard to the extension, and as a complement, to these policies.

From the governance point of view, the study emphasised the diversity of stakeholders, as well as the substantial margins of progress in terms of coordination between them in order to meet social needs more adequately.

The committee has debated these issues. The association of regions in France (ARF), the assembly of departments in France (ADF) and the Alliance of urban employment have contributed their written reports, as well as those mailed by the national council of insertion by economic activity (CNIAE). The Delegate for Employment and Vocational Training has asked the AMNYOS-EDATER consortium for a supplementary analysis of funded projects.

Two on going evaluation projects

In accordance with the evaluation plan, an evaluation on the participants in ongoing professional training actions co funded by ESF started in June 2011. It focuses on the direct questioning of participants in the programme, in this case, those who are involved in professional training programmes such as job seekers or employees. The new approach to this study is the inclusion in the evaluation of an overview of "life stories" which highlights how training assisted by the ESF can help change participants' career prospects.

By anticipating the needs of the next programming period for a monitoring evaluation system focused on results, an evaluation has been launched to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the current French system, that will include a comparative European approach to produce adapted recommendations.



An annual implementation report based on results subject to management checks (CSF)

Since 2009, and with the agreement of the European Commission, the annual implementation reports submitted to the Commission are based on results subject to management desk checks on expenditure, whatever the actual year of completed operations may be. This innovation allows for the implementation of necessary information for the transfer of a report before the statutory date, either before 30 June of the year $n+1$.

The annual evaluation report: a unique practice in Europe

Since 2009, within the framework of the evaluation plan, the consortium in charge of evaluation submits an annual evaluation report (REA) to the scientific committee for evaluation (CSE). The committee debates the report which is then subject to a presentation to the National Monitoring Committee.

The report retraces the approach and objectives of the evaluation, highlights the frontier between the monitoring and evaluation processes and presents the methodology chosen. It reconstitutes achievements and analyses the values of all indicators in the results. It puts them into a regional and national perspective and defines the range and limitations of this analysis of achievements.

In addition, it assesses the on going studies.

Each year, it develops one or two themes chosen in advance, (2009: the range and limitations of the evaluation system of information and data entry, in particular; the role of the ESF faced with the crisis; 2010: an analysis of the ESF's added value, analysis of the relevance of the Operational Programme (OP) and its development; 2011: contributions made by the procedure of the regional use of evaluation results).

In relation to the progress and analyses of the evolution of the global context, the report issues recommendations which aim to improve the programming schedule 2007-2013 and to contribute to the debate on the next programming period.

“ It is useful to implement more qualitative evaluation procedures of operations carried out within the framework of the ESF programming mission. With regard to the evaluation procedure of the supply of services for employment insertion, it has the advantage of allowing a debate on the way the ESF may intervene best, the need for more subsidiarity and the way to establish a form of management which is coherent with the skills of partners, as well as the reality of territorial issues. These qualitative evaluation procedures would gain by being organised for the different priorities of the ESF OP, even if they should remain technical issues.

Christine Cote, Assembly of the Departments of France ”

“ Evaluation issues, gathering quantitative and qualitative data, analytic grids of information, a study of conclusions and recommendations: the scientific committee examines the whole range of the evaluation process with regard to its aims in order to guarantee the quality and application of its results. The attention paid by the scientific committee to the aim of the evaluation right from the start, particularly within working groups dealing with qualitative studies, allows it to adopt a valuable approach to the prospects of population groups which are most vulnerable to the inequalities of treatment within the programming procedure (transversal priorities). A debate on the valorisation and use of results, as well as an instructive approach to the advantages of the evaluation process itself (innovative and original in many respects), is still needed. We can safely say that this special issue of “Entre les lignes” will make a contribution in this direction.

Martin Clement, Special assistant for Studies and Research Defender of rights ”

Managing the evaluation process

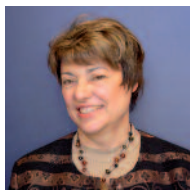


This involves an original approach between partners supported by the management authority: a scientific committee for evaluation (CSE), chaired by Mrs A. Fouquet (Chairwoman of the French evaluation company), brings together representatives of the parties involved in the programme as well as qualified persons who offer their expertise on matters concerning works in operation or in preparation.

It is an approach to which all partners contribute in order to decide first of all, which themes and areas of study should be given priority, to provide their methodological expertise and to support the valorisation of studies in operation, including results obtained during the programming period. The scientific committee for evaluation, responsible for the successful implementation of studies, examines the annual evaluation report, as well as the reports on thematic evaluation. In order to do so, it meets not only in plenary sessions two or three times a year but also in smaller sessions to prepare and validate the progress of qualitative studies.

Conscious of the fact that it sometimes works within a circle which is too limited, the scientific committee involves the support teams as much as possible, (managing authorities and intermediate bodies), in studies that are underway. This dynamic organisation, associated with the DGEFP, (the general delegation for employment and professional training), and the Amnyos-Edater consortium, has allowed quality studies to be completed and to lead a critical analysis of the monitoring and evaluation system of the ESF OP which plays a major role in the preparation of the post-2013 system.

Annie Fouquet Chairwoman of the ESF scientific committee for evaluation



What is the role of the scientific committee for evaluation and its Chairwoman?

The scientific committee for evaluation defines the evaluation programme, in conformity with its aims and the statutory provisions of the European Commission. It guarantees the scientific quality of the evaluation studies. Its members reflect the diverse nature of the parties involved in the ESF, (regions, departments, towns, centralised and local administrative offices...) and well-known specialists in the field of active inclusion and employment, together with representatives of the European Commission. In line with the theme under study, other parties involved are invited to participate in the work group set up for each evaluation project.

The plenary committee approves the specifications, (terms of reference), and debates the conclusions and recommendations. The Chairwoman makes sure that these debates run

smoothly, so that everyone has the opportunity to express his or her opinion, while ensuring the objective nature of the evaluators' work.

On several occasions I was obliged to call the meetings to order; the scientific committee is not the place for decision-making; the evaluation report is under the responsibility of evaluators who take into account the various points of view to formulate their conclusions and recommendations. The role of the scientific committee is to ensure the quality and objective nature of the evaluation report.

What do you think of the evaluation system that has been implemented?

The current evaluation system is organised on two levels. The first depends on the results provided by the monitoring system requested by the Commission; the annual evaluation report comments on the developments observed whose analysis may require subsequent evaluation studies.

Moreover, the evaluation programme includes one or two themes per year: the

choice of these themes depends on requirements, either on the part of the commission, like the evaluation of communication made on the ESF or the ESF's added value, or on overall requirements for analysis, like those concerning the supply of services for employment insertion, equality between men and women in ESF projects, professional training programmes, or the communication of evaluation results...

What do you think of the committee's group dynamics?

In its three years of existence, the committee has created solid group dynamics which is important for all parties concerned; a high level of participation at meetings is the best evidence for this. It has been made possible by the quality and hard work on the part of consultants, by the quality of exchanges with specialists and their support, particularly in work groups, and the efficient contribution made by the committee's secretarial staff represented by the DGEFP teams.

Points of view of the members of the scientific committee for evaluation

“ Many of the operations decided on by various partners to promote the growth of businesses and, in particular, the very small and medium-sized companies, are now subject to evaluation. The scientific committee for evaluation for the European Social Fund is involved in this vital process. The evaluation projects run by different partners, whether they involve employment integration through by economic activities, equal opportunities or access to information, contribute to the relevance of territorial economic development. **Christophe CORIOU**, MEDEF, (national confederation of French employers) ”

“ The large variety of members of the Committee, (representatives of institutions and administrative organisations, representatives of territorial associations and of the European Commission, scientific specialists), represents both a source of wealth for debate as well as the difficulty in forming a common position against the demands and the issues at stake in an evaluation process. The quality of the evaluation studies submitted to the Committee, which is recognised by all concerned, is a fundamental requirement to overcome these difficulties that remain hard to solve. **Jacques Freyssinet**, Centre for employment studies ”

“ As local representatives, we are trying to regularly evaluate the work which we undertake for our fellow-citizens: the need for

such and such an operation or for optimising the use of funds. On the eve of the 2014-2020 programming schedule, the analytical studies provided by the scientific committee for evaluation constitutes an aid in the decision to orientate our strategic choices in a better way. This work also allows us to continually move forward and optimise our methods of funds management. Being very limited in the range of options available, local representatives are forced to adopt an efficient approach! The optimisation of funds allocation has become more important than ever. **Philippe Maitreau** ”

“ A managerial method of the national evaluation committee which allows everyone to play a part: the ESF manager, the central administration offices, the evaluator and specialists who can all contribute to the evaluation process. **Anne Saily**, Direccte Poitou-Charentes, (Local public management body for businesses, competition, consumers, work and employment) ”

“ The scientific committee for evaluation takes credit in being able to bring together various specialists and partners to discuss results and decide on objectives, approaches and evaluation tools. The different points of view are expressed and heard; a little more distance to the concerns of the managerial bodies themselves would, however, help to differentiate the monitoring and evaluation

processes more clearly. **Jean Louis Dayan**, Centre for Strategic Analysis ”

“ An evaluation process which goes beyond the answer to an ESF operational rule, which searches for a concrete method of operational efficiency in the field and, by doing so, helps the ongoing improvement of procedures and contributes to aiming for a "quality" approach. **Guy Decourteix**, CNIAE, (National council for employment integration through economic activities) ”

“ The advantage of the ESF's scientific committee for evaluation is, among others, its diversified membership which ensures a multiple approach and a transversal analysis of the themes in question.

As far as Force ouvrière is concerned, a workers' trade union, the committee contributes fully to its mission with the increasing quality of its studies which represent a source of information for all partners in both the programming process and the ESF. The information obtained from the evaluation studies constitute, moreover, a sizeable contribution to the whole range of studies and analyses produced in terms of evaluation, such as those on the participants in ongoing professional training programmes jointly funded by the ESF. **Sylvia VEILL**, Force ouvrière (workers' trade union) ”