

Evaluation Policy 2021-2024

Document version

Version	Date	Prepared by	Verified by	Approved by	Date of approval
1	12 August 2021	BES	MDB	IKA	19 August 2021

Evaluation at Eurofound

Why is this important?

Evaluation is defined as an evidence-based judgement. It assesses the extent to which an intervention has been:

- relevant given the needs and its mandate and objectives,
- effective and efficient,
- coherent both internally and with other EU policy interventions and and achieved EU added value¹.

Eurofound is acutely aware of the central importance of monitoring, evaluation and learning in the context of ‘Results-Based Management’ and the need to demonstrate its performance.

Eurofound is fully committed to build further on and consolidate its investments in this area into this programming period, with a focus on further embedding evaluation deeper into the organisational fabric. Eurofound complies with the regulatory requirements² in this respect.

What is in this document?

This ‘evaluation policy’ document describes how Eurofound applies the evaluation principles to its own programmes, activities and projects. This document builds firmly on the approaches developed over previous programming periods, taking account of recent contextual and regulatory changes and developments and applies them to implementation at Eurofound.

¹ According to European Commission evaluation guidelines

² Article 29 Financial Regulation (2019)

Link with other documents

Contextual framework: Evaluation provisions in the EU institutional regulatory framework

In recent times, there were a number of relevant developments and changes in the overarching regulatory frameworks relevant for Eurofound as an EU Agency, which have implications for Eurofound's evaluation practice and policy, which continue to evolve.

1) The EU institutions' (Inter-Institutional Working Group) **2012 'overhaul' of EU decentralised agencies leading to the 'common approach' to EU agencies** (July 2012) and the December 2012 'roadmap' for its implementation have shaped the institutional context concerning the governing, functioning and oversight of EU Agencies. Evaluation requirements for EU Agencies were specifically defined in the 'roadmap' document, and Eurofound as EU Agency is obliged to implement these in its evaluation policy. The evaluation requirements by the Commission are reflected in the 2019 revised founding regulation.

2) The **European Commission 'Better Regulation' guidelines**³ include guidelines for evaluation⁴ (as part of the 'Better Regulation toolbox') which represent the overarching framework of *guiding* the approach to evaluation in Eurofound as an EU Agency. These Commission evaluation guidelines set out definition, concepts and principles of evaluation.

At level of *concepts and principles*, these guidelines are considered to be generally applicable to Agencies in as far as the scope of the guidelines is concerned, which is largely focussing on 'retrospective' evaluations. It is acknowledged that the needs and institutional settings and circumstances of the agencies are different to the European Commission, and thus different 'working arrangements' are required by the specificities of EU decentralised agencies, which vary from the institutional settings of the Commission.

3) **Eurofound's financial regulation (2019)**⁵, **article 29** [copied in Annex] stipulates that evaluation needs to be done.

³ Initially introduced in 2015 and revised in 2017 and 2020.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/ug_chap6_en.htm

⁵ Eurofound's Financial regulation (August 2019), and is available at: [financial regulation eurofound august 2019 24102019.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#) based on the Financial Framework Regulation⁵

4) Evaluation is part of Eurofound’s **Internal Control Framework**⁶ in Principle 12 of Component 3: “*The evaluation of Eurofound’s programme and activities are performed on the basis of Eurofound’s Evaluation strategy, inspired by the Commission’s better regulation guidelines.*”

5) Evaluation is an integral part of **Eurofound’s Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System**. Further details about the EPMS are in the Manual 2021-2024.

6) Finally, Eurofound’s evaluation policy takes into account the evaluation guidelines provided by the **EU Agencies Network’s sub-network ‘Performance Development Network’ (PDN)**. The **‘Evaluation handbook for Agencies’ (2014, updated 2017)** provides guidance to EU Agencies in implementing the evaluation guidelines in an *EU Agencies’ context*, incorporating all the requirements arising from the EU institutional context and requirements described above, applied to EU Agencies. Eurofound applies these guidelines in its own evaluation activities and practices as closely as possible adapted to its own organisational context.

How Eurofound translates these evaluation requirements into practice in its specific context

Eurofound applies the above-mentioned evaluation requirements and provisions in a **multi-annual perspective** of its 2021-2024 programme taking a ***modular and complementary approach*** to implementing a coherent set of evaluation activities.

This approach aims to ensure a proportional and effective use of resources in meeting the evaluation requirements, as well as a way of ensuring that the required evaluation activities are applied in such a way to maximise their utility for the Agency in a multiannual perspective.

Eurofound’s commitment to this evaluation requirement is implemented through the formal establishment of a ‘Eurofound’s Performance Monitoring and Evaluation system’ (EPMS), which underpins and supports the programming cycle of its work, of which the evaluation programme forms an integral part.

⁶ Revised in 2018-19 (GR-18-17230)

How we conduct evaluation at Eurofound: evaluation governance and management

Resources for implementing evaluation activities

Eurofound's evaluation function is responsible for the implementation of the agreed annual evaluation programme. This function currently has a dedicated resource with the 'Monitoring and Evaluation Officer' in the Organisational Support Unit.

The evaluation budget is implemented through dedicated multiannual framework contracts for evaluation services and stakeholder feedback. The framework contracts for this programming period will be in place from August 2021 until August 2025.

Depending on the purpose, scope and objectives of the specific evaluation (including whether it is more summative or more formative in character), the resources mobilised are decided with due regard of the proportionality principle.

Decision making process for activities to be evaluated

The details of the planned implementation of this approach in the 2021-2024 programming period (the 'what') are defined in the relevant sections of the programming document of Eurofound, describing the concrete practical implementation of the evaluation programme in the given year and over the four year period.

The evaluation activities are defined in the Programming Document, and planned for in the evaluation programme 2021-2024.

- Annually, the evaluation function makes proposals for evaluations to be conducted in the programming year N+2 within the frame of the (rolling) evaluation programme (typically by June).
- The proposals will be based on the high-level plans in the evaluation programme 2021-2024.
- The basis for making decisions about which activities will be evaluated are guided by the criteria:
 - New projects/activities started in the programming period
 - Innovative / novel concepts / methodologies used, etc.
 - Option appraisals for future actions....
- These proposals will be considered as part of the programme development cycle.
- The Management Committee (MAC) will deliberate on the proposed priority evaluations and identify or confirm sponsors for these evaluations where necessary.
- Sponsorship depends on the nature of the specific evaluation. It may be the relevant project leader / activity coordinator / Head of Unit of a specific activity / project

being evaluated, or an equivalent existing steering body within Eurofound or an *ad-hoc* steering group with members nominated by the Management Board

- Final decisions about evaluation priorities will be taken by the Director within that programme planning context, and the chosen evaluation projects will then form part of the annual evaluation programme for the relevant year.

Implementation process⁷:

Evaluation format

The concrete format of a specific evaluation is decided case by case based on the following criteria:

Where evaluation is '*summative*' (such as ex-post evaluation of completed programmes or activities), or where objectivity, impartiality and independence of the evaluators is paramount, it should be carried out by external evaluators (as contractors to Eurofound) by default. This is the case for ex-post evaluations at programme levels, and can be the case for complex, 'high-stake' or contentious projects or activities.

Where evaluations are of a more '*formative*' nature, i.e. orientated towards further improvement and/or organisational development and learning, and where good knowledge of the evaluated intervention and its context as well as stakeholder involvement are important, such evaluations can sometimes be better and more efficiently and effectively conducted by internal resources, or a mixture of internal and external evaluation resources ('hybrid teams'). This can be the case for example for ex-ante evaluations, and for interim evaluations of specific projects or activities. Resourcing can be decided flexibly case by case.

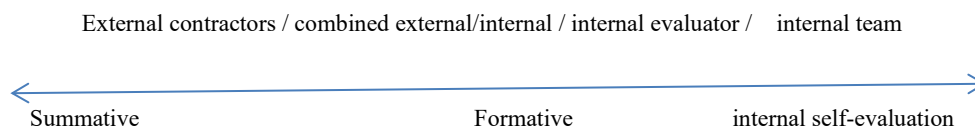
Implementation options

These can range from:

- External evaluation resources (contractors) only (guided and supervised by the evaluation function);
- Combinations of internal and external evaluation resources can be considered where a balance between independence and internal knowledge needs to be achieved;
- joint internal evaluations carried out by the evaluation function jointly with staff responsible for the activity evaluated;
- evaluations being carried out solely by the evaluation function, by Monitoring & Evaluation staff as internal evaluators;
- self-evaluations by staff responsible for the intervention with some support by the M&E Officer and reference to evaluation guidelines and standards.

⁷ Broadly informed by Commission evaluation guidelines (2015 and 2004)

Fig. 1: Resourcing options – a continuum of available choices



Implementation steps

1. The process starts with the drafting of a ‘Terms of Reference’ (ToR) document (drafted by the evaluation function (M&E Officer). The ToR defines the rationale, purpose, topic and objectives of the evaluation, and defines the evaluation questions to be addressed, as well as how the evaluation is intended to be used.
2. The draft ToR goes through relevant internal consultations with key stakeholders – the relevant functions with responsibilities and ‘stakes’ in the intervention to be evaluated – (internal, and if/where relevant, involving MB representatives, as appropriate).
3. Following all relevant consultations, the final agreed version of the ToR is formally signed off by the evaluation sponsor, usually the Executive Director.
4. The final ToR becomes the basis for implementation of the evaluation, and in case of externally conducted evaluations, is the basis for the request for proposal to the evaluation contractor (for implementation through a specific contract under the evaluation and feedback services FWC).
5. Typically, the evaluation consists of 3 phases:
 - a. Inception phase: resulting in an inception report
 - b. Fieldwork phase: resulting in an interim report
 - c. Conclusion and reporting phase: resulting in a draft final report, and final report.
6. In the interest of maximising organisational ownership and participation, the relevant steering groups will be involved at key stages of the evaluation:
 - a. Consultation / contribution to ToR
 - b. Receiving relevant reports (inception and progress reports)
 - c. Participation in relevant participatory workshops, as foreseen in the evaluation design (at inception, fieldwork and/or reporting phases).
7. Typically, there will be at least one such participatory workshop which will involve relevant key staff and / or stakeholders in the evaluation, and to ensure the findings (conclusions and recommendations) are co-created, meet the needs of the organisations and will be useful and used.
8. The final report is usually shared with the MB for information (via the [dedicated page on MB Extranet](#) with a repository of final evaluation reports). Where relevant, final evaluation reports (of summative evaluations) are also published on Eurofound’s website ([evaluation page](#)).

9. Important evaluations are usually followed by an evaluation action plan, to ensure implementation of accepted recommendations by the organisation (monitored by the Internal Control Coordination function).

Quality assurance:

Externally conducted evaluations are being implemented by external contractors on the evaluation and feedback services Framework contract, and as such subjected to specified quality criteria and standards under the contract.

Contract management: implementation of contracts is supervised by M&E Officer; acceptance of deliverables through the relevant steering arrangements for specific evaluations.

Internally conducted evaluations: [NEW]: from 2021 onwards, any internally conducted evaluations will be subjected to appropriate and cost-effective peer review processes. Depending on the nature of the evaluation, external or internal peer review processes can be considered:

- *External peer review:* through evaluation practitioners in other EU agencies (drawing on peers in the PDN. Such external peer review services are a form of ‘shared services’ that could be cost-effective and based on mutuality; and building on existing relationships and shared understanding; but depends on those colleagues' availability which may not be available at the time when needed. -
- *Internal peer review:* since evaluation is a specialised application of ‘research’, evaluation peer review can be seen as part of the ‘research’ peer review process. Conducting internal peer review for internal evaluations can also be an important building block for ‘evaluation capacity-building’, of benefit to reviewees and reviewers equally, and building a small ‘community of practice’ of evaluation expertise within the agency.

ANNEX: Financial Regulation (2019) - Article 29 Evaluation

Article 29 Evaluations

1. Programmes and activities that entail significant spending shall be subject to ex-ante and retrospective evaluations ('evaluation'), which shall be proportionate to the objectives and expenditure.
2. Ex-ante evaluations supporting the preparation of programmes and activities shall be based on evidence, if available, on the performance of related programmes or activities and shall identify and analyse the issues to be addressed, the added value of Union involvement, objectives, expected effects of different options and monitoring and evaluation arrangements.
3. Retrospective evaluations shall assess the performance of the programme or activity, including aspects such as effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value. Retrospective evaluations shall be based on the information generated by the monitoring arrangements and indicators established for the action concerned. They shall be undertaken periodically and in sufficient time for the findings to be taken into account in ex-ante evaluations or impact assessments that support the preparation of related programmes and activities.
4. The Executive Director shall prepare an action plan to follow-up on the conclusions of the evaluations referred to in paragraph 3 and report on its progress to the Commission in the consolidated annual activity report referred to in Article 48 and regularly to the Management Board.
5. The management board shall scrutinise the implementation of the action plan referred to in paragraph 4.