Evaluating the Impact of EU Cohesion Policy

Veronica Gaffey,
Acting Director Policy Development &
Head of Evaluation
DG Regional Policy
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Achievements of Cohesion Policy

- **2000-2006**
  - Jobs created: 2.2 million
  - 46,000 R&D projects creating 20,000 research jobs
  - 2,700 km of new motorways
  - 1,800 km rail (including 1,200 high speed)
  - Increase in GDP in Objective 1 regions due to Funds

- **2007-2010**
  - Jobs created: 200,000
  - 20,000 RTD projects
  - 1 million additional population covered by broadband
  - 900 km new roads; 630 km railroads new or renewed
Have we been effective?

- Impossible to generalise across:
  - 270 regions with different needs and objectives
  - Over 300 programmes and 1000s projects
  - EU15 vs EU12; Convergence vs Regional Competitiveness & Employment

- Objectives in programmes not sufficiently precise to judge if they have been achieved

- Indicators not used by all programmes and not linked to expenditure

- We know we have achieved a lot, but not if that is the maximum we should have achieved for the resources spent.
Experience of Evaluating Cohesion Policy

• **Responsibility for ex ante and ongoing/mid term with Member States; for ex post with the European Commission**

• **Challenges for Evaluation at EU level:**
  - No common indicators, no link with expenditure
  - Objectives of programmes not measurable
  - Implicit objectives economic, social, environmental, territorial
  - Predominant focus of programmes on absorption – inputs, not outputs and certainly not outcomes
  - Weak national and regional evaluations focused more on implementation issues than effects
  - Over-reliance on macro economic models – focused on GDP/employment
Change of Approach for 2000-2006

- Evaluated thematically with methods and evaluation teams adapted to themes

- Increased volume and quality of resources – financial (19 contracts), human (in designing and managing the contracts) & academic input

- Triangulation of evidence using different methods – literature, models, administrative data, qualitative evidence and piloted counterfactual impact evaluation in one area

- Weaknesses persisted, but we still managed to deliver much new evidence on policy effectiveness which is reflected in Commission's proposals for future.
Impact of Cohesion Policy
*2000 - 2006*

**Modelling Block**
- Hermin
- Quest
- Transtools

**Data Block**
- Data indicators ‘06
- Major projects
- Geographic distrib.

**Thematic Block**
- Enterprise support
- Environment and Climate Change
- Transport
- Structural change and globalization
- Gender and Demography
- Rural Development

*Community Initiatives*
Interreg III & Urban

*Cohesion Fund*
Transport & environment

*Regional Policy*
Reflections on how to improve

• 30 academic experts as part of the ex post evaluation stimulated debate within DG Regional Policy & at public hearings

• Barca Report in 2009 and his focus on counterfactual impact evaluation

• Reflections on our evaluation guidance with leading evaluation experts (Florio, Martini, Leeuw, Stern)

• Outcomes Task Force led by Barca/McCann – 2010/11

• Ongoing work on Theory Based Impact Evaluation

• Pilots on Results
Actions for Current Programme Period

- Improvements voluntary not obligatory
- Introduction of common indicators and follow-up of reporting against these to build capacity to report
- Ongoing evaluation starts to accumulate evidence in different intervention areas
- Expert Evaluation Network reviewing and reporting on evidence every year
- Methodological work on counterfactual and theory based impact evaluation – examples & guidance
What is proposed?

- Concentration of resources

- Programmes with clear articulation of what they aim to change and how, including baselines (programmes which can be evaluated!)

- Better gathering and reporting of basic data on outputs

- More precise requirements for evaluation including a final report synthesising evaluation findings and outputs and results

- Annual Implementation Reports to report progress

- Monitoring committees to focus on performance

- Performance Framework and Reserve to incentivise performance
Specific objectives
what the MS wants to achieve, taking into account national and regional challenges, needs and potentials

Description of actions needed to achieve the specific objectives

Categories of intervention

Result indicators

Output Indicators

Investment priorities

Cohesion Policy
Piloting Results Logic in Current Programmes

- **8 Member States; 12 regions**

**Conclusions:**

- Feasible – but only with change of mindset
- Indicators now used sometimes do not capture intended effects
- Results focus must be designed into programmes
- Reflecting on the "other factors" which may affect result indicators can improve programme design
- Concentration requires political choices to be made but means fewer indicators
- Baselines essential
- Indicators don't tell you everything – importance of the qualitative
Conclusions

• Currently, we can assess what has been achieved but cannot draw conclusions comprehensively on effectiveness

• We now accumulate evidence on what works and why in what contexts

• There is no "proof", magic method or model – we build up a picture

• Process of sharing knowledge, building capacities across Europe

• Evaluation must be built up from the bottom – cannot be left to the EU level

• Only by building trust with MS and regions in current period, will we obtain agreement on what we propose for the future
Further information

Concepts & Recommendations

ERDF + Cohesion Fund


Results Indicators 2014+: Report on Pilot Tests