



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

EuropeAid Co-operation Office

General Affairs
Evaluation

GUIDELINES FOR DISSEMINATION AND FEEDBACK OF EVALUATIONS

1. Introduction

The Evaluation Unit is situated in the EuropeAid Office. However, to strengthen its independence and ensure regular feedback of recommendations to the policy-making level it reports direct to the Relex Commissioners. These guidelines have been adopted by the Relex Commissioners on November 2003.

The Evaluation Unit is responsible for evaluation of the Commission's co-operation and development programmes in third countries, with the exception of enlargement candidate countries and humanitarian aid. It covers the actions of DG DEV, EuropeAid and DG RELEX in all geographical regions, and the corresponding EC external co-operation programmes: Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP), Mediterranean Region (MED), Asia and Latin America (ALA), Western Balkan countries (CARDS)¹ and the New Independent States (TACIS). The Unit's programme focuses on policy formation, programming, country and regional strategies, sectoral development, thematic issues, aid instruments, and budget lines. It needs to be highlighted that from 2003, DG ECOFIN will carry out its own evaluation on macro-financial assistance, so the Evaluation Unit will no longer undertake this task in order to avoid duplications and overlapping.

While Evaluation contributes to accountability, its objective is also to draw out the lessons and recommendations from the successes and failures, and to feed these into both ongoing and future programmes so as to improve present and future EC external policies and actions.

To this end, dissemination and feedback assist and encourage policy makers and operational staff to make use of evaluation results in formulation/adaptation of new/existing policies and in implementing them.

Dissemination and feedback activities are integral parts of the whole evaluation process, as lessons and insights are provided not only at the very end but throughout the evaluation process.

¹ until 2004

2. Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines concern evaluations commissioned and managed by the Evaluation Unit. The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure a common approach and to reinforce the quality of the dissemination and feedback activities. The guidelines are also a response to the Commission Communication on Evaluation Standards and Good Practice (COM 2002/5267), which states that “*Appropriate feedback mechanisms shall be provided so that all types of evaluation results are transmitted to all persons responsible for decision-making.*”. This aspect is reiterated in the evaluation guide for the Commission Services.²

3. Dissemination of Evaluation Results

3.1. Purpose of dissemination

The purpose of disseminating evaluation results is to ensure that stakeholders external and internal to the Services³ are aware of the evaluations and their findings and recommendations. This is an important precondition for the feedback of evaluation results into the programming and implementation process and also for the general use of evaluations.

A basic step in any evaluation is to define the target group of the evaluation, and to customise the use of the different dissemination products, channels and activities accordingly. The management level, the Delegations and the local stakeholders are groups that are important but, experience suggest, difficult to reach. Hence specific measures should be taken to target these groups. Furthermore, to stimulate and support cross-use of evaluations over countries, regions and sectors it is important to disseminate the results of the evaluations to stakeholders that are less directly concerned.

3.2. Dissemination products and channels

An important precondition for successful dissemination activities is the quality of the evaluation and the quality of the summaries and abstracts complementing the final report. Hence, an important first step in ensuring an effective dissemination process is to assess the quality of the final report, in particular the quality of the executive summary, the concluding chapter and the recommendations. This assessment is part of the “Quality Grid” which should be completed for all evaluations.

Five dissemination channels have been identified: 1) distribution of the final report via mail and e-mail, 2) Internet, 3) Intranet, 4) Newsletters, i.e. the “Evaluation Feedback Newsletter” and the EuropeAid Newsletter (“The Meridian”) and others, and 5) seminars and workshops. Each of these channels demands specific dissemination products.

² “Evaluating EU Activities. A Practical Guide for the Commission Services” Preliminary version, July 2003, DG Budget.

³ The Services refers in this document to: EuropeAid, DG DEV, DG RELEX, DG Trade and DG ECFIN.

Distribution of the final report via mail and e-mail

The very first step of dissemination and distribution is to develop a distribution list. The final report should first be sent to the Board of EuropeAid with copies to the Directors General of EuropeAid, DG Trade, DG Relex, DG Ecfm, and DG DEV. Depending on the evaluation subject the report may also be sent to the Director of ECHO. The report is accompanied by a cover note and a summary.

Fifteen days later the report is sent together with the “Fiche Contradictoire” to the stakeholders within the Services that are directly concerned by the evaluation. If requested the final report should also be sent to the Parliament and the Court of Auditors. These documents are also sent to the DAC Network on Evaluation for registration in the DAC evaluation database.

Internet

To make the report publicly available, the final evaluation report should be made available on the Internet as soon as it has been agreed by the Board. The Fiche Contradictoire is put on the Internet as soon as completed.

Intranet

To guarantee awareness of the evaluation within the Services, a short article including the title of the evaluation and its purpose, scope and main findings should be published on the Intranet of EuropeAid, DEV and/or Relex as soon as it is available on the Internet.

Newsletters

The article written for the Intranet should also be published in *the Meridiean*, AIDCO's internal newsletter. The Evaluation Unit produces every six months a *Feedback Newsletter* including articles on all evaluations completed during the period as well as information on ongoing evaluations.

Seminars and workshops

A seminar presenting the main findings of the evaluation should be organised when the final report has been distributed. The purpose of the seminar is to stimulate a discussion around the evaluation and its main findings and recommendations. The target group of the seminar depends on the subject of the evaluation. The seminar could preferably be organised within existing structures such as:

- The Thematic Networks within EuropeAid, particularly relevant for sector and thematic evaluations.
- The iQSG.
- The oQSG.
- The management meetings (EuropeAid, Relex, DEV).
- The Committees (FED, ALA, MED etc.).
- The Country Groups.

For each Country Strategy Evaluation (CSE), a seminar should be organised in the partner country in co-operation with the Delegation. Furthermore, the iQSG should always be contacted for a presentation of a completed country strategy evaluation.

4. Feedback and Follow up of Use of Evaluations

The Evaluation Unit should according to COM 2002/5267 “...*check on how the evaluation recommendations have been taken into account.*”. The Board of EuropeAid has also demanded a specific system for feedback and follow up of evaluation results.

The purpose of feedback and follow up is to support the uptake of evaluation lessons and recommendations in new operations and in the decision-making processes. Furthermore, the purpose is to provide a system through which the Evaluation Unit is informed about the use of evaluation lessons and recommendations.

Two factors are particularly important for the feedback of lessons and recommendations. Firstly, the timing of evaluation in relation to the processes within the Services, secondly, the quality of the evaluation, which thus needs to be closely monitored by the Evaluation Unit through out the evaluation process.

Four channels have been identified for feedback and follow up. 1) The “fiche contradictoire” (FC) is the most formal and explicit mechanism for follow-up on the use of evaluations. The FC should be filled in for all completed evaluations: the first column listing the evaluation recommendations, the second column including the responses from the Services, and the third column, completed one year later, showing the actions taken by the responsible Services.

2) The iQSG is an important channel for feeding back evaluation lessons and recommendations and also for following up on how lessons and recommendations are taken into account in the Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), Regional Strategy Papers (RSPs) and the Multi-annual Programs (MIPs).

3) The Thematic Networks of EuropeAid also provide a very useful channel for feeding evaluation lessons and recommendations into the operational work.⁴

4) The Evaluation Unit should formally or informally keep in contact with the members of the Reference Groups after the publication of the final evaluation report, in order to follow up on the use of the evaluations, and in particular in relation to the completion of the third column of the Fiche Contradictoire (see point one above).

⁴ There are ten thematic networks: 1) budget support 2) health 3) education and training 4) good governance, rule of law 5) trade and development 6) development of the private sector 7) information and communication technologies 8) social protection and accompanying measures 9) rural development and food security 10) transport infrastructure 11) environment.