



Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development



Local Economic and Employment
Development Programme

**A STRATEGIC EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

REPORT

A report prepared by the Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Programme of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in collaboration with the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of a strategic evaluation framework

Regional and local development strategies and programmes are now characteristic of all OECD Member countries. They may be concerned with a wide range of issues: economic competitiveness and growth; employment and local labour market issues; local public services; environmentally sustainable development. Many are multidimensional, covering several of these domains. Some are the result of purely local initiatives but many are initiated and supported by national policies and programmes.

National governments support the development of regional and local strategies and programmes because of the key role local actors play in identifying solutions for local problems and in recognising locally specific opportunities for growth. However, while regional and local development interventions are widely seen to be of value, the measurement of their progress and impacts is often too weak to enable evidence-based policy improvements. Increasing and improving regional and local development monitoring and evaluation is therefore a priority.

Each level of government – national, regional and local – has an important role to play in this effort. Each has an important role in collecting information, analysing it and exchanging it in order to improve management, policy and budget decisions. However, the benefits are likely to be strongest when this occurs within a clear and coherent national framework that is shared by all the main actors. For regional and local governments, following a clear national framework helps put in place good practice monitoring and evaluation approaches as well as to share information more easily with other areas that will help in policy design and building better strategies. For national government, a coherent national monitoring and evaluation framework provides evidence on the extent to which regional and local development interventions contribute to achieving national objectives for growth and reduction of disparities and how this contribution might be increased.

Project description and outputs

This project, jointly implemented by the OECD with the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic, aims to assist the Ministry and its sub-national partners in putting into place an appropriate framework for the evaluation and monitoring of regional and local development trends and policies in the Czech Republic.

The setting up of a monitoring and evaluation framework is considered by the Ministry an important pre-requisite for fostering and sustaining socio-economic development of the Czech Republic at regional and local level. A well functioning framework for the Czech Republic will help provide a common frame of reference and support the increased use of monitoring and evaluation of regional and local development strategies by national government departments and agencies and by governments and agencies at regional and local levels. It will:

- Provide a platform for establishing links between strategies and programmes with different territorial and sectoral scope, and aligning them with national strategic development objectives.

- Support the assessment of the regional and local impacts of national policies and their effect on growth and spatial disparities.
- Serve as a communication tool to different levels of governments on the impacts of regional and local development strategies.
- Provide information to assess how to increase the impact of national, regional and local policies and programmes.
- Provide a tool through which national government can assist and guide regional and local development actors in improving their strategy building and delivery.
- Build capacities at national, regional and local levels for effective strategy development and implementation.

More in detail, the project was implemented from January 2008 to February 2009 and it was intended to produce:

- **A Report** to set out the issues in establishing a successful strategic monitoring and evaluation framework for regional and local development in the Czech Republic.
- **An implementation Guide** on evaluation requirements that set out the principal activities to be undertaken and steps to follow in implementing the evaluation approach recommended in the analytical report at national, regional and local levels.

Information gathering for the finalisation of the project outputs included an examination of policy and evaluation documents provided by the Czech Ministry for Regional Development, an examination of documents from governments and agencies in other countries, a peer review visit to the Czech Republic on 22-24 April 2008 and several discussion meetings between the OECD and the Ministry teams.

A major source of background information was a preliminary report, produced by Czech experts under the supervision of the Ministry for Regional Development. The report presented the main issues related to regional and local development and to the evaluation of the local and regional development strategies in the Czech Republic, including a perspective from the regional and local authorities through the cases of Vysočina region (kraj) and Premyslid Central Bohemia micro-region.

Purpose and structure of this Report

This report intends to provide a discussion of issues in good evaluation; descriptions of international best practices in local development evaluation that may be applied in the Czech Republic; an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of current practices in the evaluation of local development strategies in the Czech Republic; and recommendations on how the Ministry for Regional Development and local policy makers can improve evaluation practices related at this level.

The Report also includes the articulation of a common approach to evaluation that can be used at regional and local level in the Czech Republic. Such a common approach could permit improved monitoring, evaluation and comparison of regional and local programmes. It could also permit the flow of improved information to the national level on the anticipated and achieved outcomes of regional and local programmes and their contribution to delivering long term development strategies.

More specifically:

Chapter 2 outlines the main issues related to good evaluation, its meaning, principles processes, approaches and methodologies. This include also challenges and requirements for organisational and management arrangements.

Chapter 3 is focused on the Czech regional policy, its relations and competencies. This chapter also deals with the use of evaluations of policies in the Czech Republic (at each level), and describes the evaluation of operational, regional and development programmes in the Czech Republic in practice.

Chapter 4 describes practical examples of good practice used in other relevant countries (Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Spain and Switzerland) for the regional and local monitoring and evaluation process.

Chapter 5 outlines challenges and requirements for organisational and management arrangements in the Czech Republic, also on the basis of general principles derived from good international practices previously outlined.

Chapter 6 outlines a set of suggestions and recommendations on how the Ministry for Regional Development and its partners can improve evaluation practices related to local development and suggests a plan of action to achieve the development of a strategic evaluation system which will make it possible to analyse the impacts of development policies at the local and regional level.

Finally, a bibliography of sources used in the Report and references for further reading are provided.

2. ISSUES IN GOOD EVALUATION

Introduction

Evaluation is about choices and making a choice requires access to reliable information and an understanding of the consequences of the options available. There are many issues surrounding the principles and practice of good evaluation and this section of the report will present an introduction to the issues of good evaluation.

An evaluation approach is essential when assessing the merits of a particular project or when deciding between a set of competing projects. In many cases developing an evaluation approach and culture involves policymakers and decision makers in challenging the established local approaches and existing cultural perspectives. The importance of overcoming existing cultural and institutional norms to gain acceptance for evaluation and then go on to embed an evaluation approach to public expenditure is a continuing challenge. It is a challenge that is still being faced in economies that have a deep tradition of markets and the use of evaluation.

Evaluation means Change

The changes in the Czech Republic since joining the EU and accessing programme funding have been impressive. This has seen a strengthening of institutions and sets the context for further changes in structures and culture. Part of this requirement is to move away from a focus on generating activities and counting the outputs at a local level and to elevate the perspective to higher order goals of achieving lasting outcomes and impacts. This will necessitate a different geo-economic view on what defines a sustainable development area. Current acceptance of local area approaches face challenge as the reality of economic development at a regional level has gained ascendancy around the globe.

In practice this means a further development of the thought processes that are involved in development decision making. It will require new leadership approaches that augment the traditionally strong financial (audit-based) skills with true evaluation (economic-based) skills in order to be able to assess and review project effectiveness and efficiency. Good evaluation aims to examine how government interventionist expenditure (public expenditure) can be made more efficient and/or effective. This requires clear and accountable performance measures and transparent monitoring information. Many Anglo Saxon countries, such as the UK, have developed a wealth of documented experience and guidance, including tool kits, for showing how an evaluation approach may be carried out in practice. Links to these sources are provided in this report, for example the UK National Audit Office.¹

Policies, Programmes and Projects

By its nature public expenditure will have a major impact on the way a nation uses its resources. Public expenditure is designed to affect people's quality of life positively by implementing across three

¹ See http://www.nao.org.uk/guidance_and_good_practice/toolkits/better_funding/3_tactical_decisions/monitoring_and_evaluation.aspx

distinct levels: policies, programmes and projects. Systems of evaluation (and appraisal) need to reflect this multi-dimensional aspect (as outlined in the box below).

Box 1. Multi-dimensional aspects of evaluation systems

A **policy** is a high level plan of action incorporating general goals of the expenditure. An example is the provision of free primary school education for all children of the appropriate ages. Policies are decided at the highest level of government.

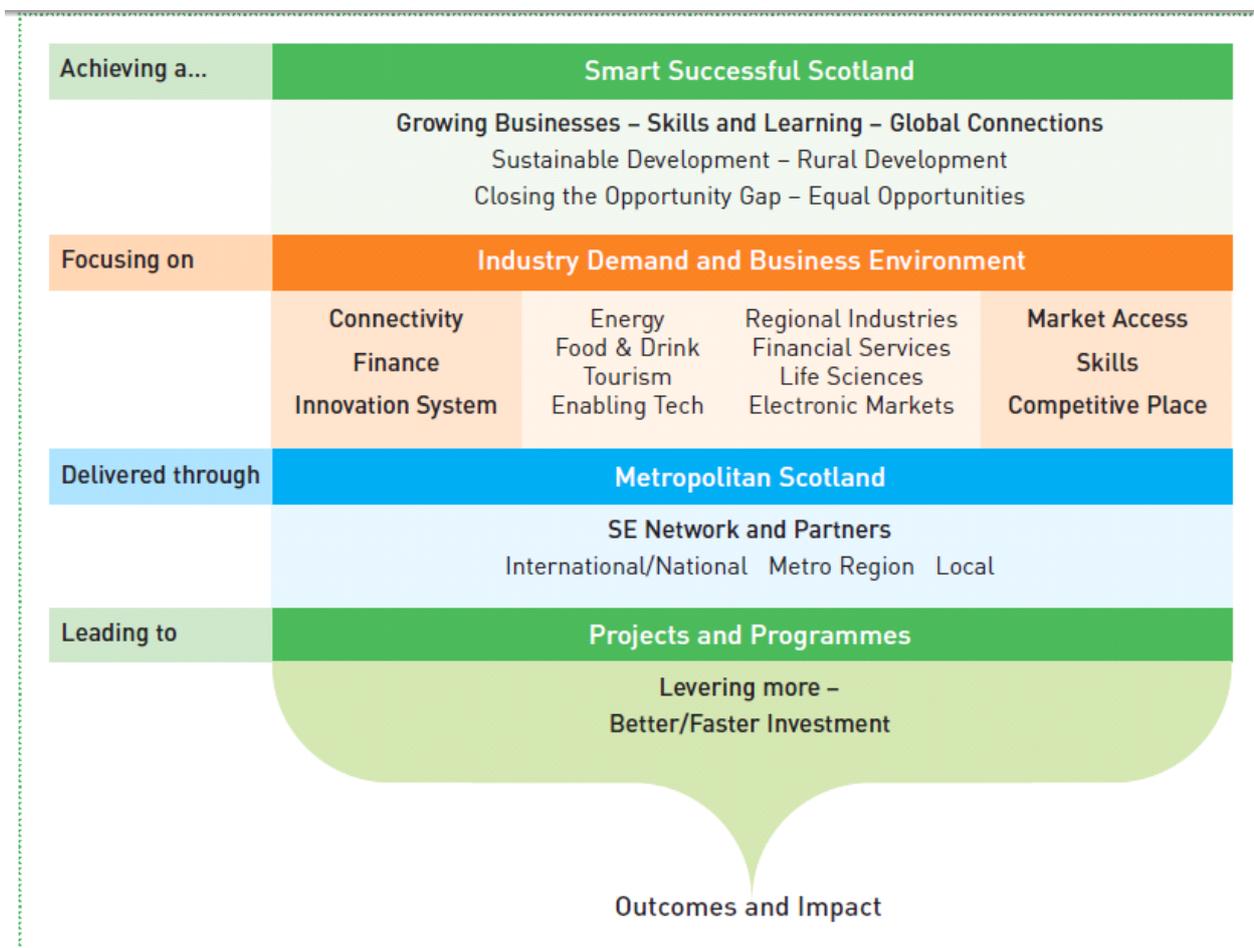
A **programme** is a body of procedures and practical actions designed to implement policies and achieve their aims. For example, a primary school building programme designed to help implement a policy of free primary school provision. Programme details may be decided at a slightly lower level, for instance they may be generated in collaboration between Ministers and senior officials.

A **project** is a separate component within a programme, for example a proposal to build or extend a certain primary school to serve the needs of a specific local school population. Projects are decided at the lowest level. They may be generated by officials, or (particularly where the programme involves financial assistance to non-Government bodies) they may also represent proposals from the private, voluntary or community sectors

Therefore, with regard to socio-economic development, the evaluation of public expenditure can take place at the level of a policy, programme and individual project. Recognising this linkage across the three levels shows how good evaluation must be co-ordinated at all levels and there should be a flow of information from the top down and the bottom up. It is especially important that the contribution of projects to programme objectives and the evaluation of their contribution to policy evaluation is captured in good evaluation approaches at all levels.

Some countries have set examples of good evaluation. The following diagram from Scotland shows the strategic development policy and implementation relationships and the role of Scottish Enterprise, the state development agency, at the various stages. This shows the links from high level policy aims through to programmes and projects and highlights the multi-dimensional environment within which good evaluation plays a vital role.

Figure 1. The strategic development policy and implementation relationship in Scotland



Source: Scottish Enterprise's Operating Plan 2007-10

What is Economic Appraisal and Evaluation?

Good evaluation involves an acceptance of the need for appraisal and monitoring as part of an overall approach to reveal how development is progressing. In other words, identifying what works and how, noting the learning and lessons that can be applied to the next set of decisions. It is also important to be clear that economic development is about making choices and evaluation helps to guide good decision making through a rational assessment of the options and impacts from making certain choices. The appraisal process is a vital front end part of evaluation in its broader sense.

Appraisal and evaluation uses the analytical methods of economics to determine the cost, value and worth of a policy intervention. This includes estimating the value of alternative uses of a given resource (i.e. the opportunity cost of a policy, programme or project). In short:

- Appraisal is undertaken at the outset of policy making (i.e. ex ante) to determine which of various policy options is most likely to produce the desired outcomes, and at what cost.

- Evaluation is undertaken after (i.e. post hoc) a chosen policy, programme and project has been running for some time in order to determine whether or not the anticipated outcomes (or other outcomes) have been achieved.

This approach is exceptionally valuable to decision makers as it forms a virtuous circle linking the decision to intervene and allocate resources with a comparison of whether and to what extent the objectives are then achieved and how far this represents best value.

Policy Evaluation Considerations

Policy evaluation uses a range of research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of policy interventions, implementation and processes, and to determine their merit, worth, or value in terms of improving the social and economic conditions of different stakeholders. There is no single all encompassing approach or method of enquiry that applies to every situation. It is up to those involved, especially in the commissioning and undertaking of the evaluation activities, to justify their approach.

Again in Anglo Saxon countries there is a long tradition of rational approaches and recording of the routes to address such issues. In the UK, government guidance (known as the Magenta Book) sets out in the form of a guidance document the acceptable methods to be used in government evaluation and analysis. Such guides acknowledge that methods are usually driven by the substantive issues at hand rather than a priori preferences for a particular approach.²

Policy evaluation should include some consideration of the philosophical and ethical dimensions of policy making and policy implementation. Indeed it is sometimes important to ask whether or not a policy, programme or project can be evaluated at all. Some policy initiatives and programmes can be so complicated and diffuse that they have little prospect of meeting the central requirements of evaluability. In conducting good evaluation, it is important that:

- the interventions, and the target population, are clear and identifiable;
- the outcomes are clear, specific and measurable;
- an appropriate evaluation design can be implemented.

Again there is UK guidance on ethical assurance of government social research as shown in the link to Ethics in Government Social Research.

Identifying the Guiding Principles of Evaluation

As mentioned earlier, there is no single approach to evaluation. Instead there are various approaches, frameworks and disciplines that can be used in order to achieve the goals of assessing effectiveness and efficiency in terms of public expenditure. According to the American Evaluation Association (AEA) there is a diversity of methods and disciplines within evaluation which both enhances the profession but makes agreeing on principles challenging. However, some groups such as the AEA have sought to establish a set of guiding principles that may be applied to all forms and types of approaches to evaluation.³

² See: http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk/policyhub/magenta_book/

³ See: <http://www.eval.org/Publications/GuidingPrinciples.asp>

As the AEA states, a set of principles is better at providing guidance and enlightenment for practice than they are at supplying definitive answers. Based on extensive research and collaboration, the AEA states that the purposes of guiding principles are to:

- Promote ethical evaluation practice,
- Foster continuing professional development, and
- Stimulate discussion within and outside evaluation.

The US approach is instructive and sets out a series of requirements to good evaluation that are relevant. These are summarised in five headings as follows:

a) Systematic Inquiry

b) Competence

c) Integrity and Honesty

d) Respect for People

e) Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare

a) Systematic Inquiry: Evaluators conduct systematic, data-based inquiries.

1. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the evaluative information they produce, evaluators should adhere to the highest technical standards appropriate to the methods they use.
2. Evaluators should explore with the client the shortcomings and strengths both of the various evaluation questions and the various approaches that might be used for answering those questions.
3. Evaluators should communicate their methods and approaches accurately and in sufficient detail to allow others to understand, interpret and critique their work. This means that the limitations of an evaluation and its results should be made clear. In each context, evaluators should discuss those values, assumptions, theories, methods, results, and analyses that significantly affect the interpretation of the evaluative findings. These statements apply to all aspects of the evaluation, from its initial conceptualisation to the eventual use of findings.

b) Competence: Evaluators provide competent performance to stakeholders.

1. Evaluators should possess (or ensure that the evaluation team possesses) the education, abilities, skills and experience appropriate to undertake the tasks proposed in the evaluation.
2. To ensure recognition, accurate interpretation and respect for diversity, evaluators should check that the members of the evaluation team collectively demonstrate cultural competence. Cultural competence would be reflected in evaluators seeking awareness of their own culturally-based assumptions, their understanding of the worldviews of culturally-different participants and stakeholders in the evaluation, and the use of appropriate evaluation strategies and skills in working with culturally different groups. Diversity may be in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economics, or other factors pertinent to the evaluation context.

3. Evaluators should practice within the limits of their professional training and competence, and should decline to conduct evaluations that fall substantially outside those limits. Evaluators should make clear any significant limitations on the evaluation that might result. Evaluators should make every effort to gain the competence directly or through the assistance of others who possess the required expertise.
4. Evaluators should continually seek to maintain and improve their competencies, in order to provide the highest level of performance in their evaluations. This continuing professional development might include formal coursework and workshops, self-study, evaluations of one's own practice, and working with other evaluators to learn from their skills and expertise.

c) Integrity/Honesty: Evaluators should display honesty and integrity in their own behaviour, and attempt to ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.

1. Evaluators should negotiate honestly with clients and relevant stakeholders concerning the costs, tasks to be undertaken, limitations of methodology, scope of results likely to be obtained, and uses of data resulting from a specific evaluation. It is primarily the evaluator's responsibility to initiate discussion and clarification of these matters.
2. Before accepting an evaluation assignment, evaluators should disclose any roles or relationships they have that might pose a conflict of interest (or appearance of a conflict) with their role as an evaluator. If they proceed with the evaluation, the conflict(s) should be clearly articulated in reports of the evaluation results.
3. Evaluators should record all changes made in the originally negotiated project plans, and the reasons why the changes were made. If those changes risk significantly affecting the scope and likely results of the evaluation, the evaluator should inform the client and other important stakeholders in a timely fashion (barring good reason to the contrary, before proceeding with further work) of the changes and their likely impact.
4. Evaluators should be explicit about their own, their clients', and other stakeholders' interests and values concerning the conduct and outcomes of an evaluation.
5. Evaluators should not misrepresent their procedures, data or findings. Within reasonable limits, they should attempt to prevent or correct misuse of their work by others.
6. If evaluators determine that certain procedures or activities are likely to produce misleading evaluative information or conclusions, they have the responsibility to communicate their concerns and the reasons for them. If discussions with the client do not resolve these concerns, the evaluator should decline to conduct the evaluation. Evaluators should consult colleagues or relevant stakeholders about other proper ways to proceed or indeed to refuse to progress as indicated. (Options might include discussions at a higher level, a dissenting cover letter or appendix, or refusal to sign the final document.)
7. Evaluators should disclose all sources of financial support for an evaluation, and the source of the request for the evaluation.

d) Respect for People: Evaluators respect the security, dignity and self-worth of respondents, program participants, clients, and other evaluation stakeholders.

1. Evaluators should seek a comprehensive understanding of the important contextual elements of the evaluation. Contextual factors that may influence the results of a study include geographic

location, timing, political and social climate, economic conditions, and other relevant activities in progress at the same time.

2. Evaluators should abide by current professional ethics, standards, and regulations regarding risks, harms, and burdens that might befall those participating in the evaluation; regarding informed consent for participation in evaluation; and regarding informing participants and clients about the scope and limits of confidentiality.
3. It is essential that justified negative or critical conclusions from an evaluation must be explicitly stated as evaluations can sometimes produce results that harm client or stakeholder interests. Under such circumstances, evaluators should seek to maximize the benefits and reduce any unnecessary harm that might occur, provided this will not compromise the integrity of the evaluation findings. Evaluators should carefully judge when the benefits from doing the evaluation or in performing certain evaluation procedures should be foregone because of the risks or harms. To the extent possible, these issues should be anticipated during the negotiation of the evaluation.
4. Knowing that evaluations may negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
5. Where feasible, evaluators should attempt to foster social equity in evaluation, so that those who give to the evaluation may benefit in return. For example, evaluators should seek to ensure that those who bear the burdens of contributing data and incurring any risks do so willingly, and that they have full knowledge of and opportunity to obtain any benefits of the evaluation. Programme participants should be informed that their eligibility to receive services does not hinge on their participation in the evaluation.
6. Evaluators have the responsibility to understand and respect differences among participants, such as differences in their culture, religion, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and ethnicity, and to account for potential implications of these differences when planning, conducting, analysing, and reporting evaluations.

e) Responsibilities for General and Public Welfare: Evaluators articulate and take into account the diversity of general and public interests and values that may be related to the evaluation.

1. When planning and reporting evaluations, evaluators should include relevant perspectives and interests of the full range of stakeholders.
2. Evaluators should consider not only the immediate operations and outcomes of whatever is being evaluated, but also its broad assumptions, implications and potential side effects.
3. Freedom of information is essential in a democracy. Evaluators should allow all relevant stakeholders access to evaluative information in forms that respect people and honour promises of confidentiality. Evaluators should actively disseminate information to stakeholders as resources allow. Communications that are tailored to a given stakeholder should include all results that may bear on interests of that stakeholder and refer to any other tailored communications to other stakeholders. In all cases, evaluators should strive to present results clearly and simply so that clients and other stakeholders can easily understand the evaluation process and results.

4. Evaluators should maintain a balance between client needs and other needs. Evaluators necessarily have a special relationship with the client who funds or requests the evaluation. By virtue of that relationship, evaluators must strive to meet legitimate client needs whenever it is feasible and appropriate to do so. However, that relationship can also place evaluators in difficult dilemmas when client interests conflict with other interests, or when client interests conflict with the obligation of evaluators for systematic inquiry, competence, integrity, and respect for people. In these cases, evaluators should explicitly identify and discuss the conflicts with the client and relevant stakeholders, resolve them when possible, determine whether continued work on the evaluation is advisable if the conflicts cannot be resolved, and make clear any significant limitations on the evaluation that might result if the conflict is not resolved.
5. Evaluators have obligations that encompass the public interest and good. These obligations are especially important when evaluators are supported by publicly-generated funds; but clear threats to the public good should never be ignored in any evaluation. Because the public interest and good are rarely the same as the interests of any particular group (including those of the client or funder), evaluators will usually have to go beyond analysis of particular stakeholder interests and consider the welfare of society as a whole.

Good Practice in Evaluation Processes

It is important to ensure that evaluation processes are comprehensive and cover the different perspectives from four main types of stakeholder. Detailed material is available from organisations such as the European and, in particular, the UK Evaluation Society (UKES) and this source has been used to illustrate how good practices can be developed among evaluators and help embed good practice by supporting four key constituencies, namely:

1. The work of evaluators,
2. Commissioners of evaluation,
3. Evaluation participants, and
4. Those involved in self-evaluation.

The UKES divides the guidelines into four discrete sections to match the needs of the four key interest groups above. Following on from the Guiding Principles, it will be seen that there is some crossover of good practice issues across the four sections as reflects the common core values of each section. UKES states that the “guidelines attempt to capture, in an easily assimilated way, a diverse range of principles and frameworks for action that have been useful for evaluations in a variety of contexts”.⁴

By organising the material by ‘section’ the UKES guidelines provide a reference point of the different perspectives for a range of stakeholders involved in the evaluation process. This is particularly helpful to policymakers and commissioners of evaluations as it presents the perspectives of each stakeholder group.

Policy in Context: an Example to Improve the Productivity of Business R&D

As an example of policy in action a case from Scotland is reproduced. As part of its wider economic development brief, one of Scottish Enterprise’s policy aims is to improve the productivity of businesses

⁴ See: <http://www.evaluation.org.uk/resources.aspx>

operating in Scotland. A combined indicator (e.g. GDP per capita or GDP per hour worked) is often used to summarize the complex set of relationships that work towards productivity improvements (e.g. the ability to commercialize R&D and the use of ICT in business). The presumed link between commercialization and ICT use with productivity gains is accepted and progress is measured against a set of indicators benchmarked internationally and regionally. The benchmarks are used in a form a balanced scorecard.⁵

1. *Intervention in Commercialization of R&D*

Action: Increasing and encouraging innovation and investment in R&D

Programme: Initiate specific funding programmes to assist commercialization of research by Universities and increase new start, spin out, businesses

Benchmark: The effective commercialisation of university research is an important element of improving innovation performance. However, internationally comparable data on such academic spinouts is limited and only the US and Canada can be meaningfully compared to Scotland and the UK.

- With a rate of 4.1 spinouts per million population, Scotland compares favourably with the UK, USA and Canada whose rates are 2.8, 1.6 and 1.4 respectively.
- In 2003-2004, 21 spinout companies emerged from Scottish universities. This was an increase of two firms on the previous year, however almost half the level observed in 1999-2000. This large drop was the result of a change in a number of factors including the tax treatment of academics shareholdings in university spin-out companies.

Outcome: The Programme is designed to improve the level and quality of commercialisation within Scotland's universities, research institutes and NHS Boards. The programme is one of Scottish Enterprise's initiatives that is taking Scotland's technological breakthroughs and innovations out of the lab and transforming them into businesses that can become world leaders in their field. 184 groundbreaking projects have been supported to date with over 500 new jobs created by the projects. Recent independent evaluation has estimated that these projects are creating £125 million additional value for the Scottish economy. There are currently 125 completed projects in the Programme portfolio. Of these projects, 32 spinout/start-up companies and 27 licences have been created in Scotland.

2. *Intervention in ICT Adoption and Use*

Action: Support improving business connections and efficiency

Programme(s): Promoting e-business

Benchmark: Data from the UK government departments indicates that Scotland's e-business performance compares well with other countries:

- In 2004, 41 per cent of Scotland's employment was in businesses which trade online.
- This put Scotland in the top quartile of eleven comparator economies.

⁵ See: http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/publications/operating_plan_2007-10.pdf

- Scotland is ranked equal second of the UK regions, moving up from fourth equal in 2000

Outcome: The application of information and communications technology (ICT) in business is an important way in which businesses can increase their access to wider markets and make efficiencies in their business processes, contributing to potentially higher profit levels. Higher levels of ICT usage should therefore contribute to higher levels of productivity and greater access to global markets, two key elements of A Smart Successful Scotland. Whilst the impact of ICT on business outputs is more difficult to capture, the use of technology is a good indicator of potential future productivity gains. Three measures capture the levels of technology in use:

- The proportion of businesses trading online
- The proportion of business activity transacted through e-business
- The proportion of businesses using broadband

The initiation of e-business surveys have been used to reveal that online trading with customers and suppliers amongst Scottish organisations has grown substantially:

- In 2005, 38 per cent of connected organisations received orders over the internet, up from 24 per cent in 2004.
- 60 per cent of connected organisations now place orders over the internet, an increase from 56 per cent in 2004.

However, although the data show an improvement across the indicators, it is not possible in this case to attribute accurately the improvement to the various state and regional interventions. This is an example where the various programmes and projects used in support of ICT contribute to a generally favourable environment for it to flourish.

Good Evaluation Summary

- Good evaluation requires management initiative (and often political commitment) and intensive monitoring. The thoroughness of an evaluation should depend upon the scale of the impact of a policy, programme or project, and to some extent on the level of public interest. There may be a high level of media interest around a project which has required a significant degree of expenditure, or one which is highly complex, novel, or represents a pilot for future large scale programmes. Evaluation reports should be widely disseminated and published, where appropriate, to contribute to the knowledge base upon which future decisions will be taken.
- The activity to be evaluated needs to be clearly specified. The evaluation might be of a project, programme or policy, particular aspects of the activity, or of key common issues affecting a number of activities. It might also be a pilot designed especially for evaluation.
- Objectives, outcomes and outputs should be defined and quantified as precisely as possible for use in step three below. It is important to distinguish between the objectives and outcomes, and the outputs and targets.
- The availability of output and performance measures and targets, and other monitoring data, and how they relate to the objectives should be reviewed. If this information is inadequate,

consideration should be given to the collection of additional data, although ideally, data needs would have been considered at the outset of the project.

- It is usual to take as a benchmark for comparison, what would have happened if the activity under consideration had not been implemented. It is also useful to consider the consequences of implementing one or more of the alternatives considered during appraisal. Occasionally it may be appropriate to consider an option that was not originally appraised, as long as it was feasible at the time of implementation.
- The results and recommendations from evaluation should feed into future decision-making. The methods used to achieve this will generally require senior management endorsement. Efforts should be made to disseminate the results widely, and, for this purpose, it may be helpful to use summaries of the main points, and reports which synthesise the results from a number of evaluations with common features.
- The results of an evaluation should summarise:
 - Why the outturn differed from that foreseen in the appraisal.
 - How effective the activity was in achieving its objectives.
 - The cost effectiveness of the activity, and
 - What the results imply for future management or policy decisions.

3. REGIONAL POLICY AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Regional Policy of the Czech Republic: Relations and Competencies

The current institutional setting of the Czech Republic derives from a series of reforms of the public administration that were undertaken in three main stages: a) in 1990 the renewal (reestablishment) of local self-governing units and municipalities; b) in 1997 and 2001 the creation of higher self-governing units (Krajs – NUTS3 regions); c) in 2002 the abolition of District Authorities and the transfer of their function to the new Krajs and to the so called “municipalities with extended powers” (a total of 205 municipalities). These reforms have gradually reduced the tasks of the central administration through the formal transfer of competencies to lower levels of government.

At present, the Czech Republic is divided into 14 self-governing regions (Krajs) and 6,244 municipalities.⁶ Krajs are associated into 8 Cohesion Regions (NUTS2 level) for the administration of Regional Operational Programmes and the collection of statistical data. Specific state tasks, such as the implementation of police and justice, are still managed within the territorial framework of the former existing Districts. Finally, municipalities can associate on voluntary basis to form development entities called micro-regions, to provide a better planning and delivery of services.

In accordance with law (Act No. 248/2000 Coll. on Support of Regional Development), both national and regional authorities are responsible for regional development. The central administration gives the general framework for the implementation of regional policy in the Czech Republic. It sets out prerequisites for promoting social and economic cohesion, encouraging development and strengthening competitiveness and partnerships. The Ministry for Regional Development performs a number of statutory roles including that of national coordinator of regional development, administrator of regional policy of the state and regulator of territorial development.

The basic national document concerning regional policy in the Czech Republic is the Regional Development Strategy (RDS), elaborated under the supervision of the Ministry, which includes:

- an analysis of the status of regional development,
- strengths and weaknesses of individual Krajs, Districts and administrative micro-regions,
- strategic objectives for regional development in the Czech Republic,
- a definition of regions with prioritization criteria for concentrated state support,
- recommendations to the relevant central administrative authorities and Krajs focussing on issues to be addressed by (sectoral) development policy falling within their competencies.

⁶ According to Law, municipalities and Krajs have the right of self-governing in many spheres of local administration as well as they perform delegated function within the control of state administration.

Box 2. Regional policy in the Czech Republic

The main objectives and actions of regional policy of the Czech Republic are set out in the Regional Development Strategy and are:

- based on the Sustainable Development Strategy of the Czech Republic and establish a reform oriented, growth-promoting plan that is formulated in the Economic Growth Strategy of the Czech Republic (EGS) and in the National Programme of Reforms (NPR);
- designed to interact with the principal objectives of sectoral ministries and regional strategies and programmes,
- harmonised with EU priorities that are set out in the EU economic, social and territorial cohesion policy and in the renewed Lisbon Strategy (cohesion, growth, employment).

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) is based on the “Czech Republic Strategy for Sustainable Development” and it is in line with the general regional policy objectives set by of the European Union. The link between the two strategies is expressed concisely by the objective “*to promote the sustainable development of municipalities and regions*”.

The Regional Development Strategy is also guided by another document prepared by the Ministry for Regional development, the Territorial Development Policy, a national territorial planning tool (focused mainly on infrastructural and environmental issues) which coordinates the physical territorial planning of the regions and the “concepts” and programmes that have an impact on the territory managed by sectoral Ministries.

As such, the Regional Development Strategy is an important source document for the preparation of the National Development Plan (NDP), the 2007-2013 National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and its related Operational Programmes (EU development and cohesion policy).

The RDS focuses on several themes or pillars. For example, the partial objective of the “economic pillar” is: “*in the field of regional development, to create conditions that will alleviate, or even eliminate, regional economic disparities, while drawing on opportunities to support the cross-border cooperation of regions*”. The objectives within the scope of the “environmental pillar” are set globally for the entire territory of the Czech Republic. The specific regional focus stated in the “social pillar” concerns the promotion of development in rural areas.

The Regional Development Strategy has also a section on “good governance” which calls for a number of objectives to be met, including: a) the creation of conditions for optimising the use of regional resources; b) the support for the utilisation of local sources of secondary raw materials and the preferential use of renewable energy sources; c) the support of policies to alleviate regional disparities and to promote the balanced development of regions (through the development of the local economies of municipalities and micro-regions); d) the development of SMEs, and; e) the support of cultural diversity in individual regions.

In accordance with the subsidiarity principle, the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy is carried out at the local, regional or departmental level and activities are funded either by national development programmes, development programmes of regions and (mainly) by the EU co-financed Operational Programmes (Structural Funds). Thus, the Regional Development Strategy envisages all possible intervention within the responsibility of Ministries, Krajs and Cohesion regions or municipalities, provided that they have a relevant impact on regional development.

Kraj and Local Development Programmes

In the framework outlined above, the 14 self-governing regions (Krajs) have a crucial role in setting regional policy in the Czech Republic. In fact, Krajs have their own budgets, coordinate their own development programmes and provide for the design, implementation and monitoring of development programmes in the regions. At the same time, Krajs assess intra-regional disparities, participate in the process of distribution of public funds for promotion of regional development and provide to some extent assistance and loans to municipalities and other territorial entities.

Every kraj in the Czech Republic prepares and adopts its own development programme according to the Act on Regions (Regional System) and the Act on Promotion of Regional Development. These documents that define quite broadly each Kraj's development strategy often contain a number of objectives and aspirations that cannot be delivered by Krajs authorities. However with the preparation of these development documents, Krajs are able to point out what they consider as key development elements concerning their territory. These also allow for a better coordination (or integration) of (sectoral / territorial) policies and activities that are implemented by other central or regional level administrations (e.g. by the state in case of construction of main roads, motorways and railway corridors).

National authorities may issue guidelines which would help Krajs to create their development programmes, but given the independent competencies of Krajs, they have only a very limited possibility to influence the nature and structure of Krajs planning documents.

Similar roles exist for municipalities and micro-regions. In fact each of the 6,243 municipality should have a development strategy and provide development plans. However, while the above mentioned Acts explicitly ask municipalities to elaborate development programmes, in case of micro-regions (which are created voluntarily as associations of municipalities) this is left to their free will or necessity.

Box 3. Strategic planning in the micro-region Premyslid Central Bohemia

Microregion Přemyslovské Střední Čechy (Premyslid Central Bohemia) is situated in the north-eastern part of the Central Bohemian Region and consist of a group of municipalities (e.g. Slaný, Velvary, Roztoky u Prahy etc.) co-operating on voluntary base. The Premyslid Central Bohemia micro-region has prepared its own development strategy that is focused on a large and diverse range of topics including economic development, agricultural, social and technical infrastructure. The strategy was prepared with the support of a variety of local actors such as non-profit or civic organizations, local development agencies etc. However, as quite common to other micro-regions and local development strategies it is not well integrated into regional and national strategies.

Although administration reforms have significantly reduced some responsibilities of the central authorities towards regions and self-governing regions, formal transfer of competencies has not yet been completed and the system of access to financial resources remains highly regulated. Thus although Krajs have found some room to operate and play a role (mainly as mediators, initiators or coordinators) in development and planning in their territories, the decisive factor still relies in the scarce financing possibility to fully implement their own proposed development strategies and plans outside the EU co-financed policy framework.

Evaluation in the Czech Republic

The outlined administrative and governance structure in the Czech Republic has been developed over the past twenty years mainly due to reforms, which were also motivated by the deepening of the integration into European structures as well as participation in work process of both Council of Europe and EU membership. Evaluation also became part of the process of preparation and implementation of development strategies and policies with the involvement of the Czech Republic in the implementation of EU pre-accession programmes (PHARE, SAPARD, ISPA).

Nowadays, the use of evaluation in regional development in the Czech Republic is still mainly connected with the evaluation of EU co-financed programming documents: a) related to the implementation of the Joint Regional Operational Programme (JROP), applied to all Cohesion regions (NUTS 2) within the 2004-2006 programming period; and b) related to the preparation and implementation of the NSRF and its Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) within the 2007-2013 programming period.⁷

Currently, the government of the Czech Republic is putting a strong emphasis on the modernisation of the public administration and on the effectiveness of the use of public funds. This debate includes efforts to increase public administration accountability, to develop human resources, to rationalise processes and structures, as well as to introduce ICT and modern forms of communication, databases and registers.

In this picture, despite the effort of the Czech government to make the public administration to apply to evaluation and audit systems, the use of evaluation is still rare and its value generally underestimated. There are no clear national rules or regulations striving for the establishment, development and cultivation of an evaluation culture, and policies which would define the principles of use of evaluation and would promote a commitment to create the necessary structures and methodological support are still lacking.

Box 4. The Effective Public Administration and Friendly Public Services, Smart Administration Implementation Strategy for 2007 – 2015

The Effective Public Administration and Friendly Public Services, Smart Administration Implementation Strategy for the period 2007 - 2015 was adopted in 2007 in connection with the new priority of the EU cohesion policy, set as a condition for accessing EU Structural Funds. This strategy aims to enhance qualitative changes in the public administration. Particular attention is paid namely to assessing quality, openness, transparency, effective use of public sources, quality of the regulatory framework and to establish a Regulation Impacts Assessment System (RIA). This concept also represents a formal umbrella of the Smart Administration Strategy stated in the National Strategic Reference Framework of the Czech Republic for 2007-2013 (NSRF).

The NSRF is the only current Czech document that explicitly provides support to the development of an evaluation culture at the local and regional levels. In the case of territorial public administration authorities, this represents an incentive for regions and municipalities (mainly those municipalities that have expanded competencies) to prepare, implement and evaluate territorial development strategies and projects and to develop adequate information bases.

Evidence from evaluation activities conducted in the Czech Republic reveals a series of characteristics that are summarised below:

⁷ In 2006 an important change occurred, when, following legislative enhancement of Cohesion regions (under which the Regional Councils became independent legal entities), the JROP was substituted with Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) for each Cohesion region, managed indirectly by Krajs. Each Regional Council currently plays the role of managing authority of the ROPs. Regional Councils are also required to set up the evaluation system of the ROPs.

- Evaluations are mainly carried out just to fulfil EU regulations and implemented in a way to respond to the minimum basic requirements
- The majority of evaluation experiences matured in the Czech Republic refer mainly to ex ante evaluations.⁸
- Other evaluations (when not performed to respond to EU regulations) are often reduced to simple overviews or lists of projects implemented, without clear connections to financial allocations, results, impacts etc.
- Evaluations are often too much consultants driven, rather than based on clear terms of references set by and developed under a clear supervision of the proposer
- Evaluation analyses are often conducted without consistent or coherent procedures and reports are produced mainly for internal bureaucratic purposes
- A certain difficulty to gather relevant data (both quantitative and qualitative), particularly at regional level, still persist

Box 5. The Vysočina region (kraj) evaluation experience

The Vysočina region (kraj) (6 796 km², 512 582 inhabitants) is located in the central part of the Czech Republic covering territory in both historic countries of Bohemia and Moravia. Together with the South Moravian region (kraj), Vysočina forms a Southeast Cohesion region (NUTS II).

The Development Programme of the Region focuses on:

- Improvement of the competitive position of the economy,
- Improvement of the quality of the social environment with an emphasis on the development of human resources,
- Improvement of the quality of the technical environment with an emphasis on the development of network infrastructure and the introduction of principles of sustainable development of the region.

Vysočina Development Programme is funded by the main financial instrument of the region, the Vysočina Fund. In the Programme there is no reference to perform evaluations and also it does not contain any monitoring indicator. However recently the introduction of the Balance Scorecard method for evaluation has been discussed together with the introduction of a set of monitoring regional indicators such as:

- The financial impact for the territory of the Vysočina region (kraj),
- A summary overview of all programmes, in terms of the number of applications granted,
- Level of support,
- Overall financial volume of projects,
- Statistics on draw-down, by RDP goal,
- Level of co-financing by applicants,
- Use of funds, by applicant type,
- Distribution of support with an impact on the districts of municipalities with extended powers.

⁸ Being the 2007-2013 programming period just started, experience from the previous period is relatively limited since the implementation of most related programmes was delayed significantly and ongoing evaluations were not carried out for all of them.

Box 6. Ex ante evaluation of Hradec Králové region (kraj)

Hradec Králové region (kraj) has commissioned an external ex ante evaluation of its sustainable development mid-term strategy, made operational through annual programmes linked to the regional budget, containing also specific projects with allocated resources. The evaluators were confronted with the following challenges:

a) *Not well defined roles between evaluators and the contracting authority*

The evaluation was commissioned by the kraj to its regional development agency. The evaluation was managed by a specialized department (a section of the regional authority) and by the political representation, which attempted vigorously to promote its ideas. Close and multiple links between the contracting authority and the evaluator resulted in defocusing of the responsibility of the contracting authority.

b) *asynchronous approach to the process of elaboration of the document and of the evaluation*

The evaluation began in a situation where the negotiations with regional stakeholders concerning the structure of the strategy had been almost finished and a relatively strong consensus had already been achieved. Further, once the evaluation started, evaluators found that parts of the strategic document were meant to be final and it was not possible to be adjusted according to evaluation findings

c) *vague ideas about the process of elaboration of the strategy*

Due to a very limited space provided by the contracting authority, evaluators focused mainly on the logic of forming the strategy and on the compliance with formal rules of setting objectives and subsequent priorities. However it was difficult to understand how the objectives stated in the strategy were defined, the methods used, their relations and hierarchy and the links between objectives and priorities of the strategy. In fact the strategy was prepared as a cut and paste of previous documents and information contained in NUTS 2 Regional Operational Programmes. Strategic objectives were not linked to operational objectives, which led to the break-up of the strategy into mutually unrelated parts, and consequently, threatened the coherence of the document.

d) *vague ideas about methods of monitoring the implementation of the strategy*

The region (kraj) did not foresee in the strategy any monitoring method or indicator concerning the implementation of individual objectives and priorities.

e) *lack of information necessary for verification of simulations and modelling*

In addition to such specific difficulties, evaluators found very difficult to find appropriate data sources mainly at local level, thus causing problems to benchmark evaluation findings or to use the findings as an input to future evaluation models and simulations.

Factors Affecting the Evaluation of Policies in the Czech Republic

To conclude, some factors that may have inhibited so far the diffusion of evaluation as a common practice in the Czech Republic are summarised below.

a) ***Communication Issues in the Public Administration System***

The public administration system in the Czech Republic remains partly incommunicative. Further, the involvement of the economic sector and the civil society (including professionals, academics and researchers) in the policy making process and monitoring and evaluation of its implementation, does not receive a systematic encouragement or support. Exceptions exist in relation to EU co-financed policies, whose regulations require the use of partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, and to other practices that are regulated by law (e.g. the SEA evaluation).

b) ***Underestimating the Benefits of Evaluation for Effectiveness of Public Policies***

Politicians have often a strong influence not only on the content of policies but also in their implementation (including procedural and organizational aspects). Political structures and often some professional apparatus do not always fully appreciate the benefits of evaluation in the policy cycle. Such underestimation may be also caused by a less developed and insufficient evaluation culture, barriers on the side of supporting information sources and consequently by insufficient outputs of early evaluation studies. This results in a classic vicious circle, where the lack of demand for evaluations weakens the process of building of an evaluation capacity and cultivation of an evaluation culture.

c) Professional Employment Instability

Public administration in the Czech Republic is affected by high and increasing levels of employee turnover. This is due to the lower attractiveness of employment in the public sector where salary levels are considerably lower than in the private sector, particularly at management level. High employee turnover significantly weakens the dissemination of the awareness of the need for evaluation and understanding of the content of this process, as well as the possibilities of its practical application.

d) Impaired Ability to Accumulate Knowledge

Personnel instability hinders the accumulation of knowledge and the development of capacity. Information learned in the policy implementation process is not sufficiently systematically processed and assessed in the light of broader material, context and long-term considerations. Databases are insufficiently developed and restrict the sources of data (i.e. of input for mathematic modelling and simulations) that can be accessed and applied. As a result, there are no sufficiently detailed studies to bring forward new, robust and reliable, information about outputs, outcomes and impacts of policy at gross or net levels.

e) Poor Ability to Formulate Strategies, Concepts and Programmes

The personnel and organizational instability is also reflected in a limited capacity of the public administration to formulate strategies, concepts, programmes and connected evaluations. Thus, often the public administration depends on the use of external support. This reliance on external assistance inhibits learning and absorption of processes, method and skills and therefore to develop related capacity.

f) Low Incorporation of EU Evaluation and monitoring practices into National Programmes

Despite the important impulse to programming and evaluation given by EU requirements in the last decade, it has remained difficult to widely spread or share the evaluation experience within regions and municipalities. This is also true regarding monitoring, since data collection system and monitoring of implementation of national funded programmes is still partially undeveloped.⁹

g) Absence of a National Strategy that Promotes Evaluation for set-up of the policy

⁹ In the 2004-2006 EU Programming period, the Ministry for Regional Development had an Evaluation Unit responsible for the coordination of the Community Support Framework (CSF) related evaluations. The change of European legislation and the passage from the CSF to the NSRF document led also to the dissolution of this unit, which could have played an important role in the development of evaluation culture in the Czech Republic. Concerning monitoring, the 2004-2006 programming period was affected by technical incompatibility of partially developed monitoring systems. However the current improved monitoring system in use for EU co-financed Operational Programmes, should be considered as an opportunity and be somehow extended or adapted to monitoring the implementation of all the local development strategies and programmes.

Despite progress towards the modernization of public administration with the promotion of the concept of Effective Public Administration and Smart Administration, there remains imbalanced attention to the issues of evaluation. The main emphasis continues to be on cost-effectiveness of public administration in providing public services, and on the impact of legislation on business environment and on the population (RIA) with the aim of reducing bureaucratic load. With the exception of the NSRF, promotion of evaluation as a regular phase of the decision-making process, and as a policy management instrument, is given only small support at the central and at the territorial levels.

4. INTERNATIONAL EVALUATION PRACTICES FROM SELECTED COUNTRIES

Introduction

International best practices can often shine a light to guide the evaluation actions in countries with underdeveloped evaluation systems and culture. However, as illustrated by the difficulties outlined in the previous chapter, looking for absolute international best practices in the evaluation field, and then trying to apply them in the current context of the Czech Republic could be a rather artificial and sterile way to proceed. This chapter will instead try to identify specific traits, positive and negative, of various evaluation systems in different countries that can help us formulate practical considerations with regards to the Czech case.

This implies that we will not look at national evaluation systems as a whole, but only pick those particular features which appear to be relevant for our purposes.

The five countries from which we will select our examples are: Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Spain and Switzerland. Generally speaking, these are countries with fairly varied historical, political, administrative and geographical backgrounds, and what is even more important is that they have very differentiated traditions in terms of evaluation culture and institutionalisation.

Before going into more detail, it is worth noting that the International Atlas of Evaluation (Furubo et al., 2002), which outlines the status of policy evaluation in 21 countries and three international organizations (the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, the European Union and the World Bank), using an index from 0 to 18, ranks Australia and Switzerland (with 16 and 15 points respectively) in the group of world leading systems of evaluation in terms of their maturity, places Denmark (with 12 points) somewhere near the middle of the ranking and, finally, assigns some of the lowest positions to Spain (5 points) and Belgium (4 points).

Similar results derive also from the application of a different kind of index, from 0 to 9, based on the Degree of Evaluation Institutionalisation in Western Countries (Jacob and Varone, 2003):

Table 1. Degree of Evaluation Institutionalisation in Western Countries

	Country	Points
1	Australia	7
2	Switzerland	7
3	Denmark	3
4	Belgium	2
5	Spain	1

Source: Jacob and Varone, 2003

While care should always be taken in the interpretation of the experiences from different countries some years ago, it can produce useful pointers on how to proceed while learning from the lessons of others. The set of national evaluation practices selected for examination and comparison in this paper, therefore,

will allow us to deal with both best-case scenarios as well as situations still in evolution and where, at least in theory, there is significant room for improvement.

Australia

This section will concentrate mainly on the period between 1983 and 1996 when, for internal political reasons, extensive evaluation activities were conducted in Australia. This pursuit of a comprehensive approach will allow us to examine the set-up and management of a particularly sophisticated and effective Monitoring and Evaluation System.

The reforms promoted by the Government in the early eighties, in the face of a very difficult macroeconomic situation, placed Australia at the forefront of OECD countries in terms of public sector management. The reforms were inspired by a philosophy of “letting the managers manage”. To measure their performance the Department of Finance (DoF) developed a whole-of government evaluation strategy, strongly endorsed by the Cabinet through a formal decision. The strategy was progressively developed over several years with three principal objectives:

- a) to encourage programme managers to use evaluation to improve their programmes;
- b) to aid the cabinet’s decision making and prioritization;
- c) to strengthen accountability in a devolved environment.

A centrepiece of the strategy was evaluation planning, done through formal portfolio evaluations plans (PEPs) to be submitted annually to the Minister of Finance. PEPs listed the government programmes each ministry intended to evaluate, and the issues to be addressed in each evaluation. PEP evaluations were classified as “major evaluations”, and they targeted programmes with large budgets, programmes of particular policy importance, problem programmes and pilot programmes. Departments were also expected to initiate other, smaller evaluations, purely for internal management purposes.

By the mid-1990s, about 160 PEP evaluations were under way at any one time. The terms of reference (ToR) for each evaluation were the key element of negotiations between the line departments and the budget sections of the Department of Finance.

Some of the larger departments had their own internal evaluation branch responsible for planning activities, providing methodology advice, participating in steering committees, and conducting some specific evaluations directly. Departments with smaller evaluation units devolved the evaluation function to line programme areas, which in some cases contracted the work out to individual consultants or consulting firms. Officials from the DoF often were in the position to influence the conduct of evaluations by commenting on draft reports.

Australia’s Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system was based on a broad definition of evaluation, including rapid evaluations, formal policy reviews, rigorous impact evaluations, and performance audits conducted by the national audit office. The cost of these evaluations varied widely from \$ 43.000 to \$ 430.000 in 1993 prices¹⁰. To further strengthen the system, the DoF created a specialist evaluation unit for providing advice, support, training, and encouragement to other departments.

¹⁰ Currently 1 Australian dollar corresponds to about 0.5 EUR

In the first phase the main focus was on providing the necessary, in-depth, reliable information on the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs. Later on the finance department also mandated a rolling series of detailed reviews of each department's program objectives and performance information. The over-arching objective of Australia's M&E system, however, remained that of supporting the cabinet's decision making during the budget process.

The budget process entailed a "marketplace of ideas", based on an adversarial situation between the DoF and the sector ministries. In such a context, having evaluations findings available was an important means of ensuring a reliable evidentiary basis for budget decisions. Those who could rely on good quality evaluation had an obvious strong competitive advantage to promote or halt funding for specific programmes. Increasing the amount of information available on government performance provides the opportunity to move the debate from the amount of the spending to the results of that spending. This was a huge cultural change within the whole administration and particularly within the Department of Finance, which entailed a slow process over a number of years and involved a substantial staff turnover. Gradually the focus moved more and more on to value for money, rather than on simple spending issues, with inter-ministerial negotiations increasingly drawing on available evaluation findings.

By 1994-95, about \$ 1,75 billion (or 77% of the total) of Australia's new policy proposals were judged to have been influenced by the findings of an evaluation, and in most cases the influence was judged to be direct. The corresponding figures for saving options were \$ 380 million (or 65% of the total). Evaluation findings influenced not only the policy options put forward for the cabinet's consideration, but also the cabinet's decisions. In this regard the evidence is a bit more mixed and less definitive, but in 1994-95 evaluation was judged to have influenced the Cabinet's decisions in 68 percent of the \$ 2,846 billion of proposals considered (new policy proposals plus saving options).

Box 7. Influential evaluations in Australia

In the 1996-97 budget the new government was determined to both reduce and reprioritize government spending. Particular focus was given to labour market and related programmes, which accounted for \$2.90 billion in spending annually. The minister for employment articulated the government's overall policy goal as being to provide assistance to the long-term unemployed and to those at risk of entering long-term unemployment. This focus was adopted both for equity and efficiency objectives, such as achieving a better match of labour supply and demand. At the same time, the minister wanted to achieve better value for money from labour market programs in the tight budgetary environment.

Australian and international evaluation findings were drawn on heavily to help guide the policy choices made. The minister highlighted the relative cost-effectiveness of different labour market programmes. A key measure of this was estimated by calculating the net cost to government for each additional job placement from different programmes—as measured by the increased probability of an assisted person being in a job some 6 months after he or she had participated in a labour market programme. (The baseline was a matched comparison group of individuals who did not participate in a programme.)

Evaluation findings showed that the "JobStart program", which provided wage subsidies, had a net cost of \$3,700 per additional job placement, whereas the "JobSkills program", which was a direct job-creation program, had a corresponding net cost of \$57,800. The minister noted, "The government will be . . . concentrating its efforts on those programs which have proven most cost-effective in securing real job outcomes." As a result, the "JobStart program" was retained and the "JobSkills program" was substantially scaled back and more tightly targeted to job seekers who were particularly disadvantaged.

Total savings to the government from its reduction and reprioritization of labour market programs were about \$1.14 billion over two years. The cabinet also commissioned a series of major evaluations of its new labour market programs and of the new arrangements for full competition between public and private employment service providers.

According to many commentators in Australia, this period witnessed the most that can be expected from a whole-of-government M&E system, in terms of potential utilization of the M&E information that the system produces. Some form of evaluation was necessary to provide justification for virtually all budget bids. There was also a high level of utilization of the information produced by the M&E system by line departments and agencies. This high level of utilization by line departments reflected the fact that, in the Australian M&E system, evaluation was essentially a collaborative effort involving the DoF, other central departments, and the line departments. Although responsibility for evaluation was largely devolved to line departments, the involvement of the central departments in the planning and oversight of the major PEP evaluations helped achieve broad ownership of the evaluations themselves and of their findings.

On the other side, it should be noted that the quality of the evaluations conducted by line departments was not always of the highest level. In fact a performance audit conducted by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) concluded that more than one-third of the evaluation reports suffered from methodological weaknesses of one kind or another. One reason for this was that many of the program areas of line departments that had responsibility for conducting or commissioning evaluations lacked sufficient skills to ensure that high-quality evaluations were conducted. The DoF provided basic training in evaluation methods and issued handbooks on program evaluation and cost-benefit analysis. But the ANAO audit reported that 20 percent of line departments were concerned about the lack of available training in advanced evaluation techniques.

In retrospect, one option to address this issue of evaluation quality would have been for the DoF to mandate creating sizeable central evaluation units in each department. Another option would have been to centralize the entire evaluation function in the DoF—this would have required the creation of a very large evaluation office and would have been contrary to the devolutionary nature of most of the public sector reforms. Another weakness of the M&E system claimed by some departmental secretaries was that the formal requirements for evaluation planning and reporting were too burdensome.

Belgium

As already stated in the introduction to this chapter, in terms of policy evaluation Belgium can be considered a laggard country by international standards (Varone, Jacob, De Winter, 2005). The discussion of the Belgian case is, however, interesting as it represents a perhaps deviant case of non-diffusion of policy evaluation. Explaining the particular situation of Belgium could thus be a fruitful way to identify possible obstacles to take into account in a context where evaluation is trying to affirm and confirm itself, like is typically happening in the present phase in the Czech Republic.

We will focus our attention on three main explanatory factors of the laggard situation of Belgium in terms of evaluation praxis:

- a) the all-pervasive phenomenon of partitocracy;
- b) the relative weakness of Parliament vis-à-vis the government;
- c) the federalization process that is characteristic of the recent institutional evolution of the country.

In Belgium political parties are the key actors in the policy-making process. The three traditional political party families (Christian Democrats, Socialists and Liberals) together received the overwhelming majority of votes and shared governmental offices in different coalition formulae. In the 1968–78 period, these traditional parties split into two autonomous Flemish and francophone parties. In addition, several new types of parties entered the political market (regionalists, greens and right-wing populists). The fragmentation of the party system has since increased further to record levels within Europe. Hence, a federal majority coalition could only succeed by including four to six parties.

In order to guarantee a minimal degree of cohesion within the federal government, coalition parties minimize interactions with other political actors (e.g. voters, ministers, MPs, civil servants and the judiciary) and centralize the policymaking power in the hands of the party executive. The existence of strong ‘ministerial cabinets’, one specific feature of this partitocratic system, has a major influence on the limited development of policy evaluation. This refers to ministers having a large number of personal staff paid by the state. These ministerial cabinets, which can have up to 200 members, and their leading members are often ‘(wo)men of confidence’ of the party leaders. The cabinet members prepare the minister’s own policy project, formulate policy compromises for the council of ministers and define the minister’s position for parliamentary appearances.

Two main arguments can be identified with regard to the negative impact of partitocracy on Belgian evaluation culture. The first argument is that political parties try to avoid any additional ‘veto player’ in the policy-making process. As evaluators can call into question policy choices, which are the products of delicate compromises between four to six coalition parties, it is quite obvious that the party leaders would resist this potential loss of coordinating power. The political costs induced by a policy evaluation, in promoting a higher public visibility of the potentially missing outputs and outcomes of the evaluated policy, seem to be far too much for political parties and government stability.

The second argument is that the links between the different stages of a traditional policy cycle are disturbed. The ministerial cabinets formulate public policies with little proactive integration of the administration’s expertise. Policy implementation logically lies in the hands of civil servants, but generally the administration has neither the formal competencies nor the resources for initiating and conducting their own evaluation. All in all, the lack of policy evaluation is a sign of a highly fragmented and polycentric policy cycle and little cooperation between ministerial cabinets and the administration.

Belgium is a parliamentary democracy, but several empirical studies show that the power of the Parliament seems to be low and declining in this country. In spite of permanent and specialized parliamentary committees, the legislative function of the Parliament has been sidelined. A large majority of bills passed by Parliament in Belgium are introduced by the government rather than by individual MPs. Furthermore, the control function of the Belgian Parliament is undermined by the majority MPs’ duty to promote the stability of the government coalition. Finally, another indicator of Parliament’s weakness is the secondary role given to MPs for policy evaluation.

Federalism is a third important barrier to policy evaluation in Belgium. Due to the federal structures of the political system and the power-sharing devices guaranteed by the Constitution, the formulation, adoption, implementation and evaluation of various public policies require – if they are to be appropriate, effective and efficient – a proactive coordination between various levels of government. Belgium strictly speaking is neither a jurisdictional federation nor a functional federation¹¹, but rather a hybrid federal system with many overlapping competencies among the federal, regional and community levels. All federal policy initiatives and expenditures are constantly scrutinized by regional players (executives and parties) for their potentially different (and thus ‘unfair’) impact on their respective regions. Conflicts over federal policies and the devolution of more powers to the regions/communities are solved by large package deals, or pacts, between the federal coalition parties, which are purely political compromises, referred to as ‘wafer iron politics’; these would only be hindered by policy evaluations on objective grounds. This fragmentation cum politicization of policy competencies strongly affects the underdevelopment of

¹¹ In jurisdictional federations, full competencies in specific policy sectors are attributed to each level of government. In their respective jurisdictional areas, governments can act unilaterally (e.g. Canada). In functional federations, competencies are attributed along the functions of policy formulation and policy implementation. Hence, while policy formulation is normally the responsibility of the federal government, implementation usually belongs to sub-federal governments (e.g. Switzerland). In contrast to jurisdictional federations, functional federations normally require intensive intergovernmental cooperation.

evaluation at the federal level and complicates policy evaluations conducted jointly by several levels of powers.

The Belgian case demonstrates that federalism is not always a factor that enhances policy evaluation. Thus, we can doubt the generality of the federalist explanation. Federal structures and processes might well strengthen multi-level evaluations, or even facilitate an 'evaluation laboratory' at the regional level. However, conflicts, rivalries or the absence of a proactive coordination between various levels of power might also hinder the diffusion of the evaluation praxis.

In contrast to the nation-wide tendency, it should be noted that the situation is quite different in Wallonia (French-speaking), where evaluative practice has developed as a result of the conditions attached to funding from the European structural funds and the presence of a strong political leadership. For the regional experiment in Wallonia to induce an emulation and diffusion process within the other federated entities and at the federal level, some commentators (Varone, Jacob, De Winter, 2005) argue that it will be necessary to think about a suitable institutional configuration, given the politico-administrative constraints described above. One way would be to rely on the experience of volunteer actors before turning evaluation into a compulsory activity to politicians of a given sector (MacDonald et al., 2003). In any case, the four major hurdles for enhancing evaluative capacities in Belgium are: (1) developing an epistemic community (scientific investigations, training of officials in evaluation methods and framing of quality standards for evaluators); (2) strengthening the role played hitherto by parliamentary and supervisory bodies to overcome the problem of evaluation 'usurped' by the executive (both administrative and governmental); (3) introducing multi-level cooperation for policy evaluation; and (4) launching a debate within and among political parties (e.g. parties' task forces and ministerial cabinets) about the usefulness of policy evaluation for a better policy performance and a better implementation of 'coalition agreement' of the various governments.

Denmark

Evaluation research has established itself in Denmark since the mid-1980s as a much needed instrument for political and organizational development, control, monitoring and modernization in the public sector and in private organizations and institutions.

Before the mid-1980s evaluation developed slowly in Denmark, partly due to special political conditions in the development of the Danish welfare state. The lack of economic pressure for budget reductions and the general political consensus between the major political parties - especially the political involvement of the social democratic trade union movement in the political decisions on welfare and labour market programmes - can, in part, probably explain the lack of political interest in evaluations of many welfare reforms and programmes.

The need for more systematic knowledge of the effects and outcomes in the form of evaluations of these reforms and programmes became evident during the 1980s with economic recession, stagnation and increasing political protest against high taxation and hence political demands for austerity programmes. In this situation, the necessity for systematic information to increase efficiency and goal-orientation in social policy was unavoidable. The total size of the public sector, and especially the growing social sector responding to accelerating social problems, stood out as a problem in itself.

Today evaluation research in Denmark covers all areas-from evaluation of public services and institutions to evaluations of social projects, experiments and policy programmes. Until fairly recently, however, the great majority of these evaluations were conducted with the use of rather traditional methods of data collection. For many years there was a predominance of survey-based evaluations relying on positivistic quantitative methods and without the use of theory in evaluations. This kind of social research,

with its long tradition of conceiving social relations just as facts to be collected by questionnaires and analysed by statistical methods, has great difficulties, as highlighted by several commentators in the 1990s (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 1994; Hansson, 1997), in producing information and usable knowledge on social relations that can be interpreted in an historical-cultural context and integrated in a reflexive interpretation of the social processes analysed in complex modern or post-modern industrial societies.

Theory oriented evaluations and evaluations based on action-research represent today the main responses of practitioners in Denmark to the traditional approach briefly described in the paragraph above. For the purposes of our discussion of the current perspectives for evaluation in the Czech Republic it is not advisable to examine in great depth these two alternative methodologies. It is sufficient to say that, for example, the theory oriented efforts have succeeded in combining evaluations in the field of research with organizational theory and turned the focus in the discussion of research evaluation from individual results or productivity to the organizational setting and environment for research (universities, institutes, working groups, networks), and that evaluations based on action research advocate for a much more explicit user – or stakeholder – involvement, so that the dialogue between the local initiators and the researchers produces information to be used locally while the project is in progress and not from a top-down perspective.

Spain

We will look at the Spanish experience from a particular point of view: the use of an empowerment evaluation approach to build evaluation capacity within the context of rural development, more specifically through the European LEADER initiative. This approach stems from the two following considerations:

- a) the importance of rural development in the Czech Republic, confirmed also by the success of the LEADER initiative in the country with 156 Local Action Groups (LAGs) and micro-regions established as of March 2008;
- b) the centrality for the strengthening of a culture and system of evaluation of concepts such as empowerment, capacity building, local partnerships, bottom-up, stake-holder participation, leadership and ownership.

The development of European Community administrative authority has greatly and positively influenced the development of an evaluation culture among the southern and central member states of the European Union. At the same time years of experiences have also indicated the existence of some limitations and difficulties regarding the full applicability of the EU rules and tools to the variety of development realities on the ground. The concrete case study of the evaluation of the LEADER initiative in the region of Madrid over a period of ten years is a good illustration of this constructive tension.

In the 1980s, the differences in the level of development between the urban and rural regions of the EU highlighted the need for effective rural development strategies. A consensus formed that these should be based on endogenous development models (Haan and Van der Ploeg 1992; Musto 1985; Van der Ploeg and Long 1994). This concept has been the source of numerous debates and definitions, although a general agreement was reached that local participation was required and should be encouraged by specific forms of local organization (Bryden and Scott 1990; Stöhr 1981). The European LEADER initiative was born within this context and has grown into a guiding and facilitating element in the rural development of Europe.

The focus of the following section will not be on specific evaluation findings but on the evolution of the evaluation process and its capacity building through an empowerment approach.

During the different LEADER phases put into practice in Spain since 1991, the number of territories that have benefited from the initiative has risen from 52 to 154. Currently, about half of the country's total area is involved, affecting a population of some 5 million people. In the region of Madrid, the number of LEADER programs has risen from one to three, involving all the main rural areas: the Sierra Norte, the Sierra Oeste, and the Comarca de Las Vegas. Each one of these programs has a territorial extension around 1,000 km², and the level of European financing is € 1.5 million.

The midterm evaluation carried out by the Technical University of Madrid in 1998¹² found that the evaluation tools designed 2 years earlier for monitoring the programs had hardly been used. The regional government of Madrid reported that the monitoring reports—AIR and ARD—provided by the LEADER groups in 1997 lacked enough quality (little information, analysis, and evidence). The monitoring tools in place consisted of an information system and a self-evaluation system that would facilitate the management of knowledge and innovation within the programs. A database was used to collect and manage critical project activities and components. The self-evaluation system, as an ongoing internal evaluation, involved the systematic surveillance of an indicator system (a few key indicators that reflected the main values of the strategies). The relationship between the information and self-evaluation systems—which had been designed in tandem—formed the main workings of the internal evaluation system. The theory was that the data obtained using the information system would be converted into useful knowledge and learning through the self-evaluation system. In theory, everything had been well designed during the planning period in 1996, but 2 years later, the only evidence of any use of these tools was a database containing information on a few basic features of the projects, their promoters, and their financing. In other words, the information system was incomplete and self-evaluation practically nil.

A meeting with the LEADER partnerships during the midterm evaluation made it clear that the priorities established during the design of the internal evaluation process were not appropriate. First priority had been given to the information required by the authority ultimately responsible for the evaluation process (in this case the Servicio de Desarrollo Rural del Gobierno Regional de Madrid) so that it might respond to the European Commission. Some of these priorities were related to budget and finance, program impacts, diversification into non-agricultural activities, compliance with environmental regulations, conservation of rural heritage, meeting standards based on community legislation, or animal welfare. The priorities of the people actually involved in the LEADER partnerships—which were more related to meeting the needs of the local population, the modernization of agricultural holdings, or business creation—came second.

At this point, it became clear that the design of the monitoring tools should have involved the LEADER technical teams to a greater extent. These teams stated that “they needed an information system more focused on their real, day-to-day information needs and more practical indicators.” Indicators should be identified by those who will be involved in their monitoring and the extraction of information from them (Riddell et al. 1997). Indicators are only effective when they become a part of their users' way of thinking (Innes and Boother 2000). This had not been achieved. The indicators were often foreign and reduced the sense of ownership. The LEADER teams reported that “monitoring involved an excessive and useless amount of work” and that they were “disoriented in how to prioritize and when to update the information required in the database.” They also pointed out that some indicators did not take into account data availability. In the end, their day-to-day management of the programs involved other types of activities.

¹² The Technical University of Madrid was awarded the contract for the LEADER evaluation activities by the Servicio de Desarrollo Rural del Gobierno Regional de Madrid (the Rural Development Service of the Regional Government of Madrid)

The LEADER groups were aware of the difficulties they had found in managing the programs: they had problems working with databases, they lacked participatory techniques and negotiation and communication skills, and they lacked leadership in dealing with whole rural communities and building consensus with them. It wasn't, however, easy, to convince them that the evaluation effort the European Commission required could also help them to build capacity by applying an empowerment approach. They disregarded the evaluation activities, but they liked the benefit of building some capacity from these activities.

Empowerment evaluation aims to empower program stakeholders at the lowest possible level, in this case the local level. The evaluation therefore needed to focus on the empowerment of Madrid's rural population, and for that, the main goal of empowerment should be the technical teams of the three LEADER partnerships—a total of 20 people from the rural communities that would undertake the daily management of the programs. Through them it would be easier to reach a larger part of the communities and expand the evaluation culture among the rural population. The LEADER partnerships appreciated the interest in their participation from the outset and got involved in the evaluation activities, although at the beginning, they stated “that they were simply doing it because it was requisite of the European Commission and that they knew they had to collaborate.”

The basic idea was that the evaluation team should take a leading and facilitative role and gradually share some responsibility with the technical teams. The participation of the rural population in the evaluation was organized into several focus groups centred on the rural sectors that were more representative in the territories. Each one of them gathered people familiar with agriculture, cattle breeding, rural tourism, arts and crafts, marketing of local products, social services, and so on and focused on issues important to those particular sectors.

Leaders and pioneers of each population were identified in the focus groups. More than 600 people attended the 5 to 7 focus groups implemented for each one of the three rural programs (each group lasted about 1 hour to 2 hours), and more than 50 personal interviews were conducted among leaders and pioneers. The data were collected and jointly analyzed by the evaluation team and the LEADER technical teams. More than 100 ideas were put forward to improve the strategies of each territory. These ideas included diversifying rural activities (e.g., rural tourism or introduction of new crops) to create employment among young people, fostering the use of the endogenous rural resources, seeking cooperation among the different rural sectors of activity, facilitating the marketing of local products, introducing innovation and technology to the small rural businesses, improving access to communication and health services, fostering local identity and social integration, and increasing social participation (especially among women) and partnership to improve the social structure of the rural territories. These ideas were categorized and evaluated independently in terms of legal, economic, social, and environmental criteria (multi-criteria analysis) and served as the basis for the evaluation. Other traditional evaluation tools were used, including matrix of cross impacts, individual interviews, direct observation of some projects, geographic information systems, cost-benefit analysis, and some techniques to compare the three LEADER programs and identify the best practices in each of them. Use of these tools allowed for ample participation of the LEADER technical teams to pass on some of the expertise of the evaluators to them.

In the beginning, the evaluation team had a leading role in redesigning the monitoring tools, but at the end of the midterm evaluation in 1998, the LEADER technical teams began to have more initiative. They made very useful suggestions about the monitoring system they wanted to implement, especially in the design of the indicator system for self-evaluation.

In the final evaluation of the programs in early 2001, with the help of the LEADER technical teams, three key features requiring evaluation were distinguished—the internal logic of the local development strategies, their implementation and management, and their impact. The growing interest concerning

evaluation activities in rural communities was evidenced by the high level of attendance, to the meetings with the LEADER technical teams to discuss the participatory process, by members of the partnerships who were not part of the technical teams. The revision of the internal evaluation process and capacity building at the midterm evaluation opened the road for an evaluation process that was easier because useful and reliable information was being made available and robust analyses were being developed by the partnerships. They reported that “they had begun to realize that evaluation could become part of their commitment to good practice in the improvement of their territories.”

It is important to note that the evaluators were also influenced by the evaluation process and changed from being evaluators originally contracted as external agents—distant experts with no special interest in the future of the programs—to committed collaborators and facilitators, each with a vested interest in the success of the programs. The evaluators originally wanted to perform a well-run evaluation exercise that met the requirements of the European Commission and that would allow them to perform good research. However, they became increasingly concerned about the future of the partnerships and their territories. They exceeded their professional obligations and invested extra time in helping and giving advice to the LEADER technical teams when the summary evaluation periods were over.

The empowerment approach to evaluation finds its main limitation in the fact that it is “extremely labour - and time- intensive” (Patton 2005, 413). Also, empowerment evaluation may require a great deal of operational support, and this might sometimes conflict with the realities of limited funding.

Given these limitations and difficulties, the decision to apply an empowerment approach in the EU should be guided by a few basic considerations. First, the required time and resources should be available. They are needed to identify existing skills and knowledge, to develop trust, to encourage involvement, and to begin the capacity-building process. Second, there should be a clear goal of empowerment. In this regard, a clear and pragmatic, although inclusive, delimitation of the stakeholders empowering themselves should be established (in our case the technical teams of the partnerships). This core group is critical to facilitate large-scale empowerment. Third, the role of the evaluator must be considered, particularly when advocacy is an issue. The role is manageable. However, a set of checks and balances are required. Fourth, managing the developmental complexity of the approach is important. Ignoring these considerations would make the implementation of this approach problematic at best. In addition, in circumstances in which empowerment is not a clear priority, other participatory models might be more appropriate. Empowerment is, however, a clear priority in the endogenous rural development programs of the EU.

Switzerland

In Switzerland evaluation finds an anchor in article 170 of the Federal Constitution, and has developed steadily over the past two decades.

Evaluation has been integrated into the planning and management instruments at the federal level. Nowadays, around 40 larger evaluations are reported in the annual reports of the Federal Council, the Parliamentary Control of the Administration and, last but not least, the Swiss Federal Audit Office. The Parliament commissions around half of these evaluations; the executive carries out two-thirds of them. Parliament plays an important role in evaluation, which corresponds to its lawmaking function. Many more evaluations of smaller importance are undertaken each year. Around 90 legal acts (laws, ordinances, etc.) carry evaluation clauses (i.e. obligations to carry out an evaluation). All bills of the Federal Council to the Parliament substantiate the financial, economic, social, environmental and other effects of proposed laws. Switzerland has an active and dense network of evaluators and circles interested in evaluation in the civil service and in academia.

In comparison with many other European countries, the evolution of evaluation in Switzerland has been practically endogenous. The European Commission has encouraged evaluation in various policy fields for EU member states, but such pressures have been absent in Switzerland.

The role of evaluation in the Swiss political process can only be understood by taking into account three peculiarities of Swiss political institutions:

- a) Switzerland is a multiethnic state and, the lower levels of government (the cantons and municipalities) have important participative powers in constitution- and lawmaking. They have maintained a large share of autonomy in their own (limited) spheres of activity and in executing federal law. More than two-thirds of public servants work for the cantons and municipalities. Up to now, most of the evaluation activities have concentrated on the federal level.
- b) Well-developed political rights (constitutional initiative, constitutional referendum, law referendum, etc.) allow political groups to provide inputs to the policy process (initiative) or to block decisions taken by the Parliament (referendum). Public policies are more widely debated by the public than in most other countries. Evaluations can thus become ammunition in fierce political debates. However, there is little room for taking into account the results of evaluations, once decisions have been reached on specific questions.
- c) The Swiss political system is characterized by power-sharing (Konkordanz). Resolution of conflicts and decision-making both occur through a process of negotiation. The government of Switzerland ('Federal Council') is made up of representatives from the four major parties. It operates on a collegial basis, with seven members who are simultaneously the respective heads of the seven ministries. The fact that the Federal Council cannot be dismissed by a vote of no-confidence provides more scope for opposition than traditional parliamentary democracy. Thus, arguments put forward by evaluations may well have some resonance in the political process and contribute to allegiance or opposition to a certain policy. In this political system, so heavily influenced by various political actors, evaluation cannot play a decisive role. It must serve as a resource for all partners (or rather opponents). Evaluation, at its best, can help to illuminate the stakes at hand and to improve the quality of argumentation within the legislative process. Often, it is used as ammunition in the political process by different interests involved. At its worst, it is distorted or completely ignored.

A recent article (Bussmann, 2008) identified seven main entry points for evaluation into the Policy-Formulation and Policy-Implementation Process in Switzerland:

1. when a problem gets on the public agenda
2. during the preparation of a law draft
3. during the formalized consultation process of the law draft
4. during the review of the draft by the Federal Council and before submission to Parliament
5. during the examination of the draft by both chambers of the Parliament
6. in the event of a referendum
7. after a bill is enacted and starts to be implemented

There is ample evidence (Balthasar, 2007) that most of the evaluation activities concern the operational questions of implementation (entry point 7).

Conclusions

Australia

At the moment it is not easy to identify in the Czech Republic an entity willing (and in the position) to use evaluation in a similar way to what was done by the Department of Finance during the Australian “golden age”. And, we should as well keep in mind that the pre-condition for playing that sort of role by any entity is obviously a very strong mandate by a Government with a clear political agenda. The almost unique case of Australia, however, remains nevertheless very illuminating in terms of the potential use of evaluation.

Like in the Czech Republic, also in the Australian administration there is a devolved environment, although enormous and significant differences exist in terms of geographical extension and institutional traditions. What can be usefully retained, however, is the importance of a collaborative approach between various sectors and levels of government, to ensure use and ownership of the evaluation results.

Finally, there are two more important considerations relevant for the current Czech situation:

- Both options between establishing centralized or de-localized units for evaluation have their points of strength and weakness, but in any case it is important to be aware that choosing one of the two, and seriously implementing it, is a necessary pre-condition to spread and ensure quality of evaluation activities.
- Even in optimal situations, like the Australian case, the risk of creating, through a structured evaluation system, a heavy burden for public structures and civil servants should always be kept in mind and never under-estimated.

Belgium

The description of the situation in Belgium teaches us some fundamental lessons, of which the first one is that politics and political systems are fundamental for establishing a successful and effective evaluation system. Technocrats, who in different countries dreamed of turning evaluation into a successful practice without ensuring the necessary buy-in from political institutions, have inevitably failed miserably. The heart of the evaluation system could be better housed in the executive or in the legislative branch, depending on national peculiarities, but it cannot possibly be housed outside of the institutional framework.

The second lesson is that federalism and multi level of government can be fertile grounds for evaluation, but at the same time they call for intensive management for evaluation to be successful. Finally, parts of the road map, described in last paragraph of the section on Belgium, for the diffusion of the positive experience of the Wallonia region to the rest of the country seem to be potentially interesting also for the current debate on evaluation which is underway in the Czech Republic.

Denmark

The main lesson to be learnt from the Danish experience is to avoid any temptation to see data-collection as the best solution to good evaluation. Availability and collection of updated and reliable data is a problem common to several countries. However the experience from Denmark helps to understand that this type of constraint cannot prevent to undertake good evaluations.

Spain

The case study from Spain shows a concrete example of the need and possibility of adapting EU tools in order to make them actually useful, and not just formal requirements. The Spanish experience illustrates how an empowerment evaluation approach to community objectives can be combined with EU standards of accountability, and how it is possible at the same time to foster improvement in the rural communities of the EU while responding to the requirements and information needs of the different public authorities that shape the multi-level governance in the EU.

The role of evaluation professionals in this case study can be defined in two words: *evaluator*, which makes reference to professionalism and, in turn, provides credibility to the evaluations made, and *facilitator*, which refers to the establishment of evaluation capacity among the participants (i.e., their role as educators, collaborators, critical friends, and counsellors). In the present case, the first facet led to meeting the requirements of the European Commission (the production of credible evaluation documents), whereas the second facet led to the building of capacity in the partnerships to undertake their own internal evaluation process. The first of these facets was more related to the evaluation findings; the second was more related to the process of evaluation.

It is important to strike a balance (with appropriate checks and counterweights) between advocacy for stakeholders and the need to maintain objectivity, and to understand that concern for the proposer or client should never influence the evaluation team to set aside its concern for quality in the evaluation process—nor its objectivity, nor its rationale. This evaluation also suggests that there is merit in applying empowerment approaches to new countries that joined the EU in May 2004. Strengthening evaluation capacities in these countries - especially in rural areas - remains a constant challenge and was a priority highlighted in the biannual evaluation conference of the European Commission in Budapest back in June 2003.

Switzerland

In Switzerland, our analysis focused primarily on evaluation of policies and laws, rather than on evaluations of programmes and projects, but what is relevant for the Czech Republic is the fact that in this country evaluation takes place mainly at the implementation phase, and there is no readily available evidence that can show an influence of evaluation on the strategic legislative choices (entry points 2, 3, 4, 5). Given that this is commonly considered to be one of the main limitations also in the evaluations of programmes and projects worldwide, it is important to always work in the direction of reducing this risk.

5. EVALUATION EXPERIENCE OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Introductory aspects

The Benefits from Appraisal and Evaluation

Strategic planning, economic development and resource allocation in the Czech Republic would all benefit greatly from the accelerated development of an appraisal and evaluation culture. In the complex administrative framework and extensive local autonomy that has resulted from the 1990s devolution settlement such cultural change requires to spread from and through all levels, local, regional and national. Existing structures and official strategic documents need to be more than a means of securing funding from a finance hierarchy and instead become the means whereby the complex network of local decision-making is co-ordinated effectively to aid economic and social development.

The challenge facing the Ministry for Regional Development (MRD) is to demonstrate and convince local players that adopting an appraisal and evaluation culture brings extensive benefits well beyond simply making access to future funding more likely. This can be an incentive as project impacts could be demonstrated as contributing to a wider, integrated, development strategy which in turn could further underpin and strengthen the delivery of local and regional strategies. Addressing the challenge involves creating a delicate balance between meeting competing local and regional needs while achieving national goals. Lessons from a number of countries, including Scotland and Italy, show that this balance requires constant calibration as local economies develop and the functioning of markets changes. Further details of this are provided in the earlier chapters.

The view from the Regions and Municipalities

While there are many strategy documents at national, regional and local level there is little apparent interest or incentive at regional and local level to evaluate these strategies. In such an environment resistance can develop based on a reluctance to reveal the fund-based nature of many strategy documents: strategy documents more often compete for draw down funds rather than demonstrate their value in terms of economic and social development. This is a common problem in all countries where local areas compete and where there is a lack of a restraining influence in the form of a mature, coherent national framework based on a culture of appraisal and evaluation.

Moving from a monitoring-based approach where the emphasis is on inputs and expenditure to an approach based on outputs and evidence of effects introduces a whole range of key issues relating to the assessment of supply and demand, identification of market based opportunities and costs and the understanding and acceptance that resource allocation needs to be justified on an objective basis beyond the political desire to develop locally. This change is analogous to the Czech experience of moving from a central planning state to a market-based economy: i.e. a change in culture where decision-making has been devolved. The difficulty with cultural change is that it takes time and many former perspectives remain long after legislative and incentivised culture change.

The lack of a culture of evaluation combined with an analogous lack of evaluation experience means that capacity building is the key practical issue in the Czech Republic. This is vital to ensure that individual

strategic documents work towards a common purpose. This is not the case at the moment however the current regional and local monitoring frameworks are useful vehicles that could support increasingly complex ex ante, ongoing and ex post evaluation and provide the basis for a route map for capacity building at the local level (i.e. identify individuals and organisations for further engagement, facilitation and evaluation training).

Design of detailed and bespoke methodological guidelines, identification of sets of indicators and establishing relationships between key variables to identify and create (for example) local multipliers involve deeper evaluation issues which can be developed and adapted with regional and micro regional partners to suit the Czech experience and are in many ways of secondary importance at this time.

Vysocina and Central Bohemia are prepared to participate with MRD to pilot capacity-building in appraisal and evaluation and such collaborations will be an important first step in highlighting the benefits of achieving cultural change with regard to the role of appraisal and evaluation in delivering a coordinated approach to strategic planning at all levels in the Czech Republic. The current situation with a series of fragmented strategies at various levels is sub optimal and does not deliver effective, joined up development in a value for money way.

Issues of Governance, Structure and Motivation

While there is a Regional Development Strategy for the Czech Republic, the fragmentation at regional and micro region levels does not result in any systemic evaluation. The devolved settlement has resulted in many sub-optimal decision-making units e.g. micro areas creating micro strategies influenced by local issues and personalities with often tenuous practical links to regional or national strategy documents beyond achieving the criteria for securing funding. Although part of the reason for this is the lack of a legal requirement for systemic evaluation, the regional development strategies do provide the mechanism for evaluation to develop in a positive evolutionary way.

Capacity building through learning from evaluation can show the benefits of partnership working, particularly with contiguous municipalities (this has already been done to good effect in some areas). Capacity building (including the development and deepening of social capital) will be seen as worthwhile as learning is spread and becomes a lever for changing attitude and approaches as well as value for money.

Lessons from recent Czech Evaluation Experience

The EU evaluation system has been so far a reference point for all parties involved, but it is not necessary the overall answer to the present needs and expectations at the regional and local level. At this stage politicians and practitioners are looking for a more user-friendly, flexible and less expensive way to evaluate. Also, it is important to develop a system which is not only driven by Fund regulations, but has instead the potential of being applied across the board to a multitude of development policy interventions financed from all available sources.

The main experiences with evaluation in the Czech Republic so far have been in the ex ante phase. There is a need therefore to promote and implement also more in itinerant (ongoing) and ex post experiences. More specifically, ongoing evaluation, because of its obvious concreteness and its potential to interact directly with operational and administrative decisions, would be an interesting platform from which to start. It is not true that ongoing evaluation of a program or a project cannot be performed if there was no ex-ante evaluation. This is a purely theoretical myth, that may sometimes also be used by politicians to avoid forms of checking and control over what is happening.

There are very real capacity issues at the Kraje level that need to be addressed. At present, there is often a notable disconnect between strategy documents and actual implementation of development plans at

Kraje and local level. Implementation and learning capacity will be vital in delivering effective, joined up sustainable “local” development. The current focus of available data on expenditure and type of activity (basic inputs) generates limited and unsophisticated information of limited strategic value. This can be confusing and acts to obscure the need to ensure effective linkage between strategy documents that otherwise would be illuminated by an appraisal and evaluation process.

At this stage of development, individual Kraje and micro region level focus on monitoring of inputs and activity only is understandable given a lack of appropriate appraisal and evaluation methodology and a lack of motivation and incentives to develop capacity. Work has proceeded on some fronts, such as constructing a form of balanced score card, but this has happened without an accepted overarching evaluation framework and detailed methodology to guide the search for appropriate metrics and ways of applying learning. Lessons from other countries detailed in chapter 3 show the need to ensure metrics are clear at the appraisal stage and that the appraisal process is clear about the objectives otherwise information generated in isolation can give a misleading picture of thematic or territorial programme impacts.

The role of appraisal in the design and implementation of regional and local strategic plans

Appraisal is the initial test of the ‘fit’ of an individual programme within a strategic plan and provides an ex ante view of its contribution across an identified range of indicators. Adoption of a suitable appraisal mechanism will help challenge existing local prejudices when identifying a potential programme or selecting between competing programmes. Appraisal can be the least costly and most easily accessible tool in the evaluation suite and should be the focus of initial capacity building efforts as it asks the important questions before resources are allocated.

Box 8. The set-up of a network of decentralised evaluation units in Italy for the 1999-2005 Structural Fund Cycle in Italy

For the 1999-2005 structural fund cycle the Government of Italy passed a law that made available resources for start-up of evaluation units in all regions and in all central ministries involved with the management of European funds. The regions and administrations who set-up their units in a credible way during a certain time-span were also rewarded through the allocations of an additional quota of public finances for development projects. All evaluation units were (and still are) organised in a horizontal network of peers chaired on a rotational basis by all regions and administrations involved. The network is both a forum to discuss and address specific technical issues related to evaluation as well as an instrument to promote and reinforce the culture of evaluation throughout the country.

EU Cohesion Policy: stimulating new relationships and structures for change and transformation

The principle of subsidiarity provides incentives at all levels of administration to engage actively with the Cohesion Policy to access funds and to adopt principles of good governance. As each subsequent level of administration maps its strategy document against the aims of the Cohesion Policy as a means of attracting funds, there will be an increasing need to conform to the precepts of effectiveness, value for money and economic efficiency. This will require local strategy documents to consider their impact on a wider scale and raises key evaluation issues such as gross and net effects and the composite issues of displacement, additionality and deadweight. Such evaluation issues challenge sub-optimal area strategy documents to be more than aspirational fund seeking documents and to seek local and national partnerships in order to accommodate wider issues sustainable development issues.

To be more than the sum of its constituent parts, the benefits of collaboration between contiguous areas and across administrative levels has to be demonstrated and this is already present in The Regional

Development Strategy and the National Strategic Reference Framework. Thus there are general frameworks in support of evaluation within the context of National Government and EU frameworks which promote appraisal and evaluation as necessary conditions for key strategic development documents to function in the manner intended as they encourage collaboration naturally. There are lessons from other countries, such as Scotland and others profiled in Chapter 4, on how local agencies can work with regional strategies and an overall national development strategy.

An infrastructure to gather information and data that could be used to accommodate national appraisal and evaluation has been developed by the Czech Statistical Office in light of the needs of the Cohesion Policy. Many of the indicators will be common to programmes and strategies at lower levels and in turn be influenced by such efforts. This framework could provide an accessible set of indicators and thereby help promote the role of appraisal and evaluation policy management. This must be developed in partnership however rather than as an instrument from the central government down through regions and to municipality level. Kraje and their ROPs play a key part in showing other levels of administration the benefits of evaluation, as they have to work within the tight framework of Community Strategy Guidelines and have to follow EU evaluation procedures. Positive lessons and learning should be highlighted to provide motivation for others to change their mind-set and approach to appraisal and evaluation.

EU Funding and Czech Drivers for Change

Pre-structural reforms, the Czech Statistical Office and the role of NSRF

The top-down system is thematic or regional-driven and presents an opportunity in terms of encouraging evaluation culture. Municipalities ‘buy into’ a thematic or regional (i.e. territorial) strand and adopt part of a broad monitoring and evaluation framework with its roots in either a thematic or regional strand.

EU Cohesion Policy and the NSRF: opportunities for appraisal and evaluation

The role of the regions is strengthening as the competencies of the Cohesion units are ‘learned’ by the Kraje and this could be used as a basis for embedding an evaluation culture. This places appraisal, monitoring and evaluation at the centre and reduces the need for a local justification for a programme as it maps onto higher-level planning documents based on higher-level funding and development requirements. This could be the means for trickle down of an evaluation culture as well as a horizontal partnership approach. These are key principles that need to be demonstrated to qualify for funding especially as the importance of the Regional Councils which represented the Cohesion Regions has been greatly enhanced for the period 2007 – 2013. The needs for SMART administration are complementary to the Cohesion Policy in opening up opportunities for appraisal and evaluation.

Linking the national, the regional and the municipal: strategies and operational programmes

The creation of a clear link between any appraisal and evaluation framework to the Czech National Strategic Reference Framework and the National Development Plan is required as these documents deal with the 3 Objectives of EU Cohesion Policy. Programmes following either Thematic or Regional themes will have common roots and this allows a degree of commonality in setting up a monitoring and evaluation framework that will appeal to municipality-based programmes. That is, a simple set of indicators for each could be drawn up for use at all levels of programme implementation.

The national co-ordination unit is a major asset for promoting evaluation and for making important connections and synergies between all interventions. This can also assist to share and promote learning outside Cohesion areas, at NUT2 and NUTS3 level in cooperation with the Department of Regional Policy and Development of the Ministry for Regional Development.

The National Evaluation plan: a common EU-based framework

The European Council prepares an overarching strategic document for cohesion policy and this provides a set of priorities for member states to follow. This top-down approach provides the driver for member states to prepare policy documents to provide a framework for Thematic and Regional programmes that the European Commission then adopts. This is a major change as it moves away from 'management by measure' where programmes were multi-funded rather than sourced from a single fund. This approach could be a guiding principle as fund payments are made at the level of each high order strategic priority and then produce a trickle down effect within the system to reach projects. There is movement towards even stronger high order priorities at thematic and supra-national competitive levels. This means that issues of partnership at all levels now become central in gaining access to funding.

Prioritising strategy programmes and projects through appraisal

The long-term impacts of many local programmes mean that they should not be seen in isolation; rather they should be seen as providing a true picture of economic and social development. Taking a longer term perspective will involve a re-prioritisation of many local projects. The task of MRD and partners will be to show that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole. This is a familiar issue in many countries including Scotland and Italy where it is recognised that some programme impacts will not be felt for many years and mean that priorities are not always apparent at the local level.

MRD and Cohesion Policy administration: encouraging buy-in through demonstrating the benefits of evaluation at regional and local level

In the absence of legislation, motivation is required to change the approach to appraisal and evaluation by regional and local representatives. This is an issue of culture and is a common problem facing all development agencies once decision making is devolved to the local level. Raising local sights beyond the individual project requires local strategies to be fully integrated with national and regional strategy documents in a meaningful way. MRD's working group focused on the Integrated urban development plans is an example of the type of co-operation that encourages local representatives to look beyond their own area. This removes the need for a local justification for a programme as it maps onto higher level programmes and plans based on higher level funding and development requirements. There are opportunities to work such initiatives introduced by Cohesion Policy and EU funding and reduce some of the fragmentation and potential overlaps from municipalities programme driven approach.

Evaluation Challenges

The need to identify low-cost, easily applied indicators

It can be difficult to identify a set of inexpensively attainable indicators to measure the outcomes of policy. In the Czech Republic, a range of indicators are available due to the work of the Czech Statistical Office, but the issue is that data is collected only at NUTS2 level and this is a problem that must be addressed as development planning and monitoring moves to macro area agglomerations which creates multi level data requirements. Also the problem relates to the appropriate methodological approach to adopt rather than the selection of indicators. Indicators must be fit for purpose in that their adoption must conform to the appraisal needs of the project/strategy and this is an issue of methodology and a reason why capacity building is so important.

Developing reasonable sets of indicators at the regional and local level requires some creativity and effort, but is not necessarily always a costly and long exercise. Often project-specific and context specific indicators can tell us much more about a project or a programme than pre-packaged standard indicators or indicators derived from central statistical offices. Building indicators at the regional and local level is a

fundamental part of creating a sustainable evaluation culture with truly strong roots and capable of standing on its own legs.

Build on developing networking of localities to support evaluation capacity building

Pilot evaluations and their learning have an important role in local capacity building. This is a route that MRD should follow in that it could work well with regional partners to make the lessons from evaluation explicit and to ensure that these lessons are spread to the wider community, particularly to municipal level. This requires an openness to work together and promote developments for mutual benefits.

Accessing funds to achieve appraisal and evaluation capacity building

Funding for capacity building in all its forms remains a key priority even when the benefits from thorough appraisal and evaluation become recognised and cultural resistance diminishes. MRD's Regional Strategies Unit could be in a position to draw down approved funds from the State budget and funding from its own technical assistance budget, from 2009. This could fund capacity building seminars and pilot evaluations as will be discussed in the Guidelines section of this report.

Adopting a new governance approach: stimulating motivation

The set-up of an evaluation system which is shared accepted and recognised by the three main levels of political and administrative authority (central, regional, local) intertwines closely with the current governance general issues of the Czech Republic. Ministries have to be able to play also the role of a knowledge bank and resource for decentralised self-governing entities, while the latter need to understand that making available this kind of technical assistance is not necessarily a way to undermine their power and prerogatives.

Given that the main reason for introducing more evaluation at the regional and local level is the potential for more efficient, effective and targeted allocation of public funds, a results based system of incentives for salaries should be considered to encourage the best evaluators to enter and/or stay into the public sector.

Aligning the time cycles of evaluations with the time cycles of programs and policies

Often planning and evaluation cycles do not coincide with the political cycle of elected officials and therefore it is difficult to convince them of the importance of long-term strategy objectives. This is a constraint common to many countries and contexts, but it is important to understand that aligning the time cycles of evaluations with the time cycles of programs and policies is a worthy goal. This is the way to ensure evaluations make their maximum contribution. It is better to deliver an incomplete or imperfect evaluation on time than to achieve a 10% improvement in evaluation quality and miss the window of opportunity, when policy makers and program managers can use evaluation results.

Encouraging political support at national, regional and local levels: share good experience

Micro-regions appear to be a potentially interesting laboratory for applying evaluation to their strategic documents. Micro-regions are a free association of several municipalities which are politically independent from each other and get together on the basis of a common platform of objectives and a plan to jointly administer some resources. An indicator-based evaluation process could indeed help the set-up of the common platform and raise awareness of potential results that could benefit all members of the micro-region.

Because of the number of participants and stakeholders involved, by their nature RDPs are wide in scope, and therefore very general. They have drawn on the evaluation methodology of the Cohesion Policy when looking to design a method of evaluation, adapting this method to suit local need. There is a clear need to recognise that RDPs are similar and require a similar approach to monitoring and evaluation. The view from the regions is that while strategy documents are similar, the methods and approach to evaluation are very different. This variety of approach reveals a lack of capacity within the regions (Krajs) and the need for guidance in terms of methodology and application. It is also clear that there is very little effective communication between the regions (Krajs) to share views and develop standard practices.

SWOT Analysis

The foregoing narrative has discussed many of the issues and challenges facing the Czech Republic. It is appropriate to gather these thoughts in a way that allows us to consider the recommendations in moving forward. One technique that can assist in this process is the SWOT analysis, a summary matrix of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This analysis is presented below and draws upon discussions in the Czech Republic as well as the preceding narrative.

Table 2. SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Local partner exposure to Cohesion Policy documentation and pre-requisites provide a basis on which to build capacity	Many good (strategic and planning) documents containing a role for evaluation exist but this role is not implemented
Strong and devolved administrative structure used to working within Cohesion Policy frameworks and constraints	Lack of effective communication between regions (Krajs) and municipalities, and between Krajs and central authorities
Emerging organic links and networks between municipalities	Evaluation not contained in the legal framework (although it is part of NSRF)
Recognition, especially at Ministerial level, of the need for change and development of networking at all levels	Institutional reluctance in practice to see the important role evaluation could play
Understanding of basic principles and value added of evaluation by most civil servants and politicians at the local level	Municipalities are a sub-optimal and inappropriate level to design and implement strategy documents
	The complexity of regional and local autonomy inhibits practical development and implementation of strategy documents and programmes
	Too many municipalities contribute to RDPs making their implementation and evaluation problematical
	Appraisal process influenced by short term political interests rather than objective assessment
	Absence of incentives and structured mechanisms for using evaluation as a standard tool at all levels of administration.
	Limited acquaintance of the regional political level with planning and implementation based on evaluation.
Opportunities	Threats
Potential at the Kraje level to create and spread a culture of evaluation. The ROPs	Poor levels of communication between Kraje and some local political elites
Cohesion Policy experience provides a foundation from which to develop	High turnover of staff in public administration reveals lack of systemic knowledge and practice of evaluation
Move from programme-driven approach at the regional and local level to an appraisal-based approach linked to the contents of strategy documents enabling thematic and territorial programmes to be followed	Expansion of the EU, changes in EU funding and key determinants of competitive regions in a global market economy require swift re-organisation in the Czech Republic
MRD and Ministry of the Interior (through its SMART administration initiative) can facilitate a culture of evaluation	Not being able to identify the right level and tools for evaluation in the local and regional context
Strengthen the role of NSRF and Association of Towns and Municipalities in sharing the lessons from appraisal and evaluation	Transforming the use of evaluation into a confrontation ground between central level on one side and local and regional level on the other side
Develop a network at regional level to share learning and develop new standards	Lack of political will on the side of some regional or local authorities to be openly involved in evaluation, as is common to many other national contexts
Interest at municipality and micro-region level for concrete approach and use of evaluation	
Use of EU funds for a specific project on evaluation	

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED ACTIONS

The situation described is not unique to the Czech Republic, and actually it is quite typical in contexts without a strong positive history of evaluation of public policies, and to some degree it is still present also in countries which have been dealing with EU Structural and Cohesion Funds for many years, like for example Italy. Evaluation needs to continuously prove itself as a useful and reasonable tool while policymakers and public administrators will recognize its value only when they are able to see it.

The main issues to address appear to be:

1. the need to widely spread the clear knowledge of what a systemic approach to evaluation entails and its benefits
2. the need to build an evaluation system which is responsive to the real and concrete needs of the various levels of the Czech Public Administration, therefore not too cumbersome and demanding, but sufficiently rigorous and structured to be credible
3. the need to create a system of incentives and a conducive mechanism to jump-start and support the process

Recommendations

- The complex web of strategies, plans and programmes need to be mapped out in a structured way with weightings attached to the various indicators currently in use. This would reveal their degree of importance to a new monitoring and evaluation framework.
- The distinctive roles at local, regional and national level need to be identified in a manner that allows for development that will meet the challenges identified
- Efforts should be made to hardwire successful connections that have arisen organically over time and those connections that have proved less than fruitful should be downgraded. This is particularly the case at municipality level and the development of micro-regions as a defence against operating at the sub-optimal decision-making level.
- Pilot evaluations should be facilitated by the State to develop regional capacity building. Regional partners would be required to make the lessons from evaluation explicit and to ensure that these lessons are spread to the wider community, particularly to municipal level. Where appropriate positive incentives should be developed to encourage joint working and promotion of developments for mutual benefits.
- Funding for capacity building in all its forms remains a key priority. MRD's Regional Strategies Unit should be in a position to draw down approved funds from the State budget and funding from its own technical assistance budget, from 2009. This could fund capacity building seminars, networking events and pilot evaluations.

- It could be useful to undertake an analysis and audit of the recent Czech experience at the National level and how this can inform the current NUTS 2. The changes in competitiveness and funding organisation will make it necessary as higher-level strategies and programmes require to be the more structured in terms of evaluation frameworks.
- Increased communication should be encouraged between MRD and particularly the Krajs that form the Regional Councils which represent the Cohesion Regions and whose importance has been greatly enhanced for the period 2007 – 2013. Ownership of the drive for appraisal and evaluation needs to be made explicit.
- Work towards recognising each level’s commonality of strategy document content and structure (this is recognised already) and towards a commonality in the set of indicators to produce a menu of indicators for evaluation purposes from which each administrative level can chose. This can be set within the drive towards SMART administration, NSRF development and the lead from MRD.
- Work with the increasingly influential EU evidence-based approach to policy and strategy and away from a programme driven approach. This will require evaluation strategy documents at Regional level to be mapped against Cohesion Policy Thematic and Territorial strands and for programme appraisal to be set against this.
- Introduce longitudinal tracking of success from joined up development strategies in particular regions (known champions or leader regions) to show good practices and the value derived from operating in this way. For example, this could be done in a way that shows how reduced administration costs can be achieved when following a more logical and cohesive approach. The next step would be to reveal the net additional gains realised as well as cost savings. Such real benefits would incentivise change.

Action Plan to Develop a Strategic Evaluation System

These recommendations and the assessment of challenges described earlier point towards a series of actions to establish new and productive evaluation relationships. The following is a plan of action to achieve “the development of a strategic evaluation system which will make it possible to really analyse the impacts of development policies at the local and regional level”.

- Work with the existing Association of Towns and Municipalities of Czech Republic to deepen networking and increase communication with a view to identifying suitable micro region and municipality groupings. This opens the way for a clusters and micro-region approach to be adopted drawing on the lessons of other OECD members such as the UK (Scotland) and Italy described in the earlier sections of this report.
- Work to increase the level of local cooperation with a view to enhancing the capacity of municipalities and to allow meaningful contribution to Kraje strategic plans and thereby preserve local autonomy within an overall framework of the sustainable development strategy. Achieving this step will reduce the opportunities for sub-optimal decision making units to prevail.
- Create a link between the Kraje, micro regions and Municipalities to be demonstrated in their respective plans and for this to be a requirement of the adoption of plans.
- Look to develop the role of MRD as a catalyst and “honest broker” able to provide leadership and incentives for other spatial level representatives to buy into appraisal and evaluation.

- Develop the emerging evaluation framework to link the NSRF and RDS using intellectual guidance and experience of the MRD to provide: guidelines, tools and techniques of appraisal and evaluation.
- In strategy and development documents, explicitly recognise the important role of building social capital through the processes of appraisal and evaluation and thereby encourage local ownership of these processes, as part of the necessary change in culture. An agreed typology and hierarchy of settlements and documents should be established with partners to ensure that local, regional and national development synergies are recognised and pursued for mutual benefit rather than perpetuating local competition.
- Bring forward legislation and changes to move politically so that evaluation becomes a requirement rather than an optional intention.
- MRD to provide support and create linkages between micro regions to develop capacity locally and create a framework for sustainable changes in culture where openness and sharing of experiences and success becomes standard.
- Develop key steps and milestones to create a roadmap on how to progress and develop the evaluation culture over time.

Concluding Remarks

1. Any legislative act aiming at promoting the use of evaluation at the regional and local level should be the result of a partnership agreement between the different levels of administration, and not a bottom-down decision. The preliminary step for this, and for other initiatives on the side of the Ministry for Regional Development, should in any case be the set-up of a forum which involves directly and personally the decision-makers (i.e. the political level) involved in the process. There should be no form of delegation allowed in the participation to this forum (i.e. the politicians cannot be represented by civil servants and/or consultants). In this forum the decision makers need to discuss and understand the basics of evaluation and buy into them.
2. A system of incentives could help promote a wider use of evaluation as a tool to improve programming of public development investment at all levels of administration (central-regional-local). Experience has confirmed that having a readily accessible and internalized “centre of knowledge” greatly facilitates a broader use of evaluation, at the formal and informal level.
3. It is necessary to allocate some financial resources for a project aimed at reinforcing evaluation culture at the regional and local level and for setting up a wide-spread mechanism for evaluation. This project could be developed along the lines of what suggested under the above point 2, or along other lines to be identified in partnership between the Ministry for Regional Development, the 14 Krajs, the micro-regions and the municipalities. Possibilities for funding this project through Cohesion Funds need to be fully explored and verified.
4. Actually doing a number of concrete pilot evaluations at the regional and local level, if necessary also drawing on the existing network of available external experiences (but always leaving regional and local authorities in the driver’s seat) is certainly an additional avenue to spread the knowledge of evaluation culture and methodology. This exercise should also be followed by an information dissemination campaign of the results to the public at large.

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