

A 7 ESTABLISHING EXTENSIVE EVALUATION RESEARCH

It is often difficult to assess how effective policy measures are. An evaluation has to answer complex questions, such as which goals are to be achieved, what constitutes success, and what should the relationship be between the outlay and the returns? Furthermore, which measures best serve the realisation of the specified goals in the short-, medium-, and long-term? In other words: How effective and efficient are the measures over a broad band of quantitative and qualitative indicators of success?

These topics are addressed by evaluation research, which if properly designed makes it possible to estimate in advance the effects of policy instruments (*ex ante*). The instruments can then be monitored during the implementation and the actual effects assessed subsequently (*ex post*). Ideally, this process can be established as a rolling evaluation system which provides reliable results.²⁸

In order to allow comparisons within and between government departments, a certain standardisation is required for the evaluation of political programmes and a binding catalogue of criteria has to be drawn up. A differentiated system of qualitative and quantitative indicators must be used in order to register the direct and indirect effects of political measures at all levels, including at the public level.

Already in the 1990s, the Fraunhofer Institute for System and Innovation Research (ISI) conducted a study of evaluation research in Germany on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Research and Technology (BMFT).²⁹ The study highlighted the importance of thorough, inter-departmental evaluation research. It was recommended that this should be made binding for all ministries. The Expert Commission agrees, and recommends that all ministries should allocate about one percent of planned expenditure to evaluation research, in order to make a significant contribution to increasing the efficiency of government support.

In order to establish effective, long-term evaluation research in Germany, it should be concentrated in a single institution. This can then serve as a one-stop address for the various ministries and departments, and it would become a centre of expertise for evaluation research. Data from various evaluation studies would be collected centrally, and this

would make it possible to establish a valid data basis so that various programmes could be subjected to long-term comparisons.³⁰ It is possible to draw on the experience of the Federal Ministry of Economics (BMWi), which in recent years has developed an evaluation profile with clear guidelines for conducting evaluations uniformly, with a contact centre for questions relating to evaluation research.³¹

Various methodological difficulties concerning evaluation research remain unresolved, such as the quantification of indirect effects or the isolation of the consequences of a measure. In order to apply the existing measures in policy-making and to develop evaluation research in Germany further, the Expert Commission suggests that the BMBF carries out a meta-evaluation for the exchange of experience and knowledge, as in 1995. The conclusions should then be implemented. In order for the evaluation research to be carried out over a sufficiently broad scope, it is also important that well-qualified scientists with the necessary expertise should be entrusted with this task. However, they are currently in short supply. Evaluation methods should therefore form a standard part of social science and economics course curricula. Evaluation research should also be introduced as a topic for further training.

The results of extensive evaluation research must be made available to the public. This can contribute significantly towards improving the public awareness about the deployment of public funds. But members of the Bundestag and other actors must also be able to inform themselves better about the effectiveness of political instruments. The Expert Commission has therefore decided to publish future evaluations of innovation-relevant support programmes of the Federal Ministries on its website (www.e-fi.de).