

**Vth European Conference on the Structural Funds
Challenges for evaluation in an enlarged Europe
Budapest 26/27 June 2003**

Workshop 2: Programme evaluation

**Challenges for the evaluation of a complex programme:
the experience of the European social fund in Italy**

Cristina Lion, Paola Martini, Stefano Volpi

c.lion@isfol.it; p.martini@isfol.it; s.volpi@isfol.it
ISFOL (National research institute for vocational training development)
European Social Fund National Evaluation Unit,
Via Lancisi, 29, 00161 Roma
Italy

Abstract

ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit was asked by the Italian Ministry of Labour and the European Commission – DGV to conduct the ESF evaluation activities for the new 2000-2006 programme at national level. The preparatory actions that the Unit performed during 2000-2001 included a series of documents on the methods, contents and organisation of the evaluations to be carried out. These latter exploit the experience gained during the 1994 – 1999 period and develop new areas to survey, such as the evaluation of implementation processes.

The paper intends to present the overall approach to the evaluation of the European Social Fund and how this has been received by the various stakeholders of the national evaluation system. This approach entails an evaluation that guarantees common information on a country-system level, summarising it and proposing a cross reading. This last aspect is particularly important in the evaluation of complex programmes such as those financed by the Structural Funds, because it develops an evaluation that can support policy choices and thus reprogramming.

In general, given the structure and nature of the ESF programming, the approach takes into account two important aspects: a) the continual interaction between the ESF programme and the context in which it operates, with particular emphasis on the evolution of the phenomena observed and evaluated, and b) the heterogeneity and complexity of the activities financed within the same programme, entailing the use of methods of both a quantitative and qualitative type with reference to the object to be evaluated

It will be shown to what extent: i) this approach combining a mix of methods and techniques has been adopted by the central and regional administrations managing the ESF OPs (Objective 3); ii) a common framework of the Esf evaluation is being created. There will also be an in-depth analysis of the results obtained on a system level to foster the evaluation of an innovative subject such as that of the programme implementation process.

1. The reference scenario for the programme evaluation

Within the framework of the 2000-2006 European Social Fund (ESF) programming and on the basis of Structural Funds Italy has designed a national evaluation system with the aim to provide national and regional policymakers with an analytical tool for their programming and reprogramming and for managing co-financed policies and interventions.

Italy's strategy was already clear during the negotiating stage and confirmed in the ESF programming documents:¹, its basic purpose is to build up a national evaluation system that can systematically and continually produce a database on the human-resource development policies (training, education, social and labour policies) of the central and regional authorities managing the ESF Operational Programmes (OPs).

Designing this system poses specific challenges for ESF programme evaluators, as they are working in a more complex context than in the past. This is not only because of the more structured nature of these programmes but also because of the choices made on a Community or national level to strengthen the evaluation role. It should be recalled that:

- the evaluation is increasingly becoming an integral part of the ESF policy cycle management for gathering information on the output, outcomes and impacts of the interventions and thus for supporting – as in the case of the interim evaluation – the on-going reprogramming of the cofinanced activities;
- the ESF reform has extended the scope of the evaluation, which no longer only concerns training policies but also other active labour policies, education and social inclusion policies; it also investigates how the co-financed policies contribute to the implementation of the European Employment Strategy, also supported by the ESF;
- the programme evaluation has to take into account multiple objectives (global and specific), various policy-fields and specific lines of intervention (measures, types of action and main types of intervention), with the aim of providing more detailed information on each of these aspects, broken down according to the effects they produce;
- the evaluation must not only measure what and how much has been done in terms of outputs, outcomes and impacts produced by the programmes, but also describe how they have been implemented and in what way this has favoured some outcomes and not others;
- the evaluation is split into two levels, national and individual OP, so the major effects produced by co-financed policies on the entire system can be reconstructed on the basis of the information provided by the various ESF Managing Authorities.
- the evaluation involves various actors who interact on the basis of the partnership principle.

¹ The documents referred to are the Community Support Frameworks, the National and Regional Operational Programmes and relative Programme Complements of Objectives 1 and 3.

In particular the last two aspects represent the major innovations introduced by the 2000-2006 ESF and emphasise the local dimension of the evaluation: They are consistent with the devolution of human-resource development policies. In fact, in Italy the ESF co-financed activities are being implemented in a scenario where competences are gradually being delegated from the centre to the regions, outlining a new governance model. This fact is already receiving attention in a Community and national framework, starting with the European Commission's White Paper on Governance.

Governance represents a *complex and multiactor* system for programming and managing policies with some specific features, such as:

- the reference to a plurality of actors involved in a specific policy (State, regions, provinces, local authorities, social partners, public and private executing agencies, etc.). The coordination of these actors respects formal and informal rules, resulting in different relational structures;
- the institutional decentralization and/or tendency to decentralization of the same policy into several levels (Community, national, regional and local), creating the conditions and reference framework for the actor's action. When the State, for example, is no longer the single body defining the guidelines of a policy and the tools to use, the sub-national space becomes the level on which the other policymakers involved in the decentralization of that policy are defined and required to act;
- the possibility for the various actors to construct their own pathways within the policy, on the basis of a participatory approach as opposed to the concept of authority on the part of a single actor.

These elements now characterise the institutional context in which ESF-supported policies are programmed and implemented in Italy. A governance system for human-resource development policies is shaping up: no longer hierarchical but increasingly spelt out locally in independent areas all equally responsible for seeing to their own needs. Moreover, since governance means that the achievement of an objective is the result of an independent but not isolated action of the various stakeholders in the policy implementation process, the evaluation has also to analyse the relationships existing between:

- the institutions and organizational contexts that contribute to the *formation* of the decisions made by the policymakers;
- the functioning of the social-actor networks required to *implement* these decisions in a local context (administrations and public and private agencies);

- the *formal aspects* that regulate the programming and management of a policy (codified, for example, into laws and administrative provisions) and, above all, the *informal aspects* that depend on mediating the specific interests of the various stakeholders, whose effects are not therefore foreseeable.

2. The approach to the evaluation

The ESF National Evaluation Unit, working in ISFOL since 1995, has based its approach to the evaluation of the new ESF programme on the elements described in the previous paragraph. The experience gained from 1994 to 1999 has also been important for setting up the new evaluation activity. Some choices of method and content were confirmed and implemented, while others were added to meet the new dimension of the ESF intervention.

In general, the ESF as *evaluand*², that is the evaluation object, is characterised by: i) the plurality of objectives pursued; ii) the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the typologies of co-financed actions; iii) the new intervention frameworks with respect to the 1994-1999 programme; iv) the multiplicity of actors involved in the planning and implementation of the programmes (also with regards to the decentralization process in course in Italy); and v) the relationship between the ESF and the other concurrent or complementary national policies.

These specific features have meant that the level of the single ESF financed policy, as an independent area of intervention with its own particularities, has had to be analysed and its tendencies defined through a cross-reading of developments of use to policymakers. This need has been spelt out in the three areas into which the approach is divided: the evaluation object, the tools and methods and the working procedures.

The Community Support Framework (CSF) is a public-policy intervention programme that is inevitably inserted in a broader context than that of the general and specific objectives it pursues. Therefore the evaluation does not only involve checking that the goals set during the programming have been reached by analysing the outcomes, but it also has to consider the evolution of these goals within the framework of the national and regional situation.

² That is the *evaluation object*. This brief and effective description was coined by Scriven in Scriven M., *Evaluation Thesaurus* (4th ed.), Sage Publ., Newbury Park, Cal., 1991.

However, a *goal-free*³ approach to the evaluation has meant reconstructing all the effects produced by the programme or attributed to it, starting with the initial programming objectives. This is, firstly, because the programme can produce different, unexpected effects, which if not properly understood can lead to biased evaluations; secondly, because a multitude of actors are involved in the implementation of the policies, especially the co-financed ones, who can change the original objectives into a complex process of negotiation and transfer; and, thirdly, because the evolution of the CSF reference context - i.e. the Italian economic, demographic and political/regulatory context- means that new objectives and priorities can emerge, not foreseen or foreseeable during the programming (and the seven-year duration of the current programme inevitably means changes in context).

In this sense, the CSF can be considered as an “open system”, that is an instrument able both to receive messages from the outside environment and to react to them, that is to influence the environment itself. Thus programming is a continuous process that interacts constantly with its implementation and is fed and supported by it.

As noted earlier, the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the actions co-financed by the CSF has meant focussing the evaluation areas on some priorities of interest to policymakers. It is proposed to divide the evaluation into the different levels in which the co-financed interventions are spelt out within the CSF. In this sense the approach is multilevel and multifocus.

Using a *multilevel* logic means analysing the CSF and its implementation in an evaluation key, considering the different basic levels, that is the OPs, Programme Complements and single interventions, and the sub-levels of policy fields and measures according to the logical programming structure of the CSF. However, since a policy field does not necessarily match a policy goal a further analysis level is needed, cross reading the policy fields by analysing the project typologies.

The *multifocus* logic means not only analysing outputs, outcomes and impacts on the basis of physical and financial indicators but also the implementation processes and mechanisms.

In the new programming period, the Italian ESF National Evaluation Unit has extended the evaluation to cover the implementation process. The intention was to go beyond the “traditional” approach to the programme evaluation, based only on the quantification and measurement of outputs, outcomes and impacts.

³ Ibidem.

More recent evaluation trends have helped to strengthen the “formative” type of approach to the evaluation. This implies an evaluation that informs policymakers not only on the programme results but also on the reasons for successes and failures. Thus it has to be seen how the objectives have been achieved by analysing and evaluating the programme implementation stage. The evaluation does not only have to answer the question of *what* and *how much* has been done, but also *how* and *why* some outputs have been produced, attempting to shed light on the stage, in which the policies found concrete implementation, often defined a *black box*.

The multiplicity and heterogeneity of the co-financed interventions has inevitably meant that specific instruments and methodologies have had to be designed for the evaluation areas considered in a multidisciplinary perspective.

The *multidisciplinarity* choice has generally two different meanings: the implementation of the evaluation with the assistance of methods, techniques and tools belonging to different, but complementary disciplinary fields⁴ and the coordinated use of *quantitative* and *qualitative* methods.

The quantification of the developments implies the possibility of structuring the evaluation on the basis of numerical findings. This has been done for the CSF *system of indicators of output, outcome and impact* that passes into the national monitoring system Monit 2000. This system enables a sufficiently common level of information to guarantee the minimum comparability between the different ESF implementation levels (national, regional, provincial).

The system of indicators does not however solve the problem of why certain results have been produced. As said earlier, the Unit has specifically studied aspects linked to the ESF implementation processes with the idea of providing evaluative keys for explaining programme tendencies. The core concept of the model proposed is that a reconstruction of processes for implementing the OPs and Programme Complements (PC) is essential for explaining the outputs and any gaps between the expected and effective outputs, especially in a complex programme like that of the ESF.

To study the OP/PC implementation process, a series of factors, elements and variables - called factors/mechanisms of implementation - that come between the

⁴ See for example: De Sanctis A., Lion C., Vergani A., *La valutazione del Docup ob.4 Fse 1994-99: tra multidisciplinarietà ed eclettismo, tra integrazione e giustapposizione metodologica*, Paper presented at AIV III National Congress, Turin, April 2000.

programme and its outputs and that can therefore represent an explanation of them, have been defined beforehand. The model defines the procedures for evaluating, in a specific context, how the individual factor or mechanism of implementation influences the outputs. Three macro-factors have been pinpointed (each divided into 30 factors). The assumption is that the implementation of the ESF programme, and in particular its outputs, are influenced by factors/mechanisms belonging to the system of actors involved in the ESF, by the context in which the programme is implemented and by the system of rules, procedures and technical supports that guide and support this implementation, and which often the Managing Authorities are obliged to respect.

The option for the participatory approach is an aspect that the Unit had already extensively developed in its 1994-1999 evaluation experience⁵. In its role of coordinating the scientific and methodological aspects, the Unit is working even closer with stakeholders in this new programming period. This is also based on the conviction reached during the previous programming period that only in this way can the evaluation become a shared value and thus really influence policymakers' decisions. Thus the more it interacts with the actors and specific dynamics of the reference context, the more the evaluation becomes a contextual activity⁶.

Participation means the choice to base the evaluation on sharing areas of investigation among those responsible for the ESF implementation and ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit, on the direct involvement of those responsible for the implementation during the definition of methodologies and indicators and on the continual exchange of knowledge. In particular: the process and responsibilities are shared during the participatory evaluation with the different actors implicated, Managing Authorities and independent evaluators; these same actors are tapped to the full as a resource for the evaluation⁷; the collaboration and cooperation among actors is emphasised; and the process is steered towards the creation of shared values in evaluation.

The fact that the evaluation is a continuous and systematic process means there has to be a suitable level of methodological consistency in the instruments adopted between the *nature* of the evaluands and the nature of the evaluation activity to which they refer. A "process" evaluation is also based on the relationship the ISFOL's ESF

⁵ The reasons why the participatory approach was chosen have been discussed in: De Lellis A., Vergani A., *Participatory evaluation and transformation of institutional systems*, paper presented at the European evaluation society Congress, Rome, 1998.

⁶ Dugan M.A., *Participatory and Empowerment Evaluation*, in: Fetterman et al., *Empowerment Evaluation*, Sage, Newbury Park, Cal., 1996, p.279

⁷ Just think, for example, of the contribution that the individual OP evaluators can give.

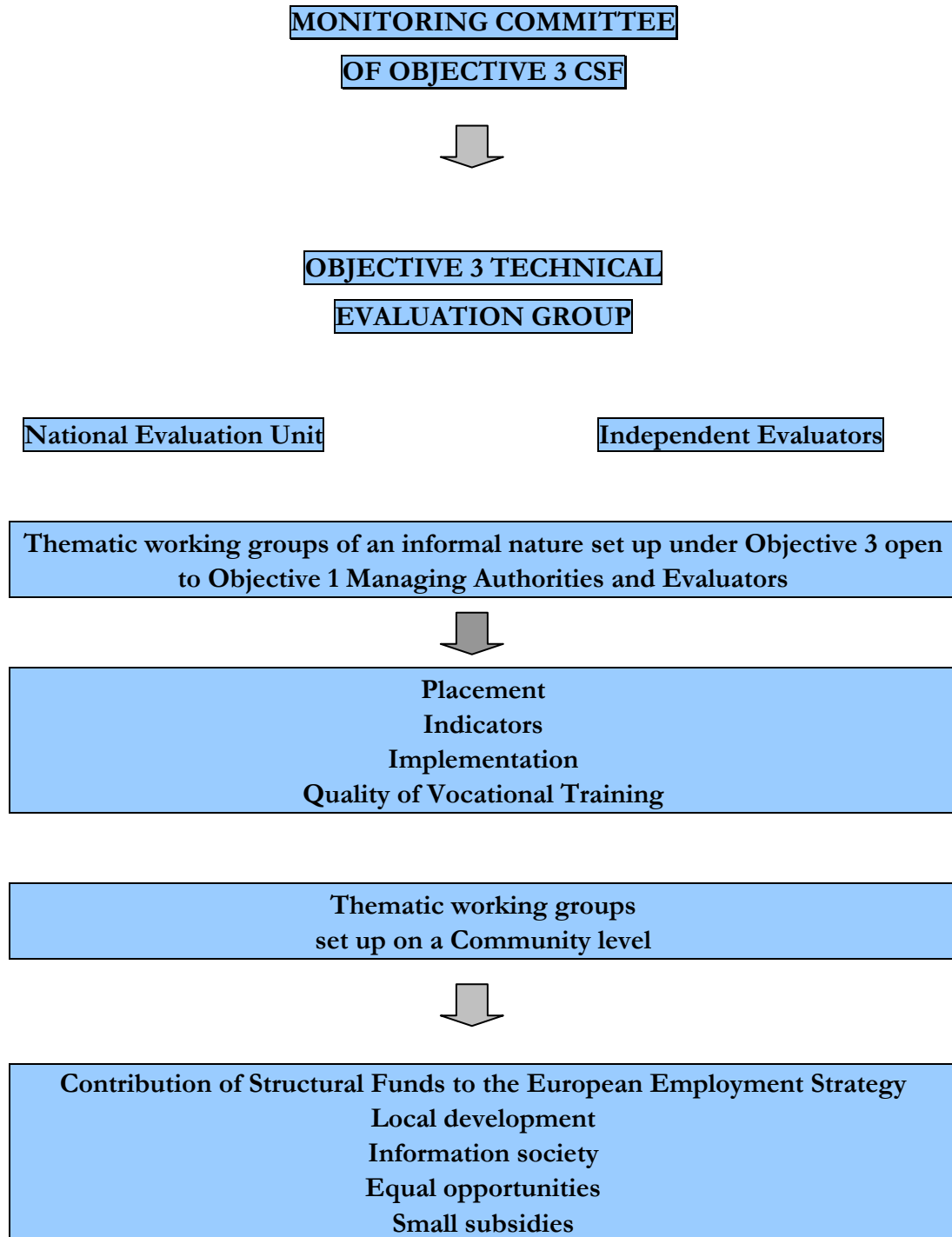
National Evaluation Unit has achieved between its own evaluation activities and the implementation/readjustment *in itinere* of the CSF/SPD. The idea is to enhance the incremental and mutual learning process between evaluator and evaluated⁸.

3. The organisation of the evaluation activities

For the organisation of the evaluation activities dictated by the Community regulation, Italy has developed a system that reflects the decentralised character of the institutions, with as many evaluators as there are Operational Programmes. It also guarantees homogeneous information on the various local situations through the scientific and methodological coordination of a national Evaluation Unit (Graph 1).

⁸ ISFOL – ESF Evaluation Unit (ed. A. Bulgarelli), *Valutazione finale dell'obiettivo 3 in Italia*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2000.

Graph 1: Organisation of the evaluation



The Objective 3 CSF envisages: i) a strong partnership as working procedure for all the evaluation activities; ii) evaluators external to the Managing Authorities for the interim and final evaluation of each OP; iii) the coordination of the evaluation activities and the evaluation of Objective 3 CSF by the ESF National Evaluation Unit.

The tasks that Objective 3 CSF attributes to the ESF National Evaluation Unit include the following:

- proposing the methodological indicators, strategies and standards of the OP evaluations, also taking in account that worked out and constructed by the ERDF and EAGGF and, in an evaluation framework, on an EC and OECD level;
- carrying out specific in on-going evaluations on topics and policies of strategic importance;
- analysing the impact of the ESF, also with regards to national/regional labour and human-resource development policies, within the framework of the European Employment Strategy and the National Action Plans (NAPs);
- carrying out the interim and final evaluation of Objective 3 CSF starting from the evaluations of the OPs and other specific analyses.

The evaluation activity is directed by the Technical Evaluation Group, set up within the Objective 3 CSF Monitoring Group with the aim of steering, coordinating and continuously checking and cross-checking the evaluation carried out by the various stakeholders.

The Technical Evaluation Group, the forum for common reflection and for sharing experiences and choices of methodologies, constitutes the partnership body of the evaluation. Presided over by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, it is composed of representatives of the European Commission, Ministry of the Economy, Operational Programme Managing Authorities, Equal Opportunities Department in the Prime Minister's office, social partners, ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit and Operational Programme evaluators.

It should be emphasised that the Technical Evaluation Group, besides meeting regularly to guide and supervise monitoring and evaluation activities, started working even before the Objective 3 CSF negotiations were completed. This decision was prompted not only by the desire to avoid any delays involved in the definition of procedures and regulations introduced by the new programme, but also by the complex architecture of the programme design and by the need to have a common language and benchmarks from the start of activity.

During their first informal meeting in July 2000, the members of this Group set their priorities as:

- the preparation and regular updating of common guidelines, models, methodologies and instruments for all the Objective 3 Managing Authorities. This was the basis for a homogeneous evaluation of the various OPs and the overall CSF evaluation;
- the drafting of *Terms of Reference* for defining the independent evaluators, used by the Managing Authorities as a common benchmark for the relative calls for tender;
- the regular checking of the actions needed to start up the Structural Funds 2000-2006 national monitoring system under the Ministry of the Economy.

The preparatory actions were a point of reference for launching the CSF evaluation system in cooperation with all the actors involved. All the stakeholders under Objective 3 CSF, including the European Commission, the Managing Authorities and independent evaluators, participated in the activities promoted by the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit, which were also "opened up" to those of Objective 1. The specific working groups were particularly important, enabling participants to meet and discuss complex topics under a scientific and methodological profile, giving priority to those especially significant for the CSF evaluation.

The evolution of the CSF evaluation is also guided and assisted by:

- the working groups promoted by the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit on *placement* (operative since 1997), on the quality of the vocational training system, on the implementation process, on equal opportunities and on the indicators; this latter group specifically analyses the feasibility of the common indicators of output, outcome and impact set out by the CSF and by the OPs for the evaluability reports prepared by the Objective 3 Managing Authorities;
- the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit participation in the Objective 1 National Evaluation System (with INEA - National Institute of Agrarian Economy - UVAL - Evaluation Unit - and the network of regional and central evaluation units) to compare and discuss evaluation methodologies for all the ESF co-financed policies in Italy.

4. Evaluation instruments and activities

Since 2000 ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit has been engaged in defining specific models, methods, tools and activities for the evaluation of the co-financed policies. These constitute a benchmark in Italy for evaluation models and practices applied not only to the ESF-supported policies but also to the national and regional ones for developing human capital and improving the labour market.

In brief, the national evaluation system set up with the contribution of the ESF can currently make use of:

- a classification system for co-financed interventions allowing to gather information on the state of implementation of the most important ESF-supported policies on a national and local level;
- a common set of indicators of output, outcome and impact shared by all the Objective 3 administrations to assist the CSF and OP monitoring and evaluation;
- a central system of physical, financial and procedural monitoring (Monit 2000, managed by the Ministry of the Economy) that interacts with the local monitoring systems for gathering the information necessary for constructing indicators of output;
- specific actions promoted by ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit for connecting, under a scientific and methodological profile, the evaluations carried out on a level of CSF and individual OPs;
- methodological organisation and/or testing of more sophisticated evaluation models, methods and tools than in the past; these serve not only to check the financial efficiency and physical implementation of the ESF interventions, but also to measure their absolute and relative effectiveness (in terms, for example, of net impacts produced by interventions addressed to persons for their employability) and to keep an eye on factors that could have a negative or positive effect on programme implementation.

Within this framework, the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit has fulfilled the mandate received from Objective 3 CSF. It has interacted with all the system actors according to the approach illustrated earlier to implement specific actions for constructing the ESF 2000-2006 monitoring and evaluation system and to promote the launch of the CSF evaluation system.

The preparatory actions, hereafter illustrated, have answered specific and multiple needs linked to the implementation of the CSF design. The most important needs,

the first the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit considered when mapping out the activities, include:

- reconstructing and analysing the state of implementation of the CSF's employability objective, with methodologies and tools shared by all the Managing Authorities, to evaluate the net impact and relative effectiveness of the ESF interventions addressed to persons;
- further investigating, under the methodological profile, the activities necessary for evaluating some particular features of the ESF 2000-2006 programme (for example, assistance to structures and systems), specific implementation areas of the co-financed activities (evaluation of the OPs' implementation process) and some priorities pinpointed by the CSF actors (evaluation of the quality of training systems);
- fostering the launch of programme evaluations, for example by defining Terms of Reference for appointing independent evaluators.

Here below is a diagram of the main preparatory actions for constructing the CSF monitoring and evaluation system carried out by ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit over the 2000 to December 2002 period.

Preparatory Actions for Constructing the 2000-2006 Monitoring System

- Guidelines for the monitoring and evaluation of ESF Objective 3 2000-2006
- Classification of actions for ESF Objective 3 2000-2006
- ESF 2000-2006 indicators of output and result
- Preliminary analysis for monitoring the 10 priorities indicated by Objective 3 CSF

Preparatory Actions for Constructing the 2000-2006 Evaluation System

- Defining the approach to the ESF 2000-2006 evaluation
- Actions supporting the start-up of programme evaluations (drawing up “Terms of Reference” for appointing independent evaluators for OP Ob. 3 2000-2006 and Community Initiative “Equal”; assessment of calls for tender for appointing independent evaluators of regional and national OPs, Objective 3 2000-2006)
- Drawing up methodological rules for the evaluation of specific themes (guidelines for the evaluation of assistance actions to ESF 2000-2006 structures/ systems; Methodological guidelines for the evaluation of the programme implementation process)
- Preparing a model for evaluating the quality of training systems
- Working out a methodology for evaluating the net impact and relative effectiveness of ESF interventions
- Planning and implementing special evaluation instruments (application for ESF interventions addressed to persons; questionnaire for surveying employment outcomes)

These preparatory actions have served as an initial standard for starting up, and especially from 2001, the CSF evaluation system in cooperation with all the actors involved. Within this framework, ISFOL’s ESF National Evaluation Unit, either working with the Technical Evaluation Group or on explicit mandate, has promoted and/or participated in working groups considered important for developing and coordinating the evaluation of specific themes (placement, indicators of output, outcome and impact, OP implementation process, quality of training systems). It has made the initial evaluations on the net impact of training interventions during the previous programme and on the contribution of the ESF to the Europe Employment Strategy, helping to disseminate the results. The aim was to build up knowledge, know-how and benchmarking in the programme and policy evaluation field.

Below is a diagram of the main actions carried out by ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit over the 2000-2002 period to start up the CSF evaluation system.

Scientific-Methodological Development and Coordination of the Evaluation

- Organisation of working groups with actors involved in the ESF evaluation (thematic working groups on placement, indicators, implementation process and equal opportunities; joint working group of Objective 1 National Evaluation System and transnational groups set up by the and the European Commission);
- Participation in other working groups important for the monitoring and evaluation of the co-financed policies (NAP monitoring group in the Ministry of Labour, ISTAT-SISTAN working group, coordination of Pic Equal national evaluation: specific meetings aimed at bringing other monitoring systems in line with the national ESF one)

Implementation of Specific Evaluations

- "The impact of training interventions: acquiring knowledge for the current programme"
- The ESF contribution to the European Employment Strategy

Actions Supporting the Dissemination of an Evaluation Culture

- Design and organisation of IDEA international seminars (ISFOL Debates on Evaluation)
- Organisation of national conference "Training and Employment: Evaluation of Employment Outcomes in Italian Regions"
- Reviews of international studies on the measurement of vocational training effects
- Publishing an International Evaluation Observatory
- Design and publishing of "Programme Evaluation Methodologies" series
- Participation in international and national conferences on scientific and methodological themes

5. The results achieved

Four years after the launch of the new ESF programming period, some considerations can be offered on the main results achieved in constructing a national evaluation system. These results demonstrate not only the development of an evaluation mentality in all the actors involved in the implementation of the policies,

but also policymakers' acknowledgment of the evaluation instruments prepared by the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit.

The structured evaluation system set out in the programming documents is operative on both a central and local level (albeit with differing degrees of development). This is thanks to the assistance of intervention bodies and methodologies who integrate the double central/local level of the evaluation into a single design and link it with the Community one, respecting the autonomy of each Managing Authority.

The system is also consistent with the need to strengthen evaluation activities as a tool for policymakers. It is based on the partnership principle, that is on the systematic involvement of all the stakeholders (Community representatives and Managing Authorities, OP and CSF evaluators, social partners, etc.) in the various stages of the evaluation process. It is also targeted, in the definition of the objects to analyse, at various policies, features and innovations introduced by the CSF and at the different areas that the evaluation activities have to consider (outputs, outcomes and impacts achieved and the effects of the OP implementation process).

The construction of such a structured system undoubtedly represents a significant result for Italy. Already in the 1994-99 programme, the ESF had represented an important tool on a national level for strengthening an evaluation culture in policymakers, traditionally more accustomed to dealing with the administrative and financial inspection and control of interventions. With the current programme, these positive results have been invaluable for implementing the new activities and for developing new evaluation approaches.

Two working groups have been set up on placement and on the implementation process so that these complex themes could be discussed under a scientific and methodological profile, giving priority to those topics considered particularly important for the evaluation of the CSF.

Particular attention has always been devoted to the evaluation of the effectiveness of training actions addressed to persons, on both a Community and national level. Within the framework of the Placement Working Group set up by the Unit in 1996, consisting of Managing Authorities of Objectives 3 and 1 and evaluation managers, common survey methodologies and instruments have been defined for retrospective studies on ESF beneficiaries.

The working group has designed a common format for intervention applications and a questionnaire for surveying the employment outcomes of the trained. These constitute policymakers' two basic tools for further studies, given that each Managing Authority is free to expand them with specific questions of interest.

The working group has also focused on the analysis of net impacts, and a model has been designed to estimate the net impacts of training policies addressed to employability. Alternative methodologies for estimation of the Probit model with selection effects have also been experimented, especially with regards to simultaneous estimation methods.

The group has recently extended its field of survey, in line with the new ESF intervention areas, to innovative topics such as integrated pathways for starting up businesses, work experiences and higher education and training. This has meant sharing ad hoc questionnaires for these types of intervention. At the same time a debate between the various actors on the results achieved has been encouraged for an on-going follow up of what the Managing Authorities are implementing.

The Managing Authorities have taken an active part in the definition of the model for evaluating the implementation process. The model has thus also taken into account the various findings emerging from the meetings that the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit specifically set up, over and above its institutional obligations, to involve the main actors interested in the evaluation of ESF programme implementation. The model designed by the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit is now considered a priority benchmark by many of those involved in the evaluation of the implementation process within the ESF framework.

Under Objective 3, for example, the data available at May 2002 showed that this topic was considered a priority in seven cases, and that in five of these express reference is made to the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit's model as the initial instrument on a methodological and operational level. The fact that two Managing Authorities and an independent evaluator expressed the desire to test this model during the February 2002 seminar also demonstrate that – even before its formal validation in July by the Monitoring Committee of Objective 3 CSF – it had already been explicitly approved by five Management Authorities and/or independent evaluators of Objective 3 (over half of the institutional actors possessing information on evaluation activity and around two-thirds of those expressly interested in the evaluation of the ESF implementation process).

The evaluation reports show that the Objective 3 Management Authorities have pursued some topics of specific interest in the evaluation of the implementation process on the basis of factors/mechanisms proposed in the Unit's model. These topics include the Managing Authorities' organisation, the partnership structure, the architecture and effectiveness of the monitoring systems and the project selection and evaluations procedures.

The Ministry of the Economy, which coordinates the Objective 1 evaluation on a national level, has also requested the ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit to prepare a form for the implementation process evaluation.

The ISFOL's ESF National Evaluation Unit will also work on the evaluation model to make it a more efficient back-up for the choices made by ESF policy-makers by:

- updating and/or maintaining it on the basis of a global methodological approach, of specific operational choices and/or of technical/instrumental structuring;
- updating and/or maintaining its contents; for example, defining the implementation factors/mechanisms;
- extending the model to support the evaluation of the implementation of other national and/or regional policies not financed by the ESF.

Bibliography

- Azzone G. and Dente B., *Valutare per governare – Il nuovo sistema dei controlli nelle Pubbliche amministrazioni*, Etas, Milano, 1999
- Baslé M., “Bonne gouvernance publique et évaluation: introduction à un débat” in Baslé M. et Guignard-Hamon C. (ed. by), *Evaluation et gouvernance*. Actes du colloque de Rennes des 15 et 16 juin, Société française de l'évaluation
- Bel M., Richiard A., Teissier J., “Evaluation et gouvernance régionale de la formation professionnelle?” in Baslé M. et Guignard-Hamon C. (ed. by), *Evaluation et gouvernance*. Actes du colloque de Rennes des 15 et 16 juin, Société française de l'évaluation
- Bulgarelli A., Vergani A., *The evaluation of the European social fund in Italy: a central evaluation of a decentralised system*, 4th European Evaluation Society Conference, Lausanne, October 2000
- Conseil scientifique de l'évaluation, *Petit guide de l'évaluation des politiques publiques*, La Documentation française, Paris, May, 1996
- De la Maisonneuve A., *Precondition for a good evaluation: getting to the heart of the programme* 3th European Evaluation Society Conference, Rome 1998
- European Commission, *European Governance – A White Paper*, COM (2001) 428 final/2, Brussels, 5.8.2001
- Fabbri D., Fazioli R., and Filippini M., *L'intervento pubblico e l'efficienza possibile*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1996
- Grassi M., *La parola Governance*, Lettera Irpet, Novembre 2002
- Heinrich C. J. & Lynn L.E., *Governance and Performance: New Perspectives*, Georgetown University Press, Washington DC, 2000
- Hill C. and Ham M., *Introduzione all'analisi delle politiche pubbliche*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1995
- Kelvin A., *How stakeholders with various preferences converge on acceptable investment programs*, Evaluation and Program Planning, Vol. 23/2000, pp.105-113
- Isfol – Struttura nazionale di valutazione, *Rapporto sulle condizioni di valutabilità del Qcs obiettivo 3 Fse 2000-2006*, bozza, maggio 2002
- Isfol – Struttura nazionale di valutazione, *Linee guida per il monitoraggio e la valutazione del Fondo sociale europeo 2000-2006*, Metodologie per la valutazione di programma vol. 1, ISSN 1594-9516
- Isfol – Struttura nazionale di valutazione, *Orientamenti metodologici per la valutazione del processo di implementazione*, Metodologie per la valutazione di programma vol. 2, ISSN 1594-9516
- Isfol – Struttura nazionale di valutazione, *Linee guida per la valutazione degli effetti occupazionali del fondo sociale europeo 2000-2006*, Metodologie per la valutazione di programma vol. 3, ISSN 1594-9516

- Lang J., *Improving Structural Policy Under Conditions of Hybrid Governance: Multi-Actor Constellations, Integrated Feedback Instruments and the Use of Evaluation Results*, in *Evaluation* 7 (1), 2001, Sage Publications
- Lynn L., Heinrich C. and Hill C., *Improving Governance: A New Logic for Empirical Research*, Georgetown University Press, Washington DC, 2001
- Mark M.M., Henry G.T. and Julnes G., *An Integrated Framework for Understanding, Guiding and Improving Policies and Programs*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco, 2000
- Martini A., *Aiutare lo Stato a pensare (e il pubblico a capire): l'esperienza americana della policy analysis*, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino 1996
- Meny Y. and Thoenig J. C., *Le politiche pubbliche*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1991
- Monnier E., *Evaluations de l'action des pouvoirs publics*, Economica, Paris, 1992
- Occhiocupo G., Pomponi F., « La governance e i rapporti Stato-Regioni-Enti locali », in *Osservatorio Isfol*, XXIII, n.5, 2002
- Osborne D., Gaebler T., *Dirigere e Governare. Una proposta per reinventare la pubblica amministrazione*, Garzanti, Milano, 1995
- Pacchiarotti M., *Note introduttive alla valutazione delle politiche pubbliche*, in Quaderni di documentazione del gruppo di lavoro sulla misurazione dell'azione amministrativa, Cnel, Rome, 1999
- Perez C., *Evaluer les programmes d'emploi et de formation – L'expérience américaine*, Centre d'étude sur l'emploi, Dossier 18, 2001
- Poquet G., *L'évaluation des politiques publiques et le concept de "bénéficiaires"*, Credoc, Paris, September 1995
- Tagliaferro C., « Riforma del titolo V, parte II della Costituzione e nuovi modelli di « governance » in tema di formazione professionale, lavoro, istruzione », in *Osservatorio Isfol*, XXIII, n. 5, 2002
- Tecnostruttura, «La governance nei rapporti tra Stato, Regioni ed Enti locali territoriali», Conferenza nazionale *La strategia europea, nazionale e regionale per le politiche occupazionali, l'inclusione sociale e gli interventi per le risorse umane*, Benevento 10-11 luglio 2002
- Weiss C.H., *Evaluation*, Second Edition, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1998
- Working paper, *Governo del territorio e governance. Un confronto tra Regioni europee*, 30 September-1 October 2001, Rocca di Fontanellato - Parma