

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT
New Frontiers in Evaluation

24th – 25th April 2006
Vienna, Austria

SPONSORS

Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology, Austria
Platform Research and Technology Policy Evaluation, Austria

www.bmvit.gv.at
www.fteval.at

NEW CHALLENGES FOR EVALUATION

The evaluation of long-term scientific research is about to experience new challenges:

- Policy makers are increasingly aware that the success of their efforts to finance and promote long-term research is dependent not only on individual programs, institutions and infrastructure, but also on 'portfolios' of programs which interact.
- In Europe, the division of labour among European, national, regional and private science financiers has led to a debate about interdependencies among the resulting portfolios of research projects provided by the respective decision makers.
- With the European Research Council (ERC), a new major player in long term research funding is about to enter the European stage. It is important to get a clearer picture of which evaluation instruments – peer review and beyond – will be most appropriate for this new fund.
- In the United States, federal policy makers are often uncertain about how federal financing of research programs interfaces with efforts by other federal programs, private financiers, and state and regionally sponsored programs.
- As policy makers consider new instruments for research promotion, a methodological question arises of how best to identify and measure the effects of individual instruments as well as portfolios of instruments.
- As research promoters see themselves more as institutions in support of science, and less as administrators of a specific funding strategy, the more they will question the strategic orientation of their institutional portfolios.
- Traditionally, Peer Review has been pushed beyond its limits in making some of these decisions.

Evaluation can help policy makers deal with these challenges. However, to get the most from evaluation, institutions such as the evolving ERC may need to contribute to the further

development, implementation, and application of modified and extended methods of evaluation and selection processes suitable for today's complexities.

The conference "New Frontiers in Evaluation" will bring together policy makers, programme managers, evaluation experts from a variety of disciplines, and managers of science funds from around the world for two days of intensive exploration into current best practices--and beyond--in selection processes and evaluation methods geared towards the complexities of multiple levels of decision making and interdependent science program portfolios.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are seen as important starting points for contributions to the conference:

- What new selection processes and evaluation methods are being used for long-term scientific research? With what result? Is there a need for further development of methods and sharpening of instruments by new institutions such as the European Research Council? Which role does Peer Review best serve? Can Peer Review be further developed or combined with other methods to increase its effectiveness?
- What is the state-of-the-art of evaluating an institution's research portfolios? Why is it important in long-term research to have a complete overview of an institution's portfolio beyond the individual project? How can such a portfolio be evaluated? What advances are underway?
- How can "additionality" be conceptualized for programs funding scientific research?
- What is the "additional" effect of public funding? Do we have any cost-benefit analysis with respect to cost of the funding mechanisms? Actually, the European framework programmes as much as national policies change their funding strategies in favour of new and complex funding procedures, e.g. competitive research partnerships, creating networks, clusters or carrying out R&D auctions. These new kinds of public funding procedure are much more lavish compared to simple traditional funding schemes. Are they worth it – or are they too complex and costly compared to their outcomes? Is evaluation able to take into account variations in funding procedures and shed light on their relative merits?
- What is the state-of-the-art of evaluating collections of research portfolios extending across multiple instruments and institutions? How can different instruments and institutions be evaluated in context? How can such tasks be tackled and how is this to be done in relation to the level of the individual project or individual institution? Is it possible to ask such questions in a large European context?

These five sets of questions will be sharpened and made more precise in advance by an international advisory committee. Parallel to this effort, a call for papers will be issued and a background paper will be drawn up by the end of 2005 that will include the first approach to the questions of the conference. Registration will open from 1st September 2005.

Point of Contact: Plattform FTEval, Klaus Zinoecker
Währinger Straße 3/15a, 1190 Wien
AUSTRIA

zin@fteval.at

www.fteval.at