

EES

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**International Forum on
Civil Society's Evaluation
Capacities
Chiang Mai, 3-6 2012**

European Evaluation Society

**Making a difference:
supporting evaluative practice
through the EES**



Background

- Founded 1992: The Hague
- Emerging professional needs of individuals
- Academics and auditors
- The Board has 12 possible members, 8 elected
- Ex President a member for one year



The mission

- The goal of the European Evaluation Society is to stimulate and promote theory, practice, and utilisation of high quality evaluation especially, but not exclusively, within Europe.
- This goal is obtained by bringing together academics and practitioners from all over Europe and from different professional sectors, thus creating a forum where all participants can benefit from the co-operation and bridge building opportunities of the EES.
- The main vehicle for this knowledge exchange is the biennial conference. In addition, EES works to provide a platform to interact, discuss and network amongst evaluation professionals, through means such as Thematic Working Groups, web-based tools/ forums and ad-hoc events.



Membership

- academics (30%),
- free lancers (18%),
- private consultancy workers (22%)
- evaluation commissioners and evaluators at governmental institutions (8%),
- supranational (3%)
- international organizations (11%),
- NGOs-Non-profit institutions (7%).

May 2012, 82% conduct and/or do evaluation, 42% teach evaluation, 43% carry out research on evaluation, 31% commission and/or manage evaluations, and 4% are students. The disciplinary composition of members is 15% Public Administration, 15% Economy, 13% Political Science, 13% Sociology, 10% Education, 7% Business Administration, and engineers, social workers and psychologists (3% each one; other categories 15%).

The EES has as of September 2012, 488 individual members and 30 institutional

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NESE (Network of Evaluation Societies in Europe)

At the EES Conference in Berlin (2004)

The structure that emerged placed the EES as a core partner and with one other European society or network as co-coordinator for a two year term.

To date the NESE co-coordinators along with the EES have been the SFE (The French Evaluation Society), DeGEval (The German Evaluation Society) and the Italian Evaluation Association



Strategy: The enabling environment

Promote national evaluation societies in Europe with a view to strengthen the evaluation culture of national governments and the civil society. The main vehicle the EES uses for this is the promotion and co-coordination of NESE (see above).

The EES produced a general statement on Ethics and Standards in 2004. This document encouraged the creation of standards in national societies, but explicitly ruled out the formulation of 'European standards'.

EES developed an evaluators' capabilities framework that was validated through two surveys. Again, the intent was not to impose Europe-wide standards but rather to encourage professional development

The EES has influenced ongoing and dominant evaluation debates and discourses by the provision of statements and manifestos.

An example of this is the influential statement on impact evaluation in 2007 titled "The importance of a methodologically diverse approach to impact evaluation".



Strategy: The enabling environment

- The DAC Evaluation Network, the United Nations Development Program, the UK Evaluation Society and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (among others) have addressed or are working on various facets of evaluation competencies.
- The International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) has issued a competency framework for development evaluators. .
- Robert Picciotto, *The Value of Evaluation Standards*, Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation: JMDE (3) 30 ISSN 1556-8180

See for example, the UKES guidelines at

<http://www.evaluation.org.uk/resources/guidelines.aspx>... They define the distinctive accountabilities and reciprocal obligations of different categories of evaluation stakeholders.



Developing/strengthening individual capacities

- The EES has promoted specialized and high quality training in conferences (pre-conference workshops) at each of 10 conferences to date.
- Outside the conferences, there have been international master classes on specific themes (Odense in 2009 and Seville 2007)
- Within Europe, the EES, in collaboration with other partners or singly, have set up evaluation events.
- Before, we organized events at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense and in Fribourg, Switzerland in the non-conference years of the EES.
- The EES has encouraged specialised university based programmes in evaluation and inaugurated a special student award
- The EES closely collaborates with the Journal *Evaluation*.

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Strengthening equity-focused and gender-sensitive evaluation systems and evaluations

- Influencing through the development of Thematic Working Groups (TWGs)
- sessions on gender issues, at conferences
- The EES Board is attentive to gender and evaluation.
- The EES has made big efforts, since Lisbon (2008), to get bursaries for evaluators in developing countries to attend its biennial conferences.
- A new Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Evaluation of International Engagement in Fragile Situations has also been launched.



Institutional capacity (1)

The work of the EES Board is distributed through working groups and activities. Each activity or group has a dedicated person of responsibility for their area and reports on developments at the EES Board meetings which are mainly held virtually, to save costs.

While these groups and activities may change over time to respond to changing circumstances, a typical array of groups and activities are:

- Conference
- TWGs around general areas of strategic interest.
- Members' services
- Newsletter- 'Connections'
- Professional development and capacity building
- Communications
- Non-conference years and 'ad-hoc' events
- Relations with the *Evaluation* journal
- Recruitment and fund raising



Institutional capacity (2): knowing the membership

- One of the most important strategic priorities, apart from the professionalization of EES service providers and a dedicated Board, is the analysis of the community and membership.
- The EES has used surveys as a tool which enables communication and getting active participation from members and for getting useful information on members. The NESE surveys (2008; 2010) are a case in point as is the background information survey to members (2009). In that way the EES is building a better profile of its members.
- In 2011, the EES systematized the information addressed in the 2009 survey, doing an 'Individual Member Profile' in the Member Area of the web site. This is where each member can put his/her information in a survey style, so now it is very easy to recover that info at any moment for analytical purposes.
- The EES will continue with more 'in-depth' analysis of its membership

Bottlenecks/challenges

- The EES has a relatively small membership which fluctuates depending on conference years.
- The EES should develop stronger ownership and a more substantial participation of members in the society. The challenge is to make membership understand that the EES is more than a service provider;.
- There is a need to be more present and utilize more efficiently the possibilities Social Networks and new IT's allow. The EES has improved, but there is much to do in this regard. The 10th Biennial Conference's Theme (Evaluation in the Networked Society: New Concepts, New Challenges, New Solutions') was indicative of this concern and commitment.
- The EES, a regional-supranational player with clear and interesting opportunities as such, faces also the challenge of developing an 'European Evaluation Space. NESE is grappling with this issue.



Progress

- Biennial conferences
- Developing events
- Thematic working groups
- Improved secretariat and service provider
- Communication
- Membership policy



Enabling factors

- Regional positioning
- Strong partners
- Dedicated two year Board
- Professional secretariat
- EU contacts



Innovations and lessons learned

- Dedicated plan of activities
- Using social and other communication media
- Strategic partnerships
- Strategic thinking space and clear vision

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Next steps

Increasing membership (participatory approaches)

Communication strategy

TWG strategy

Donors within EU

Building EES historical archive