

ESF Member Organisation Forum on Evaluation of Funding Schemes and Research Programmes

Background

Getting the evaluation of funding schemes and research programmes right for improving both the internal operations and the external accountability of funding agencies and research organisations is gaining importance. However the procedures and organisational integration of evaluation activities are rather different across Europe. The ESF Member Organisation Forum on *Evaluation of Funding Schemes and Research Programmes* brings together more than 40 evaluation officers from ESF Member Organisations to exchange experiences and gather best practice. From October 2007 to November 2009, the Forum will have convened in five workshops, focused on the following topics:

- 1st Workshop (hosted by DFG – German Research Foundation): Evaluation of Funding Schemes and Research Programmes: Expectations, Practices and Experiences
- 2nd Workshop (hosted by the INFN - Italian National Institute for Nuclear Physics): Quantitative Indicators in ex-post Evaluation of Funding Schemes and Research Programmes
- 3rd Workshop (hosted by FWF – Austrian Science Fund): Best practices in “Quality assurance”
- 4th Workshop (hosted by OTKA – Hungarian Scientific Research Fund): Socio-economic impact assessment
- 5th Workshop (hosted by SFI/HRB) in November 2009 will be the Final Forum workshop.

Activities

Apart from the workshops, two different strands discussed practical topics during the workshops and formed working groups with a defined focus area. One important goal of the Forum, undertaken by the working group of the Research Funding Agencies, was to develop a mapping of current evaluation activities within funding agencies and research institutes as well as its categorisation and the identification of several “*evaluation modes*”:

1. Evaluation of funding agency as organisation
2. Evaluation of funding policies (or particular strategic issues)
3. Evaluation of research fields or scientific disciplines

4. Evaluation of funding schemes
5. Evaluation of research grants (to a single PI or a group of recipients)

The analysis concludes that almost all research funding agencies have mechanisms to monitor and assess the progress and outcomes of individual grants they provide (ranging from a single project to a large collaborative programme of research, a research network, or centre of excellence).

The Forum has been successful in exchanging practices and facilitates the networking of sciences officers engaged in evaluation. However in course of its work new questions were raised, which were not answered yet but deemed to be worthwhile exploring. At the same time, the EUROHORCs ESF Road Map acknowledges the work of the Forum which can help to implement activities within Action 6 of the Road Map (Develop common approaches to ex post evaluation of funding schemes and research programmes). Therefore this group will establish a **second Forum on the topic *Evaluation of publicly funded research***.

The second working group, mainly Research Performing Agencies, worked on tools that are used to document and support the evaluation process. This group mainly worked on two issues: indicators on Internationalisation and on Innovation/innovative capacity. There is a tremendous discrepancy between the very rich knowledge that has been built on these processes and the very limited set of indicators that are usually produced and used. Therefore, the working group works on possibilities to produce new indicators that could better describe the innovative capacities and internationalisation and test them in a number of participating institutions, including a benchmarking operation. Therefore, they are proposing a new Forum to launch a pilot study which aims to design and to produce a set of indicators that could account for the internationalisation of European research activities and programmes and be useful for MOs themselves and in their relationships with European Commission as well as their governments (benchmarking and policy evaluation).

Meetings

5th and final Workshop of the Member Forum: Dublin, 16-17 November 2009 (*under construction*)

4th Workshop of the Member Forum. Budapest, 27-28 April 2009

3rd Workshop of the Member Forum. Vienna, 6-7 October 2008

2nd Workshop of the Member Forum. Rome, 31 March - 1 April 2008

1st Workshop of the member Forum. Berlin, 22-23 October 2007