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Institutional Roles and Organisational Arrangements for Impact Evaluation: A Case Study of Poland



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Agenda

1

Evaluation in Poland

2

The Institutionalisation of Evaluation: Theoretical Foundations

3

The Institutionalisation of Cohesion Policy Evaluation in Poland

4

Key Challenges

5

Discussion



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SECTION

1

Evaluation in Poland





Evaluation Is Well Established in Several Policy Areas in Poland



Education

- Evaluation embedded in school and higher education systems
- Supported by pedagogical supervision and programme-based assessments



Cohesion Policy

- **The most dynamic area of evaluation development in Poland**
- Comprehensive legal, institutional and methodological framework



Development Cooperation

- Evaluation integrated into the Polish Aid system
- Required by development cooperation legislation

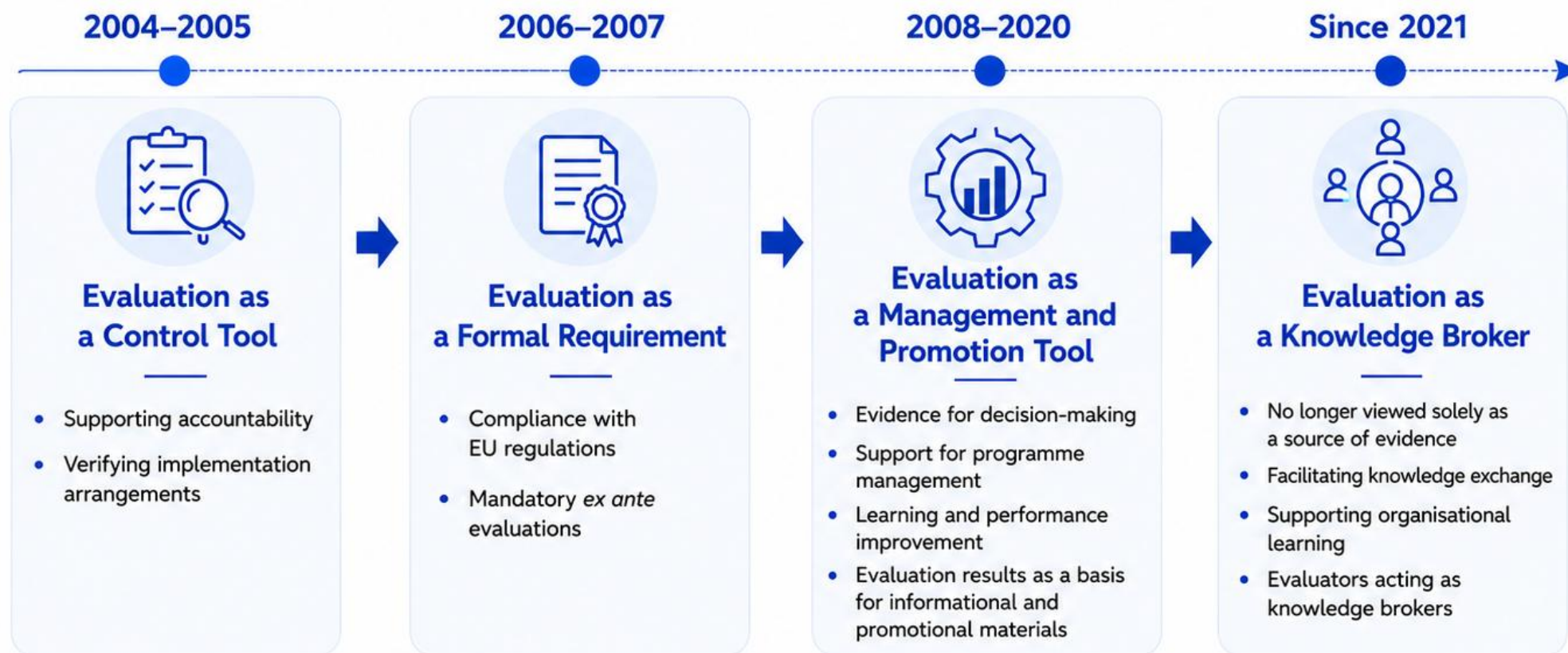


Evaluation requirements are referenced in **more than 1,000** legal acts and policy documents in Poland.



Changing Role of Evaluation in Cohesion Policy

From Control to Knowledge Brokerage



The role of evaluation has evolved

from control and compliance towards **learning, knowledge management** and **evidence-informed policymaking**.



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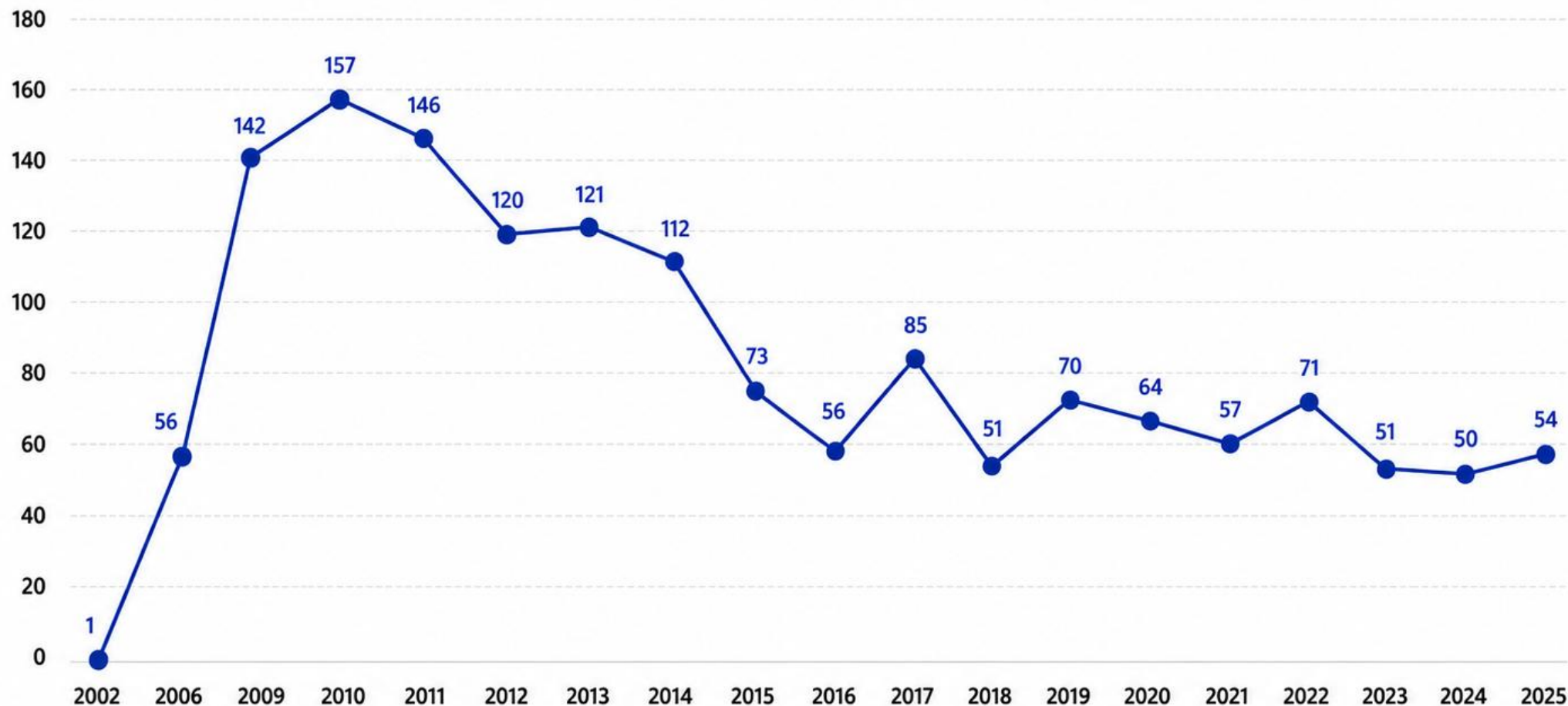
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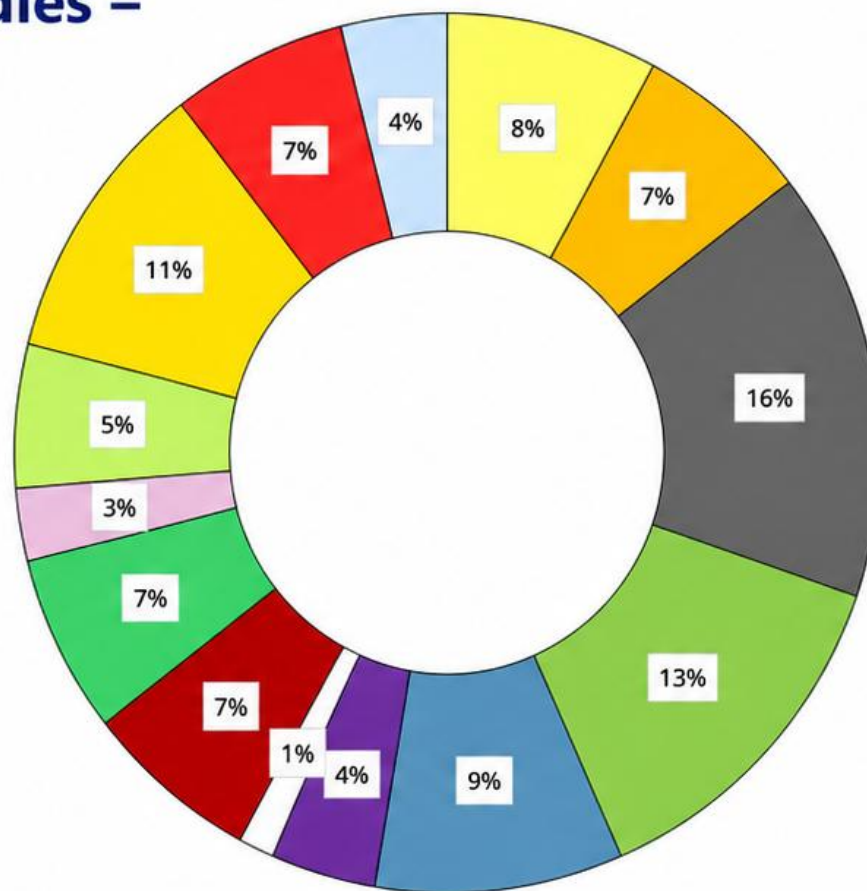




Number of Evaluation Studies in Cohesion Policy



Implemented Studies – Topics



Research and development, innovation

Good governance

Public administration system

Education

Information and promotion

Health

Regional and local development

Entrepreneurship

Social inclusion

Labor market

Horizontal policies

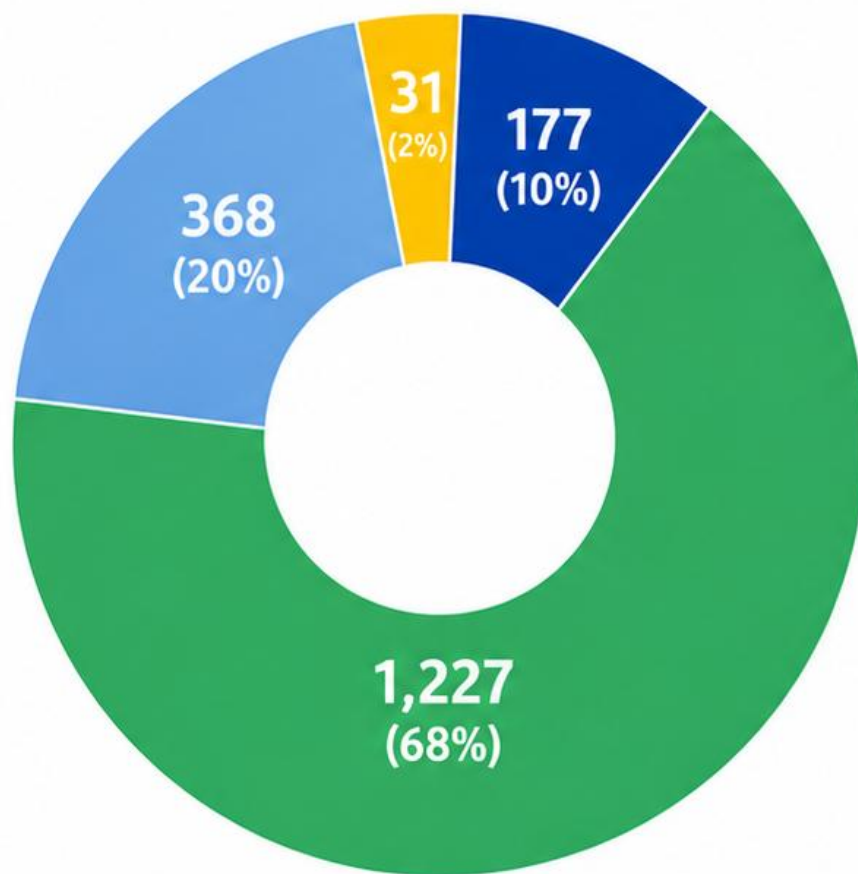
Transport

Environment/ energy

ICT



Realization of Evaluations by Timing



	Number of studies	Share
Ex ante	177	10%
Ex post	368	20%
On-going	1,227	68%
Mid term	31	2%
Total	1,803	100%





SECTION

2

The Institutionalisation of Evaluation: Theoretical Foundations



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Dimensions of Evaluation Institutionalisation

Organisations and Structures

- Evaluation units and coordination bodies
- Formal roles and responsibilities
- Governance and accountability arrangements

Rules, Forums and Practices

- Legal and procedural frameworks
- Evaluation standards and guidelines
- Professional networks and communities of practice

Use of Evaluation

- Evidence-informed decision-making
- Organisational learning and accountability
- Uptake of evaluation findings and recommendations



Evaluation becomes institutionalised when it is embedded in **organisational structures**, supported by formal **rules and practices**, and routinely **used in decision-making** processes.



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Factors Influencing the Institutionalisation of Evaluation

(Furubo)

1

Presence of evaluation activities in major public policy areas

2

Availability of experienced evaluators from different disciplines

3

Existence of a national debate on evaluation

4

Presence of professional evaluation organisations and associations

5

Existence of a national evaluation society (VOPE)

6

Degree of institutionalisation within government

7

Degree of institutionalisation within parliament

8

Plurality of institutions and evaluators conducting evaluations across policy areas

9

Evaluation activities within supreme audit institutions

10

Balance between evaluations of outputs and evaluations of outcomes and processes

Factors Influencing the Institutionalisation of Evaluation

(Jacob & Varone)

1

National Evaluation Society (VOPE)

2

Academic Journal Dedicated to Evaluation

3

Evaluation Quality Standards

4

Institutional Arrangements for Evaluation within Government

5

Institutional Arrangements for Evaluation within Parliament

6

Evaluation Activities within the Supreme Audit Institution

Factors Influencing the Institutionalisation of Evaluation

(Meyer)

- 1 Evaluation across different policy sectors and the volume of evaluations conducted
- 2 Specialised evaluation or research units within government institutions
- 3 Evaluation unit within parliament
- 4 Evaluation activities within the Supreme Audit Institution
- 5 National legal framework for evaluation (horizontal or sector-specific)
- 6 National Evaluation Society (VOPE)
- 7 Public debate on the effects and use of evaluation
- 8 Academic journals dedicated to evaluation
- 9 Postgraduate programmes in evaluation
- 10 Evaluation standards and certification systems
- 11 Systematic use of evaluation by public institutions and society



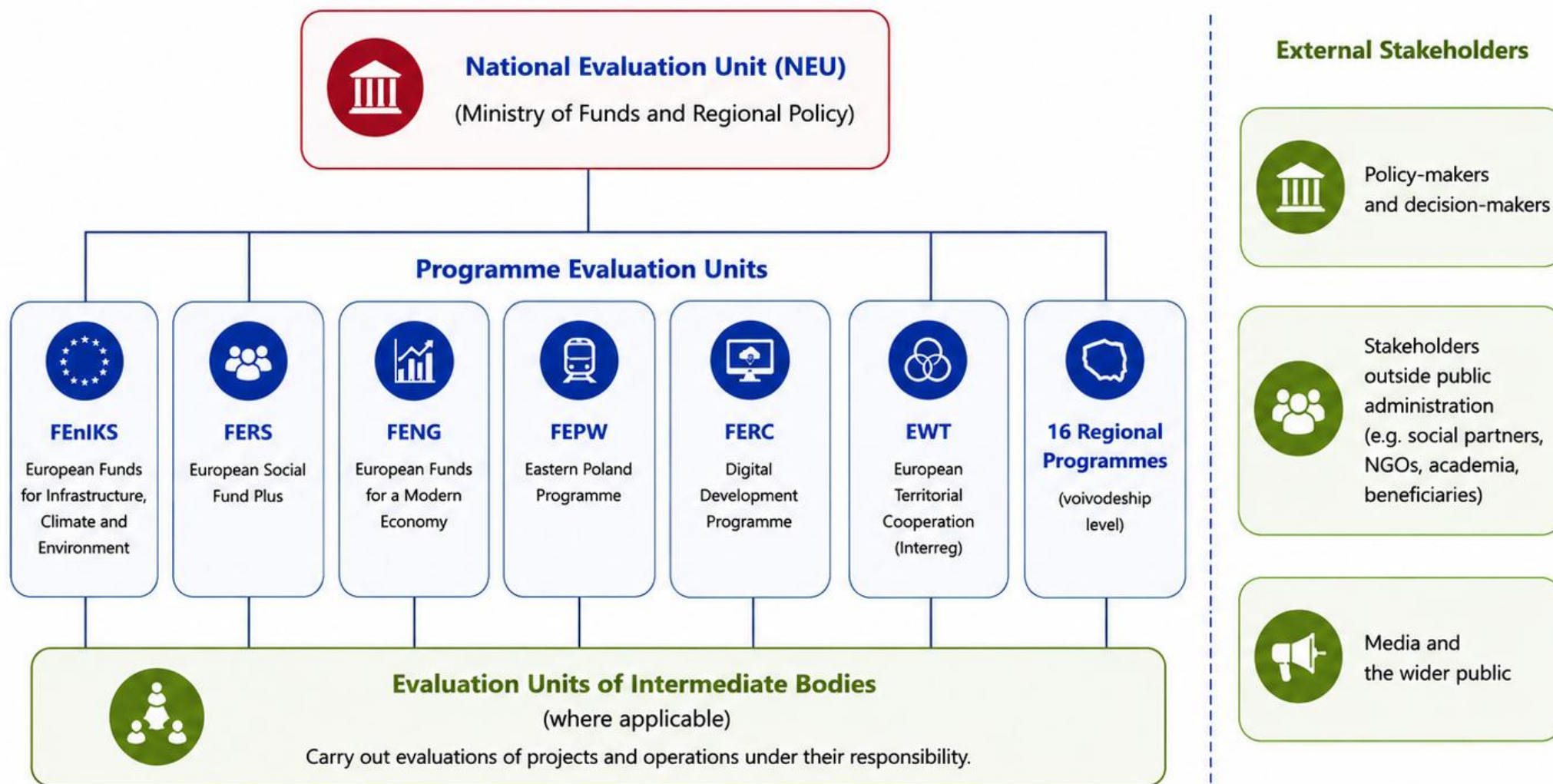
SECTION

3

The Institutionalisation of Cohesion Policy Evaluation in Poland

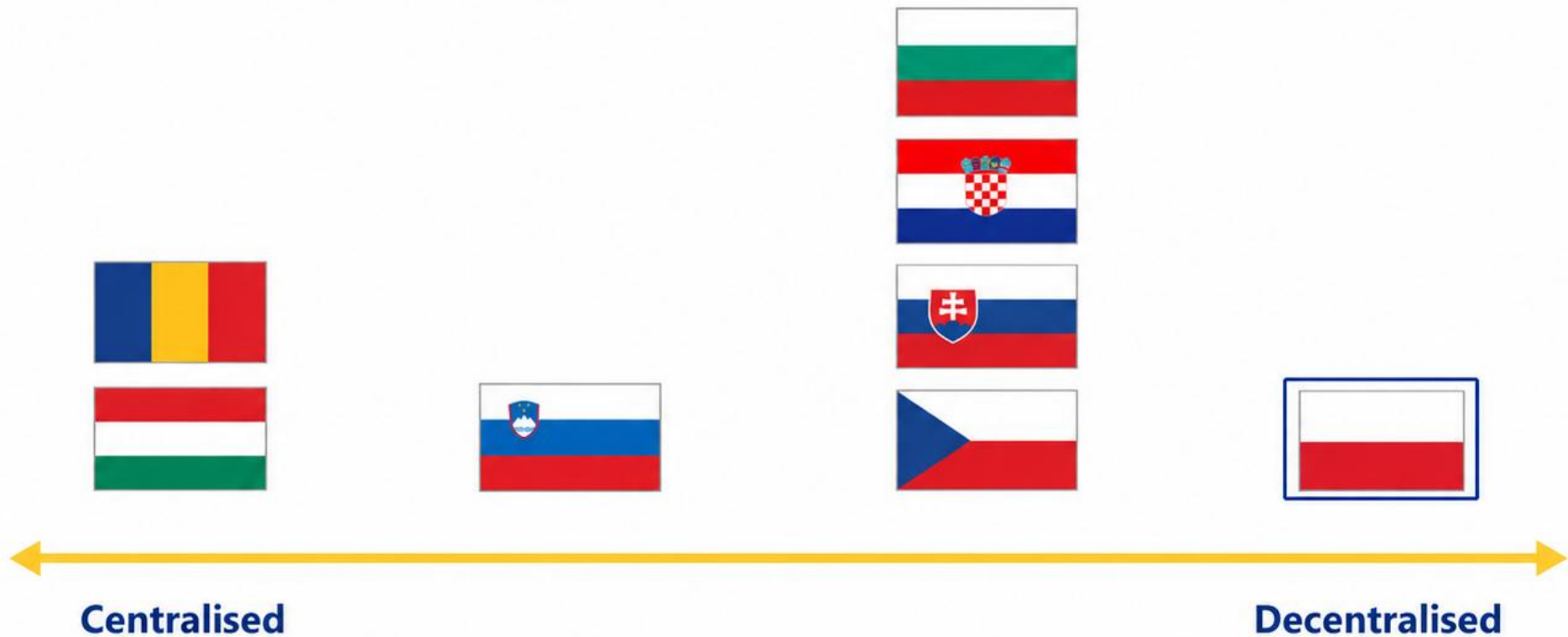


Cohesion Policy Evaluation System in Poland



The Polish evaluation system is based on a network model coordinated by the National Evaluation Unit and implemented through programme-level evaluation units.

Cohesion Policy Evaluation Systems in Central Europe



Poland has developed one of the most decentralised cohesion policy evaluation systems in Central Europe.

Legal Framework for Evaluation – EU Legislation

Guidance from European Commission Directorates-General

- Various Directorates-General of the European Commission issue guidance and methodological documents on evaluation addressing different policy areas and instruments, including:

DG REGIO

Cohesion policy,
European Regional
Development Fund,
Cohesion Fund

DG EMPL

Employment, Social
Affairs and Inclusion,
European Social Fund+

DG BUDG

Budget, Performance
Management and
Evaluation

Other DGs

e.g. DG AGRI, DG ENV,
DG HOME, DG RTD
and others, depending
on sectoral policies

EU Legislation – Cohesion Policy

- The evaluation requirements for cohesion policy programmes are set out in the EU regulations, adopted by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament.



Key EU Regulations

- **Regulation (EU) 2021/1060** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, as well as financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy.
- **Regulation (EU) 2021/1058** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund.
- **Regulation (EU) 2021/1057** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).
- **Regulation (EU) 2021/1056** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund.



The regulations require Member States to ensure the evaluation of programmes, including ex-ante evaluations, on-going evaluations and ex-post evaluations, as well as the use of evaluation findings.

Legal Framework for Evaluation – National Legislation

- **The Act of 2006** introduced broad requirements for the evaluation of national, regional and local strategies and programmes. (*Act on the Principles of Development Policy*).
- **The implementation act** specify the rules for evaluating programmes co-financed from European Union funds (*Act on the Principles of Implementation of Tasks Financed from European Funds*).

Beyond the cohesion policy framework

- **On 7 October 2009**, the Minister of National Education issued a regulation mandating the evaluation of the education system. These provisions were amended on 4 September 2021, when this type of evaluation once again became mandatory. Work on the next amendment is currently underway.
- **As early as 2011**, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduced a requirement for the evaluation of multi-annual development programmes (so-called Polish Aid).

Professionalisation, Standards and Networking

- **The Polish Evaluation Society (PES)** was established in 2000 and currently brings together approximately 100 active members representing public administration, academia, consulting firms and non-governmental organisations.
- **In 2008**, PES coordinated a year-long EU-funded initiative aimed at strengthening evaluation quality standards. The project involved representatives of public administration, academia, NGOs and other stakeholders interested in evaluation.
- **In 2025**, in cooperation with the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, the initiative was renewed, resulting in updated evaluation standards and a new set of guiding principles for evaluators.
- **The dissemination of evaluation knowledge** has also been supported through publications issued by various institutions, including the National Evaluation Unit (NEU), the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP) and the Polish Evaluation Society.
- **National evaluation conferences** have played an important role in networking and professional development. Since 2005, sixteen nationwide evaluation conferences have been organised, bringing together practitioners, researchers and policy-makers.
- **Efforts are currently underway** to establish a dedicated academic journal on evaluation, further strengthening the professional infrastructure of the field in Poland.

Source: Polish Evaluation Society (PES), National Evaluation Unit (NEU), Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy.

1. Evaluation Plans – Structure

Purpose

Evaluation plans are strategic documents that define the scope, timing and organisation of evaluation activities throughout the programming period.

Main Components of an Evaluation Plan

1	Introduction and rationale
2	Context and objectives
3	Planned evaluations (topics, types, objectives and key evaluation questions)
4	Multiannual timetable and schedule
5	Responsibilities and governance arrangements
6	Financial resources and budget
7	Monitoring, reporting and plan updates

Key Features

- Prepared at programme level and coordinated by Evaluation Units
- Cover the entire programming period
- Updated when new evaluation needs emerge
- Serve as the primary tool for strategic management of evaluation activities

2. Adoption Procedure of Evaluation Plans

Evaluation plans are adopted through a transparent and participatory process ensuring strategic relevance and quality of planned evaluations.



Evaluation plans may be updated during implementation to reflect emerging needs, contextual changes and lessons learned.

IT Tools Supporting the Evaluation System

■ Evaluation Study Database

- Central repository of evaluation reports conducted under cohesion policy programmes
- Provides public access to completed studies, reports and executive summaries
- Supports knowledge management and dissemination of evaluation findings

Evaluation Study Database

Lp.	Tytuł badania	Program	Tematyka	Rodzaj badania/ Typ ewaluacji	Zasięg terytorialny badania	Rok zakończenia badania	Wykonawca	Link do raportu
1	Wpływ wsparcia instrumentów finansowych na rozwój przedsiębiorstw w Polsce	POIR	Przedsiębiorczość i innowacje	Ewaluacja wpływu	Krajowy	2023	Zewnętrzny	Zobacz raport
2	Wpływ funduszy europejskich na poprawę dostępności do usług zdrowotnych	POiŚ	Zdrowie	Ewaluacja ex-post	Regionalny	2022	Wewnętrzny	Zobacz raport
3	Ewaluacja wpływu inwestycji współfinansowanych w ramach POiŚ 2014-2020 na gospodarkę niskoemisyjną	POiŚ	Gospodarka niskoemisyjna	Ewaluacja on-going	Regionalny	2021	Zewnętrzny	Zobacz raport
4	Ocena skuteczności wsparcia z funduszy europejskich w zakresie innowacji w przedsiębiorstwach	POIR	Kapitał ludzki	Ewaluacja on-ante	Krajowy	2022	Zewnętrzny	Zobacz raport
5	Ewaluacja wpływu projektów realizowanych w ramach RPO na rozwój kompetencji i umiejętności	RPO	Kapitał ludzki	Ewaluacja on-ante	Krajowy	2023	Zewnętrzny	Zobacz raport
6	Ocena efektywności wsparcia w zakresie rewitalizacji obszarów zdegradowanych	RPO	Rewitalizacja	Ewaluacja on-ante	Krajowy i regionalny	2023	Wewnętrzny	Zobacz raport
3	Ewaluacja wpływu wsparcia na eksport przedsiębiorstw	POIR	Ryzyko ludzki	Ewaluacja on-ante	Krajowy	2019	Zewnętrzny	Zobacz raport
9	Analiza wkładu funduszy europejskich w rozwój transportu publicznego	POIR	Kapitał ludzki	Ewaluacja on-ante	Krajowy	2019	Zewnętrzny	Zobacz raport
10	Ocena wsparcia dla przedsiębiorczości w Polsce Wschodniej	POIR	Transport	Ewaluacja on-ante	Krajowy i regionalny	2016	Zewnętrzny	Zobacz raport
13	Ewaluacja wpływu wsparcia na włączenie społeczne	POIR	Włączenie społeczne	Ewaluacja on-ante	Krajowy	2017	Zewnętrzny	Zobacz raport

Pokaż 10 pozycji

1 2 3 4 ... 28 >>

■ Recommendation Implementation System (RIS)

- Online platform used to monitor the implementation of recommendations resulting from evaluations
- Tracks progress, responsibilities and follow-up actions
- Enhances accountability and promotes the practical use of evaluation results

Recommendation Implementation System (RIS)

 Baza SWR

A A A Wersja kontrast

Logowanie

Strona Główna



Witamy na stronie Systemu Wdrażania Rekomendacji!

System umożliwia monitorowanie procesu wdrażania rekomendacji sformułowanych w wyniku ewaluacji. Jego celem jest wspieranie praktycznego wykorzystania wyników ewaluacji dla skuteczniejszej realizacji polityk publicznych.

Kontakt

Krajowa Jednostka Ewaluacji
Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej
ul. Wopólna 2/4
00-925 Warszawa
tel. 22 273 70 10
e-mail: swr@mifunds.gov.pl

Administratorem strony jest mifunds@gov.pl
Tel. 22 273 70 10

Dedicated IT tools support both the dissemination of evaluation findings and the monitoring of recommendation uptake within the Polish cohesion policy evaluation system.

Source: National Evaluation Unit (NEU).

Evaluation Methods Applied in Cohesion Policy

Theory-Based Approaches	Qualitative Methods	Quantitative Methods
■ Theory-Based Evaluation (TBE)	■ In-depth Interviews (IDIs)	■ CATI and CAWI Surveys
■ Counterfactual Impact Evaluation (DiD, PSM, Spatial PSM)	■ Focus Group Interviews (FGIs)	■ Econometric Analysis
	■ Expert Panels	■ Macroeconomic Modelling
■ Theory-Based Impact Assessment (TBIA)	■ Desk Research	■ Administrative Data Analysis

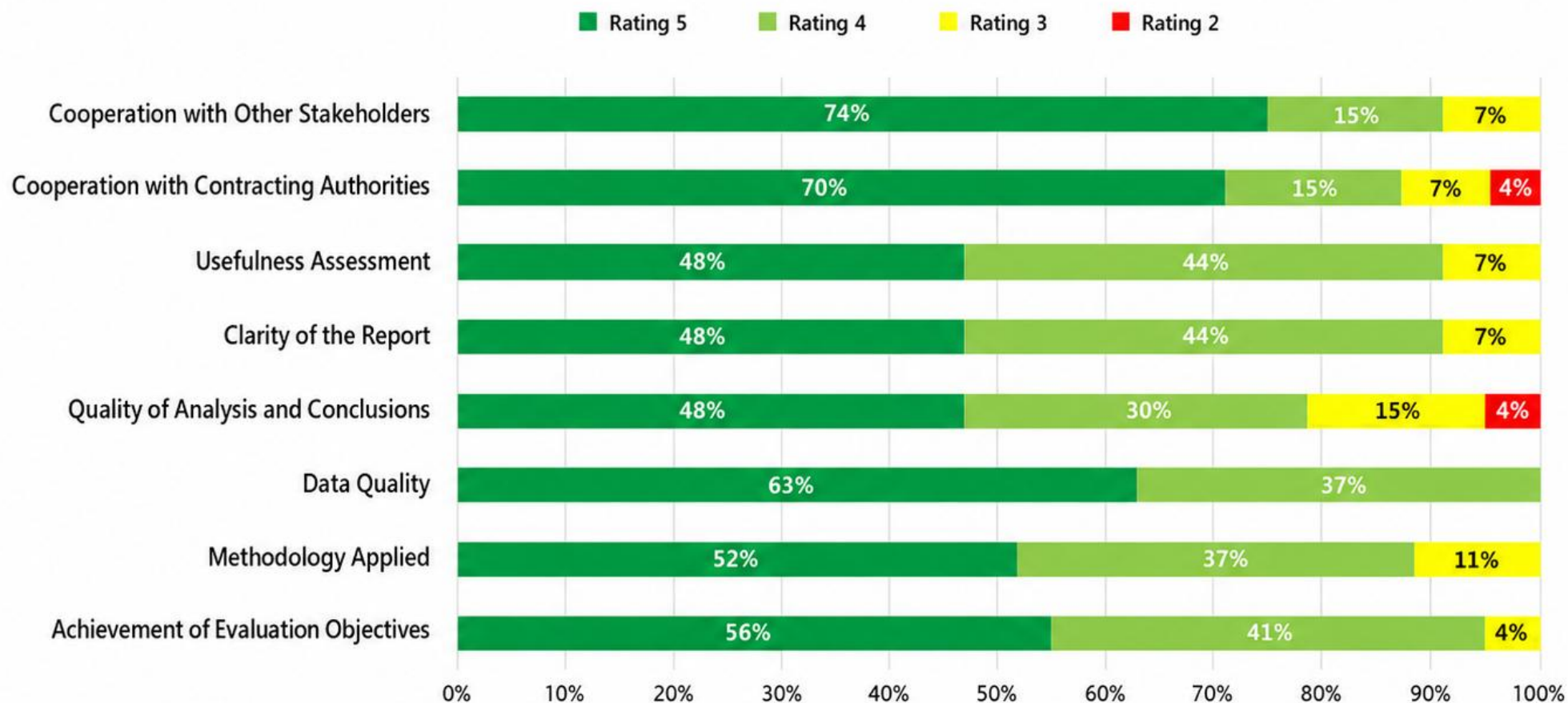
Methodological Characteristics

- Strong emphasis on mixed-method approaches
- Increasing use of counterfactual impact evaluation methods
- Extensive application of theory-based evaluation frameworks
- Combination of primary research, administrative data, and macroeconomic modelling

The Polish cohesion policy evaluation system combines theory-based, qualitative and quantitative approaches, allowing for both accountability-oriented and learning-oriented evaluations.

Source: National Evaluation Unit (NEU), Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy.

Quality of Evaluation Studies



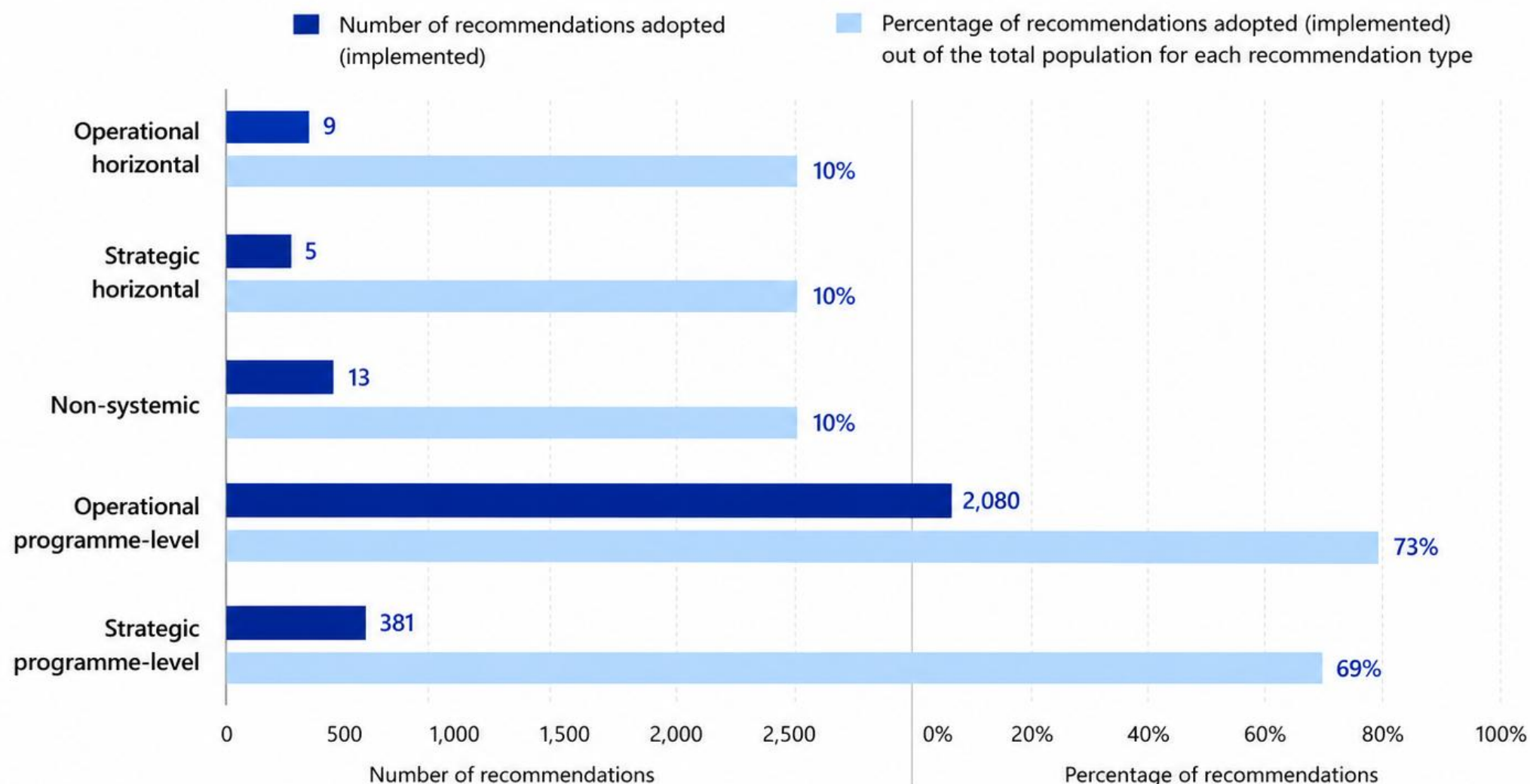
The overall quality of evaluation studies is high,
with most assessments receiving the two highest ratings across all quality dimensions.

Source: Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (MFIPR), quality assessment of evaluation studies.

Implementation of Recommendations by Recommendation Type

Number of recommendations and percentage adopted (implemented)

The percentage shows the share of adopted (implemented) recommendations out of the total population for each recommendation type.



Source: Recommendation Implementation System (RIS) – Evaluation Study Database (N=4,081)

4. Example of Evaluation Use in Public Policy

Long-Term Impact of Evaluation Findings

Evaluation Topic	Evaluation of ESF support for the development of the social economy sector in Poland
Objective:	Assessment of support provided under the European Social Fund and identification of future development needs for the social economy sector.
Commissioned by:	Managing Authority of ESF programmes and institutions responsible for social policy.



Key Recommendations

- Maintain the regional system of Social Economy Support Centres (OWES)
- Continue accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms
- Strengthen comprehensive support services:
 - incubation
 - advisory services
 - training
 - animation activities
- Shift support from grants towards repayable financial instruments
- Focus support on strengthening existing entities rather than creating new organisations

Policy Changes Introduced

Recommendation	Policy Change
Regional support model	Maintained in 2014–2020 and 2021–2027
Support centre accreditation	Continued and strengthened
Integrated support services	Incorporated into programme design
Financial instruments	Introduced as a complementary support mechanism
System governance	Reflected in the Social Economy Act (2022)

This example illustrates how evaluation findings influenced the design of public support instruments over more than a decade, demonstrating the long-term use of evaluation evidence in policy-making.

6. Example of Evaluation Use in Public Policy

Justification for the Largest Social Project in Poland in 2021–27

Evaluation Topic Socio-economic analysis with the diagnosis of ESF intervention areas – justification for the largest social project in Poland in 2021–27.

Objective: Detailed analysis and diagnosis of areas where ESF interventions are planned to be implemented under the national program in the period 2021–2027.

Commissioned by: ESF Managing Authority, Minister of Funds,
Minister of Social Affairs



Developments Driven by the Evaluation

- Based on the analysis of large disproportions in:
 - the number of places
 - the availability of nursery care in municipalities
- A recommendation was formulated to reduce these disparities.
- This was one of the key reasons for designing a large-scale intervention in this area for 2021–27.
- Funds from the Cohesion Policy, state budget and the Recovery and Resilience Facility are combined to implement this intervention.

How the Evaluation Findings Translated into Action

Evaluation Finding	Policy / Programming Response
Large regional disparities in the number of nursery care places	Targeted support for areas with the lowest availability
Insufficient availability of nursery care in many municipalities	Design of a large-scale intervention within the national program
Need to use multiple sources of funding	Combination of funds from CP, state budget and RRF

This example demonstrates how evaluation evidence supported strategic decision-making and directly contributed to the launch of the largest social intervention in Poland in 2021–2027.

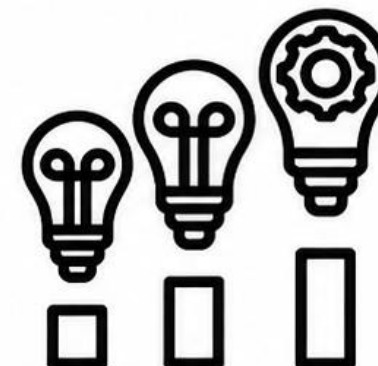
7. Example of Evaluation Use in Public Policy

Keeping Finger on the Pulse of Achieving Program Goals

Evaluation Topic Cycle of evaluations dedicated to the system of project selection in Innovative Economy OP.

Objective: To ensure that the project selection process effectively supports the achievement of program goals.

Commissioned by: Managing Authority, Monitoring Committee, Beneficiaries



Developments Driven by the Evaluation

- The decision to commission these studies was driven by the belief that the project selection process is of key importance for the achievement of programme goals.
- Introduction of changes in project selection criteria, including:
 - making the innovation criterion more specific
 - introducing additional criteria for selected measures
 - more precise and clear definition of criteria
 - changing the weight of some criteria
- These adjustments aim to improve the quality of selected projects and strengthen the alignment with programme objectives.
- As a result, the project selection system became more effective, transparent and better adapted to the evolving needs of beneficiaries.

How the Evaluation Findings Translated into Action

Evaluation Finding		Action Taken
	Innovation criterion too general	Innovation criterion made more specific
	Lack of additional criteria for some measures	Additional criteria introduced for selected measures
	Criteria definitions not precise enough	Definition of criteria improved
	Unequal weight of some criteria	Weight of some criteria changed



This cycle of evaluations enables continuous improvement of the project selection system, helping to keep the program on track to achieve its goals.

Source: Cycle of evaluations dedicated to the system of project selection in Innovative Economy OP.

8. Example of Evaluation Use in Public Policy

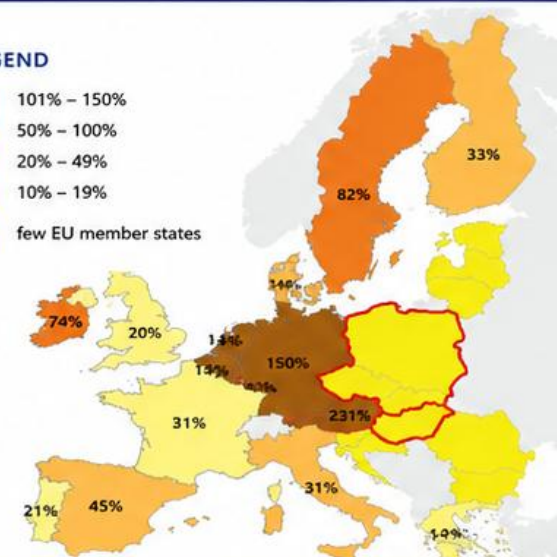
Influencing Big Politics

Evaluation Topic Evaluation of benefits to the EU-15 countries resulting from the implementation of CP in the V4 Group countries.

Objective: To verify a hypothesis on the pan-European nature of the effects of implementing the EU Cohesion Policy.

Commissioned by: Prime Ministers, Commissioners, high officials, media

LEGEND



Developments Driven by the Evaluation

- The study provided strong evidence that the benefits of Cohesion Policy extend beyond the recipient countries and generate positive effects across the entire EU.
- This increased awareness of the “win-win” nature of Cohesion Policy and contributed to building a positive image of the policy among the general public, especially in net contributor countries.
- The findings supported key policy-makers in advocating for the continuation of Cohesion Policy in the 2014–2020 period.
- It also strengthened the position of cohesion countries in negotiations on the EU budget for 2014–2020.

Impact on Policy and Public Debate



Increased awareness of the mutual benefits of Cohesion Policy across the EU.



Positive image of Cohesion Policy among the general public, including in net contributor countries.



Support for continuation of Cohesion Policy in 2014–2020.



Stronger position of cohesion countries in negotiations on the EU budget for 2014–2020.



This example shows how evaluation evidence can inform high-level political decisions, shape public opinion and strengthen the position of countries in key EU negotiations.



SECTION

4

Key Challenges



Challenges

- Ensuring an adequate financial base,
- Ensuring a functional legal framework,
- Ensuring the functional independence of Evaluation Units,
- Engaging stakeholders from the early stages of the evaluation process,
- Collecting and sharing data (enabling impact evaluations),
- Maintaining the quality of evaluations (evaluation objectives, quality monitoring, standards, and support for capacity development),
- Ensuring usefulness of evaluations and application of evaluation findings.



SECTION

5

Group exercise





Group Exercise

Expected Outputs

1 STEP 1 – ASSESS YOUR COUNTRY ACROSS FOUR DIMENSIONS



A. ORGANISATIONS & STRUCTURES

- Evaluation units
- Roles & responsibilities
- Governance arrangements
- Oversight institutions



B. RULES, FORUMS & PRACTICES

- Legal framework
- Standards & quality assurance
- Evaluation planning
- Professional networks



C. CAPACITY & DIVERSITY

- Availability of evaluators
- Institutional capacities
- Methodological diversity
- Independence



D. USE OF EVALUATION

- Use in decision-making
- Follow-up of recommendations
- Organisational learning
- Public availability of findings

2 STEP 2 – IDENTIFY PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT



**THREE
PRIORITY
ACTIONS**

3 REPORT BACK



5-MINUTE PRESENTATION PER GROUP

1. Main strengths
2. Main weaknesses
3. Three priority actions for future development



**20 MIN
GROUP WORK
+ 5 MIN
REPORT BACK
PER GROUP**



Discussion Questions

1

In which dimension is your country strongest:
structures, rules and practices, capacity, or use?

**2**

Where is the main bottleneck?

For example: weak demand, unclear mandates, limited skills, poor data, low independence, lack of funding, or limited use of findings.

**3**

Are evaluations mainly used for accountability, learning, programme improvement, budget decisions, or formal compliance?

**4**

What would be the most realistic next step to strengthen evaluation institutionalisation in your country?

**5**

Who should lead this change:

government, parliament, audit institutions, evaluation societies, universities, donors, civil society, or a coalition of actors?

