

Access to high-quality data for impact assessment: Ukraine/UK case study

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Why impact evaluation of ALMPs is currently not feasible in Ukraine

1. No legal requirement

- ✓ While evaluation is mentioned in some legal and strategic documents, there is *no comprehensive legislative framework* mandating its systematic use across government.
- ✓ There is no systematic requirement to conduct impact evaluation of ALMPs
- ✓ In practice, ALMPs are *rarely designed or evaluated using counterfactual methods*

2. Evaluation is not systematically embedded in programme design

- ✓ In practice, ALMPs are often implemented without designs that enable comparison groups
- ✓ Programmes typically track outputs (e.g. participants, grants), while robust outcome measurement against a control group is rarely feasible

3. No baseline or continuous labour market data

- ✓ Regular *Labour Force Survey* data collection has not been conducted in its standard form since 2022, breaking time series
- ✓ Alternative surveys and proxy data (e.g. NBU, private surveys) are used, but they are less comprehensive and not directly comparable to LFS data.

Why impact evaluation of ALMPs is currently not feasible in Ukraine

4. Administrative data are not sufficient to support robust impact analysis

- ✓ Data exist (e.g. registered unemployed), but:
 - data are not systematically linked across systems (employment, training, business support)
 - limited ability to track beneficiaries over time across programmes
- ✓ *Example:* it is not possible to reliably assess whether ALMP participants found jobs compared to similar non-participants, due to the lack of linked data and comparison groups

5. Data access and governance constraints

- ✓ Access is often restricted due to confidentiality, security and wartime governance conditions

6. Context makes credible counterfactuals extremely difficult

- ✓ Large-scale displacement, migration and rapidly changing local labour markets
- ✓ *Example:* comparison groups quickly become invalid as populations and economies shift

7. Evaluation of donors' interventions is rarely about impact

Is it just about Ukraine?



Common pain:



Common limitations of administrative data

Data are often **collected for operational purposes**, not evaluation

Fragmented systems → data not linked across programmes or institutions

Limited ability to follow the same people over time and observe changes

Changes in administrative rules → **breaks in data consistency**

Access restrictions (GDPR, confidentiality, institutional barriers)



Common limitations of survey data

Costly and time-consuming to collect

Often **not designed for causal analysis** (no baseline, no control group)

Limited sample sizes → **low statistical power**

Dropouts and missing responses → **bias risks**

In rapidly changing contexts → results become **quickly outdated**

Implications for impact evaluation (everywhere)



Difficulty constructing **credible counterfactuals**

High risk of **selection bias**

Need for **careful design from the start**

Reliance on mixed methods and triangulation

Case example: Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), England

- The YEI was part of the EU response to the social and economic challenges following the 2007–2008 financial crisis
- The programme targeted **young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)**
- The Youth Employment Initiative in England formed part of the wider EU programme (total €8.9bn), delivered through the European Social Fund
- Individual support:
 - Personalised guidance (key workers) addressing barriers to employment
 - Skills & employability training: short courses, basic skills (English/maths), job readiness
 - Work-focused activities: training pathways, volunteering, and links to employers



- The impact evaluation began in **April 2017** and ran until **late 2019**.

[Youth Employment Initiative – Impact Evaluation](#)

Evaluation design: what methods were used?

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach:

- *Qualitative*: interviews and survey
- *Quantitative*: counterfactual impact evaluation - propensity score matching complemented by difference-in-differences analysis, based on linked administrative datasets
- *Economic*: cost-benefit analysis (DWP analysts)

Evidence came from:

- a desk-based review of documentation;
- secondary analysis of YEI Management Information (MI), ESF and YEI Leavers Survey data, and ONS statistical data;
- interviews with high-level stakeholders;



Data used in the evaluation

1) **YEI Management Information** (MI) recorded participant-level information, start and end dates, and whether participants entered employment, education or training on leaving.

2) **Survey data:** European Social Fund (ESF) and YEI Leavers Survey, including six-month follow-up evidence on employment, training and softer outcomes.

3) **Administrative data**

- DWP Customer Information System;
- Index of Multiple Deprivation data;
- HMRC Real Time Information (RTI) payroll data;
- DWP National Benefits Database;
- Personal Independence Payment datasets; and
- Universal Credit Full Service / Live Service datasets.

4) **Qualitative evidence:** Interviews with providers, stakeholders and participants were used to understand delivery and explain outcomes.



Why this is a useful impact-evaluation example

- It shows how a counterfactual can be built from administrative data rather than an experiment
- The evaluation dataset was constructed by linking **YEI treatment-group records** and a **comparator pool** to administrative datasets using National Insurance Numbers after matching through DWP systems
- The comparator pool initially included **100,000 individuals**, drawn from both the general population and those known to have claimed out-of-work benefits.

Data challenges and how they affected the evaluation

1) Missing or unavailable linked data

- Education variables (Longitudinal Educational Outcomes) unavailable within evaluation timescales
- Ethnicity data provided by DWP were excluded due to high levels of missing data
- Data for self-employment was not available.
- Destination data excluded due to lack of comparable measures

2) Incomplete identifiers reduced the treatment group

- Sample reduced from 3,276 to 1,050 due to data gaps and cohort restrictions
- Additional rules were needed to identify individuals likely to be available for work before the intervention

*ESF + YEI supported 64.6 million participations overall (2014–2022)



Concrete effect of data limitations on the evaluation

- Because educational data were unavailable, analysis was restricted to a narrower cohort based on proxy criteria
- Smaller treatment group used for analysis
- Data limitations affected both precision and evaluation design
- Limited ability to estimate some outcomes (e.g. Universal Credit, subgroups)
- Counterfactual analysis depended on the availability and linkage of key datasets



Recommendations for data management in Partner Countries

Recommendation 1: Build evaluation requirements into programme data systems from the start

- ✓ Collect stable unique identifiers early and consistently, so participants can be linked to administrative data later.
- ✓ The YEI case shows how missing contact details reduced the usable treatment group.

Recommendation 2: Plan linked data access early

If impact evaluation may require education, benefits or earnings data, agreements and timelines for linkage should be secured at the beginning of the evaluation.

Recommendation 3: Prioritise completeness of key variables

A small set of mandatory variables may be better than a large but incomplete dataset.

Recommendation 4: Harmonise outputs across administrative systems

- ✓ In YEI, differences between benefits systems limited destination analysis and Universal Credit estimates.
- ✓ A common data model or shared outcome definitions would improve comparability.

Recommendation 5: Combine data sources deliberately

Administrative data is strong for measured labour-market outcomes, but surveys and qualitative work remain important for softer outcomes and explanation.



High-quality impact evaluation is not only a methodological issue; it is also a data architecture issue.

Another example: NU Futures

Delivery targeting young people aged 11–25 through two strands:

- Careers (11–16) in schools
- Employability (16–25) in community and employer-facing settings

Core delivery model

- Individual support (skills, confidence, job readiness)
- Employer engagement (work experience, employer-led provision)
- Delivery across schools, PRUs, special schools and community settings

Capital element (NUCASTLE) £12.8m capital investment in flagship facility

- 6,530 sessions and 56,000+ visits (2024/25)
- Enables programme delivery and wider community engagement

Scale of delivery

- 198 schools and 24,675 pupils supported (11–16)
- 1,845 young people received employability support;
- 2,350+ engagements recorded



Data used in evaluation

Data sources combined:

- Programme data: participant-level MI (entries, exits, outcomes)
- Survey data: participant-reported outcomes (skills, readiness, progression)
- Qualitative data: interviews with participants and stakeholders (soft outcomes)
- Economic modelling inputs: employment outcomes and engagement data used for GVA/social value estimates

Approach: Mixed-method design combining monitoring data + self-reported outcomes + modelling

Key data limitations

1) Outcome measurement relies heavily on self-reported data

- High shares of “improvement” (e.g. 86–97%, 90%+) are based on participant feedback
- No consistent independent verification of outcomes

2) Limited ability to track long-term outcomes

- Data captured mainly at point of exit or shortly after
- No longitudinal tracking across systems

3) No counterfactual or comparison group

- Cannot assess outcomes relative to non-participants
- Attribution of effects to the programme remains uncertain

Evaluation provides credible evidence of outputs and short-term change, but impact evidence is limited by data design and availability

Labour market evaluation reports

- ✓ <https://webapps.ilo.org/ievaldiscovery/#bed156j>
- ✓ <https://evidencehub.northeast-ca.gov.uk/report/nu-futures-programme-final-evaluation-report>
- ✓ <https://evaluation-registry.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/search/0593be75-feb2-4a0c-a474-31e2ce896420/>
- ✓ <https://evaluation-registry.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/search/124c2218-182c-486c-9b62-8cedbf5134c3/>
- ✓ <https://evaluation-registry.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/search/4614d12b-e5b6-479b-ba55-536d4473eebc/>
- ✓ <https://evaluation-registry.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/search/9907d9b7-e581-440b-9693-c730c53a838c/>
- ✓ <https://evaluation-registry.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/search/e60cec53-3be8-43bb-bbc3-aa84d2222b9e/>



Thank you



Any questions?



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