



European Monitoring Centre  
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

# Introduction to drug policy evaluation

Liesbeth Vandam, PhD, HoS Support to Policy, EMCDDA  
DPNSEE Webinar “Drug policy evaluations”, 10 February 2021



# The EMCDDA

- Decentralised technical EU agency
- The EU's central reference point on drugs information (since 1995)
- Network of National Focal Points
- Provide the Community and EU Member States with *factual, objective, reliable and comparable information* at European level concerning drugs and drug addiction and their consequences



# The what, why and when of drug policy evaluations...

## Definitions ...

### **Evaluation =**

The making of a judgement about the amount, number, or value of something; an assessment.



## Definitions ...

“an evidence-based judgement as to what extent and how well a policy, strategy or intervention has been implemented and/or what effect it has had.”

PolicyEvaluation



Can also assess other things  
e.g. why a policy or programme did or did not work

# Important points

- **Drug policy comes in many forms**
- **Evaluation should be natural - to do the best you can, not a threat**
- **Evaluation also comes in many shapes and sizes**



# Why evaluate?

Evaluation is essential for effective policymaking:

- to improve planning of policy & services
- for efficient resource allocation
- it promotes organisational learning
- for transparency and accountability.

# What should you evaluate?

- **Overall policy or strategy**  
**OR individual programme/elements**  
**General evaluation**  
**OR targeted evaluation**
- **Or a mixed approach?**

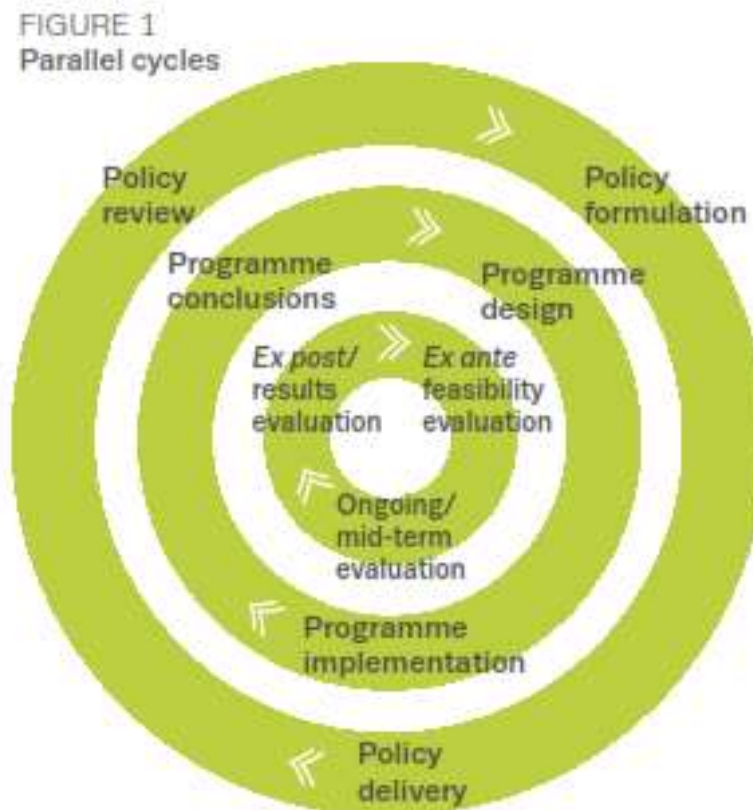


Choice will depend on:  
resources, time, data, how evaluation will be used



# When should you evaluate?

- Not a one-off event - policymaking & evaluation should be intertwined



Source: European Commission, 2013.

# EMCDDA support to policy evaluation

- Support to policymakers / commissioners of evaluations
- Provide practical support
- Provide training – capacity building
- Provide tools ...



# Dedicated web page

[http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/topic-overviews/policy-evaluation\\_en](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/topic-overviews/policy-evaluation_en)

*Spotlight:* Evaluating drug policy: a seven-step guide to support the commissioning and managing of evaluations



Contact the policy evaluation team

## EU evaluations

### Timeline of EU drug strategies and plans and their evaluation

In the timeline below, linked documents are colour-coded according to whether they are action plans/strategies or evaluations:

○ action plan or strategy    ○ evaluation

**1990** The call for a common approach to the drugs phenomenon in Europe was first made by the European Parliament in the mid 1980s. In response, heads of state and government of the 12 Member States of the European Community agreed on the first [European plan in the field of drugs 1990](#).

**1992** Two years later, the plan was revised and a new [European plan in the field of drugs 1992](#) was adopted by the European Committee to Combat Drugs — CELAD, a newly created intergovernmental mechanism among Member States.

**1995** However, in 1995 on the basis of the new prerogatives given by the Treaty on



## Drug policy evaluation

Introduction

EU evaluations

National evaluations

Resources

Glossary

### What is drug policy evaluation and why is it important?

Evaluation is essential for effective policymaking, helping ensure that policies and programmes have the desired effect, provide value for money and do not have negative unintended consequences. The importance of evaluation has been recognised in all EU drug strategies and in the strategies of many Member States.

### National evaluations

You can access publicly available national evaluation documents below.

National policy evaluation documents found in EMCDDA Document Library

Document name	Country
<a href="#">Rapid Expert Review of the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016 (Ireland)</a>	Ireland
<a href="#">Tackling problem drug use (United Kingdom)</a>	United Kingdom
<a href="#">Evaluation of Dutch drug policy</a>	Netherlands
<a href="#">Evaluation of Cyprus National Drug Strategy 2009-2012</a>	Cyprus
<a href="#">Performance audit - Tackling problem drug use in Malta</a>	Malta
<a href="#">Evaluation of the National Anti-Drug Strategy 2005 – 2012 (Romania)</a>	Romania
<a href="#">Evaluation of the Governmental Strategy and Action Plan 2010-2014 of Luxembourg regarding the fight against drugs and addictions</a>	Luxembourg

# Key messages

- Evaluation is essential for effective policymaking: to ensure actions have the desired effect, provide VfM & no unintended consequences
- There is no one right way to evaluate – need to consider timing, goals, resources, data issues
- Not a one-off event - policymaking & evaluation should be intertwined



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