



CONDUCT AND SHARE PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION

The Conseil d'Etat's 2020 annual study

Introduction - The challenges of evaluation in a period of crisis and mistrust

- A demand for transparency and understanding of public action
- Multiple initiatives to promote public policy evaluation and to prepare (*ex ante*), support (*in itinere*) and then draw lessons (*ex post*) in the context of the health crisis
- How to guarantee the utility of public policy evaluation in a context of mistrust. Methodological rigor of the evaluation and its close articulation with science are not enough

I. PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION HAS MADE PROGRESS IN FRANCE OVER THE PAST THIRTY YEARS, BUT STILL HAS SOME WEAKNESSES

1) The actors

- Multiple players. A predominant role of the executive branch and administrations in commissioning assessments
- A rise in university laboratories carrying out public policy evaluations
- Interactions between political institutions and the academic world remain too limited
- Unequal practices in local authorities
- A lack of coordination and data for the evaluation of public policies shared between local and national governments



2) The practices

- A general quest for reliability
- Remarkable progress in opening up access to data for research and evaluation
- A lack of anticipation and preparation
- Progress in involving stakeholders. Citizen participation in evaluation is still marginal
- Human, administrative and financial resources are rarely guaranteed on a long-term basis
- Some areas of public policy seem to be left out



3) The place of public policy evaluation in the public debate

- The time for evaluation is not the time for political action
- The space for evaluation in public debate and decision-making is still insufficient
- Among leaders, evaluation still arouses a fear of criticism or control
- Public policy evaluation is too often overlooked by policymakers but produces learning effects

II. WAYS TO MAKE EVALUATION A TOOL FOR DEMOCRATIC DEBATE AND DECISION-MAKING

1) Public policy evaluation should benefit from proper means

- Develop the demand for evaluation in parliament to promote the democratization of evaluation
- Prioritize the assessment of public policies that significantly commit public finances or aim to produce effects on a large part of the population
- Develop evaluation training for future leaders and public officials
- Promote exchanges between the academic and the administrative spheres
- Cooperation and the production of local data as a key to evaluations in local authorities



2) How to strengthen the virtuous cycle of evaluation thanks to adapted, credible and transparent works

- Adapt the objectives and methodology of the evaluation to the time and data available
- Policy objectives and its evaluation should be defined at first and at the same time
- The creation of a steering committee is essential for the credibility of the evaluation
- The technical and administrative expertise must be taken into account
- Citizens and beneficiaries of public policies should be involved in their assessment, according to each situation

3) How to make evaluations really useful for democratic deliberation and public action

- Never forget the limits of public policy evaluation
- A need for long-run evaluations and for experimentation prior to any generalization of a large-scale policy
- Evaluate to characterize the effects of public policies, but also to understand their mechanisms
- A necessary monitoring of the lessons and answers
- Publication, dissemination, communication

Evaluation should not be seen as a risk nor as a control tool, but as a vector of emancipation, democratic maturity and collective progress

