



Summary of decisions – INTOSAI working group on programme evaluation
Meeting of September 25th & 26th - Paris

- 1. Minutes of the last meeting :** approved during INCOSAI 2016
- 2. Agenda of the day :** approved
- 3. Objective of the day :**

The Working Group on programme evaluation met on September 25th and 26th, 2016, for its annual session presided over by the French SAI. The Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) of Germany, Finland, Gabon, Italy, South Korea, Lithuania, Pakistan, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Sweden, Thailand and the United States were represented.

This meeting was the first one taking place after the adoption of the guidelines on the evaluation of public policies – INTOSAI GOV 9400 – at the occasion of the XXII INCOSAI in December 2016, as well as of a new work plan for the group.

As a consequence, the objective of the meeting was to delve deeper into the practice of public policy evaluation, with a particular focus on the optimal combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

4. Main observations

In his speech, the First President of the French SAI, Mr. Didier Migaud, highlighted the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative methods of evaluation when evaluating public policies. He detailed a few prerequisites to this approach as well as challenges that need to be taken up by SAIs to improve their way of conducting evaluations. For instance, such an approach requires the access to reliable data bases as well as to sophisticated mathematical tools.

Following the opening speech, Mr. Pannier, Director of the French SAI foreign relations office, welcomed the new participants to the group, consistent with the new guidelines and workplan of the working group.

Several presentations took place during the meeting. Performed by SAIs' staff and academics, they were all intended at exposing benefits, methodologies and case studies of the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of evaluation.

The first presentation, conducted by Mrs. H  l  ne Milet and entitled "Encompassing qualitative and quantitative approaches for the evaluation of public policies", dealt with the theory of qualitative and quantitative methods as well as with the case study of the tax credit for employment and competitiveness (CICE) evaluation.

This was followed by a presentation on an on-going evaluation of Priority Education Zone (ZEP) by two auditors of the French SAI, Mr. Lo  c Robert and Mr. Hicham Abbas, as well as an academic from the Paris School of Economics, Mrs. Asma Benhenda.

The next day, Mr. Oliver Richard, chief economist at the GAO (USA SAI), presented on "Using data, modeling and quantitative techniques in audit engagements", based on case studies of Youth with autism, the implementation of a federal minimum wage and immigration laws in the Northern Mariana Islands.

He was followed by Mr. Andersson from SAI Sweden, who focused on the DEA method, illustrated by the case of "Efficiency and Productivity for district courts in Sweden". Finally, the last presentation dealt with the method used by the Swiss Federal Audit Office to evaluate temporary employment programs under unemployment insurance.

All those presentations were followed by enriching debates, which mainly revolved around the collection of data and the methodologies used. One of the main points arising from those conversations was that there is no best and unique technique. Each evaluation calls for a carefully thought-after method that can differ from one case to the other. The balance between quantitative and qualitative tools must be a key subject for attention. Additionally, the questions asked to guide the evaluation were also recognized as essential as they imply different methodologies and conclusions. The experts all acknowledged the importance of combining methods – and not replacing qualitative method by quantitative ones – as qualitative data tells one the story of the case and guide one's interpretation of the quantitative results. Finally, a distinction was made between basic and sophisticated mathematical tools based quantitative methods.

5. Main conclusions

After a few negotiations and amendments, the group successfully managed to agree on a common conclusion to the meeting, whose core message is that "public policy evaluation conducted by SAIs should be strengthened by a more assertive use of quantitative techniques". This document argues that for each evaluation conducted by SAIs, the optimal combination of qualitative and quantitative methods now has to be considered. The use of quantitative approaches, when applicable, shall be a prime objective of SAIs. To achieve this goal, SAIs shall consider, among others, training in statistical and econometrical skills, partnerships with universities or recruitment or resort to specialists in quantitative methods. The conclusion also promotes the adoption of internal or outside counter-expertise to make sure that the sophisticated quantitative work is appropriate and reasonable for the purpose at hand. Finally, it proposed the creation of methodological sheets to support SAIs' actions in that field.

By the end of the meeting, all the participants agreed to take the conclusion back to their home institutions to gather eventual comments on its content before a formal final adoption.

6. Next deadlines

Before the 14th of October 2017	Formal adoption of the conclusions to the September 2017 meeting
2018	Health policies evaluation experience sharing seminar (with a particular focus on methods)
2019	Methods workshop (subject to be defined)