

# Foreword

Policy evaluation is a critical element of good public governance. Policy evaluation can help ensure public sector effectiveness and improve the quality, responsiveness and efficiency of public services. Ex ante evaluation feeds into the policy-making process at the design and implementation phase, informing, for instance, the design of new rules or the allocation of resources. Evaluation is also essential ex post, to draw lessons and to provide an understanding of what works, why, for whom, and under what circumstances. Policy evaluation connects policies, policy makers and citizens, helping ensure that decisions are rooted in trustworthy evidence and deliver desired outcomes.

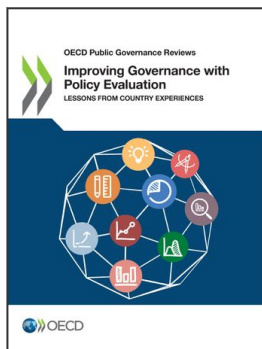
This report offers a new, cross-cutting contribution to the global policy debate on evaluation and evidence-informed policy making. The need for a thorough understanding of evaluation emerged from OECD's efforts to define a holistic approach to sound public governance by taking stock of the lessons from all the governance policy communities. There were no systematic comparative studies on policy evaluation systems and cultures across OECD countries. Moreover, there was a need to link up the various elements that relate, directly or indirectly, to policy evaluation, including regulatory practices, performance budgeting, and supreme audit institutions.

This report offers a comprehensive analysis of the institutionalisation, quality and use of evaluation from a systemic perspective. This implies an analysis of each of these dimensions and how they are related to each other to ensure evaluation contributes decisively to sound public governance. The report relied on a survey of 42 OECD and non OECD countries, which is the first significant cross-country survey of policy evaluation practices in an OECD context. The report presents the results of this survey together with examples of good practices from countries. It also draws on results from other data on performance budgeting, centres of government and regulatory policy.

Generally, countries show a strong commitment to policy evaluation, as this is embedded in a range of legal and policy frameworks and even at the level of the constitution for some countries. However, implementing policy evaluation remains a challenge for many, and this reflects an unfinished policy agenda. This report sheds new light both on the challenges and the policy responses that are developed across countries. These seek to mobilise a range of tools and to invest in skills and organisations to promote the use and quality of evaluation.

Overall, the report seeks to foster knowledge-sharing in an area that remains in many ways a frontier. It offers evidence to guide countries seeking to implement evidence-informed policy-making strategies and to improve public sector effectiveness. The report can be a useful tool for strengthening the capacity for policy implementation and for learning. Finally, sharing and promoting good practices in this area is also important for improving citizens' trust in governments' decision making processes and to enable sound public governance in a complex and fast changing social and economic environment.

This study was carried out under the auspices of the OECD Public Governance Committee, which approved the document for publication on 10 June 2020.



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