

THE EMERGENCE OF AN EVALUATION CULTURE IN THE EU: BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES AND EUROPEANIZATION PRESSURES

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Abstract

In this paper I refer to the bidirectional relationship between the Europeanization process and the emergence of an evaluation culture in Europe. I examine both the factors associated with the Europeanization process that led to the crystallization of an evaluation culture as well as the manner in which the development of a European evaluation culture lead to a deepening of Europeanization through the institutional mechanisms that have been created. I will then present the convergent influence of Europeanization and globalization, which renders the theme of the net impact of any of the two processes on the formation of an evaluation culture methodologically unapproachable, but brings to the fore the theme of intercontinental factors (mainly North Americans) that play a fundamental role in creating a European public evaluation agenda. Given the multiple influences and pressures exerted both vertically and horizontally, I question the very existence of a specific European culture of evaluation and I ultimately position its nature as being somewhere between imitationalism and syncretism.

Keywords

Europeanization; evaluation culture; evaluation functions; professional communities of evaluators; structural funds

1. INTRODUCTION

There are probably as many understandings of what evaluation culture is or should be as there are authors dealing with this subject. Unfortunately, the wealth of texts is not accompanied by a wealth of primary data and even less by corroborative data at the European level, mainly because of the different methodologies used to examine the development stages of the evaluation culture in Europe. Most existing studies have therefore a national character and, when considering a supranational space, they focus primarily on the use of qualitative methods. I consider the evaluation culture as being the sum of values, practices and tools designed in order to complete an evaluation. I find particularly relevant the association that Smith and Brandon make between evaluation culture and a mandala-like structure (Brandon and Smith 2008, p. 2), which is an integrated structure organized around a unifying centre, holding an infinite and simultaneously whole content. Applying this concept to the culture of evaluation, we can see that it can be represented by a mandala with three interrelated centres: on the one hand we find the theoretical fundament of the evaluation, on the other the different methods of carrying out the process and last but not least we have the development of the evaluation community. Each of these centres has the ability to transform and to carry this transformation to the other two centres as well.

In the present paper it does not make the object of my interest to make a summary of the perspectives and studies concerning the development of evaluation culture and cultures in Europe, but to determine the extent to which the development of a European evaluation culture is influenced by the process of Europeanization. There are initiatives of this kind that are surely already serving this purpose while additionally offering a chronological perspective on their dynamics as well, but these will get in the high spot within the second chapter¹. The premise is that there is a high dependency relationship between the Europeanization process and the emergence and development of an evaluation culture, and that based on its understanding

¹ For a deeper understanding of the subject also see Jan Eric Furubo, Ray C. Rist and Rolf Sandahl, *International Atlas of Evaluation*, Transaction Publishers, 2002. See also Peter Dahler Larsen, *The Evaluation Society*, Stanford University Press, California, 2012 and Ray C. Rist and Nicoletta Stame, *From Studies to Streams. Managing Evaluative Systems*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 2011.

there could be identified specific patterns and trends of future evolution in the development of a supranational level evaluation culture.

The problems caused by the plethora of scholarly opinions regarding evaluation culture were similarly found in the literature regarding the process of Europeanization. Research on the influence of the Europeanization process on the evaluation culture in the European space is, however, very limited. Two of the best sources for this area of study are Toulemonde's works in 2000 "Evaluation Culture(s) in Europe: Between National Differences and Convergence Practices" and Nicoletta Stame's paper 9 years later, on "The European Project, Federalism and Evaluation". If the first of the two papers is remarkable because of its pioneering ideas, comprehensive approach and open research tracks, the second demonstrates an already systematized research approach based on two case studies. Both are fundamental to the analysis done and to the development of the evaluation subject as such.

The research question is not as in Kim Forss and Rebien Claus' article on determining the existence of a Nordic evaluation tradition (Forss and Rebien 2014) if the Europeanization process has led to a similar method of implementing evaluations regardless of their geographical and geopolitical context, but if the training and preferences of evaluators lead to the same variety of implementation options regardless of geographical and geopolitical context. It is understood that the evaluation of a programme implemented by the European Commission will most likely use a different methodology than a programme evaluation at the federal level in the US government or that a programme implemented by the European Commission will most likely have different results than the one implemented by the US Executive. On one hand the difference is caused by the complexity of the contextual differences, on the other hand by the evaluator's approach, the evaluation model being strictly applicable to the case in question, with all its peculiarities. The question is whether two teams of evaluators (one operating in North America and one in the European Union) will respond similarly to the defined terms of reference used for the evaluation of a public project in North Africa. The hypothesis that nurtures further research is that the proposals from both sides would be different, generated by a difference in the types of experiences (of varying public management cultures) and their training in different schools of thought.

Is there an evaluation specific to the European space? Surely if we strictly observe the similarities and influences at the European level, we will

find that shared core that transcends national specificity. But is this shared core specific only to the European space or could it be found on other continents as well? And if we go with the second assumption, can we talk about those features as being actually the *sine qua non* of the evaluation as a profession? Or are we rather in a situation where both globalization and Europeanization act in convergence on the European evaluation culture?

In an attempt to delineate the influence of globalization from that of Europeanization over the same reference space (that of the evaluation culture in the European space), we have had a hard time surrendering to the fact that it is impossible to attribute effects between the two factors. This limitation also opens a legitimate question about the external validity of the research that I submit to your attention. Therefore, I would like to invite the reader to make a short detour to a related topic, that of impact evaluation. In the current scholarship on impact evaluations, the theme that occupies the most editorial space is the debate of attribution versus contribution, i.e. confirmatory approaches versus exploratory approaches with everything involving this debate (using quantitative methods to the detriment of qualitative ones or, conversely, top-down approaches versus participatory approaches). Faced with a daunting number of works dedicated to explaining the apparently boundless advantages of quantitative approaches (especially using counterfactual and randomized controlled trials), the work of James Copestake (Copestake 2014) deserves closer examination. He shows a clear view regarding the credibility of impact assessments with an exploratory nature. According to him, confirmatory approaches are used and useful in well-defined contexts where the programme change theory is already made, while exploratory approaches prove their worth in complex contexts where it is desirable to identify all of the effects, both planned and unplanned (Copestake 2014, pp. 422-423). Although the difference is sensible, it is worth pointing out that my discourse is not about an evaluation of the impact of Europeanization and globalization on the evaluation culture, but the validation or invalidation of the Europeanization process of the evaluation culture as such. For those who still want an impact assessment of both currents (Europeanization and globalization) on the evaluation culture, I consider Copestake's arguments in favour of exploratory approaches to be useful and usable, as methodological realism leaves no room for another approach in this context.

I will start the process of operationalizing the concept of Europeanization with the working definition offered by Claudio Radaelli, who sees it as following:

"a process of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ways of doing things, shared beliefs and norms, which are first defined and consolidated in the development of public policies and policy at EU level and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies" (Radaelli 2003).

He has a top-down vision of the process, where the initiative is primarily located at the supranational level. Authors Qualia, Neuvonen, Miyakoshi and Cini (Qualia, Lucia, Mari Neuvonen, Machiko Miyakoshi and Michelle Cini. 2007. *Europeanization*. In *European Union Politics*, ed. Michelle Cini, pp. 405 – 420. Oxford University Press *apud* Ion 2013, pp. 203-204) added three other perspectives:

1. Europeanization as a top-down process, i.e. Europeanization as "adapting national and sub-national governance institutions and European norms" (this view coincides with that of Radaelli);
2. Europeanization involving transfers both from bottom-up and top-down, meaning "Europeanization in the sense of institutionalizing a distinct system of governance" at EU level;
3. Europeanization as the transfer of policies between EU Member States, the important part being that "changes occur from one country to another, with little or no mediation from the European institutions", thus making it a horizontal process;
4. Europeanization as equivalent of the idea of European integration.

The relationship between the Europeanization process and the emergence of a European evaluation culture is not seen as one-directional, even if I will refer to it as such in the following, especially with regards to the factors that led to the crystallization of an evaluation culture in the European area (whether of European origin or not, but as instruments of Europeanization). We cannot neglect the way in which the development of the European evaluation culture has led to a deepening of the process of Europeanization, mainly through the functions it serves and institutional mechanisms it creates.

2. INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES

2.1. Evaluation as it was imported from the US in the 1970's

Although the US influence on the emergence of what has now become a European evaluation system is indisputable, I would say that the metaphor of an import of parts, as opposed to an import of products, is more appropriate, as the realities of European political culture have quickly led to the need to overcome the mimetic stage and go on to an adaptation stage. Of course, the federal valences of the European Community, and later the European Union, have led North American practices to find a fertile ground (as it will be discussed below in the section dedicated to the vertical Europeanization of the evaluation culture) and have a fundamental role in triggering "the snowball" - a metaphor all the more appropriate as the entry of the evaluation processes into the European zone was through the Scandinavian area. Although only an external influence on Europeanization, it became a key part of it: the transfer has occurred and still occurs mainly through the exchange of ideas in the practitioners' communities, which subsequently causes incremental changes in management structures without exerting external pressures. It is therefore an outside influence, of North American origin, propagated through the process of Europeanization horizontally and bottom up.

2.2. The role of international professional networks

The OECD has played a definitive role in the spread of evaluation practices since the late 1970's in the policies where it had found greater openness, particularly in research and development aid policies. It published technical guides on evaluation methods and practices; it initiated working groups on evaluation, the OECD development committee being perhaps the most known of those.

The American Evaluation Society, although predominantly a national-federal oriented professional community, has quickly become a landmark for all stakeholders in the field around the world. The American antipode of the European Evaluation Society occupies first place in the ranking of evaluation

communities with the most members and it is referenced as a pole of concentration of the “evaluation industry” in the US.

There were two major vectors contributing to the exponential growth in the number of players participating in the international evaluation professional networks: on the one hand efforts to develop national evaluation societies and on the other hand the private international organizations’ struggle for influence. The desire to create national evaluation companies has also been driven by the need to form a critical core group of professionals and to have coherence in the work of strengthening institutional evaluation capacity. The existence of such a formalized group, capable of lobbying at the national level can reduce losses in policies that concern or relate to evaluation, determined by changes in political vision. It may explain the dynamics of different national evaluation societies: 5 in 1995 to about 50 in 2004 and 200 in 2014¹.

2.3. Development, international cooperation and humanitarian aid

The existence of development aid funds (or assistance for development) led to the emergence of a field concerned with the evaluation of international development organizations, one in which OECD and the World Bank have become very influential in promoting an agenda for an evaluation with global reach regarding both the unification of evaluation standards and empowering actors relevant to the setting of the agenda (Rutkowski and Sparks 2013, p. 493). We are therefore in a situation of complex multilateralism, one in which governance network consists not only of state structures (as in the case of multilateralism) but also of non-state actors, the latter even managing to tip the scales of power in their favour (Verger. A. 2010. *WTO/GATS and the global politics of higher education*. Available online at

¹ The data was provided by Craig Russon in the presentation “Cómo desarrollar la evaluación en las sociedades democráticas” held at “XI Seminario sobre experiencias de evaluación de programas y políticas: construyendo capacidades de evaluación a través de asociaciones y redes” organized by the Complutense University of Madrid at 26.09.2014. Data for 1995 and 2004 can be found by accessing the link: <http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/reflecting-on-the-past-and-future-of-evaluation/a-decade-of-international-trends-in-evaluation>, accessed 1 November 2014.

<http://dare.uva.nl/record/336650> *apud* Rutkowski and Sparks 2013, p. 500). Setting the evaluation agenda proves to be a form of exercising soft power, since this may result not only in a preference for using certain investigation methods or methodologies (thus rendering evaluation less credible over generations), but also in establishing the allocation of resources.

3. TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP EUROPEANIZATION OF THE EUROPEAN EVALUATION CULTURE

The vertical process of the Europeanization of the culture of evaluation is facilitated by the presence of a European system of evaluation, although its existence is questionable given its partially unofficial character. Based on the four elements defined by Leew and Furubo (Leew and Furubo 2008, p. 157), who testify the creation of an evaluation system, Steven Hojlun (Hojlun 2014, pp. 429-430) defines an evaluation system based on: the existence of a permanent systematic character as well as formal and informal evaluation practices performed in a set of interdependent organizations in order to underpin decision making processes and to ensure the planning and predictability of events.

The role played by the European Commission in creating the existence of a network of European organizations responsible for the initiation, centralization and fostering evaluations confirms the presence of a system. We can observe, however, that there is a divergence between the purpose of the network and the use of the evaluations made by it. Legitimization is not common, because most findings and recommendations are specific to the programme in question and related to its internal functioning. It is not oriented towards external and political legitimization of the programme, but rather towards using them internally for a better understanding between DGs programmes (Hojlun 2014, pp. 435-436). We have this gap between expectations and results because the function attributed to evaluation is many times not defined and delineated before starting an evaluation, but rather it adapts by "seeing and doing", or even worse, it is adjusted depending on the results obtained. An evaluation designed to serve all evaluation functions (generation of know-how, understanding and improving the programme,

decision-making, transformation) is not preferred as well, as it will be either ineffective or inefficient in terms of the costs involved.

3.1. The federal vocation of the European model

The strong American influence in the early 1970's, as well as its persistence over time, is explained by the similarities with the European model, as there were no major cultural or institutional barriers in internalizing the imported and adapted practices. American Federalism alternated between dual federalism and cooperation. In the first format, responsibilities are divided according to a system of checks and balances, while for the second they are shared on multiple cooperation levels¹ between the regional level and the federal one. In both variants, the US federal government distributes funds and establishes the minimum performance standards of public services, while states plan how money is spent and periodically ask how many of the set goals have been met, what was neglected and whether they can improve their performance (Grodzins, M. 1966. *The American System*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally *apud* Stame 2008, pp. 119-120). The much disputed and disputable European federalism does not bear the same structure as the North American one, but has one without an equivalent at state or existent organizational level, combining the use of the "checks and balances" mechanism with the shades of cooperation, with both exclusively supranational/national and shared competencies. The practices generated by the two mechanisms create at institutional level an incipient type of evaluative thinking, a habit of implementing the evaluation exercise, even if it does not have a voluntary direction or it is not seen as such. Justin Louis Brandeis (*apud* Stame 2008, pp. 119-120) highlights one of the unplanned effects of having a federal system, namely the possibility of having a statistically equivalent control group to evaluate a policy implemented only by a state or a group of states².

¹ Or "shades of cooperation".

² This is also the only scenario in a democratic system where one can apply randomized controlled trials in order to determine the net effects attributed to the policies being implemented.

3.2. The use of Regulatory Impact Assessment

Considering the fact that the initial discussions on impact assessment were partly inspired by the work of different administrations throughout the world, particularly that of the Office for Information and Regulation Affairs (OIRA) in the US Executive Office of the President (Collova 2015, p. 1), why would the theme of Regulatory Impact Assessment be an indicator of the Europeanization of the evaluation culture and not one of transposition of the international practices? In my view, Regulatory Impact Assessment, together with the evaluation instruments developed for a better implementation of the structural funds (see next section), are the main mechanisms for institutionalizing evaluation throughout the EU, both of them being first a top-down process. Paradoxically, even though the use of RIA was first institutionalized at EU level, nowadays the systems that were set later on at national level have become in many cases more effective. Some Member States have also developed their own domestic Better Regulation best practice. Until October 2014, such best practice was exchanged in a high level group of national regulatory experts. In May 2015, the Commission announced its intention to establish a new Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) platform, consisting of high level experts from Member States and stakeholders with practical expertise in the policy areas of EU regulation (European Commission, Impact assessments in other EU institutions 2015).

In some cases, as it is that of Romania, where the party that has a majority within the Parliament holds the same position within the Executive, the transparency and even the use of RIA is easily debatable. It is hard to determine whether this ineffective RIA system is generated by a temporary political context or rather if it is a result of the national political culture, but its institutionalization is undisputable, as of 2007 (The Government Decision 1361/2006, Article 1).

The ex-ante regulatory impact assessment in the EU represents “an attempt to provide, in advance of legislating, a coherent analysis of the reasoning that lies behind, and the foreseeable effects of, any proposed measure or policy initiative” (Collova 2015, p. 1). Impact assessments are prepared for Commission initiatives expected to have significant economic, social or environmental impacts. These can be legislative proposals, non-legislative ones (white papers, action plans, financial programmes, and

negotiating guidelines for international agreements), implementing and delegated acts (European Commission, Impact Assessment 2015). Its history starts in November 2001, when the Mandelkern Group¹ on Better Regulation adopted a series of recommendations. Their view on a better regulation framework was not reconsidering the necessity of having regulations in itself, but that there should be ensured the quality and relevance of its use (Mandelkern Group 2001, p. 1). For achieving the goal of better regulation, it is addressed the whole policy cycle, from its inception to its implementation and review, involving changes in culture, both at the executive and at the legislative level (Mandelkern Group 2001, p. i). They have proposed that starting December 2002 neither the European Parliament nor the Council should not consider the legislative proposals that have not been subject to an agreed impact assessment and that by June 2003 all the Member States should have an effective RIA system (Mandelkern Group 2001, pp. iii-iv). They present the RIA as a part of the ex-ante evaluation process, together with considering all the policy implementation options and the consultation process and that the evaluation should also consider an ex-post phase. On the ex-post evaluation, they are aware of the limits imposed by the use of different evaluation models and methodologies at the national level so even though it is emphasized the use that an ex-post impact assessment might have in the development of new policies, they propose from functional reasons using checklists, such as the one developed by the OECD (Mandelkern Group 2001, pp. 11-12).

The proposals from Mandelkern have been later on incorporated in the work for setting the Inter-Institutional Agreement (IIA) on Better Law Making that was signed in 2003 between the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of Ministers (Collova 2015, p. 1). It is clearly stated in the IIA that the efforts are conducted towards a legislation that is consistent

¹ According to the report of the European Court of Auditors on „Impact Assessments in the EU Institutions: Do they support decision making?“ the Mandelkern Group is a high level advisory group that consisted of regulatory experts from the Member States and the European Commission. This group was established by the Public Administration Ministers of the Member States in November 2000 and chaired by the Frenchman Dieudonné Mandelkern, a former Member of the Conseil d'état. Among other proposals, the group recommended in 2001 that the Commission should develop a tool for assessing the social, economic and environmental impacts of proposed legislation.

with the seven principles denominated in the Mandelken proposal, namely necessity, proportionality, subsidiarity, transparency, accountability, accessibility and simplicity, and that it aims to:

“ensure that legislation is of good quality, namely that it is clear, simple and effective. The Institutions consider that improvement of the pre-legislative consultation process and more frequent use of impact assessments (both ex ante and ex post) will help towards this objective. They are committed to the full application of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 22 December 1998 on common guidelines for the quality of drafting of Community legislation.

28. The three Institutions agree on the positive contribution of impact assessments in improving the quality of Community legislation, with particular regard to the scope and substance thereof.

29. The Commission will continue to implement the integrated advance impact-assessment process for major items of draft legislation, combining in one single evaluation the impact assessments relating inter alia to social, economic and environmental aspects. The results of the assessments will be made fully and freely available to the European Parliament, the Council and the general public. In the explanatory memorandum to its proposals, the Commission will indicate the manner in which the impact assessments have influenced them.

30. Where the codecision procedure applies, the European Parliament and Council may, on the basis of jointly defined criteria and procedures, have impact assessments carried out prior to the adoption of any substantive amendment, either at first reading or at the conciliation stage. As soon as possible after this Agreement is adopted, the three Institutions will carry out an assessment of their respective experiences and will consider the possibility of establishing a common methodology” (The Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law Making, articles 25, 28, 29, 30).

Furthermore, the IIA brings into force the Mandelken proposal, emphasizing the necessity of having not only a reliable legislative system at European level but also effective national RIA systems:

“Pursuant to the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, the Commission will take due account in its legislative proposals of their financial or administrative implications, for the Union and the Member States in particular. Furthermore, each of the three Institutions will take into account the objective of ensuring that application in the Member States is appropriate and effective” (The Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law Making, article 27).

Reference is also made to the possibility of the Parliament and Council choosing to conduct impact assessments on their own amendments. In the subsequent 2006 Inter-Institutional Common Approach to Impact Assessment, the Parliament and Council “*undertake to carry out impact assessments, when they consider this to be appropriate and necessary for the legislative process, prior to the*

adoption of any substantive amendment" (The Interinstitutional Common Approach to Impact Assessment, paragraph 14).

Another step ahead in the development and consolidation of the use of impact assessments in the EU was the Commission's Internal Impact Assessment Guidelines, issued in 2009 and currently under a reviewing process (starting July 2014) that should reach its end by the end of 2015 European Commission (Impact assessments in other EU institutions, 2015). Its application should have led to a higher quality and use of the IA realised, as well as to a higher degree of coherence of the methodologies used. The surveillance institution over the conformity of the IAs with the Internal IA guidelines is the Impact Assessment Board, constituted in 2007, as a second (and last) filter for checking the quality of an IA, before the Commission's inter-service consultation can be launched. Even though the Internal Commission's rules require that each proposal should be backed up not only by an IA but also by a positive opinion from the IAB, in practice there are cases in which the proposal has passed also with the negative opinion from the Board, nevertheless this one accompanying the proposal (Collova 2015, p. 3). The IAB was formed by five members, out of which one was the Deputy Secretary General and the other four rotating members, were elected, from 2012 onwards from a permanent pool of eight Commission directors. They were sitting in the Board in addition to their regular duties (Collova 2015, p. 2). The rotating members are drawn December 2014, Mr Frans Timmermans, the Vice-President of the Commission, who also has the portfolio of Better Regulations (and thus including the IA component), declared that the IAB is to be reshaped as a Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB) that will encompass also a mandate on performing ex-post evaluations. The RSB was set up 19 May 2015, replacing the IAB. The Board is independent of the policy making departments. It is chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General responsible for Better Regulation. In its new set-up, three members will be high-level Commission officials while three members will be recruited from outside the Commission (European Commission, Regulatory Scrutiny Board 2015).

3.3. The evaluation imposed by structural funds

The development of structural funds and that of evaluation policy/policies within the European Union enjoy a common history that

started in the age when evaluations were considered equivalent to the performance measurement activities and were concentrated mostly within the project management manuals; the interdependence relationship between the two is better formalized starting 1998 and intensified since 2013, when the European Commission published the guide for evaluating social and economic development (EVALSED). It presents a structured and coherent approach to evaluate the structural funds that aims to regulate:

- “A legal obligation of donors and programme managers to use evaluation;
- A shared responsibility of different government structures to the overall evaluation process;
- A multi-phase and interconnected evaluation process (ex- ante evaluation, interim, ex-post);
- The involvement of multiple and diverse partners in the implementation and evaluation of programmes;
- A clear relationship between evaluation on the one hand , and programmes and allocation of public funds , on the other” (EVALSED: The Resource for the evaluation of Socio-Economic Development 2013, p. 12).

During these 15 years (1998-2013), there was a significant progress in the crystallization of an evaluation culture particular to the structural funds with respect to the internalization of the obligation to evaluate not only at the supranational level but also at the national one, taking an interest in the use and usefulness of evaluation results but also in using evaluation during all the stages of its implementation (EVALSED: The Resource for the evaluation of Socio-Economic Development 2013, p. 12).

The regulations for the evaluation of Structural Funds have played an important role in the institutionalization of evaluation at Member State level and also in the development of the evaluation capacity, the pressure being exerted from top to bottom, which inevitably led to some criticisms, among which we will mention the one from Nicoletta Stame who wrote about the weak use of national level evaluation and poor data correlation between the supranational and national level (Stame 2004, p. 63).

In the financial period 2007-2013 it has become visible that evaluations pass from the compliance zone to adapt themselves to national needs; in the 2014-2020, the Performance Measurement Framework Agreement according to which the reserve of 6% was reallocated was proposed by Member States and agreed by the Commission.

Table 1. Evolution of Regulation regarding the Evaluation Process of Structural Instruments

1989-1993	1994-1999	2000-2006	2007-2013	2014-2020
Evaluation Ex-ante				
Ex - ante analyzes are the responsibility of member states for each programme. The Commission may develop their own analysis , but there is no binding	Ex-ante evaluation is carried out through a partnership between the Member State and the Commission, with the obligation to include environmental impact.	Ex-ante evaluation lies mainly in the responsibility of Member States with its purpose is clearly defined. The emphasis is on inclusion in the evaluation of issues related to environmental impact, gender equality and labour market	No major changes from the previous period	Same as during 2007-2013, with a stronger focus on an approach centred on results and understanding of the logic of the intervention
Interim Evaluation				
There is no obligation to complete it	Interim evaluations are required for programmes with an implementation period exceeding 3 years. They are made by independent appraisers. They do a critical analysis of monitored data and measure the level of achieving the objectives up to that point	The management authority is responsible for carrying out interim evaluation in partnership with the Commission. The latter decides the relevance assessment. A first interim evaluation is carried out by the end of 2003 by independent appraisers. Subsequently the information is updated in 2005 to prepare the final evaluation	Member States are responsible for continuous evaluation in consultation with the Commission. They are encouraged to build their own evaluation plans and the focus moves from compliance to an approach based on need. Member States should evaluate based on the information needs they have in a particular juncture in time	Evaluations are required for each priority, so that their contribution to achieving the objective can be valued. A report is requested by the end of 2021 for each programme.
Ex-post evaluation				
It should be conducted at national level but in most cases it is not	The Commission and Member States must carry out in partnership an ex-	The Commission has primary responsibility for the ex -post, which it performs together	Nu modifications compared to the 2000-2006	There are no changes, although the existence of reports that

accomplished.	post evaluation which aims at the impact of the measures with report to the given objectives.	with the Member States. The objective of the evaluation is defined, and it is being conducted by an independent appraiser within three years from the completion of the programme period.	period, except for the fact that the final evaluation must be completed within a period of one year shorter - 2015, at the same time when expenses for the period should also be finalized.	summarize each programme evaluations will produce a new material for evaluation.
The performance reserve				
Not existing	Not existing	Until March 31, 2004 , 4% of the allocation for each Member State which has been retained at the start of the programme is allocated to programmes considered to be successful, based on an evaluation made by the Commission based on proposals made by Member States	Performance Reserve is optional for Member States	The performance reserve was proposed by the Commission in late 2013, and in 2014 a reserve of 6% was approved, at the disposal of Member States based on annual performance monitoring and the evaluation made in 2019 by the Commission. Member States may spend the performance reserve based on an amendment to the budget originally planned on those priorities and approved by the Commission. (Guidance Fiche. Performance Framework Review and Reserve in 2014-2020, 2014)

Source: EVALSED 2013, p. 14

3.4. The existence of supranational professional evaluation societies

The European Evaluation Society (EES) was founded in 1992 and it is statutory since 1996, benefiting from the support of the Netherlands Court of Audit and the Belgian Insurance Executive Secretary until 2003. The EES mission is to promote theory, practice and use of a qualitative evaluation within the European space, without being limited solely to qualitative methods. In 2008, an interest in establishing a network of National Evaluation Societies (NESE) was put forward, and the Société Française d'Evaluation took the leadership of the initiative. In 2010, the structure and the establishment of a joint action plan were formalized. Both the European Evaluation Society and the Network of Cooperation for national evaluation societies were established in view of a social need perceived both by academia and national auditors' bodies (Bustelo and Saunders 2014). While there are European and national institutions supporting the activities of the two entities and collaborating with them to develop some joint projects (training of officials, conduct studies and dissemination events), it is important to note that the two initiatives were not designed to be a non-governmental face of the European public agenda regarding evaluation, but one whose objectives converge on the same point. European Evaluation Society assumes primarily projects leading to the enhancement of theories, methods and professional achievement, developing an ethical guide and the profile of an evaluator. NESE acts as a complement, assuming the strong role in the examination and development of the evaluation capacity at the national level.

The collaboration between NESE and EES creates a vertical transfer, both top-down and bottom up, following which there is a tendency both to homogenize professional standards and, paradoxically, to dilute the national footprint. The differences lie more in how the evaluator is trained and how he relates to the use of certain specific methods than in his nationality.

It is interesting the evolution over time regarding the policies on regulating the profession of evaluator. In 2003, there were made efforts towards the professionalization of the evaluation practice, without having a regulatory act of the profession. After a discussion of the board members of the European Evaluation Society, Thomas Widmer elaborated a document regarding the policy on standards, guides and principles, pointing out the position of the EES.

“...does not have the intention of establishing EES standards of any kind on its own or to declare any specific or existing standards as a qualification for EES membership. EES acknowledges the cultural diversity within Europe that hinders the creation of meaningful, Europe-wide standards. Instead, the EES will primarily act as a platform for mutual exchange and as a promoter of standards where EES support is asked by other parties” (Bustelo 2006, p. 438).

During the last 12 years, the EES put itself on the map as a safe keeper of the diversity among the communities of evaluators throughout Europe, trying to offer just a framework for the transfer of evaluation knowledge and practices, leaving the setting of standards in the hand of the National Evaluation Societies. In the same time, having such a big demand for evaluations from the side of European Institutions and bodies, the profession of evaluator in EU got to be a very mobile one. Evaluators need therefore a common ground of work among the national communities so that they can ease their work on one hand and enhance the way this profession is perceived, valued, and praised on the other hand. One cannot expect the raise in the demand for evaluations if there is no predictability and quality assurance in terms of what the client gets.

In April 2015, EES makes a big step forward, making public a capabilities framework of the evaluator. It took 6 years to get to a common understanding of how professional evaluators should look like in terms of knowledge, practice and attitudes. Based on a survey launched in 2009, a follow-up questionnaire in 2011, panels in the EES 2010 conference in Prague, the EES 2012 conference in Helsinki and discussions within the NESE, the EES capabilities framework are setting a common ground of work. The purpose of this is to enhance the quality of evaluations, beyond the application of standards and guidelines, as well as to strengthen the sense of identity among evaluators (The EES Evaluation Capabilities Framework 2015, p. 2).

“The EES surveys brought out the notion that complementary initiatives would be needed to promote evaluation excellence. Towards enhancing the quality of evaluation practice the surveys disclosed exceptionally strong support for harmonized evaluation guidelines across borders, sharing of good practices through connectivity among evaluators, mentoring and improved access to quality assurance advice. Next in line was enhanced access to quality training and greater availability of academic offerings at the MA and PhD levels. The final piece of the puzzle is evaluator peer review and designation” (The EES Evaluation Capabilities Framework 2015, p. 3).

4. BOTTOM-UP AND HORIZONTAL NATIONAL PRACTICES IN THE PROCESS OF EUROPEANIZATION OF THE EVALUATION CULTURE

In the European space, there was a pressure targeted both vertically from bottom-up as well as horizontally, towards integrating the evaluation culture as part of the Europeanization process and at the same time towards an Europeanization of the evaluation culture. At an institutional level, there have been consistently supported initiatives by the audit offices and national Finance ministries. If initially the motivation for the development of the evaluation capacity was that of identifying a new mechanism of legitimacy, subsequently other functions were engaged and refined in the last 5 years for the purpose of determining the net impact generated by certain policies. Together with the development of new methods specific to evaluation and individualizing it as a discipline, there appeared the need to designate specific institutions responsible for planning and managing the national evaluation systems. Aside from, but in tandem with institutional pressures, we would consider the importance of the pressures imposed by the more or less formalized professional evaluation communities, this transversal factor that facilitates the exchange of know-how in a network of actors in which nationality remains an element that emerges only during the exchange of business cards.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Through this paper I try to formulate a response that addresses two issues that I find fundamental to the maturation of the evaluation culture in the European space. The first is questioning the very existence of a European culture of evaluation and the way in which the Europeanization process determined or influenced it. The second theme already places us in the scenario of an existing European culture of evaluation and in the context of a confrontation between the emergence of an evaluation culture in the European space as a result of a process of inter- and intra-continental syncretism and its formation through a mimetic, imitationalist process.

In the debate on the existence of a European culture of evaluation and not (only) that of European cultures of evaluation that are ascribed to national areas, we find relevant the existence of a system of evaluation at European level, one consisting of a network of institutions involved formally or informally in evaluation processes, where there is at least one organization with the assumed role of managing the system (in this case the European Commission). Associated with this system are the practices of professional evaluation communities that, as Toulemonde notes, are different only in so far as they are associated with different stages of maturation of the evaluation culture. The Mandala is completed through the development of a discipline of evaluation and the existence of theoretical fundamentals underlying the community of evaluators, currently having 16 university training programmes in Europe (European University-based study programmes in evaluation 2012). Although the net impact on the development of an evaluation culture in the European space cannot be assigned to the Europeanization process because it acts convergent with the globalization process, we systematized the factors determining the Europeanization process of the evaluation culture. Among these, the establishment and refinement of a system of evaluation of the Structural Funds is notable as it introduces the mandatory evaluation process in planning and implementing programmes, this being internalized both by the European and the Member State administrative apparatus. But a crisis about maximizing the use of evaluations is looming, as they are currently used mainly for internal information and for a better understanding of the programme, while the political function of legitimization before legislative bodies, the one for which they were initiated, it is served only formally. Top-down pressure applied by the Structural Funds and other international bodies is reinforced by the bottom up and horizontally acting pressure that is put at the institutional level through the national audit offices, Finance ministries and later on by organizations within the central office that are dedicated to evaluation. International organizations and professional evaluation societies have made their own contributions in defining standards and best practices in a multilateral complex context, where defining the evaluation agenda becomes an exercise of soft power and properly dividing resources.

I propose the hypothesis of imitationalism in defining the nature of the evaluation culture in the European space, as the influence brought by the North American culture of evaluation since the early 1970's is undeniable.

Whether there existed or not the intention of taking on mimetic practices does not have much relevance, given the fact that political culture and management realities led to the need to transpose them in order to be internalized in the European institutional system. An important role in the creation and implementation of incremental transfer of practices and approaches has been played by the professional and academic communities, given their role as the intercontinental carriers of information and subsequently creating pressure from the bottom up and horizontally in order to adjust the existing norms. Should, therefore, the European evaluation culture be considered an inter- and intracontinental mosaic, one in which the practices imposed by international financing bodies tacitly coexist with the remaining perpetuated ones from the North American substrate and those resulting from the national evaluation communities? The comparison with a mosaic reveals the coexistence of different elements that have the ability to operate in unity without losing their own identity.

I find the metaphor of a pop-art¹ Europeanization process as being the one that best displays the dynamics of the European processes resulting in the emergence of a specific evaluation culture while maintaining the reserves given by the limitations of adjusting the notion to a different field. Although the influences on the European evaluation space have multiple origins, coming via different actors (state and non-state), from different areas (the emergence of professional evaluation societies with regional vocation on all continents) and promoting different approaches, sometimes divergent, they cannot coexist without going through a process of Europeanization which involves modelling, influencing and adjusting themselves to the context in which they become one and are given therefore a new institutional life.

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¹ Pop-art is the artistic movement that introduces images and characters from pop culture to the fine arts, thus gaining a new life by being introduced into other contexts, whether in association with other characters or in isolation.

de guvernare și securitate”) coordinated by George Anglițoiu and published by CH Beck in January 2015. The research was conducted through the institutional grant “Improving organizational performance and the management of change through an empowerment evaluation model” (“Creșterea performanței organizaționale și optimizarea proceselor de schimbare prin aplicarea unui model de evaluare de tip capacitativ”) financed by the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration.

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