

## META-EVALUATION - AN ANALYSIS OF THE EVALUATION TOOLS OF THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION POLICIES IN ROMANIA FOR THE FINANCIAL FRAMEWORKS 2007 - 2013 AND 2014 - 2020

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### **Abstract**

According to the EU regulations, the policy evaluation is compulsory, for the European Union but also the Member States, as established by the Lisbon Treaty (article no. 156). The purpose of this paper is to verify if there is a correlation between the accessibility (usability) of evaluation outcomes and the degree of use of these results in the process of substantiating future policies. Subsequently, we aim to identify if the evaluation tools play an essential role in increasing the use of the evaluation results and in maintaining the EU's role of knowledge generator in the field of evaluation. Supporting the development of an evaluation culture is essential for the EU's effort to understand what works and what is not working and how its policies are functioning in order to enhance cooperation and maximize impact or improve strategies.

The case study, presented in this article, aims to identify the appropriate tools for evaluating research and innovation policies to improve the quality, efficiency

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and coherence of interventions, considering the context of a significant financial allocation for research and innovation in the future EU budget for the financial framework 2021 - 2027. The study it is expected to provide an answer to the question "To what extent were the results of the evaluations used in the process of substantiating the research and innovation policies in Romania?".

**Keywords:** meta-evaluation; research and innovation policies; evaluation tools.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is not an aim in itself, so investing resources in this approach must be justified by the difference it can make in achieving the success or failure of a program. To make such a difference, the evaluation must address and answer useful questions to the factors involved in the development of the program, regardless of their role in the program.

The European Funds played a key role in the development of the evaluation culture within the European Union and the introduction of evaluation in the countries of Southern Europe is mainly due to the requirements stipulated in the European regulations. As a consequence, at the level of European Union policies, evaluation is mandatory, being an obligation for both the European Union and the Member States under the Treaty of Lisbon, to use policy evaluations.

As one of the largest funders at a global level, the European Union has assumed the role of knowledge generator in the field of evaluation. Supporting the development of a culture of evaluation is essential for the EU's effort to understand not only what works and what doesn't in its policies but also how they work, in order to improve cooperation and maximize impact or improve strategies. The Union's evaluation policy is a strong commitment to improving evaluation practice, built to meet the current needs (EEAS 2014).

The research hypothesis is based upon states that there is a correlation between the accessibility (usability) of evaluation outcomes and the degree of use of these results in the process of substantiating future policies. The case study aims to

appreciate the degree of use of the results of evaluations of research-development-innovation procedures in the process of substantiating intended policies.

The concept of "use of evaluation", also defined as the usage of program evaluation results for decision making or program improvement, is one of the major objectives in the program evaluation literature, as evidenced by the large number of theoretical and empirical studies published on this topic. (Cousins and Leithwood 1986, Johnson et al 2009 - produced significant reviews of the evaluation use literature and together highlight 106 empirical studies on this topic published since 1986). There are three main types of evaluation usage associated with the use of results identified in the literature: instrumental use, which refers to the use of evaluation results as a basis for action and change; conceptual use, which occurs when an evaluation influences stakeholders' understanding and attitudes about a program; and symbolic use, which occurs when individuals use evaluation information for their political interest (Johnson, 1998).

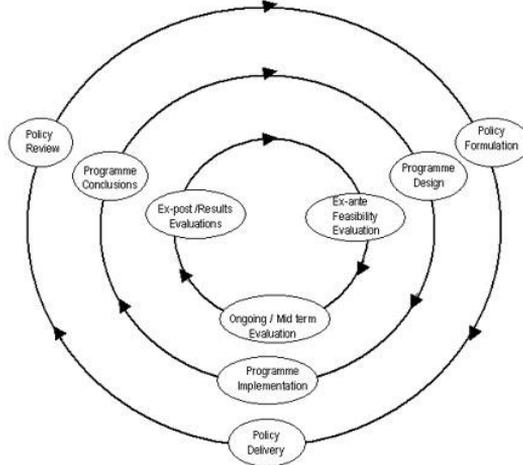
## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The obligation to carry out activities for the evaluation of interventions financed from the funds, as well as the general rules are referred in the (EC) Regulation no. 1083/2006 of the Council from July 11<sup>th</sup> 2006 (Articles 47 to 49). Article 47 from the Regulation laying down certain general provisions on ERDF, ESF and CF no. 1083/2006 provided the general framework in which evaluations should be carried out in the 2007-2013 programming period. Based on this article, the mission of the evaluation is twofold: on one hand, to improve the quality, efficiency, and coherence of intervention from the funds, and, on the other hand, to improve the strategy and implementation of operational programs, in relation to specific structural problems of the covered Member States and regions.

When we talk about the evaluation of European policies, it often goes through stages similar to the cycle of a policy, which starts with policy formulation, planning and resource allocation, design, implementation and delivery of

expected results and this results from the use of evaluation in some terms such as ex-ante, intermediate and ex-post. (EVALSED, 2013).

Figure no. 1 - Policy, program and evaluation cycles



Source: EVALSED

On the other hand, meta-evaluation is a systematic and formal evaluation of evaluations, evaluation systems, or the use of specific evaluation tools in order to guide the planning/management of evaluations within organizations. A meta-evaluation can be used for ongoing evaluations (formative) or to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of previous evaluations (summative). The methodology was proposed by Michael Scriven in 1969, to describe the evaluation of an evaluation plan for educational products (Scriven 2009).

Stufflebeam (2000) describes meta-evaluation as “the process of delimiting, obtaining and applying descriptive and critical information about the usefulness, feasibility, relevance and accuracy of evaluation and its systematic nature, competence, integrity/honesty, respect and social responsibility in guide evaluation and/or in highlighting strengths and weaknesses (Stufflebeam 2000, 95 - 125).

Policy monitoring and evaluation provide information and data that, when accepted and internalized, turn into knowledge that supports the learning process. Therefore, learning needs to be incorporated into the policy-making cycle through an effective feedback mechanism. The information must be disseminated and made available to interested stakeholders in order to become applied knowledge.

The study of the consequences of evaluation is not new; however, for most of the last four decades it has focused on the analysis of a particular segment of evaluation, namely, the use of evaluation results (Alkin 2003; Cousins & Leithwood 1986; Leviton & Huges 1981; Shulha & Cousins 1997).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, theorists and researchers expanded the focus of research on the use of evaluation to include analyzing the consequences of processing information from the evaluation (Cousins & Leithwood 1986) and effective involvement in the evaluation process (Greene 1988; Patton 1997).

Over the last two decades, the analysis of the possible consequences of the evaluation has shifted the focus to hypotheses such as:

- evaluation can contribute to decision making;
- the evaluation can lead to the improvement of the program;
- assessment can expand the knowledge base;
- at the same time, recent studies identify a wide range of expected consequences of evaluation, including empowerment, social justice, organizational learning, capacity building, social improvement, and even transformation.

Evaluation can influence the way people think and act, individually and collectively. It can even have significant consequences for the practice of subsequent evaluation. (Mark 2006). It is important to remember that we cannot separate the concept of “use of evaluation” from that of “usability” when we talk about evaluation and, implicitly, when we perform a meta-evaluation. Regardless of the type of evaluation, the moment of its realization, or the stakeholders involved, it is necessary to make the distinction between these two dimensions. Consequently, if the use of evaluation results takes into account rather the context and organizational capacity to use the evaluation results,

usability refers to the way in which an evaluation has been designed so that its results can be used as broadly as possible.

### 3. CASE STUDY

#### 3.1. Presentation of research-innovation policies in Romania

Being a young democracy and a member of the European Union only since 2007, respectively a net beneficiary of European funds at that time (we are not referring here to pre-accession funds) we can say that Romania is at the beginning when it comes to transition to a knowledge-based economy (objective assumed by the EU to reduce the existing gaps in the regions).

Country-wide innovation performance is poor, ranking last in the EU in the 2019 European Innovation Scoreboard (European Commission 2019b). Investments in research and development are very low, with an R&D intensity of 0.51% of GDP in 2018, well below the national target for 2020, of 2%, and the EU average of 2.12%. Public investment in research and development accounted for 0.2% of GDP in 2018. Private spending on research and development was only 0.30% of GDP, below the EU average of 1.41%. (European Commission 2020)

Scientific performance and the links between academia and business continue to be weak. The country is still at the bottom of the EU in terms of top scientific publications and international co-publications (European Commission 2018a). Regulatory barriers (e.g. bureaucracy, conflicting or unclear rules) hinder the links between academia and business, which tend to emerge on an ad hoc basis.

RDI governance is characterized by excessive and burdensome bureaucracy, the predisposition to excessive regulation, frequent changes at the legislative and institutional level, and the lack of human resources. Policy changes have affected the R&D&I system and policies, leading to delays and ad hoc changes. Theoretically, coordination mechanisms and bodies are established; however, they may prove to be insufficient in the absence of human resources, political will and culture to make them work.

The main programmatic documents in the field of research-innovation in Romania, in the period 2007 - 2020 are: National Strategy in the field of research-

development and innovation for the period 2007 - 2013 - (approved by Act no. 217/2007), National Plan for research-development and innovation for the period 2007 - 2014 (NPRDI II) - (approved by Act no. 475/2007), the National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2014 - 2020 (NS RDI 2020) - (approved by GD 929/2014) and the National Research Plan - development and innovation for 2015 - 2020 (NPRDI III) - (approved by Act no. 583/2015).

It should be remarked that these public policy documents stipulate that the undertaking must undertake to monitor and evaluate the measures they propose, which should have been carried out regularly and carried out by independent experts. and whose conclusions have been presented to policymakers.

### 3.2. Methodology

The present meta-evaluation aims to analyze the evaluation tools of the research-development-innovation policies in Romania in the financial years 2007 - 2013 and 2014 - 2020.

The purpose of the meta-evaluation is to know the use of the results of the evaluations carried out in the financial year 2007-2013 to substantiate the research-innovation policies in the period 2014-2020 and, secondly, to establish a benchmark for a future meta-evaluation to subsequently identify trends, models and changes in the policy evaluation tools analyzed.

The main research method used is the analysis of documents, respectively the content evaluation of the evaluation reports and the main programmatic documents and the construction of an analysis grid of the assessment records from 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. To carry out the study, the author focused on the following research: analysis of specialized texts and documents, with a focus on research-innovation strategies and, in particular, with a focus on the financing of research-innovation policies; analysis of evaluation reports made for national research-innovation strategies; analysis of the documents substantiating the normative acts in the field of RDI.

Before building the analysis grid of evaluation reports, we researched what other meta-evaluations were conducted in Romania regarding the system/tools for evaluating research-innovation policies. From the identified documents and information, the authors noticed that the analyzes carried out mainly target the research-innovation system as a whole and not particularly its evaluation tools, not being possible to draw conclusions or recommendations with a particular character. Within the evaluation grid of the evaluation reports we used an ordinal rating scale for each analyzed criterion, respectively the scale: "Excellent, Very good, Good, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Absent". The grading was based on the presence, clarity, robustness and adequacy of the relevant information in the evaluation report for each criterion analyzed. Therefore, the proposed analysis grid of the evaluation reports aims to obtain information on the following analysis criteria: coordination of the evaluation process, evaluation design and methodology, presentation of evaluation results and use of evaluation results.

### 3.3. Research limitations

The main limitation of this study is based on the fact that, although the responsibilities on the management of research-innovation policies and implicitly, the attributions on policy evaluation belonged, de facto, to the same entity (currently the Ministry of Education and Research), the administrative instability led to a low degree of information accessibility on the evaluation exercises analyzed and the difficulty of identifying all documents regarding these evaluations. Thus, if a series of evaluation reports could have been identified on the institution's website, it was not possible to distinguish the documents regarding the evaluation process, especially the reference terms, the main reason being the fluctuation of the staff who managed these evaluations.

### 3.4. Evaluation report analysis grid

The author considers important specifying that the elaborated grid aimed at a logical structuring of the way of conducting the meta-evaluation, this isn't being an interview grid. Thus, the analysis grid of evaluation reports is divided into two main parts: an introductory section, which presents fundamental information on assessment reports that allow them to be placed in a time frame and knowledge of the specifics of evaluation.

The second section contains the rating criteria considered relevant for the purpose of the meta-evaluation: coordination of the evaluation process, design, and methodology, presentation of the evaluation results, use of the results.

Each of these criteria was operationalized through a set of evaluation questions aimed at identifying the existence in the evaluation reports of the categories of fundamental information in the evaluation process, the relevance, clarity, and robustness of these categories of details. The evaluation questions also aim at acquiring information that would allow qualitative analysis of how to present the evaluation results and their use as well as the realization of correlations.

### 3.5. Meta-evaluation report

#### 3.5.1. *Summary*

The purpose of this report was to make a meta-evaluation of the evaluation tools of research-innovation policies in Romania, developed in the period 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. The following criteria were taken into account: coordination of the evaluation process, evaluation design, methodology, presentation of evaluation results, and their use. For each criterion was assigned at least two evaluation questions.

Both the meta-evaluation reports and their supporting documents and information were used to carry out the meta-evaluation, insofar as they could be identified. One of the limitations of meta-evaluation is represented by the different typology of the analyzed evaluation exercises (these being centred either towards the evaluation of the performance, of the governance system of

the RDI field or focused on the analysis of the public policy strategy related to the field). This made it difficult to analyze the answers to the evaluation questions and to give grades. A general conclusion that can be drawn is that evaluation methods and tools have seen significant improvements from one year to the next but the presentation and use of results are not necessarily directly proportional to this development.

### 3.5.2. Presentation of the results of the meta-evaluation

Table nr. 3.5.2.1 – Analysis grid no. 1

<b>Evaluation report identification data</b>	
Report name	Delivering policy analysis on the
Type of evaluation	performance of Cohesion Policy 2007-2013
The evaluated period	Task 1: Policy Paper on Innovation
The evaluation period	intermediate
<b>Criterion no. 1: Coordination of the evaluation process</b>	
Rating: Unsatisfactory	
<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Findings:</b>
Have the actors involved in the evaluation process been identified, including their roles?	The report does not indicate who the actors involved in the evaluation process are or their roles but rather focused on the analysis of the evaluation subject.
Was the evaluation carried out by an external or internal team?	The evaluation was carried out by an expert from the Expert Evaluation Network for the European Commission - Directorate-General Regional Policy.
<b>Criterion no. 2: Design and methodology</b>	
Rating: Unsatisfactory	
Is the chosen methodology clearly described?	Not. The report does not present the methodology used. However, the report contains a series of annexes where the categories of the user data can be identified.

Is the choice of methodology explained?	N / A
Are the evaluation questions relevant to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation?	The report does not include the evaluation questions used. However, from each aspect evaluated, a series of utilized criteria and indicators are transparent, leading to the conclusion that certain evaluation questions were employed, and through the answers and conclusions formulated for each of them in the report, the objectives of the evaluation are met. (also presumed)
Were the DAC / OECD criteria used in structuring the evaluation?	YES. The analysis of the report shows that at least one DAC (relevance) criterion was used.
Was the data used clear, robust, and sufficient?	The analysis of the report's annexes confirmed the use of a complex, clear, and robust data set. However, in the absence of methodological specifications, it was not possible to assess whether the data were sufficient.
Are the risks of the assessment clearly and specifically identified?	There is no section in the report to identify possible risks that may arise during the assessment. These are not mentioned at all in other sections either.
Does the report have key documents such as terms of reference, etc. attached?	No documents containing the terms of reference were identified.
<b>Criterion no. 3: Presentation of evaluation results</b>	
Rating: Satisfactory	
Are the evaluators' findings and recommendations clearly described?	YES. A chapter of the Report is dedicated to each aspect assessed. The conclusions and recommendations related to each evaluated aspect are set out, but with a low degree of

	specificity.
Does the evaluation report have a logical structure? Does it present the information clearly and coherently?	The evaluation report has only a partial logical structure and the information is presented in a fairly general way. The general areas and objectives of the evaluation are distinguished. However, a detailing of the methodology and tools used to operationalize the evaluation would have been an advantage for substantiating the findings presented, rather than a detailed description of the context of research and innovation policies in Romania.
<b>Criterion no. 4: Use of evaluation results</b>	
Rating: Satisfactory	
Are previous evaluation experiences identified?	Not. The report does not refer to previous evaluation experiences in the field analyzed.
Are future decisions or actions identified that could use the results of this evaluation?	Yes. Future actions are identified that could use the results of the evaluation as well as the actors involved in these actions.

Table no. 3.5.2.2 – Analysis grid no. 2

<b>Evaluation report identification data</b>	
Report name	Interim Evaluation of the National Strategy and National Plan CD & I 2007-13
Type of evaluation	intermediate
The evaluated period	Not specified
The evaluation period	2012
<b>Criterion no. 1: Coordination of the evaluation process</b>	
Rating: Good	
<b>Evaluation questions</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Have the actors involved in the evaluation process been	The report indicates which actors are involved in the evaluation process (National Authority

identified, including their roles?	for Scientific Research, UEFISCDI, National Councils for Development and Innovation / Scientific Research). Although the report mentions the involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process, they are not accurately identified.
Was the evaluation carried out by an external or internal team?	The evaluation was carried out by a consortium of experts, mixed, consisting of Technopolis Group Austria, Vienna, Austria, FM Management Consultancy, Bucharest, GEA Strategy & Consulting, Bucharest, Vienna University of Technology, Vienna, Austria. The management of the evaluation services contract was ensured by the National Authority for Scientific Research.
<b>Criterion no. 2: Design and methodology</b>	
Rating: Good	
Is the chosen methodology clearly described?	The Report identifies, from the introduction, the objective, the methods/tools used, and the actors involved. The aspects that are subject to evaluation have a high degree of generality (the emergence of the National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2007-2013, its internal and international context, vision, strategic objectives and their main strategic approaches, implementation of the strategy). On the other hand, the instruments used are detailed quantitatively: - 40 interviews with different partners among R&D actors (universities, National Research and Development Institutes, research centres, and institutes coordinated by the Romanian

	<p>Academy and private companies), of the institutions responsible for research policies (representatives of National Authority for Scientific Research, The Executive Unit for the Financing of Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (UEFISCDI), Councils for Development and Innovation / Scientific Research).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 15 focus groups, composed of 110 representatives of the same group of institutions.</li> <li>- study of official documents, official and internal reports</li> <li>- analysis of data provided by ANCS and UEFISCDI</li> </ul>
<p>Is the choice of methodology explained?</p>	<p>Although the methodology is described in detail, the arguments that led to its choice and the tools used are not presented.</p>
<p>Are the evaluation questions relevant to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation?</p>	<p>The evaluation questions are not presented in a breakdown for each of the objectives of the evaluation and, although they meet the purpose of the evaluation as a whole, it is not very clear to what extent they meet all the objectives set. Most questions are relevant and built to provide specific answers. However, questions were also asked about the measures adopted, which risk providing answers with a high degree of generality.</p>
<p>Were the DAC / OECD criteria used in structuring the evaluation?</p>	<p>YES. The analysis of the report shows that at least one DAC (relevance) criterion was used.</p>
<p>Was the data used clear,</p>	<p>YES. The data used were clear, robust and</p>

robust, and sufficient?	sufficient. In addition to the existing data or made available to the evaluation team by NASR and UEFISCDI, data from official resources were used, which are not, however, mentioned in detail.
Are the risks of the assessment clearly and specifically identified?	There is no section in the report to identify possible risks that may arise during the assessment. These are not mentioned at all in other sections either.
Does the report have key documents such as terms of reference, etc. attached?	Attached to the Report, in its form available to the general public, are a number of annexes, as mentioned in the report, but the terms of reference are not included. At the level of the Authority responsible for managing the service contract, this type of documents was not centralized, so it was not possible to identify the terms of reference that formed the basis of the evaluation.
<b>Criterion no. 3: Evaluation results presentation</b>	
Rating: Good	
Are the evaluators' findings and recommendations clearly described?	YES. The report contains separate chapters for each of the aspects assessed. At the same time, there is a separate section at the end of the report where the findings for each specific evaluation objective and the evaluators' recommendations are presented.
Does the evaluation report have a logical structure, does it present the information clearly and coherently?	The evaluation report has a logical structure and the information is presented clearly and coherently. The chapters are presented in italics, according to the objectives of the evaluation and also according to the questions to which the evaluation had to answer.

<b>Criterion no. 4: Use of evaluation results</b>	
Rating: Good	
Are previous evaluation experiences identified?	Not. The report does not refer to previous evaluation experiences in the area under analysis, although it is an interim evaluation exercise of a programmatic document.
Are future decisions or actions identified that could use the results of this evaluation?	Yes. Future actions are identified that could use the results of the evaluation as well as the actors involved in these actions, mainly to improve the policy and not to change it excessively.

Table no. 3.5.2.3 –Analysis grid no. 3

<b>Evaluation report identification data</b>	
Report name	Evaluation report on the governance of the public research, development and innovation system in Romania 2007 - 2013
Type of evaluation	Intermediate. Themed
The evaluated period	2007 - 2013
The evaluation period	It is not specified. From the analysis of the Report, can be presumed that it was completed in 2015.
<b>Criterion no. 1: Coordination of the evaluation process</b>	
Rating: Very Good	
<b>Evaluation questions</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Have the actors involved in the evaluation process been identified, including their roles?	The report clearly indicates which actors are involved in the evaluation process (UEFISCDI - as a beneficiary of the OPACD 37609 project).
Was the evaluation carried out by an external or internal team?	The report does not contain data on the experts who carried out the evaluation.
<b>Criterion no. 2: Design and methodology</b>	

Rating: Excellent	
Is the chosen methodology clearly described?	<p>The evaluation was performed according to a detailed methodology, which uses the logical model approach. Thus, in addition to including in the Report the description of methodological steps, tools, objectives, and evaluation questions, a separate document was prepared entitled Methodology for evaluating the implementation of public policies in the field of Research, Development, and Innovation in Romania (2007-2013).</p> <p>The general purpose of the methodology is to carry out an evaluation of the governance of the public RDI system in Romania in the period 2007-2013. The governance assessment was carried out through an analysis of the implementation process of RDI policies formulated and applied during the reference period.</p> <p>By applying the methodology, the aim was to carry out a systemic evaluation whose nodal points should be the main components of the public RDI system in Romania (institutions with the regulatory and planning role, main instruments for implementing RDI policies and actors involved in the system as beneficiaries of these tools).</p> <p>In order to achieve the general purpose of the methodology, the following working tools have been adopted that define the structure of the evaluation methodology:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. a theoretical model of evaluation;</li> <li>II. an analytical grid that proposes the</li> </ol>

	<p>evaluation criteria and that distinguishes between the main components of the public RDI system subject to evaluation;</p> <p>III. a specific mechanism for operationalizing the analytical grid and detailing the criteria, tools, techniques, data necessary for the evaluation, and the procedures for their collection.</p> <p>The methodology mentions in detail what its limitations are.</p>
Is the chosen methodology clearly described?	YES. For each of the chosen methods and tools, including the data used, justified details are presented, sufficient to provide robustness to the evaluation approach.
Is the choice of methodology explained?	<p>The evaluation questions are presented in detail in the methodology, being assigned to each of the 3 specific objectives of the evaluation:</p> <p>Specific objective 1: Analysis of the responsibility of the main institutions with a regulatory role in the RDI area.</p> <p>Evaluation questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Was the regulatory framework of the RDI system adequate to the needs of society?</li> <li>- Was the level of funding of the programs adequate to social needs?</li> <li>- What was the contribution of the governance institutions in defining the priorities, in regulating and supervising the RDI system?</li> </ul> <p>Specific objective 2: Analysis of the degree of transparency of the instruments for implementing the RDI policy and of the actors involved in the system as beneficiaries of the</p>

	<p>financing.</p> <p>Evaluation questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Was the process of implementing the financing instruments of the RDI system a transparent one?</li> </ul> <p>Specific objective 3: Analysis of the performances of the main actors involved in the RDI system as beneficiaries of the RDI policy implementation tools.</p> <p>Evaluation questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the performances of the actors in the system concerning the objectives assumed by the instruments for implementing the RDI policies from which they benefited?</li> </ul>
Were the DAC / OECD criteria used in structuring the evaluation?	YES. From the analysis of the evaluation objectives, it is observed the use of efficiency and effectiveness criteria.
Was the data used clear, robust, and sufficient?	YES. The data used is clear and robust. The experts opted for the use of quantitative data, trying as much as possible to eliminate the subjectivity and lack of standardization of information obtained by qualitative methods. However, in the process of implementing the methodology, the possibility of using qualitative data was not eliminated, as they were useful for obtaining a better understanding of the functioning of the RDI system, as well as for verifying the accuracy of quantitative data collected and analyzed in the evaluation process.
Are the risks of the	YES. The methodology presents the limits of the

assessment clearly and specifically identified?	evaluation and its consequences.
Does the report have key documents such as terms of reference, etc. attached?	Attached to the Report, in its form available to the general public, are several annexes, as mentioned in the report, but the terms of reference are not included. At the level of the Authority responsible for managing the service contract, this type of documents was not centralized, so it was not possible to identify the terms of reference that formed the basis of the evaluation.
<b>Criterion no. 3: Presentation of evaluation results</b>	
Rating: Excellent	
Are the evaluators' findings and recommendations clearly described?	YES. The report contains separate chapters for each of the aspects assessed. At the same time, there is a separate section at the end of the report where the findings for each specific evaluation objective and the evaluators' recommendations are presented.
Does the evaluation report have a logical structure, does it present the information clearly and coherently?	The evaluation report has a logical structure and the information is presented clearly and coherently. The chapters are presented in italics, according to the objectives of the evaluation and also according to the questions to which the evaluation had to answer. It is also worth mentioning the high level of detail of the evaluation activities.
<b>Criterion no. 4: Use of evaluation results</b>	
Rating: Good	
Are previous evaluation experiences identified?	Not. The report does not refer to previous evaluation experiences in the area under

	analysis, although it is a thematic mid-term evaluation exercise.
Are future decisions or actions identified that could use the results of this evaluation?	Not. Although recommendations have been made, they do not address specific actions in which the results of this evaluation exercise can be used. The recommendations made are rather general.

Table no. 3.5.2.4 – Analysis grid no. 4

<b>Evaluation report identification data</b>	
Report name	NS RDI Impact Assessment Study 2014-2020, aggregated at national level
Type of evaluation	Intermediate
The evaluated period	2014 - 2019
The evaluation period	2019
<b>Criterion no. 1: Coordination of the evaluation process</b>	
Rating: Very Good	
<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Have the actors involved in the evaluation process been identified, including their roles?	The report indicates which actors are involved in the evaluation process (Ministry of Research and Innovation and the National Institute for Scientific Research in the Field of Labor and Social Protection).
Was the evaluation carried out by an external or internal team?	The report is part of the deliverables of the project “Development of the administrative capacity of the Research and Innovation Ministry for the implementation of actions established in the National Strategy for Research, Technological Development and Innovation, 2014-2020 - SIPOCA 27” and was carried out by a team of internal experts from

	the National Institute for Scientific Research in the Field of Labor and Social Protection.
<b>Criterion no. 2: Design and methodology</b>	
Rating: Very good	
Is the chosen methodology clearly described?	<p>The evaluation was carried out according to a detailed methodology, which represents a separate deliverable within the SIPOCA project<sup>27</sup> - "Impact assessment methodology of NSRDI 2020 2014-2020".</p> <p>The purpose of assessing the impact of the NSRDI 2020 Strategy, in the middle of the implementation period (2014-2019), is to demonstrate whether the interventions are progressing towards the objectives, assessing the short-term impact of funded and completed projects on the identified outcome and impact variables.</p> <p>The evaluation was divided into three levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The first level is the evaluation of funding programs and instruments through which concrete measures are proposed to achieve the objectives of the strategy.</li> <li>- The second level consists of assessing the impact on the areas of smart specialization and the field of public health priority.</li> <li>- The third level is the evaluation of NSRDI 2020 itself, with the role of understanding the effectiveness and efficiency of its contribution to the achievement of strategic objectives at the national level.</li> </ul> <p>The methodology mentions in detail what its limitations are.</p>

Is the choice of methodology motivated?	YES. For each of the chosen methods and tools, including the data used, justified details are presented, sufficient to provide robustness to the evaluation approach.
Are the evaluation questions relevant to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation?	<p>YES. The questions are highlighted in the methodology and correspond to the objectives of the evaluation.</p> <p>The evaluation questions used are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To what extent do the objectives of NSRDI 2020 reflect the needs identified at the national level? (relevance)</li> <li>2. Has the implementation of NSRDI 2020 been carried out as planned? "What" went "and what" didn't go "in the implementation of SNCDI 2020?"</li> <li>3. What is the progress towards specific objectives? Have the objectives/targets of SNCDI 2020 been achieved?</li> <li>4. How has the impact on funding instruments and smart specialization areas contributed to the achievement of the SNCDI 2020 objectives?</li> <li>5. To what extent has SNCDI 2020 contributed to the evolution of macroeconomic indicators at the national level (gross domestic product formation, employment)?</li> <li>6. To what extent and how could things have been done better?</li> </ol>
Were the DAC / OECD criteria used in structuring the evaluation?	YES. From the analysis of the evaluation objectives, it is observed the use of efficiency and effectiveness criteria.
Was the data used clear, robust and sufficient?	YES. The data used are clear and sufficient. However, experts identify potential risks

	related to the availability of statistics.
Are the risks of the assessment clearly and specifically identified?	<p>YES. The following risk categories have been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General issues related to impact assessment are related to theoretical and methodological aspects, availability of statistics, the bias in the choice of variables.</li> <li>- Access to data and selection of analyzed units.</li> <li>- Choosing the time of the evaluation that must take into account the time required after the implementation of the program for the results to become visible.</li> <li>- Delays and discontinuities in program implementation.</li> </ul>
Does the report have key documents such as terms of reference, etc. attached?	Several annexes are attached to the Report, in its form available to the general public, as mentioned in the report, but the terms of reference are not included.
<b>Criterion no. 3: Presentation of evaluation results</b>	
Rating: Excellent	
Are the evaluators' findings and recommendations clearly described?	YES. The report contains separate chapters for each of the aspects assessed. At the same time, there is a separate section at the end of the report where the evaluators' conclusions and recommendations are presented.
Does the evaluation report have a logical structure, does it present the information clearly and coherently?	The evaluation report has a logical structure and the information is presented clearly and coherently. The chapters are presented in italics, according to the objectives of the evaluation and to the questions to which the evaluation had to answer. It is also worth mentioning the high level of detail of the

	evaluation activities.
<b>Criterion no. 4: Use of evaluation results</b>	
Rating: Excellent	
Are previous evaluation experiences identified?	Yes. The report contains references to the elaboration of SNCDI 2014 - 2020 and PNCDI III and, although no evaluation issues are explicitly mentioned, a deductive reasoning can be used to link to the previous evaluation exercise and the limitations created by it.
Are future decisions or actions identified that could use the results of this evaluation?	The report explicitly states that the analysis of the evaluation results will provide the main beneficiaries and users: the Ministry of Research and Innovation, the line ministries responsible for public policies in the fields of SNCDI 2020, UEFISCDI, and interested economic and social partners, the possibility of implementing an evidence-based decision-making mechanism regarding the modification of the adopted strategic lines, the implementation mechanisms, the decision to continue funding or to selectively enhance it on certain programs/areas using the instruments with the highest potential to achieve significant positive effects. In this sense, the results obtained will provide the Ministry of Research and Innovation with strong arguments to justify the budgetary need to support the development of the RDI field in the coming years.

#### Evaluation of the criterion "Coordination of the evaluation process"

The analyzed reports indicate who held the function of coordinating the evaluation process without detailing all the stakeholders involved in this process. Simultaneously, incomplete or non-existent information on the experts who carried out the evaluation led to low ratings for this criterion. It is noted that this information is more accurate when it comes to evaluation exercises carried out in European funded projects.

#### Evaluation of the criterion "Design and methodology"

If the design and methodology of the evaluation are described in a more detailed manner with each evaluation exercise, the motivation for choosing a specific methodology is missing in the first analyzed reports. Furthermore, for none of the reports could the terms of reference be identified so that, regardless of the degree of detail of the methodology and tools chosen, we can only assume that what was delivered is and what was requested. The risks of evaluation are present in the reports prepared since 2015. A common element of all evaluation exercises is the use of at least one DAC / OECD criterion, which indicates the observance of an internationally accepted methodological framework.

#### Evaluation of the criterion "Presentation of evaluation results"

If the information in the analyzed reports is not always presented following a logical structure and the accuracy of the information raises questions about the degree of substantiation of the findings, each report still contains separate chapters to present the results of the evaluation, clearly highlighting the findings and recommendations of evaluators.

#### Evaluation of the criterion "Use of evaluation results"

The evaluation exercises analyzed do not contain information on previous evaluations or their lack, so the idea is induced that this is a singular approach.

The recommendations made by the evaluators are associated with future events and actions in which they could be implemented without detailing and how this operationalization could take place or if effective steps are envisaged.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Following the application of the analysis grid and the study of the relevant programmatic documents related to research-innovation policies in Romania, we compared the results obtained in order to verify the research hypothesis stated at the beginning of the article and the conclusions that emerged are:

The evaluation exercises were carried out as singular actions, without following a chronology of the analyzed policies. Nevertheless, this is a consequence, firstly, of the different purposes of each evaluation exercise and, secondly, of the administrative instability known to the authority responsible for managing research and innovation policies and the periodic fragmentation of its tasks. Furthermore, the analysis of the studied programmatic documents, corroborated with the data on the financing of the research-development-innovation system in the analyzed period, resulted in a low interest of the decision-makers to support the improvement of research-innovation policy management tools that received numerous budget cuts.

The methodology and tools used have evolved positively from one evaluation exercise to another. Notwithstanding, even though the presentation of the evaluation results has improved, their use remains an aspect that is difficult to follow. On the one hand, one reason is that we do not find information on whether or not to implement the previous recommendations and, on the other hand, because of the proposed recommendations, although identifying actions in which they could be implemented, do not stipulate what steps would be taken, to be followed, which actors can be involved and the time horizon in which they could be implemented.

Regarding the National Strategy for Research-Development-Innovation 2014-2020, although references to the recommendations contained in previous

evaluations have been identified, it is difficult to quantify the degree to which the results of these evaluations have been used. In the absence of details on how those recommendations were implemented, the mere reference to them in the strategy, when describing the approach of its elaboration, is insufficient to state with certainty that the public policy document is based on the results of previous evaluations.

Based on the conclusions obtained from the comparison of the analysis grids, we can affirm that the inconsistency of the analyzed data makes it difficult to establish a correlation between the usability of the evaluation results and the degree of use of these results in the process of substantiating future policies. Specifically, the use of evaluation results is an action that is difficult to predict, influenced rather by external, unknown factors. The research hypothesis is not, therefore, validated, or at least not in the context of the evaluation exercises analyzed.

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