

OECD Recommendation on Public Policy Evaluation: guidance on the institutionalisation, quality and use of evaluations

Claire Salama, Performance monitoring and evaluation lead, OECD

03.11.2022



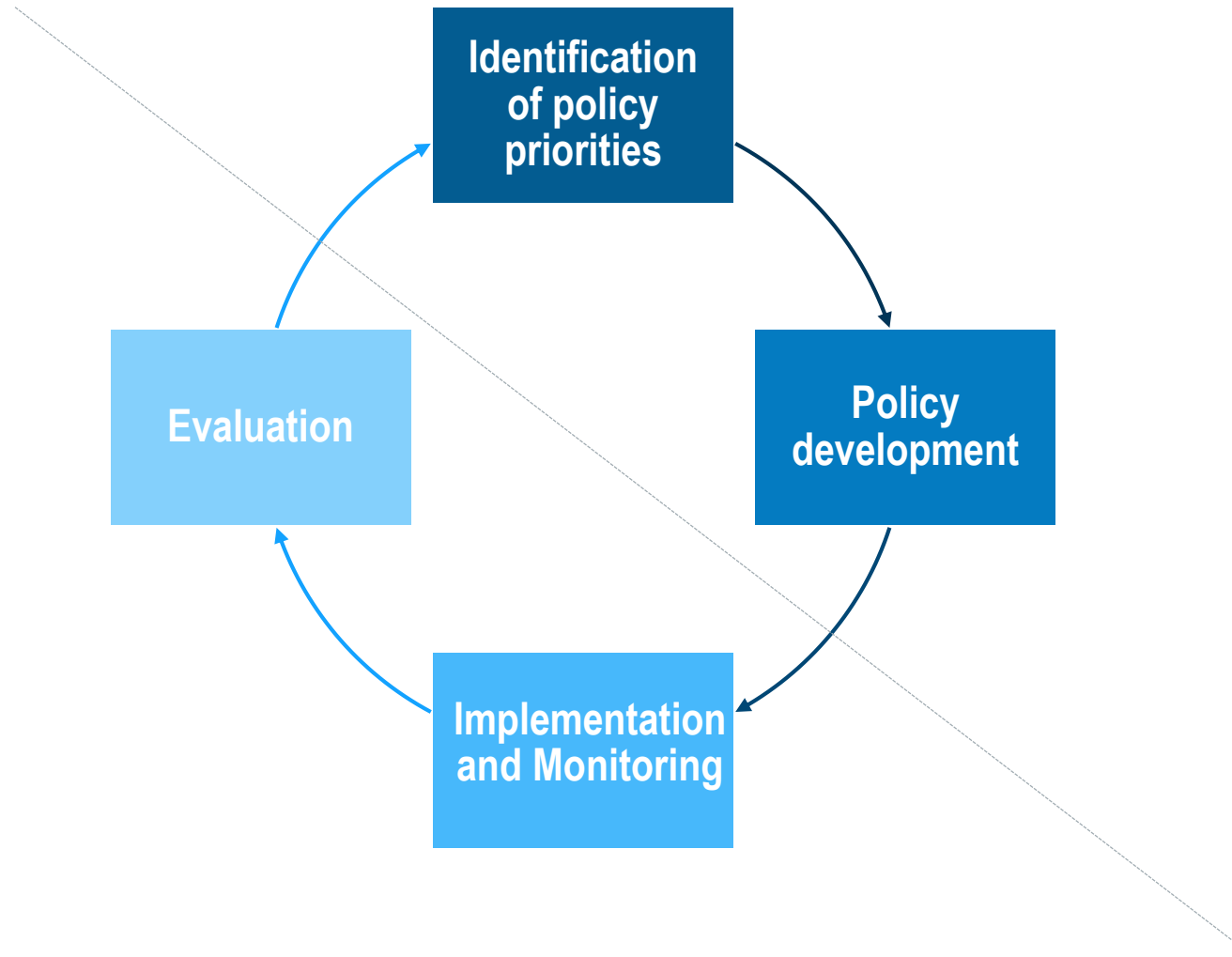


WHAT IS PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION?



I. The role of monitoring and evaluation in Evidence-Informed Policy-Making

SUPPLY



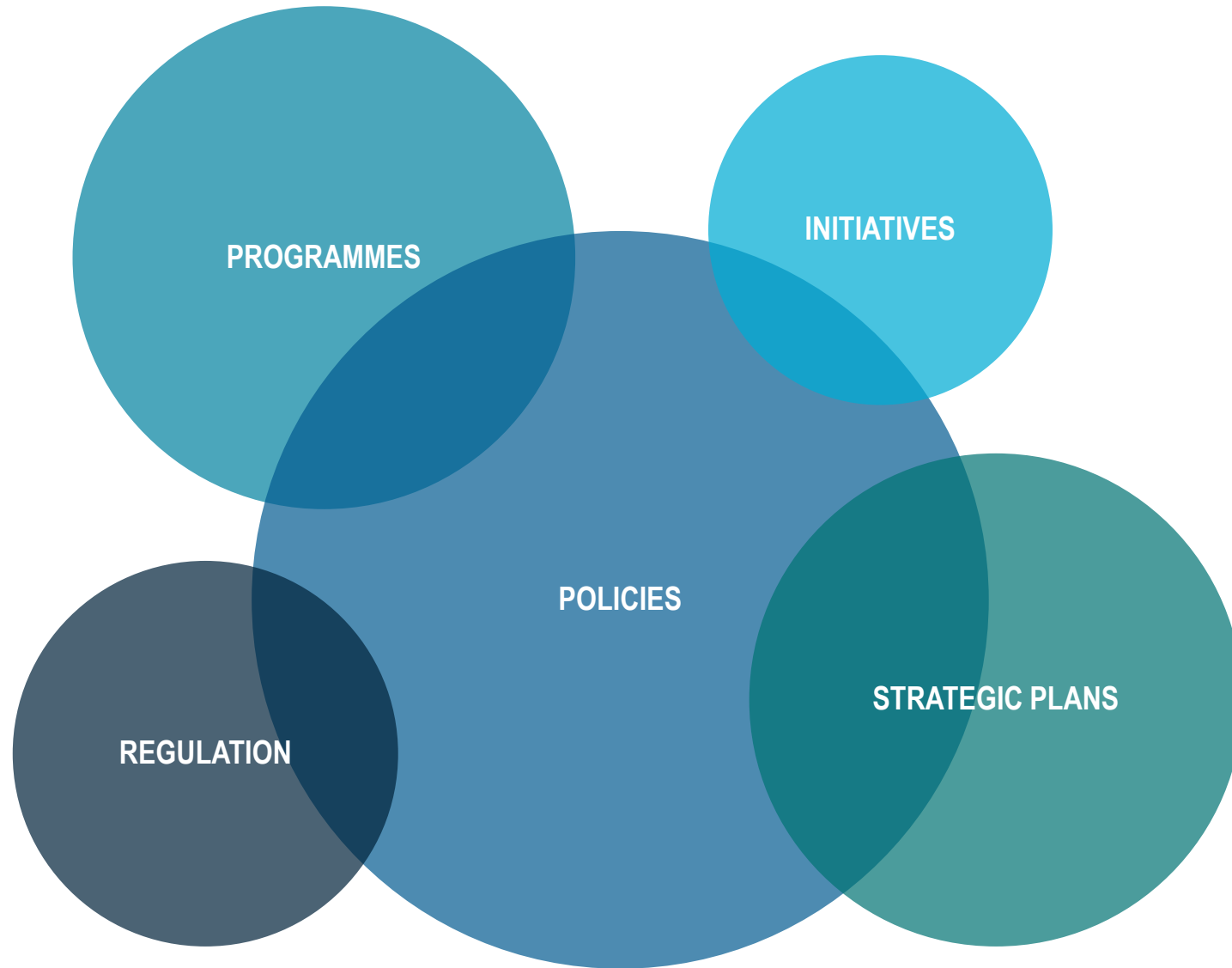
DEMAND



This is one way of representing a process, which in reality is not always linear or cyclical.



I. Understanding policy evaluation





WHY DO WE NEED GUIDANCE ON PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION?



II. Why evaluate policies?

An increased need for evaluation for the COVID-19 recovery...

- › **Draw lessons from the COVID-19** pandemic and its aftermath.
- › **Increase the effectiveness of public spending** to secure recovery from the COVID Pandemic.

...but also to address structural issues.

- › Improve decision making by **understanding “what works” and what does not.**
- › **Prevent one-sided policy design, avoid duplication and ensure scarce resources are well used.**
- › **Improve policy implementation** and adapt policies to meet local needs.
- › **Increase trust** in public institutions by promoting **transparency and communicating** results to citizens.



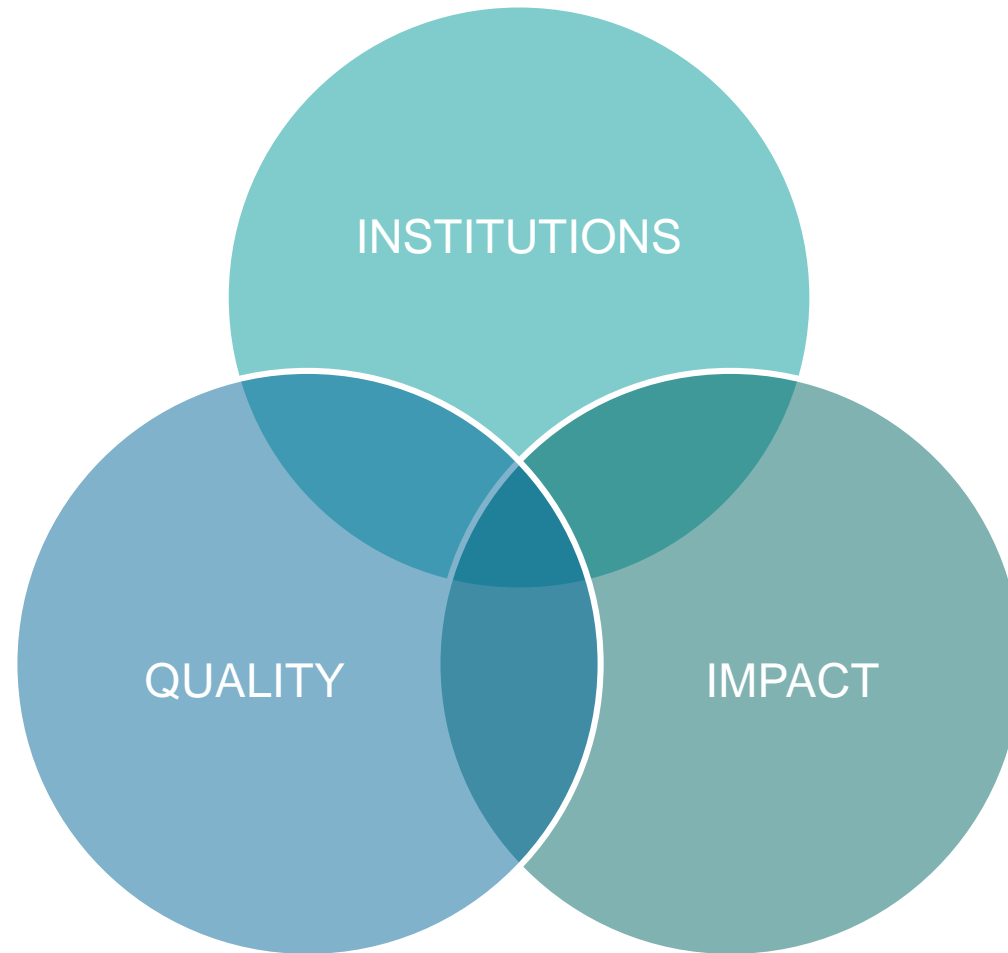
II. Then why is it difficult for evaluations to be supplied and used?

- › Information to be considered by policy makers is overwhelming and complex.
- › Evidence gaps remain on 'what works' in many policy areas (rise of wicked problems).
- › Political interest is needed.
- › Evaluations can mobilize a lot of resources and time.
- › Data availability and sharing (e.g. GDPR).
- ›



RECOMMENDATION ON PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION

III. What scope for the Recommendation?



Need to go beyond the issue of supply, and look at whole-of-government institutionalisation, quality, impact.



III. Overview of the draft Recommendation on policy evaluation

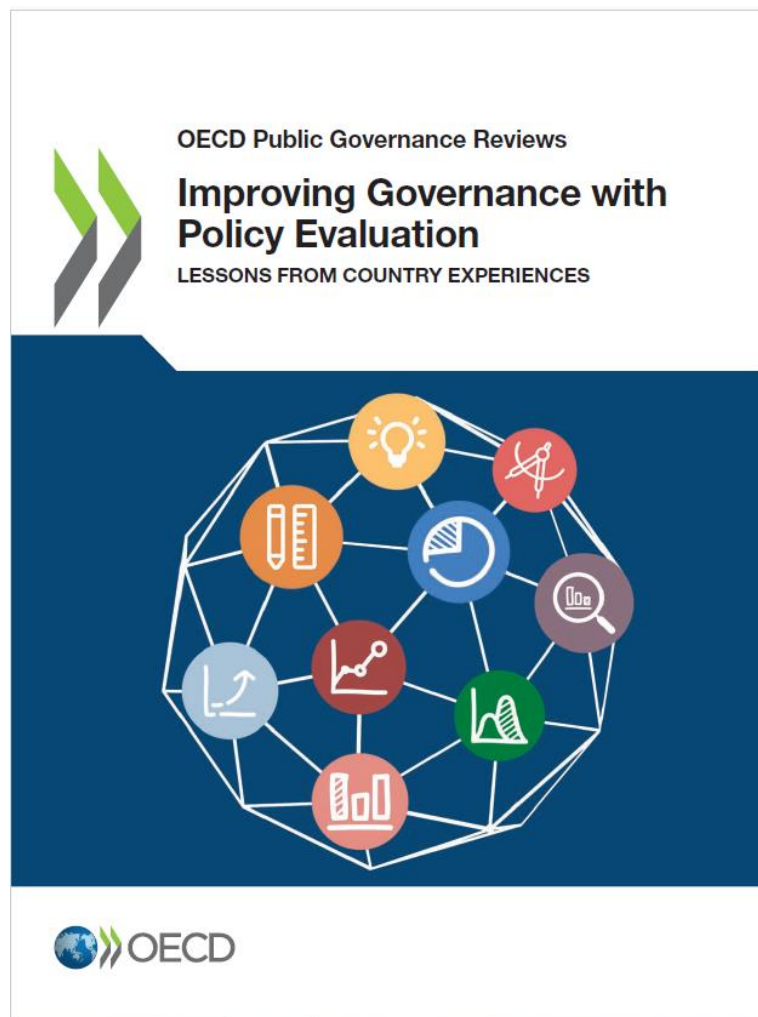
1. Institutionalise evaluation from a whole of government perspective.

2. Promote the quality of evaluations.

3. Conduct evaluations that impact decision-making.



III. A strong evidence base for the Recommendation



Solid evidence gathered from member countries

- › OECD has worked on **evaluation for over 20 years.**
- › In more recent years:
 - **Comparative data** from 42 countries on policy evaluation,
 - **Analytical work:** Improving governance with policy evaluation (2020), Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making (2020), Mobilising Evidence for Good Governance (2021), etc.
 - **Evaluation Expert Group,**
 - **Country engagement.**



The Secretariat works to provide international guidance in this area and share best practices from countries' evaluations.

1. Institutionalise evaluation from a whole of government perspective.

WHY?

- **create impetus** for evaluations to be conducted.
- **create a common understanding** of the goals pursued through evaluation.
- **clarify mandates and responsibilities** (who does what?).
- provide **high-level guidance** to institutions by outlining best practices, goals and methods for policy evaluation.

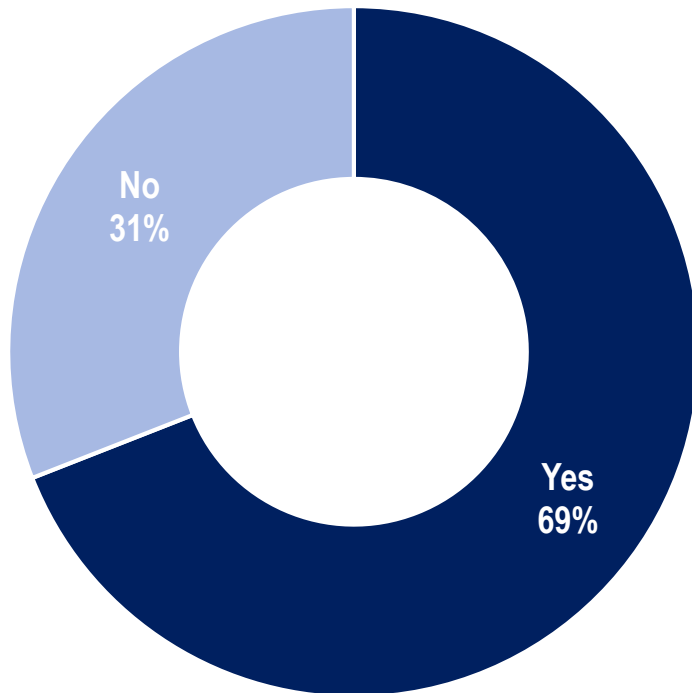


HOW?

- **a legal or policy basis** to perform evaluations and use evaluations (e.g. laws, regulations, strategic orientations, etc.).
- **mandates** to institutional actors **for supervising, controlling and performing policy evaluations, within and outside the executive.**
- **cross government macro orientations** as to when and how to perform policy evaluation from an **‘evaluation champion’** or **coordinating institution.**

1. Institutionalise evaluation from a whole of government perspective.

2/3 of OECD countries have a legal cross-government framework for policy evaluation.



Source: OECD Survey on Policy Evaluation (2019)

ZOOM ON CANADA'S POLICY ON RESULTS (2016)



OBJECTIVE: improve the results across government and better understand the resources used to achieve them.

COORDINATING AUTHORITY: the Treasury Board is responsible for:

- promoting the use of evaluations
- updating the evaluation policy
- requiring LMs to undertake specific evaluations and participate in centrally-led evaluations;
- approving LM's departmental results frameworks.

ROLE OF LINE MINISTRIES:

- should all have an evaluation unit.
- must establish a departmental results framework.

1. Institutionalise evaluation from a whole of government perspective

Promoting the supply of evaluations through macro orientations on when and how to perform policy evaluation from an **‘evaluation champion’**.

ZOOM ON THE NETHERLAND'S STRATEGIC EVALUATION AGENDA (2020)



OBJECTIVE:

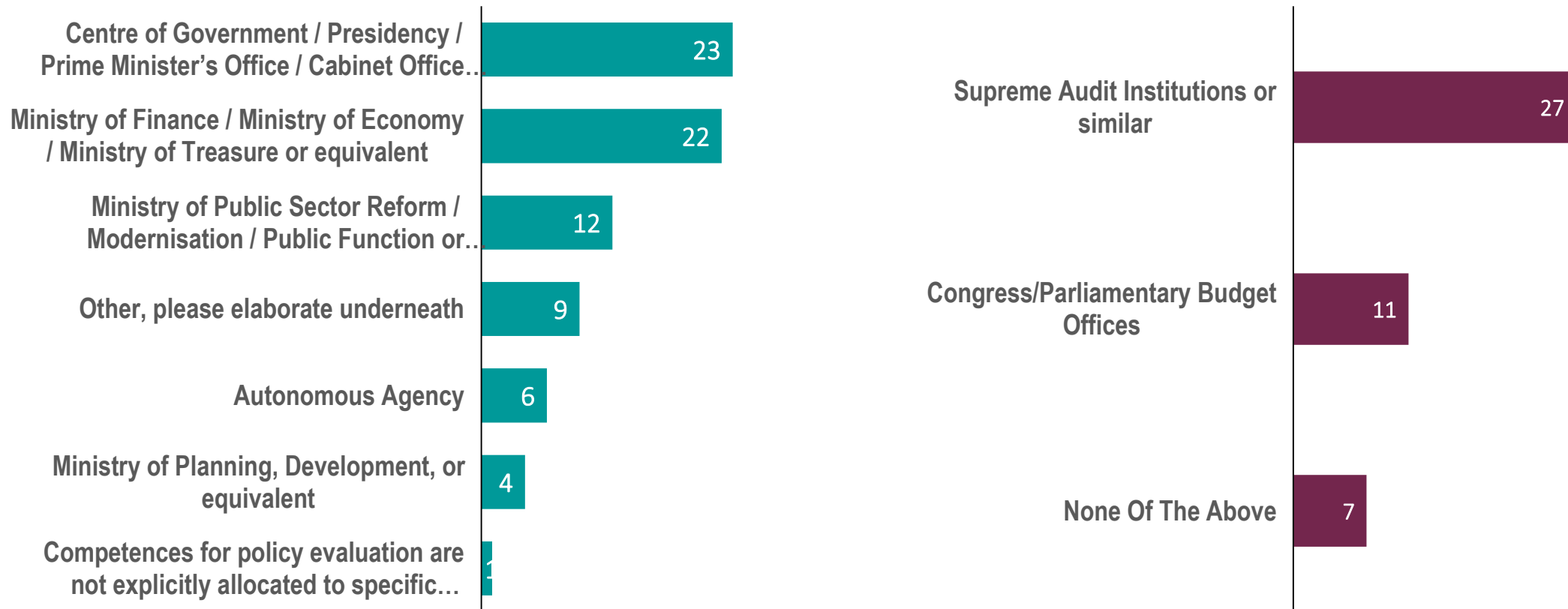
- improve the potential for evaluation to contribute to learning and not just accountability,
- have a coordinated approach to evaluation across ministries
- Ensure that evaluation results are timely.

COORDINATING AUTHORITY: Ministry of Finance. The programming of SEA largely follows the policy priorities from the policy agenda accompanying the budget (3-4 years).

ROLE OF LINE MINISTRIES: The departmental SEA sent to the Parliament annually.

1. Institutionalise evaluation from a whole of government perspective.

What actors coordinate evaluations across government, within and outside the executive?





III. BUT need to create a culture to fill the implementation gap

Some of the major challenges facing governments wishing to promote policy evaluations today:

- Do we want evaluation on paper or in practice ?
- Institutionalisation and legal frameworks matter, but how can we embed the tool in the machinery of government?
- Success is contingent on quality and impact.
- Quality and impact cannot be written in law:
 - They need a supporting environment
 - They require skills
 - And attention from politicians, the press and the media!

2. Promote the quality of evaluations.

WHY?

- **Quality** is what determines if the **evidence** that is produced is **credible**, which in turn **allows evaluations to contribute to improved decision-making**.
- **Poor quality evaluations lack credibility which can affect their use.**
- **Poor quality evaluations can also be subject to bias, error or undue influence.**

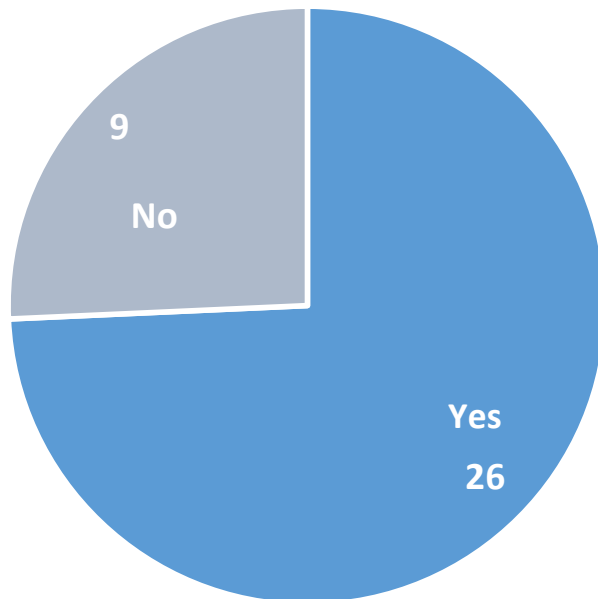


HOW?

- **Develop standards or guidelines on the quality of the evaluation process** (design, methods, resources, role of stakeholders, etc.).
- **Control the quality of the evaluation end product**, e.g. through peer review.
- Promote **evaluators' skills**, but also **ethics**.
- Foster quality at an institutional level, by ensuring the independence of 'external' evaluations through appropriate resources and autonomy.

2. Promote the quality of evaluations

Guidelines to promote the quality of evaluations



Source: OECD Survey on Policy Evaluation (2019)

UNITED KINGDOM GUIDELINES ON EVALUATION



MAGENTA BOOK: provides guidance to government on how to conduct and use policy evaluation.

GREEN BOOK: provides guidance on how to appraise policies, programmes, and projects.

AQUA BOOK: guidance on how to conduct quality policy analysis.

2. Promote the quality of evaluations

WHY DEVELOP EVALUATION CAPACITIES IN LINE MINISTRIES?

- ✓ Internal capacities (inside the line ministries), such as evaluation or analytical units, are likely to **increase policy relevance, applicability and timeliness** of evidence for decision-making.
- ✓ The availability of in-house evaluation expertise creates **incentives** to motivate policy-makers to use evidence their work.
- ✓ But not every policy officer needs evaluation skills....

EVALUATION SKILLS IN GOVERNMENT

UK: a total of 15,000 'policy analysts' (statisticians, evaluators and economists) are based across the government departments.

IRELAND: the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) operates as an integrated, cross-Government evaluation service,.

US: the 2019 Foundations for EBPM Act requires agencies to create a Chief Evaluation Officer and requires the creation of a new job series in the civil service for program evaluation.

3. Conduct evaluations that have an impact on decision-making.

WHY?

- Without impact and use, **there will remain a gap between what we know to work and decision-making.**
- **Evaluations require significant public resources.**
- The risk is that of saturation of evidence, whereby **quality evaluations get lost in the shuffle.**

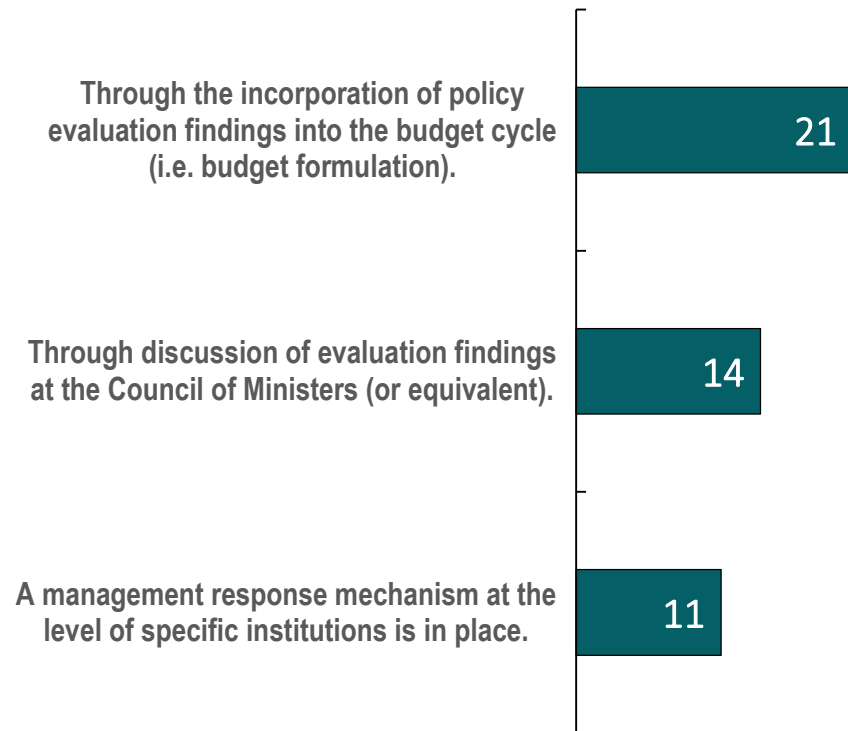


HOW?

- **conduct evaluations that are designed with ‘use-first’ in mind** (involving stakeholders, proportionality, timeliness, etc.).
- **embed evaluation use in decision-making:** budget cycle, decision making in the CoG, discussion by Parliament, etc.
- promote **access to evaluations results.**
- **support the uptake of evaluations results** (communication strategies, evidence synthesis methods, etc.).

3. Conduct evaluations that impact decision-making

Mechanisms to incorporate evaluations in decision making

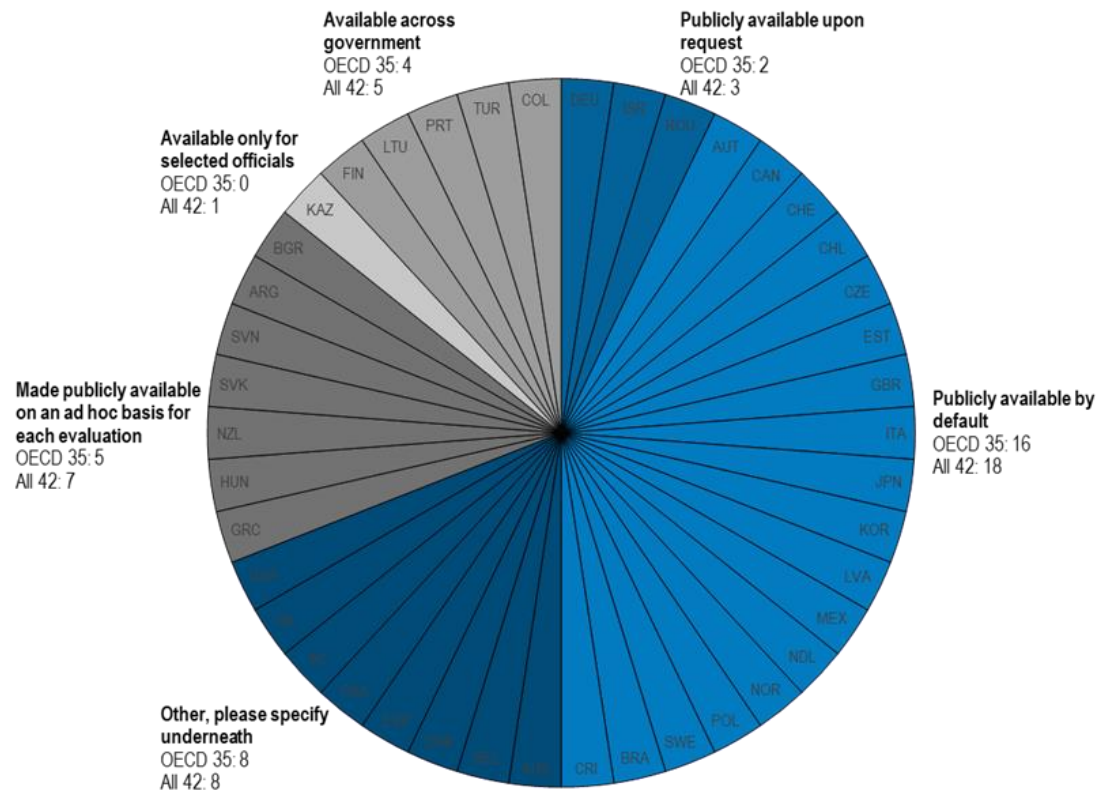


USE OF EVALUATIONS IN BUDGET DECISION-MAKING

- ✓ Country practices vary depending on
 - the **nature of the evidence produced**: spending reviews, programme evaluations, etc.
 - The level of decision-making: influence at the ministry level is greater than on CBA decisions
 - the **extent to which this evidence will impact budgetary decisions**, e.g. depending on the type of performance budgeting used
 - Evaluations ex ante vs. ex post

3. Conduct evaluations that impact decision-making

Publicity of evaluations



GOOD PRACTICES

- Beyond publicity, countries also make use of communication strategies to target specific publics and actively disseminate results. (e.g. infographics, executive summaries, social media, seminars, etc.)
- Only 2 countries (JPN, POL) use evidence synthesis methods within government – explained by the role of clearinghouses?

KEY TAKEAWAYS?

- A key tool to support quality of decision-making in all its forms.
- What makes a healthy evaluation ecosystem:
 - No one size fits all
 - Importance of skills and capacity for implementation.
 - Levers of impact are multi-dimensional: communication, transparency, role of knowledge brokers, systematic feedback loops, etc.



OVERVIEW OF SOME OF THE OECD'S OTHER WORK ON EVALUATION



IV. Overview of a recent study on Evaluations of COVID-19 responses: First lessons

WHY?

- Real time sharing of lessons
- Insights for future policy efforts and resilience

WHAT?

- Evidence synthesis
- 67 evaluations from 18 OECD countries over 15 months
- Evaluations (vs. compliance audits, monitoring reports, etc.)

HOW?

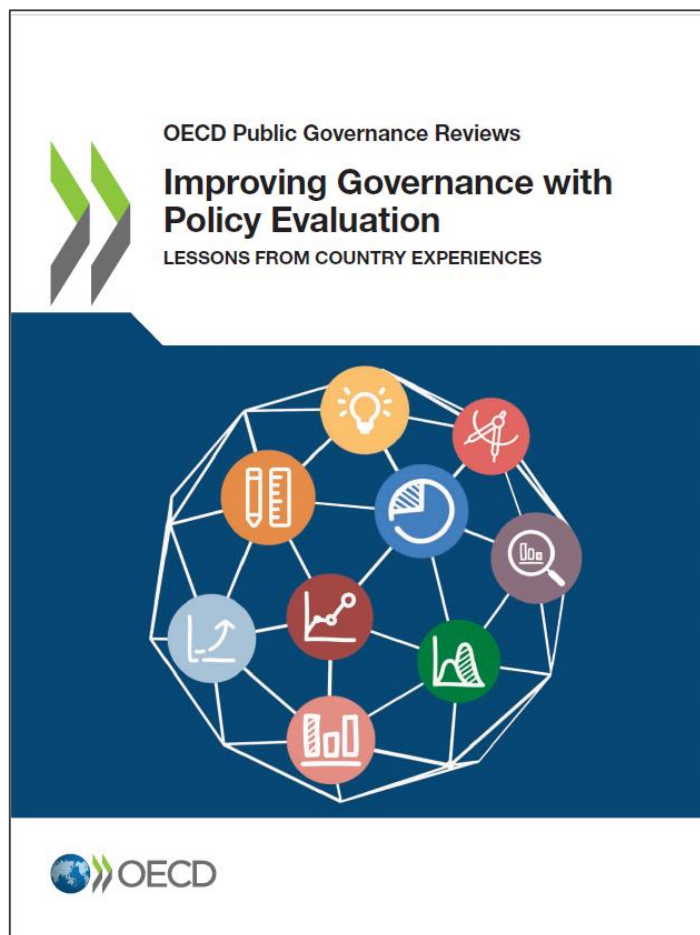
- Software assisted qualitative content analysis
- Coding based on 'OECD framework'
- Results assessed based on robustness of evidence → key insights supported by several sources

IV. Examples of recent country engagement





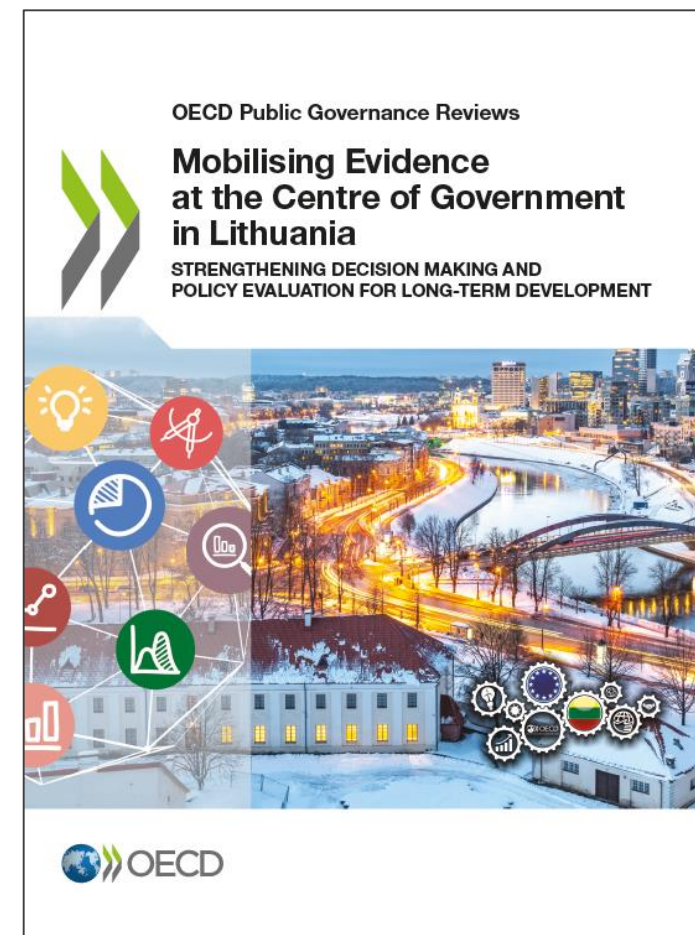
IV. Further reading



<https://bit.ly/3DvxgWH>



<https://bit.ly/3dpPpe3>



<https://bit.ly/3lcxD1V>

Thank you!

For more information: claire.salama@oecd.org
<https://oe.cd/monitoring-and-evaluation>