

Governance Needs Evaluation

Policy Document of DeGEval - Gesellschaft fuer Evaluation

Modern societies are shaped by complex governance processes within which the economic, political, educational and social system and further stakeholders pursue diverse, and oftentimes contradictory interests each with a different logic of action. Moreover, the globalisation of markets makes even further demands on governance processes, as has been demonstrated by the recent financial crisis. This complex relationship of governance and evaluation was the topic of the 11th annual meeting of the DeGEval - Gesellschaft fuer Evaluation in Klagenfurt, Austria.

In recent years, evaluations have become more important in all fields of politics and practice. They can provide well-founded information for policy planning, the improvement of operational sequences in organisations and for the further development of professional practices in general. In the opinion of DeGEval, this is both an opportunity and a risk: an opportunity in that evaluations can improve governance processes via well-founded knowledge and transparent evaluation policies; a risk, however, insofar as evaluations can be used solely to legitimise political decisions and the evaluations themselves - due to growing demand and often low budgets - can lack essential quality standards.

From the perspective of DeGEval, the interconnection of evaluations with decision-making processes in political, economic and other fields of practice is an essential requirement to contribute to a reflective attitude of decision-makers, to found governance on a factual basis and to assess and anticipate consequences accurately. Thus, evaluations contribute to politics and practice founded upon empirical facts.

The executive board of DeGEval calls upon decision-makers in politics and other fields of practice to create adequate conditions in order to strengthen the use of evaluation for rational governance. The following aspects are of especial importance:

1. The support of governance processes with evaluation requires a binding agreement regarding the form and transparency of the use of results. Unclear or lacking agreements without an orientation towards potential users reduce the relevance of evaluation for governance.
2. For the implementation of evaluation it is of utmost importance to define a time frame in accordance with the evaluation's purpose in order to be able to observe methodical and field-specific standards. In particular, evaluators should be involved early in the target explication process and the creation of instruments for programmes, strategies and institutions in order to enable a discussion regarding the feasibility of certain evaluation designs with the client.
3. Evaluations must be backed by sufficient resources. DeGEval views with concern that on the one hand the number of evaluations has drastically increased, on the other hand, however, the necessary amount of financial resources for qualitatively appropriate evaluations are oftentimes not available.
4. Taking all things into consideration, the allocation of evaluations should take place according to professional standards that alongside the already mentioned aspects also define the relationship between evaluators and clients and define the evaluation schedule.
5. On the part of the evaluators, it is required that they have adequate methodical and field knowledge, evaluation experience, social skills and know-how regarding evaluation approaches and models. This is essential because evaluation results are only useful if the evaluations are carried out professionally.
6. Thus, evaluations should take place in accordance with national and international standards upon which all stakeholders are in agreement.

DeGEval - Gesellschaft fuer Evaluation as Europe's largest association for evaluation has developed several helpful products to support stakeholders in evaluations. Alongside the *DeGEval - Standards for Evaluation* that are widespread in Europe there are in particular the *Recommendations for Clients of Evaluation* and the *Recommendations on Education and Training in Evaluation*.

For further information please visit: <http://www.degeval.de>