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**A5-0284/2002**

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## **REPORT**

on the Commission's evaluation activities  
(2002/2131(INI))

Committee on Budgetary Control

Rapporteur: Christopher Heaton-Harris



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## PROCEDURAL PAGE

At the sitting of 4 July 2002 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Budgetary Control had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative report, pursuant to Rule 163 of the Rules of Procedure, on the Commission's evaluation activities.

The Committee on Budgetary Control appointed Christopher Heaton-Harris rapporteur at its meeting of 23 May 2002.

The Committee considered the draft report at its meetings of 16 June, 8 July and 9 September 2002.

At the last meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: Herbert Bösch, 1<sup>st</sup> vice-chairman; Paulo Casaca, 2<sup>nd</sup> vice-chairman; Freddy Blak, 3<sup>rd</sup> vice-chairman; Christopher Heaton-Harris, rapporteur; Generoso Andria, María Antonia Avilés Perea, Ioannis Averoff (for Brigitte Langenhagen), Juan José Bayona de Perogordo, Renzo Imbeni (for Eluned Morgan), Helmut Kuhne, John Joseph McCartin (for Diemut R. Theato), Jan Mulder (for Antonio Di Pietro), Ole Sørensen, Bart Staes, Gabriele Stauner, Jeffrey William Titford, and Michiel van Hulten.

The report was tabled on 11 September 2002.

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

### European Parliament resolution on the Commission's evaluation activities (2002/2131(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Article 274 of the EC Treaty,
  - having regard to Article 2 of the Financial Regulation as amended by Council Regulation No 2333/95 of 18 September 1995<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to Annual Evaluation Review 2001 (SEC(2002) 337)<sup>2</sup>, 2000 (SEC(2001) 152)<sup>3</sup>, 1999<sup>4</sup> and 1998<sup>5</sup>,
  - having regard to the Commission's communication "Concrete steps towards best practice across the Commission" of 8 May 1996 (SEC 96/659)<sup>6</sup>,
  - having regard to the Commission's communication "Spending more wisely: Implementation of the Commission's evaluation policy" (SEC(1999) 69/4)<sup>7</sup>,
  - having regard to the memorandum to the Commission from Mrs Schreyer on the Commission's evaluation policy and activities in 1999 and 2000<sup>8</sup>,
  - having regard to the communication to the Commission from Mrs Schreyer in agreement with Mr Kinnock and the President "Focus on Results: Strengthening evaluation of Commission activities" (SEC(2000)1051)<sup>9</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A5-0284/2002),
- A. whereas the Treaty and the Financial Regulation require the Commission to observe the principles of sound financial management when preparing and executing European Union expenditure programmes,
- B. whereas result-oriented public sector management makes an efficient and independent evaluation function indispensable,
- C. whereas the Commission in the context of the SEM 2000 initiative in May 1996 adopted a policy of systematic evaluation of EU expenditure programmes and actions,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 240, 07/10/1995 p. 1

<sup>2</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review2001\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review2001_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review2000\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review2000_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review99\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review99_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review98\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review98_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/communications/communication96\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/communications/communication96_en.htm)

<sup>7</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/communications/communication99\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/communications/communication99_en.htm)

<sup>8</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/communications/memorandum2000\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/communications/memorandum2000_en.htm)

<sup>9</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/sec20001051\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/sec20001051_en.pdf)

D. whereas this policy is built on - among others - the following general principles:

- 1) operational services are responsible for evaluation of their programmes;
  - 2) operational services shall establish an annual evaluation plan;
  - 3) actions financed on an annual basis shall be evaluated at least once every six years; multi-annual programmes shall be subject to mid-term and ex post evaluations;
  - 4) evaluation reports shall be made available well before the adoption of proposals they are meant to influence;
  - 5) the College will take note of the Annual Evaluation Programme,
  - 6) DG Audit will carry out a regular review and report to the College on the quality of the organisations and systems DGs have put in place for evaluation<sup>1</sup>,
1. Is convinced that one of the most important tasks for the institutions of the European Union is to respond efficiently to European taxpayers' request for clarity, openness and transparency as regards the use of their contribution to the EU budget;
  2. Fully shares the view that systematic evaluation is a prime instrument to ensure value for money for expenditure from the EU budget;
  3. Believes that quality of information has an impact on the usefulness of the information exchanged as well as on the perception by the beneficiary of the information;
  4. Welcomes and recognises the Commission's efforts to develop a general evaluation culture in the institution;
  5. Invites the Commission to follow strict criteria of cost-benefit analysis when requesting evaluation reports, preventing their multiplication, especially when they apply to very small-scale projects;

#### **Division of responsibility**

6. Notes the existing evaluation practice within the Commission whereby operational DGs and Services are responsible for regular evaluation of their programmes and for organising the capacity needed for planning and managing the evaluations in their area;
7. Notes also that the central services, DG-Budget and the Secretariat General have been made responsible for support and coordination;
8. Recognises that this division of responsibility is in line with the general thrust of the Commission reform which seeks to give more responsibility to Directors-General;
- 8.
9. Considers however, that there might be reasons for giving central services a greater say in

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 1 in SEC (2000) 1051

defining priorities for the annual evaluation programme and in developing a system with the aim of greater comparability of reports and their results at various levels of implementation; would welcome an opinion on the matter from the Court of Auditors;

10. Invites the Commission to make a better use of its evaluation effort by an increased co-ordination effort; this effort could be developed namely by keeping regular updatings, on a monthly basis, of all evaluation reports finished, planned or being developed;
11. Considers evaluation to be a normal and systematic task of the Commission, as well as of the other institutions; however, external evaluations may be developed whenever deemed necessary, on a case by case basis; the independence of the chosen evaluator regarding European institutions is a key element for these evaluations; invites the Commission, therefore, to end the practice of establishing so-called "framework contracts" and to evaluate the rationale of keeping existing ones;

### **Better integration into decision-making**

12. Takes the view that the main role of the evaluation process is to support policy development and improve the effectiveness of activities; believes at the same time that the most difficult task is to integrate evaluation findings into future policy, budgetary orientations and resource allocation;
13. Invites the Commission to take all necessary steps to ensure further improvement of the quality of evaluation and to enhance the internal feedback of evaluation reports and hence their usefulness in programme formulation and implementation; welcomes the development of forward planning of evaluations as a means to improve policy review procedures;
14. Invites the Commission to enhance the role of evaluation in the context of Activity Based Management (ABM), so as to strengthen the link between evaluation findings and the decision-making process on policy priorities and the corresponding allocation of resources;
15. Invites the Commission to consider whether the debate on major evaluation reports within the Commission takes place at the appropriate level; considers it necessary for the results of critical evaluations to be discussed in the relevant parliamentary committee, both when policy changes are envisaged and when they are not due to resource allocation factors which may require political input;
16. Points to a number of areas highlighted by particularly strong criticism such as agricultural set-aside, international fisheries agreements, cooperation with Asia and Latin America and EU support for NGO structures; expects the Commission to take account of such criticism in current policy reviews in these areas;

## **Recurrent findings**

17. Invites the Commission to avoid the repetition in its different evaluation reports of the same stock phrases of general aim, and to present precise and concrete criticisms and proposals; invites the Commission to make a more readable and more concrete annual evaluation review for 2002 than the one presented for 2001;
18. Notes with concern that different evaluators in different policy areas have been repeating similar types of criticism for several years<sup>1</sup> such as too heavy an administrative burden on beneficiaries, complexity of procedures, lack of clear strategy and clear objectives, lack of coherence between interventions and lack of efficiency;
19. Invites the Commission to further analyse the background and reasons underlying these recurrent criticisms and to include its conclusions in the next Evaluation Review;
20. Points out that a useful evaluation system is one which is able to react rapidly; invites the Commission to consider whether its ability to react to evaluation findings and to review its policies accordingly should be improved;
21. Points out that the special reports of the Court of Auditors, whilst focusing on an audit-based assessment of programmes, often level criticism of operational effectiveness as well as budget management and can thus also be taken into account in evaluation reviews; urges the two processes to work in a complementary fashion in eliminating waste and inefficient use of resources;

## **Transparency and openness**

22. Congratulates the Commission on its Evaluation website which, in a well-arranged way, presents key documents and links to other evaluation websites; invites the Commission to continue developing its dissemination of information concerning evaluation activities with regular updates;
23. Welcomes the fact that further to a request by Parliament, the Commission will now forward to its competent committee details of forthcoming evaluation reports twice per annum, ideally in January and July;
24. Notes that most evaluation reports are published on the individual DGs' websites; regrets however that its competent committee is not informed directly as and when evaluation reports are finalised; urges the Commission to find a way to do so;
25. Notes with dismay the high number of unavailable evaluation reports listed in the Annual Evaluation Review 2001; notes that under Regulation 1049/2001, only in exceptional cases, considered in Article 4 it is possible to deny Commission documents; invites the

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<sup>1</sup> see [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review2001\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review2001_en.pdf), page 8  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review2000\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review2000_en.pdf), page 6  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review99\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/pdf/review99_en.pdf), page 7



Commission to justify, case by case, under the specific provision of Article 4, the reasons for the refusal to make each of the reports available;

26. Considers the fact that ex-ante evaluations in several “high risk” areas are carried out by the national or regional authorities and project managers to be a potential weak link in the evaluation process since they often have a vested interest in the continuation of the programme or project; asks the Commission to consider the ways and means necessary to conduct independent evaluations of all key Community programmes, at least once during their lifetime, with the results being transmitted to Parliament; 27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Member States, the Council, the Commission and the Court of Auditors.

## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

One of the most important tasks for the institutions of the European Union is to respond efficiently to European taxpayers' demands for clarity, openness and transparency as regards the use of their contribution to the EU budget.

Systematic evaluation is a prime instrument to ensure value for money for expenditure from the EU budget.

However, the most difficult task is to integrate evaluation findings into future policy, budgetary orientations and resource allocation.

The present report is therefore intended as a contribution towards the process of improving evaluation as a tool for assessing the implementation of the EU's objectives.

The proposals contained in this report do not, in the rapporteur's view, have any material financial impact.