

1st European Environmental Evaluators Network forum

‘Addressing demand side expectations, side effects and methodological challenges of environmental evaluation in an era of performance-based management’

9 - 10 February, 2012 | HIVA-K.U.Leuven, Belgium

What?

Organised on an annual basis in the United States since 2006 and Canada since 2008 HIVA-K.U.Leuven will host the 1st European Environmental Evaluators Network (EEEN) forum. The objective of the forum is to advance the field of environmental evaluation, which we define as environmental policy and programme evaluation, through more systematic and collective learning among evaluators and evaluation users. At the EEEN forum we aim to bring together practitioners and users of environmental evaluation at any level and provide them with the opportunity to share views, knowledge and experiences about the use, importance and future of environmental evaluation in their respective organisations, domains and disciplines. We will also define what role the EEEN could or should play. This may be the formalisation of the EEEN forum, the formation of (a) working group(s) in a European context, etc.

The challenge

The environmental challenges we are facing today are important, but the available resources and political commitments for tackling them are limited. This reality calls for a more efficient use of the scarce resources. Growing awareness of the interdependencies of our social, economic, and ecological systems requires well-integrated decisions and thus a sound evaluation practice. Besides, in this era of heightened accountability, policy makers as well as evaluation users in non-governmental organisations and companies want evidence of what works, and what does not. This calls for improvement in the quality of environmental evaluations to meet the requirements and desire for better and more accessible evidence of policies’ (cost-)effectiveness.

Theme

At the 1st EEEN forum we will approach environmental evaluation from three different perspectives:

- demand side expectations;
- side effects;
- methodological challenges.

Demand side expectations. New developments in the world around us influence information needs of decision making, planning, designing and implementing policies, etc. This reality calls for (re)examining the coverage and focus of evaluations. What are the expectations of both public and private actors (civil society organisations and market actors i.e. companies)? Which roles could or should environmental evaluations play? When to evaluate; ex-ante, ex-post or in between? What are the actual uses of environmental evaluation? How to promote the use of evaluations? What can evaluators learn from a better understanding of the needs of the users of evaluations? How can evaluation users formulate better evaluation demands?

Side effects. Evidence shows that environmental policies, like all other policies, generate intended as well as unintended effects. Such side effects can be both negative and positive. In this era of accountability the need for an efficient use of scarce resources calls for well-integrated decisions and thus considering side effects. How to proceed with identifying, describing, quantifying side effects? How to balance positive and negative side effects with the actual policy objectives? At this forum we particularly target social impacts and competitiveness effects of environmental policies and management decisions.

Methodological challenges. Environmental problems are often complex, can span long time frames and may be marked by vast and complex geographic patterns of impact and causation. The same applies to policy responses. Environmental policies are in many ways interlinked with other policies. How to deal with the interactions between different policies? These characteristics render environmental evaluation challenging. Handling this complexity in evaluations places high demands on the evaluation methodology. What are the methodological challenges and how to address them adequately?

Besides advancing the field of environmental evaluation with respect to the above themes, we will also organise a stocktaking of the availability of masters level and professional training courses in environmental evaluation across Europe.

Audience

The EEEN welcomes evaluators and users of evaluation from all relevant fields (including climate change and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, environmental education, energy, air and water quality, waste, land and fisheries management, sustainable consumption and production, behaviour change, ecological restoration, etc.) working in academia, government agencies, consulting firms, non-governmental organisations, European and international institutions and companies.

Format

The EEEN forum wants to create a space for a lively, creative, cutting-edge dialogue. The forum is organised around a number of plenary keynote speeches, panel discussions, thematic contributions by the participants and networking events.

Call for contributions

If you would like to participate in the EEEN forum as a presenter or discussion leader, please visit <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GRBH9X8> and submit your proposal by September 23rd 2011.

Contributions should pertain to at least one of the 1st EEEN forum's themes: demand side expectations, side effects or methodological challenges. A contribution can relate to any environmental problem. To encourage a diversity of approaches to sharing and learning, we encourage contributions that take the form of formal presentations, open discussions and everything in between.

Check out the EEEN forum's website on <http://www.environmentalevaluators.net/europe/> for information on important dates, logistics, past EEN forums in the US and Canada, etc.

Call for contributions EEEN forum 2012

Registration opens in October. The EEEN forum's registration fee is EUR 250, conference dinner included.

We hope to meet you in Leuven!

The EEEN planning team

The EEEN Advisory Board

(Dr. Kerstin Astrand, Prof. Dr. Hans Bruyninckx, Dr. Water Buydens, Dr. Odile Heddebaut, Dr. Matthew Keene, Prof. Dr. Andrew. S. Pullin, Prof. Dr. Jukka Similä, Prof. Dr. Luc Van Ootegem, Dr. Marleen Van Steertegem and Prof. Dr. Edwin Zaccai)