



## Rethinking evaluation – how to encourage the use and effectiveness of evaluation in the governmental policy-making

*Dr. Tuomas Pöysti/Auditor General of Finland 29.4.2014*



# Content

- ▶ Introduction
  - ▶ Data, method and approach
  - ▶ National Audit Office of Finland and the assessment of the use of evaluation
- ▶ Some megatrends affecting the use of evaluation based knowledge
- ▶ Demand side factors affecting the use of evaluation based knowledge
- ▶ Supply side factors affecting the use of evaluation based knowledge
- ▶ Conclusions and advice



# National Audit Office of Finland

- ▶ **Supreme Audit Institution of Finland**
  - ▶ Constitutional, independent oversight and evaluation authority
  - ▶ Financial, compliance, performance and fiscal policy audit
    - => policy evaluation and meta-evaluation and the assurance of the quality of the informational bases of governmental policy making core topics and tasks of performance audit and fiscal policy auditing
    - => quality of law drafting and legislation a permanent audit theme => regulatory impact assessment scheme
- ▶ **Independent Fiscal Institution of Finland**
  - ▶ Monitoring and evaluation of the Government's fiscal policy
  - ▶ Quality assurance of economic forecasting, setting and effectiveness of fiscal policy rules, reliability of information bases and effectiveness of fiscal policy
- ▶ **Oversight of political party financing and election campaign financing**



## Approach, data and method

- ▶ Use of evaluation based knowledge in governmental policy-making
  - ▶ macro-level policies and regulatory impact assessments
  - ▶ micro-level decision-making with environmental impact assessments is in some sense different issue
- ▶ Review of literature and analyses of legal structures of evaluation and information policy related to data and use of evaluation
  - ▶ Tuomas Pöysti's scientific article on the information policy related to new economic governance rules in the European Union (Tuomas Pöysti 2014)
- ▶ Document analyses and review
  - ▶ primary source documents selected in performance and fiscal policy audits
  - ▶ the analyses used in this presentation reviews performance and fiscal policy audit reports
- ▶ Structured thematic interviews of permanent secretaries and other government officials
- ▶ Qualitative empiric analyses



# Megatrends in society affecting evaluation and the use of evaluation in governmental policy making

- ▶ Evaluations are performed and are used in a context and in discourses. Evaluators need to be discourse and context sensitive.
- ▶ Infotainment and mediatization of policy,
  - ▶ signalling more important than the content
- ▶ Mathematization of knowledge
- ▶ Open society, knowledge and data
- ▶ Dominance of wicked problems in policy-making => need for multi-disciplinary evaluation
- ▶ Complexity and decision-making in uncertainty



# Demand of evaluation knowledge

- ▶ Internal factors
- ▶ Professionalisation of politics: Number of ministers and role of political advisers
- ▶ Countries with coalition governments: role of the Coalition agreements, coalition building before elections
- ▶ Evidence adverse ideological environments
- ▶ Mixture of value rationality and purpose rationality may diminish confidence on the objectivity of evaluation



# Demand of evaluation based knowledge

- ▶ Cognitive features
- ▶ Social representations: psychological and social beliefs, beliefs and conceptions shared in certain groups of people
  - ▶ => faith-based policies
- ▶ Cognitive features of human beings
  - ▶ cognitive science and research tradition following (Kahnemann & Tversky):
  - ▶ fear for uncertainty, risk assessment, situationality of all knowledge, dual cognitive process with system 1 and system 2
  - ▶ information overflow and the role of professions as epistemic communities
  - ▶ => naïve belief in knowledge based policy making based on too optimistic conception on the capacity to use data and evaluation if only advised to do so



# Demand of evaluation based knowledge

- ▶ External factors
- ▶ Long path from evaluation knowledge to governmental action (climate change and climate policy is a good example)
- ▶ Incentives for policy-makers and civil servants
  - ▶ => role of the Parliament and of the Supreme Audit Institutions
- ▶ Role of the media => data on the effectiveness of Independent Fiscal Institutions and effectiveness of anti-corruption measures
  - ▶ => media reporting with concurrent action by independent institutions with high reputation leads to effective action
- ▶ Demand by citizens:
  - ▶ open society as the possibility





# Tools and processes of policy evaluation

- ▶ Regulatory impact assessment procedures do help
- ▶ <http://lainvalmistelu.finlex.fi>
- ▶ Impact assessment data bases and decision-support software
- ▶ Regulatory Impact Assessment Review Panels: experience from UK and European Commission
- ▶ Information policy: creates foundations and conditions to the access to data and use of data



# Supply of policy evaluation

- ▶ Incentives for the academic community to participate in policy discourses
  - ▶ evaluation are shall not only be for lobbyists and consultants
  - ▶ access to data
- ▶ Differences of angle and time-perspective in research vs. policy-making
- ▶ How to provide research based / evidence based policy advice in the times and conditions of uncertainty
- ▶ Fragmentation and mathematisation of knowledge => who transforms research based evaluation to general purpose evaluation knowledge and how this is done
- ▶ Metadata concerning evaluation
- ▶ Knowledge intermediaries between policy-analyses and policy-making and research and evaluation community
- ▶ purchaser / ordering knowledge in the policy analyses work



## 7. Conclusion

- ▶ Assuring effective use of evaluations requires overcoming of several obstacles => even good evaluations do not sell themselves
- ▶ Policy-making has a certain tendency for being faith-based rather than knowledge-based
- ▶ Smart steering and governance systems help to overcome it
- ▶ Attentions shall be paid to supply and demand factors and social presentations
- ▶ Context-sensitivity and discourse awareness of evaluators is needed
- ▶ Wicked problems in evidence adverse environments call upon multi-disciplinary approach and good communication policy