

# Policy evaluation in Ireland

Dr. Richard Boyle

Head of Research

Institute of Public Administration



# 1960s, 1970s and 1980s

- Interest in rational analysis and its application to planning and budgeting
- New initiatives established e.g. analysis section in the Department of Finance
- Emphasis on project evaluation
- Evaluation limited in scope and largely peripheral to decision making

# EU Structural Funds M&E

- Annualised expenditure on evaluation about 1% of total expenditure
- Overarching evaluations – ex ante, ongoing and ex post
- Complex institutional arrangements – varied for different operational programmes
- Independent evaluation units an important innovation

# General public expenditure

- 1997-2006 - Expenditure Review Initiative
- 2006- Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative

# State of evaluation in late 2000s

- EU pressure no longer a key driver
- Value for Money and Policy Review
  - Patchy and slow
  - Resourcing reviews a big challenge
  - Little evidence of impact
- The problem more one of demand than of supply

# Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes (An Bord Snip Nua)

‘The Value for Money and Policy Reviews, in which various expenditure programmes are critically reviewed by the responsible department, have up to now had limited success in redirecting scarce resources away from lower-priority, lower performing areas to areas where they can be put to more productive use ’

# Recent developments – evaluation in times of austerity

- 2011 and 2014 Comprehensive review of expenditure
  - Departmental expenditure reports
  - Thematic evaluations
- Revised government evaluation arrangements
  - Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES)
  - VFMPR changes
  - Public spending code
  - Stronger role for Oireachtas select committees
  - Public service evaluation network
  - Focused policy assessments

# Evaluation in the legislative branch

- VFM audits - Comptroller & Auditor General's Office. 4 reports per year on average. Quality of VFM reports is high
- Oireachtas library and research service provides evaluative information e.g. Spotlight series
  - Engaging politicians
    - Providing opportunities for face-to-face meetings with academics and others who can provide an explanation of the evidence arising from evaluation and research studies and key issues arising



# What do evaluation reports recommend?

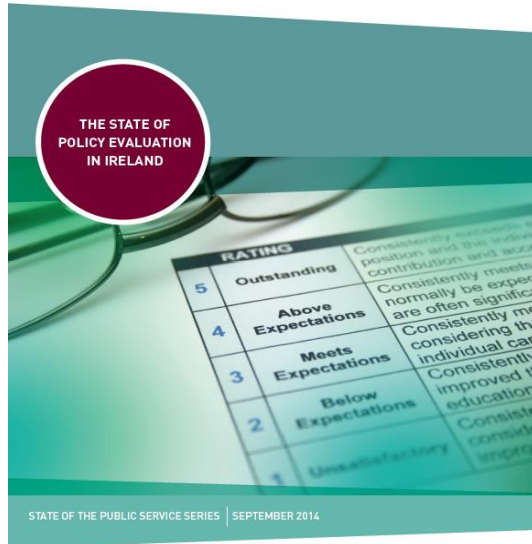
**Analysis of recommendations from Irish government evaluation reports (all figures in percentages)**

	Adjustment of programme	Substantial redesign of programme	Programme or part-programme termination
Recommendations from 19 VFMPR reports	94	5	1
Recommendations from 5 CEEU cross-cutting evaluation reports	35	55	10

# Issues

- Evaluability assessment of programmes
- Development of Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service
- Evaluation for budgeting
- Evaluation for programme improvement
- Engaging politicians
- Evaluation of the evaluation regime

# If you want to read more ...



Available for download  
at

<http://www.ipa.ie/pdf/Evaluation Report Sept 2014.pdf>