

## **Recommendation regarding the Establishment of a more professional Culture of Evaluation in Austria**

In 2005 the Austrian Council became a member of the Platform Research and Technology Policy Evaluation (Fteval). Since it was founded in 1996 as an informal co-operation, the objective of the Platform Research and Technology Policy Evaluation has been to present methods of and approaches to evaluation, discuss the current evaluation practice on an international level and thus contribute to the development of a culture of evaluation in Austria. The mission of the Platform Research and Technology Policy Evaluation is to encourage more, better and more transparent evaluations for optimal strategic planning of RTD policy in Austria and to develop a culture of evaluation together with decision-makers in the field of Austrian technology and research policy. This recommendation should support the Platform in its work and in the achievement of its goals.

### **The Austrian Council therefore recommends:**

- In order to foster quality and assure quality control throughout the entire RTI sector, programmes, projects and organisations must be systematically evaluated. The evaluation must be designed so that the RTI policy learning processes can be systematically planned and adequately funded. Increasing use should be made not only of ex post, but also of ex ante and accompanying evaluations so that future developments can be anticipated, and better risk and opportunity analyses developed. The legal requirements relating to the obligation to publish administrative documents must be observed in connection with the evaluations.
- In order to lend weight to the implementation of the evaluation results, the commissioning organisations must set up regular implementation workshops. These workshops will regularly verify the extent to which the recommendations of the evaluation have been complied with and whether corresponding improvements have been made.

- Parallel to the evaluations, international benchmark standards will also be obtained.
- All programmes lasting more than five years (or with a volume of at least EUR 1,000,000 p.a.) should be subject to appropriate evaluation by experts. Smaller and shorter programmes should be subject to an ex-post evaluation and a short ex-ante expert assessment by an external expert. In addition to this – depending on the size, structure and life of a programme – practical accompanying structures must be established which permit a continuous learning process: These could include workshops and platforms with the project leaders, accompanying expert groups, exchanges with similar programmes abroad or various forms of parallel research.
- In addition to the evaluation of individual programmes, the Austrian Council recommends regular system evaluations, in particular with regard to the financing and recommendation level; e.g. the Action Programmes or the National Foundation for Research, Technology and Development, and the related Austrian Council recommendations.
- Institutions should develop binding structures for self-evaluation; the structures will be evaluated by external assessors. At regular intervals (every 4 to 6 years) an evaluation by external experts should take place (at least some of whom should be brought in from abroad). The institutions may formulate a statement regarding the evaluation criteria (“Terms of Reference”). Projects should be subject to ex-ante evaluations and, in the case of larger-scale projects, to interim and ex-post evaluations by the funding agency which handles them. Depending on the content of the project, external experts or specialist assessors should also be consulted. The evaluation criteria used here must be closely related to the objectives of the programme, must be defined in advance and be publicly accessible. The evaluation times should be chosen so that the results of the evaluation can be used meaningfully by those carrying out the project (the evaluated party) and by the programme management.

**In addition, the Austrian Council also recommends the establishment of an Austrian monitoring system:**

- The collection of the data should require minimum effort and expense
- The data should always present gender-specific features
- The obtaining of information should be integrated in the reporting system.

- The data should be collected, documented and processed at the lowest possible aggregation level.
- Multiple collections of situation-related data should be avoided
- Monitoring systems must not become an expensive end in themselves (“utility function”)
- A complete overview should be given of the information needs of the stakeholders.