



Introduction

Working Group on public policy and program

Vilnius, 20-21 May

Introduction

Dear colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I am opening, this year's meeting, on behalf of Mr. Didier Migaud, First President of the French Cour des comptes and Chair of the INTOSAI Working Group on evaluation of public policies and programs.

Before anything, allow me to express, on behalf of him, our deepest gratitude to our host, the National Audit office of Lithuania, for welcoming us in this beautiful country of Lithuania and in helping us to organise this meeting. We are here in Vilnius, thanks to the kind invitation issued by Mr. Arūnas Dulkys, the Auditor General of the National Audit Office of Lithuania. If I am not mistaken, it is the first time in the long history of our Working Group, that an annual meeting is not hosted in Paris.

The representatives of seventeen Supreme Audit Institutions and two other organizations are gathered here today. Many of you have traveled a long and sometimes complicated way to join us, including from America, Asia and Africa, and we are very grateful to all of you for having taken the time to join us

Our Working group is also glad to welcome two new members : the first one is the European Court of Auditors, represented by one of his member, Mrs Danièle Lamarque, who is also a specialist of public policy evaluation; the second one is

the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, who is also chair of the INTOSAI Knowledge Sharing Committee, whom our working group is reporting to. We are sure they will both benefit from our exchanges and bring them substantial added value. They have shown great interest in developing evaluation and, by joining us, they illustrate the increasing appeal of our Working Group at the international level.

In addition to that, we are happy to welcome this year a member of the Office of the Auditor General of Norway, representing the INTOSAI Performance Audit Subcommittee (PAS) Secretariat, who will be able to maintain the fruitful liaison we have with the PAS.

I am sure that the diversity and complementarity of your different interventions will ensure a rich and inspiring mix of ideas. This is indeed the main objective of our working group: to identify and disseminate relevant information and good practices in the field of evaluation, in order to facilitate the appropriation of this specific mission by Supreme Audit Institutions. Public policies evaluation is sometimes perceived as a rather sophisticated approach and our job is to make it as simple and practically usable as possible by all types of interested SAIs. Our ultimate goal is that, by producing evaluation reports, SAIs bring a valuable contribution to a better decision-making process in public policies and programs.

The French experience

Before giving way to discussions, I would like to remind you, in a few words, why evaluation practices and the outcomes of our Working group are a crucial issue for the French Cour des comptes.

As some of you may know, in 2008, the evaluation mission of the French Cour des comptes was raised at the Constitutional level, as part of its role towards

Parliament and Government. I think it is a very rare, if not unique, example of the mention of evaluation in a constitutional text.

It is true that the implementation of an evaluation practice has been an important intellectual and practical challenge for our institution, as it has been for many other SAIs, but the French Cour des comptes succeeded in empowering itself with this new mission.

However, in France, the increasing use of evaluation, undertaken by more and more actors, is an asset that is still insufficiently exploited by the public authorities. In our country, Parliament, Government, ministries, public agencies and local authorities can carry out their own evaluations but they only partially take into account their results. As a result, they too often launch and implement reforms without a prior evaluation of the existing situation. Unfortunately, it happens frequently that action still precedes reflection. If it is true that the French culture of public policy evaluation has progressed in recent years, this evolution remains too small and too slow, and more regrettably, without drawing enough consequences.

In response to this, let me outline some perspectives to increase the usefulness of public policy evaluation efforts, and some of our experts will add later their opinion on this issue.

First, public decision-makers should **take the time** to examine the results of public policies evaluation and implement its recommendations. They need to be aware that in order to improve public action, **the first tool must be a better use of the already allocated resources**, and not the systematic allocation of new resources.

But evaluators should also focus on **making constructive recommendations**. The quality of the recommendations largely determines the overall usefulness of the evaluation process. Evaluators also need to keep in mind that **roles should not be confused**: they will never be responsible for public decisions.

As you can see, the continuation of in-depth reflection within our working group is a major stake for the French Cour des comptes, and that is why our presence in Vilnius makes a lot of sense.

At the international level, let me remind you the important milestones which were set in 2016. Supported by numerous organizations and States, our work led to a major result in December 2016: the adoption of specific guidelines on the evaluation of public policies at the 22nd INCOSAI, classified as INTOSAI GOV 9400.

Three years later, we thought useful that the WGEPPP addresses to all SAIs a questionnaire on the implementation of those guidelines. The results of that survey will be presented later today by Mr. Nicolas Brunner, senior counsellor at the French Cour des comptes and responsible for leading this working group. A discussion will follow his conclusion in order to determine if and how those guidelines should be reviewed in the coming years.

Coming now to our 2019 Agenda, this year seminar is the third milestone in our roadmap and is devoted to three main themes:

- 1) Review of the implementation of the INTOSAI GOV 9400 by the SAIs after 3 years;
- 2) Two methodological approaches regarding stakeholders' involvement and the use of qualitative tools;
- 3) A practical case of evaluation on the theme of social housing policies.

Consequently, several presentations will be given at this year seminar with focus on:

- The results of a survey on the implementation of the INTOSAI GOV 9400
- The qualitative approaches in public policy assessment: practices, challenges, and ambitions

- Overview of evaluation techniques in ECA on EU passengers rights
- Involving Stakeholders in Evaluation at the Swiss Federal Audit Office
- Advanced Technologies Effect on Workforce – An Evaluation Using Multiple Methodologies at the Government Accountability Office of the United States
- An assessment of the maturity of budget management from the Lithuanian National Audit Office
- Social housing policy evaluation: an experience feedback from the French Cour des comptes

This seminar will also include some highlighting presentations from the OECD:

- An introducing presentation, on the results of the survey on the evaluation of public policies in the OECD countries as
- A concluding presentation on the inclusion of public policy evaluations results in the political decision-making process as.

A few reasons led us to choose this year themes:

First, according to the questionnaire we sent to all of the members of the INTOSAI EWG, the answers showed that lots of SAIs faced issues in the conduct of evaluations, most especially regarding the involvement of stakeholders and the use of qualitative methodological tools.

Second, the theme of the housing is a major concern for our fellow citizens, which explains the strong interest raised by such evaluations.

Third, with abundant data, housing policy evaluations give remarkable illustration of combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation. Therefore, this theme appears as clearly linked to our past years meetings and it should be possible to apply their lessons.

At last, addressing our 2020-2022 work plan and depending on the needs identified during your discussions, it will be our duty to choose the theme for the

2020 meeting. We also open the call for proposals of hosting institutions for next year meeting. It is our belief that the Working Group should go on in gathering in other cities than Paris. Thanks to the Lithuanian precedent, we hope that we will be able to organize next year meeting in yet another country.

We have carried out the three meetings planned in the roadmap set up at INCOSAI in 2016. So we have now to define the next theme of our exchanges for the further working plan. Following our past meetings on evaluation techniques, it may be necessary now to focus on monitoring the impact of the evaluation of public policies (as well as publication, medialization, recommendation and the follow-up of EPPP) or to discuss the relations between performance audit and (the question remains open). After next INCOSAI in Moscow in September, we will have to start our new work plan and we will report on that to the KSC steering committee.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

In conclusion, I hope that our outcomes will inspire and be used by a growing number of Supreme Audit Institutions. SAIs do not have a monopoly on evaluation but we do believe they have important assets in this respect: among such assets, their institutional positioning provides guarantees of independence, and their in-depth knowledge of public actors and activities makes their advantage invaluable. Undoubtedly, this benefit strengthens their obligation to be successful.

I will not take your time any longer. Thank you again to our distinguished Lithuanian hosts and to you all for your participation in this year meeting.