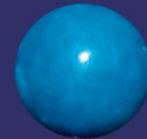




NWO Scientific Excellence and Innovation



ESF Forum on the evaluation of publicly
funded research



May 10–11, 2010



Stockholm



NWO



NWO at a glance

- Independent, non-governmental, self-governing funding organisation (NWO law)
- Basic research and applied research
- All fields of science
- Funding: peer review based operation
- Annual expenditure (estimated): 500 M€



Vision

Investing in outstanding talent

- Expanding knowledge horizons
- Providing society with new findings
- Enhancing leading position the Netherlands in the global knowledge economy



Organisation: funding activities; research institutes

General Board; General Director; 3 Directorates
- Central department for policy development.

Funding activities (4/5 budget)

- 8 Divisions/Foundations each with their own boards:
earth and life -, chemical -, physical -, social -, medical -, technical sciences, humanities, physics, sciences for global development, computing facilities.
- 3 Temporary Task Forces
chemical technologies for sustainability, genomics, ICT.

Research institutes (1/5 budget)

- 9 Research Institutes
astronomy, space science, mathematics & computer sciences, marine research, history, criminology, fundamental research on matter (3 FOM institutes)



Evaluating NWO programmes

Topic of this presentation:

The evaluations of three subsidy instruments, run by the NWO central department of policy development:

- Mosaic
- Rubicon
- Top Talent.



Aspects of evaluations

What are the three subsidy instruments (research programmes) about?

Why did we evaluate them?

How did we do the evaluations?

What were the evaluation outcomes?

What was the follow up?

What did we learn?



WHAT: research programme Mosaic

Mosaic

Aim:

To attract more ethnic minority graduate students to a career of academic research

Yearly budget (one call per year):

m€ 2, for 20 new doctoral research posts during 4 years

Start:

2004



WHAT: research programme Rubicon

Rubicon

Aim:

To encourage talented researchers in the Netherlands (and abroad) to dedicate themselves to a career in post-doctoral research through a two year working period in a foreign research institute (or one year in a Dutch institute)

Average yearly budget (three calls per year):
m€5 (NWO and EU Marie Curie Cofund Action)

Start:

december 2005

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research



WHAT: research programme Top Talent

Aim:

To make a PhD study more attractive for graduate students

Total budget (two calls):

m€ 16 for four years; about 80 grants

Start:

2007



WHY evaluate?

NWO policy

to evaluate all programmes midterm and at the end; or at regular intervals for ongoing programmes

An obligation

contained in the subsidy decision by the Ministry of Education, Science & Culture (in Dutch: OCW)



HOW - The start

A thorough discussion with programme secretaries about:

- Context of the evaluation
- Aim
- Any wishes concerning
 - recommendations
 - methodology
 - supervising committee
 - internal/external evaluation
 - Production, dissemination of the evaluation report
- Evaluation budget
- Time path, also in relation to the follow-up.



HOW - Defining the evaluation questions

Next:

Further discussion with the programme secretaries and the higher organization levels (division directors, general board) for:

- defining the main evaluation topics/questions
- formulating evaluation research questions



HOW- The main evaluation topics/questions

Mosaic:

- How efficient and how effective is the programme?
- What impact does Mosaic have on the diversity policies of the universities?
- Does the programme have any side-effects?

Rubicon:

- How efficient and how effective is the programme (procedures, proposals, programme image; comparison with other similar programmes)?
- What effects does the programme have (careers, scientific output,); is it a 'bridge' towards the NWO Innovation Incentive Fund)?

toptalent:

- How efficient and how effective is the programme?
- How do the universities do their pre-selections; is there a best practice?



HOW - External evaluation study

For all three programmes: an external evaluation study.

Steps for finding an appropriate organization outside NWO:

- A search for organizations with evaluation expertise and knowledge of the world of research
- Invitation to a limited number of them for sending in an evaluation study proposal (3 or 4)
- Selection of the best evaluation study proposal
- Organization of a starting meeting: for finetuning the study proposal, explaining details, filling in time path.



WHAT were the evaluation outcomes?

Mosaic: see NWO-website > programme site

Ad question 1:

- Proven efficiency and effectiveness; some wishes to improve information during assessment procedure
- Clear need for this programme among excellent ethnic minority students
- Workshop sessions for learning how to write a research proposal of particular importance

Ad question 2:

- impact on awareness of individual professors; no impact on university policies

Ad question 3:

- Many Mosaic laureates attract media coverage (university magazines). They set an example for other ethnic minority students.

Top Talent: ongoing evaluation (no outcomes yet).



WHAT were the evaluation outcomes?

Rubicon:

Ad question 1

- proven efficiency and effectiveness; particular interest for Dutch researchers compared to other similar programmes

Ad question 2:

- research at the host institute is not marginal; often to be continued after the Rubicon period
- careers: a bridge to the NWO Innovation Incentive Scheme
- end of project time: only half of the Dutch Rubicon laureates return to the Netherlands immediately (foreign researchers nearly all depart immediately).



WHAT WAS THE FOLLOW-UP?

- a) Formal reaction from the General Board
- b) Publication of both the evaluation report and the General Board reaction on NWO website.

Future of the subsidy-instruments:

Mosaic:

continued together with budget from the Ministry of Education; slight simplification (shortening) of the assessment procedure

Rubicon:

application with the Ministry of Education for new budget.

Top Talent:

evaluation ongoing; report and formal General Board reaction expected July 2010.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Take enough time in the preparatory phase.

Make sure that every research programme (subsidy instrument) has a budget reserved for evaluations (midterm, end).

Spend as much attention to the follow-up of evaluations as to the evaluation themselves.

Have documents ready, translated into English: it helps presentations like this one.

Thank you for your attention

More information: www.nwo.nl

Margreet Bouma

m.bouma@nwo.nl

The logo for the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), featuring the letters 'NWO' in a stylized white font with a red swoosh above the 'O'.