

## **Summary of The Second “Lunch & Learn”**

### **“Emerging moral dilemmas for evaluators when energy security policies conflict with the climate emergency”**

With 10 participants, host expert Laura Hayward, as well as Stefan Thomas, discussed moral dilemmas for evaluators. After a presentation from Laura Hayward on that topic an active participation from attendees, including perspectives from England, France, and Ireland, enriched our discussions and broadened our horizons. As guidelines for the discussions 4 questions were selected during the presentation:

- What do people think about their roles as evaluators – do they think they have a social imperative?
- Have you found yourself facing such a moral dilemma in considering evaluations – how did you deal with it?
- What (other) good practices should we as evaluators be implementing to leverage our role in support of ‘moral good’?
- What are the main challenges to evaluators going ‘beyond’ the commissioner’s brief ?- Can they be overcome?

The presentation explored the moral complexities faced by evaluators when energy security policies clash with the urgent need to address the climate emergency. Here are the key points:

#### **1. Role and Moral Imperative of Evaluators:**

- Evaluators strive for objectivity and robustness in their research methodologies but face dilemmas regarding whether to participate in evaluations that conflict with their ethical stance.
- There's a debate around the unique and potentially powerful role of evaluators, suggesting a moral imperative beyond being independent researchers.

#### **2. Evaluation Context and Ethical Considerations:**

- Evaluators often work within frameworks set by commissioners, focusing on objectives and targets, which may narrow the scope of broader ethical considerations.
- Ethical issues in evaluation decision-making are influenced by factors such as research ethics, professional guidelines, evaluators' moral frameworks, and community perspectives.

#### **3. Good Practices and Ethical Guidelines:**

- Good practice guidelines emphasize the public's right to know, balancing stakeholders' interests and the common good while safeguarding evaluation integrity.
- Emerging approaches like participatory, empowerment, and deliberative democratic evaluations aim to involve diverse stakeholders and promote dialogue for valid conclusions.

#### **4. Fundamental Decisions for Evaluators:**

- Evaluators face fundamental decisions—opting out of evaluating projects conflicting with their beliefs or participating impartially while embedding broader considerations in their evaluations.

#### **5. Actions to Embed Broader Considerations:**

- Suggestions include incorporating diverse voices, expanding dissemination plans, investigating unintended effects robustly, and employing methods like cost-benefit analysis to weigh costs against benefits from the societal perspective.

#### **6. Discussion Questions Raised:**

- Participants were encouraged to reflect on their roles as evaluators, whether they've faced moral dilemmas, additional good practices to support the moral good, and overcoming challenges when going beyond the commissioner's brief.

So, there were some key themes discussed after the presentation:

##### **1. Role of Evaluators and Ethical Dilemmas:**

- Evaluators often face moral dilemmas, especially when the scope of evaluation is restricted or biased by commissioners, affecting the ability to remain impartial.
- Concerns about in-house studies potentially compromising impartiality due to interests in results, prompting considerations about the objectivity of internally conducted evaluations.

##### **2. Balancing Objectivity and Broadening the Scope in Evaluations:**

- The challenge of balancing impartiality with influencing scopes of evaluations to align with organizational values and missions was highlighted.
- Stakeholder engagement was acknowledged as crucial but can be limited by specific project scopes and budgets.
- Highlighted the difficulty of shifting perspectives when policies change or new clients come in with differing views.

##### **3. Criteria for Project Acceptance and Ethical Considerations, Societal Perspective:**

- Organizations often assess project bids based on alignment with their mission and values, weighing the opportunity for influencing the discussion against potential compromises in impartiality.
- Emphasized the importance of considering society's perspective beyond just budget-oriented metrics like government Euros or pounds per ton of carbon saved.

- The Energy Efficiency First Principle highlighted as an attempt to incorporate multiple impacts or wider benefits into evaluations.

#### **4. Influence and Internal Resources in Evaluations:**

- Organizations consider internal resources to shape policies, intending to influence evaluations that align with broader societal goals and bring in diverse perspectives.

#### **5. Practical Challenges in Implementation:**

- Despite theoretical frameworks and principles, implementing complex analyses involving multiple impacts remains challenging due to limited resources and time constraints. The micatool.eu may be useful here.
- The need to balance methodological frameworks with the practical pressures of time in evaluation.
- Discussion highlighted the role of evaluators in bringing wider perspectives, international best practices, and reducing biases in evaluations.

The discussion emphasized the complexities involved in evaluations. Overall, the discussion revolved around the complexities of remaining impartial, considering wider societal impacts, and finding a balance between influencing scopes and maintaining objectivity in evaluations as well as navigating changes in policies, and balancing practical constraints with methodological frameworks.