



Evaluation of public health and safety policies at work

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I have no conflicts of interest to disclose

INTRODUCTION



Director William COCKBURN
Chairman and my dear friend Abdeljalil EL KHOLTI
Ladies and Gentlemen

I thank you for honouring me with the opportunity to make this presentation at this plenary meeting this morning at the ICOH2024 Congress.

It is also a pleasure to be here in this beautiful country of Morocco.

Thanks to all of you present for coming out in numbers so early this morning.

French is one of the official languages of ICOH. I will therefore make my presentation in French, with the documents in English so that you can follow.

INRS, French national research and safety institute for the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases, governed by representatives from employer organisations and trade unions and funded by public social security contributions.

Several years ago, as Director-general of INRS, I wished for our institute to implement an approach for evaluating its actions to prevent occupational accidents and diseases.

Presentation based on a working group comprising organisations from six countries - AUVA, DGUV, INRS, IRSST, IWH, NIOSH and INRS's experience in France

Today, I will therefore talk to you about:

- the evaluation of public policies for occupational health, more specifically their principles and methods
- and give you feedback on the implementation of this approach at INRS.

Contents of this presentation



- Definition of evaluation
- Evaluating: for what purpose?
- How to evaluate prevention institutes' policies
- Steps in the evaluation
- Conditions for a successful evaluation

Prevention in occupational health and safety systems



- A mission: to ensure better work conditions by improving prevention of occupational health and safety risks
- Numerous stakeholders
 - public
 - private
- Prevention bodies
- The actions conducted
 - Provision of information
 - Training
 - Expertise
 - Studies and research

Definition of evaluation



Public policy evaluation aims to determine whether the means implemented produce the desired effects of the policy and whether the policy meets the target objectives.

Evaluating means assessing the value of an action/operation objectively and taking into account legitimate opinions.

Evaluating public policies is about issuing a value judgement about a given action or operation, enquiring in particular about its relevance and effectiveness.

The value of an action is not determined only by its proper design and implementation, but especially by the **effects** it has on its target audience.

It is therefore necessary to investigate the impact of prevention actions in companies and on employees (health and safety).

For example, not only whether the stakeholders have received the information documents, but whether that has helped them in some way, whether they have implemented the recommendations and whether employees' health and safety has improved.

Definition of evaluation (continued)



In practice, evaluation consists in asking the following questions:

- What happened? (actions, effects on beneficiaries)
- Was the right thing done (was it the right time to do it? Were the objectives met?)
- How to improve?

It is not an individual evaluation.

It is not an audit of the functioning or of accounts.

It is about assessing the contribution to the prevention of occupational risks.

Evaluating: for what purpose?



- Prove that prevention bodies fulfil their mission
- Ensure credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of their principals
- Be accountable and provide proof of responsible management of resources
 - Public or private funding
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of the work
- Demonstrate the social and economic value of the actions and meet society's demands
 - Efficiency, relevance and effectiveness requirements
 - Ability to demonstrate social impact
 - Difficulty with short-term expectations and effectiveness of long-term policies

Evaluating: for what purpose (continued)



- Convince decision makers and policy makers about funding
- Present the outcomes, respond to legitimate demands and meet short-term requirements
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of programme achievements
- Conduct studies and surveys to prove the quality and effectiveness of the policy
- Communicate about the actions and their outcomes

Evaluation benefits



- Communicate the effectiveness and usefulness of actions
- Use the reports and results to continuously improve
- Increase awareness internally and externally
- Develop a genuine culture of evaluation

How to evaluate prevention policies?



- Single stakeholder
- Multiple interdependent stakeholders
- Multiple independent stakeholders

Identify the different stakeholders



- Identify the prevention body's stakeholders
- Identify the intermediate stakeholders
 - Consultants
 - Regional funds
 - Professional sectors
 - Trade unions
- Identify the institutional stakeholders
 - State, national social security fund, regional funds, town councils, etc.
- Identify enablers (subsidies, etc.)

Elements of a logic model

A logic model has all or part of the following elements, according to the scope of the evaluation:
inputs (resources):

- activities ;
- achievements;
- intermediate target audiences and intermediate effects
- final target audience and final effects.

The typical structure of a logic model is a representation of the journey starting with the activities to the final outcome through different levels of target audiences.

Conditions for a successful evaluation



Management of the approach

An indisputable supervisor must have been appointed by Management

Strong support from Management

- The evaluation approach must be supported by the leaders. This is essential.
 - Leaders must have been trained to understand and steer the evaluation approach.
- For INRS, the entire executive committee and management staff was trained in the approach.

Who conducts the evaluation?

The different aspects that can be evaluated



- Relevance
- Internal coherence
- External coherence
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Loyalty
- Efficacy
- Impact

Impact and efficiency: the pitfalls of statistics



- Occupational accidents
 - Change in the economy and therefore in accidents
 - One-off effects
- Occupational diseases
 - Delayed effect
 - Occupational diseases or not
- Reliability and relevance of statistics
 - Under-reporting
 - Under-recognition
 - European example
- The long latency with occupational diseases
- Data influenced by different factors and intermediate stakeholders

Focus should not be placed on the accident rate

Observing the change in the number of occupational accidents is a natural reflex. This is political decision-makers' instinct and is logical.

But evaluation is more complex. There are several parameters to be taken into account.

- a country's economic activity and its development is one of these. There are fewer accidents when economic activity decreases. Both over short and long periods.
- In France for example, industrial activity, the number of factories has dropped for several decades now. And the tertiary sector, banks, insurance, computer technology, has developed. There are fewer occupational accidents and accidents of a different type, with many more psychosocial hazards. Sometimes, the variation is due to events (COVID, climate, etc.).

The pitfalls to be avoided (continued)



It is necessary to take into account the under-reporting of occupational accidents and diseases

- There can be occupational accidents and diseases in the “informal” sector, i.e. in undeclared work. These accidents are not included in statistics.
- There are also occupational accidents and diseases that are not attributed to work, but to the lives of people in general, and are also not included in occupational accident and disease statistics. Every year in France, a commission is charged with evaluating this number of accidents and diseases attributed to people’s lives and not work. This is the case for numerous accidents, but even more so for diseases such as cancer, which can have multiple factors, and which, furthermore appear after peoples’ professional lives are over, when they are retired.

The pitfall of statistical differences

- In Europe, we notice, through the statistical office of the European Union, EUROSTAT, which collects occupational accident statistics from European countries, that some countries have many occupational accidents, and some, almost none.
- In certain European countries, such as France, MSDs represent 90% of occupational diseases that are recognised and therefore compensated under the occupational health insurance fund. In a neighbouring country, they represent 7%, and in Europe, between 40 and 50% on average.
- Are some people more fragile? And how to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention campaigns concerning this matter of MSDs? Is prevention more effective in Germany compared to France? I don't think so. It rather concerns the policy for recognising and compensating occupational accidents and diseases.

The return on investment in prevention



- Difference evaluation / return on investment
- The holy grail of prevention
- Useful for convincing businesses, but hard to demonstrate
- The return on investment at country level
 - From the point of view of insurance
 - Prevention/compensation
- Return on investment at business level

CONCLUSION



- Evaluation is an essential approach to demonstrate the contribution of actions to prevention in occupational safety and health.
- Evaluation is genuinely useful for assessing the actions conducted, their outcomes, and for stopping, modifying or improving the actions conducted.
- Evaluation is increasingly required by decision makers and policy makers for funding



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