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Assessing the Effects of a Collaborative Research Funding Scheme: An Approach Combining Meta-Evaluation and Evaluation Synthesis

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The scheme under evaluation

- Run by the Swiss innovation agency CTI since the early 1980s
 - Funds collaborative research projects between a firm and a research organisation
 - Objectives
 - *Strengthening the innovation capacity and innovativeness of firms*
 - *Qualifying young researchers*
 - CTI funds up to 50% of the project costs, with funding going exclusively to the research organisation
 - The rest of the project is funded by the firm, can be in kind
 - Open to all disciplines but focus on software/ICT, engineering, life science, micro/nano technology
 - Bottom-up, no calls
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Evaluation design

1. Desk research
2. Meta-evaluation
 - *The scheme was evaluated 14 times between 1989 and 2002*
 - *How were the evaluations conducted and how well were they executed?*
3. Evaluation synthesis
 - *What kind of effects (outputs, outcomes, impacts) did the earlier evaluation studies find?*
4. Complementary interviews
 - *To verify results*

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Meta-Evaluation: methodology used

- 14 evaluation studies content-analysed, evaluated against
 - *'Descriptive' and methodological criteria*
 - Internal or external evaluation?
 - Time horizon of evaluation?
 - Data used?
 - etc.
 - *The objectives the evaluation set itself*
 - *Selected evaluation standards of the Swiss Evaluation Society*
 - Comprehensiveness and Clarity in Reporting
 - Complete and Balanced Assessment
 - Precise Description of the Object of Evaluation
 - Analyzing the Context
 - Precise Description of Goals, Questions, and Methodology
 - Etc.

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Meta-Evaluation: results

- Evaluation practice at CTI
 - *The only regular evaluations were evaluations of research institutes and firms that conducted many CTI-funded projects*
 - in-depth look at (some) projects
 - Institutional evaluation rather than evaluation of CTI funding scheme?
 - *Effects, goal attainment, implementation, adequacy of funding, NOT additionality*
 - *Evaluations mostly internal, qualitative, confidential, ex post*
 - *Most evaluation standards fulfilled adequately to well*
 - Fulfilled best: substantiated conclusions
 - Fulfilled least well: analysing the context

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Evaluation synthesis: technique used/outputs

- Cumulative 'technique' used:
 - *Identification of effects*
 - *Systematisation and categorisation of effects*
 - *Listing of effects*
- A variety of outputs, ranging from new products and processes to exhibitions at trade fairs, to PhD and master theses and other publications
 - *Training effects of CTI*

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Evaluation synthesis: outcomes/success factors

- Outcomes accruing at firms
 - *mostly commercial effects and networking effects*
 - Outcomes accruing at research institutes
 - *mostly organisational and learning effects*
 - Outputs and outcomes in line with organisations' missions
 - Identification of success factors for successful CTI projects
 - *Good cooperation between project partners*
 - *Interest and commitment from the industrial partner*
 - *Clear objectives, good project planning and management*
- *quite 'banal' but show the CTI where to intervene*

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What can we learn from meta-evaluation/evaluation synthesis?

- We get results at different levels. Information about ...
 - *Evaluation practice at the CTI*
 - *Effectiveness of the CTI funding scheme – reliable and valid because measured repeatedly over a long period of time through various designs*
- Usefulness of evaluation standards for meta-evaluation limited – evaluation standards are often about transparency
- When can we use such a design?
 - *Long-running scheme or programme*
 - *Needs to have been evaluated repeatedly*
 - *Design limited by the limits of the existing evaluations (evaluation questions, methodology, quality)*

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Thank you

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