

## 9. ARGENTINA

# POLICY EVALUATIONS OF NATIONAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: OVERVIEW

**NORBERTO PEROTTI**

Under-Secretary, Secretariat of Budget Evaluation  
Office of Ministries of the Presidency

### INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, Argentina has made several efforts to consolidate policy evaluations as a key component of the management cycle.

In early 2013, within a context of different institutionalized efforts by organizations dedicated to public-sector evaluation, the Head Department of the Nation's Ministers' Cabinet established the Policy Evaluation Program in order to build awareness on and mainstream evaluation practices within the central management level. The programme gathered success histories of M&E systems within the Argentinean state. With such an aim, the programme jointly coordinates the work of three Under-secretariats of the Head Department of the Nation's Ministers Cabinet.

### CONTEXT AND ACTIONS DEVELOPED

Evaluation practices have been part of the region's government agendas for several years. Based on new institutional management needs, evaluation has been positioned as an integral part of the policy management cycle. In Argentina, government policies include these management tools to assess and guide actions towards expected outcomes. The aim is to strengthen social inclusion policies and to expand citizen rights.

Systematizing and mainstreaming public policy evaluation into management processes requires expert human resources, strong political will and a culture of promoting evaluations

as an institutionalized practice within the Argentinean public administration. Mainstreaming processes stem from the need to incorporate evaluation into the government's agenda and policy design as a key driver of quality goods and services. Therefore, the goals of launching a mainstreaming process stem from public agencies' needs. Management requires tools that measure the effective development of past, ongoing and future policies, and that can be used to improve decision-making and product quality.

Three main components form M&E systems in Argentina: a budget-related system (which conducts the physical and financial follow-up of budgetary programmes), a system linked to social programmes (which gathers information about benefits, beneficiaries and programmes' executed budget); and a government programmes' M&E system (which monitors programme management by following-up goals).

The monitoring system involved in preparing, executing and controlling the national budget has the largest regulatory framework and broadest coverage. The Ministry of the Economy, through its Budgetary Assessment Directorate, conducts follow-up of the specific goals of 380 National Budget programmes. Each programme reports quarterly indicators, built jointly among programme leaders and management. Currently, Program for Productive Institutional Strengthening and Provincial Fiscal Management (PROFIP), a programme funded by the Inter-American Development Bank, seeks to develop outcome indicators in 100 programmes budgeted for the next three years. The indicators will help assess results-based management and complement the follow-up of physical goals.

The National Social Policy Coordination Council, under the Nation's Presidency, coordinates social programme efforts with several related ministries. The National Directorate of Social Program Information, Monitoring and Evaluation is the unit in charge of: designing and implementing information systems to study the socio-economic status of the population; conducting useful policymaking analyses; capturing information about existing social programmes; monitoring progress in the compliance of goals established under such programmes; and assessing potential matches between expected and achieved impacts. The systems are implemented at the national, provincial, municipal and local levels for decision-making.

SISEG (the country's monitoring and evaluation system, *Sistema Integral de Seguimiento y Evaluación de la Gestión*), under the framework of the Head Department of the Nation's Ministers' Cabinet, is a management tool that systematizes the information that M&E processes gather about government policies and priority programmes in different jurisdictions. This tool supports the consolidation of the results-based management approach in Argentina by integrating and processing information on expected achievements under the strategic plan.

The Head Department of the Nation's Ministers' Cabinet established the Policy Assessment Program. It was created by linking three of the ministry's under-secretariats, based on its coordination role and mission of understanding policy M&E, the coordination of sector evaluation systems, and follow-up of government programmes. By developing evaluation processes, the programme promotes improved governance, enhances policy quality and improves public management outcomes.

Programme goals for the next three years include:

- Awareness-raising, agenda positioning and mainstreaming policy evaluation in the national public administration;
- Developing evaluation capacities in national public administration;
- Establishing effective evaluation of domestic policies; and
- Developing knowledge through applied research in policy evaluation.

The programme has conducted training workshops for technical national public administration officials. The first evaluations are being designed for several programmes under the Cabinet's Head Department and other ministries. An outcome evaluation has been proposed for the strategic plan of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. An additional activity, linked to the goal of awareness and agenda positioning, is the International Seminar of Public Policies. In addition, the programme has become the evaluation component of Results-Oriented Management External Pillar Implementation Program (PRODEV), the steering unit within the National Budget's Assessment Under-secretariat.

## CHALLENGES

The establishment of this programme is a qualitative improvement in M&E mainstreaming in Argentina. The programme is not intended to replace existing tools and systems, but rather to recover successful experiences and to generate conditions to promote them.

Currently, the three systems operate independently based on their appropriate goals, functions and resources. The strategy of the Public Policy Assessment Program is to rely on its experiences in order to position evaluation in the public agenda so that the national public administration can use existing tools. Therefore, the challenge is to prepare fertile ground for the actions of evaluation stakeholders.

The programme's main challenge is to become a legitimate stakeholder in a context of highly developed but poorly shared experiences. The Public Policy Assessment Program is a venue for coordinating systems and the parties within each national administration organization that have final responsibility for evaluation. Therefore, the programme goals are not limited to developing programme and policy evaluations, but rather aim at promoting awareness, mainstreaming and developing installed capacities in order to improve evaluation processes in Argentina. For this purpose, the programme relies on the political support of the Cabinet's Head, the main party responsible for coordinating the efforts of the national executive power.

## CONCLUSIONS

During the past few years, Argentina has been introducing techniques and procedures to streamline policy management efforts and has been establishing required tools to monitor and evaluate main policy decisions. In 2013, the political will of the Cabinet's Head promoted and focused evaluation with the development of the Public Policy Assessment Program in order to complement existing systems, to mainstream the topic and to build an evaluation

culture within the national state.

The programme thus adopts a progressive approach, with adequate and consistent capacity planning and building efforts. In Argentina, experiences with M&E implementation have shown that without the required support and awareness of intermediate management tiers, it is extremely difficult to adopt practices beyond government management or to prevent their removal due to structural public administration changes. The programme thus becomes a key player in the central administration's policy evaluation mainstreaming process.

## REFERENCES

- Government of Argentina. 2013. *Resolución 416/2013, de 7 de Junio, de Jefatura de Gabinete de Ministros. Boletín Oficial*. Year CXXI, No. 32.658, p. 30.
- Nirenberg, Olga, Josette Brawerman, and Violeta Ruiz. 2000. *Evaluar para la transformación: innovaciones en la evaluación de programas y proyectos sociales*. Paidós.
- Oficina Nacional de Innovación de Gestión. 2007. *La Gestión Pública por Objetivos y Resultados: Una visión sistémica*, Buenos Aires. Available at [sgp.gov.ar/contenidos/onig/planeamiento\\_estrategico/docs/libro/Gestion\\_por\\_resultados\\_version\\_completa.pdf](http://sgp.gov.ar/contenidos/onig/planeamiento_estrategico/docs/libro/Gestion_por_resultados_version_completa.pdf). Last accessed 5 February 2014.
- Ortegón, Edgar, and Adriana Prieto. 2005. *Metodología del marco lógico para la planificación, el seguimiento y la evaluación de proyectos y programas*. Vol. 42. United Nations Publications. Available at [eclac.org/publicaciones/xml/9/22239/manual42.pdf](http://eclac.org/publicaciones/xml/9/22239/manual42.pdf). Last accessed 5 February 2014.