

PRESS RELEASE

Measuring and Evaluating publicly funded research is increasingly important - ICSTI

Recent years have witnessed a sea-change in Irish public policy towards Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), which is now regarded as central to this country's continued economic and social development. The key role of STI policy is signalled in the National Development Plan 2000-2006, and reflected in the initiatives of the HEA, Science Foundation Ireland, Forfás, Enterprise Ireland, and the full range of state agencies supporting the evolution of Ireland as a 'knowledge-based society'. This was stated by Dr. Edward M. Walsh, Chairman of the Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation at the launch of the Council's Statement Measuring and Evaluating Research (Tuesday, 27 August 2002).

"Global competition in the knowledge age is tougher than ever before. If Ireland is to build on its past success and prosper in the emerging knowledge age it must demonstrate a strong research competence. The recent major commitment of public funding to build such competence is a most important initiative and if Ireland is to fully benefit from the investment, appropriate systems that measure and evaluate the outcomes must be put in place" stated Dr. Walsh.

These concerns, of relatively recent prominence in Ireland, have been the focus of much international effort in the science policy community as Governments world-wide respond to the need for new indicators and evaluation techniques for knowledge based societies. The Statement reflects that work, and its relevance to

the Irish context, and provides a structured survey of the principal indicators and techniques used internationally to measure STI policy activities and to assess their impacts.

Specific recommendations in the Statement include:

- That expertise in indicators and evaluation techniques for STI policy be more widely embedded in public policy agencies in Ireland, to more fully reflect the centrality of this domain of policy to economic and social development, by**
- The continued development and use of such techniques by specialists agencies such as Forfás, the HEA, and SFI and evaluation units involved in STI activities,**
- The dissemination of information on, and the results of, such techniques in the wider policy community, through publications and conferences/seminars on these themes,**
- Consultation with the scientific and technological communities as to the evaluation approaches adopted or under consideration.**
- The much wider use by funding sources (typically government departments) of a formal ex-ante evaluation prior to approving the introduction of any new or revised STI initiatives.**
- The provision of a specific allocation for the costs of monitoring and evaluation within the overall budget for each STI support programme.**
- That the production of indicators and the conduct of evaluative exercises should take full advantage of the range of techniques available, or under development internationally i.e. a ‘portfolio approach’ is recommended, rather than the reliance on unduly simplistic, one-shot summary measures.**

- **That the choice of indicators and evaluation techniques be generally governed by an appreciation of the underlying complexities and uncertainties of scientific research and technological development, the resource costs of such exercises, and the impacts they may have on the incentives of researchers.**

“The development of the National innovation system is Ireland’s key to sustaining competitiveness in the evolving knowledge based economy. A system that effectively evaluates or measures the outcomes from the research effort is essential if the return on investment is to be optimised,” said Dr. Walsh.

(ENDS).

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