

**European Evaluation Society (EES)  
The 15<sup>th</sup> European Evaluation Biennial Conference  
*Better Together: collaborative thought and action for better  
evaluation***

**Call for papers - AIV sessions**

**Background**

The 15th Biennial Conference of the European Evaluation Society (EES) will be on the subject “Better Together: collaborative thought and action for better evaluation”. The Conference will take place in Rimini from **September 23 to 27, 2024**.

Recognizing the global state of polycrisis, the conference emphasizes the need for diverse collaboration to effectively address urgent issues. The event aims to redefine evaluation through inclusive and innovative collaborations, leveraging the wealth of experience within the EES community. The conference will offer three strands. Strands include **Collaborative Action**, focusing on diverse actor perspectives; **Collaborative Thinking**, exploring methodology, theory, and real-world applications; and **Collaborative Practice**, highlighting intersectoral work for transformative actions. EES 2024 seeks to amplify younger voices, promote inclusivity, and encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration to enhance the impact and dynamism of the evaluation sector. The conference aims to find collective solutions to both known and emerging challenges.

As part of the Conference, **AIV (Italian Evaluation Association)** organizes **two sessions** and invites submissions on the following topics:

- 1. Evaluation impact: Challenges and Emerging Trends**
- 2. Evaluating Inclusion: Nurturing Diversity for a Fair World**

Both the sessions are designed as “**Sparking discussion**”, format suggested by the EES to instigate discussion on key issues and provide an opportunity for important themes to be presented from multiple perspectives. The objective is to bring together different perspectives or points of view surrounding a single subject. **The modality will include 6-8 10-minute presentations by presenters who are able to effectively convey complex issues in a concise and dynamic way.**

## **Topic 1- Evaluation impact: Challenges and Emerging Trends**

### **Rationale**

Evaluation use, either referred to as *findings use* or *process use* (instrumental, conceptual, symbolic) in line with Alkin and Taut's conceptualization (2003), is at the core of evaluation theory and practice, nevertheless close linkage between good evaluation and good policy making is routinely undermined. The literature on evaluation use, from the mid-1970s onwards, often focuses on the evaluation itself – its implementation, its outputs, its conditioning factors, etc. – and largely neglects the organizational and political context in which evaluation occurs. These emphases spill over into more technical issues of establishing priority evaluation questions, criteria for judging quality, and reporting procedures, as well as evaluation design and methods. Thus, most training discussions are focused on the need to train evaluators, that is, on the supply side of our profession. But we also need to be training evaluation users: to build up the demand side as well as to broaden the public capacity to think evaluatively (Patton 2002).

The likelihood of evaluation being used to inform and influence policy will, to a large extent, also depend on the combination of three relating factors: i) the political context, ii) the evidence and how it is communicated, iii) the links between the actors involved (Start and Hovland (2004).

Against this backdrop, we aim at discussing the potential for developing further the ways in which evaluation can be useful and used.

### **Objectives sought**

Through a sparking discussion, the session aims at:

- outlining trends and challenges of evidence-based policy making at present, providing professionals with an overview of the different evaluation-policy linkages acting in different contexts;
- providing key insights for practice that help orient and inform professionals to make evaluation more relevant and useful to inform strategy and decision making, build the capacity of evaluation stakeholders, or catalyze societal change;
- indirectly contributing to a greater use of evaluative evidence in policy building.

### **How the session corresponds to the theme**

The session emphasizes collaboration between evaluators and stakeholders to ensure evaluations are used effectively. This aligns with the conference's focus on working together for better outcomes. The discussion will include professionals, policy makers and commissioners of evaluation, each of

them dealing with the issue of evaluation impact from a different perspective. For instance, professionals and policy makers will discuss how power relations influence evaluation impact or will bring their different perspective on the language used in evaluation report and the way it facilitate evaluation impact.

## **Topic 2 - *Evaluating inclusion: Nurturing Diversity for a Fair World***

### **Rationale**

Inclusion is a fundamental principle that permeates various aspects of our society, from the workplace to education, and extends to international cooperation. This concept emphasizes the importance of creating environments that welcome and value diversity, promoting equity and equal access for all.

In the context of the workplace, inclusion plays a crucial role in fostering a fair and productive working environment. Organizations that embrace diversity and promote inclusion benefit from broader perspectives, stimulating creativity and innovation. Valuing differences in gender, ethnicity, abilities, and backgrounds contributes not only to a positive corporate culture but also to increased efficiency and employee satisfaction.

In the educational realm, inclusion is essential to ensure that every student has access to quality education. Embracing diversity in classrooms not only reflects the reality of society but also contributes to creating an educational environment where students learn to understand and respect differences. An inclusive approach to education promotes equity and helps overcome disparities in educational success, providing equal opportunities to all students.

In the context of international cooperation, inclusion is essential to effectively address global challenges. Inclusive collaboration involves actively engaging representatives from different cultural, economic, and social contexts in decision-making and solutions. This approach fosters mutual understanding and the building of stronger ties between communities and nations. Furthermore, inclusion in international cooperation initiatives is crucial to ensure that benefits reach everyone, contributing to reducing global inequalities.

Inclusion extends beyond these spheres to other contexts such as health, art, and culture. In every domain, inclusion plays a fundamental role in shaping a fair society where everyone can contribute to the best of their abilities and feel an integral part of the community.

Promoting inclusion requires continuous commitment from individuals, institutions, and society. Through policies and practices that embrace diversity, a world can be built where equality and respect for differences are at the core of human relationships. Inclusion not only enriches our understanding of the world but also enhances our ability to address global challenges cooperatively and sustainably.

Ultimately, inclusion is not just a goal to pursue but a foundation upon which to build a fair, open, and prosperous society.

Evaluating inclusion is crucial for several reasons, underscoring its significance across diverse contexts. Significantly, since 2019, inclusion has been formally acknowledged as a cross-cutting criterion in the assessment documents of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

### **Objectives sought**

The purpose of this panel is to gather theoretical and empirical papers that place inclusion at the centre of evaluation processes, with the goal of:

- i. **Monitoring Progress:** Inclusion evaluation allows monitoring progress in promoting fair and accessible environments. Through regular and consistent evaluations, successes and areas requiring additional efforts can be identified, allowing for continuous adaptation of policies and practices.
- ii. **Identifying Inequalities:** Inclusion evaluation reveals inequalities and disparities that may exist in different contexts. By analysing demographic data, statistics, and feedback, it is possible to identify groups or individuals who may be excluded or disadvantaged, enabling targeted measures to correct such disparities.
- iii. **Improving Policies and Practices:** Inclusion analysis provides crucial information for the improvement of policies and practices. Understanding what works and what can be optimized, organizations can develop more effective approaches to promote equality and inclusion.
- iv. **Providing Evidence:** Inclusion assessment provides tangible evidence of an organization's or society's commitment to creating inclusive environments. This evidence can be used to demonstrate adherence to ethical principles and social norms, contributing to a positive reputation and public trust.
- v. **Increasing Organizational Efficiency:** An inclusive environment promotes diversity of thought and perspective, fostering innovation and efficiency. Inclusion assessment helps recognize the benefits of a diversified workforce or community, encouraging organizations to create and maintain environments that welcome and value differences.
- vi. **Pursuing Ethical Goals:** In many contexts, there are ethical and legal obligations related to inclusion. Evaluation is a tool to ensure that organizations comply with these obligations, avoiding discrimination and promoting equal opportunities.
- vii. **Supporting International Cooperation:** In international cooperation, inclusion assessment is crucial to ensure that initiatives are distributed fairly and respect the cultural and social diversity of the involved communities. This contributes to promoting sustainable and respectful relationships between nations and groups.

### **How the session corresponds to the theme**

Evaluation of inclusion is crucial to ensure that efforts to promote diversity and equality are based on concrete data, involve beneficiaries, and allow continuous adaptation to the changing needs of

society. Through accurate evaluation, it is possible to build a solid foundation for a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable society. By exploring current challenges in promoting diversity and equality, the session fosters discussion and collaborative problem-solving and this exploration aligns perfectly with the conference's focus on collective action for better evaluation.

## **Paper proposal submission**

To submit a paper proposal, you may send it to [segreteria@valutazioneitaliana.it](mailto:segreteria@valutazioneitaliana.it) by March 22.

The paper proposal will be an abstract (up to 500 words), which is expected to:

- include session theme (1 or 2);
- indicate 5-10 keywords;
- include concise biographies of proposers, focus on their public speaking skills should be highlighted (within 50 words each).

Papers should be original and not previously published.

## **Selection process**

In the selection process will be privileged abstracts that:

- clearly address the session theme;
- offer practice-based lessons and recommendations applicable to other evaluations;
- involve different categories of stakeholders, including policy makers.

Each session will include maximum 8 presenters in total.

Authors will receive the notice on the acceptance/refusal of their abstracts through email on **April 12**.

Authors of accepted abstracts need to send their complete papers by **June 30** to [segreteria@valutazioneitaliana.it](mailto:segreteria@valutazioneitaliana.it).