

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

Title - *Evaluating inclusion: Nurturing Diversity for a Fair World*

Rationale

Inclusion is a foundational principle that influences various societal aspects, including workplaces, education, and international cooperation. This concept highlights the importance of creating environments that embrace and value diversity, promoting equity and equal access for all.

In workplaces, inclusion is essential for fostering a fair and productive environment. Organizations that prioritize diversity benefit from a broader range of perspectives, which stimulates creativity and innovation. Valuing differences in gender, ethnicity, abilities, and backgrounds enhances corporate culture, efficiency, and employee satisfaction.

In education, inclusion ensures that every student has access to quality education. Diverse classrooms mirror societal realities and foster respect for differences. An inclusive educational approach promotes equity, helps overcome disparities, and provides equal opportunities for all students.

In international cooperation, inclusion is critical for addressing global challenges effectively. Inclusive collaboration involves engaging representatives from diverse cultural, economic, and social backgrounds in decision-making processes. This fosters mutual understanding and stronger ties between communities and nations, ensuring that benefits reach everyone and reducing global inequalities.

Beyond these areas, inclusion is vital in health, art, and culture, contributing to a fair society where everyone can contribute fully and feel integral to the community.

Promoting inclusion requires continuous commitment from individuals, institutions, and society. Policies and practices that embrace diversity are crucial for building a world where equality and respect for differences are fundamental. Inclusion enriches our understanding and enhances our capacity to address global challenges cooperatively and sustainably.

Ultimately, inclusion is not just a goal but a foundation for a fair, open, and prosperous society. Evaluating inclusion is crucial, as evidenced by its recognition as a cross-cutting criterion in the OECD's Development Assistance Committee assessment documents since 2019. This underscores its significance across diverse contexts and its impact on fostering global equity and cooperation.

Objectives sought

The discussion aims to gather theoretical and empirical papers that focus on inclusion in evaluation processes, with the following goals:

- **Monitoring Progress:** Regular evaluations track progress in creating fair and accessible environments, identifying successes and areas needing improvement to adapt policies and practices continuously.
- **Identifying Inequalities:** Evaluations reveal existing inequalities and disparities by analyzing demographic data, statistics, and feedback, enabling targeted measures to support excluded or disadvantaged groups.
- **Improving Policies and Practices:** Inclusion analysis provides vital information for enhancing policies and practices, helping organizations understand what works and what needs optimization to promote equality and inclusion effectively.
- **Providing Evidence:** Inclusion assessments offer tangible proof of an organization's or society's commitment to inclusivity, supporting ethical principles, enhancing reputation, and building public trust.
- **Increasing Organizational Efficiency:** An inclusive environment fosters diversity of thought and perspective, driving innovation and efficiency. Assessments highlight the benefits of a diverse workforce or community, encouraging inclusive practices.
- **Pursuing Ethical Goals:** Evaluations ensure compliance with ethical and legal obligations related to inclusion, preventing discrimination, and promoting equal opportunities.
- **Supporting International Cooperation:** In international contexts, inclusion assessments ensure fair distribution of initiatives and respect for cultural and social diversity, fostering sustainable and respectful international relationships.

Titles and brief description of each presentation

1. *Can technology enhance inclusion? A participatory approach in the definition and evaluation of new technological innovations* - Maddalena Bartolini*, Elena Ragazzi. The abstract discusses the potential of technology to enhance inclusion through a participatory approach. It focuses on the RAISE project, aiming to empower vulnerable populations in Genova through AI and robotics. The participatory process involves user communities in technology design, development, and evaluation, ensuring coherence between technological development and social priorities. Lessons highlight the feasibility and challenges of this approach.
2. *Enhancing School Inclusion: Evaluating Practices and Monitoring Progress* – Letizia Giampietro*, Donatella Poliandri. The abstract discusses School Self-Evaluation's role in enhancing inclusive practices. It proposes indicators for assessing inclusion at both school and classroom levels, emphasizing instructional strategies and whole-school factors. The study underscores the importance of monitoring progress to ensure ongoing improvement. A

- participatory approach involving researchers and school staff validates the proposed framework.
3. *Gender mainstreaming and social inclusion: challenges to gender evaluation and methodological insights* - Virgilio Buscemi, Dario Quatrini, Francesca Catapano*, Alessandra Luisa Parisi. The paper examines gender evaluation in EU Cohesion Policy, emphasizing gender mainstreaming. It highlights the need for comprehensive gender perspectives, especially in policies supporting female entrepreneurship. Methodological insights are provided to improve gender evaluation and promote equal opportunities.
 4. *Including pathological gamblers. The evaluation of a pilot project in Piedmont Region* - Giovanna Perino, Chiara Rivoiro, Gianfranco Pomatto*, Niccolò Aimo, Federico Cuomo. The abstract addresses problem gambling and the evaluation of a prevention pilot project in Turin, Italy. It highlights the need for effective prevention programs to combat addiction and promote social inclusion. The paper proposes a hybrid evaluation approach combining realist and constructivist perspectives. The findings offer practical recommendations for policymakers and practitioners and provide a methodological perspective applicable to innovative policies.
 5. *Evaluating the inclusion of students with disabilities and SLD in the Roman university context. Experiences from "La Sapienza", "Tor Vergata" and "Roma Tre"* – Carlotta Antonelli*. The paper analyzes factors affecting the inclusion and academic performance of students with disabilities and SLDs at Roman universities (La Sapienza, Tor Vergata, Roma Tre), evaluating the role of study support services. It examines barriers to participation and promotes educational inclusion.
 6. *Indigenous epistemologies and Western standards: Enhancing inclusiveness in international cooperation* - Valeria Saggiomo*¹, Laura Fantini. The paper examines evaluations in developing contexts, highlighting the need to balance indigenous epistemologies with Western standards. It uses case studies from Somalia and Tanzania to illustrate the challenges of respecting local cultures while promoting change. The paper advocates for inclusive evaluations that support local values, reduce inequalities, and promote human rights, emphasizing trust-building with communities.
 7. *Social Investment in Inclusive Education Strategies: The Role of Evaluation in the Design of Policies* - Caterina Balenzano*, Giuseppe Moro. The paper evaluates a project aimed at reducing educational poverty among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds through inclusive education strategies. Using a mixed-methods approach, it demonstrates significant skill improvements and positive perceptions from 197 participants. The findings highlight the importance of inclusive policies in addressing social inequalities and promoting equal opportunities for all students.
 8. *Understanding what works and why: evaluating interventions that tackle educational poverty and pursue inclusion of minors with disabilities* - Eleonora Rossero, Gaia Testore*. Recent attention to disability inclusion in Italy drives interventions aiming at societal participation.

*presenting author

and rights. Evaluators face challenges in data collection for diverse programs, exemplified by "Tutti Inclusi". This initiative, funding 25 projects, targets minors with disabilities, demanding tailored evaluation methods for varied contexts, beneficiaries, and intervention contents. The paper discusses evaluation objectives and methodologies for inclusive interventions, addressing unique challenges in educational poverty.

9. *Evaluating the impact of Adapted Physical Activity courses on the elderly's inclusion: the experimental project RIMA* – Valentina Lamonica*, Nicola Pollo, Lisa Sella. The paper discusses the RIMA project, evaluating Adapted Physical Activity's impact on elderly inclusion. Conducted in collaboration with a local health authority in Piedmont, Italy, the study assesses a physical activity program's effectiveness using mixed methods. It aims to provide strategic information for promoting active ageing and extending the program's recommendations to stakeholders.
10. *Studying policies through inclusion lenses* – Marina Forestieri. The paper examines collaborative inclusion schemes for marginalized groups in Castel Volturno and Naples. It emphasizes stakeholder engagement and identifies policy barriers. Inclusion outcomes inform future policies, highlighting the need for tailored approaches to address migration dynamics and engage local actors effectively for lasting change.

Chairs

- **Donatella Poliandri**, Italian National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INVALSI), AIV board
- **Nicola Orlando**, Institute for Social Research (IRS), AIV board

Concise biographies of all members of the session team

Maddalena Bartolini, PhD in Sociology and a second PhD in Evaluation of Educational Processes and Systems. She privileges the application of the methods and tools of qualitative research and participatory evaluation with particular attention to group techniques. She chaired panels to animate discussion about her issues and coordinated Action/Research groups to involve communities in the processes. maddalena.bartolini@ircres.cnr.it

Letizia Giampietro, Researcher at INVALSI (Italian National Institute for Educational Evaluation). Her research interests include educational policies, the use of evaluation, building evaluative competences of school personnel, and school and social inclusion processes. She has presented her research at national and international conferences. letizia.giampietro@INVALSI.it

Francesca Catapano has three years of experience in monitoring and evaluating ESF and ERDF regional and national programmes. She often maintains relationships with PAs and has held many interviews and focus groups with public officials. catapano@lattanziokibs.com

Gianfranco Pomatto (IRES Piemonte), Policy analyst since 2002 and Contract Professor in Public Policy (University of Turin) since 2011, he has obtained the National Scientific Qualification in Political Science in 2023. His public speaking skills derive from his dissemination activities, from

his teaching experience and from his participation in national and international conferences.
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Carlotta Antonelli, PhD in Social Science Methodology (Coris Sapienza). Currently a classroom tutor for 2nd level inter-university MeTARS master's degree at Sapienza University and honorary fellow of "Methods and techniques of social service" DISSE Sapienza. Member of Associazione italiana di metodologia (AIS) and the Associazione italiana di valutazione (AIV).
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Valeria Saggiomo is an academic in the field of international cooperation for development with 20 years of experience in Africa as a development worker and evaluation consultant. Visiting researcher at Harvard University in 2023, Valeria is co-chair of the AIV thematic group "Evaluating in development cooperation" and nominated member of the Evaluation Advisory Committee of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. vsaggiomo@unior.it

Caterina Balenzano is Associate Professor in General Sociology. Her main research interests concern social policies, and particularly the evaluation of programs aimed at supporting vulnerable children and their families. She can communicate clearly to get their ideas across in public speaking situations such as presentations and conferences. caterina.balenzano@uniba.it

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Valentina Lamonica, CNR-IRCrES, Italy, is researcher at the Research Institute on Sustainable Economic Growth of the Italian National Research Council. She is a sociologist with a PhD in Social Sciences, curriculum in Evaluation of processes and educational systems. Since 2014 she has been a speaker at over twenty national and international scientific conferences and chair of panels on her research topics. valentina.lamonica@ircres.cnr.it

Marina Forestieri, Assistant professor of Public Administration and Management of Social Services at the University of Messina (1972-2000). She earned her professional experience of over 35 years' working in public administration and social policy, as a researcher, consultant, evaluator and trainer; worked for public agencies and for non-profit organizations.

Chairs

Donatella Poliandri, PhD, heads INVALSI's Innovation and Development Research Area (Italian National Institute of Educational Evaluation), leading projects since 2008 on school evaluation systems, staff training, and national research on School-Work Programs and Inclusion processes. Her interests span social research methodology, educational policy evaluation, and capacity building. She is a board member of AIV. donatella.poliandri@invalsi.it



Nicola Orlando chairs NESE's Advisory Board (2023-2025) and is a Senior Researcher at IRS since 2003, specializing in labor market monitoring, labor policy evaluation, and comparative research in Labor Economics. Skilled in quantitative and qualitative analysis, he focuses on employment services, labor inclusion policies, and European Structural Funds. He is a board member of AIV. norlando@irsonline.it

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.

Key words

Inclusion, Diversity, Evaluation Capacity Building, Environment, Education, Gender, International cooperation, Inequalities, Policies and practices, Mixed Methods