

10 Evaluation Management Services at the MFA of Finland

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Introduction

This chapter analyzes the partial outsourcing of evaluation functions at Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) from 2016 to 2024. It focuses on the effects of the Evaluation Management Services (EMS) framework that was introduced in 2016 on evaluation commissioning and governance. Based on our direct experiences as evaluators and EMS coordinators, we explore how EMS has shaped transparency, commissioner roles, and evaluation quality. We also examine its broader implications for democratic commissioning, as outlined in Chapter 1 of this book (Stame & Bustelo, 2027).

We have been part of MFA evaluation teams on several occasions since 2014, including evaluations under and outside of the EMS contracts. Our roles were evaluation team leader, deputy team leader, and team member. One of us also served as EMS Service Coordinator between January 2022 and June 2024. Apart from evaluation work for the MFA of Finland, we have worked for various other international clients in the development sector, experiencing different evaluation arrangements. The views expressed in this chapter are solely ours and do not necessarily reflect those of the MFA or EMS consortia.

After this introduction, the next two sections provide the necessary background on how the Development Evaluation Unit of Finland's MFA outsourced some evaluation functions (second section) and on what the rationales for this were (third section). In the fourth section, we then share our experiences with how EMS has impacted central evaluations at the MFA and to what degree the motivations for introducing EMS were fulfilled. In the final fifth section, we draw more general conclusions on how the outsourcing of evaluation functions may impact democratic evaluation practices.

Management of centralized evaluations at the MFA of Finland 2014–2024

The Development Evaluation Unit of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Finland is responsible for evaluation guidelines and the development of the evaluation function.¹ It is an operationally independent unit in the sense of not reporting to any of the MFA's departments in charge of implementing Finland's development

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policy and cooperation (Figure 10.1). Instead, the unit directly reports to the MFA's Under-Secretary of State responsible for development policy and development cooperation. Recently, the MFA has undergone an organizational reform, but because our experiences draw on the past, this does not affect the observations made in this book chapter.

In addition to its other duties,² the MFA's Development Evaluation Unit is responsible for managing "centralized" evaluations. These are comprehensive strategic and policy-level evaluations of Finland's development policy and development cooperation. Most centralized evaluations are targeted primarily at senior MFA management and the Finnish government and parliament, in addition to serving broader information and accountability purposes.

Under EMS, between three and five centralized evaluations were usually conducted per year on themes and issues of particular interest. Sometime before EMS was introduced, 10 or more smaller evaluations were implemented per year, but then the Development Evaluation Unit moved to fewer and larger evaluations to allow for comprehensive analysis of questions concerning overall Finnish development policy and cooperation. These larger evaluations required more refined methodology and expertise than earlier ones (MFA, 2019, p. 55). As a continuing principle, all centralized evaluations were commissioned to independent experts.

Until 2016, centralized evaluations were tendered and managed individually by the MFA's Development Evaluation Unit. In early 2016, the MFA launched a first call for tenders for EMS. In the summer of the same year, a consortium of two consulting companies – Particip GmbH and Indufor Oy – was contracted. The implementation of this first "EMS 1" framework contract continued until late 2020. Towards the end of this first period, Indufor Oy was replaced by another company, NIRAS Finland Oy, without interrupting the agreement. In 2020, a call for tender for a subsequent phase was launched, and the same consortium won that bid and was contracted for "EMS 2" (Box 10.1). At the time this chapter was written, the MFA launched a third framework, now called "Framework Agreement for Centralized Evaluations" (FACE) for the period 2024–28.³

Box 10.1 The EMS 2 consortium companies

The lead company of EMS 2 – Particip GmbH – has 85 staff and is headquartered in Freiburg (Germany).

The second consortium company – NIRAS Finland Oy – has 30 staff in Vantaa (Finland). NIRAS Finland Oy belongs to the NIRAS group with about 3,000 employees worldwide.⁴

Source: www.particip.de/en/companyoverview/companyfacts/ and www.niras.com/offices/finland/, www.niras.com/about-niras/, accessed March 2024.

Organisation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

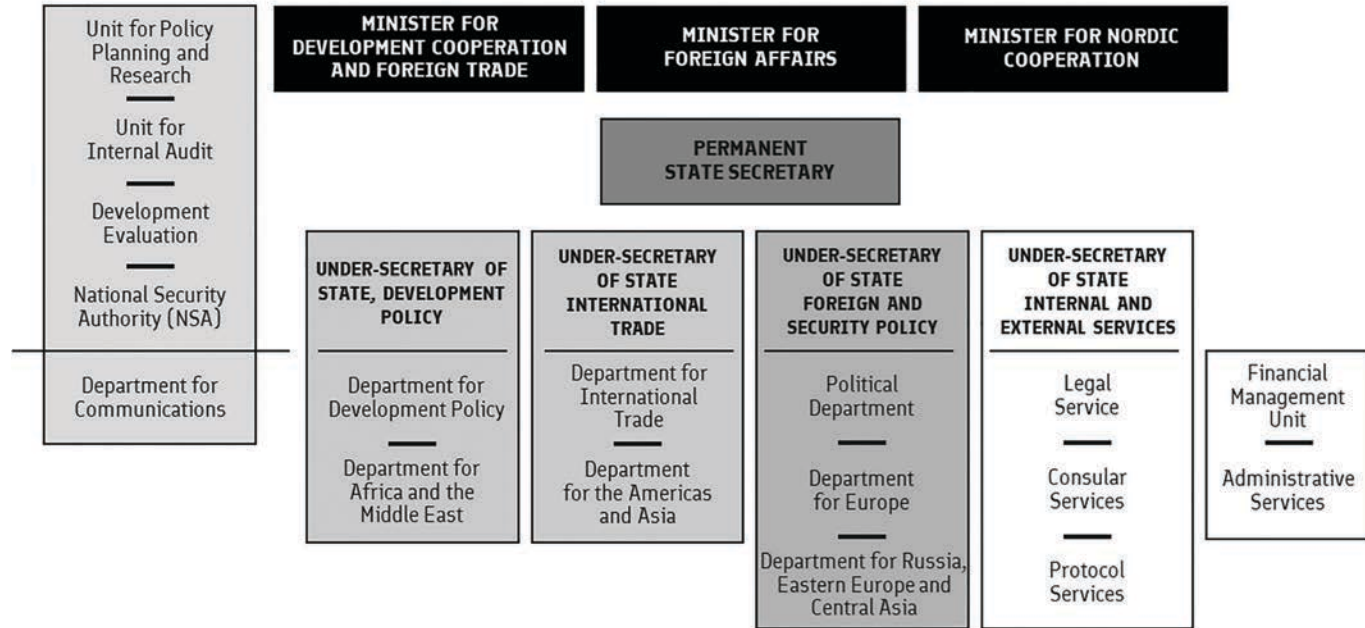


Figure 10.1 Organization of the MFA of Finland in 2023.

Source: <https://um.fi/the-organisation-of-the-ministry-for-foreign-affairs>, accessed March 2024.

Under the EMS framework contracts, the Development Evaluation Unit remained the commissioner of evaluations – following its evaluation plan – with overall decision-making authority. This means that the unit leads and steers the planning, design, and implementation of evaluations; the quality assurance of deliverables; dissemination; and the promotion of use. For each centralized evaluation, the Development Evaluation Unit designated one staff member as “Evaluation Manager” to oversee that evaluation.

EMS framework contracts implied several other governance and management arrangements. These are the Consortium Board, EMS Project Managers, the EMS Service Coordinator, and Evaluation Management Teams and are briefly explained below.

- The overall management of EMS contracts was overseen by a “Consortium Board”, the highest level oversight body within the EMS consortium, with members representing senior management from both consortium companies. The Consortium Board reported to and coordinated with the Development Evaluation Unit.
- Service provision for individual centralized evaluations was overseen by one of the two consortium companies. Between them, the two companies decided which evaluation would be led by which company. For this, each company appointed a staff member as “Project Manager”, with responsibility for leading and coordinating the administrative service provision from the consortium for that specific central evaluation.
- Another position was created with responsibilities both at the level of individual evaluations and the overall EMS contracts: the “EMS Service Coordinator”. As a backup to that position, a “Deputy Service Coordinator” was retained in case the Service Coordinator would not be able to fulfill his or her duties. EMS Service Coordinators were contracted independently from the EMS Consortium and reported to the Development Evaluation Unit. The Service Coordinator was responsible for supporting the MFA in the finalization of the evaluation ToR; suggesting evaluation team leaders and evaluation team members; advising evaluation team members in Finland’s development policy and cooperation, as well as with regard to the MFA’s organization and its partners; supporting the development of the evaluation approach and methodology; and quality-assuring the evaluation process and all evaluation outputs.
- To coordinate at the level of individual evaluations, “Evaluation Management Teams” were established. Members represented all parties involved: the Evaluation Manager from the MFA’s Development Evaluation Unit, the Service Coordinator, and, once appointed, the leader of the evaluation team.

Apart from these EMS-specific arrangements, centralized evaluations continued to be implemented by teams of independent experts, as before EMS was introduced.

Rationales for outsourcing Evaluation Management Services

In this section, we describe the reasons for introducing EMS at the MFA. We do this based on our own observations and understanding.

We consider the introduction of EMS to be driven by several interwoven factors:

- The quality of centralized evaluations,
- The capacity of the MFA's Development Evaluation Unit,
- Coordination and synergies between centralized evaluations,
- Learning from centralized evaluations, and
- Capacity development of emerging Finnish evaluators.

These motivations aligned with the MFA's broader approach to professionalizing evaluation commissioning while maintaining oversight. By shifting administrative and operational aspects of evaluation commissioning to the EMS consortium, MFA was able to focus on strategic oversight, albeit in a more indirect role than before. In what follows, the above factors are briefly described.

Quality of centralized evaluations. In our view, a central motivation for introducing EMS was the MFA's desire to ensure a constantly high quality of centralized evaluations. This concerned the methodological design of evaluations, their implementation, and the resulting end products. There were concerns that, because of staff rotations and non-expert positions, the Development Evaluation Unit lacked consistent in-house expertise to ensure high-quality centralized evaluations.

Capacity of the MFA's Development Evaluation Unit. Another driver was the limited staff capacity at the Development Evaluation Unit. For example, a recent funding decision notes in relation to the unit:

Due to the volume of concurrent evaluations and the limited human resources, the model based on commissioning requires external services in order to be efficient and to maintain high quality of evaluations deliverables.

(MFA databank, n.d./b)

Related expectations for EMS were to outsource some of the administrative tasks, such as searching for evaluation team candidates, contracting, travel arrangements, and formatting of evaluation outputs.

Coordination and synergies between centralized evaluations. EMS also aimed at a higher degree of standardization of centralized evaluations and increased coordination and synergies between them. This, so was the intention, should then improve the flexibility, effectiveness, and efficiency with which central evaluations were planned and implemented.

A recent evaluation of the utility of centralized evaluations at the MFA noted:

The EMS arrangement has multiple purposes [...]: it is expected to increase quality and coordination of the evaluations that the EVA-11 [the MFA's Development Evaluation Unit] outsources. It is also expected to increase flexibility, efficiency and effectiveness in planning and commissioning the evaluations.

(MFA, 2023)

Learning from centralized evaluations. Centralized evaluations are important knowledge instruments for the MFA (MFA, 2019), and, among other things, EMS was introduced to further support this. For example, a recent funding decision mentioned:

The use of EMS provides a platform for accumulating knowledge also within the commissioning organization.

(MFA databank, n.d./a)

Capacity development of emerging Finnish evaluators. In EMS, the MFA has systematized the inclusion of “emerging evaluators” into the teams of centralized evaluations. These are young Finnish professionals with experience of working in development cooperation and the desire to become evaluators. This reflects the intention of developing the capacity of emerging evaluators through their participation in centralized evaluations.

Our observations

In this section, we discuss our experiences and observations related to the previously discussed drivers and expectations associated with EMS. We do this along with some of the following key features of the EMS:

- 1 Outsourcing to a consortium,
- 2 EMS governance and management structure, especially the position of EMS Service Coordinator,
- 3 Standardization of management processes and requirements,
- 4 Contributions to knowledge management, and
- 5 On-the-job learning for emerging evaluators.

At the end of each section, we briefly review how these feature-specific experiences and observations relate to the three analytical aspects of democratic commissioning, namely i) the role and agency of commissioners, ii) approaches, methods, and relationships in the commissioning process, and iii) the systems in which commissioning takes place and that commissioners must navigate.

Outsourcing to a consortium

An obvious central feature of EMS is the fact that certain evaluation-related activities were outsourced to external companies rather than being delivered by the MFA. Based on our experiences, this had several effects that catered to some of the goals associated with EMS discussed in the previous section.

By contracting a consortium of established evaluation firms, MFA gained access to extensive professional networks, expanding the candidate pool for evaluation teams and enhancing evaluation quality.

However, while this structure enhanced technical quality, it also led to a concentration of evaluation commissioning within a somewhat more closed network. The structured selection process increased predictability but also reinforced a procurement model that, while not exclusionary, could limit the entry of new evaluators or firms.

A clearly positive effect is related to the MFA's human and financial resources for evaluation management. Staff resources at the MFA have been under pressure for decades. For example, a recent review of the use and utility of centralized evaluations noted that *"Half of the centralized evaluations made recommendations about the understaffing or competence development needs, and many others had findings or conclusions on them"* (MFA, 2023). Outsourcing certain evaluation management components relieves some staff pressure in the Development Evaluation Unit by transferring tasks to outside partners who are paid out of the MFA's development cooperation budget and not subject to staff headcount ceilings. For example, while the unit used to manage separate contracts for each centralized evaluation, in EMS, it managed a single contract for all centralized evaluations in a four-year period. We believe that some of the services provided under the past two EMS contracts would have been difficult for the MFA to provide from its own ranks. At the time this chapter was written, the unit had only four full-time staff.

Finally, in our view, potential conflicts of interest between the business interests of the consortium companies and the goals of the MFA were managed well. For example, evaluation teams were usually staffed with independent experts and not with employees of either company.

With relation to the broader subject of this book – democratic commissioning – we note that some activities previously implemented by the Development Evaluation Unit were now implemented by external companies. This impacted the role and agency of the Development Evaluation Unit through an increased distance between commissioners and evaluators. While previously contracting the evaluation team and overseeing the evaluation process, the unit now contracted and oversaw the external companies that did this. Similarly, EMS also impacted the commissioning process and the system in which commissioning took place, as explained further below.

EMS governance and management

A unique feature of EMS contracts was the introduction of the Service Coordinator, a coordinating position in-between the MFA's Development Evaluation Unit, the consortium, and the evaluation team.

In our experience, the Service Coordinator contributed to consistency between evaluation substance and evaluation management processes, for instance, by providing guidance on appropriate evaluation approaches to meet the MFA's evaluation purpose while remaining within available capacities and resources. Service Coordinators also contributed to consistency across centralized evaluations because the same person was closely involved in several consecutive and parallel evaluations over time.⁵

The position contributed to synergies between evaluations by informing one evaluation team of relevant findings from others. During evaluation design, Service Coordinators helped avoid duplication, particularly when previous or parallel evaluations involved the same MFA units, embassies, or stakeholders. By playing an intermediary role, Service Coordinators helped align evaluations with strategic priorities.

The Service Coordinators were senior experts in evaluation and Finland's development policy and cooperation. They were able to support all processes relating to evaluation and fact- and context-check for Finland's development efforts and guide and connect evaluation teams to managers and staff within and outside the MFA. While their role in Quality Assurance for evaluation outputs was significant, their value in ensuring process quality was oftentimes more important. They provided a fair deal of troubleshooting, problem-solving, and gap-bridging in managing expectations of stakeholders, facilitating mutual understanding between the MFA and evaluation teams, and providing hands-on assistance to evaluation teams and their end products.

We consider that the Evaluation Management Teams introduced with EMS have usually worked well. They represented the principal planning and coordination mechanism at the level of individual evaluations between the MFA's Development Evaluation Unit, the Service Coordinator, and the evaluation team. Having all parties involved at the table greatly facilitated communication, coordination and the establishment of mutual consensus on the way forward. In a sense, these teams were a way to ensure that some direct engagement between commissioners and evaluators continued to happen, despite the introduction of Service Coordinators as intermediaries. At the same time, the presence of the Service Coordinator in all evaluation processes facilitated creating trust between the actors involved and provided for a mechanism of expectation management facilitation between the MFA's Development Evaluation Unit and the evaluation teams.

With respect to democratic commissioning, we note that the introduction of an intermediary role altered the nature of the commissioner–evaluator relationship. As discussed in Chapter 1 of this book (Stame & Bustelo, 2027), democratic commissioning requires engagement between commissioners and evaluators. While the EMS model increased efficiency, the outsourcing, as well as the introduction of a Service Coordinator, added a layer between these actors. Yet, democratic commissioning also benefits from trust, management of expectations and support provided to the joint efforts of the commissioners and evaluators, and the added layer of the Service Coordinator did its part to add these values.

Standardized procedures

In 2023, the MFA reviewed the use and utility of its centralized evaluations (MFA, 2023). That evaluation found that the EMS process had contributed to managing evaluations in a standardized manner and with consistent quality.

Our experience suggests that while evaluation management standardization increased, it did not lead to bureaucratization. Standardized criteria for team selection, evaluation milestones, and reporting formats improved consistency while not restricting adaptability in evaluation design. The two-step contracting approach described below allowed for participatory finalization of the Terms of Reference (ToR), which contributed to evaluations being methodologically sound and strategically aligned.

One area in which standardized criteria were introduced under EMS was the selection of team leaders and different categories of team members. For each team member role (team leader, senior evaluator, evaluator, and emerging evaluator), minimum criteria were defined, and the consortium companies and the Service Coordinator made use of them when searching for candidates. Also, as part of the selection process, team leader candidates were interviewed by the Service Coordinator and asked to draft a brief methodological note.

Other areas with standardization under EMS included the EMS process flow with set milestones, as well as report formats, writing instructions, toolkits and vocabularies. We found these useful in managing and steering the evaluation, where all stakeholders involved could “sit in the process and enjoy the ride”. We also found these useful when leading evaluations and serving as team members because the form and boundaries of the work were set, and we could focus on substantive matters at hand.

Under EMS, evaluation contracts were split into two “Service Orders”. The first (“Service Order 1”) included a brief contract for the evaluation team leader that allowed for some preparatory activities as well as a limited number of working days for the Service Coordinator. This was followed by the second contract (“Service Order 2”) that covered all other evaluation activities.

We find that this approach has two advantages. First, it allows the team leader and Service Coordinator to help finalize the evaluation ToR. Usually, the MFA’s Development Evaluation Unit would provide a draft ToR and then ask for feedback and additional input, especially on the methods section, which was usually left open to be developed or adapted by the team leader and the Service Coordinator, in close alignment with the Development Evaluation Unit. We consider this a good practice because it ensures that the evaluation approach was realistic and in line with the skills and experiences of the evaluation team. In line with this, a recent MFA funding decision advocated that the “*service-based approach allows a more flexible use of evaluation expertise, also during the planning phases*” (MFA databank, n.d./a). In several instances, the interactions during this first phase had contributed to further clarifying the purpose and the scope of the evaluation and to developing fewer but more meaningful evaluation questions, which we also consider good practice. In our view, this participatory approach to finalizing ToRs reduced the

need for later course corrections during (or after) the inception phase. While we experienced ourselves that such later corrections were possible, having a ToR in place that was fully owned by those managing and implementing the evaluation was more efficient. It also had positive effects on managing expectations of evaluation stakeholders and increased transparency, as only the ToR (not the inception report) was later published as part of the evaluation report.

Second, the first Service Order also provided capacity and time for selecting the remaining evaluation team members, which we found very useful. We could, for example, suggest candidates from our own networks and influence the selection process. While the MFA's Development Evaluation Unit retained final decision-making authority on team selection, our recommendations were often followed. In our view, this approach increased the probability of having the "right" evaluators on board, not only in terms of skills and expertise but also in terms of effective and efficient teamwork.

A 2023 evaluation of the use and utility of centralized evaluations (MFA, 2023) suggested a need to better balance evaluation expertise with understanding and knowledge of the MFA, which the reviewers found missing in some of the very senior international consultants selected in the past. To this end, we considered it helpful that one consortium member was a Finnish company. Also, the supporting role of the (Finnish) Service Coordinator was helpful to ensure sufficient understanding of the MFA. Moreover, the standardized selection process for team leaders and team members allowed for a balanced approach in mixing experts with prior experience evaluating Finland's development policy and cooperation with new entrants and international, Finnish and local experts in the teams.

With respect to democratic commissioning, we find that the EMS-related standardization of the commissioning process has been useful overall. In our view, the model represented a good balance between providing additional structure without negatively impacting adaptability.

Knowledge management

Centralized evaluations are important knowledge instruments. In 2019, one evaluation was dedicated to knowledge management at the MFA (MFA, 2019). It found that centralized evaluations "*produce useful results information, and have successfully influenced decision-making at the MFA*". The same evaluation also found that MFA had not yet fully put to use the comprehensive body of knowledge centralized evaluations generated. It was recommended that the MFA invest in targeted syntheses of specific results information and knowledge from centralized evaluations to effectively inform learning and decision-making in development policy and cooperation at the MFA. The 2019 evaluation did, however, not assess the degree to which the EMS framework might have contributed to this status quo.

In 2023, a review of the utility of centralized evaluations (MFA, 2023) praised the EMS framework but also highlighted several challenges in knowledge management. A key issue identified was the limited transfer of ownership of evaluation results from the Development Evaluation Unit to operational MFA departments

responsible for policy implementation. The lack of a comprehensive, accessible knowledge repository further limited continuity across evaluations, forcing teams to repeatedly collect similar information. Addressing these gaps would improve the extent to which evaluations contribute to informed decision-making and democratic accountability in MFA policy processes.

Assessing EMS's impact on knowledge use remains challenging. However, while existing evaluations indicate that EMS improved process coordination, it did not resolve issues related to knowledge retention and accessibility. Strengthening systematic knowledge management mechanisms could enhance the long-term contribution of evaluations to MFA policy and decision-making.

One issue related to the management of information (rather than knowledge) was the lack of a comprehensive, ready-to-use database for standard information used in centralized evaluations before and during EMS. This has two complementary reasons. First, the MFA's project and archive management systems were and remained inadequate (MFA, 2019). Second, despite the Consortium's efforts, it was not possible to establish a comprehensive database as part of EMS. Because of this chapter's focus on EMS, we will discuss the second point further.

In the centralized evaluations in which we were involved, the identification and collection of documented information usually represented an activity that consumed significant amounts of time and capacity. This usually concerned a wide range of documents, from project plans and reports to policies and data on budgets, expenses, and human resources. In a first step, the Evaluation Manager usually tries to recover this information from the MFA's information management systems and from public sources. In most cases, this left important gaps, and it thus became necessary to ask MFA staff in involved departments and units to somehow retrieve any missing information. These activities required considerable effort by MFA staff and delayed the evaluation – or required the evaluation team to start their work with incomplete information.

Because evaluation contracts stipulated that evaluation-related information had to be deleted after an assignment was complete, we sometimes had to ask the same people for the same information we had already required and used in a previous evaluation. On the level of the consortium, this concerned information repositories of earlier centralized evaluations managed by one of the companies that were not accessible to the evaluation teams anymore, apart from some limited cases where the consortium negotiated access to the earlier evaluations' selected files to the experts. After repeatedly going through this procedure, we felt that much value could be added by investing in establishing and maintaining a comprehensive repository of standard information for future centralized evaluations.

With respect to democratic commissioning, we find that the EMS has not been able to improve knowledge management. The transfer of ownership of evaluation results from the Development Evaluation Unit to operational MFA departments remained weak, and there were no significant synergies in terms of access to the same information required by subsequent evaluations. We also note that these weaknesses are related to data management systems and policies at the MFA more generally, which could not be changed by the EMS but within which it operated.

Participation of emerging evaluators

Emerging evaluators were usually part of evaluation teams under EMS. A recent evaluation on the use and utility of centralized evaluations found that “The inclusion of Emerging Evaluator posts in the teams is most welcome: it gives Finnish young professionals a chance to build experience in these evaluations”. In our experience, the on-the-job learning of emerging evaluators has likely become more effective in EMS 2 because the same individuals could participate in different evaluations. This was part of a capacity development plan formulated as part of EMS.

Based on two surveys conducted by NIRAS Finland Oy in October 2022 and May 2023, all emerging evaluators felt that the level of tasks was adequate for learning. It was noted that the tasks needed to be defined clearly, be sufficiently challenging, and ideally include both an independent contribution to the evaluation (i.e., overseeing a specific part) and supporting more senior team members.

For us, one lesson learned is that the role of emerging evaluators needs to be carefully balanced between more or less independent and demanding tasks on a case-by-case basis. Clearly, emerging evaluators learn more in more demanding roles, provided they can fulfill them well. We had very positive experiences with motivated and capable emerging evaluators, but we also remember cases when intense coaching and unbudgeted additional work were required for achieving satisfactory evaluation end products of emerging evaluators.

In several cases, the emerging evaluators were also the Project Manager from one of the consortium companies. We consider this double role beneficial because it further supports learning. For example, it offered them the opportunity to participate in the planning of the evaluation from the very beginning.

Overall, the inclusion of emerging evaluators in EMS teams has provided a structured pathway for early-career professionals to enter the evaluation field. When we began writing this chapter, five emerging evaluators had successfully transitioned into the “Evaluator” category, with two already engaged in MFA evaluations in an independent capacity.

Conclusions

Between 2016 and 2024, the EMS framework introduced a structured, professionalized approach to managing centralized evaluations at the MFA of Finland. By outsourcing selected evaluation management functions, EMS allowed for greater consistency, access to evaluation expertise, and relief from internal staffing constraints. Standardized evaluation management processes, transparent qualification criteria, and a flexible two-step contracting procedure supported evaluation quality and strategic alignment.

However, the introduction of EMS also redefined the role of MFA commissioners, shifting them toward strategic oversight while introducing an intermediary structure that managed core aspects of evaluations. This increased distance between commissioners and evaluators impacted the agency of the MFA’s Development Evaluation Unit along the commissioning process, while it also served to provide

further trust, expectation management and sense of continuity in the commissioners and evaluators' relations.

The EMS-related standardization of the commissioning process has been useful overall, with a good balance between providing additional structure without negatively impacting adaptability.

The EMS has not been able to improve evaluation knowledge management, which remains a systemic issue at the MFA, with institutional systems and policies beyond the scope of the EMS.

The EMS contributed positively to evaluator capacity-building, notably through the emerging evaluators program, and realized process synergies across evaluations through the role of the Service Coordinator.

Looking ahead, the key question is how commissioning models like EMS can continue to evolve to strengthen democratic commissioning. If public agencies increasingly adopt structured outsourcing models, future iterations of EMS – or similar frameworks elsewhere – must ensure that commissioners' roles and agencies are further strengthened, that the commissioning process is efficient and effective, and that it is supported by the systems within which it takes place.

Notes

- 1 This section draws on the Development Evaluation Norm of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA, 2015).
- 2 As of March 2024, other responsibilities of the Development Evaluation Unit were evaluation guidance concerning development policy and development cooperation; evaluation capacity building and training; disseminating evaluation results; general development of the evaluation of development policy and development cooperation; and participation in international evaluation networks and joint evaluations (<https://um.fi/development-evaluation>, accessed March 2024).
- 3 The related tender document “Finland – Research and development consultancy services – Framework Agreement for Centralised Evaluations (FACE)” was published on the TED website of the European Union: <https://ted.europa.eu/en/notice/-/detail/233846-2024>, accessed June 2026.
- 4 The company information was drawn from the two firms' websites (www.particip.de/en/companyoverview/companyfacts/, www.niras.com/offices/finland/, www.niras.com/about-niras/, accessed March 2024).
- 5 Since EMS 1 began in 2016, the Service Coordinator only changed once from the beginning of 2022, when one of us took that job.

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