

topic – evaluation and impact assessment

“Continuous improvement”, the art of extracting lessons from current processes and using them to create better ones in the future, is an approach that has been widely popularised by the Japanese through lean manufacturing. It is also an approach that is becoming increasingly popular amongst policy-makers when designing and developing science, technology and innovation policies.

But how does one implement a continuous improvement process in the case of a large, complex, internationally-funded R&D programmes? Within such a context, an evaluation expert from Intelligentsia Consultants assisted the European Commission with a major industrial collaborative R&D programme. Together with research partners, the evaluation expert ex-post evaluated and impact assessed several hundred industrial R&D projects funded under one programme. By implementing an evaluation/impact assessment scheme in an IT solution, and systematically collecting data on the technological, economic and social effects of the projects, the evaluators were able to draw out key lessons.

Overall, the R&D programme had been successful. However, closer inspection revealed that “risky” projects had been the most successful ones, although comparatively few had been funded. Consequently, the main recommendation made for successive programmes was to increase the proportion of funding for risky R&D projects.