Federal Evaluation Agency: Institutional Background and Challenges

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Using quality data and information to make public decisions has become a global practice in government policy making. Evidence-based policy making is an approach that proposes building public plans and programmes on the results of research, monitoring and evaluations and in consultation with different actors. This decision-making process contributes to a more systemic understanding of the problems being addressed and can help improve the effectiveness of government action.

Evaluating the impact, processes and design of plans and public programmes is a method of generating evidence about the performance of government initiatives. However, in Argentina not all institutions have the same abilities to produce, sustain, and use information from diverse sources. On the supply side, public institutions do not always have the capacity to collect reliable and quality data in the short and long term. On the demand side, public debate does not always insist on policy decisions being backed up by evidence.

During the period from 2015 to 2019, the organizational framework enabling monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in Argentina was improved by the enactment of the Access to Public Information Law, the creation of the Congressional Budget Office and the sanction of the Annual M&E Plan implemented by the Office of the Information, Evaluation and Monitoring System of Social Programmes (SIEMPRO) in the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies (CNCPS). All these regulations constitute significant innovations towards the development of a national evaluation policy. However, a law representing a broader framework for monitoring government activity is still pending.

SUMMARY

During this time, the number and quality of institutional actors at the governmental level performing M&E increased. Nevertheless, their budgets are still too limited to exercise these functions in a comprehensive manner. In addition, the practice of M&E advanced in two specific aspects: i) there is more specialization of the monitoring functions towards oversight and administration management; and ii) the evaluation of education and social policies increased.

The least developed aspect of the M&E functions is the lack of systematic usage of the collected data. There has not been an institutionalized and regular process through which the lessons learned by M&E lead to changes in policies.

Strengthening and extending the evaluation culture in Argentina requires overcoming these pre-existing challenges in terms of policies, institutions and regulations. To this end, it is necessary to promote a national evaluation policy that integrates and coordinates the M&E functions in a ruling agency under the Chief of Staff, strengthens the culture of evaluation in the National Public Administration (NPA), constructs evaluability parameters for policies, enhances officers´ capacities, ensures quality policies and informs the national development plan.

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Introduction

In recent years, many countries and sub-national governments have incorporated national evaluation policies. The creation of a specific monitoring and evaluation (M&E) body is a clear sign of the importance attached to the systematic analysis of policies, plans and programmes. However, international experiences (Lázaro, 2015; Aquilino et al., 2017; Pérez Yarahuán y Maldonado Trujillo, 2015) show that the political-institutional construction does not solely imply the creation of a unit with M&E functions: it also requires defining and strengthening M&E skills and capacities in central government (ministries, departments, agencies), sub-national governments (provinces/states, municipalities/city halls) and civil society. These actors are the ones who must collect information, guarantee the evaluability of programmes and policies and interpret the results of the information collected. Thus, it remains crucial that these actors are qualified.

This document reviews the status of the evaluation function in Argentina's National Public Administration (NPA) and enumerates different achievements and pending challenges in the area of M&E plans and government programmes in order to make policy recommendations that contribute to the strengthening of a national evaluation policy. To this end, it analyses the period 2015-2019 through the changes observed in: 1) the organisational framework of the State's M&E function (its institutional unit, legal framework and distribution of functions); 2) the sustainability of the M&E practice (funding, human resources and quality mechanisms); 3) the M&E practices being implemented (system approach, evaluability, coverage); and 4) the use of M&E (demand creation and possible alternative uses).

The analysis was carried out through the revision of current regulations, online information and reports, a survey to bodies with M&E functions in the NPA (**Table 1, Annex**) and interviews and consultations with strategic officials. The researchers focused on the following ministries/departments: Education, Social Development, Health, Housing and Labor.

Organisational Framework: Legal Framework and Functions

1. How is the National Public Administration organized to monitor and evaluate policies?

In Argentina, there is no specialized Agency or system[1] tasked with leading the evaluation function, responsible for the deployment of

M&E policy as in other federal countries[2] (Aquilino et al., 2017). In recent years, at least four bills related to the creation of a national evaluation agency have been presented. None of them was ever passed by Congress to become law.

Since 1994, the Chief of Staff has had the mission of intervening in the M&E process, articulating evaluation systems by sector and developing a monitoring system for government programmes with key priority policy indicators for decision-making[3]. However, it did not achieve continuity in the development of a comprehensive national M&E system for plans and programmes.

In this context, we identified fragmented evaluation functions organized around four levels: i) social programmes and policies; ii) policy area plans; iii) budgetary programmes; and iv) projects funded by international institutions.

For social programmes and policies, the leadership in M&E is exercised by the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies (CNCPS), dependent on the Presidency. The Decree 292/2018 assigned these functions to the CNCPS through the Office of the Information, Evaluation and Monitoring System of Social Programmes (SIEMPRO), designating the body as responsible for developing and executing the Annual M&E Plan, which is mandatory for the included social policies, programmes, plans and social projects financed either by the National Treasury or by international organisations.

For the sector-based plans, it is possible to identify a system designed to monitor goals and activities associated with projects that are part of the plans of the different national agencies. Until the end of 2019, the Results Based Management National Office of the former Department of Modernization of the Chief of Staff was in charge of the process that established a common methodology and a digital platform for reports. However, this system had a low level of institutionalisation as not all NPA agencies implemented it.

With regards to budgetary programmes, it is possible to identify a financial and operational goal-monitoring system executed by the National Budget Office of the Ministry of Finance's Department of Finance. The departments for this task are the Physical Information Coordination Centres that are located within the financial administrative services areas of the agencies. In turn, as of 2016, financial and physical goals monitoring of budget programmes associated with government strategic plans began to take place, such as the Government Plan and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in charge of the Department of Budget Evaluation, Public Investment and Public-Private Participation (PPP) of the Chief of Staff.

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1 The governing body is understood to be a government agency that fulfills the following functions: i) to set objectives and goals for the system; ii) to define priorities and methodologies; iii) to assign responsibilities and functions; iv) to distribute the resources necessary for compliance; v) to regulate activities in accordance with quality standards, coverage levels and financing; vi) to monitor and evaluate the progress of activities and the achievement of goals.

2 Mexico, Canada and Spain, for example.
3 Decree 909/95 creates the organizational structure of the Chief of Staff and the Department of Strategic Control carries out the functions related to the monitoring of policies linked to the fulfillment of government plans.

In internationally funded programmes and projects, M&E functions have high levels of institutionalization. Until the end of 2019, they were under the responsibility of the National Office of Projects and Programmes with External Financing of the Department of Budgetary Evaluation, Public Investment and PPP of the Chief of Staff. This office monitored the project portfolio and was responsible for the ex-ante evaluation of projects. In addition, the Ministry of Finance carried out physical and financial monitoring of these projects through a unified software system (UEPEX).

2. What is the legal framework that supports the monitoring and evaluation function?

In recent years, the evaluation function was anchored on three laws from the late 1990s and early 2000s. These laws have a strong focus on expenditure evaluation: Law No. 24,156 on Financial Administration and Control Systems, which establishes the obligation to carry out physical-financial monitoring of budget programmes, Law No. 24,354 on the National Public Investment System, which establishes the obligation to carry out M&E of the investment projects, and Law No. 25,152 on the Programme for the Evaluation of Expenditure Quality.

However, there are two laws for the period 2015-2019 that implied changes for the evaluation function: the Law of Access to Public Information (No. 27.275), because it seeks to assure the publication of evaluations, and the Congressional Budget Bureau Law (27.343) because it requires the evaluation process to be applied to budget bills. Law No. 27,275 also extended the application of the Right of Access to Public Information to all branches of government. The active transparency mandate reaches "(...) audits (...) evaluations, internal or external, carried out previously, during or after, referring to the body itself, its programmes, projects and activities" (Article 32, paragraph i). Law No. 27,343 of 2016 created the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) with the mission, among others, to carry out studies, analyses and evaluations of the impact achieved by government policies and programmes in relation to their budget allocation at the request of the Budget and Finance Commissions. However, the focus of the CBO continues to be the analysis of the national budget and its execution. This idea reinforces the kind of evaluation focused on public spending of these laws.

From a normative point of view, the laws that frame the M&E function respond to an expenditure evaluation paradigm that, although valuable, leaves aside approaches that analyse the impact of State action on citizens' living conditions.

In this context, Decree 292/2018, which establishes the mandatory evaluation of social programmes and policies was an important break-through. The decree recognizes that "the design and implementation of social policies requires the availability of information and the possibility to carry out technical analyses to evaluate their impact and improve decision making; therefore, the institutionalization of a management area becomes necessary to contribute to the articulation of the various areas of government that manage data to improve its availability, management and analysis".

It also establishes innovations for the national policy of evaluation of social programmes in the field of:

1.   Ruling. It assigns the leadership of the evaluation of policies and social programmes to the CNCPS in the area of the Presidency.
2.   Tools. It creates the Annual M&E Plan for Policies and Social Programmes[4] by the CNCPS.
3.   Methods. It establishes a common methodological matrix for social plans and programmes linked to information systems.
4.   Information management. Recognizes the importance of the integration of beneficiary information.

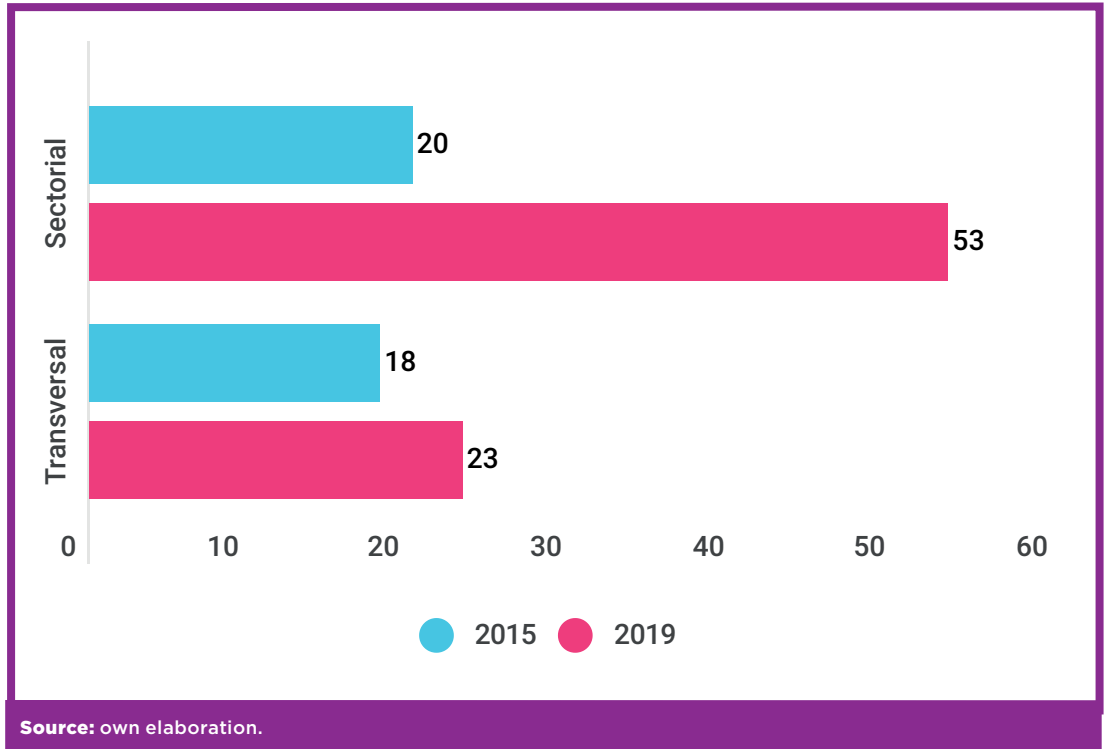## 3. How are roles and responsibilities distributed among agencies?

The M&E function in the central NPA, then, is divided among different cross-cutting systems[5]: a) the monitoring of physical targets of budget programmes and strategic objectives; b) the monitoring of sector-based policies; c) the monitoring and evaluation of social programmes; and d) the evaluation of externally funded projects. All of them are carried out by different public agencies that are within the sphere of the Chief of Staff, of the Ministry of Finance/Ministry of Economy of the Presidency. In cases where functions are shared, such as the M&E system for budget programmes and externally funded programmes, during the period 2015-2019 there was an effort to coordinate the tasks of each agency and institutionalize the process by both the Vice Chief of Staff and the Underdepartment of International Financial Relations of Finance.

Beyond the connections between the agencies and the attempts to coordinate efforts, each of these systems were developed in isolation without a conceptual, normative and organisational framework that would integrate them. Thus, agencies are subject to multiple requirements and methodologies, which generates negative incentives for compliance. Vertical coordination between agencies in charge of the different systems had a
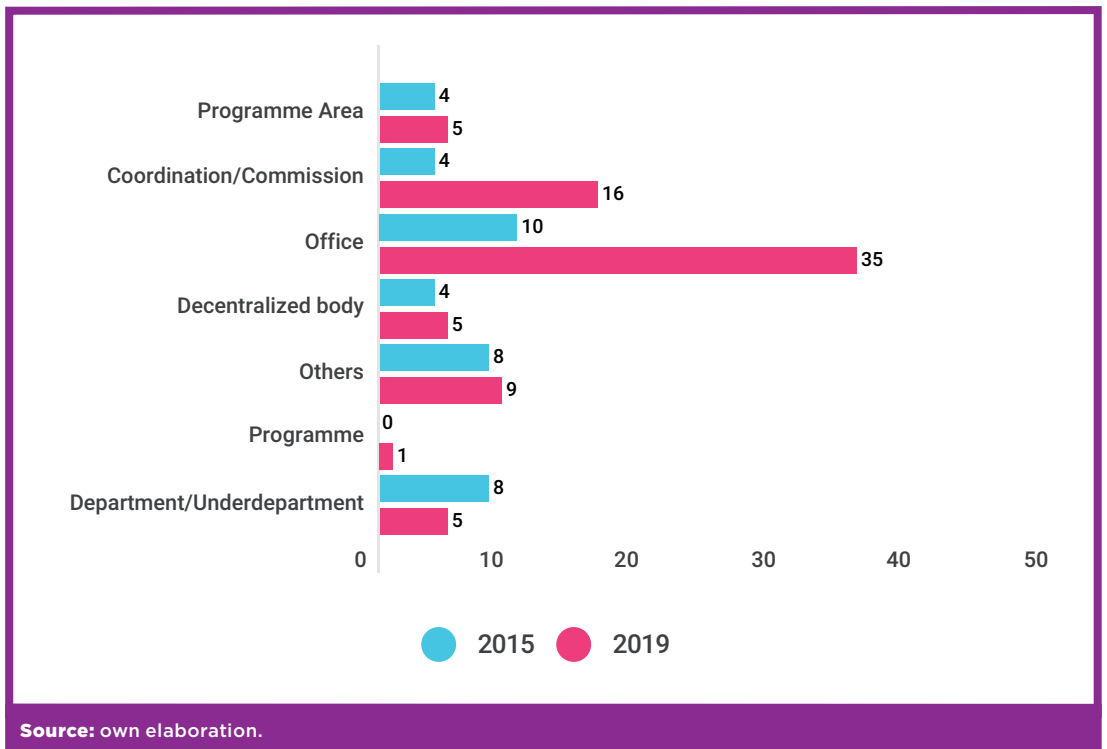
Graph 1.
Number of areas with M&E functions in the NPA according to policy role (2015 and 2019)

Sectorial
- 2015: 20
- 2019: 53

Transversal
- 2015: 18
- 2019: 23

● 2015 ● 2019

Source: own elaboration.

Graph 2.
Number of areas with M&E functions in the NPA according to hierarchy (2015 and 2019)

Programme Area
- 2015: 4
- 2019: 5

Coordination/Commission
- 2015: 4
- 2019: 16

Office
- 2015: 10
- 2019: 35

Decentralized body
- 2015: 4
- 2019: 5

Others
- 2015: 8
- 2019: 9

Programme
- 2015: 0
- 2019: 1

Department/Underdepartment
- 2015: 8
- 2019: 5

● 2015 ● 2019

Source: own elaboration.

Graph 3.
Number of areas with M&E functions in the NPA according to focus (2015 and 2019)

	2015	2019
Evaluation	13	25
Monitoring	11	22
Monitoring and Evaluation	8	16
Planification and other functions	6	13

Source: own elaboration.
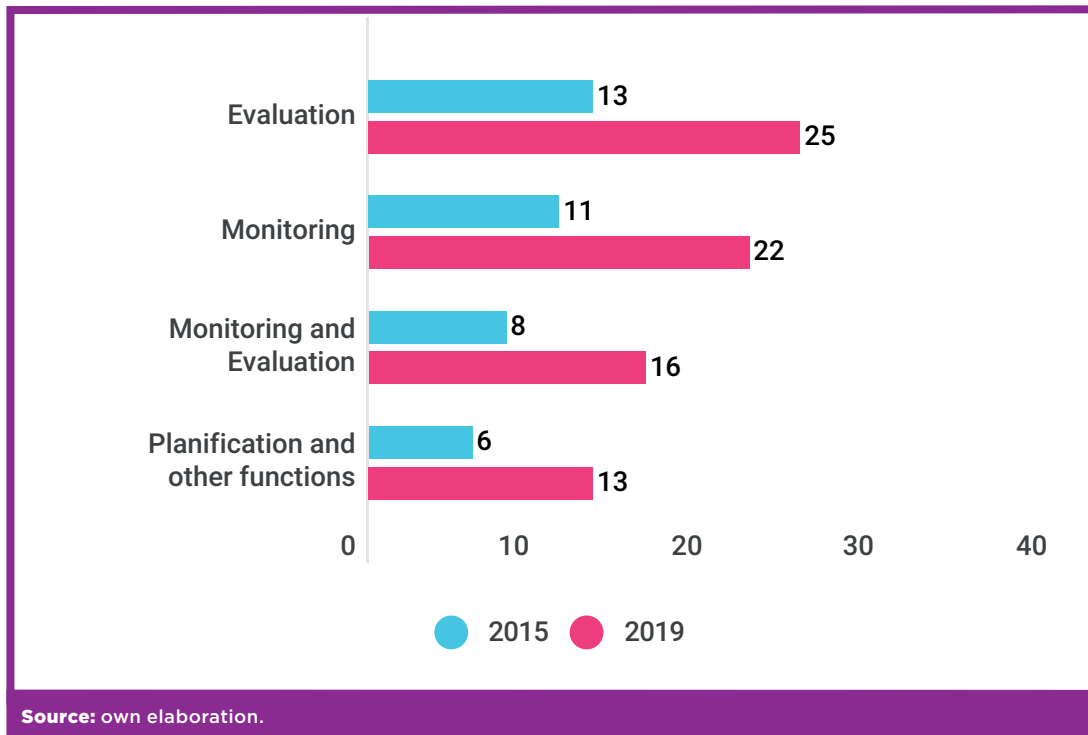
varying degree of institutionalization. Finally, there is a regulation (Decree 945/2018) that has redefined the counterparts in the agencies in charge of the external financing projects, and what were the tasks of the executing units and the Financing Units International (UFI) have to be absorbed by the substantive areas of the ministries[6].

In the case of M&E systems for budget programmes and externally funded projects, there are areas in the agencies in charge of these functions. On the other hand, in the case of the M&E systems of sector plans and social programmes, no clearly identifiable counterparts were developed, which added to the organisational difficulty.

In the vast majority of cases, there are no governing bodies[7] by agency with M&E functions, and therefore both tasks are practiced in a heterogeneous manner according to the sector or programme. In turn, this implies the non-existence of identifiable counterparts to implement common guidelines on M&E among the different agencies. The exception to this is the Department of Educational Evaluation, dependant on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, which does function as the governing body, mostly on the evaluation of learning through standardized tests[8]. Although the Department carried out evaluations of specific policies, most of their results were not published.

Despite the absence of M&E governing bodies in most central NPA agencies, between 2015 and 2019 there was a 46% increase in the number of areas with M&E functions (**Graph 1**), which denotes a greater relevance of the issue within the State's organisational structure. This growth was greater in the agencies based in different sectors (especially those linked to social policy) than in the cross-cutting ones (such as the Chief of Staff, the Presidency or the Treasury).

However, the variety of hierarchies among the units with M&E functions within the ministries shows that the evaluation is left to the discretion of the official leading the area, rather than responding to an organic conception by the State. The areas that grew most were the Offices and Coordination Offices (**Graph 2**).

In addition, the focus of work in the areas with M&E functions is still quite heterogeneous. As can be seen in **Graph 3**, the ones that grew the most are those linked to monitoring, evaluation or both functions combined.

6 There is no standard for creating formal areas with M&E functions at the ministry level. In the only case where the programme monitoring function is centralized at the agency level is the Department of Employment, and its functions are assigned informally. In the only case where the programme evaluation function is centralized is at the Department of Educative Evaluation, where Resolution 280 of the Federal Council of Education assigns the specific mission of evaluating learning and institutions to a department in charge of standardized tests. The National Education Act stipulates that the Ministry of Education is responsible for and has the power to implement evaluation policies (Article 95-98).
7 Other bodies with M&E functions include the Ministry of Production and the Ministry of Labor, where the Department of Employment is located; the Underdepartment of Public Health Coverage in the Ministry of Health and Social Development (2018); the Department of Housing in the Ministry of the Interior, Public Works and Housing; and General Office of Projects for Children, Adolescents and Youth in the National Administration of Social Security (ANSES).

8 In this case, it should be noted that the evaluation to which it refers lies in the evaluation of learning although it also centralizes the ministry's decisions regarding the policy evaluations that are carried out.

Sustainability: Financing, Human Resources and Information Quality

1. What resources are available for M&E in the NPA?

There are severe financial resource constraints in conducting M&E. To begin with, most ministries do not receive a specific allocation for the function. Furthermore, the policies and programmes they design do not allocate budget to develop evaluations. Internationally funded programmes are exceptions as they do have dedicated resources specific to evaluative functions.

In addition, the Annual M&E Plan in charge of SIEMPRO, which establishes the evaluation of social programmes and policies as mandatory does not have a defined source of funding, thus making its execution dependent on the funds of the agencies in charge of such programmes. At the level of agencies, the funds to carry out evaluations generally come from multilateral cooperation organisations.

Both the number and skills of human resources allocated to the function in the agencies are heterogeneous. Evaluation experts are scarce in the NPA because the academic training offerings also need to be strengthened. Teams vary from a maximum of 50 people to a minimum of 5 depending on the political hierarchy of the area and current projects within the sector.

Information systems used for monitoring and evaluation of surveyed programmes and plans (**Table 1, Annex**) show varying degrees of development in relation to technological support and data sources. The most complex and advanced are those that are provided with existing information in the provincial agencies in an automatic or regular manner and in accordance with international standards, as in the cases of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security. In contrast, in most cases there are some issues that hinder the efficiency and accuracy of these systems:

1.   Double burden on the provincial registries and national system which duplicates workload and requires ex post standardization of data
2.   Own information structures that are not compatible with the needs of the system at the national level or with the technological requirements of the different systems.
3.   Need to improve processes for identifying people and capturing data.
4.   Informality in the collection of data that hinders its use and validity

2. How is the quality of information guaranteed?

To ensure the quality of evaluation information, a Federal Agency could define quality standards, strengthen capacities and incentives to improve practices, or establish internal and/or external review processes.

In the case of M&E of social programmes and policies, since 2018, SIEMPRO has established common methodological guidelines for the construction of indicator matrices, the definition of types of evaluations, the steps in the evaluation process, the contents of the terms of reference and the use of information. However, there are no institutionalised instances for the registration of evaluators, the quality review of the evaluation implementation processes or the technical quality of the usefulness of the reports.

Evaluability in Practice

1. How is the evaluability of plans and programmes ensured?

One of the greatest difficulties in evaluating plans and programmes is that there are no formal and homogeneous requirements for designing and formulating them. This makes evaluation difficult both because of the lack of administrative records on the performance of plans and programmes, as well as the lack of technical and budgetary foresight in a strategy of evaluation. This is particularly evident when analysing the quality of the design and planning of plans and programmes.

The disparity in the evaluability of social plans and programmes in Argentina (Aquilino et al., 2015) exposes that there are no homogeneous rules of design or operation that reflect indispensable aspects of the formulation of policies, such as objectives, results, indicators, products, information sources, among others. These aspects are also crucial for the design and implementation of quality information systems.

2. What is the approach to monitoring?

At the central level, the NPA carries out different monitoring practices: monitoring of expenditure associated with the physical targets of budget dispositions, monitoring of agencies' sectorial plans, monitoring of programme and project portfolios, and monitoring of the management of social programmes and policies at the individual level.

The physical and financial monitoring of the budget dispositions deals with the fulfilment of the physical goals of 70% of the budget programmes and the analysis of the corresponding programme results and financial execution, administered by the ONP. As of 2017, the monitoring of the strategic objectives of the SDG and the Government Plan (priority objectives and initiatives) began to be carried out by the Chief of Staff.

The ministry management has the responsibility of monitoring their corresponding sector's plans through the Project Management Board developed by the former Department of Mod-

ernization of the Chief of Staff. In general, goals associated with the projects that are prioritized by the Ministry are physical.

The National Office of Programmes and Projects with International Funding monitors the programme and project portfolio. Through a control panel that includes indicators of the total portfolio of internationally funded projects on financial progress, physical progress, sub-national participation in the total portfolio, and concentration of the portfolio by Ministry. At the level of individual projects, physical and financial execution is monitored through the UEPEX system, which reports to the Ministry of Finance.

Alternatively, SIEMPRO monitors social programmes and policies through the Integrated Monitoring System (IMS). It monitors the achievement of budgetary, coverage and output goals. At the same time, the social programmes and policies that are included in the Annual M&E Plan must develop an indicator matrix to track their performance and results. However, the policies incorporated in the IMS do not respond to a particular criterion, but to the bilateral agreements between the programme managers and SIEMPRO. Their inclusion does not imply any kind of standardization or minimum information requirements and, therefore, it does not conform an integrated system.

At the agency level, we distinguish two types of monitoring: the management level monitoring and programme level monitoring. Management monitoring is a follow-up practice carried out by hierarchical levels for the rendering of accounts and information on strategic lines of work or specific indicators that are politically prioritized, and is usually in charge of the areas of Chief of Staff of each agency. In general, these are supervising boards or pre-selected, prioritized indicators by the Minister or directly by the Chief of Staff.

This practice is distinguished from the monitoring of programmes, which focuses on the implementation and performance of each one. This type of monitoring is usually subject to the decision of each programme´s staff, which carries it out following their own processes and methodologies. One exception is the Department of Employment (of the former Ministry of Production and Work) where there is an area that centralizes programme monitoring information and seeks to define common standards.

3. What is the approach to evaluation?

At the central level, evaluation is carried out in the social sector through SIEMPRO. The decree 292/2018 introduced important changes in evaluation practice: an Annual M&E Plan that defines a set of social programmes and plans to be evaluated through external evaluators that must follow the methodological guidelines defined by the governing body and the corresponding ministry.

At the agency level, evaluation practice is characterized by a multiplicity of descriptive studies on three main aspects: i) organisational capacities, ii) characteristics of the target population, and iii) management and implementation processes.

There is a low level of planning for evaluations. These are carried out according to political and management needs, but there are no evaluation plans in the surveyed areas for evaluation activities, and that has implications on the possibility of having the necessary resources and information to carry out evaluations. Only the Ministry of Education has generated a clear planning for the evaluation activities.

The importance of the demands and requirements of international organisations in carrying out outcome and impact evaluations is fundamental[9].

Using Information: Demands from the Political System and Uses

1. What is done with the information obtained?

In general, management reports are developed from the monitoring systems that are then given to different actors periodically. The four types of recipients that utilize the information can be categorized as the following: i) areas within the same ministry, ii) Chief of Staff, iii) provincial governments (directly or through Federal Councils), and iv) international organisations.

The information produced by the system for monitoring the physical goals and results of budget programmes is used as an accountability mechanism to prepare the Investment Account that must be submitted annually to Congress to analyse the consistency of the budget distribution made by the agencies and the requirements for additional funds.

The findings and recommendations of social policy and programme evaluations are generally not communicated publicly and systematically. Information is scattered among public agency websites and does not depend on a common guideline. However, public policies are not yet designed as valuable platforms to show development results or to account for their impact, effectiveness, efficiency and efficacy.

In this regard, the only exception is the Department of the Evaluation of Educational Quality[10] of the Ministry of Education, which has created an Advisory Council made up of evaluation experts. The Council meets to analyse the results of the evaluations so it can make adjustments and suggestions to the evaluation reports.

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9 The case of the Ministry of Education is one of the exceptions, since outcome and impact evaluations were carried out with funding from the Treasury.
10 It also published the data from the Aprender 2016 tests with the support of CEPAL's Redatam platform.

Achievements and Challenges of the National Evaluation Policy (2015-2019)

The survey conducted for this document identifies achievements in the institutionalisation of the M&E function in the NPA between 2015 and 2019. First of all, the innovations regarding access to public information (Law No. 27,275), rectory and M&E of social policy (Decree 292/2018) and regulatory impact assessment (Law No. 27,343) are significant advances in regulatory matters because they define the practice of evaluation as mandatory, subject to certain standards and enabling channels for its public dissemination.

Second, the number of areas with M&E functions increased. In fact, there has also been an improvement in the quality of the tools used for M&E functions. For example, an important advancement in the monitoring of budget programmes was achieved by linking the goals associated with strategic planning and the programmatic structure of the budget system in connection with the SDG. In relation to social programmes, the Annual M&E Plan was established, methodological guidelines were defined, and there was an increase in the capacity to integrate data related to the identification of information on applicants and beneficiaries of national programmes (non-contributory pensions, scholarships, retirements and pensions, social rates, and subsidies)[11].

Third, while there is not yet a governing body overseeing the evaluation function, SIEMPRO, dependent of the CNCPS, is an agency that directly depends on the Presidency and has a directorship role in the evaluation of social policy. This agency constitutes a milestone that can allow for institutional learning for the consolidation of a central body. Likewise, the experience of the M&E of strategic projects is a valuable practice that can generate future benefits.

Fourth, a significant effort was made in the generation and integration of systems of information. The quintessential case remains that of the Ministry of Health where although the main programmes already had systems in place functioning, there was an effort to the integrate each of these developments on a common platform that allows interoperability of information. In addition, efforts were made to perform quality control measures.

Despite this progress, there are still many challenges. On the one hand, the absence of a national policy to regulate the M&E function

in the NPA prevails. This has repercussions on the fragmentation of the M&E function and the overlapping of different cross-cutting systems.

On the other hand, the social policy evaluation guideline functions assigned to the CNCPS through SIEMPRO was weakened for at least two reasons: the absence of its own funding to implement the Annual M&E Plan, and the low level of recognition of these changes among the social agencies.

Additionally, the absence of central bodies by agency with M&E functions implies that such tasks are practiced in a heterogeneous way according to the sector or programme. There are no unified plans or criteria for conducting evaluations within each agency. Decisions on what and how to evaluate are generally decentralized at the programme level and depend on the requirements of the international agencies, which focus much more on accountability than on redesigning plans and programmes. At the same time, the absence of specialized areas implies the lack of identifiable partners to implement common M&E guidelines among the various agencies.

Moreover, there is little incentive for agencies to reformulate their physical targets included in annual budgets so that they allow for monitoring at the policy level and serve as inputs for evaluations.

Furthermore, access to information on national plans and programmes implemented by the provinces is very unequal. For example, there are difficulties associated with the centralization of information by the national government in cases where programmes are implemented by the provinces. The information received and its quality depends on the province and the programme team, in particular. In some cases, this is due to a lack of existing capacities or a common working path between the national and provincial teams, or because of political affinities. Generally, there are no institutionalized mechanisms for provinces to report information on the implementation of programmes in their agencies.

Finally, there are no institutionalised mechanisms for the use of M&E information. No instances were identified in which the results are presented from which decisions are made and commitments are defined. In this regard, the SIEMPRO guidelines provide for mechanisms, but they need to be institutionalised. At the same time, the results of studies and evaluations carried out either via international agencies or in isolation are still not systematically and publicly communicated.

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11 Executive Order 292/2018, article 6 and 7.

Recommendations

As the analysis shows, the organisational framework (institutional unit, legal framework and distribution of functions) to know the impact and the results of public policies is more robust in 2019 than in 2015. However, sustainability of the M&E exercise (financing, human resources and quality mechanisms) needs to be strengthened with investment of resources. In addition, effective M&E practices and the use of information generated needs to be extended into the political system. It is necessary to continue consolidating the path that enables the construction of an evidence-based state solid on the impacts of their actions. To this end, it is essential to make progress in the following aspects.

Regulatory challenges

1. Designing, agreeing on, and approving a national evaluation policy

It is essential that the National Congress debate and legislate a national policy that will invigorate the national evaluation system; that will provide the decision makers processes and tools that produce critical information to support the design, formulation and implementation of interventions, budgeting; and that will support senior public management in monitoring the performance of their actions and generate lessons for improvement. It is imperative to move toward a national evaluation system that provides the information needed to analyse the government's plan and contribute to the budget allocation to be accountable to the legislature, civil society, the public and the international community.

Institutional challenges

2. Developing a National Evaluation Agency

It is necessary to design and implement a unit responsible of planning, coordinating and executing the national evaluation policy within the framework of a national evaluation law approved by Congress, as the one announced by the President during the State of the Nation Report in 2020. This agency would also have the challenge of integrating interventions, advances and knowledge to improve the national system of evaluation. Its institutionalization is vital to consolidate the evaluation function, for which must meet certain requirements, the most important of which is to have the necessary autonomy institutional, technical and financial.

It is necessary to move towards greater training and technical knowledge on issues related to monitoring and evaluation in the NPA.

3. Strengthen the role of the CNCPS as the coordinating body for social policy and the implementation of the Annual M&E Plan

The CNCPS has an indispensable role in the integration of social information as well as in the production of reports on progress regarding the SDG. In this sense, it is crucial to think about how coordinating the work done by the CNCPS with the National Evaluation Agency in order to not diversify the sources producing the information, which would render this process more complicated. Thus, this coordination has the end goal of constructing a more consolidated, integrated and solid system.

4. Deepen the role of Congress in national evaluation policy

Increase the request, use and dissemination of quality M&E reports by deputies and senators, to inform legislative debates and the national budget. In addition, it is crucial to improve horizontal accountability mechanisms such as the State of the Nation Report and the Chief of Staff reports with reliable evidence for the debate in the chambers, and to strengthen the performance of the Congressional Budget Office in impact evaluation regulatory law.

Policy challenges

5. Strengthening the culture of evaluation

Capacity building in M&E needs to be encouraged in all branches of government, assembling the realm of academia with civil society. It is imperative that the next presidency draw a strategic path for the Chief of Staff to lead the institutionalization and culture of evaluation in the NPA. This plan should strive to increase the quality of dialogue and the power to the Legislative branch to enforce accountability measures through the usage of reliable data on impacts and results of the government plan and public policies.

6. Integrate evaluation into programme design and allocate budget for evaluation

Improvements in public policy design can be considered as a joint task between the evaluating body (setting operating rules) and the sectorial planners (applying them). Thus, rules can be established for the development of government plans and programmes that improve the quality of their design:

- parameterize indispensable aspects: formulation (objectives, results, indicators, products, information sources, etc.), design of information system (monitoring and evaluation matrices, recording and archiving), methodologies (quantitative and/or qualitative) and usage that will be applied to the information being produced;
- increase evaluability by linking the evaluation function to the planning;
- ensure implementation and budget allocation;
- establish data collection strategies and linkage with key actors, and
- allocate task-specific budget for M&E tasks consistently. This will allow for a constant flow of data to make decisions during implementation and to analyse medium-term impacts.

7. Integrate and coordinate information systems to enhance their use

It is vital that the Chief of Staff collaborates to unify and consolidate the existing information systems so that they are able to coordinate with the various policy sectors and provide quality data for different levels of policy aggregation (development plan, sectors, plans and programmes). There is a need to increase coordination with the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses so that the evaluations can dialogue with the existing data through a common metric thus rendering the results they analyse interpretable.

In addition, greater coordination of systems would contribute to the sustainability of each system. Otherwise, each programme manages its own development, resulting in incompatible systems with high maintenance costs and different operating criteria.

8. Ensure the use and dissemination of findings and recommendations

Having operational mechanisms for the programmes and policies to adopt recommendations and respond to evaluation findings through specific institutional incentives that exceed the budget factor is of paramount importance. It is also essential that the Chief of Staff (at level of the government planning), the evaluator (at the public policy level) and the sectorial ministries (with their plans and programmes) provide quality public information and broaden the dissemination of the results of the evaluations that are carried out. The communication of the results would enable not only greater transparency on the reporting system but also the integration of the information M&E processes generate into the management of the department.

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Annex

Table 1.
List of agencies analyzed in the Executive Branch

Agencies of the trasversal component of the M&E function

Agency	Type	Dependency name
Presidency of the Nation	Underdepartment	Of design, monitoring and evaluation of territorial approach, international relations and control of chemical precursors.
	National Office	From the Information, Monitoring and Evaluation System of Social Programmes (SIEMPRO).
	Decentralized body	National Council of Women, Observatory of Violence against women
	Unit	Strategic planning and evaluation of Argentine Education.
	Programme Area	Prevention Area in Educational Fields (from ESTAR Project)
Chief of Staff	Unit	Monitoring and traceability of foreign trade operations.
	General Office	Monitoring and communication strategies
	Unit	Environmental risk assessment (UERA)
	Commission	Technical Environmental risk assessment
	Department	of Budgetary evaluation
	Underdepartment	of Evaluation of the national budget.
	National Office	of Budgetary evaluation
	Underdepartment	of evaluation of projects with external financing.
	Underdepartment	of Budgetary evaluation and public investment
	Coordination	of Evaluation of Budgetary Programmes
	Office	of Study and evaluation of the national budget
	Office	of Programming, Evaluation and Formulation of Public Investment
	Office	of Information Management and Evaluation
	Office	of Consolidation and Sector Budget Monitoring
	Office	of Analysis and Management Control
	Office	of Jurisdictional monitoring of the budget
	Bank	Bank for Public Policy Evaluations

Agencies of the sectorial component of the M&E function

Agency	Type	Dependency name
Ministry of Agroindustry / Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries	Programme Area	of Management Control of the Provincial Agricultural Services Programme
	Commission	of porcine production evaluator
Ministry of the Environment	National Office	of Environmental Assessment
	Unit	Environmental risk assessment unit
	Office	of Environmental impact and Strategic Evaluation
	Department	of Environmental Control and Monitoring
	Office	of Monitoring and Prevention
Ministry of Science and Technology	Coordination	of Management and Monitoring of Sectorial and Special Programmes and Projects
	Coordination	of Technological Studies, Surveillance and Strategic Intelligence
	Coordination	of Evaluation and Improvement of Science and Technology Institutions
	Office	of Projects Evaluation
	Coordination	of Management Control
	Underdepartment	of Institutional Evaluation
	Office	of Projects with External Financing
	Unit	of Evaluation and Quality Assurance
Ministry of Culture	Coordination	of Management Control and Monitoring
Ministry of Defense	Coordination	Of Evaluation of Offers
Ministry of Social Development	Office	of Management and Monitoring of Sectorial and Special Programmes and Projects
	Coordination	of Social Development Programmes Evaluation
	Office	of Evaluation and Monitoring of Programmes
	Office	of Planning and Evaluation
	Department	of Coordination and institutional monitoring
	Underdepartment	of Coordination, monitoring and Logistics.
Ministry of Education	National Office	of Information and evaluation of educational quality (DiNIECE)
	Commission	of University Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEAU).
	Programme Area	of Evaluation and Monitoring of the Connect Equality Programme.
	National Office	of Evaluation of Educational Quality and Equity
	Department	of Educational Evaluation
	National Office	of Planning of Educational Policies
	Office	of Learning Assessment
Ministry of Energy and Mining	Coordination	of Monitoring and Follow-up
	Coordination	of evaluation of personnel, contests and labor relations
	Office	of Resource and Technology Assessment
	Office	of Nuclear Technology Assessment
	National Office	of Evaluation and Supervision of Nuclear Projects
	National Office	of Scenarios and Evaluation of Energy Projects
	Office	of Management Control
	Coordination	of Project Evaluation

Agency	Type	Dependency name
Ministry of Finance / Treasury / Ministry of Economy and Public Finance	Decentralized body	of Financial Information
	Office	National Budgetary Office (ONP)
	Self-sufficient entity	National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC)
	Underdepartment	From Macroeconomic Programming of the Secretary for Economic Policy and Development Planning
	Unit	of Coordination and evaluation of subsidies for domestic consumption.
	Council	Advisor to evaluate the ethical behaviour of consumer associations.
Ministry of the Interior, Public Works and Housing	National Office	Urban Planning Project Evaluation
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights	General Office	of Institutional Monitoring
	General Office	of Budget planning and monitoring.
Ministry of Modernization	Office	of Planning and Management Control
	Programme	of Public Policies Evaluation
	System	Comprehensive Management Monitoring and Evaluation System (SISEG)
	Coordination	of Evaluation and accreditation of training
Ministry of Production	Management	of Quality and Continuous Improvement
	Office	of Competitiveness and impact evaluation
Ministry of Health	Office	of Management and Monitoring of Sectorial and Special Programmes and Projects
	Office	of Supervision and Monitoring, Underdepartment of Management of Assistance Services of the Department of Policies, Regulation and Institutes.
	Office	of Research Policies for Health
	Programme Area	SUMAR, monthly management results.
	Programme Area	Programme for the development of the Project to Strengthen the Primary Health Care Strategy (FEAPS)
	Programme Area	DINAMIA, Monitoring and Evaluation Area
	Programme Area	REMEDIAR, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
Ministry of Security	Supervision	of Processes Evaluation
	Coordination	of Technical Assessment and Control of Chemical Precursors
	Office	of Projects, Evaluation and Drafting of Laws and Decrees
	Coordination	of Management Control
	National Office	Project Management, Evaluation and Drafting of Laws and Decrees
	National Office	of Projects, Evaluations of Norms and Legislative Cooperation.
Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security	National Office	Design, Evaluation and Monitoring of Social Protection Policies.
	Decentralized body	National Administration of Social Security (ANSES).
	Observatory	Observatory of Employment and Business Dynamics (OEDE)
	Survey	Social Security and Protection Survey (ENAPROSS)
	Commission	of Evaluation, Coordination and Follow-up of Price Redetermination Processes
Ministry of Transport	National Office	of Monitoring and Evaluation of Works
	Office	of Works Management Evaluation
	Unit	Temporary Special Executor "Metrobus"

Table 2.
Summary of the degree of institutionalisation according to levels

Level	M&E Functions	Regulatory Framework	Rectory	Counterparts	Degree of institutionalization
Social programmes and policies	Monitoring and evaluation of processes and results	Decree 292/2018	CNCPS	There are no formal counterparts in the responsible agencies of programmes' M&E	MEDIUM + regulatory framework that makes social programmes M&E compulsory + there is governing body - there are no formal counterparts in the agencies
		M&E lineaments	SIEMPRO		
Sectorial plans	Monitoring of goals and activities of ministerial plans	Monitoring of goals and activities of ministerial plans	Management by results	There are no formal counterparts in the responsible agencies of strategic planning and plans' M&E	LOW + there is governing body - there is no regulatory framework that makes M&E compulsory - there are no formal counterparts in the agencies
			Ex Modernization Department		
Budgetary programmes	Monitoring of physical goals and execution of budgetary programmes (objectives of the Government Plan and SDG)	Financial administration law, n° 25.156	ONP	The ONP's counterparts are the Physical Information Coordination Centres within the areas of financial administrative services	HIGH + regulatory framework that makes budgetary M&E compulsory + governing body + formal counterparties in the agencies
			Secretary of Evaluation Budgetary, Public investment and PPP - Chief of Staff	There are no formal counterparts in the agencies for linking physical goals with strategic plans	
Programmes and projects with external financing	Physical-financial monitoring	Law of the National System of Public Investments N ° 24.354	DN of Projects and Programmes with External Financing - Chief of Staff	Areas that prepare and execute projects with external financing in the ministries (Decree 945/2018)	HIGH + regulatory framework that makes investment projects' M&E compulsory + governing body + formal counterparties in the agencies
	Ex ante evaluation	Decree 945/2018	Department of Finance - Ministry of Finance		

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