



# What is “evaluation”?

## Discussing the fundamentals

### **Alfred Uhl**

# COST-A6 1992 – 1998

Evaluation Research in Regard to ...

WP 1: ... Drug Policy and Policy Changes

**WP 2: ... Primary Prevention of Drug Abuse**

WP 3: ... Treatment and Rehabilitation

WP4: Development of Research Instruments and Protocols  
to be used in Evaluation

WP5: Evaluating Actions against Drug Related Delinquency

**What is “Evaluation” and  
what is “Primary Prevention”**

Springer, A. & Uhl, A.(eds.) (1998): Evaluation Research in Regard to Primary Prevention of Drug Abuse. A COST-A6 Publication, European Commission Social Sciences, Brussels

## COST-A6 1992 – 1998

- everyday context  
proving effectiveness of the evaluand  
(= measure, technique, programme)  
(quite narrow – but mostly not feasible)
- professional context  
assessing anything to understand the evaluand better:  
(rather modest – and always feasible)

# Structure of a large Company

original situation

but new boss wants focus on production

- Administration
- Research
- Production
- Advertisement
- Sales



# Structure of a large Company

## pragmatic solution

- Production (administrative Processes)
- Production (of Research)
- Production (of Goods)
- Production (of Advertisement)
- Production (of Sales)

# Structure of a large Company

after some time

- Production
- Production
- Production
- Production
- Production

# DTME - classification of Evaluation

## (COST-A6-Workgroup)

### Data dimension (Type of data collection)

structural data

process data – **process evaluation**

expected outcome data – **outcome evaluation**

unexpected outcome data – **impact evaluation**

context data

### Time dimension (State of the evaluand)

concept phase = pre-formative phase

development phase = formative phase – **formative evaluation**

testing phase = first summative phase – **summative evaluation**

routine phase = second summative phase

### Methodological dimension

description

exploration

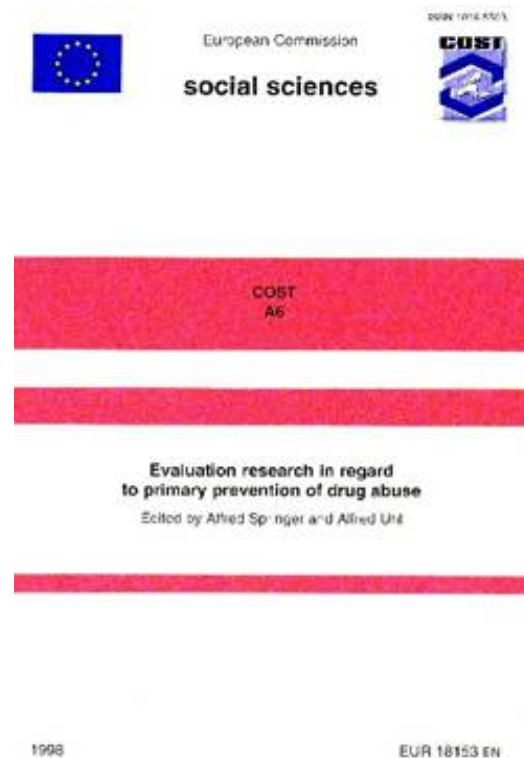
hypotheses testing

### Evaluator dimension

**internal evaluation**

**external evaluation**

# COST-A6 1992 – 1998



Uhl et al. (1998): Evaluation of Primary Prevention in the Field of Illicit Drugs: Definitions - Concepts - Problems. COST A6, Brussels



Uhl (2000): The Limits of Evaluation , EMCDDA, Lissabon

# Later Publications



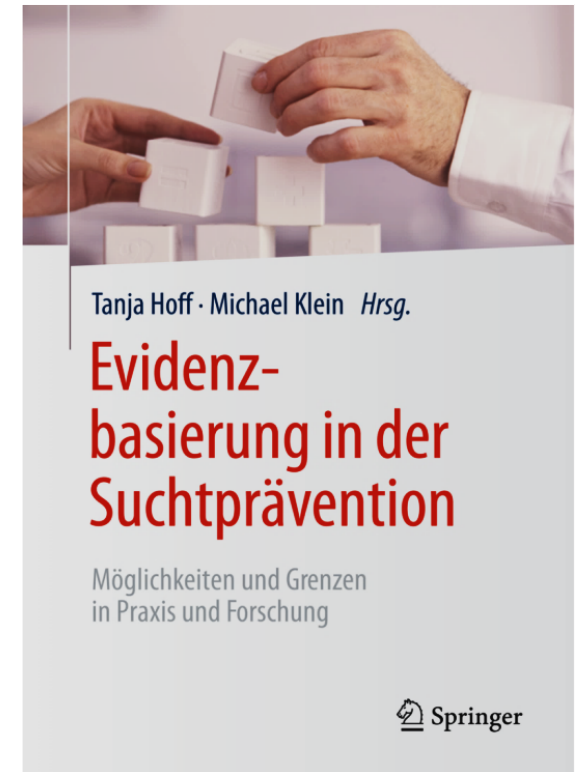
## Definition of Evaluation

Uhl, A. (2000): Evaluation.  
In: Stimmer, F. (Hrsg.):  
Suchtlexikon. Oldenbourg, München



## Methodological problems when evaluating complex issues

Uhl, A. (2012): Methodenprobleme bei der  
Evaluation komplexerer Sachverhalte  
In: RKI (Hrsg.): Beiträge Evaluation komplexer  
Interventionsprogramme in der Prävention  
Robert Koch Institut, Berlin, S. 57-78



## Myth of rational effectiveness research

Uhl, A. (2015): Der Mythos einer  
rationalen Effektivitätsforschung.  
In: Hoff, T.; Klein, M.:  
Evidenzbasierung in der Suchtprävention.  
Springer, Berlin, S.103-118



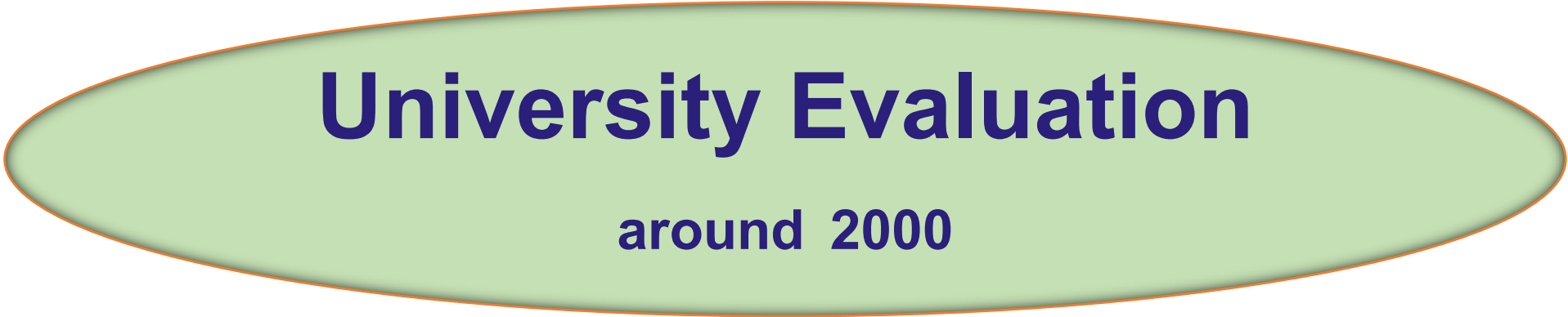
# **European Project on Evaluated Prevention Programs 1998**

# Mental Health Promotion for Children up to 6 Years 1998

Goal: assemble for **best evaluated**  
Mental Health Promotion **programs**  
for small children

500.000 Euro budget  
total failure

Merely documentation of what participants had found



# **University Evaluation**

**around 2000**



# University Evaluation around 2000

30 PhD Students in my first Block Seminar  
on “Research Methodology”

The mode of assessment guarantees adequate scores!  
entirely true (1) – is completely untrue (5)

29 responded

Details in questions hardly matter !  
Primarily a sympathy test !



# **Evaluation of Boltzmann Institutes**

**(around 2005)**

# Evaluation of LBI around 2005

Around 135 mostly small institutes

- international evaluation by European Institute
- Questionnaire with 6 questions
- Ask for list of publications by department head only

Execute **hidden agenda** to close them



# **Drogenkoffer**

## **1997**

# Drogenkoffer 1992 - 1997



Uhl & Springer (1997): 5 Jahre "Drogenkoffer" – Eine Evaluation der Situation in Wien

# Drogenkoffer 1992 - 1997

1992 – Internal evaluation with questionnaire:  
Good ratings by teachers and students  
(→ EDDRA-database)

1997 – External evaluation by LBI-Sucht:  
only 2 teachers throughout Vienna had  
demonstrably carried out the 8-hour program

The design is **totally inappropriate**  
Providing "one suitcase per school" is ridiculous

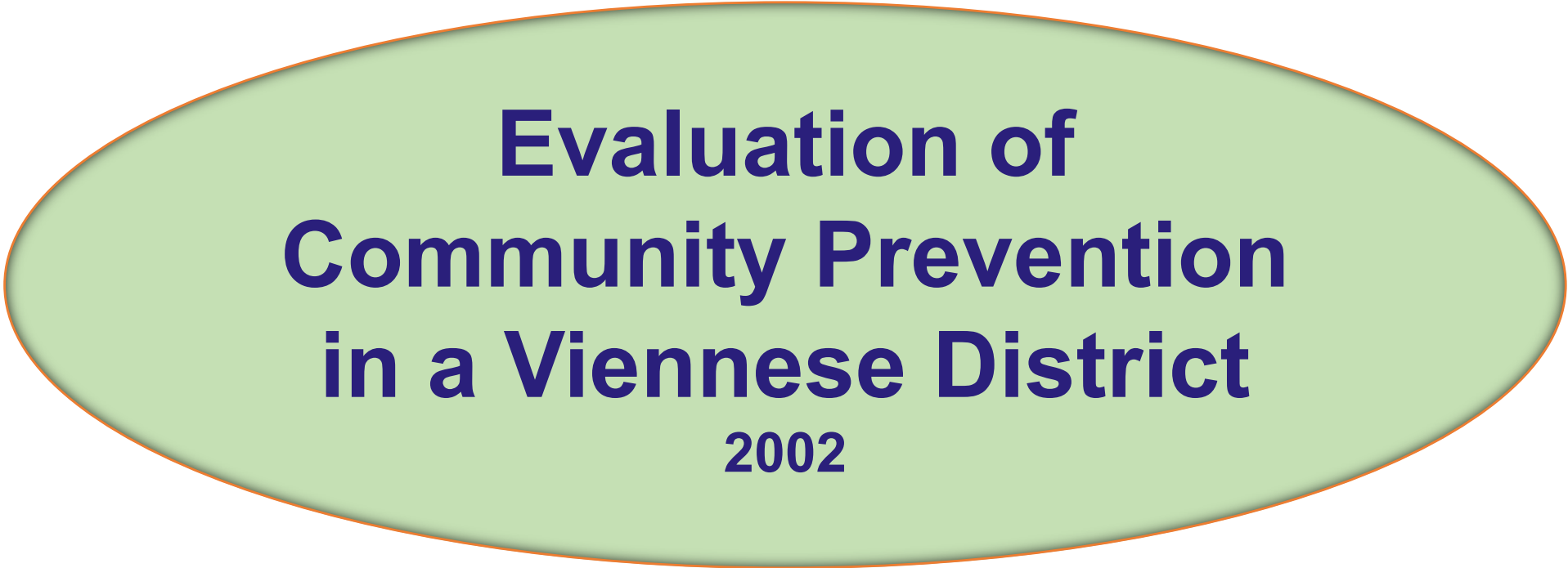
# Drogenkoffer 1992 - 1997

no more  
republished !



Uhl & Springer (1997): 5 Jahre "Drogenkoffer" – Eine Evaluation der Situation in Wien





# **Evaluation of Community Prevention in a Viennese District 2002**



# Community Prevention Project

## Prevention Centre as Facilitator and Consultants

- local politicians
- school teachers
- out-of-school youth-workers
- parents
- students
- Prevention Centre as Facilitator and Consultants

misconceptions about project ownership

Problem with teachers' skills

# **Evaluation der “Wiener Berufsbörse”**

# Results

## Positive assessment by Public Employment Service and addiction services

- Addiction services need expertise in social work
- Public Employment Service needs addiction expertise
- Positive Response to Counselling Service in Public Employment Service positive
- More comprehensive and more diversified services on the 2nd labor market needed



**Sozialwissenschaftliche Studie  
über langzeitbeschäftigungslose  
Personen mit einer  
Suchterkrankung  
2009**

# Results

Practical problems e.g.

- Treated addicts are not eligible for Public Employment Service
- Public Employment Service not ideal for addicts – creaming
- Low level initiation or permanently reduced requirements

# German Evaluation Standards



translated into English  
**EVALUATION STANDARDS**  
(DeGEval-Standards)  
German Society for Evaluation (2001)

## Original version

<https://www.degeval.org/degeval-standards-alt/archiv/download-der-ersten-fassung-von-2002>

## New version

<https://www.degeval.org/degeval-standards-alt/download>

# Popular wrong Conceptions about Evaluation

- Always plan evaluation prior to project start  
(commonly not feasible)
- Always have precisely predefined goals  
(commonly neither sensible nor feasible)
- Every evaluation has to prove effectiveness  
(usually neither sensible nor feasible)
- The evaluator has to judge the evaluand  
(sometimes explicitly ruled out – sometimes desired)
- Only standardized methods are legitimate  
(systematic, data-based and competent – but not standardized)

# Popular wrong Conceptions about Evaluation

- Always quantitative statistics and significance tests  
(understandable and criticisable – qualitative is accepted as well)
- Always for specific practical application  
(also gaining knowledge without intention to apply it)
- Always aim at emancipation and not control  
(not necessarily – but nice if feasible)
- Always guarantee transparency for all participants  
(not necessarily – but nice if feasible)



# Sensible Conceptions about Evaluation

- systematic & realistic (not standardised)
- reproducible and criticisable
- data based
- competent

# Goals of Evaluation

- Improving the evaluation object (= formative evaluation)
- Preparing decisions
- Gaining knowledge (without direct intention to application)
- Basis for judgements – but not necessarily judgement

# Gestalt – Complexity

Twig - qualitative

Picture of a twig

Twig - quantitative

Twigs and needles  
separated

Ursus Wehrli, „Kunst aufräumen“, Kein & Aber, Zürich

# Gestalt – Complexity

x-mas tree - qualitative

Picture of a  
Christmas tree

x-mas tree - quantitative

Twigs, needles and  
decoration separated

Ursus Wehrli, „Kunst aufräumen“, Kein & Aber, Zürich

# Gestalt – Complexity

subway plan - qualitative

subway plan - quantitative

Subway plan

All lines and letters  
separated



# **Evaluation of the new Austrian Gambling Law 2017**

# Possible evaluation of the gambling law

(not really carried out but demonstrated to show the problem)

## Two identical formulations for 30 persons each

- The gambling time per day is limited to a maximum of 3 hours per day  
(81% think this makes sense).
- You are allowed to play 3 hours a day without a break  
(0 % think that makes sense).

# Evalopathy

The permanent demand for "evidence-based policy" has fostered inappropriate pseudo-evaluation that could be labeled "Evalopathy" ...

... a semi-pathological approach  
to evaluate  
even if where it is not possible  
and  
where it makes no sense;  
  
with inadequate methods  
and  
irrational goals



It is difficult to get a man to  
understand something  
when his salary depends  
on his not understanding it.

Upton Sinclair

Finding creative solutions is not always easy, but we should not give up !

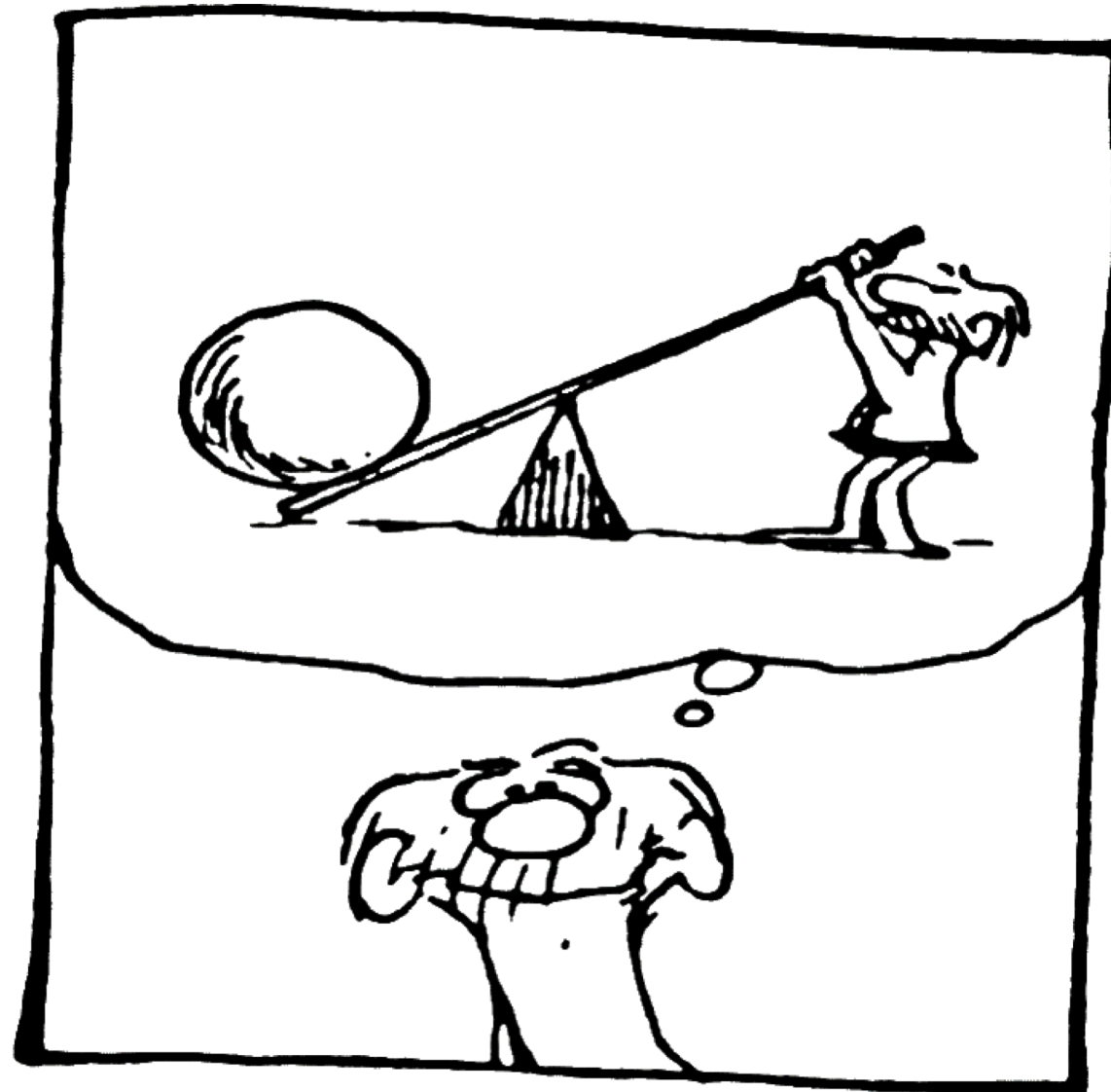


B.C. THE SUN COMES UP THE SUN GOES DOWN by *Johnny Hart*

Finding creative solutions is not always easy, but we should not give up !



Finding creative solutions is not always easy, but we should not give up !



Finding creative solutions is not always easy, but we should not give up !

