

# 12<sup>th</sup> EES Biennial Conference

Evaluation Futures in Europe and beyond  
Connectivity, Innovation and Use

26 - 30 September, 2016  
MECC Maastricht, the Netherlands



The EES 12<sup>th</sup> biennial conference “Evaluation Futures in Europe and Beyond: Connectivity, Innovation and Use” promises to be the evaluation event of 2016. It will be held in Maastricht, The Netherlands, in the same country where the first EES conference was held over 20 years ago. It will take stock of the current state of affairs in evaluation politics, capacity, systems, research, methods, communication and use; as well as sketch future directions.

This conference marks two important “firsts” in the history of the EES: for the first time in an EES conference, **gender equality** is a cross-cutting theme. In addition to gender-specific sessions, papers and panels addressing gender-equality will be distributed throughout the programme according to the other themes they relate to. Secondly, along with paper presentations, panels, poster sessions and roundtables, the EES conference will explore for the first time the potential of **open space technologies**, also known as “un-conference” events, which facilitate self-organised and spontaneous conversations open to everyone’s active participation.

The overall programme is divided into 4 thematic strands, with two cross-cutting themes (Europe and Gender Equality).

**Strand One “Evaluation Ethics, Governance, and Professionalism”** addresses “the rules of the game”: high-level standards and normative frameworks for evaluators as well as commissioners and policy makers. **Strand Two “Evaluation Systems, Organisations and Partnerships”** relates to the institutional architecture of evaluations, for example the development of evaluation systems or multi-partner and complex network configurations. **Strand Three “Evaluation Methods and Research”** reflects on innovative ways to design and conduct evaluations, as well as evaluation theories and approaches based on academic, discipline-based traditions. **Strand Four “Evaluation Use, Communication, and Outreach”** highlights experiences showing that evaluations can have an impact, not just on policy making but also on community empowerment or other desirable (or undesirable) outcomes.

Our **keynote and plenary session** speakers will take us on a memorable journey of entertaining enlightenment (and enlightening entertainment).

**Hans Rosling**, the man who makes “statistics sing” and “data dance”, will teach us a thing or two about communicating evaluation findings. But most importantly Hans Rosling, the man who never tires of uncovering and denouncing the widespread ignorance, knowledge gaps, and deep-seated biases afflicting even that part of humankind who think of themselves as educated and knowledgeable, will make us realise **how easy it is to be wrong**. Even for professionals priding themselves of, and making a living out of, creating “evidence”. Even worse: how easy it is to be wrong without even suspecting that we are. For increasingly respected professionals like evaluators, nothing is more precious, as an investment for future growth, relevance and prestige, than the awareness of our own weaknesses.

**Elliot Stern** will represent “evaluation” in a plenary panel chaired by **Frans Leeuw**, joining two high-level representatives of other social sciences who will compete, or perhaps cooperate, between themselves and with “evaluation”, to provide the most appropriate and highest quality advice to a fictitious prime minister about to design a new policy. The distinctiveness of evaluation in relation to social sciences should brilliantly emerge in a **real-time simulation of evidence-based policy making**.

Our **EU keynote speaker** will remind us what’s at stake for Europe: the value Evaluation holds for Europe-wide cohesion, democracy and accountability. Finally, **Claire Hutchings** will pull the threads of the conference together and draw on her experience as an NGO commissioner of evaluations, as a methodological innovator, and as an M&E community developer, to tell us what it takes for innovation in evaluation to spread, and for evaluations to be pervasive and persuasive, making a difference “on the ground”.

Everything on the menu is mouthwatering. We can’t wait to see you in Maastricht.

**Barbara Befani**

