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Measuring the Impact of European Community Support to Research Infrastructures

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This presentation

- Why impact assessments?
- What has been done in the field of evaluating Research Infrastructures?
- The additional complication of assessing the European Community support
- A package of methods proposed in a pilot study for DG RTD/ DG INFSO
- Main messages

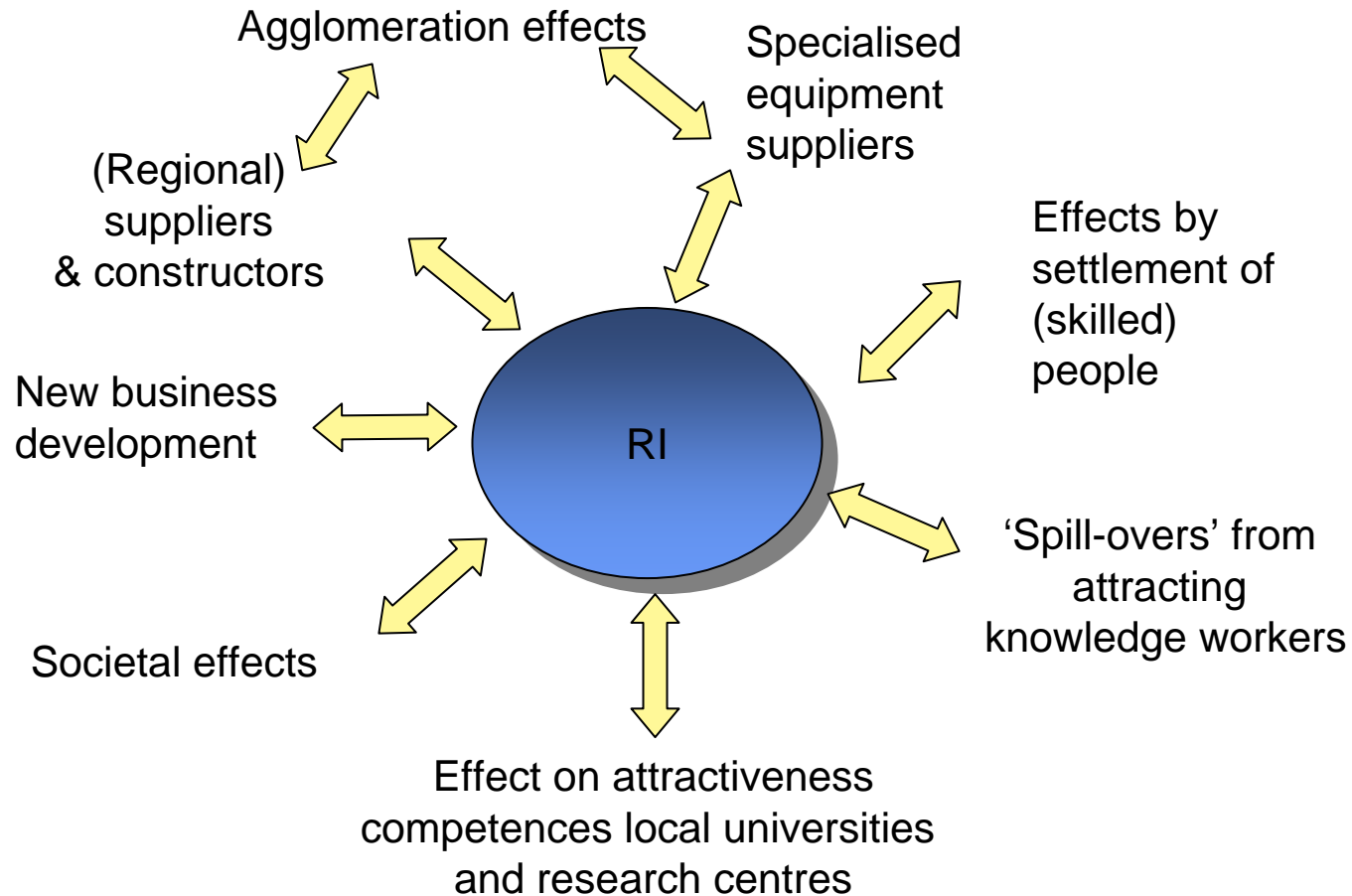
Why the need for evaluations & impact assessments?

- Accountability reasons: has public money been spent well?
- New production of knowledge (Gibbons, et al.): social accountability and reflexivity
- As part of evaluations, impact assessments can provide lessons how to improve the effectiveness of government support, and provide intelligence to make 'mid-term' corrections and design new programmes
- It can help support a culture amongst the scientists / managers of RIs to become more reflective on the future applications of their activities

What has been done so far?

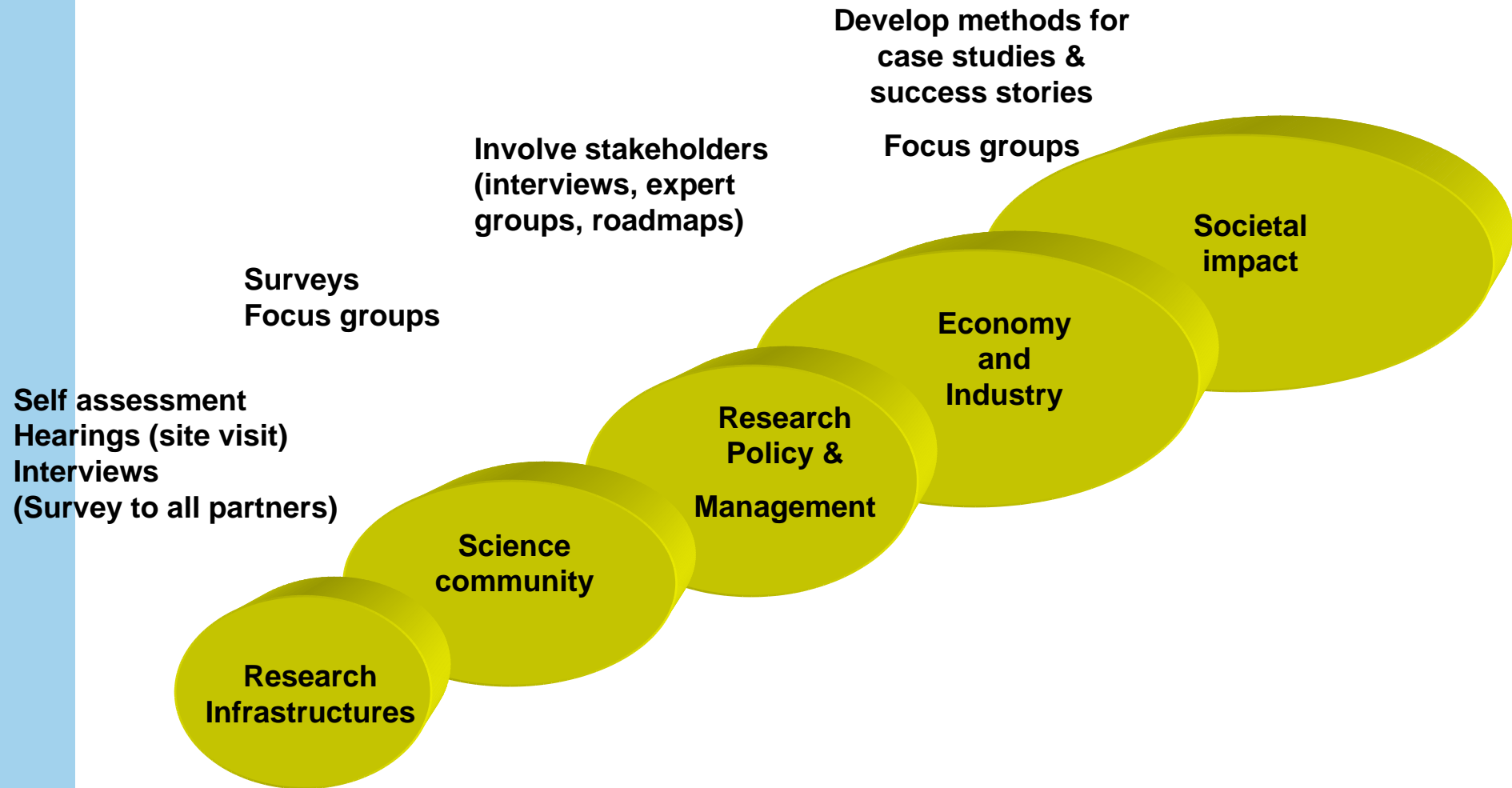
- Ex-ante impact assessments: what will be the likely impact if we invest in Research Infrastructure X?
 - Mostly on the basis of the ‘science need’ arguments
 - The socio-economic aspects remain very speculative
 - Examples: ESS City of Lund, TESLA/X-Fel, Hamburg
- Surveys characterising existing Research Infrastructures
- Regional impact studies: e.g. Trieste, Elletra
- EU context: surveys with users of research infrastructures and their hosts
- Roadmaps: e.g. UK. Large Facility Roadmap, Danish Needs survey and strategic study

Example: regional 'footprints' of a Research Infrastructure

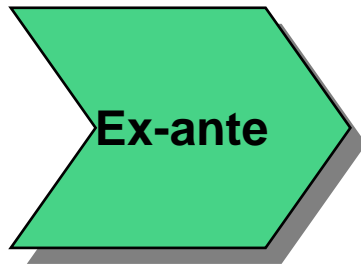


Particular challenges measuring EU contribution

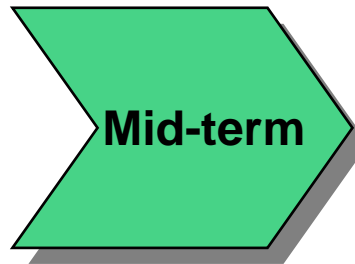
- The EU support is an 'add on' to existing national or multi-national infrastructures: difficult to isolate the EU action from normal operation
- Some RI networks have a very long history and dynamics, others have only started 'integration' activities
- The character of the RIs and RI-consortia is extremely diverse (e.g. large physical infrastructures, E-Infrastructures, collections, databases)
- The intervention logic of each EU support scheme in FP6 is different
- The mind set of many contractors is on the immediate 'research user', not on a wider set of impacts or group of beneficiaries
- Economic impacts are mostly indirect (the attribution problem!)
- Time scale for impact assessment (economic & societal) is very long, many EU projects/networks very young



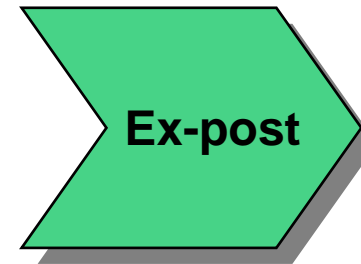
See the impact assessment as a dynamic process:
'the road to impact'



Concepts of potential impacts
Targets set
User involvement
Planned management actions for desired impacts



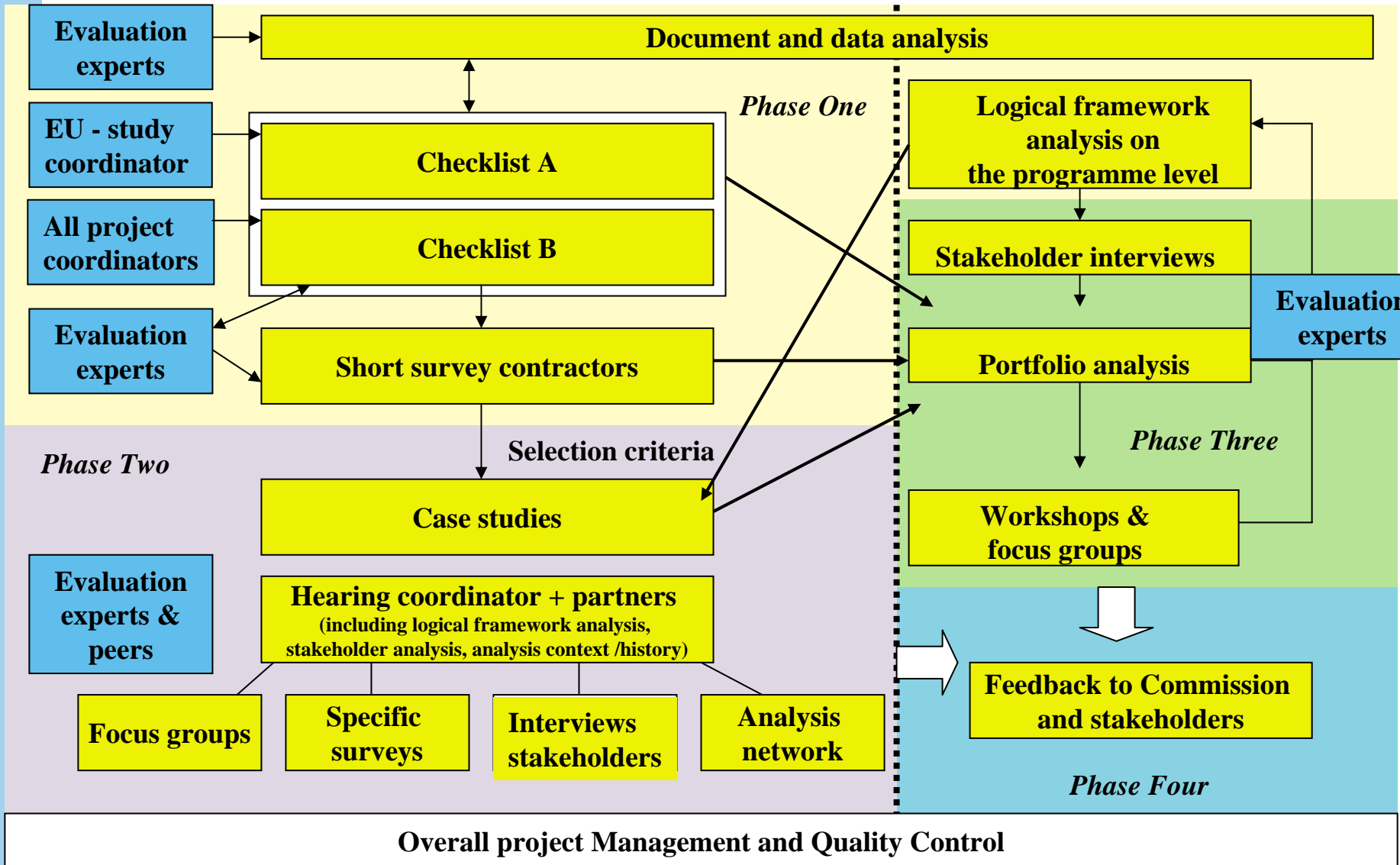
Activities to achieve impacts
Cross-fertilization between science domains
Dissemination actions
User involvement



Results
(depending on timeframe)

PROJECT LEVEL

PROGRAMME LEVEL



Some key messages

- Understand what you want to achieve and which effects you expect before you can evaluate its effects!
- Be realistic about the possibilities to quantify economic and societal effects
- A full impact assessment of the EU contribution would need a mix of methodologies and interactive approaches
- Create awareness with the stakeholders/contractors why (socio-economic) impact assessment is important, in an early stage of EU support (and not when the project is approaching its end)

Thank you!

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