



# Good Practice Case Study within ERA-LEARN 2020 Practices of Evaluation and Impact Assessment

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Indicators for Assessing Progress of P2Ps:  
The Case of JPI MYBL

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## Abstract

Within a climate of overall appreciation with respect to the progress of Public to Public Partnerships (P2Ps), the attendees of the Annual Joint Programming Conference 2016 stressed that the time is ripe to show what impact has been achieved - showing evidence for this impact acquires adequate approaches and processes of evaluation. P2Ps, as highly complex system innovation platforms that develop in an evolutionary manner, are driven by **“collective search and learning” processes** - which particularly holds for their Monitoring & Evaluation. Three case studies<sup>2</sup> therefore showcase examples of Monitoring & Evaluation and identify approaches and processes that allow P2Ps to assess the impact achieved.

The Joint Programming Initiative More Years Better Lives (JPI MYBL) is an example of a Joint Programming Initiative in which a set of performance indicators has been set up in an early phase of the programme. The set of key indicators was later used in an independent evaluation in order to assess the progress made in the JPI. The case study demonstrates that performance indicators can provide good guidance for legitimisation and learning on the one hand, but tremendous effort may be required to collect relevant information. Therefore, indicators need to be selected with care and the Monitoring and Evaluation framework must allow for modifications to the indicator set at a later point. This case study provides information on the development of the indicators set and how the indicators were used by the external evaluation. It is not the purpose of this case study to analyse the results and achievements of JPI MYBL.

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<sup>2</sup> The two earlier case studies on FACCE-JPI and JPND can be found here: [https://www.era-learn.eu/monitoring-and-assessment/Monitoring-and-impact-assessment-of-networks/practices-of-evaluation-and-impact-assessment/Case\\_Study\\_JPND\\_Evaluation.pdf](https://www.era-learn.eu/monitoring-and-assessment/Monitoring-and-impact-assessment-of-networks/practices-of-evaluation-and-impact-assessment/Case_Study_JPND_Evaluation.pdf)

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## 1 Background and ambition

### 1.1 Objectives and achievements of MYBL

The Joint Programming Initiative “More Years, Better Lives – The Potential and Challenges of Demographic Change” (JPI MYBL) was established in 2012 with the purpose to **foster coordination and collaboration between European and national research programmes related to demographic change**. The JPI MYBL follows five guiding aims:

- To develop a European Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) to identify research gaps, potential for alignment, and joint activities. The SRA was adopted in April 2014, following which a first round of joint calls on “Extended Working Life and its Interaction with Health, Wellbeing, and beyond” was launched in 2015. Two more joint calls were opened in subsequent years: “Welfare, Wellbeing, and Demographic Change: Understanding Welfare Models” in 2016 and “Ageing and Place in a digitising world” in 2017.
- To better coordinate national, regional, and European activities relevant for demographic change
- To exchange best practice, pool expertise and financial resources, and carry out joint activities
- To gain understanding of demographic change by a cross-disciplinary and holistic approach
- To have an impact on national and EU agenda setting

The JPI builds its SRA around **four broad research domains**: 1) Quality of life, health, and wellbeing, 2) Economic and social production, 3) Governance and institutions, and 4) Sustainable welfare. Within these domains, the Agenda highlights eleven research issues that will be given priority in the short- and medium-term. MYBL is presently in the process of updating the original SRA (2016-2017) and is focusing on developing strategies for alignment of national research programmes, implementing joint activities, and fostering public engagement. Since areas affected by demographic change cover a wide range of research fields and policy topics, MYBL follows a transnational, multi-disciplinary approach (technological, economic, social, political, and societal) to provide solutions for upcoming challenges. Currently, JPI MYBL has 17 member states, 15 European countries plus Canada and Israel.

JPI MYBL’s key activities to date include:

- **Three joint calls** for proposals following the adoption of its SRA in 2014. The topics were “Extended Working Life and its Interaction with Health, Wellbeing and beyond” in 2015, “Welfare, Wellbeing and Demographic Change: Understanding Welfare Models” in 2016, and “Ageing and place in a digitising world” in 2017. The first two joint calls funded 5 projects each.
- **Three ‘Fast Track’ projects** where experts work together over a relatively short period, reviewing a topic and preparing for further research. The first such project was the Data Mapping Project (2013) where a team conducted a mapping and critical review of relevant data sources at national and European levels. The following year, a second project reviewed policies and practice on the employment of older people to define research needs (“Understanding employment participation of older workers”). A third fast-track project is currently underway on the implications of migration for an ageing society (“Demographic Change and Migration”).

Experts from participating states will provide a comparative overview of their countries' recent history of migration and analyse the relationship between migration and health, employment, pensions, and public attitudes.

- **Two Coordination and Support Actions** (CSAs), J-AGE I and J-AGE II, funded by the European Commission to support MYBL's implementation and alignment activities. Specific activities include supporting and fostering the overall management of the JPI, the development and updating of the SRA and its implementation by joint activities, the mapping of relevant national programmes and a complementary foresight activity, the generation of a communication and dissemination plan to increase visibility, and the Monitoring and Evaluation of the initiative.

## 1.2 Ambition of the indicator framework

During J-AGE I, JPI MYBL aimed at establishing a Monitoring and Evaluation framework early on in its lifecycle (2013-2014). As part of WP6, the United Kingdom's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) developed **two sets of indicators**:

- The **Type A indicators** (Deliverable D6.1) are inward looking and measure how well the JPI functions. The focus is on the effect of the JPI on European and national research programming, research policy, and funding, i.e., these indicators are focused on the 'research system(s)' which are at the core of JPI activities.
- The **Type B indicators** (Deliverable D6.2) aim at monitoring progress towards the scientific and societal impact of the implementation of the Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) work programme, i.e., thinking beyond impact on the research system to impact on wider society.

At the point of development, MYBL was already in a position whereby it was able to learn from others. JPND (Joint Programme - Neurodegenerative Disease Research) has already developed its Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and JPIs to Co-Work has been running workshops on evaluation in its series of workshops focusing on areas of the framework conditions. The European Commission has shown interest in some standardisation of monitoring and impact indicators across JPIs. According to the J-AGE I document on the development of the Type A indicators, the above factors combined led to MYBL using an analysis of the JPND framework as a starting point of indicator development.

### Process of developing indicators

The team of JPI MYBL conducted an analysis of the JPND Monitoring and Evaluation framework at the beginning to gain a better understanding of the metrics being used by the pilot JPI and to facilitate comparison between JPIs where possible. It enabled creating indicators that build on the experiences of others and an understanding of the metrics used by the pilot JPI, thereby facilitating comparison between JPIs where possible.

The JPI MYBL's Type A indicator development process started with reviewing the JPND Monitoring and Evaluation framework against its vision, aims, and objectives. MYBL's vision, aim, and objectives were mapped, from there, its short-, medium-, and long-term aims were set out. In the next step, a comparison between those of JPND and those of MYBL was carried out. Subsequently, the indicator framework was elaborated using the short-, medium-, and long-term aims of the JPI. This method also involved a careful examination of the differences between the scientific fields and the aims of the JPI. For example, the JPND

framework considers the need to reduce the amount of fragmentation within the field whereas in the field of demographic change this was considered to be less of an issue for the JPI to address. For MYBL, a transdisciplinary approach and engagement and influence of non-academic stakeholders was seen to be key to the process. Therefore indicators were developed to enable measurement against this criterion. With the input and approval of the General Assembly and other JPI evaluation teams, the final Type A indicators draw on the framework developed by JPND but do not replicate these indicators. Some simplification has taken place and additional indicator types were included which also adhere to different success criteria. This is to be expected since the objectives of each JPI are tailored toward specific societal challenges that may also require different approaches to contributing to their solutions.

A similar learning process took place in the development of the Type B indicators - an iterative process that started by mapping the indicators used by the JPIs AMR and JPND against the MYBL indicators. This process was adopted to ensure consistency in the Monitoring and Evaluation indicators developed across JPIs since MYBL's indicator framework was modelled after JPND, and AMR's indicators were developed as part of JPIs to Co-Work and published after MYBL's. It identified four potential new Type A indicators and the initial set of proposed Type B indicators. The mapping occurred in two stages: 1) Mapping AMR indicators against MYBL Type A and B indicator definitions, which identified some Type B indicators and indicators that could potentially be added to the current Type A indicators to facilitate comparability between JPIs. 2) Mapping JPND Type B indicators and identifying potential Type B indicators for MYBL.

The final set of indicators were established following consultations and feedback from the General Assembly, an independent external Evaluation Advisory Group, the Scientific Advisory Board, and the Societal Advisory Board. The General Assembly was particularly involved in the process: General Assembly members gave feedback for the initial proposed sets of Type A and B indicators, and where possible, those suggestions were incorporated into the final set. Feedback from General Assembly members suggested that the framework ought to include process variables which would focus on the activities of the JPI and how effective they are in delivering the aims of the JPI. Following consideration of this addition and its impact on the scope and number of indicators, it was decided to include 'process' as an additional indicator type. Including wider stakeholder engagement was another suggestions that has been incorporated into the final framework. The set of indicators was then put to test with JPI MYBL conducting an external evaluation of the early phase of the JPI. In the evaluation, the developed indicators were used as a means to measure progress toward meeting the objectives set.

## 2 The JPI MYBL indicator framework

Both Type A and B indicators were broken down into five categories according to the information they provide to Monitoring and Evaluation:

- *Input indicators* describe the resources used for the implementation of MYBL (e.g., the amount of funding and the human resources needed for the initiative, member state contributions to initiatives and governance, etc.)
- *Process indicators* measure MYBL activities
- *Output indicators* measure the knowledge and value added directly attributable to MYBL activities (e.g., activities related to the implementation of the SRA)

- *Outcome indicators* measure the initial results of MYBL and are less tangible than outputs (e.g., increased research funding, raising awareness within the stakeholder community)
- *Impact indicators* measure the long-term socio-economic effects of MYBL and its activities (e.g., instrumental impacts such as influencing the development of policy or practice, shaping legislation; conceptual impacts such as contributing to the understanding of policy issues or reframing discourse; etc.)

JPI MYBL developed a total of 20 Type A indicators, 7 Type B indicators, and 3 proxy impact indicators. Since the complete set of Type A and B indicators is not publicly available, the following tables provide an excerpt of the indicator set with one example for each indicator category.

**Table 1: Excerpt of Type A indicator set (one example per indicator category)**

Indicator Category	No.	Type A
Input	A2	Level of non-funded staff resource contributed to the activities of the JPI
Process	A6	Members find it as easy and cost effective to collaborate through the JPI as they do to fund their own research directly
Output	A9	National research funding policies have been influenced as a result of JPI MYBL and the activities of the JPI
Outcome	A20	Members of GA and SAB consider the JPI is leading research in the field in Europe.
Impact	A16	Robust JPI MYBL policies to: maximise impact from JPI funded activities and; ensure engagement of non-academic stakeholders throughout the research process

Source: J-AGE Set of modified Type A Indicators for Evaluation (Deliverable 6.1)

**Table 1: Excerpt of Type B indicator set (one example per indicator category)**

Indicator Category	No.	Type B Indicator
Input	B1	The financial value of collaborative research projects funded through the JPI-MYBL joint calls that address each of the SRA scientific priorities.
Output	B3	The existence of an up-to date overview of demographic change research programmes and initiatives.
Outcome	B6	Proportion of SAB and SOAB members satisfied with the quality and reach of stakeholder engagement with the JPI MYBL.
Impact	B7	Increased use of demographic change research amongst relevant

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stakeholders.

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**Proxy Impact**    PI2    Proportion and type of stakeholders taking part in JPI MYBL activities.

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Source: J-AGE Set of Type B Indicators for Evaluation (Deliverable 6.2)

Evaluation and monitoring during the lifetime of J-AGE focuses on short/medium term aims, and therefore input, process, and output indicators are monitored systematically during the lifespan of J-AGE. This is appropriate given the stage of JPI development and corresponds to the approach taken by the Monitoring and Evaluation teams of other JPIs. Outcomes and impacts take a longer time period to develop and will be picked up in the longer term monitoring and external evaluation of the initiative.

The first external evaluation in March 2015 aimed at covering all Type A input, process, and output indicators and an initial assessment of the outcome indicators. It not only conducted an assessment of the indicators but also identified room for improvement in MYBL’s Monitoring and Evaluation framework to be taken up during J-AGE II. The evaluator’s recommendations in relation to the Monitoring and Evaluation framework are synthesised below:

- **Definition of terms** including: Clarification of the definition of ‘coordination’, distinguishing between coordination within JPI member states, between member states and between the JPI and member states, in order to ensure the collection of relevant, structured, and comparable data in the future; and consistent usage of terms between the evaluation framework and other JPI documents.
- **Need for the development of monitoring and evaluation tools** to improve data collection and facilitate the final evaluation, for example: tools to enable MYBL representatives to quickly record examples of alignment and stakeholder engagement and awareness, data collection methods in other J-AGE II workpackages such as those around measuring changes in national funding.
- **New data collection methods** need to be considered either through annual monitoring or future evaluation activities such as: qualitative data to contextualise quantitative findings and draw out examples of outcomes and impacts at national level is necessary; focussed data collection to inform the final evaluation; clear, structured, and comparable data about stakeholder engagement and output dissemination at the national and JPI levels.

## 2.1 Outlook

The second CSA, J-AGE II, started on March 1, 2015, and will finish by the end of February 2018. This second phase will continue to support and foster the overall management of MYBL, update the SRA, and support the implementation of joint activities. It will also conduct a second and final external evaluation toward the end of the project, where indicators that were not considered in the first evaluation (some Type A and all Type B) will be analysed.

WP6 is once again dedicated to Monitoring and Evaluation activities and builds on the work and activities of J-AGE. It will **continue to monitor** the progress of MYBL against the developed indicators, **gather evidence on impact**, and **conduct a second and final external evaluation**. The final evaluation will draw on all

evidence gathered to date, gather its own evidence and cover all indicators to inform the future direction of the JPI.

### 3 Key Results

JPI MYBL developed a set of Type A and Type B indicators that form the basis of its Monitoring and Evaluation framework. The Type A indicators are monitored systematically and have already been put to test in a first external evaluation. The process revealed lessons learned that are worth considering for future work on evaluation frameworks.

#### 3.1 Obstacles and challenges

Although MYBL has successfully managed to develop a full set of Monitoring and Evaluation indicators early on in its lifecycle, according to J-AGE I documents (deliverable 6.1 and 6.2) it had to overcome a number of challenges to do so. These are described in detail below.

- **Keeping the framework simple:** One of the main challenges in the process of indicator development was to ensure that the framework was simple and does not include too many indicators. This was considered critical in order to keep the activities related to annual data collection viable and to not overburden JPI members with data gathering. An effortless and simple Monitoring and Evaluation framework is also more sustainable in the long-term. Thus, following suggestions from the General Assembly in the drafting process, the development process included a methodical removal of duplicative indicators and a rationalisation through reformulating or removing some indicators.
- **Balancing ambition and practical information:** Since the indicators were developed at a time when MYBL was relatively young, the stage of the JPI required paying particular attention to striking the right balance. On the one hand, the Monitoring and Evaluation framework and its indicators needed to be sufficiently ambitious, on the other hand, those activities should serve to enhance the day-to-day operations and delivery of the JPI.
- **Ensuring comparability:** Adopting the right indicators to make them comparable across JPIs was of key importance. The European Commission likely considers gathering practical information that have corresponding counterparts in other JPIs most useful for future evaluation of JPIs. Therefore, some indicators that may appear rather less ambitious at first glance were retained. To this end, it was also made clear from the outset that additional indicators could be added at a later date once the JPI had developed more fully.
- **Assuring measurability:** Every indicator needs to allow for measurement through easily accessible, reliable, and readily collected data and have available baseline data for comparison purposes. This was especially challenging in the development process of the Type B indicators.
- **Understanding the contribution of the JPI to any changes in indicators:** Given the complex landscape in which JPIs operate it remains a challenge to actually understand whether the JPI has contributed to any changes in indicators.

## 3.2 Key benefits and lessons learned

### Benefits

- **Adopting a Monitoring and Evaluation framework and developing indicators early on in the lifecycle** of the JPI was tremendously beneficial. It allowed for monitoring of relevant indicators from the beginning, reduced time and costs associated, and will facilitate impact assessment down the road. Furthermore, gaps and missing indicators could be identified and added during the earlier stages of JPI maturity. J-AGE II will also be able to make adjustments to the system according to the first external evaluation's findings and recommendations to improve the final evaluation.
- **Linking vision, aims, and objectives of the JPI to the indicator framework** and developing indicators based on short-, medium-, and long-term aims allowed for comprehensive indicators to be elaborated. Its input, process, output, outcome, and impact indicators broadly map along a timeline from short to longer term.
- By starting the indicator development process with mapping out the JPND Monitoring and Evaluation framework, then mapping JPI AMR indicators against MYBL's as well as closely studying the transformational proxy impact indicators of JPI Cultural Heritage and Global Change, MYBL ensured that its **indicator framework is comparable across JPIs**. To this end, experts involved in other JPIs and the author of the JPND Monitoring and Evaluation framework were involved directly in the feedback rounds to harvest input on how the framework and indicators might be further developed and adapted. Other JPI evaluation teams and the JPIs to Co-Work evaluation group were also involved in discussions.
- **The flexibility of the indicator framework** is a key benefit, especially in view of the two sets of indicators being established when MYBL was relatively young. It was made clear from the outset that additional indicators could be added at a later date once the JPI had developed more fully. It is also fully anticipated that the set of indicators might be further modified over the lifespan of the JPI as the JPI develops activities in response to the SRA and the Implementation Plan.
- **Potential for awareness building among key stakeholders** by involving the General Assembly in consultations. General Assembly members gave feedback for the initial proposed sets of Type A and B indicators, and where possible, those suggestions were incorporated into the final set. Since the General Assembly's membership is composed of national delegates who can potentially initiate alignment at national level, raising awareness can potentially shape the delegates' self-perceived role as active contributors to (national) alignment activities.

### Lessons learned and key success factors

- **Considering the feasibility of the approach and the process from the beginning** is a key success factor. It is necessary to keep the indicators and related data collection activities simple and as cost-effective as possible. Striking the right balance between ambition and practical information, while reflecting the aims of the assessment and the indicators' value added, is crucial.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation needs to be adapted - not reinvented**: There is no one-size-fits-all Monitoring and Evaluation framework. Using JPND's and AMR's framework as a starting point and

adapting them to MYBL's needs proved to be the best course of action. Involving other JPI evaluation teams and the JPIs to Co-Work evaluation group in discussions further benefitted the indicator development and ensured comparability across JPIs.

- **Adding external expertise** when needed to advise on the Monitoring and Evaluation work is a good strategy to compensate for areas where the JPI may lack internal knowledge and to ensure a comprehensive framework. JPI MYBL appointed an independent external expert group, the Evaluation Advisory Group, in June 2013 to advise on the development of the Type B indicators and the external monitoring process. Its membership consists of experts in impact evaluation as well as experts in demographic change. Their proposal to supplement the final evaluation of MYBL with other impact evaluation activities, to not rely only on the developed indicators, was incorporated into J-AGE II. Additional impact evaluations to complement the evidence and data from the monitoring of Type A and Type B indicators have been added to the J-AGE II WP6 programme of work.
- **The early implementation of a sound monitoring system geared toward the P2P's objectives** from the start is enormously helpful for impact assessment a couple of years later. The adaptation and development of new monitoring tools following recommendations from the first external evaluation is being considered.
- The **flexibility to adapt the indicator framework** at a later point, when the JPI has matured more fully, is a key success factor for the effective early establishment of evaluation and monitoring frameworks.

## 4 Conclusion

The JPI MYBL indicator development process revealed that the early development of an indicator framework, the adaptation of already existing Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks of other JPIs to fit its own requirements and circumstances, and allowing for modifications to the set of indicators later on are the main benefits of MYBL's framework. The most significant conclusions to be drawn from the development process are:

- **The emphasis on feasibility proved to be beneficial** to the overall process. In particular, establishing the right balance between an ambitious evaluation framework and providing practical information for a maturing JPI, emphasising the need to keep data collection simple, and consulting by external experts from the beginning.
- **Planning the assessment of impacts as early as possible** in the lifecycle of a P2P potentially reduces costs and time required. Furthermore, the implementation of relevant indicators related to the P2Ps objectives from the beginning facilitates the Monitoring and Evaluation process as well as impact assessment in the future. The stepwise evaluation approach, covering only Type A input, process, and output indicators and an initial assessment of the outcome indicators in the first external evaluation, seems to improve the feasibility of the evaluation task. Furthermore, early implementation enjoys the added benefit of allowing for refinement and adjustment of the framework with ample time left to the final evaluation for improvements to manifest.
- **The consultation of the General Assembly members can provide added value** by improving the evaluation framework and building awareness among national delegates. For example, national delegates might redefine their own role as actors who can provide policy impact that can result in activities that foster strategic and structural alignment on national level.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation as a reflection and learning tool:** JPIs are highly complex system innovation platforms that develop in an evolutionary manner which implies a continuous “collective searching and learning”.
  - o Continuous refinement and recalibration of Monitoring and Evaluation activities are a part of this process. Modifying the indicator framework later on, obtaining outside expertise, or making adjustments after the framework has been put to test in a first external evaluation.
  - o By using Monitoring and Evaluation activities as a reflection and learning tool, it seems promising to integrate stakeholders/beneficiaries in the process of impact assessment to a larger extent. This was taken up during the development of the Type B indicators, where the General Assembly suggested that the set should include wider stakeholder engagement.

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