
The evaluation of the Austrian START programme: an example for a sophisticated multi-method approach

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1. Methodological design of the evaluation

- Impact evaluation using a control group approach
- Mix of methods and sources used (triangulation)

2. Application of a mixed-method approach: illustrating the evaluation approach through selected results

- Scientific outcomes of the START grantees
- Career effects on the START grantees

1. Methodological design

Use of a control group

Aim: Impact evaluation

- Allows quantification of effects
- Investigates aspects of attribution of effects to the programme

Generation of a randomly selected control group

- Database: Scopus database
- Generation of a group of twins for each START grantee with similar features than the START grantee at the beginning of the START project. Selection criteria:
 - Discipline : field with the most publications
 - Gender
 - Scientific age
 - Publication output
 - „Austrian“: at least 5 publications in 5 years with an affiliation to an Austrian institution
- Used for the analysis of publications and an online survey

Make use of triangulation

Methods	Sources
Online surveys	Start grantees : all grantees since 1996 (114) Randomly selected control group: Austrian researchers (312) Comparison group : unsuccessful candidates to the START programme; candidates 2006-2014 (49)
Bibliometric analysis	Scopus database, using data from: Start grantees (112) and control group researchers (112); Austrian researchers
Database analysis	FWF monitoring data, Scopus database
Interviews / case studies	START grantees (8) members of the START project group (9) representatives of host institutions (6) Jury members, the FWF, Ministry representatives
Documentary review	Project and programme documents, general literature incl. evaluation studies
Workshop	19 participants: FWF, Ministry, universities, START grantees

2. Selected results

Effects on the grantees (direct beneficiaries)

Scientific outputs

Bibliometric analysis: Comparison of publication output: before, during & after funding period

- Publication number
- Citation rate
- Cooperation patterns

Answers from online survey and interview with grantees : explain / illustrate the pattern of the quantitative analysis

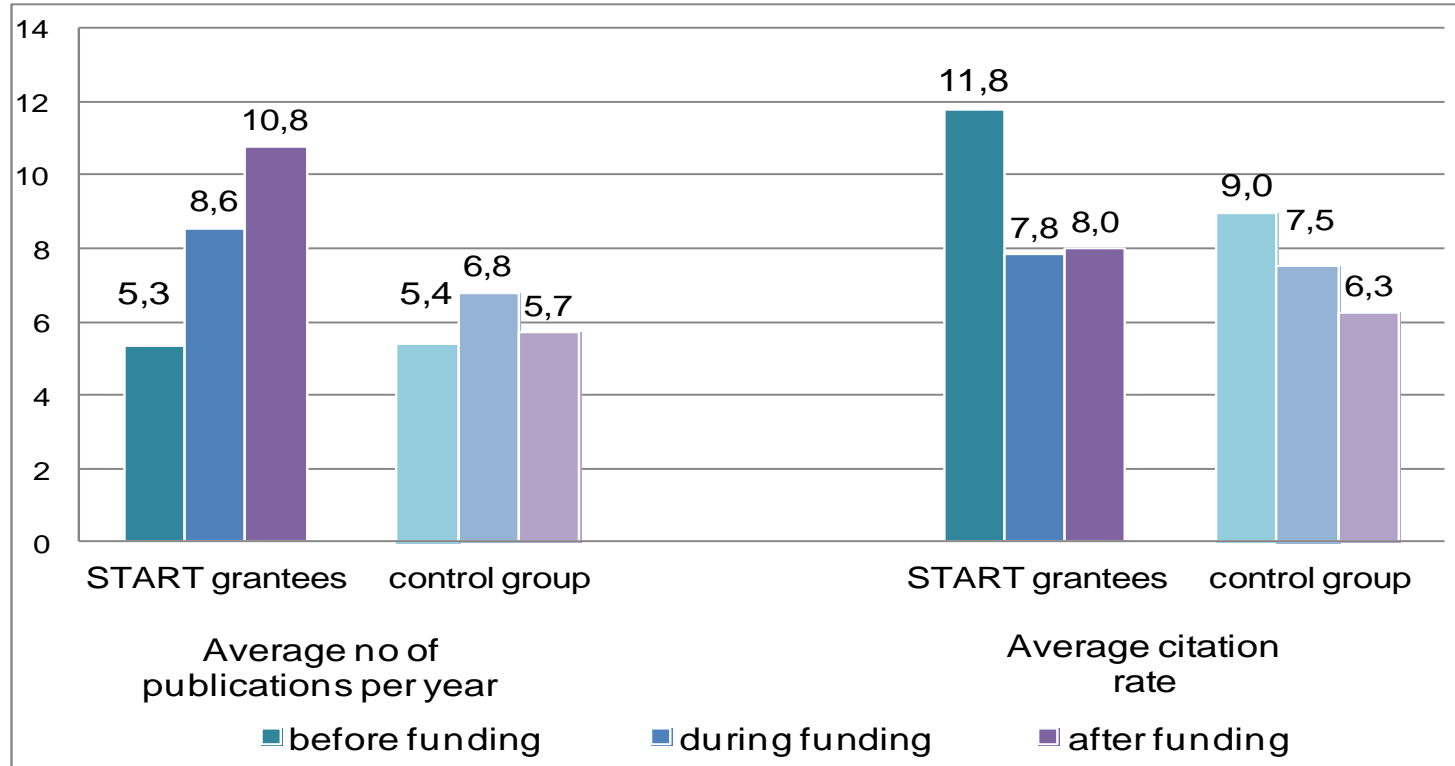
Career effects

Online surveys: comparison of career effects

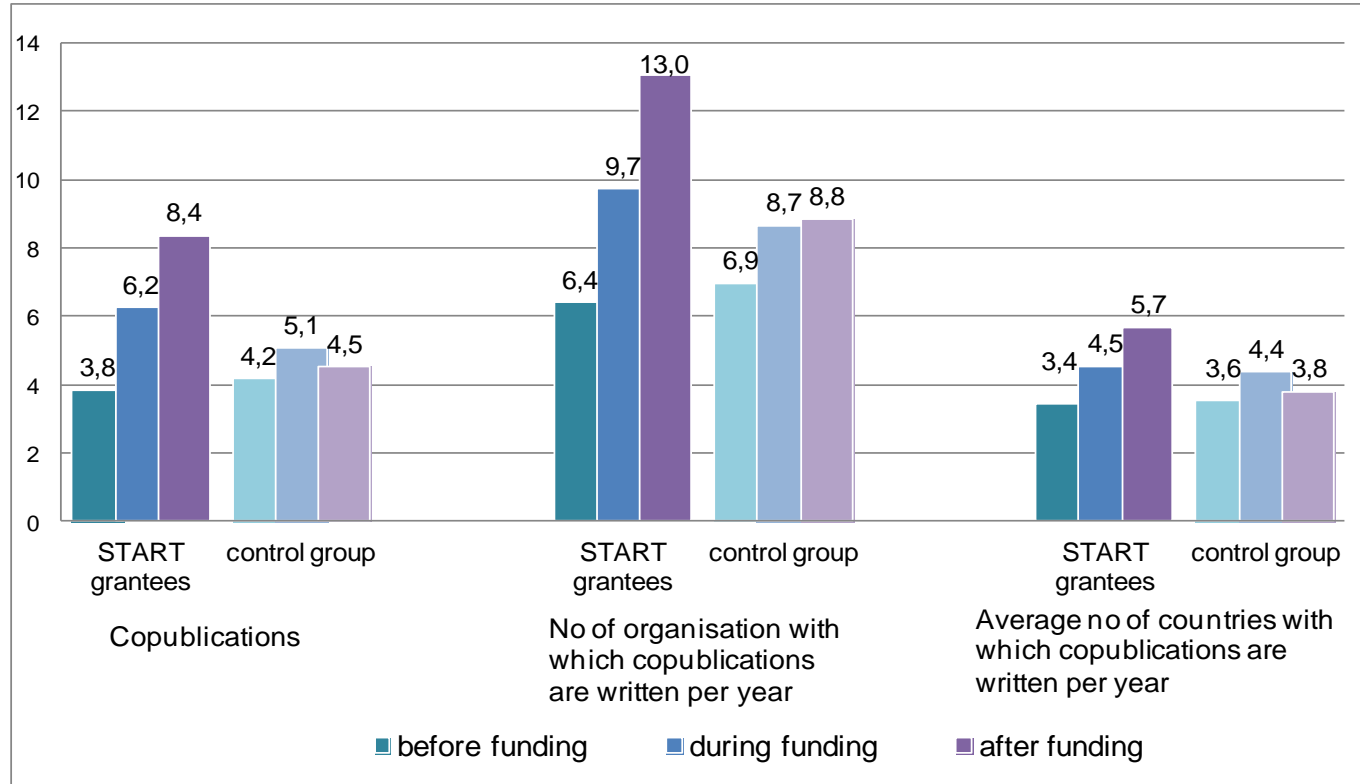
- Sector and country of employment
- Position of employment
- Career pace

Answers from interviews and online survey with grantees and comparison group

Scientific output - publication & citation



Scientific output - cooperation

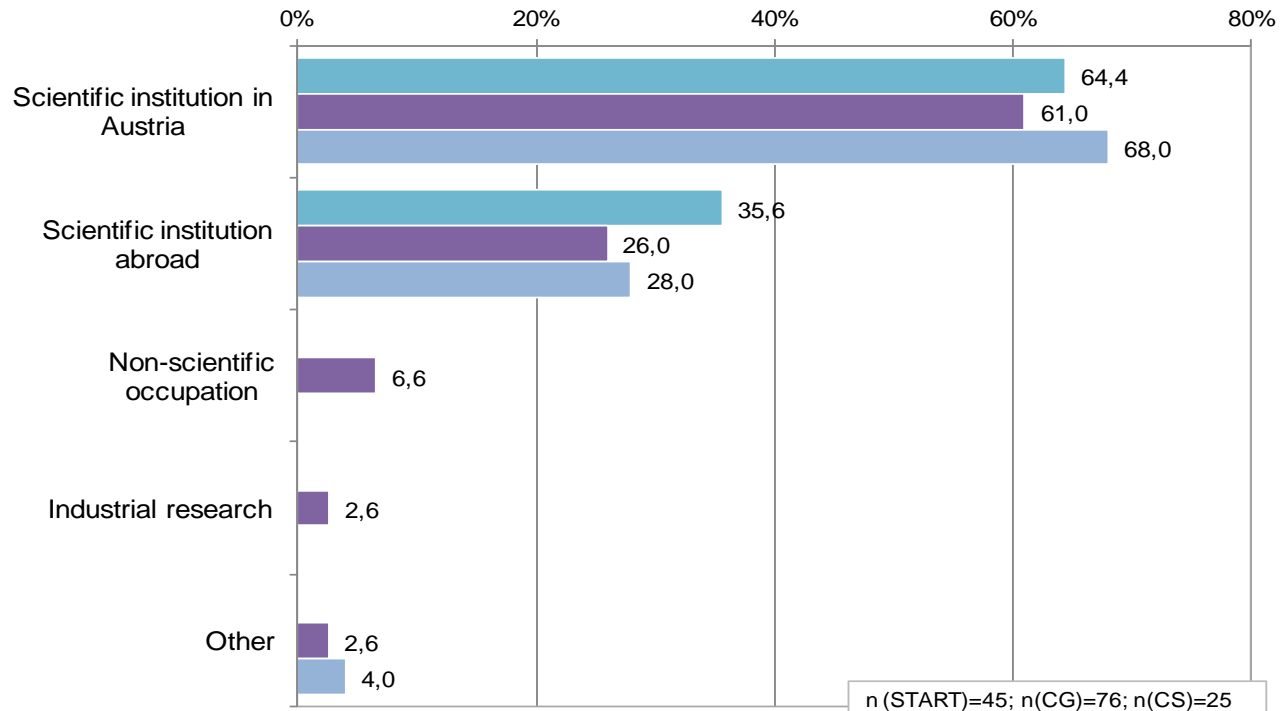


Scientific output - conclusions

- Publication analysis:
 - Grantees increase their scientific performance during and after the funding
 - Grantees perform better than control group
- Online survey & interviews (self assessment of the grantees):
 - Funding was used to work on new fields of research and / or risky and unconventional methods
 - Funding allowed consolidating own research profile
 - Cooperation: visibility of START grantees in the national and international research community increased.
 - Research results were used for: developing international cooperation and widen networks; acquisition of further external funding; teaching
 - Research project would have not been possible to implement without START funding; only few similar funding (Assessment of comparison group)

Career development

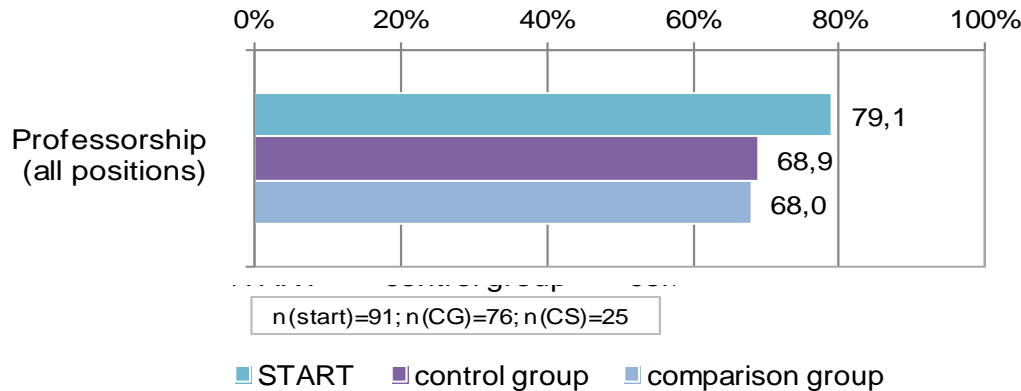
Country and sector of employment



Career development

Highest position in the research system to date

Career: pace of development



→ Start grantees do not get appointed earlier to a professorship than the non-funded control group.

Career effects - conclusions

➤ Online survey:

- Comparison between START grantees and control group does not show statistically significant difference between two groups with regards to position held, sector and location of employment or years needed to get appointed a permanent professorship position.
- The majority of the comparison group does not think that they would have reached their current position earlier with the START funding

➤ Online survey – self assessment of grantees :

- 60% Start grantees think it is unlikely that they would have achieved their current position without the funding.
- START is seen as entry ticket for a permanent position in the Austrian research system
- START is seen as a motor for their research career development

Conclusions

Impact analysis:

- Use of a control group vs. comparison group of researchers
- Quantification of outcomes possible
- Allowing statements on attribution of the programme effects' on direct beneficiaries (START grantees)
- Limitation: measuring effects on indirect beneficiaries and on further impact level (meso and macro level – group members, host institutions, national / system level)

Using a mixed method approach / triangulation of methods and sources

- Complementing / explaining quantitative figures
- Contrasting evidences: especially relevant when assessment is based on opinions
- Robustness of the conclusions (and recommendations)

Thank you!

1. Annexes

Online surveys: response rates

Group	No of survey requests sent	No of answers	Return rate
START grantees	114	94	82%
Controll group (CG)	307*	75	24%
Comparison group	49	25	51%

Case studies : 8 start projects

Interview partner	No of interviews	Selection criteria
START grantees	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• from 6 disciplines• 5 men, 3 women• 2 ERC grantees
Host Institution	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• from 7 different institutions
Group members	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• From 4 disciplines• Covering 6 START-projects