



# **EVALUATION MATTERS**

## **THE EVALUATION POLICY FOR EUROPEAN UNION DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION**

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## Preface

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Evaluation matters. In an increasingly complex and challenging environment for international development, the importance of demonstrating our results and learning from experience has gained significant value.

Evaluation is a key learning tool for the European Union to understand not only what works and what does not, but critically why, and under what circumstances. Evaluations generate knowledge and produce evidence which we use to improve the way we engage with our partners and enhance the impact of our development co-operation. As one of the world's largest donors, the EU is a leading force in demonstrating the value of rigorous evaluation. The EU is committed to the "evaluation first" principle, using evaluation as a critical tool to inform its choices and decisions on the best available evidence in order to improve its strategies and practices.

This Evaluation Policy is timely. Such a policy is called for, due to increased public scrutiny on the results achieved by the EU, the EU's commitment to become a learning organisation, internal reforms being undertaken in the area of monitoring and evaluation, and to coincide with the new financial framework.

It has been drafted in a participative manner and builds on the long experience of the Commission in the field of Evaluation. It draws and expands on the 2013 Communication from the Commission "Improving evaluation". It represents a clear, ambitious, and comprehensive commitment to improve our evaluation practice, updating it to address current needs.

This Evaluation Policy represents a joint commitment of EuropeAid and the European External Action Service. It applies to all EU development co-operation services in Headquarters and Delegations.

Together, EuropeAid and the European External Action Service are committed to building stronger, effective co-operation with the help of good quality evidence generated through systematic use of robust evaluation. We will do this by developing and driving a strong culture of accountability and learning, demonstrating our results, using our evidence to enhance our policies and practice.

Our success will depend on our ability to implement the 'evaluation first' principle and make evaluation a central part of our co-operation, rooted in an awareness of its importance as a key part of our corporate culture. Management and staff in EU Delegations and at Headquarters are continually encouraged to make extensive use of evaluation findings to better support the efforts of developing countries to eradicate poverty and maximize the impact of our aid on poverty reduction, better governance and sustainable growth.

## Introduction

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The Evaluation Policy represents a commitment to evaluation as a core part of EU development practice. It demonstrates the important role evaluation plays in building and maintaining a culture of accountability and learning. It seeks to inform the different stakeholders involved in evaluation by setting out the common principles and standards which guide evaluation. By establishing a clear institutional framework, the Policy contributes to improving both quality and consistency of evaluation practice. It responds in the context of development co-operation to the Commission's call in 2013<sup>1</sup> to put "evaluation first", and see the learning of lessons as the starting point for any new initiative or proposal.

The Evaluation Policy for EU Development Co-operation<sup>2</sup> governs the evaluation function and practice of the European Commission (Directorate-General for Development and Co-operation – EuropeAid) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in the area of development co-operation. It explains:

- the framework of evaluation, including principles and standards
- what is to be evaluated
- how evaluation is managed.

It is primarily for use by EuropeAid and EEAS Staff in Brussels and in Delegations. However, it is also a reference for our partners and beneficiaries – government and non-government – and all those who are stakeholders of EU financing, other donors, and the wider international development community.

The Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis (and in particular in view of the forthcoming revision of the Commission evaluation guidelines) to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

## 1. Meeting the challenges for evaluation

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### **1.1. Evaluation responding to a more complex development world**

Significant changes are taking place in International development co-operation, and evaluations are being undertaken in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment. This emerging environment includes a rising number of actors, a broadening diversity of aid mechanisms, new information technology and improved data collection capacity, all of which

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<sup>1</sup> "Strengthening the foundations of Smart Regulation – improving evaluation", Brussels, COM(2013) 686 final

<sup>2</sup> In this Evaluation Policy, EU Development Co-operation covers the Development co-operation activities conducted by the European Union. It is to be noted that the terminology "development co-operation" does not include humanitarian aid, or interventions in the context of EU enlargement.

provide both more challenges and more opportunities for evaluation practice than ever before.

The international community recognizes that good governance is vital for sustainable development. In light of this, development co-operation gives more emphasis to issues of human rights, democracy and political stability. The greatest focus of attention has shifted to countries in fragile situations, where conflict and governance issues play a determining role. The European Union has a wide variety of instruments, including political and military co-operation, in order to respond appropriately and effectively to such situations, and through the EU Delegations it benefits from its extensive presence on the ground.

The international development community now embraces an increasing number of development actors, including new donor countries, philanthropic foundations, civil society and the private sector. This new landscape is changing traditional aid relationships and calls for stronger partnerships between donors, partner governments and beneficiaries. Demonstrating the relevance, effectiveness and quality of our aid has become an even more pressing need.

The global aid effectiveness agenda has evolved and the Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation concluded in Busan<sup>3</sup> calls on all development partners to improve reporting on performance, through greater transparency and by demonstrating results. It also prioritizes mutual accountability, a stronger partnership approach, and improved co-ordination of donor engagement. In this context, evaluation is increasingly playing a central role and will be focused more and more on joint evaluations involving all partners, and on contributing to strengthening local evaluation capacity.

## **1.2. Evaluation anchored in the EU Development Co-operation policies**

The overall objectives of European Union development policy are to promote peace and prosperity in the developing world. The priorities focus on two areas: (i) good governance: human rights, democracy and the rule of law and (ii) inclusive and sustainable growth for human development.

The EU is a major global development player with significant potential to influence and contribute to good governance, poverty reduction and sustainable growth. The EU's development co-operation covers countries all around the world, using a wide range of financial and non-financial instruments. The EU spends over €8 billion each year and is deepening its partnerships with partner countries and other donors. Its in-country Delegations play a crucial role in translating broad objectives into effective strategies and actions to meet local needs.

In its 2011 policy statement on development, the Agenda for Change, the EU committed itself to increase the share of its aid going to countries most in need, and where the EU can have the greatest impact, particularly countries in a fragile situation. To promote this, the EU

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<sup>3</sup> Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2011)

will allocate more funds through new financial mechanisms (such as blending and other risk sharing mechanisms) and use aid modalities facilitating joint actions (such as budget support).

Evaluation plays a critical part in assessing and understanding how these objectives are reached, and results achieved. Evaluation in this context has to cover a wide variety of activities on the ground, actions, modalities, instruments, country co-operation and themes, and must be able to respond to these different needs, contexts and strategic priorities.

### **1.3. Evaluation within the framework of wider EU policies**

Evaluation of development co-operation seeks to enhance coherence and build synergies with European policies and programmes other than development cooperation (such as trade, agriculture, and research) which impact on developing countries. It is carried out in co-ordination with other relevant European Commission Directorates General and institutions.

EuropeAid and the European External Action Service (EEAS), working together in the field through the EU Delegations, are the two organisations mainly responsible for EU development co-operation<sup>4</sup>. Evaluation is a common responsibility. The Commission Services and the EEAS are involved in determining and implementing the sector, country and regional strategies which bring together the external aspects of all EU policies, through political and policy dialogue, development of synergies with other European policies and the application of a comprehensive approach to development policy. Ensuring coherence between political, policy dialogue and development assistance is therefore of importance to both entities.

## **2. The aims and principles of Evaluation**

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### **2.1. What is evaluation ?**

As defined by the OECD-DAC<sup>5</sup>, evaluation is the *'systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results.'*

Evaluation provides an objective and timely assessment on the performance of a strategy, a policy, a programme, project or any intervention. It identifies and explains not only what changes have occurred, but critically why these changes have occurred. Evaluations follow rigorous methodologies based on intervention logic. Evaluation embraces both intended

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<sup>4</sup> Lisbon Treaty (2009 - Article 27) creating the post of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) and the European External Action Service (EEAS); the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, Title III on "Co-operation with third countries and humanitarian aid" (Articles 208-211) setting the focus and objectives of EU development policy; and the Council Decision of 26 July 2010 establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service: The EEAS ensures "the overall political coordination of the Union's external action ensuring the unity, consistency and effectiveness of the Union's external action, in particular through specific external assistance instruments."

<sup>5</sup> Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

changes and unintended changes. It provides a judgement on whether a change can be attributed to a particular cause, or to what extent particular factors have contributed to a given change.

### **Box 1: Evaluation, Monitoring and Audit**

Evaluation, monitoring and audit are complementary but different assessments serving different purposes. Evaluation focuses mainly on the outcomes or impact and the reasons 'why' changes were achieved; whereas audit looks at the integrity of processes, procedures and compliance, and monitoring focuses on 'what' has happened in terms of results or progress.

'Performance Audit' is a specific type of audit which assesses the combined use of resources to meet objectives, against the criteria of economy, efficiency and effectiveness

## **2.2. Why do we evaluate ?**

Evaluation fulfils two main purposes:

### **Learning: to improve the quality of EU development co-operation and its impact by:**

- generating knowledge about what works and what does not, under what conditions.
- facilitating evidence-based decision-making, notably at the programming stage, in the design stage of new interventions and to support management of ongoing interventions.
- improving development policy and practice by sharing experience, and best practice within the EU and with other partners. The EU encourages joint evaluations, undertaken with the involvement of its partners and other donors.

### **Box 2: Joint evaluations**

By joint evaluation we understand an evaluation in which different donor agencies and/or partners participate (definition of the OECD/DAC).

The EU encourages and undertakes joint evaluations, to align with aid effectiveness priorities and to deliver the EU commitment to increase joint programming and joint interventions, notably when funds are pooled (budget support, blending,...). In this regard, joint evaluations address two major objectives: i) facilitating joint programming and drawing conclusions and lessons to be learned from experiences of joint programming ii) improving the number and quality of joint actions. In addition, the EU also encourages when possible the involvement of the partner countries in joint evaluations (notably for Budget Support evaluations). This is seen as a factor to enhance the ownership and develop a culture of evaluation and expertise locally.

OECD-DAC is the reference for joint evaluation process and procedure. Joint evaluations are scheduled after a process of internal prioritization and discussion through the EU Heads of Evaluation Services group, which acts as a forum to foster joint evaluations.

### **Accountability: to report on results to EU stakeholders by providing:**

- an assessment of performance of EU interventions,
- an explanation of difference between planned objectives and achieved results,
- transparency on EU activities to stakeholders and the wider public.

These two purposes are complementary. An evaluation may have a particular focus on one of these two purposes, depending on the individual pattern of the activity under review and the users' needs.

### **2.3. Evaluation as part of a Monitoring and Evaluation System**

**Evaluation is part of a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.** This M&E system covers different tools (*Evaluations; ROM Reviews; internal monitoring*) which articulate with one another, in order to ensure data collection, performance assessment, reporting and learning.

*Internal monitoring is the systematic and continuous data collection against indicators. These data are to be validated by the Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) Reviews and contribute to inform individual evaluations and the Results Framework.*

*ROM Reviews are brief reviews of project and programme quality by external experts. They primarily serve project management and quality control of the internal monitoring but will also serve to inform evaluations and the Results Framework.*

At corporate level, there are two major reporting systems. They are:

- The Results Framework *reports on the results achieved through the implementation of EU funded development and co-operation activities at a global level against a set of key indicators.*
- The External Assistance Management Report (EAMR) *is an internal report on the programmes performance which is submitted twice a year.*

### **2.4. Type and level of evaluations**

**The EU undertakes a range of different evaluations.** The most common are project/programme evaluations, and strategic (long term geographic, thematic, corporate) evaluations. These evaluations<sup>6</sup> are distinguished from appraisals and impact assessments<sup>7</sup>, which are undertaken as part of the design of an intervention.

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<sup>6</sup> Referred to in the EU as 'retrospective' evaluations. These include, interim, final, and ex-post evaluations

<sup>7</sup> Also referred to as, 'ex-ante evaluations'



<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Scope / Focus</b>	<b>Example of specific focus</b>	<b>User/ Learning Purpose</b>
<b>Strategic evaluations</b>	Corporate issue of strategic importance	<i>Joint programming</i>	Senior managers → to inform strategic decisions on corporate issues
	Geographic Thematic / Sector	<i>EU cooperation with a specific Country / Region</i>  <i>EU Support to a Sector / Theme</i>	Senior managers & managers → to inform strategic choices on programming, and in defining policy
<b>Sector, Project and Programme evaluations</b>	Set of interventions in a specific sector at country level  Individual project / Programme		Operational services Sector/ Project/Programme manager  → to improve on-going/future sector, project and programme management / design

Syntheses of a number of evaluations on similar issues, and meta-evaluations, are undertaken periodically, to provide operational services with an overview of evidence and trends.

Evaluation approaches and methods are set out in the evaluation guidelines<sup>8</sup>. In addition, specific methods have been developed for the evaluation of some aid modalities (budget support, and capacity building).

## **2.5. Evaluation principles**

The evaluation of EU co-operation is guided by the following core principles:

- Transparency: *The process, data, findings, conclusions and recommendations of all evaluations are made available for the public.* All evaluations are published, making them available for public scrutiny, and accessible to the wider public for sharing learning.
- Independence: *Evaluations are carried out by impartial experts who give their assessment based on sound evidence.* The governance arrangements incorporate safeguards to enable an evaluation to provide credible, reliable evidence and an independent view. Evaluations are undertaken by independent evaluators who have not been involved in the design and implementation of the intervention under evaluation, so they are free of any kind of conflict of interest and can provide an impartial view. Strategic evaluation reports are approved by the Evaluation Unit and not subject to editing by line management.

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/methodology/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/methodology/index_en.htm)

- **Ethics:** *The rights and dignity of all evaluation stakeholders are respected.* The design of an evaluation must consider and address potential ethical challenges which may arise. Evaluations, and the evaluators, should respect the rights and dignity of respondents, programme participants, beneficiaries, and other evaluation stakeholders. They must explain and preserve confidentiality and anonymity of participants, where sought or provided. Those who partake in an evaluation should be free from external pressure, and their involvement should not disadvantage them in any way.
- **Quality:** *Evaluations provide robust and credible evidence-based conclusions.* To ensure robust, high quality evaluations, the EU applies quality standards compliant with international standards and are systematically reviewed and adjusted to meet new needs, including developments in evaluation good practice.
- **Utility:** *Evaluations provide critical information and recommendations to improve EU's interventions.* To optimize the use of evaluations and the evidence they produce, they must have a relevant focus for the users, stemming from their involvement throughout the evaluation process starting from the design phase. They must be timely to inform decision-making processes. They must be well written and presented, such that users can easily understand and integrate the findings into their daily work. It is also necessary that the knowledge gained from an evaluation is appropriately translated into policy and practice.

### **Box 3: Utilizing evidence and learning from evaluations**

Much emphasis is placed upon the conditions and conduct of evaluation. This policy places equal emphasis on the main objective of undertaking evaluation – to use the evidence from evaluation to improve what we do.

In essence, the knowledge generated from evaluation contributes to building a body of knowledge of what works, or does not, and under what conditions. This learning function of evaluation links it to research and other ways in which we try to improve our understanding. It can be used in several ways:

- To inform immediate choices for the design or action regarding a programme or strategy;
- To improve our general understanding on a particular issue and contribute to the intellectual debate;
- To help to inform a policy decision by bringing the necessary evidence.

## **3. Standards and Criteria for Evaluation**

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### **3.1. Frameworks for conducting evaluations**

Evaluations have to be in line with the evaluation policies and regulations of the Commission, and the standards set internationally in relation to development co-operation. They include:

- The Evaluation standards of the OECD Development Assistance Committee<sup>9</sup>;
- The Evaluation methodological guidance for external assistance<sup>10</sup>;
- The EU institutional framework for effective management of evaluation activities<sup>11</sup>.

### **3.2. Criteria**

A rigorous methodological approach to evaluation is required. Evaluations should be based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, namely:

- **Relevance** is the extent to which the objectives of a policy or an intervention are consistent with the beneficiaries' needs, and EU policies and priorities. *Is the EU strategy currently, and likely to continue to be, appropriate for the beneficiaries? Does it make the best use of EU priorities?*
- **Effectiveness** is the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved: *Have the objectives been delivered, and with what level of quality?*
- **Efficiency** is the measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results: *Is there appropriate and optimal provision and use of resources to deliver the objectives sought?*
- **Sustainability** is the continuation, or probable continuation, of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed: *are the positive results of the EU interventions likely to last once the intervention comes to an end?*
- **Impact:** Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended: *To what extent and why does the EU co-operation have an impact, or not?*

and the following EU specific criteria:

- **Coherence:** The extent to which EU engagement works together with other interventions which have similar objectives. In addition, criteria of co-ordination and complementarity are closely related to the concept of coherence.
- **EU Added Value** is the extent to which the development intervention adds benefits to what would have resulted from Member States' interventions only in the partner country.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dcdndep/41612905.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/guidelines/gaa\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/guidelines/gaa_en.htm) Two types of guidance are available, one for the evaluation team and one for the evaluation manager with a checklist to evaluate the content and quality of the main deliverables.

<sup>11</sup> Evaluation standards and good practice (C/2002/5267 of 23/12/2002 and SEC(2007)213 of 21/02/2007) and the Communication COM(2013) 686 on 'Improving Evaluation'

## 4. Building the evaluation capacity of Partners

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The EU believes that evaluation of co-operation establishes important learning channels which help stimulate demand for change in partner countries. Hence evaluation has a role in fostering stronger governance and accountability. The EU therefore works closely with **partner governments** and is committed to encouraging and assisting them strengthen their own evaluation culture, capacity and systems. Evaluation capacities and system are part of the dialogue conducted with partner countries.

The EU also directly supports capacity development in different ways:

- Involve partners in evaluation planning, implementation and use.
- Organise specific training dedicated to Partners in Brussels and in partner countries.
- Support partner countries attendance at training courses and open EU corporate evaluation training courses to partner government staff.
- Launch specific programmes to enhance evaluation capacities in partner countries through international organisations.
- Fund capacity building initiatives on monitoring and evaluation.

## 5. Engaging with the wider evaluation world

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EU is actively engaged in international efforts to make development co-operation policies more effective and sustainable. It therefore co-operates with other Directorates of the EU and external partners on the broader aspects of evaluation. These include the following in particular:

**The other Directorate Generals in the European Commission** through the Evaluation Network managed by the Secretariat General; specific coordination is ensured with DGs working in the field of international aid and co-operation, notably DG ECHO (the humanitarian arm of the EU), and DG ENLARGEMENT which manages the EU's assistance to candidate countries and potential candidates.

**The EU Member States' Heads of Evaluation Services (HES) expert group.** This is a forum for pooling experience, building capacity, and developing guidance. Joint evaluations are also co-ordinated and encouraged through this network.

**The OECD-DAC Network on Development Evaluation<sup>12</sup>** is a longstanding and important forum. It is a recognized focal point of evaluation in the development field and plays a key

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation>

role in ensuring the increased effectiveness of development co-operation worldwide. The Evaluation Unit works closely with the Network seeking to improve evaluation practices and to adapt to new challenges.

**The United Nations** family is a key partner for the EU, and its evaluation activities are overseen by the UN Evaluation Group. **The development banks**, such as the World Bank, also have strong evaluation functions and the EU works closely with them.

EuropeAid is a member of the **European Evaluation Society (EES)** which, inter alia, hosts a regular biannual Evaluation Conference to facilitate exchange between a wide range of evaluators, and new thinking in evaluation.

The EU works with Global Foundations, Think Tanks and international NGOs which are pioneering evaluation approaches and methodologies.

## **6. Setting Roles and Responsibilities for Evaluation**

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The following sets out the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders involved in the evaluation of development co-operation across the EU.

### **6.1. The External Relations Commissioners**

The External Relations Commissioners (the High Representative/Vice-President, Development, Enlargement, and Humanitarian Aid) agree the rolling 5 year work programme of strategic evaluations submitted by the Evaluation Unit. They monitor the implementation of the work programme and the results of the strategic evaluations through bi-annual reports provided by the Commissioner for Development.

### **6.2. Senior Management of EuropeAid and EEAS**

Senior management plays a key role in the day to day promotion and maintenance of a culture of evidence based decision-making across the services. Senior management:

- Champions evaluation, by being a leading force in incentivising the conduct and promoting the use of quality evaluations,
- Oversees the design and implementation of the evaluation framework documents, ensuring update and regular review as well as coherence with other framework documents,
- Requires and ensures the use of evidence from evaluation to inform programming, new policies and strategies.

### **6.3. The Evaluation Unit**

The Evaluation Unit is responsible for steering and co-ordinating the evaluation function in development co-operation services.

- *Provides institutional level co-ordination and ensures the coherence of evaluation activity:*
  - Designs the Evaluation Policy for European Union development co-operation,
  - Sets the procedures for evaluation planning, management and dissemination,
  - Monitors overall quality, utility and independence of evaluation work,
  - Coordinate reports to the External Relations Commissioners on evaluations undertaken by EuropeAid; meets regularly with DG ECHO, DG ELARG and EEAS to co-ordinate evaluation work.
- *Provides support and develop capacities:*
  - Develops or adapts the necessary tools and methodologies to ensure high quality evaluations,
  - Develops training and maps competencies,
  - Provide methodological support to operational services in charge of complex project & programmes evaluations,
  - Manages and moderates the network of evaluation correspondents.
- *Manages strategic evaluations :*
  - Prepares the work programme of strategic evaluations, in consultation with EEAS, Delegations and EuropeAid services,
  - Commissions, manages and gives final approval for strategic evaluations,
  - Disseminates and ensures the follow-up of strategic evaluations.
- *Co-ordinates with other stakeholders engaged in evaluation of development co-operation internally and externally.*

#### **6.4. EEAS**

The Development Co-operation Co-ordination Division (DCCD) co-ordinates the EEAS interaction with regard to development co-operation both at policy level and operationally at HQ.

DCCD supports the evaluation work being undertaken by EuropeAid, including:

- Meeting regularly with the Evaluation Unit to co-ordinate policy, planning, action, and follow up on evaluation issues within EEAS; to support the Evaluation Unit in its co-ordination function;
- Facilitating EEAS participation in Reference Groups,
- Ensuring evaluation is included in programming exercises and policies and actions
- Overseeing the follow-up within EEAS on knowledge generated by evaluations.

#### **6.5. Operational services**

At operational level the geographic and thematic units of EuropeAid, and EU Delegations, are responsible for planning and managing project and programme evaluations. Every

Delegation and Service (i) develops its own evaluation work programme for the forward programming period, (ii) ensures that every intervention to be evaluated includes from the start a carefully considered evaluation design (as well as the necessary funds), and (iii) manages project and programme evaluations. In addition, they are responsible for integrating learning into the design and implementation of new interventions.

### **Evaluation Manager**

For each project/programme evaluation the evaluation manager, as a member of the operational service, is responsible for commissioning the evaluation, ensuring its quality, supporting the dissemination of findings and translating uptake of key learning points and making them readily accessible. In the case of complex evaluations it is advisable to have a deputy evaluation manager to support the Evaluation Manager and ensure back-up.

### **Evaluation Correspondents' Network**

The Evaluation Correspondents' Network was set up in 2013 to strengthen the evaluation culture in EuropeAid and across Delegations. It is managed by the Evaluation Unit. It brings together those responsible for evaluation in each Delegation and Headquarters Unit, with the Evaluation Unit and with each other to facilitate exchange of experience, ideas, knowledge generated by evaluation. It is a dynamic forum for learning about all aspects of evaluation. The Evaluation Unit moderates its discussions. It is accessed through Capacity4Dev, and is a restricted Group for staff.

In each Directorate at HQ and in each Delegation, an evaluation correspondent is designated to support and co-ordinate evaluation activity. The Evaluation Correspondent contributes to the preparation of an evaluation plan, to the development of robust evaluation practice and to upgrading evaluation skills, and ensures contact between the services and the Evaluation Unit.

## **7. Providing Human and Financial Resources for Evaluation**

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### **7.1. Expertise development and maintenance**

Managing an evaluation requires specific skills. The more complex the evaluation, the higher the level of knowledge and experience required. The main types of skills are the following:

1. Evaluation methodological expertise,
2. Communication, management and interpersonal skills,
3. Project management.

Each Delegation and operational unit at the Headquarters should ensure that at least one of the staff has the required expertise to manage evaluations and provide support to colleagues who play the role of evaluation manager. EuropeAid is committed to developing evaluation skills. As part of this long term process, mapping and pro-active strengthening of

evaluation skills will be undertaken.

## **Training**

EuropeAid and the Commission Secretariat General have developed training packages at basic, intermediate and advanced levels, to cover all the skill areas needed for evaluation. Staff who manage evaluations should undertake, at least, basic level training. Staff holding specific posts in evaluation are expected to progress to advanced level. Additional training is provided for specific methodological areas such as evaluation of budget support, evaluation of capacity development.

In addition to training, EuropeAid and EEAS actively promote exposure to evaluation practice and encourage staff to follow an evaluation as a member of a Reference Group.

### **7.2. Evaluation Budget**

Funding for evaluations may come from different sources. That for project or programme evaluations is usually included in the overall project or programme budget. For strategic evaluations (thematic, aid instrument, corporate) the budget is provided through the general EU budget or the EDF. The cost of an evaluation depends on the type of evaluation undertaken, and the effort considered to be proportionate. This needs to be decided on a case by case basis.

## **8. Planning evaluations**

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Evaluations take place at different levels:

- a) *The evaluations of specific projects and programmes* (referred to as programme evaluations) are managed by the Delegations and services responsible. An annual evaluation plan is drawn up by each Delegation or service, within the framework of its mandate and its multi-annual evaluation programme. These evaluations cover a wide variety of actions, from relatively small or innovative projects, to large facilities mobilising significant amounts of funds.
- b) *Strategic evaluations*, which cover general policies and strategies in countries and regions, and in sectors or themes, are managed by the central Evaluation Unit. Its work plan consists of a rolling five-year plan which is approved by the Commissioner for Development, in agreement with the Commissioners for External Action, the Neighbourhood, and humanitarian aid, and which is published.

Planning has to ensure that, overall, the evaluations meet the two main objectives of accountability to stakeholders, and learning lessons for the organisation. Planning also has to ensure that there is a firm base at project/programme level for the evaluation “pyramid” so that strategic evaluations and facility-type evaluations are based on detailed and robust evidence.



### **8.1. Planning programme evaluations**

The choice of programmes for inclusion in the evaluation plan of a Delegation or service is its own responsibility, and will certainly include those where provision is made in financing agreements, but should normally follow these standard criteria:

1. Evaluations should cover the majority of the total multi-annual indicative programme,
2. Programmes over a certain threshold should be evaluated,
3. Programmes which are under the threshold, but which are innovative, or have been particularly successful or unsuccessful in meeting their objectives, may be evaluated.

Where EU programmes are carried out jointly with other donors, either as projects or as sector programmes, evaluations involve all the interested parties. More generally, every effort should be made to work closely with all partners in relation to the planning of evaluations, to ensure that there is no overlapping or duplication in evaluations, and also in relation to the sharing of evaluation results (conclusions and recommendations).

In accordance with the Framework agreements with international organisations, the evaluations of programmes implemented through partners such as UN agencies or the World Bank will be carried out by those agencies in accordance with their own procedures, but EU services should be involved in the process (eg. as members of reference group). Evaluations of projects carried out through grants to NGOs should be carried out as required in the grant agreement.

**Budget support evaluations** are normally considered to be more of a strategic nature and thus are managed by the HQ Evaluation Unit. In any case, unless the EU is the only budget support donor, such evaluations should always be carried out on a joint basis.

Delegations may also plan to conduct **reviews of evaluations** in a specific area, or a synthesis of programme evaluations. The latter should certainly be considered where no strategic country-level evaluation is planned before the next programming cycle. In addition, Delegations may wish to evaluate processes such as policy dialogue.

The **timing of an evaluation** is also at the discretion of the Delegation or service concerned; some evaluations may be more effective if carried out one-two years after a project is closed, in order to better identify the impact and sustainability, depending on the availability of the main actors in a project and the documentary material still available after a lapse of time.

**Evaluations of large facilities** (investment facilities, sectorial facilities) are normally managed by the HQ services responsible, with the support and participation of the Evaluation Unit. In many cases these evaluations form a key part of wider thematic evaluations.

## **8.2. Planning strategic evaluations**

The strategic evaluations are based to a large extent on the specific evaluations available in the country or sector concerned, but also assess the strategy for co-operation as a whole. The programme is divided into part 1 (geographic evaluations) and part 2 (thematic and other evaluations) but there are clear links between the two, since country-level evaluations can support thematic evaluations (for instance, evaluations in middle-income countries can provide evidence for thematic evaluations on themes of particular relevance in MICs), and thematic evaluations feed back into country strategies. The rolling programme is updated each year.

### **Part 1 - Geographic Evaluations**

The Commission is required to "regularly evaluate the results of geographical and cross-border policies and programmes and of sector policies and the effectiveness of programming in order to ascertain whether the objectives have been met and enable it to formulate recommendations with a view to improving future operations". However, resources, in terms of personnel and finance, do not allow the EU to evaluate every country programme in every programming cycle. The following criteria for inclusion in the strategic evaluation plan have been applied:

- Amount of disbursements in the past and rank within the region for future allocations ("materiality");
- Year of previous evaluation ("regularity");
- Rough proportional balance between regions ("proportionality").

On the basis of these criteria, countries within each region are identified as first priority, to be included in the plan (while priority has to be given to the larger programmes, approaches are being developed for evaluating smaller country programmes, such as those covered by regional Delegations, on a group basis). The plan pays attention to two further aspects:

- to evaluations in fragile and conflict-affected countries, in line with the Agenda for Change and in the context of EU's commitment to the New Deal. This will be done in order to draw the main lessons from the past and contribute to "changing the way in which we work in fragile situations",
- to a spread of least-developed, low-income and lower-middle income countries.

The EU categorises evaluations as **bilateral** (involving only EU co-operation), **joint** (including several or all donors whatever the form of their support), and **budget support (BS) only**, usually joint because carried out with the involvement of all donors giving budget support in a country.

### **Part 2 Thematic and Other Evaluations**

Part 2 includes thematic and corporate evaluations. The plan is based on the need to provide information on the results of the implementation of policies set out in the "Agenda for Change" and other sector policies, in order to have sufficient material available to report to Parliament and Council on the results and impact of the instruments.

## 9. Ensuring Quality in Evaluation

The evaluation manager is in charge of commissioning the evaluation, setting the governance arrangements and managing the whole process, so that the evaluation is robust, convincing and useful.

### 9.1. Evaluation process

An evaluation is launched by a reference group composed of the evaluation manager, the main users and stakeholders of the evaluation, if possible representatives of the beneficiaries, and when relevant the evaluation unit. This group defines the **use** and **scope** of the evaluation: *What should be evaluated and why?* These elements should be clearly set in the Terms of Reference of the evaluation.

During the **inception phase** of an evaluation, the **Intervention Logic** of the intervention is reconstructed, showing the expected chain of results (from inputs to impact) and the assumptions made at the time of decision-making. A limited number of **evaluation questions** derived from that intervention logic are formulated.

During the **implementation phase**, the necessary information is collected with data collection tools such as documentary analysis, surveys, field research and interviews. The evaluators cross-validate the information sources (“triangulate”) and critically assess the validity and reliability of the data. Limitations in the data collection must be explained.

The final report gives clear replies to the evaluation questions and shows a logical chain from the **findings** to the **conclusions** and **recommendations**. Good recommendations are realistic, evidence-based, targeted, clear and prioritised. All these elements as well as a description of the evaluation methodology used are reflected in the final report, which is **published** and distributed as widely as possible.

### 9.2. Roles and responsibilities in individual evaluation processes

Strategic evaluation				Phases	Project/Programme evaluation			
Management	Unit / Delegations	Evaluation Unit	Reference group		Management	Unit / Delegations	Evaluation Unit	Reference group
●	●	●	●	Design	○	●	○	●
	●	●	●	Management		●	○	●
●	●	●	●	Dissemination & Brokering	○	●	○	●
●	●	●		Use & Follow-Up	●	●	○	

*Annotation: The size of marks indicates the level of involvement and/or responsibility  
When ○, means : no direct involvement / responsibility - support only*

● Strategic & Budget Support evaluations; ● Project & Programmes evaluations;

### **Who does what for Project / Programme Evaluations**

Actors Process	Supervisory level	Unit / Delegations <i>Eval. Manager</i>	Evaluation Unit	Reference group
<b>Design</b>	Approve evaluation mandate. Approve Evaluation ToRs	<i>Ensures timely planning and resources</i> Drafts evaluation mandate and associated ToR Compiles together existing evidence (earlier evaluations, studies, etc.); sets up reference group	<i>Assists in planning</i> <i>Advises on content of the evaluation mandate;</i> <i>Provides template for ToR</i>	Assists in drafting of mandate and ToR and validates both of them
<b>Implementation</b>	Approve final evaluation report	<i>Manages evaluation in close cooperation with Reference Group</i> <i>Ensure the Quality Assurance</i>	<i>Provide support when needed</i>	Provides evaluator with information; Monitors progress and quality of evaluation by validating deliverables.
<b>Dissemination &amp; brokering</b>	Approve <i>plan for dissemination and communication</i>	<i>Drafts and implements plan for dissemination and communication</i>	<i>Advise on plan for dissemination and communication</i>	
<b>Use &amp; Follow up</b>	Endorse the fiche contradictoire/ approve internal action plan addressing evaluation recommendations.	<i>Establishes an internal action plan based on the fiche contradictoire addressing evaluation recommendations;</i> <i>Feeds evaluation results into strategic planning and programming.</i>	<i>Provides template / advises</i>	

### **9.3. Quality assurance of the evaluation process**

Quality assurance is applied to the evaluation **process** and evaluation **products**. It requires consistent application of standards. It conforms with OECD-DAC quality standards for development evaluation.

Consistency of evaluation approach and application of evaluation standards: The Evaluation Unit is responsible for ensuring consistency in evaluation by setting clear standards and approaches, available in the Evaluation Policy and Methodological Guidance; and providing Operational Guidance and templates.

Key moments in the evaluation process for quality assurance: Evaluations are systematically quality assured throughout the whole evaluation process and for each key product.

- Quality assurance at entry: *Terms of Reference are guided by a template, and approved by the manager of the evaluation manager.*
- Quality assurance of the implementation of the evaluation process: *Each deliverable of the evaluation is reviewed by the evaluation manager.*

- Quality assurance at Exit: *Final Reports are published together with an internal quality assessment*<sup>13</sup>.

## 10. Ensuring Evaluations influence change

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### 10.1. Dissemination and knowledge translation

Dissemination of evaluation results is an integral part of the evaluation process. In the past, evaluation results have often been known and used only in a very limited framework, and there has been less sharing of results across the organisations. EuropeAid and EEAS have worked closely together in recent months, with the support of external consultants, to improve the uptake of evaluation results.

The evaluation manager is encouraged to ensure good **‘Knowledge translation’** – interpreting and distilling the outcomes of the evaluation in a way which is tailored to specific user audiences. The expression of content and the format used may differ accordingly. Knowledge translation is, in the first instance, led by the evaluation manager. However the process will closely involve some key users as they are best placed to determine which content is most applicable to which audience, and ways of presentation.

The evaluation manager must primarily ensure the **quality and clarity of the overall report**. The evaluation report must be clearly presented, following the standards, including recommendations which are practical and directed at those who have responsibility to take action on an issue.

The evaluation manager, in coordination with the key users, systematically prepares for each evaluation a **plan for communication and follow-up**. It covers the audience (key users and stakeholders), the communication channels (ie: email, PCM platform, Capacity 4 Dev web platform, social media, seminars,...) and the reporting formats (ie: summary, management brief, video, ...).

Public seminars are held systematically, in Brussels and in partner countries, to discuss evaluation reports and promote awareness of the conclusions. Representatives of the European Parliament and the Member States are always invited to the Brussels seminars.

### 10.2. Follow-up of Evaluation recommendations

The EU is committed to promoting and improving the use of evaluation to inform its choices and decisions. The knowledge generated by evaluation is used both in the process of evaluation itself and through the application of evaluation findings.

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<sup>13</sup> A quality Grid template is available on EU evaluation unit website

To enhance use of evaluations, management encourages a learning culture across the organisation and oversees the mainstreaming of evidence from evaluation into corporate programming choices, policy definition processes, programme design. The EU is committed to "evaluate first", systematically ensuring that all significant proposals are backed up by a robust evaluation of existing EU action.

At corporate level, evaluation is to be included as a core element of all corporate processes such as programming and policy formulation. In particular:

- Every Communication relevant to Development Co-operation should in future indicate the evidence on which it has been based, and provide information on the approach to evaluate it,
- All new policy initiatives should be checked for taking into account 'lessons learnt',
- All multi-annual programmes should include a summary of evaluation results and their consequences,
- All action plans should reflect evaluation conclusions; demonstrate their 'evaluability' (indicators, baseline data, etc.) and the cost of evaluation should be covered in the budget.

Furthermore, ownership of evaluation exercises by users is strongly promoted, notably through their involvement in planning, design, implementation and follow-up; and evaluations are planned such that the evidence generated can feed into policy or decision-making processes. The Evaluation Manager is responsible for ensuring that evaluation recommendations are operational and for initial follow-up on their uptake. Evaluation recommendations are, as far as possible, attributed to someone responsible with a deadline and a follow-up date.

A systematic follow-up on management response regarding adoption and implementation of recommendations is ensured through a 'fiche-contradictoire', which sets out the recommendations of the evaluation and the action to be taken in response to those recommendations. Progress in implementing the action is inserted in the fiche-contradictoire after one year. The 'fiche-contradictoire' is validated by management and published on the website. Ways of providing management with an overview of the implementation of recommendations are being developed.

<b>Fiche contradictoire</b>		
The "Fiche Contradictoire" is a document completed by the services in charge of implementing the recommendations. It presents i) the main recommendations; ii) the actions taken; and iii) the follow-up of these actions one year later.		
<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Response of the EU services Actions to be taken</i></b>	<b><i>Follow-up – one year after Action taken</i></b>
R1 : xxx	Agree / Partially agree / Disagree xxx	Done / Partially done / Not done xxx

### **10.3. Knowledge brokering**

Use of the knowledge generated by evaluation is the key purpose of any evaluation, it must systematically be further analysed and shared.

**'Knowledge brokering'** is a distinct step in the process of promoting uptake of findings. It involves using the knowledge of ways in which it will influence change. The Evaluation Manager is responsible for ensuring this takes place. However key users are best placed to promote evidence and findings from the content of the evaluation. The Evaluation Manager assists key users to set out an action plan for how they intend to do this. This may include:

- Identifying opportunities in the internal planning cycle when evaluation should be used in decision-making, and who will be responsible for these inputs,
- Identifying external opportunities to use the evidence and findings of the evaluation to influence change,
- Meta-evaluations (systematic synthesis of evaluations) conducted to bring together core learning on similar topics.

## **Conclusion**

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This policy represents a firm commitment to upgrade the evaluation function; some of the requirements, particularly those to strengthen the evaluation culture, are new, and will take time to implement. For evaluation to play its part in increasing the impact of our development co-operation, communication has to be improved, and key messages need to be translated into the everyday work of our staff. The implementation of the policy and its effectiveness will therefore be regularly reviewed by co-ordination meetings between EuropeAid and EEAS reporting to senior management.