

Position of the External Evaluation Committee
on the
„Bi-Annual Performance Report 2021-2022“

1. On the 9th of November 2023 the Members of the **External Evaluation Committee** (the Committee) discussed the Bi-Annual Performance Report 2021-2022, titled “Meta-analysis of evaluation results from SECO’s economic cooperation and development activities”, dated October 2023 (the Performance Report) and the corresponding Foreword by Martin Saladin, Head of Operations at SECO’s Division for Economic Cooperation and Development (WE).
2. Besides reporting on all evaluation activities in the corresponding period the **focus** of the **Bi-Annual Performance Report 2021-2022** lies on a systematic quantitative and qualitative analysis of all evaluation results, comprising external and internal project evaluations of the operational sections as well as independent portfolio evaluations. The key objective of reviewing all evaluation findings collected over the past two years is to draw lessons, disseminate knowledge and ultimately strengthen the effectiveness of SECO development cooperation by identifying both hindering and enabling factors for project success.
3. It is to be noted that instead of a Management Response to the Performance Report, the Head of Operations at SECO’s Division for Economic Cooperation and Development (WE), Martin Saladin, gave his feedback to the Report in a Foreword on behalf of SECO WE Management. This was welcomed by the external committee as an easily readable form of dealing with the Meta Analysis of 61 external project evaluations and 70 internal project reviews under the responsibility of the four operational sections, as well as one evaluation of the multilateral cooperation section. Accordingly, the Committee considers the Foreword as a successful new format for replacing a management response to Bi-Annual-Reports.
4. The Committee’s discussions of the Report and related conclusions are summarized below in the following structure: general remarks followed by more detailed comments.
5. **General Remarks**
 - The Committee acknowledges that the Report is clearly structured and well written and appreciates that it comes up with new topics and offers potentially helpful recommendations. The Committee recognizes the huge work behind the Report and congratulates the evaluation team on this great accomplishment.
 - The Committee is impressed by the scope of evaluation work, which was realized during the reporting period on a rather limited budget, suggesting a very efficient working approach.

- The committee wonders whether, in the light of the current political discussions, the Report (and individual evaluations) should provide more information on the question of who exactly benefited from the funds used for project interventions.
- The Committee agrees with the Report's recommendation 1 to maintain the focus on the sustainability and impact of project results, notably through ex-post result measurement, but is not totally convinced of the benefits of recommendation 2 to 'emphasize the use of evidence in project design'. The Committee would wish for more explicit and concrete recommendations in the future.
- The Committee is pleased that the Meta Analysis shows a very positive picture of the development results achieved, reflected in a highly satisfactory average project performance rating according to the DAC criteria. However, the Committee notes that this high overall performance rating relies, to some extent, on a questionable statistical methodology and calculation method of summarizing the individual performance ratings of evaluated projects.

6. Comments in Detail

- The Committee asks if the high number of external project evaluations could be reduced in favor of fewer but more in-depth external evaluations that give answers to specific project performance and impact questions.
- The Committee would welcome it if future bi-annual reports were to add a few more photos and maybe short boxes on positive or negative project examples. This would make some of the findings of the report more tangible and improve the overall ease of reading.
- Finally, the Committee was asking about the lessons learnt from the 15 percent of projects that were rated as unsuccessful, and it suggested that these learnings were to be commented on in future reports. The committee is convinced that this would increase the credibility of the report even more.

7. In conclusion, the Committee recommends disclosure of the Bi-Annual Performance Report.

The Committee members:

Miges Baumann (Chairperson)
 Christine Badertscher
 Raphael Schilling
 Eva Terberger
 Martina Viarengo