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REPORT

2021-2022 Performance Report

Meta-analysis of evaluation results from SECO's economic cooperation and development activities

October 2023



The cover image of this report depicts spider-web rice fields on the island of Flores in Indonesia. Flores is one of the sites of WISATA, a SECO-supported project on sustainable tourism implemented by Swisscontact in close collaboration with the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy.

Credit Photo: © Swisscontact

Acknowledgements

This report is produced every second year by the Evaluation Unit of SECO's Division for Economic Cooperation and Development (SECO WE, hereafter called "SECO" to enhance reader-friendliness) with support from various colleagues of the Division. The Evaluation Unit¹ thanks everyone who contributed, but remains solely responsible for the report. It would also like to thank the Division's Head of Operations for the foreword, as well as the independent Evaluation Committee for its remarks on the report. Last but not least, it acknowledges the vibrant evaluation culture within the entire Division which contributes to continuously improving SECO's projects and without which this report would not have been possible.

Foreword

By Martin Saladin, Head of Operations at SECO's Division for Economic Cooperation and Development (WE).



Dear readers

It is with great pleasure that as Head of Operations and member of WE's management I can present to you, together with our evaluation unit, the bi-annual performance report 2021-2022 of SECO WE. The report contains a wealth of information gathered through evaluations at project and portfolio level.

The Management sees this report as an illustration of the strong M&E culture of our Division and of our willingness to take advantage, as a "learning institution", of successes, challenges and failures in order to continuously improve our projects.

The analysis of all external evaluations of the last two years indicates a good performance of our projects with a

success rate of 85%. This report contextualizes this simple number with a detailed analysis.

From an operational point of view, we are particularly pleased that evaluations have proven valid to draw relevant lessons, to disseminate knowledge and to strengthen the effectiveness of our work by identifying both hindering and enabling factors for project success. The two years under observation were rich in terms of evaluations with 61 external project evaluations and 70 internal project reviews. In addition, we carried out two independent portfolio evaluations on SECO's approach to private sector engagement and to climate as well as one external evaluation of our project support partnerships. In addition, the Swiss Federal Audit Office carried out a comprehensive evaluation on the Division's infrastructure activities.

Personally, I am satisfied that the evaluations were owned and appropriated by our operational sections (e.g., through very valuable capitalisation workshops) and that, despite hindering factors in Covid times like remote data collection or limited accessibility to stakeholders, they were overall of good quality. We duly take note that the two "big" independent portfolio evaluations in private sector engagement and climate ask for higher aspirations in terms of value enhancement, objectives, learning

¹ Authors of this report: Andrea Salem, Valérie Sturm, Johannes Schneider

and internal capacity building. And the Swiss Federal Audit Office evaluation of infrastructure projects in three countries (Tajikistan, Albania and North Macedonia) identified issues that go beyond infrastructure financing and apply to all our operations. This covers a certain flexibility of log-frames, early planning for project exit and the introduction of a pragmatic ex-post monitoring for projects to better monitor the sustainability of the projects in the long term and learn lessons for other projects.

The sustainability of interventions, including planned exit strategies in projects, definitely needs close attention since this criterion fares lower than others. We agree with the recommendation that the assessment of effectiveness, sustainability and impact of project results is important and that, in order to reach this objective, ex-post results measurements (including with a reasonable number of ex-post evaluations) remain instrumental. In this regard, Management emphasizes the existing target of at least two ex-post evaluations per year and expects operational sections to increase a pragmatic ex-post monitoring of projects. Making better use of knowledge (in the field and with further stakeholders like project support partners) can also play an

important role. In this regard, we rely to a large extent on strong implementing partners such as multilateral organisations and development banks: with their integrated research and evaluation units, projects benefit - in addition to their operational experience - of extensive evidence on what works and what does not. In order to enable the increased use of evidence, the call for making all SECO evaluations publicly available is long overdue and should be swiftly enabled.

I thank you all for your interest in our work and wish you an insightful reading.

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List of abbreviations

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
EvalNet	OECD DAC Evaluation Network
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Association
IFC	International Finance Corporation
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ODA	Official development assistance
PCM	Project Cycle Management
PR	Performance rate
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
SCO	Swiss Cooperation Office
SECO	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SECO WE	SECO Division for Economic Cooperation and Development
WBG	World Bank Group
WEHU	Section Trade Promotion
WEIF	Section Private Sector Development
WEIN	Section Infrastructure Financing
WEMU	Section Macroeconomic Support
WEQA	Section Quality and Resources

Executive Summary

The analysis of external evaluations and internal reviews based on the internationally recognised OECD DAC criteria confirms the positive results of SECO’s Division for Economic Development and Cooperation in partner countries. Even in times of the global COVID-19 pandemic, with travel restrictions affecting project evaluation, the evaluation culture at SECO remained vibrant, as the considerably high number of 61 evaluations show. In fact, almost a fifth (18%) of the active portfolio was evaluated by external experts in the last 2 years.

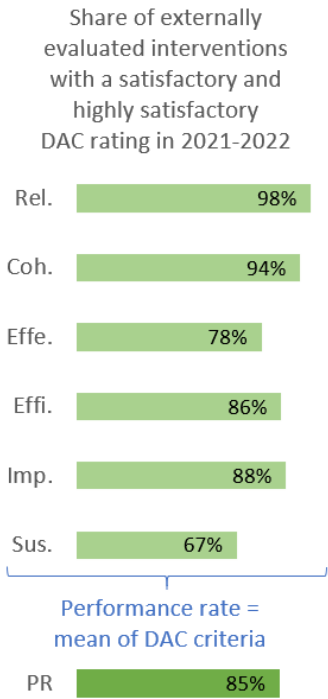
Despite a challenging context for the projects evaluated in 2021/22, with multiple crises affecting our partner countries and, to a varying degree, also the implementation of projects, SECO was able to maintain a high level of project performance, as illustrated in the graphic to the right. The performance rate of 85% reflects the mean of all satisfactory and highly satisfactory ratings of the six OECD DAC criteria.

Looking at some OECD DAC criteria in detail, relevance continues to be the highest rated criteria, as all but one of the externally evaluated projects received a satisfactory or highly satisfactory rating. The effectiveness rating of 78% is considerably lower than in the previous reporting period, illustrating the need to strengthen the focus on achieving the expected results. The sustainability of project results continues to be a constant challenge: the 67% success rate calls for continued efforts to ensure lasting benefits of the projects.

A portfolio analysis shows that the evaluated projects are representative of the active SECO portfolio, while a qualitative “deep dive” draws lessons from all external and internal evaluations of interventions implemented by the World Bank Group (WBG). Last but not least, the report highlights key insights from independent evaluations on SECO’s Private Sector Engagement (PSE) and climate approach, as well as from a Swiss Federal Audit Office (EFK) inspection of three infrastructure projects.

Based on the wealth of information from all the analysed evaluations, the Evaluation Unit makes the following two recommendations:

- Improve the assessment of effectiveness, sustainability and impact of project results, notably through ex-post results measurements
- Emphasize the use of evidence in project design



1. Introduction

Every second year, all evaluations – external and internal project evaluations of the operational sections as well as independent portfolio evaluations mandated by the Evaluation Unit - are systematically reviewed with a quantitative and qualitative approach. 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.²

Chapter 2 delves into the external and internal *project* assessments under the responsibility of the operational sections: first, a portfolio analysis is presented to understand what was evaluated and assess the representativity of the evaluated portfolio compared to the overall portfolio of projects managed by SECO. Then, statistics on the overall performance of the evaluated portfolio and the six OECD DAC criteria are presented, followed by a differentiated analysis based on the project characteristics used in the portfolio analysis. Chapter 3 summarises key findings from two independent portfolio evaluations mandated by the Evaluation Unit (SECO approach to private sector engagement and to climate), one external evaluation of the project support partnerships of two operational sections, as well as an evaluation on the Division's activities executed by the Swiss Federal Audit Office. Chapter 4 looks at the implementation of recommendations from the previous performance report 2019-2020. Lastly, Chapter 5 presents two recommendations from the Evaluation Unit.

2. Review of results from project evaluations

Portfolio assessment: what was evaluated and how?

Assessment types

The evaluation culture at SECO is vibrant, as the considerably high number of evaluations shows. During the period 2021-2022, the Evaluation Unit analysed the results of 61 external project evaluations and 70 internal project reviews³ under the responsibility of the four operational sections, as well as one evaluation of the multilateral cooperation section. These 131 project assessments cover a total of 121 interventions: for 12 interventions both an internal review and at least one external evaluation are available⁴. The number of external evaluations has increased since 2019-2020 and largely exceeds the Division's own target of at least 20 to 25 external evaluations per year. The types of evaluations and reviews used within the Division and their characteristics are defined in the Division's Evaluation Policy and summarised in [Figure 1](#).

² The 2021-2022 edition of the bi-annual performance report covers only the ODA activities of SECO. During this period, only limited activities of the Swiss contribution to EU enlargement were active, they were therefore not analysed.

³ All internal reviews were completion notes.

⁴ One intervention was even twice externally evaluated in 2021-2022 (Better Work Phase III).




	Independent Evaluations	External Evaluations	Internal Reviews
Focus and scope	External evaluation of a thematic area at portfolio level	External evaluation at project or program level	Self-assessment at project or program level
Oversight (principal)	External Evaluation Committee	Head of Operational Section	Head of Operational Section
Commissioning (managed by)	Evaluation Unit	Project or Program Manager in charge	n.a.
Execution (evaluator)	Independent External Evaluator	Independent External Evaluator	Project or Program Manager in charge
Degree of independence			

Figure 1: Types of evaluations and reviews

The selection of external project evaluations falls under the responsibility of operational sections (SECO evaluation policy, 2021). This ensures that the evaluation is timely for project steering and learning purposes and results can be best used.

The timing of external evaluations indicates that they are mainly carried out for steering and learning purposes, rather than for accountability purposes.⁵ A relatively high 62% are mid-term evaluations, 34% end-term evaluations, while, over two years, only two are full-fledged ex-post evaluations (representing 3%).⁶ Therefore, the Division's own target of at least two ex-post evaluations per year is not achieved. The importance of more systematic ex-post reviews of results from closed interventions is also a recommendation from a recent review by the Swiss Federal Audit Office (see Chapter 3).

Compared with past practices, internal reviews are elaborated closer to the project end. The remaining time lag between project end and its review highlights that they are mainly used for institutional memory and accountability rather than for a review of a closed phase in preparation of a follow-up phase. The internal completion notes, which are mandatory for every intervention with a budget above CHF 1 million, aim to take-stock of and reflect on the results and experiences from SECO perspective. During 2021-2022, a big effort was undertaken by operational sections to catch-up with delayed completion notes. Completion notes of more recent interventions are now available in a timelier way.

Results and lessons learned from the past are usually assessed in preparation of a follow-up phase, yet their review could be more systematically presented in credit proposals. In fact, the standard credit proposal contains a chapter on previous results, but it is short and unevenly used. The Evaluation Unit also saw a rare case, where critical results from an external evaluation arrived after the approval of a follow-up phase.⁷ Completion notes, as mentioned above, are usually available only after the preparation of the follow-up phase⁸. Thus, their content should focus on experiences that are useful beyond the assessed intervention to allow institutional memory and peer learning.⁹

⁵ SECO WE Evaluation Policy (2021) identifies these three main purposes for evaluations.

⁶ Ex-post evaluations were carried out for the two following projects: Resource Efficiency and Cleaner Production RECP Vietnam, WEHU 197; West Balkans Municipal Infrastructure Development Fund, WEIN 83. In addition, ex-post components are found in: a) mid-term evaluation of Cities Development Initiative Asia CDIA, WEIN 67; b) end-term evaluation of The Sustainable Trade Initiative IDH (WEHU 199).

⁷ As an example: an external evaluation of the Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises SCORE, Phase III was made available after the approval of phase IV.

⁸ According to standard practice, completion notes are expected to be elaborated within six months after the project ended (to benefit from the final implementation report of the implementing partners), which is in contradiction with the timing to prepare a potential follow-up phase, which usually starts several months before the previous phase ends (to allow for a smooth continuation of activities). However, if the program manager stays in charge for both phases, it can be expected that the learnings from a previous phase are implicitly integrated into a follow-up phase.

⁹ The template of the completion note was revised in that sense in 2021.



Sustainable Cocoa Production Program, Indonesia

The Sustainable Cocoa Production Program (SCPP) has been supported by SECO since 2012 as a multi-donor, public-private partnership and it aims to increase the competitiveness of an environmentally responsible and inclusive cocoa value chain in Indonesia. It is among the largest partnerships between donors and businesses in a commodity sector of the country, and has proven to be able to deliver high quality implementation at scale across a wide range of regions and topics, such as: Knowledge and technology transfer on good farming practices; nutrition and gender integration; certification and traceability. An ex-post evaluation of the program is planned to be conducted in 2024.

Photo Credit: © Swisscontact

Methods used

SECO carries out evaluations using internationally accepted evaluation criteria and standards. These include the criteria used by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD for international cooperation (OECD/DAC, 2020) and the relevant guidelines, as well as the Swiss Evaluation Society (SEVAL) evaluation standards.



Figure 2: The six DAC criteria and their related questions

Overall, the Evaluation Unit considers the received evaluations of good quality. The majority of evaluation reports contain methodological chapters, some as a very detailed standalone chapter, some others less detailed.¹¹ According to data available to the Evaluation Unit, the average cost of an evaluation is around CHF 80'000, which corresponds on average to 0.7% of the SECO contribution to the project. This percentage is to be interpreted with caution: potential co-financing sources of the evaluation or other evaluations of the same intervention are not considered; the evaluation modalities and costs or the number of countries covered are also not comparable. Besides, the sample is small and very heterogeneous.¹² SECO alone (or in few cases jointly with other donors) commissioned slightly more than half of the evaluations in the reporting period. The other half was commissioned by the executing agency.¹³ Overall, management responses are available for two thirds of all evaluations. In most cases, the latter confirm the added-value of the external project evaluation.

External evaluations mainly use standard evaluation methods, yet some examples of alternative or innovative approaches exist. All SECO project evaluations rely on a mix of methods to reach their conclusions: desk analysis (such as portfolio analysis, governance and management analysis), surveys (such as quantitative stakeholders surveys), interviews (such

Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully

As recommended by the OECD Evaluation Network (EvalNet),¹⁰ in an evaluation, all six criteria should be considered initially. However, evaluations must carefully select which criteria to focus upon, depending on several factors including the objectives and limitations of the evaluation and the context of the intervention.

It is important to strike a balance between standardisation (avoiding a mechanistic application of all criteria) and cherry-picking (selecting only the "easy" criteria).

¹⁰ OECD guidance "Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully" (2021)

¹¹ The evaluation unit did not consult the terms of references, inception reports, or other types of reports related to the evaluations, where elements of methodology may also have been described.

¹² The two most extreme examples are from a) Local Government Finance Reforms (RELOF), where SECO's macro-economic support section is the only donor, and with CHF 250'000 it spent 10% of SECO commitment on one single evaluation; b) Scaling-up Renewable Energy Program in Low Income Countries (SREP), which is a targeted program of the Strategic Climate Fund, implemented by the World Bank Group, where SECO's infrastructures financing section is a small donor, and which has an extensive monitoring and evaluation system in place: with CHF 32'526, SECO spent 0.12% of its commitment on one evaluation.

¹³ The condition for SECO to consider the results of an evaluation commissioned by the implementing partner is that the evaluation is representative of SECO contribution, and that SECO is involved to some extent in the evaluation process (e.g., consultation on terms of references, draft evaluation report, and/or management response, interviews).

as qualitative structured interviews, focus group interviews), participatory workshops, and case studies.

The Trade Promotion Section has made good experiences with Results-Oriented Monitoring “ROM”. ROM reviews are short-term monitoring missions on ongoing interventions, organised on a need basis and usually at least once during the intervention’s lifetime. An external expert measures progress towards achievements of policy objectives and targeted results. It can thus be seen as a mixed monitoring and evaluation tool. Programme managers, who have applied it were satisfied with the cost-benefit ratio of this method.¹⁴

Good practices, which have shown to increase the quality and usability of the evaluation, were identified from the analysed evaluation reports:

- ✓ **Including an evaluation matrix** enhances transparency by providing clarity on data sources, data collection, and the methods used to elaborate the different types of evidence collected.¹⁵
- ✓ **Communicating transparently about limitations** of the evaluation, in particular regarding the sampling strategy, ensures representativeness and acceptance.
- ✓ **Applying a gender lens** can provide evidence for learning and accountability while supporting the achievement of gender equality goals, a transversal theme of SECO.¹⁶
- ✓ **Organising a capitalisation workshop** for the draft evaluation report ensures the validity of the findings and ownership of recommendations. The workshop provides an opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on the findings and recommendations, fostering a collaborative atmosphere for learning and knowledge sharing. It ensures that the evaluation insights are effectively harnessed to inform future projects and strategies, ultimately enhancing the overall impact of SECO development efforts.¹⁷

Common limitations were also identified in the 2021-2022 evaluation reports:

- **Low response rates** for (online) surveys weakened the survey results;
- **Sample selection bias**, due to limited availability of or accessibility to stakeholders for instance, led to incomplete and potentially non representative primary data collection and analysis;
- **Difficulties in attributing results to projects activities** because of an unclear theory of change and lack of adequate monitoring data.
- **Risks associated with remote data collection**, such as loss of nuance and comprehensiveness when conducting interviews via online platforms; under-representation of participants with lower phone/internet access, lower internet “literacy” or participants facing gender-related barriers to use social media or phones; challenge to develop trust with the participants; data security of online platforms.

¹⁴ Sustainable Tourism - Destination Management Organisation (WEHU 202); Market Access of Products of Terroir - Tunisia, Phase I (WEHU 203); Sustainable tourism in Morocco (WEHU 207)

¹⁵ Examples: The Umbrella Facility for Trade Trust Fund (WEHU 200); Swiss Entrepreneurship Program, Phase II (WEIF 128)

¹⁶ Examples of external evaluations that applied a gender lens: Partnership with World Bank Water Global Practice evaluation (WEIN 70); Global Financial Infrastructure Program evaluation (WEIF 125).

For further guidance on applying a gender lens to the DAC evaluation criteria, see the dedicated chapter in the OECD guidance “[Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully](#)” (2021)

¹⁷ Example: Swiss Entrepreneurship Program, Phase II (WEIF 128)

In fragile or conflict-affected situations and in particular in war zones, ethical questions have to be raised about the role of evaluation. Can evaluators be sent to the field? Is it timely and appropriate? What alternatives can be considered? Due to its focus, SECO has been less exposed to fragile or conflict-affected settings than other development actors. This changed with Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, one of SECO's priority countries.

An independent evaluation of the Swiss cooperation program of SDC, SECO and the Peace and Human Right Division in Ukraine and Moldova, to be conducted in 2022, was stopped in the days following the beginning of the war by joint decision of the three involved evaluation units. The key objective of this evaluation, initially intended to inform the new country strategy for Ukraine, became obsolete.

An example from the Trade Promotion Section (WEHU) illustrates another choice in the same context: An external evaluation of the Phase 2 of the Quality Food Trade programme in Ukraine, planned to start in February 2022, was also cancelled. Instead, WEHU mandated an external strategic analysis of its portfolio in Ukraine in the second half of 2022. The goal was to analyse the portfolio of projects in the organic agriculture and dairy sector and to present an independent analysis, as well as recommendations on how to continue working in this focus area. The review provided key insights for continuing the programme, such as to capitalise on the strengthened focus of the Ukrainian Government to work towards achieving the standards of the EU Green Deal.

Evaluated portfolio

Overall, the evaluated portfolio is representative of the active SECO portfolio of projects, in terms of geographical distribution, outcome objectives, implementing partners and share of SECO contribution to the intervention's budget. The 61 external evaluations cover a portfolio of CHF 503 Mio commitments, which represents 18% of the active portfolio in 2021-2022 (Figure 3). The 70 internal reviews cover a portfolio of CHF 334 Mio commitments, mainly approved under the 2013-2016 disbursement credit (Figure 4).

FIGURE 3

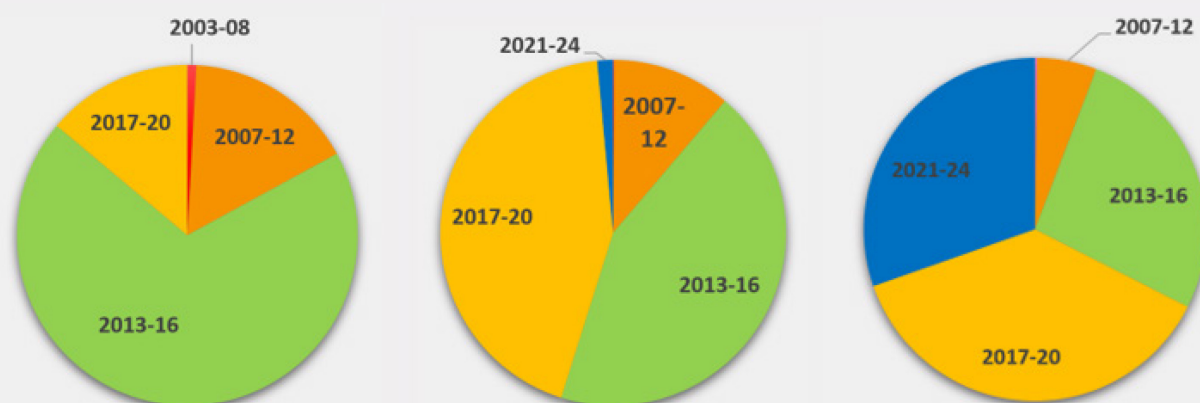
Share of commitments that were evaluated externally in 2021-2022



Although the analysis and lessons learned in this report inform about interventions which pursued strategy objectives and observed guidelines from the past, the Evaluation Unit considers them still relevant of current practices. First and foremost, there is a strong continuity between the current and previous international cooperation strategies. Moreover, a comparison with previous biannual performance reports shows recurrent findings and lessons learned. The active portfolio in 2021-2022 still contains a third of “older” projects, approved before 2017, it is therefore normal that they are still being evaluated, in particular in the case of ex-post evaluations.

FIGURE 4

Portfolio distribution by disbursement credit

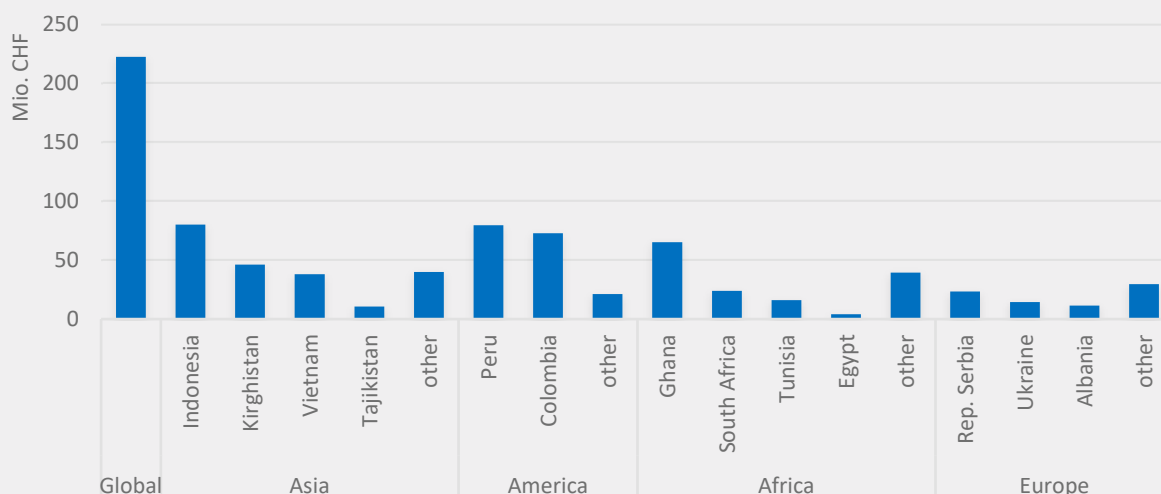


(Left: internally evaluated portfolio, middle: externally evaluated portfolio, right: active portfolio)

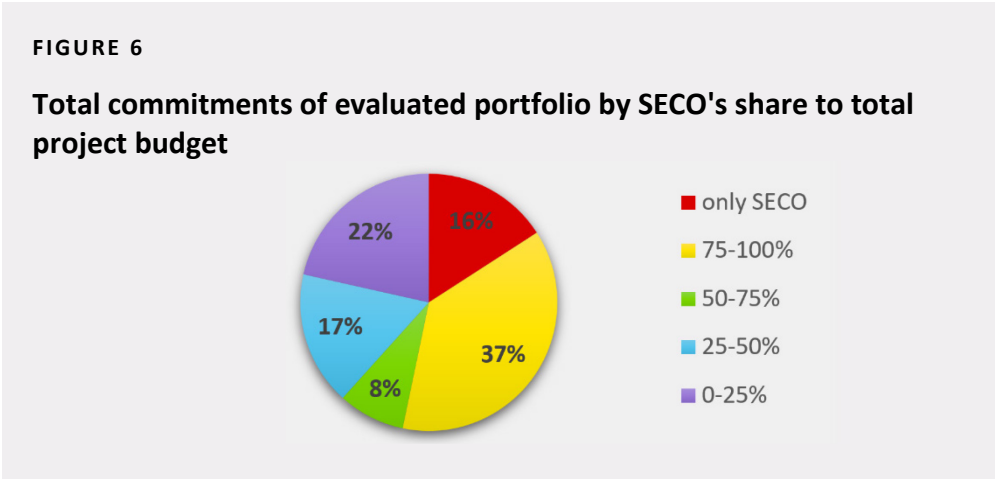
60% of evaluated interventions focus on SECO priority countries (bilateral interventions), while 35% cover global projects. The share of the active portfolio is quite close over the same period. It appears that Indonesia, Peru and Colombia have the highest share of financial commitments that were part of an evaluation (Figure 5). Peru and Indonesia are also among SECO priority countries in the South which benefit from the highest financial country allocation, with Colombia ranging in the middle.

FIGURE 5

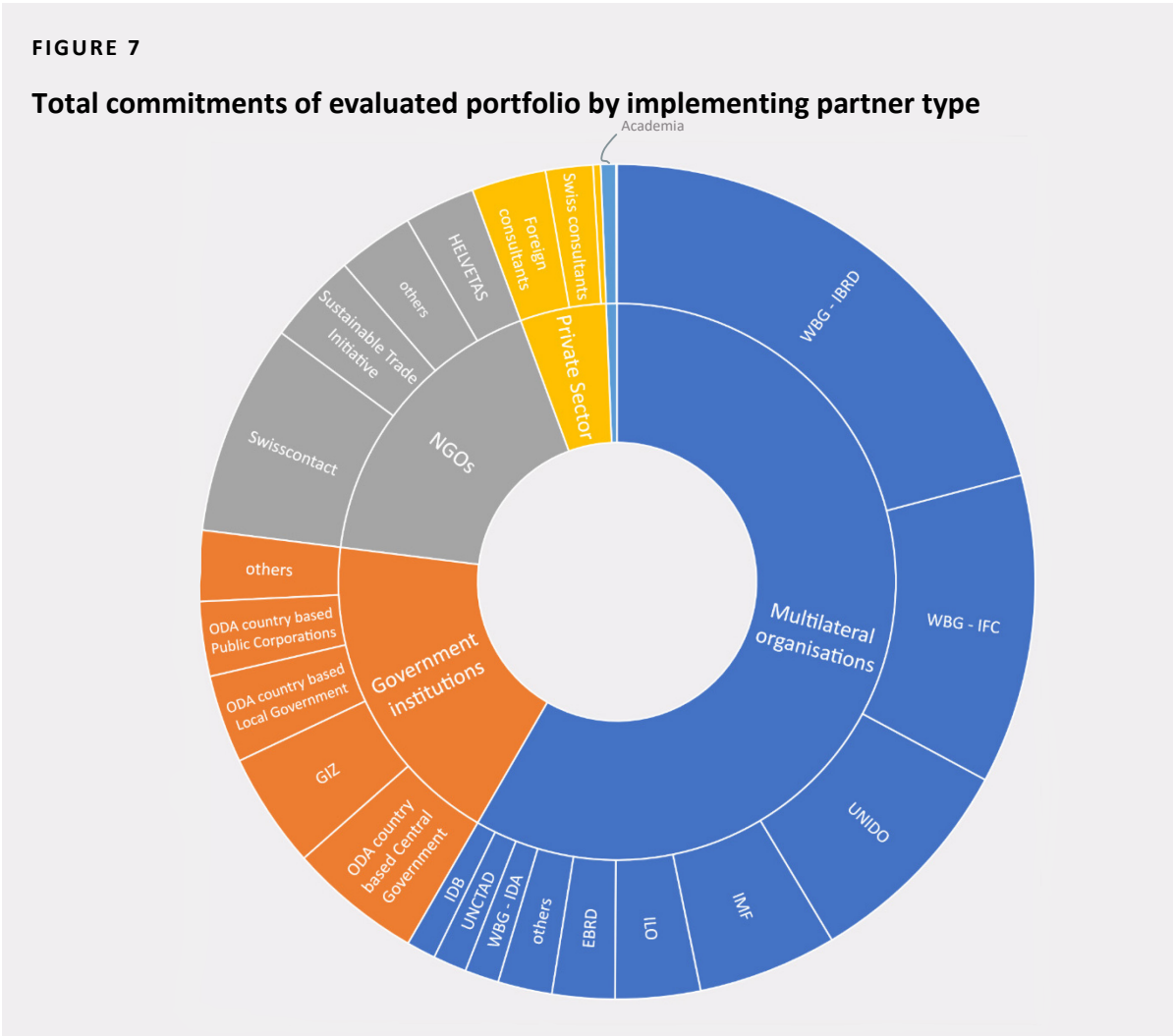
Total commitments of evaluated portfolio by country and continent



In 60% of the evaluated interventions, SECO is financing at least half of the total budget¹⁸(Figure 6). The capacity of SECO to influence the implementation of the intervention, and eventually its success, is expected to be higher in such evaluations.



SECO works mainly with multilateral organisations as implementing partners and, as a consequence, also for its evaluations (Figure 7). It can often rely on their well-established evaluation systems. Ranking second as most important implementing partners are, at a comparable level, governments and NGOs. The private sector as direct implementing partner, represents a relatively small share of the portfolio, yet it is often an “indirect” partner in projects developed via multilateral organisations, such as the IFC.



¹⁸ This finding is based on SAP data.

Evaluation results assessment: how well do the evaluated interventions perform?

Since 2021, SECO and SDC use a harmonised calculation method to obtain the overall performance rate of their evaluated development activities, based on the average of the six DAC criteria. A joint assessment grid, including sub-criteria, guides evaluation managers to establish high quality evaluations with a comparable assessment of results. In this report, the “historical” values of performance rates were recalculated since 2015 with the revised calculation method, covering two 4-year strategy cycles.¹⁹

The new calculation method reduces the overall performance rate by nine percentage points compared to the previous calculation method²⁰, even if the results at project level remain stable. Using the mean of the six DAC criteria at portfolio level, instead of the more subjective assessment by the evaluator, explains this discrepancy. The reduction is however limited through the addition of the two newly introduced DAC criteria coherence and impact²¹ which – in the current sample of evaluations – increase the overall performance rate: their share of satisfactory and highly satisfactory ratings is higher than the mean of the other four DAC criteria.

Quantitative analysis

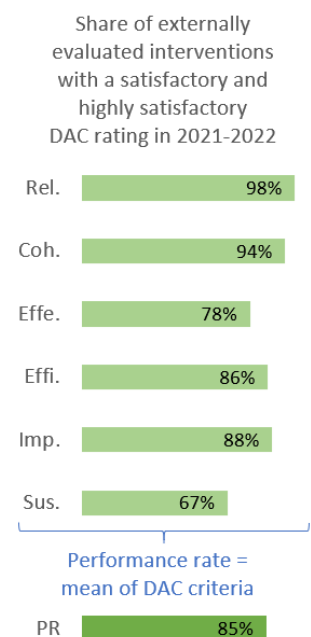
Statistics of the overall performance rate

The 2021-2022 overall performance rate is 85%, with an error margin of 3%.²² This is a satisfactory result for SECO. Looking at the last 4 years of evaluations, there are proportionally less highly satisfactory ratings in 2019-2022 than in the previous 4-year period covering the years 2015-2018 (17% down from 22%). At the same time, there are proportionally less unsatisfactory ratings when comparing the same periods (13% down from 18%). In short, under the current strategy period, more evaluations showed average results with less variability towards highly satisfactory or unsatisfactory results.

Figure 8:
Overall performance rating over 2021-22 reporting period (ext: external evaluations; int: internal evaluations).



Performance Rate of SECO, with a new calculation method: The overall performance rate is the mean of all satisfactory and highly satisfactory ratings of the six DAC criteria.



¹⁹ As a consequence, a direct quantitative comparison with previously published performance ratings is not possible. The 4-year cycle for evaluations is not matching the strategy cycle approved by Parliament, as for accountability reporting, evaluations of the last two years of a strategy cycle are only available once the accountability report is published.

²⁰ There are three major differences between the old and the new calculation method: 1) the evaluator does not provide a performance rate at project level anymore; 2) six DAC criteria are considered instead of four; 3) the overall performance rate is the mean over the six DAC criteria of the share of highly satisfactory and satisfactory projects, instead of the share of projects with a highly satisfactory and satisfactory project performance rate. Due to lack of data, only the effect of the third difference can be quantified: for instance, in 2019-2020, with the old calculation method the share of projects with a highly satisfactory and satisfactory performance rate would have been 94%, while with the new calculation method, the average over the DAC criteria is 85%.

²¹ The criterion impact, while already part of the pre-2019 OECD DAC criteria, was only introduced for regular use within SECO after the revision of the criteria in 2019.

²² The error margin is calculated with the following formula: $e = Z \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n} \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N-1}}}$, where e is the error margin, Z is the Z-score equal to 1.96 for a 95% confidence level, p the proportion of successful projects (i.e., highly satisfactory and satisfactory ratings), n the sample size of successful projects and N the total population of ratings. For more details, including the Z-score table, see: <https://success.qualtrics.com/rs/qualtrics/images/Determining-Sample-Size.pdf>

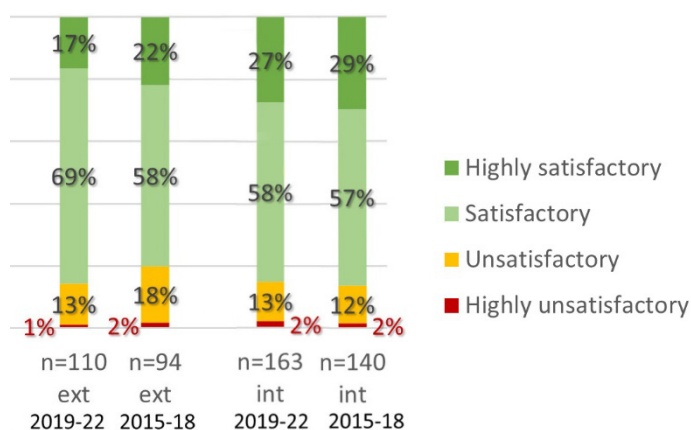


Figure 9: Overall performance rating of the current and the previous IC Strategy reporting period (ext: external evaluations; int: internal evaluations)

Only one project was rated as highly unsatisfactory in an ex-post evaluation from 2022 mandated by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).²³ SECO had stopped its support to this intervention, which aimed at contributing to improving the public infrastructure in the Western Balkans. The external evaluation identified a series of lessons learned which are relevant beyond the evaluated intervention (Box 2). Three other interventions are considered as unsatisfactory, with unsatisfactory effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability ratings, even though their relevance was considered by evaluators as high or very high.

Box 2: Some lessons learned from the ex-post evaluation of the Municipal Infrastructure Development Fund (MIDF), Western Balkans

- A key factor in the success of these types of municipal infrastructure investments is a **very robust market study** that examines the absorbing capacity of potential financing recipients and the attractiveness of existing, competing offers.
- **Intensive communication and coordination with other donors** in the region are necessary to ensure that the various projects match.
- **Early involvement of the private-sector fund managers** in the planning and design phase is essential so that they can contribute from the outset and assume responsibility for the development of the project.

Relevance and coherence are almost always rated (highly) satisfactory, yet this shows only a partial picture. Relevance is considered as a gate keeping criterion for interventions. Thus, the 98% share of (highly) relevant interventions is a good yet to be expected result (Figure 10). However, a closer look shows that this result is mainly representative of the relevance of the intervention's *objectives*. Most evaluations do not address the relevance of the design, which is an equally important aspect of the recently revised DAC criterion. A stronger focus on this aspect could decrease the high share of positive results. The use of the newly introduced coherence criterion is still unequal and, in some cases, mixed up with relevance. In fact, there are connections between the coherence criterion and other DAC criteria. A recent OECD guidance provides explanations on how to use the coherence criterion.²⁴

Definition of relevance

The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design respond to beneficiaries' global, country and partner/institution needs, policies and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.

²³ Municipal Infrastructure Development Fund (MIDF) (WEIN-WEIF 83)

²⁴ OECD guidance "Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully" (2021) / table Challenges of evaluating relevance

Coherence is connected in particular with relevance, effectiveness and impact.

- Both relevance and coherence consider how the intervention aligns with the context, but they do so from different perspectives: While relevance assesses the intervention at the level of the needs and priorities of the stakeholders and beneficiaries that are directly involved, coherence goes up to the next level and looks at the fit of the intervention within the broader system.
- Coherence is often a useful angle through which to begin examining unintended effects, which can be captured under effectiveness and impact. While the intervention may achieve its objectives (effectiveness), these gains may be reversed by other (not coherent) interventions in the context.
- Likewise, there are links with efficiency: “incoherent” interventions may be duplicative, or even counterproductive, thus wasting resources.

77% of external evaluations consider the evaluated interventions to be (highly) effective, or to be likely so (Figure 10), but they often lack evidence on the achievement of outcome results. In fact, most evaluations are carried out before results at outcome level materialise. Several explanations are identified. First, the timing of the evaluations: the large majority of evaluations are carried out during implementation, either mid-term or some months before project end. A second reason is that some outcome objectives (the direct effects of the intervention on target groups) take more time to materialise than the project duration, yet no ex-post monitoring is planned. In these cases, evaluations often assess the achievement of outputs or the likelihood to achieve outcomes. Thirdly, the absence of clear ambitions, with baselines and target objectives, and performance indicators makes it difficult to objectively assess the achievement of results.

86% of externally evaluated interventions are assessed (highly) efficient, while the internal reviews are more critical (Figure 10). Most evaluations assess the operational efficiency, i.e., the extent to which the planned budget and project duration were respected²⁵ and if the interventions encounter feasibility and implementation difficulties. Evaluations debate to a lesser extent whether the limited resources are best used (cost-effectiveness), as it requires to identify alternatives in terms of quality and results.

Definition of coherence

The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.

Definition of effectiveness

The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups.

Definition of efficiency

The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.

²⁵ An analysis of SAP data could potentially provide a systematic view on those considerations, e.g., by analysing the (no) cost extensions and the reimbursements.

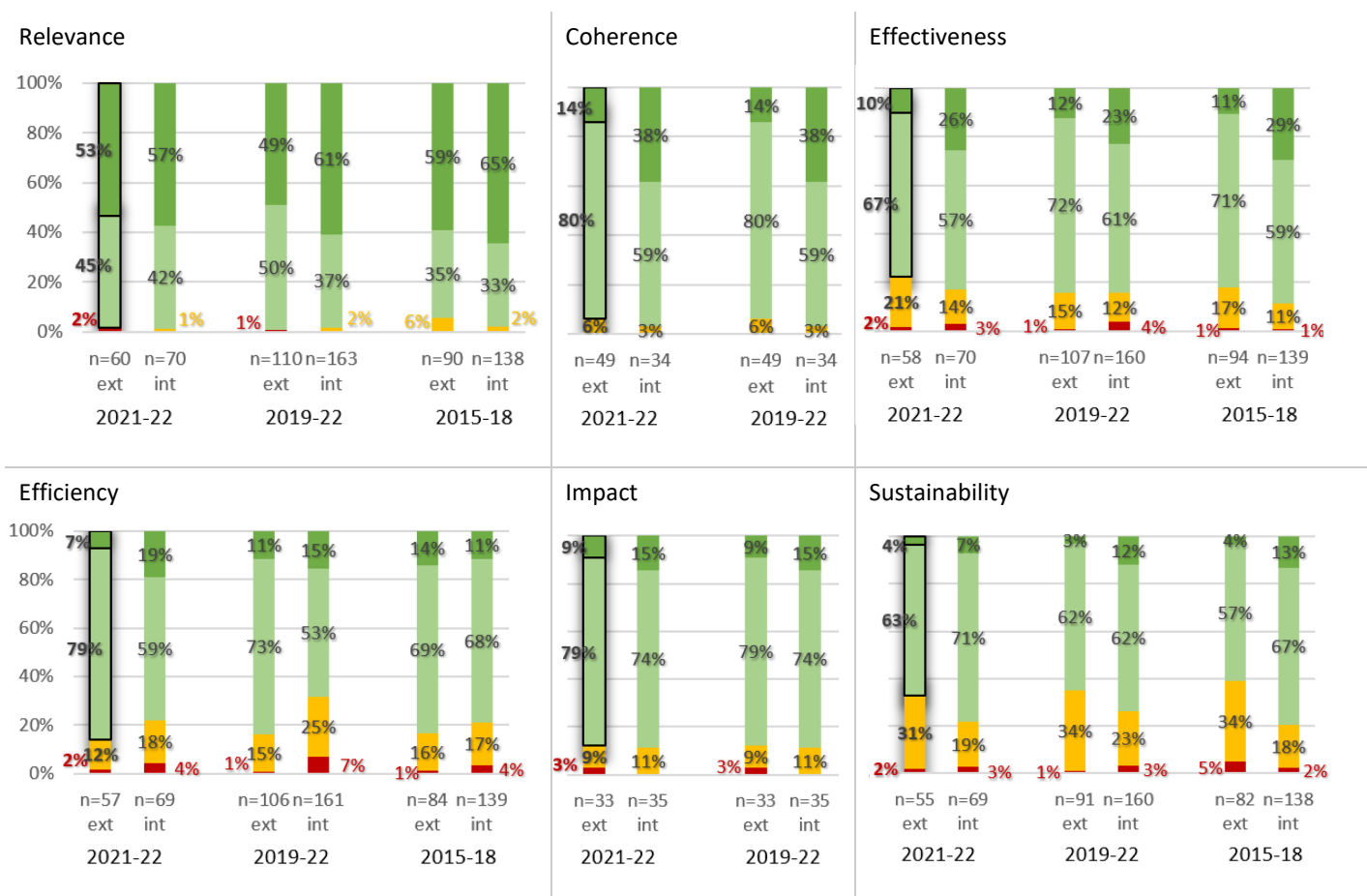


Figure 10: DAC criteria ratings over time: The rate of external evaluations (1st column), used for the calculation of the Performance Rate, is highlighted

Impact is rated (highly) satisfactory in a high 88% of the externally evaluated interventions (Figure 10). This DAC criterion, which was introduced for SECO evaluations in 2020, is applied in slightly more than half of the external evaluations. Its absence in many evaluations is due to the fact that in many cases they are undertaken too early to assess impact. The sample size (33 evaluations) is considerably smaller than the sample size of evaluations looking at effectiveness (58), which can partially explain the higher overall rating for the impact criterion. An important aspect to reach impact is to consider ways to scale up positive results. Two SECO interventions stand out for having successfully addressed this issue: The Southeast Europe Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility project, which in 2015 was selected as an OECD DAC finalist in the “Prize competition to take development innovation to scale”, is one of them. Another example is the Better Gold Initiative for Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining, which in 2018 mandated an external analysis for scaling-up perspectives.

Sustainability remains the most challenging criterion to achieve, yet improvements are observed. 67% of external evaluations rated the evaluated interventions as (highly) sustainable, or likely to be sustainable (Figure 10). However, the available ex-post evaluations are more critical, with lower ratings.²⁶ Internal reviews are more optimistic with a rate of 78% (highly) sustainable projects. The core element of most interventions’ sustainability strategy is the institutionalisation of processes brought by the intervention. By this it is meant to gradually transfer some functions, tools or systems developed as part of the intervention to other actors, or the likely influence on policy dialogue due to stronger institutional knowledge based on adequate capacity development strategies. The lack of “exit strategies” for SECO’s withdrawal from a project, the missing enabling environment for the project to thrive beyond donor support, as well as the pandemic, are mentioned several times as factors negatively affecting the sustainability of projects.

Definition of impact

The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

Definition of sustainability

The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.

²⁶ WEHU 199 and WEIN-WEIF 83 are rated as (highly) unsustainable, while WEHU 197 and WEIN 67 give a satisfactory rating while providing certain critics in the justification. These four evaluations are: [The Cities Development Initiative Asia CDIA](#) (WEIN 67); [the Sustainable Trade Initiative IDH](#) (WEHU 199); [the Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production RECP](#), [Vietnam](#) (WEHU 197); and [the West Balkans Municipal Infrastructure Development Fund MIDF](#) (WEIN 83).

Differentiated analysis of the portfolio

The following analysis explores how certain characteristics of interventions are correlated with the intervention's performance, even if no causal relation is made.

As seen in Figure 11, this purely quantitative analysis is not conclusive. This is due to the limitations of this analysis – mainly the homogeneity of results and the small sample size. Figure 11 tends to suggest, that based on 10 evaluations, projects implemented by the private sector have slightly higher performance rates than projects of other implementing partners. A similar analysis was performed on other project characteristics (e.g., percentage of SECO funding in total project budget, geographic scope, or total project financial budget volume) to relate them to the performance ratings. For the reasons mentioned above, the analysis was not especially informative in all cases.

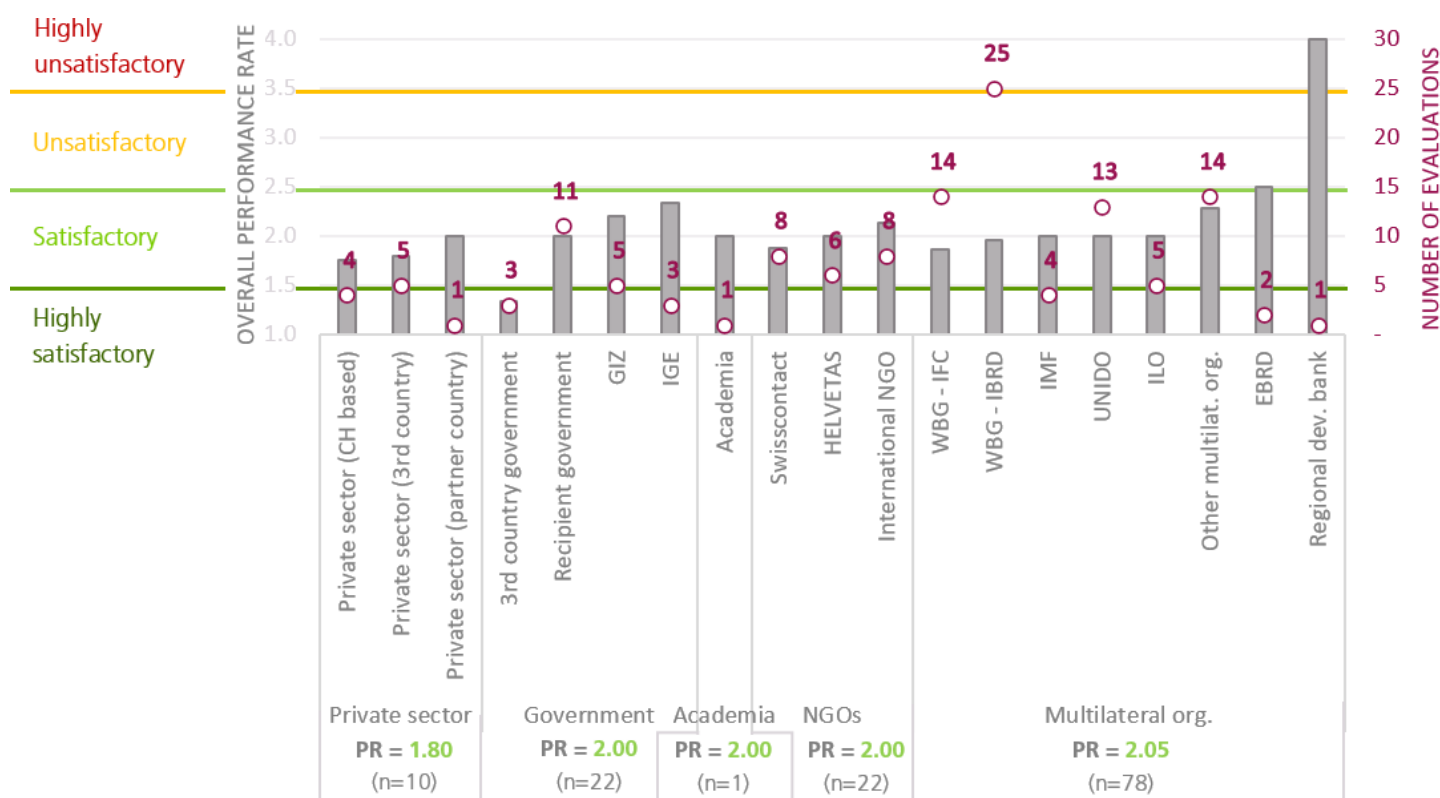


Figure 11: Overall performance rate (PR) by implementing partner categories

The Evaluation Unit decided to present a “deep dive” in a sub-group of evaluations to identify success factors and challenges. This deep dive was based on the external and internal evaluations of interventions implemented by the World Bank Group (WBG), as it is the largest sub-set of evaluations of SECO. The World Bank is also *the* major development partner of SECO and the partnership of SECO with the World Bank and other multilateral organisation is the focus of an upcoming independent evaluation, serving as further reason for this focus.



Ninh Thuan Solar Power Project, Vietnam

Since 2018, SECO supports the development of Vietnam's solar sector with the aim of providing affordable and reliable solar energy solutions that benefit communities while preserving the environment. The Ninh Thuan Solar Power is one of the first utility-scale solar farms in the country and one of the largest of its kind in Southeast Asia. The project is implemented by the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG), a multi-donor organization that aims at mobilizing funds from the private sector to bridge the funding gaps for infrastructure projects in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. SECO has supported PIDG since its foundation in 2002 with a total of 225 million US dollars, making it PIDG's third-largest donor.

Photo Credit: © PIDG

Qualitative insights from the evaluated portfolio implemented by the WBG

This chapter takes a closer look at the recent evaluation results of 37 SECO interventions implemented by the World Bank Group through IFC, IBRD, or IDA. The review is based on an analysis of 40 project evaluations (19 external evaluations, 21 internal completion notes) conducted over the past two years. The 37 projects cover a total SECO commitment of around CHF 290 Mio. All statements below are based on the analysed project evaluations, and they are structured along the DAC Criteria, even though some topics (governance structure, delivery mode, etc.) are relevant for more than one criterion.

The variety of interventions under consideration, reliance on secondary data from evaluation reports and completion notes that did not specifically focus on the partnership with the WBG, and the limited sample size constitute the **key methodological constraints** in drawing conclusions about results attained in promoting economic development with the WBG as partner. The findings on performance must therefore be considered indicative rather than representative.

Relevance: Interventions implemented by the WBG are found to be financing beneficiaries' real needs and priorities. An internal evaluation identified as weakness for relevance and effectiveness in one project the absence of a programmatic approach and a too strong focus on "a purely ad-hoc response to country demand".²⁷ On the other side, **conducting consultations with client counterparts and governments, performing demand gap analyses and bottom-up awareness-raising activities** are tools mentioned by evaluators that have shown to increase the relevance of the WBG projects.

Evaluation results also indicate that **complementary and mutually reinforcing components increase relevance of the projects**. Whether between global components, country-level interventions, or sector programs at the technical level, closer linkages and better aligned logframes enhance program relevance. To conclude, evaluations mention that **employing adaptive management makes programs more relevant and responsive** as it allows to reflect changing priorities and circumstances of client counterparts and governments.

Coherence: Projects with high levels of coherence have established coordination mechanisms that facilitate information sharing and collaboration among relevant stakeholders. This way, **cross-institutional cooperation, division of assistance as well as using synergies** with other development partners can be proactively identified and implemented with regards to the phasing of interventions as well as strategic linkages across thematic and cross-cutting programs. Unsurprisingly, evaluations show that a lack of cooperation can result in overlaps between projects by different institutions with negative implications for project implementation.

Alignment with Swiss domestic priorities can also be seen as strengthening coherence: One example stems from SECO's Government Debt and Risk Management programme which provides customised public debt advice in a way to be consistent with Switzerland's own domestic priority of prudent debt management at federal and cantonal levels.²⁸

To create synergies and enhance coherence, evaluations also suggest to **foster complementarity between critical upstream activities**, such as supporting improvements of policies, laws and regulations, strengthening institutions, and building government capacity in a country, **with other downstream transaction-based interventions**, such as the City Resilience Program, the Public-Private Partnership Transaction Advisory Program, or the IFC LAC sustainable cities programme.

Effectiveness: External factors such as slow political processes and changes in the political situation of a country may hinder the effectiveness of development cooperation. Evaluators

²⁷ 2022_WEMU C (World Bank Debt Management Facility project, Phase II)

²⁸ WEMU 104 (Government Debt and Risk Management Program, Phase II)

note that developing **results-oriented and country-specific annual plans** provide a sound basis for scheduling, resource allocation, budget control, and achievement of objectives. All these elements are considered to improve programme implementation and contribute to enhance project effectiveness. In order to track progress at outcome level, several evaluations highlight the importance of establishing a **clear and well-designed results framework** with associated indicators, baselines, impact hypothesis, and data sources.

As monitoring and reporting systems are not always harmonised between development partners, it is sometimes also difficult to build aggregate indicators and this may lead to the absence of a suitable logframe and, as a consequence, insufficient impact monitoring for project steering and reporting.²⁹ Insights regarding logframes from highly effective programs are: a global unified logframe is needed for projects that are global; the logframe should contain a general set of indicators as well as customized indicators especially at the outcome and impact levels in order to achieve higher effectiveness. Also, **programs with overly wide geographical scope may face challenges in achieving long-lasting results**.³⁰ A more focused and targeted approach can enhance effectiveness. A way to accommodate a wide geographical coverage with a high degree of effectiveness relies on the sharing of experiences across regions, or tailoring approaches to local circumstances. **Also, the placement of international advisors or resource persons has proven to be a key ingredient for enhancing effectiveness in several interventions**.³¹

Efficiency: This aspect of development cooperation activities is crucial for enhancing the impact of projects while optimising resource allocation. Timely implementation, effective budget absorption, and good management of delays are indicators of efficiency in project execution. Lean systems and adaptive management allow projects to respond swiftly to changing circumstances and efficiently ensure that they stay on track to achieve their goals. More specifically, evaluators note that a **detailed resource allocation breakdown is crucial for assessing cost-effectiveness of projects** and enable the financial monitoring of activities. They recommend that SECO requires it from its implementing partners, as this is not always provided.

The implementation of skills programs using the **"training-of-trainers" approach is evaluated as highly efficient**, as it allows for widespread dissemination of knowledge at a lower cost, making the overall project cost-efficient, such as seen in the Southeast Europe Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility Program. Furthermore, as a donor, SECO has to rely on **an effective and appropriate strong governance structure** that allows strategic inputs from donors to be heard in the management of bigger trust funds. This enhances efficiency by enabling effective decision-making and oversight.

Impact: long-term effects often take time to materialise and can often not be properly assessed at the time of evaluation. In terms of impact, one project illustrates as lesson that technical assistance does not automatically result in improved capacity of government counterparts without targeted and intentional capacity building interventions.³² The given context, such as electoral cycles, high levels of corruption, or hierarchical structures, also has a high influence on project outcomes. Evaluators also highlight the importance of **establishing adequate baseline data** that can enable analysis on contributions and provide for better before-and-after assessments of the country situation. For example, the Remittances and Payments Program established a comprehensive performance monitoring framework that included tailor-made data collection protocols and instruments in order to better observe scheduling of activities and assess progress towards stated outcomes.

Sustainability: The durability of development results is linked to the likelihood that project results, such as capacities, will remain available and continue to be demanded in the future. In reality, further external donor assistance is often required after project closure. Therefore, **project activities adequately have to consider the need for operational follow-up**

²⁹ WEIN 75: Scaling-up Renewable Energy Program in Low Income Countries (SREP)

³⁰ 2022_WEMU D: Consumer Protection and Financial Literacy project

³¹ 2021_WEMU F: Public Financial Management, Modernization Accounting Program – Tajikistan; or WEMU 106: Supreme Audit Institutions Strategy, Performance Measurement and Reporting Project (SPMR)

³² WEIF 123: Multi-Country Investment Climate Program (MCICP)

assistance. The absence of clear sustainability or “exit” plans can significantly influence the sustainability of results. They should include a phasing-out strategy or capacity assessment of the further institutional needs, fiscal impact assessment of the project, bearing in mind that the responsibility for sustainability is often shared among various stakeholders, including public and private institutions.

Ensuring sustainability of the project impacts also goes through extensive consultations and dialogue with relevant stakeholders, to ensure ownership of the project. However, **uncertainty about resource availability (funding risks, lack of human resources) hinders investment planning and makes the prospects of sustainability uncertain.** In this context, evaluators note that pooling funds with a variety of development partners may reduce funding risk and decrease dependency on state budget allocations. **Program sustainability is also undermined by political shifts, institutional restructuring, and high staff turnover, affecting policy coordination and continuity.** In such a case, adopting a "mentoring-like" approach and strengthening knowledge-sharing has had a system-building effect and supported the sustainability of results.³³

3. Summary from evaluation activities at portfolio level

Independent evaluations mandated by the Evaluation Unit³⁴

Private Sector Engagement evaluation (2022)

SECO mandated an independent evaluation to assess and take stock of the experiences with the Private Sector Engagement (PSE) implementation modality. The evaluation was carried out in 2021/2022 to reflect on the portfolio of more than 140 PSE projects that SECO's economic cooperation division implemented since 2013. It identified results, common success factors and challenges at an overarching level.

The evaluation emphasises the importance of private sector alignment for meeting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Notably, SECO projects are seen to resonate well with private sector interests. However, the evaluation calls for more transparent and critical discussions about the rationale behind adopting the PSE modality. Strategic alignment emerges as a strong point, with SECO projects harmonising well with Swiss international cooperation and foreign economic policy strategies. This harmony extends to congruence between SECO initiatives and private sector projects pursuing similar objectives. **PSE effectiveness** lies in its ability to attract private capital, foster multi-stakeholder collaborations, and stimulate innovation. While successes are evident, evaluating the extent of PSE ambitions is hindered by limited baseline data and unclear targets. **Efficiency**, particularly in the long term, garners positive ratings. SECO is advised to carefully balance project scale and cost-benefit considerations, advocating both larger, strategic projects and innovative smaller ones. Measuring **impact** remains challenging, but the evaluation supports the idea that PSE enhances development results. Clear communication of SECO's PSE principles is identified as pivotal to maximizing impact. **Sustainability success factors**, such as aligning goals with profits and involving domestic stakeholders, are underlined. Challenges

³³ WEMU-WEIF 99: WB Remittances and Payments Program (RPP)

³⁴ The relevant Management Responses for these evaluations are published on the [website of SECO](#).

include raising awareness of SECO's PSE approach, ensuring a comprehensive application of the five PSE principles (additionality, subsidiarity, no market-distortion, consideration of social and environmental safeguards), and distinguishing PSE from private sector development.

Recommendations from the independent evaluation propose to adopt and operationalise clear PSE ambitions, promote PSE principles for enhanced value, and strengthen support and learning structures, including with SDC.

Climate evaluation (2023)

In 2022/2023 SECO mandated an independent evaluation of its climate portfolio and approach covering the years 2017-2022. According to the evaluators (PEMconsult, Denmark), SECO's approach to climate change proved highly relevant and contributed positively to addressing climate change. The strategic focus on mainstreaming climate into SECO's work related to strengthening framework conditions for private sector led economic growth and jobs creation was highly relevant and supported the increasing attention in the global community to greening economies. Climate commitments and disbursements increased over the period under evaluation 2017-2022, as climate was increasingly mainstreamed into SECO activities, and there is evidence of good results and in some cases promising signs of transformative impact.

The evaluation also unravelled room for improvement. According to the evaluators, climate remained an add-on to SECO activities and peripheral to strategic choices and allocation of funding. SECO depended on partners to integrate climate into project activities, as internal capacity related to climate remained a bottleneck. Also, the strategic objective of mobilization of private capital for climate investments was not fully achieved in line with the expectations raised in Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024.

The evaluation recommends amongst others to clarify the objectives of SECO's climate strategy including the ambition level regarding climate finance and to further and explicitly strengthen alignment with the Paris Agreement. It also sees potential to increase the understanding of risks and opportunities related to climate (for instance, climate-tagged projects should consistently show the relevant indicators in their logframe) and to build internal climate capacity.

Insights from other types of evaluations

Evaluation of WEMU's and WEHU's back-stopping mandates (2022)

Two operational sections (WEMU, WEHU) collaborate amongst others for evaluations with so-called Project Support Partnerships (PSP), more commonly known as "back-stoppers". Although WEMU and WEHU use their respective PSP in different areas, most findings of a first external evaluation of these backstopping mandates apply to both sections. The PSPs consist of around 30 consultants from academia and private consultancy companies and can reach out to broader networks of additional expertise. A total of 148 mandates were implemented between 2018 and 2020. Most were between 1 and 20 days, only few were even longer.

The main findings from the external evaluation are summarised below:

- **Services offered by the PSP are complementary to the roles and know-how of SECO staff.**³⁵ They effectively recruit complementary expertise. Consultants get to know SECO strategy and administrative procedures. However, this continuity might result in thinking only along familiar lines and a lack of fresh perspectives.
- **Outside perspective provided by the PSP is assessed as very valuable.** The thematic depth that PSP can provide is appreciated as SECO is a relatively small donor with limited in-house resources to provide thematic backstopping or methodological support to implementers. The results of these PSPs inputs helped the two sections make their position more robust and credible when working with external actors, be it in terms of methodological, conceptual, or thematic inputs. There is evidence that the PSPs have also contributed to strengthen SECO's position in international organisations (e.g., on Public Finance Management / Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability) and enhanced policy dialogue.
- **There is no doubt about the high efficiency of the PSP approach** compared to single contract procedures as it allows the quick and flexible mobilisation of expertise with little administrative procedures. The results of PSP work are presented either in debriefings or during thematic seminars.

The evaluation formulates specific recommendations, which aim at reconsidering the relevance and size of the thematic clusters, clarifying the roles between programme manager and PSP consultant, strengthening knowledge management, having a better gender balance in the pool of experts, and using more local expertise in reviews and evaluations. The evaluation also invites the Division to reflect on lessons learned that are relevant beyond the evaluated mandate (Box 4).

Box 4: Lessons learned from the external evaluation of back-stopping mandates

SECO should reflect on whether the PSP mandates should stay in the realm of rather operational / conceptual aspects (PCM, analytical support), or if they would like to involve the PSP more in a strategic and long-term manner to jointly develop the strategic orientation of sections. This could include for example mandates assessing the coherence and synergetic potentials of country portfolios.

There appears to be a potential for a better integration of local offices in PSP work and for using more local evaluators for evaluative work. Capacity building of local partners benefited enormously from using local consultants. Furthermore, it adds value and perspectives if a qualified local expert teams up with an expert from the PSP team.

Evaluation of the Swiss Federal Audit Office (2023)

The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO/EFK) audited in 2022 SECO infrastructure projects in three countries: the expansion of infrastructure by a private electricity company in Tajikistan, security surveillance of dams in Albania and the construction of a sewage treatment plant in North Macedonia.

The audit findings were positive for SECO: The audited plants were operational and are being used as intended. SECO is considered to be running the projects professionally, and its reputation among development cooperation stakeholders is very high. Also, controlling and

³⁵ The Evaluation Unit notes that it was not interviewed by the evaluation team. In its perspective, it would be interesting to set-up a regular exchange between PSPs and WEQA (e.g., on an annual basis) to further strengthen the coherence of the respective support mandates.

monitoring during project execution are considered to be generally fit for purpose. The SFAO however identified a need for action with regard to defining exit strategies and checking the long-term effectiveness of projects and made the following observations and recommendations, which are valid beyond the three scrutinised projects and which resonate with recommendations of the previous bi-annual performance report (2021) or the Sustainability Review (2019):

- update the logframe when relevant changes take place in the program, i.e., use the logframes as a flexible, adaptive monitoring and steering tool.
- define concrete criteria for the project “exit” already with the credit proposal in order to enhance sustainability.
- introduce pragmatic ex-post monitoring for infrastructure projects, to better monitor the sustainability of the projects in the long term and learn lessons for other projects.

Fábrica de Cultura in Barranquilla, Colombia

The SECO-supported Urban Transformation Program aims at revitalizing underprivileged neighborhoods and boosting inclusive economic prosperity in selected Colombian cities through the realization of innovative, multifunctional urban infrastructure. An example is the "Fábrica de Cultura" in Barranquilla, an 11,000-m² complex designed by the Chair of Architecture and Urban Design of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ) in partnership with Colombian universities and built with funding from local private and public sources. The "Fábrica de Cultura" integrates sustainable construction elements and provides a "maker space" for at least 2,800 young people to learn and practice creative arts and popular traditions.



Photo Credit: © Chair of Architecture & Urban Design Prof. Hubert Klumpner | Alejandro Arango and Luis Bernardo Cano

4. Follow-up on recommendations from 2019-2020 Performance Report

Recommendations	Follow-up (selection)
1. Maintain the focus on the sustainability and impact of project results, notably through ex-post results measurement	<p>Conducting the minimum 2 ex-post evaluations on an annual basis remains a challenge, as illustrated in this report. Operational sections indicate that cost-benefit considerations can play a role. The pipeline of planned evaluations includes two examples of ex-post evaluations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planned evaluation of the IFC MENA Women banking project partially meets the criteria of an ex-post evaluation. • In the “dam safety” programme in Albania, SECO mandated Axpo (Swiss renewable energy firm) to strengthen the capacity of dam operator KESH over the 3 years following the end of the program's implementation.
2. Use the logical logframes as a more flexible, adaptive monitoring and steering tool	<p>There is a common understanding among operational sections about the risk to modify logframes and reduce ambitions once projects are approved. This is a reason why they prefer to change output indicators, rather than outcomes. However, if underlying hypotheses change, then outcomes might also need to be adapted. The programme managers estimate if such changes respect the initial intention of the intervention and whether they require to be discussed with the head of operations.</p> <p>Examples of reasonable adaptations of logframes have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghana’s National Pension Regulatory Authority program: A revised project planning and approval process allowed Ghana’s regulatory authority to be more involved in the implementation of project, including the definition of a revised log-frame for Phase 2; • In the “dam safety” program in Albania, following the evaluation of the Swiss Federal Audit Office, SECO mandated Axpo to update the general program logframe in collaboration with KESH (local dam operator).
3. Maintain a strong and considerate M&E practice in times of COVID-19	<p>As seen with the high number of evaluations received, the evaluation activities remained vibrant, but needed to adapt to contextual changes. Many evaluations were (partially) executed on a remote basis, or with more local evaluation expertise. In many cases, even local evaluators did not physically meet with interviewees in order to respect pandemic protocols or etiquette. However, contrary to early expectations, this didn’t limit the evaluation activities of SECO or its partners.</p>

5. Recommendations

Based on the wealth of information from the different types of evaluations, the counselling provided by the Evaluation Unit and developments at international level in the evaluations sector, the Evaluation Unit makes the following recommendations:

1) Improve the assessment of effectiveness, sustainability and impact of project results, notably through ex-post results measurements

Rationale: Efforts should be increased to have a more reliable picture of results achieved at outcome level. This implies, on the one hand, defining ambitious yet realistic outcome objectives with baselines, and intermediary targets associated with time estimations when they are likely to be observable. On the other hand, outcome achievement should be monitored at pre-defined moments and, depending on the project, also after its completion. In addition, where relevant and considered efficient, further assessments like an ex-post evaluation should be envisaged to assess the intervention's impact and sustainability after a few years. This is aligned with the recommendation from the Swiss Federal Audit Office (2023). Also, the Division maintains a target of at least 2 ex-post evaluations per year, which has not been reached in the current reporting period.

Target groups: The implementation of this recommendation is an operational responsibility, with support from the Evaluation Unit. The Swiss cooperation offices and implementing partners can also play a prominent role.

2) Emphasize the use of evidence in project design

Rationale: Use existing evaluations and research to critically assess the links between activities, outputs, and outcomes in the credit proposal, in order to strengthen the intervention logic. As part of this endeavour, all SECO evaluations should be made publicly available and easily accessible to project managers and other stakeholders. Easily available evaluations of other development agencies, such as through KfW's IDEAL app³⁶, the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)³⁷, or the impact evaluations of the WBG³⁸ can be used to strengthen the intervention logic. Cooperation with partners such as the WBG, with strong research and evaluation departments, should be seen as an asset.

Target groups: The primary responsibility to use evidence lies with the implementing partners, operational sections and Swiss cooperation offices: be it from own evaluations, own analysis (such as a political economy analysis), the evaluation database of other donors, or research on aid effectiveness. WEQA should contribute by making internal evidence more easily accessible, or by adapting the relevant chapter of the Credit Proposal template.

³⁶ [More evidence-based development policy in just a few clicks | KfW Development Bank \(kfw-entwicklungsbank.de\)](#)

³⁷ <https://developmentevidence.3ieimpact.org/>

³⁸ [Development Impact \(DIME\) \(worldbank.org\)](#)

Annex 1: List of evaluated projects with evaluation ratings

Annex 1a: List of external evaluations of SECO's interventions

Project ID	Section & Evaluation ID	Project Name	Country / Region	Evaluation Type	Relevance	Coherence	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability	Overall Performance	Year of Statistic
UR_00909-01	WEMU/WEIF 99	WB Remittances and Payments Program (RPP)	Global	Mid-Term	1	0	1	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_00332-03	WEMU 98	Public Expenditure Management Peer-Assisted Learning (PEMPAL)	ECA	Mid-Term	1	0	2	1	1	3	2	2021
UR_00789-01	WEMU 97	Support to the Inter-American Centre of Tax Administrations (CIAT)	LAC	End-Term	1	0	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00574-03	WEMU 96	PINK Programme (Procurement Infrastructure Knowledge Management)	South Africa	Mid-Term	1	2	2	0	0	2	2	2021
UR_00687-02	WEMU 95	Local Government Finance Reforms (RELOF)	Serbia	Mid-Term	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2021
UR_00674-04	WEMU 94	IMF Middle East Technical Assistance Center METAC2021	MENA	End-Term	1	0	2	2	2	3	2	2021
UR_01082-01	WEMU 103	Financial Sector Supervision Tajikistan	Tajikistan	Mid-Term	1	1	2	3	0	2	2	2021
UR_00166-02	WEMU 102	Direction Générale des Impôts II (DGI)	Burkina Faso	End-Term	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_00805-04	WEMU 101	Replenishment Swiss TA Subaccount at the IMF	Global	End-Term	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_00793-01	WEMU 100	NRGI Eurasia Knowledge Hub Program	Azerbaijan	End-Term	1	2	3	0	3	2	2	2021
UR_01060-01	WEIN 72	Regional Capacity Development Network (RCDN)	Western Balkans	Mid-Term	2	3	3	3	0	3	3	2021
UR_00787-01	WEIN 71	Integrated Urban Development Sousse	Tunisia	Mid-Term	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	2021
UR_00921-01	WEIN 70	Global Water and Sanitation Partnership (GWSP)	Global	Mid-Term	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2021
UR_00211-04	WEIN 69	Assessment and scoping study SECO water portfolio	Kyrgyzstan	Mid-Term	1	0	3	3	0	3	3	2021
UR_00803-01	WEIN 68	Sustainable Urbanization Trust Fund (IDSUN)	Indonesia	End-Term	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_00769-02	WEIN 67	Cities Development Initiative Asia (CDIA)	Regional	End-Term	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_01159-03	WEIN 66	WB Central Asia Water and Energy Program (CAWEP)	ECA	Mid-Term	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_00463-01	WEIN 65	At Bashi Mid-Term evaluation and Technical Audit	Kyrgyzstan	Mid-Term	1	3	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00121-03	WEIN 64	IFC ECA PPP Transaction Advisory Program	ECA	End-Term	1	2	1	2	0	0	2	2021
UR_01043-01	WEIF 123	Multi-Country Investment Climate Program (MCICP)	Global	Mid-Term	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_00949-01	WEIF 122	IFC Digital Financial Services program	Ghana	End-Term	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_00595-01	WEIF 121	IFC Tax Simplification Program LACTAX	LAC	End-Term	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_01042-01	WEHU/WEIF 194	Private Sector Competitiveness Program / ComCashew	Ghana	End-Term	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_00600-01	WEHU 199	The Sustainable Trade Initiative IDH, Phase I	Global	End-Term	1	2	2	2	0	3	2	2021
UR_01070-01	WEHU 198	Sustainable Tourism Development Indonesia (STDI)	Indonesia	Mid-Term	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00029-09	WEHU 204	RECP Vietnam	Vietnam	Ex-Post	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2021
UR_00765-04	WEHU 196	UNCTAD Global Bio Trade Initiative	Global	Mid-Term	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00642-03	WEHU 195	Better Work III	Global	Mid-Term	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2021
UR_01018-01	WEHU 193	Global Quality Standart Programme	Global	Mid-Term	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_01005-01	WEHU 192	Sustainable Winter Tourism	Kyrgystan	End-Term	2	0	2	2	0	0	2	2021
UR_01014-01	WEHU 191	Responsible Tourism & Competitiveness VN	Vietnam	Mid-Term	2	2	3	2	0	3	2	2021
UR_00843-02	WEMU 107	Managing Natural Resource Wealth (IMF), Phase II	Global	Mid-Term	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2022
UR_00609-01	WEMU 106	International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, Partnership 2013-2020	Global	Mid-Term	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2022
UR_01188-02	WEMU 104	Government Debt and Risk Management Program, Phase II	Colombia	End-Term	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	2022

Project ID	Section & Evaluation ID	Project Name	Country / Region	Evaluation Type	Relevance	Coherence	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability	Overall Performance	Year of Statistic
UR_00621-01	WEIN 83	West Balkans MIDF		Ex-Post	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	2022
UR_00995-01	WEIN 82	INDOBUS Urban Transport	Indonesia	Mid-Term	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	2022
UR_00631-02	WEIN 81	Modernization of Land Management in Colombia (Swiss Tierras) - Phase II	Colombia	Mid-Term	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_01096-01	WEIN 80	Urban and Municipal Development Fund	Africa	End-Term	2	2	3	3	0	3	3	2022
UR_00224-03	WEIN 79	GEDAP III Ghana Electricity Sector Support Project	Ghana	Mid-Term	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2022
UR_01139-01	WEIN 78	World Bank City Resilience Program	Global	End-Term	1	2	3	2	0	2	2	2022
UR_00816-02	WEIN 77	Energy districts in Colombia, Phase II	Colombia	Mid-Term	2	0	2	2	0	2	2	2022
UR_01000-01	WEIN 76	Cities and Climate Change in Africa (CICLIA)	Sub-Saharan Africa	Mid-Term	2	0	2	2	0	0	2	2022
UR_00429-01	WEIN 75	Scaling-up Renewable Energy Program in Low Income Countries (SREP)	Global	Mid-Term	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	2022
UR_01247-01	WEIN 74	Indonesia Urban Water and Sanitation Program IUWASH Plus	Indonesia	End-Term	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2022
UR_00835-01	WEIF/WEIN 126	Financial Reporting and Audit Enhancement Kyrgyzstan	Kirghistan	End-Term	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00919-01	WEIF 129	Corporate Financial Reporting in Serbia, Phase I	Rep. Serbia	End-Term	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00723-02	WEIF 128	Swiss Entrepreneurship Program, Phase II	Global	Mid-Term	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2022
UR_00834-01	WEIF 127	Small Business Initiative Central Asia, Phase I	Central Asia	End-Term	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00934-03	WEIF 125	Global Financial Infrastructure Programme, Phase I	Central Asia	End-Term	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_01050-01	WEIF 124	Skills for Competitiveness (S4C)	Indonesia	Mid-Term	1	2	2	2	2	3	2	2022
UR_00997-02	WEHU 210	Regional Biotrade Project Southeast Asia Phase II	Southeastern Asia	Mid-Term	1	2	2	1	0	3	2	2022
UR_01173-01	WEHU 209	Global Trade Facilitation Program	Global	Mid-Term	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00642-03	WEHU 208	Better Work Phase III	South Asia	End-Term	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2022
UR_01174-01	WEHU 207	Sustainable tourism in Morocco	Morocco	Mid-Term	1	2	3	3	0	3	2	2022
UR_00067-05	WEHU 206	Technopark Serbia 2 - boosting exports through technoparks	Rep. Serbia	Mid-Term	2	2	3	2	0	2	2	2022
UR_01303-01	WEHU 205	E-commerce and the Digital Economy Programme	Global	Mid-Term	1	2	2	2	0	3	2	2022
UR_00029-29	WEHU 204	Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP), Global	Global	Mid-Term	2	0	2	2	3	3	2	2022
UR_00955-01	WEHU 203	Market Access of Products of Terroir - Tunisia, Phase I	Tunisia	Mid-Term	2	2	3	2	0	2	2	2022
UR_00748-01	WEHU 202	Sustainable Tourism - Destination Management Organisation	Tunisia	Mid-Term	2	2	3	2	0	3	2	2022
UR_01009-02	WEHU 201	Enhanced Integrated Framework II	Global	Mid-Term	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2022
UR_01019-01	WEHU 200	Umbrella Facility for Trade and Development (Aufstockung)	Global	Mid-Term	2	0	2	2	2	0	2	2022

Annex 1b: List of internal evaluations of SECO's interventions

Project ID	Section & Evaluation ID	Project Name	Country / Region	Relevance	Coherence	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability	Overall Performance	Year of Statistic
UR_01075-02	WEHU A	Risk-Based Food Safety Control System in the Dairy Sector	Ukraine	1	0	2	1	0	3	2	2021
UR_00559-02	WEHU B	Better Gold Initiative, Phase II	South America	1	0	1	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00029-28	WEHU C	RECP Indonesia	Indonesia	1	0	2	3	0	2	2	2021
UR_00073-01	WEHU D	Quality System and Export Capacity Strengthening	Nicaragua	2	0	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00748-01	WEHU E	Sustainable Tourism - Destination Management Organisation	Global	1	0	1	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00877-02	WEHU F	Responsible Mining Index II	Global	2	0	2	1	0	3	2	2021
UR_00997-01	WEHU G	Regional Biotrade	Southeast Asia	2	0	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00511-01	WEHU H	Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production Program (RECP)	Ukraine	1	0	2	3	0	2	2	2021
UR_00875-02	WEHU I	Climate Technology Center and Network	Global	2	0	2	3	0	3	3	2021
UR_01214-01	WEHU J	Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH) Phase I	Global	1	0	1	1	0	2	1	2021
UR_00560-02	WEHU L	Corporate Sustainability and Reporting for Competitive Business, Phase II	Global	2	0	3	2	0	3	3	2021
UR_01005-01	WEHU M	Sustainable Winter Tourism Kyrgyzstan, Phase I	Kirghistan	2	0	2	1	0	2	2	2021
UR_00710-01	WEIF A	ECA SME Crisis Resilience Project	Ukraine	2	0	1	1	0	2	2	2021
UR_00810-01	WEIF B	IFC Regional Corporae Governance Programs	Global	1	0	1	1	0	2	1	2021
UR_00903-02	WEIF C	Enhancing Quality of Financial Reporting (EQ-FINREP)	Albania	1	0	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00670-01	WEIF D	Promise Impact Project Indonesia	Indonesia	1	0	2	1	0	2	2	2021
UR_00520-01	WEIN C	Chiclayo Limpio Solid Waste	Peru	3	0	3	4	0	3	3	2021
UR_00358-03	WEIN D	Water Utility Support	Peru	1	0	1	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00807-05	WEIN E	PPIAF Phase IV	Global	1	0	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00195-05	WEMU A	General Budget Support	Mozambique	1	0	4	4	0	4	3	2021
UR_00599-01	WEMU B	State Audit of Vietnam (SAV)	Vietnam	2	0	4	4	0	4	4	2021
UR_00687-01	WEMU C	Local Government Finance Reforms Serbia Phase I	Serbia	1	0	2	1	0	2	2	2021
UR_00570-01	WEMU D	Financial Regulator Strengthening and Inclusion, Phase I	Peru	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	2021
UR_00610-01	WEMU E	Public Finance Management Phase I	Peru	1	0	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00549-01	WEMU F	Public Financial Management, Modernization Accounting	Tajikistan	1	0	2	2	0	2	2	2021
UR_00606-01	WEMU G	Financial Sector Development, National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic Phase I	Kirghistan	1	0	3	2	0	1	2	2021
UR_00154-09	WEMF A	IFC Let's Work (Global, 2014-2016, former Consultant Trust	Global	2	0	3	3	0	3	3	2021
UR_00554-02	WEHU A	Sustainable Cocoa Production Program	Indonesia	2	0	2	1	0	2	2	2022
UR_00586-02	WEHU B	Indonesian-Swiss Intellectual Property (ISIP), Phase II	Indonesia	2	0	3	2	0	3	3	2022
UR_00955-02	WEHU C	Market Access of Products of Terroir - Morocco, Phase I	Morocco	1	0	3	2	0	2	2	2022
UR_01316-01	WEHU D	Fairtrade COVID-19 Fund	Global	2	0	2	3	0	2	2	2022
UR_50024-01	WEHU E	Colombia Sostenible	Colombia	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2022
UR_00534-01	WEHU F	Partnership for Market Readiness, Phase I	Global	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00850-02	WEHU G	Partnership for Action on Green Economy, Phase II	Global	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	2022

Project ID	Section & Evaluation ID	Project Name	Country / Region	Relevance	Coherence	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability	Overall Performance	Year of Statistic
UR_00642-03	WEHU H	Better Work Phase III	Global	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00600-01	WEHU I	The Sustainable Trade Initiative IDH	Global	2	2	2	0	3	2	2	2022
UR_00644-03	WEHU J	Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises SCORE, Phase III (including the Lab II)	Global	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00704-01	WEHU K	Colombian - Swiss Intellectual Property Project	Colombia	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2022
UR_00817-01	WEHU L	Strengthening the Colombian Quality System in Cosmetics	Colombia	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2022
UR_00047-04	WEHU M	Advisory Centre on WTO Law IV	Global	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2022
UR_01002-10	WEHU N	Swiss Import Promotion Programme SIPPO 2017-2021	Global	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2022
UR_00067-04	WEHU O	Trade Cooperation Programme in Serbia, Phase IV	Rep. Serbia	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00029-29	WEHU P	Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP), Global	Global	2	0	2	3	0	2	2	2022
UR_00999-01	WEHU Q	Transparency and Innovation of Sustainability Standards (TISS) Phase I	Global	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00940-02	WEIF A	Southeast Europe Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility	Southeastern Europe	1	0	2	2	0	2	2	2022
UR_00969-01	WEIF/WEHU B	Colombia + Competitiva	Colombia	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2022
UR_00873-03	WEIF C	Ukraine Residential Energy Efficiency Programme (UREEP), Phase III	Ukraine	2	2	1	2	1	0	2	2022
UR_00934-03	WEIF D	Global Financial Infrastructure Programme	Global	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00949-01	WEIF E	Mobile Financial Services in Ghana	Ghana	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_01042-01	WEIF F	Ghana Private Sector Competitiveness Program	Ghana	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00483-03	WEIF G	Business Registration Reform in Viet Nam, Phase III	Vietnam	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2022
UR_00831-01	WEIF/WEHU H	Secompetitivo: Strengthening Peru's competitiveness	Peru	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2022
UR_00556-01	WEIF I	Remittance Grant Facility Ghana	Ghana	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	2022
UR_00517-02	WEIF J	Microfinance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Phase II	Bosnia-Herz.	2	0	1	2	0	2	2	2022
UR_00835-01	WEIF/WEIN K	Financial Reporting and Audit Enhancement Kyrgyzstan	Kirghistan	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00631-01	WEIN A	Modernization of Land Administration of Colombia	Colombia	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2022
UR_01247-01	WEIN B	Indonesia Urban Water and Sanitation Program IUWASH Plus	Indonesia	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2022
UR_00941-04	WEIN C	Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP)	Global	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00787-01	WEIN D	Urban development Sousse and secondary cities in Tunisia	Tunisia	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00800-03	WEIN E	Aquafund LatAm and Caribbean, Phase III	South America	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00553-01	WEMU A	CEMLA Public Debt Management Capacity Building	America	2	0	2	2	3	2	2	2022
UR_00693-03	WEMU B	Financial Programming, Phase III	Global	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00791-02	WEMU D	World Bank Debt Management Facility, Phase II	Global	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00707-01	WEMU D	Consumer Protection and Financial Literacy	Global	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00409-03	WEMU E	IMF Anti-Money Laundering & Combating the Financing of Terrorism, Phase II	Global	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00160-06	WEMU F	Decentralized Budget Support Ghana, Phase I	Ghana	1	0	2	2	0	1	2	2022
UR_00569-01	WEMU G	Public Financial Management Colombia, Reform Process, Phase I	Colombia	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	2022
UR_00682-04	WEMU H	Debt Management and Financial Analysis Program III	Global	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2022
UR_00917-01	WEMU I	World Bank Capital Markets Strenghtening Facility, Phase I	Global	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2022
UR_00609-01	WEMU J	International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, Partnership 2013-2020	Global	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2022

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