



IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM DEval EVALUATIONS

*Synthesis of the Implementation Monitoring of
DEval Evaluation Recommendations (2015 – 2018)*

2023

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The German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) is mandated by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to independently analyse and assess German development interventions.

The Institute's evaluation reports contribute to the transparency of development results and provide policymakers with evidence and lessons learned, based on which they can shape and improve their development policies.

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FOREWORD BY JOCHEN FLASBARTH

State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)



Dear Readers,

German development policy is currently facing a double challenge. On the one hand it pursues ambitious political priorities aimed at ecological, social and economic sustainability. On the other hand, it needs to respond to a series of exogenous shocks arising from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. This makes it all the more important to critically reflect our own actions, to have a mirror held up to us and to learn from what we see.

Evaluations serve exactly this purpose. That is why the BMZ founded DEval ten years ago as an independent evaluation institute for German development cooperation.

Parliament and the public regularly ask us if evaluations have led to improvements. Implementation monitoring of evaluation recommendations is therefore an integral part of our evaluation system. Implementation monitoring examines each evaluation recommendation to see whether we have reviewed our working methods and adjusted them accordingly. Where we do not accept evaluation recommendations, we give reasons for our decision.

In the BMZ's view, this first DEval synthesis report on implementation monitoring provides evidence of the learning capacity and transparency that exist in development cooperation. The report scrutinises completed evaluations of past years, from agricultural value chains and specific funding programmes, such as develoPPP and the weltwärts volunteers service, to budget support. I find the result of the report encouraging. About three quarters of the DEval recommendations examined have been implemented. This shows that actors in development cooperation take learning from evaluations seriously. At the same time, we would like to use the findings to further improve our work. As development cooperation actors, I would like us to translate even more of those evaluation recommendations that we accept into concrete and measurable implementation steps, and to implement these steps even more systematically.

This first synthesis report on implementation monitoring gives the BMZ and DEval specific starting points for continuing and improving the evaluation of development cooperation. This is to be made possible firstly through high-quality DEval recommendations that are practicable and tailored to the intended recipients, and secondly through demonstrable change based on these recommendations. We want to understand even better which changes are particularly easy and quick to implement and which are difficult. We will continue to examine this with DEval's assistance.

I place great value on learning from evaluations, and will establish this even more firmly in our development policy in future. I would be delighted if this report could make a contribution to a constructive discussion on evidence-based change.

Jochen Flasbarth

FOREWORD BY PROF. DR JÖRG FAUST

Director of the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval)



Dear readers,

the independent evaluation of public policies follows three interlinked functions: It generates knowledge, provides practice-relevant learning impetus for improvement and strengthens accountability.

Great importance is traditionally placed on evaluation in development cooperation. By its knowledge, learning and accountability function, it makes a valuable contribution to the realisation of the diverse and demanding tasks in the promotion of sustainable development in the countries of the global south.

At DEval, too, we pursue the goal of strengthening the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of German development cooperation with our scientifically sound evaluation work. The recommendations of our evaluations, which we derive from the results and conclusions of our analysis, play a significant role in this. These recommendations are learning impulses for our addressees in the fields of policy-making and development practice, they are concrete remits for improving German development cooperation.

But do the recommendations also lead to the changes pursued in policies and implementation practice? This report analyses for the first time the extent to which recommendations from DEval evaluations are shared and implemented by the organisations addressed. Moreover, possible factors influencing the implementation of recommendations are identified to achieve future improvements, for example in the implementation plans following evaluations. This report is ultimately of great value to DEval itself: it provides information about the effects pursued in our own work, and we ourselves gain important insight into how we can further develop the quality of our work and in particular of our recommendations.

It is also relevant that this report, which is result of a cooperation between the BMZ and DEval in defining a common procedural framework, will not remain a momentary snapshot but rather will consolidate the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations. This is of benefit to an evaluation system that pursues learning and accountability, and follows good international practice. It would therefore be advantageous if this report on the implementation of evaluation recommendations were also to be given attention beyond the field of development cooperation.

Jörg Faust

Summary

The German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) creates independent analyses and assessments of measures in German development cooperation. These include primary evaluations and evaluative studies. In doing so, the DEval recommendations inform organisations involved in German development cooperation as to how they can improve their development policy measures.

The organisations addressed look at the recommendations in the **implementation planning** following an evaluation or a study with recommendations. They decide to what extent they share these and in which steps the shared recommendations should be implemented. Approximately one-and-a-half to two years after the implementation plan, DEval assesses in an **implementation monitoring** the extent to which the recommendations or the steps defined in the implementation planning have actually been implemented in development policy practice and to what extent the changes suggested by the recommendation have occurred. According to the BMZ Evaluation Policy “Evaluating German Development Cooperation” (BMZ, 2023), both learning and accountability are anchored in the evaluation system of German development cooperation through implementation planning and monitoring.

This first synthesis report summarises the findings from a pilot phase of implementation monitoring. It looks at recommendations from ten DEval evaluations published between 2015 and 2018. This selection is thus still very limited, with some evaluations also having been carried out during the institute’s development phase. Overarching findings on the implementation status of DEval recommendations will continue to be published regularly in the future. Due to a continuously increasing number of evaluations and a progressive consolidation of processes, it can be expected that future syntheses will generate more robust results concerning the implementation of recommendations, which can consolidate or relativise the (preliminary) findings available here at a broader level.

The ten evaluations examined in this report provide recommendations primarily to BMZ and GIZ, but also to the KfW Development Bank and civil society organisations. Altogether, the target organisations shared more than two-thirds of the recommendations in whole or in part. Of the recommendations shared, about three-quarters were implemented. This result uses the steps set out in the implementation plan and the recommendations formulated in the respective evaluation as a basis of assessment.

Some conducive factors for sharing and implementing DEval recommendations can be drawn from the synthesis. Recommendations are shared and/or implemented especially when

- they are comprehensible and relevant for the addressees;
- they take account of current changes in the environment of the evaluation object;
- the needs for change being raised are specified but, at the same time, the addressees are given sufficient freedom to decide how they want to achieve change;
- responsibilities for the implementation are clearly defined in the implementation planning;
- resources required by the target organisations for implementation are taken into consideration or made available.

This synthesis report also identifies a number of starting points for intensifying the examination of DEval evaluations and the implementation of the recommendations and thus their usefulness. There is potential here for the recommendation addressees to learn and improve, for example in regard to the implementation plan or the necessary provision of resources for implementation. At the same time, the analysis also points to learning and optimisation potential for DEval, for example in regard to the formulation of recommendations. Thus, in line with the DEval Strategy 2022–2026 (DEval, 2022), this synthesis aims to further develop the evaluation processes of DEval in order to strengthen the acceptance and usefulness of its evaluations.

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1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

DEval's core task consists in independently analysing and evaluating measures of German development cooperation (DC) – with a practice-oriented approach and on the basis of scientific standards. Rather than evaluating DC projects or programmes, DEval's scientifically sound evaluations and evaluative studies primarily examine overarching topics or questions that are strategically important for decision-makers in government, parliament, implementing and civil society organisations in Germany as well as for partners in developing and emerging countries.

DEval's findings are an important learning tool for the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and provide accountability of German DC. They aim at serving evidence-based management of German DC with the goal of increasing its effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Figure 1 shows the DEval evaluation process from the clarification and concept phase to the publication of the report. In this respect, the subsequent phases of implementation planning and monitoring are no longer part of the evaluation.

Figure 1 DEval evaluation process



As a prerequisite for learning from evaluations, the organisations addressed must examine the recommendations derived from these.¹ It is therefore good international practice in DC to systematically monitor the implementation of recommendations. The implementation planning and monitoring of recommendations from DEval evaluations are anchored in the BMZ Evaluation Policy “Evaluating German Development Cooperation” (BMZ, 2023). These guidelines foresee a three-stage process with responsibilities shared between the BMZ and DEval (see also Box 1):

- a) parallel publication of the evaluation report by DEval and the BMZ response to the evaluation
- b) a formalised implementation plan with specific, time-bound and verifiable steps
- c) monitoring of recommendation implementation or the implementation steps defined by the addressees

Box 1 Processes of implementation planning and implementation monitoring

Implementation plan: Formalised implementation planning begins with publication of the evaluation report by DEval and an official response to the evaluation by the BMZ. The BMZ and other organisations addressed by the recommendations decide in the implementation planning the extent to which they share the recommendations and in which steps the shared recommendations should be implemented. In implementation planning, which is the responsibility of the BMZ, DEval has an advisory role. In this role and where required, DEval explains in more detail how a recommendation is derived from the findings and which changes are sought as a result. It also supports the BMZ in quality assurance. For example, DEval assesses whether the agreed steps can plausibly bring about the changes proposed in the recommendation.

¹ Recommendations are made primarily in evaluations but may also appear in studies.

Implementation monitoring: The systematic tracking of the implementation of recommendations has been part of DEval's evaluation work since 2020: About one and a half to two years after the implementation planning, DEval examines the extent to which the recommendations or the steps set out for these in the implementation planning have actually been implemented. In a tabular query, interviews and a short online survey, the actors addressed by recommendations provide information on the prerequisites, success factors and hurdles for dealing with recommendations, as well as insights into the actual state of implementation. The implementation of unshared recommendations is not assessed. However, findings in this regard can also be used as a learning impetus in implementation monitoring.

This first synthesis report summarises the results of the implementation monitoring for ten DEval evaluations published between 2015 and 2018. The transparent presentation of how addressees dealt with the recommendations and the derivation of conclusions as well as possible learning potential, for both DEval and the addressees, contributes to improving evaluations, their recommendations and their implementation. As stated in the DEval Strategy 2022–2026 (DEval, 2022), this is intended to reinforce the acceptance and usefulness of DEval evaluations and can also contribute to the effectiveness and credibility of the DC evaluation system as a whole.

The subject of this first synthesis report is the implementation of the recommendations in a total of ten DEval evaluations, for which the implementation monitoring (IM) was completed by the third quarter of 2022 (see Table 1). No implementation monitoring was conducted for evaluations whose implementation planning took place in DEval's initial phase.² Information on the respective evaluations as well as the evaluation reports, which also contain the recommendations, can be found on the *DEval website*.

Table 1 Evaluations with concluded implementation monitoring up to the third quarter of 2022

IM	Evaluation	Publication
2020	Secondment of Development Workers	21 December 2015
	Agricultural Value Chains	7 October 2016
	Integration of the Instruments of Technical Cooperation	2 March 2017
	Evaluation of the develoPPP.de Programme	7 April 2017
	Evaluation of the BMZ's Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities	29 September 2017
2021	Meta-Evaluation and Evaluation Synthesis of Sustainability in German Development Cooperation	16 May 2018
	The Future of Integrated Policy-based Development Cooperation. Lessons from the Exit from General Budget Support in Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia	29 August 2018
	Cooperation with the Private Sector in Agriculture in German Technical Cooperation	19 November 2018
2022	<i>weltwärts</i> Volunteers and their Civic Engagement in Germany	7 March 2018
	Impact, Diffusion and Scaling-Up of a Comprehensive Land-Use Planning Approach in the Philippines	8 August 2018

In this respect, this synthesis report comprises an initial, still limited selection of DEval evaluations, some of which were carried out during the institute's development phase. The processes of implementation planning and monitoring were still being piloted in all the evaluations examined here. The quality criteria for evaluation recommendations also underwent further development and standardisation in parallel to this pilot process.

² These evaluations are: "A Review of Evaluative Work of German Development Cooperation in Afghanistan", "Aid for Trade, Policies and Strategies in German Development Cooperation" and "30 Years of Rwandan-German Development Cooperation in the Health Sector".

The less clearly regulated evaluation and implementation planning procedures pose some limitations for this first analysis. For example, recommendations are not yet formulated as clearly in some of the evaluations examined as is now envisaged; the implementation steps defined in the implementation plans are sometimes imprecise and, for example, do not cover or only partially cover the changes foreseen by the recommendations. Likewise, defined responsibilities and time limits for implementation are lacking in some cases. So, while this synthesis provides initial relevant findings, these will be further consolidated and substantiated in future syntheses on the basis of improved standards and processes.

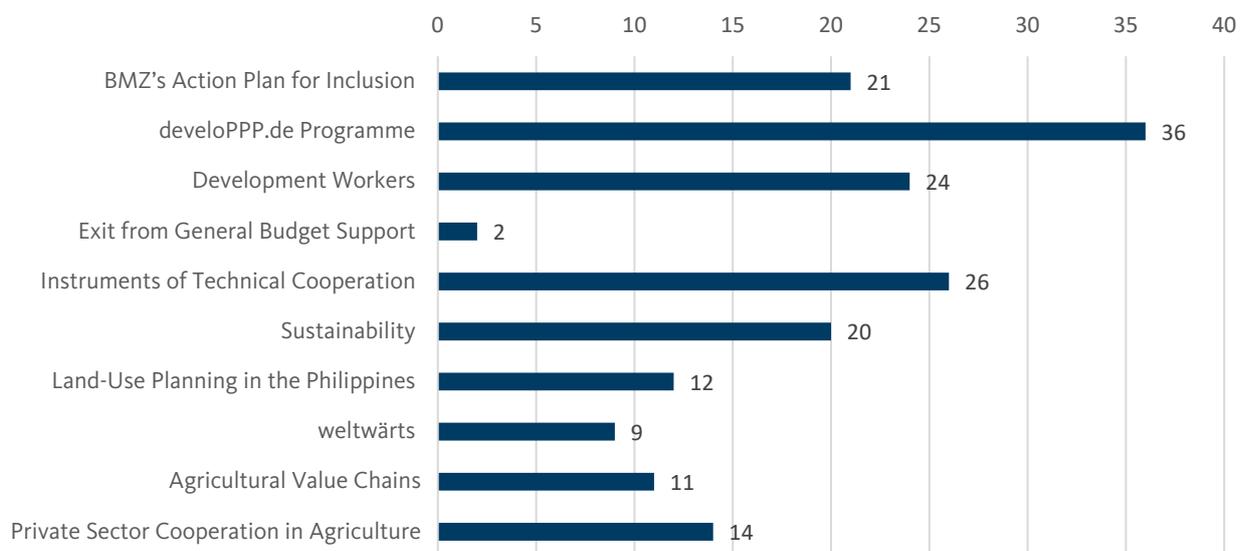
The following sections present the results of the synthesis, first in regard to the characteristics of the recommendations made and then concerning the status of the sharing and implementation of recommendations.

2. WHAT CHARACTERISES DEVAL'S RECOMMENDATIONS?

2.1 How many recommendations does DEval make?

In total, 175 recommendations are made in the ten evaluations examined in this synthesis.

Figure 2 Number of recommendations per evaluation³



Since 2021 (and thus after completion of the evaluations analysed here), there has been a requirement at the DEval to limit the number of recommendations to a maximum of ten per evaluation.

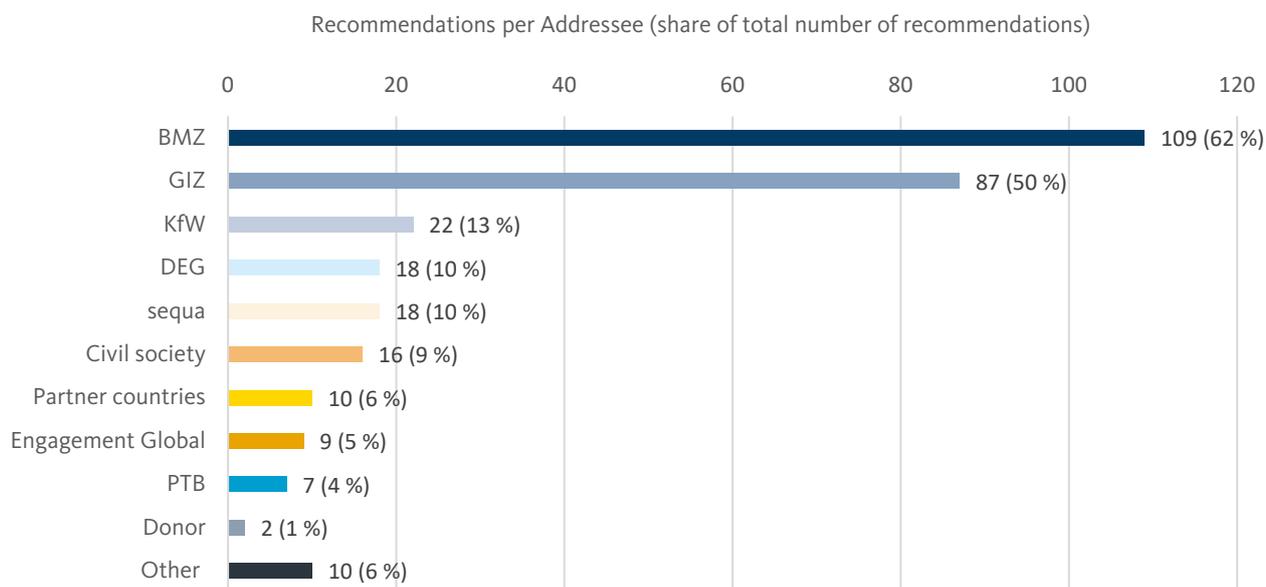
³ The large number of recommendations in the Evaluation of the develoPPP.de Programme is because the evaluation team at that time focused strongly on the operative level as users of the evaluation and thus wanted recommendations that were as specific as possible. Moreover, numerous recommendations represent options that are, in part, mutually exclusive, depending on the preference for an impact or demand-oriented approach. According to the current (at that time not yet established) DEval evaluation recommendation guidelines, some of these recommendations would rather be defined as implementation guidance below the level of a recommendation: Implementation guidance can formulate one or more alternative guidelines for a possible operationalisation of recommendations.

2.2 Who are the addressees of DEval's recommendations?

DEval directed the recommendations of the evaluations examined in this synthesis most often towards the BMZ (109 recommendations), followed by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ; 87). Together, the KfW Development Bank and the Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft (DEG) were recipients of 40 recommendations (see Figure 3).

Some individual DEval recommendations have been directed towards different addressees.⁴ Not all actors were addressed in all evaluations: Some, for example the National Metrology Institute (PTB) or Engagement Global, were addressed by only one specific evaluation.

Figure 3 Addressees for recommendations⁵



* Multiple categorization possible

In the vast majority of cases, DEval's evaluations and studies scrutinise both technical and financial cooperation. Where only one of these was examined, there were more cases of technical cooperation in the evaluations analysed in this report. This may explain the focus on technical cooperation addressees.

2.3 What sort of changes does DEval recommend?

DEval's recommendations relate to various fields of action (see Box 2). It should be noted that the need for action identified in a recommendation can be assigned to several categories, but this does not mean that several needs for action are expressed at the same time. For example, a recommendation for more investment in knowledge management in a certain area or sector of DC would be allocated to both the category "expertise & knowledge management" and the category "resources & resource allocation".⁶

⁴ Some recommendations in the past comprised several part-recommendations. These were not counted separately here.

⁵ The percentages represent the proportion of recommendations for certain addressees in relation to the total number of recommendations (175). Since recommendations can be directed towards several addressees, the percentages add up to more than 100%.

⁶ In the evaluations examined here, one recommendation is allocated to two fields of action on average. Altogether, 392 references to the fields of action represented were identified for the 175 recommendations made in the evaluations examined here.

Box 2 Fields of action addressed in recommendations

Strategy & conception: Recommendations that stimulate the (further) development of political, sectoral, country-specific or organisational strategies and concepts. This includes the definition of objectives as well as how to achieve them. The recommendations relating to this field of action call on the addressees to develop or further develop strategies and concepts themselves or to directly adopt substantive suggestions for the design of strategies or concepts.

Planning & implementation: Recommendations aimed at improving the technical and operational planning and implementation of development policy measures (projects and programmes). This also includes measures carried out in Germany, such as the promotion of civil society engagement or projects to advise German (DC) actors.

Analysis, monitoring & evaluation: Recommendations that address the implementation, (further) development or use of analyses, (baseline) studies, monitoring activities, reporting and evaluations. Both development policy and organisational development measures can be the subject of the investigation here. The overarching goal of the recommendations is to generate knowledge and incorporate it into political and operational management.

Expertise & knowledge management: Recommendations that encourage to reinforce and enhance the value of specialist knowledge within one or more development organisations, for example through training, new staff or the improvement of knowledge management. This aims at placing the addressees in a position of being able to appropriately fulfil their tasks.

Communication & information exchange: Recommendations related to improving information exchange between actors within an organisation as well as between actors from different organisations. This also includes dialogue with government representatives from (DC) partner countries as well as general public relations work. Different communication channels and information carriers can be used.

Coordination & division of labour: Recommendations concerning the improvement of coordination and division of labour within an organisation and between different organisations and actors. Role clarification and the networking/integration of actors for better performance also fall under this category. The implementation of recommendations in this category aims, for example, at improving work efficiency.

Standard & process definition: Recommendations that suggest improvements of requirements or processes, for example through the (further) development of manuals, guidelines, definitions or other guidance, such as funding guidelines. The overall objective is to standardise recurring processes to improve political and operational management by the addressees.

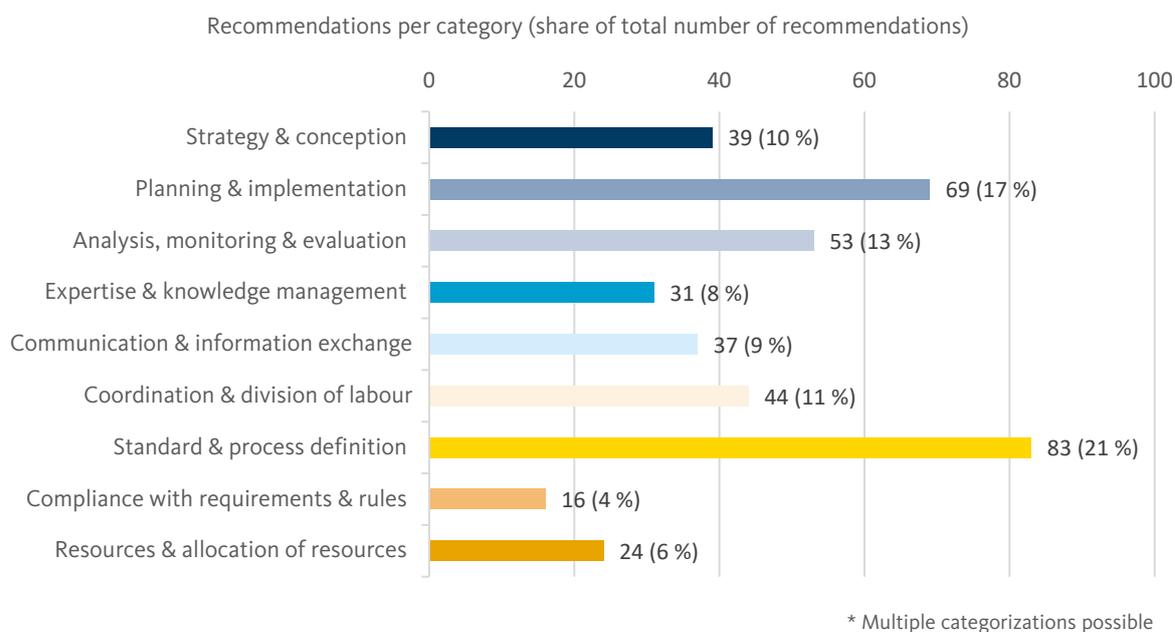
Compliance with requirements & rules: Recommendations that refer to existing requirements and rules. These recommendations aim at ensuring that the addressees or third parties take existing rules and requirements into (greater) account, that these rules and requirements are more binding or that they are included in the new development of processes. Rules and requirements include manuals, strategic objectives, guidelines and directives, standards and definitions, but also general principles (e.g. Agenda 2030) and existing recommendations (e.g. from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development).

Resources & allocation of resources: Recommendations relating to the distribution of financial resources. This includes both continued financing and the reallocation of funds within organisations and in the development portfolio. The recommendations in this category aim, for example, at increasing allocation efficiency.

The recommendations considered in this synthesis most frequently demanded changes in “standard & process definition” (83; see Figure 4). A particular reason for this is that DEval's evaluations have a strategic, overarching character which allows deficits or potential for improvement in standards and processes to be identified particularly well. For example, recommendations proposed streamlining processes and procedures or changing selection and evaluation criteria. In addition, DEval frequently recommended changes in “planning & implementation” (69).

DEval's evaluations take a strategic approach and do not generally consider individual projects on the implementation level. However, the evaluation of strategically relevant, cross-organisational issues also leads to operationally useful or employable evidence and thus to recommendations aimed at different decision-making levels of the respective addressed organisations. For example, recommendations proposed making planning and implementation processes more flexible or taking local structures into account in the planning and implementation of measures.

Figure 4 Fields of action addressed by recommendations⁷

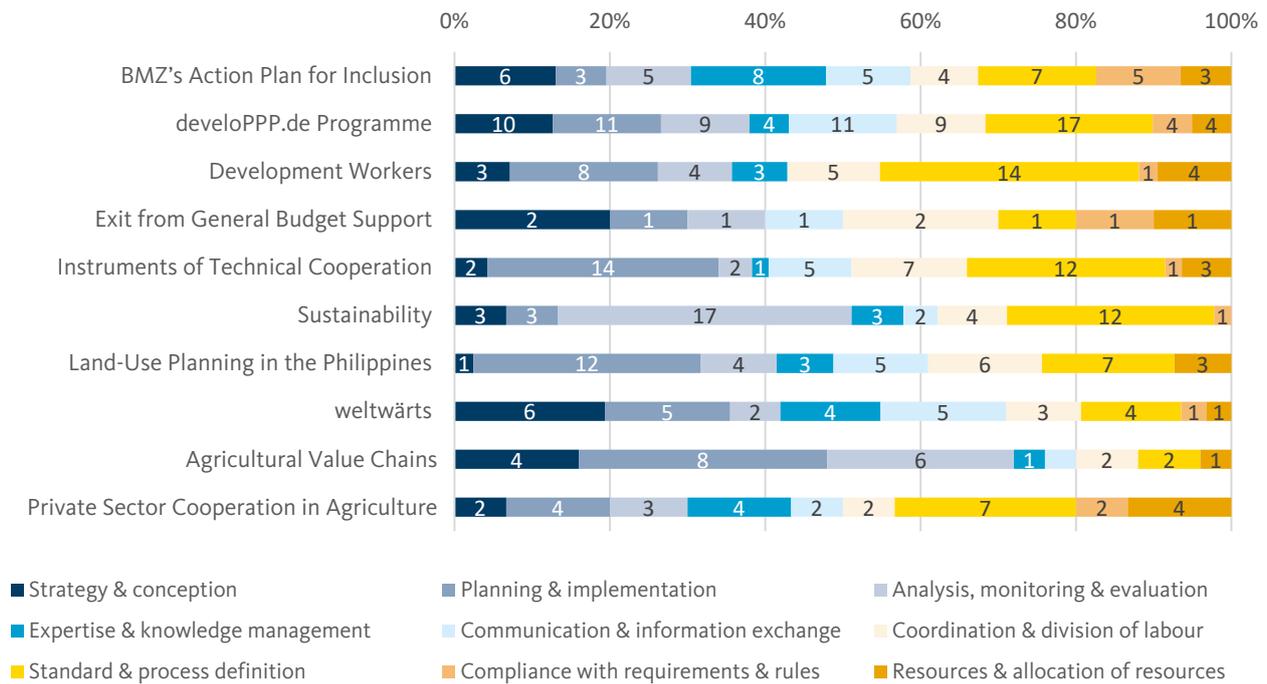


DEval recommended changes third most frequently (53) in the field of “analysis, monitoring & evaluation”. In this context, DEval recommended, for example, the development, further development or standardisation of indicators and identifiers of the Development Assistance Committees (DAC codes).

Not every evaluation considered in this synthesis made recommendations for all fields of action. Depending on the object and the findings of the evaluation, different priorities emerged (see Figure 5). For example, in the Meta-Evaluation and Evaluation Synthesis on Sustainability, 85% of the recommendations (17 out of 20) referred to “analysis, monitoring & evaluation”. Recommendations on “planning & implementation” (54%: 14 out of 26 recommendations) or “standard & process definition” (46%: 12 out of 26 recommendations) were particularly numerous in the Evaluation of the Integration of the Instruments of Technical Cooperation.

⁷ The percentages represent the proportion of recommendations for a particular field of action in relation to the total number of recommendations (175). Since the need for action addressed in one recommendation can be allocated to several categories, the percentages add up to more than 100%.

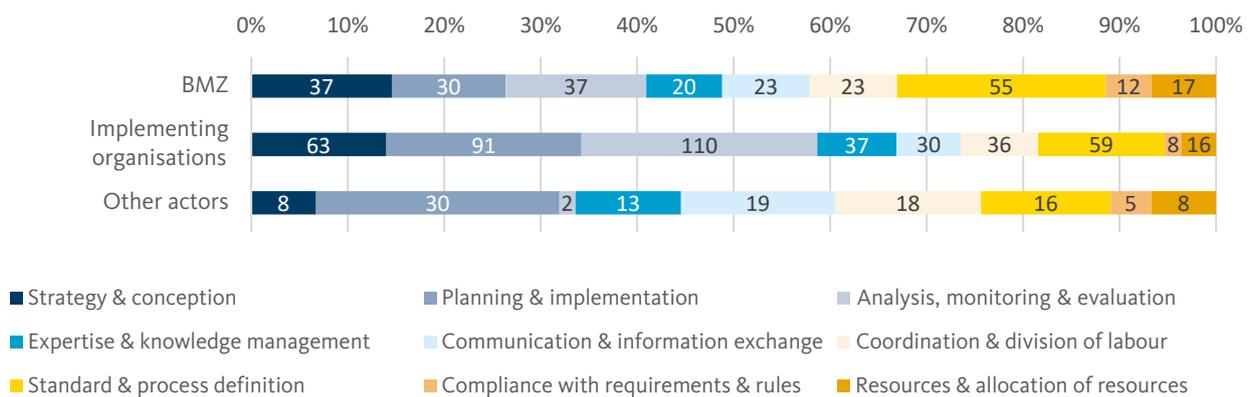
Figure 5 Recommendation fields of actions per evaluation



* Multiple categorizations possible

The content of the recommendations also differs (see Figure 6) per addressee and reflects the division of labour in German DC: the BMZ received recommendations for change particularly frequently in the fields “standard & process definition” and “strategy & conception”, whereas recommendations made to implementing organisations often referred to “planning & implementation” and “analysis, monitoring & evaluation”.⁸

Figure 6 Recommendation fields of actions per addressee



* Multiple categorizations possible

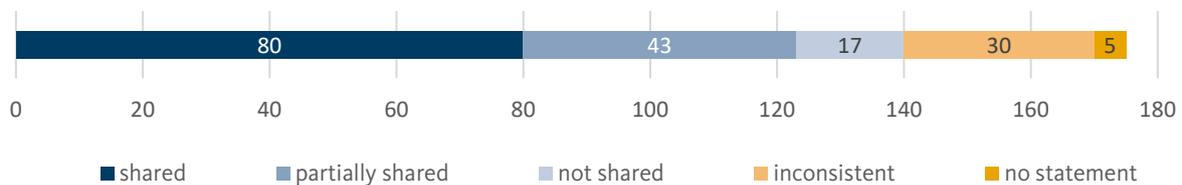
⁸ Implementing organisations were also often addressees for recommendations on “strategy & conception” because these were often jointly oriented towards BMZ and implementing organisations and addressed other operational fields of action in addition to “strategy & conception”. For example, a single recommendation may propose the development of a strategy to the BMZ and at the same time its implementation to the implementing organisations.

3. HOW DO THE ADDRESSEES DEAL WITH DEval's RECOMMENDATIONS?

3.1 Do the addressees share DEval's recommendations?

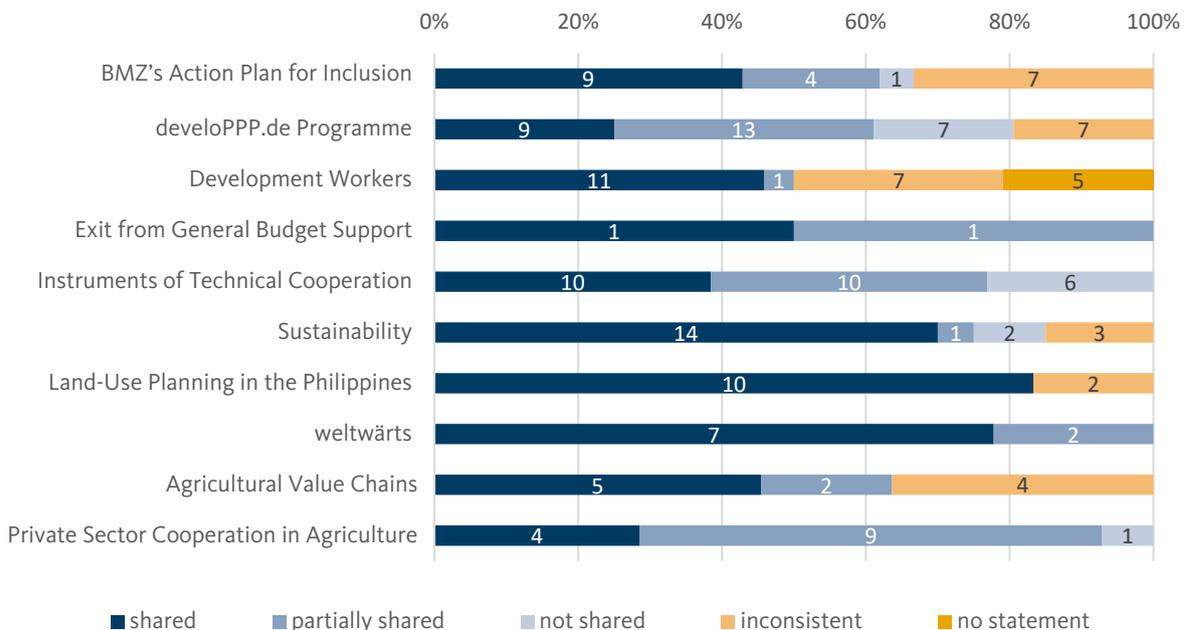
The addressees shared more than 70% of the recommendations (123 out of 175), wholly (80) or in part (43). Just under 10% (17 recommendations) were not shared (rejected), and different addressees shared differing feedback for around 17% (30; "inconsistent" category). No information regarding sharing was provided on five recommendations in one evaluation (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 Number of shared and rejected recommendations



In the majority of evaluations, all or most recommendations were shared in part at least, and only individual recommendations were rejected (see Figure 8)⁹. A rejection is not necessarily due to the quality of the evaluation, however. There can be various legitimate reasons for rejecting a recommendation, even when the recommendation is well-founded.

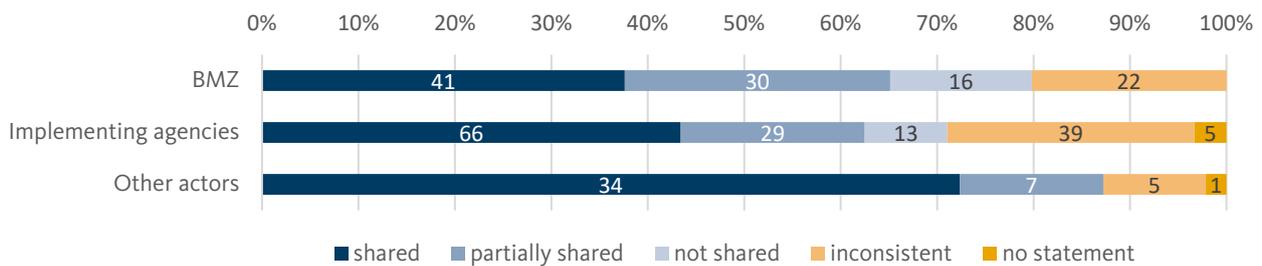
Figure 8 Proportion of shared and rejected recommendations per evaluation



⁹ The addressees rejected more recommendations in two evaluations: the Evaluation of the develoPPP.de Programme and the Evaluation of the Instruments of Technical Cooperation. Recommendations were made in the Evaluation of the develoPPP.de Programme that were, at that time, formulated in part as mutually exclusive options for action (see above). This explains the higher rejection rate in this evaluation.

If we look only at shared recommendations and disregard those partially shared, some evaluations demonstrate particularly high proportions of fully shared recommendations, such as those on Land-use Planning in the Philippines (83% shared), the weltwärts Programme (78%) and Sustainability (70%). Section 3.3 analyses the reasons for this. There are only minor differences between BMZ and implementing organisations with regard to the proportion of shared and rejected recommendations. Other actors, such as civil society actors or Engagement Global, shared recommendations more frequently than BMZ and implementing organisations (see Figure 9). However, due to the diversity of the category “other actors” and the small size of the sample, later syntheses on a broader database should examine whether a systematic and significant difference can be identified and what the reasons for this may be.

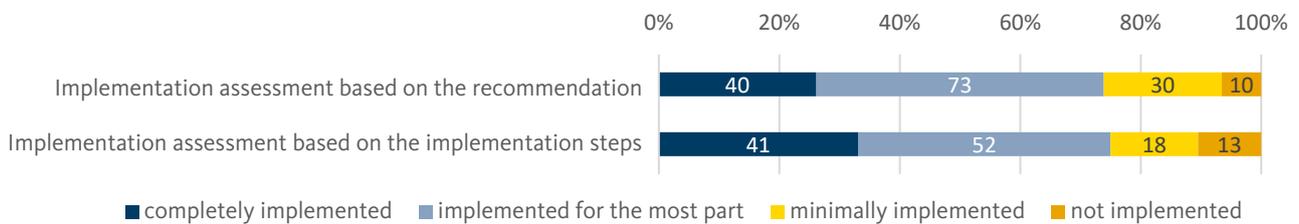
Figure 9 Shared or rejected recommendations per addressee



3.2 Do the addressees implement DEval's recommendations?

An analysis of assessable and at least partially shared recommendations shows that the proportion of recommendations implemented (completely or for the most part) is around three-quarters of the total recommendations (see Figure 10). This applies for both bases of assessment used (see Box 3).¹⁰

Figure 10 Assessment of implementation



Assessed on the basis of the recommendation, 74% were implemented (26% completely, 48% for the most part). If the implementation steps are taken as a basis, 75% were implemented (33% completely, 42% for the most part).¹¹

¹⁰ If one assesses on the basis of the recommendation and also includes non-shared and non-assessable recommendations, 65% of the of the recommendations were implemented.

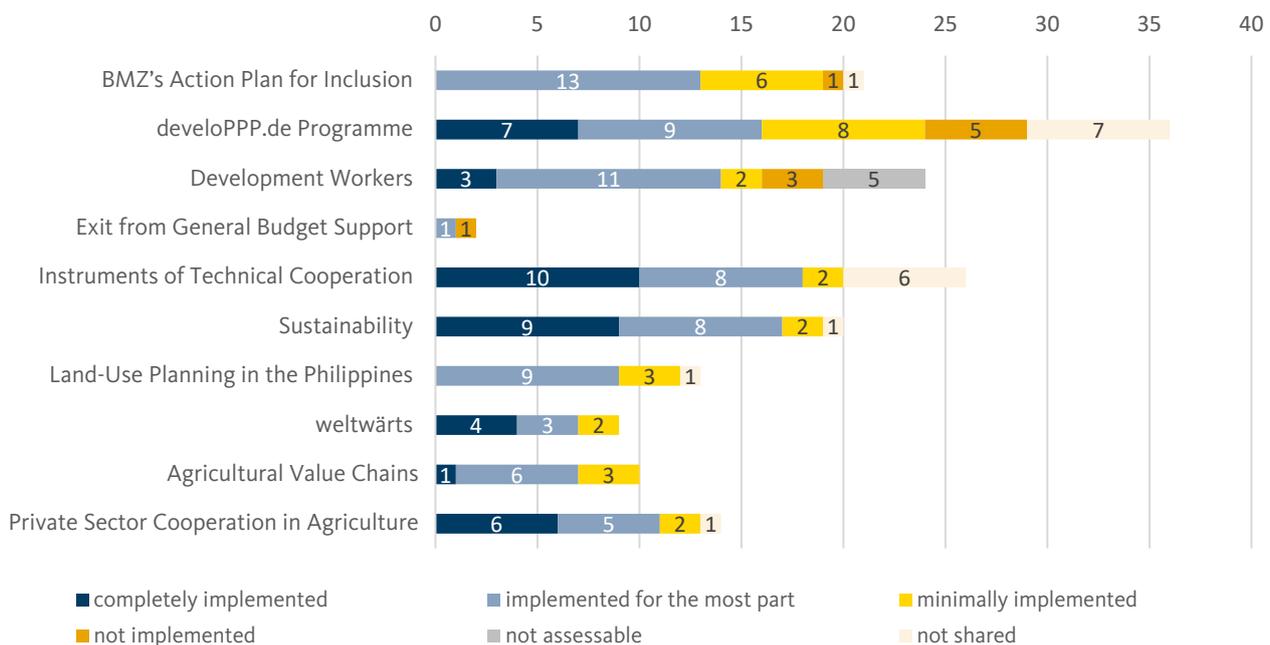
¹¹ The differences between the bases of assessment arise in particular because, in the past, no implementation steps or none suitable for the change pursued were defined for some recommendations, therefore rendering the recommendation “not assessable” on the basis of the implementation steps.

Box 3 Bases of assessment for the implementation of recommendations

When assessing the implementation, DEval compares the change proposed by a recommendation with its implementation by the addressee. The prerequisite here is, however, that the steps of the implementation plan match the changes envisaged by the recommendation. If no implementation steps have been defined or if these do not reflect the changes envisaged by the recommendation, the recommendation is “not assessable” in terms of comparison with the implementation steps. In these cases, implementation is assessed on the basis of the recommendation set out in the report rather than on the basis of the implementation steps. Since, in most cases, quality assurance had not yet been standardised in the implementation plans under consideration in this report, there may be deviation between the two assessments – as based on the implementation steps or on the recommendation set out in the report. The following therefore presents the assessment of the implementation monitoring separately as per the two bases of assessment.

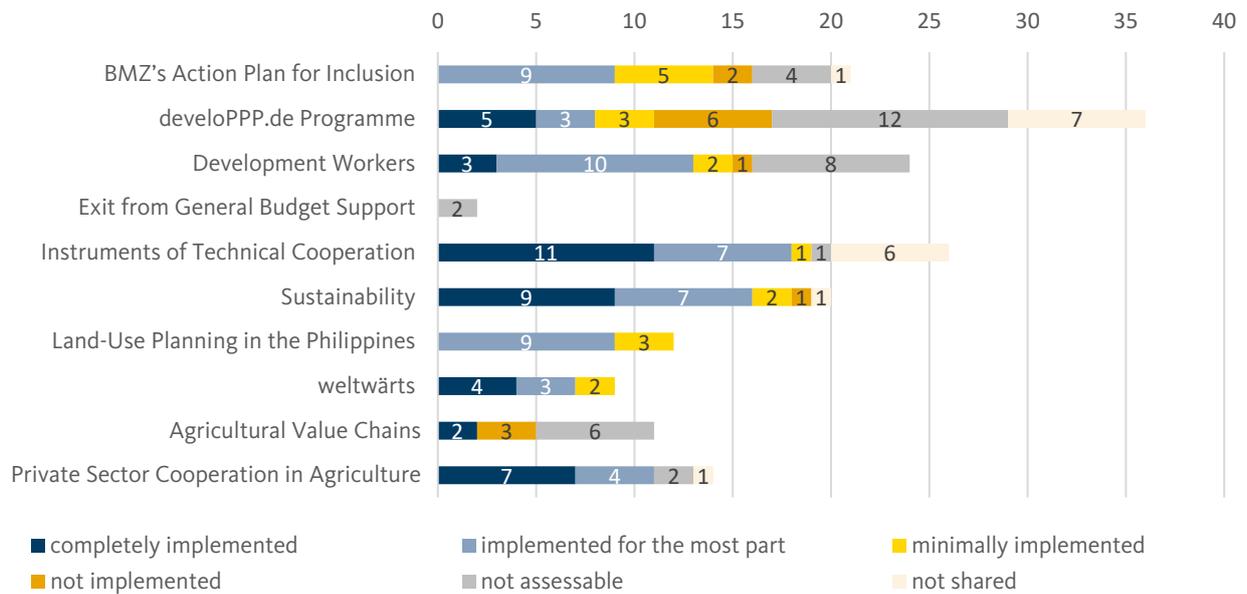
Particularly large numbers of recommendations were implemented (on both bases of assessment) in the Evaluation of Integration of the Instruments of Technical Cooperation. A high implementation rate is also seen in the Meta-Evaluation and Evaluation Synthesis of Sustainability, Cooperation with the Private Sector in Agriculture, and the weltwärts Programme. Implementation rates are particularly low regarding the evaluations of the Exit from Budget Support, the develoPPP.de Programme, the BMZ Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, and Agricultural Value Chains (see Figure 11 and 12). The following section analyses the reasons for this.¹²

Figure 11 Assessment of implementation per evaluation on the basis of the recommendation



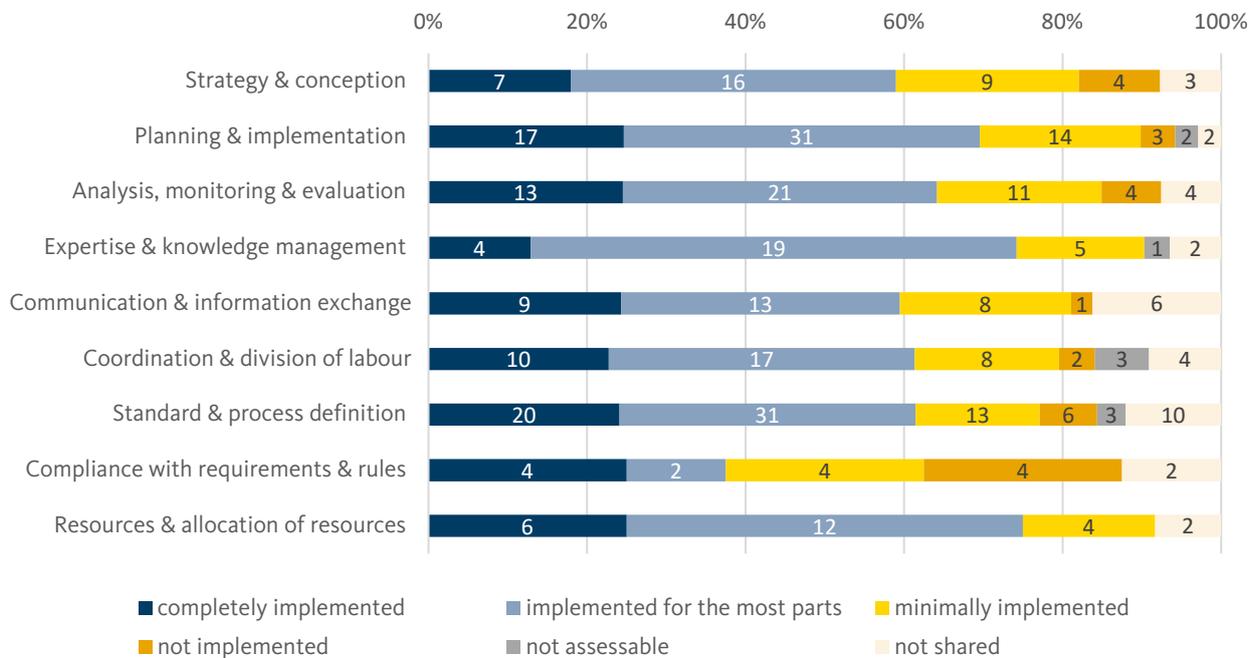
¹² This sample does not demonstrate a correlation between the number of recommendations and their implementation, as could be expected in particular on the basis of the high number of recommendations in the develoPPP.de evaluation.

Figure 12 Assessment of implementation per evaluation on the basis of the implementation steps



If we look at the fields of action in which the recommendations proposed changes (see Box 2), we see only minor differences in implementation rates. Measured against the recommendations set out in the evaluation reports, recommendations relating to the fields “expertise & knowledge management” and “resources & allocation of resources” were implemented disproportionately often (82% implemented completely or for the most part in each case; see Figure 13).

Figure 13 Assessment of implementation in fields of action on the basis of the recommendation



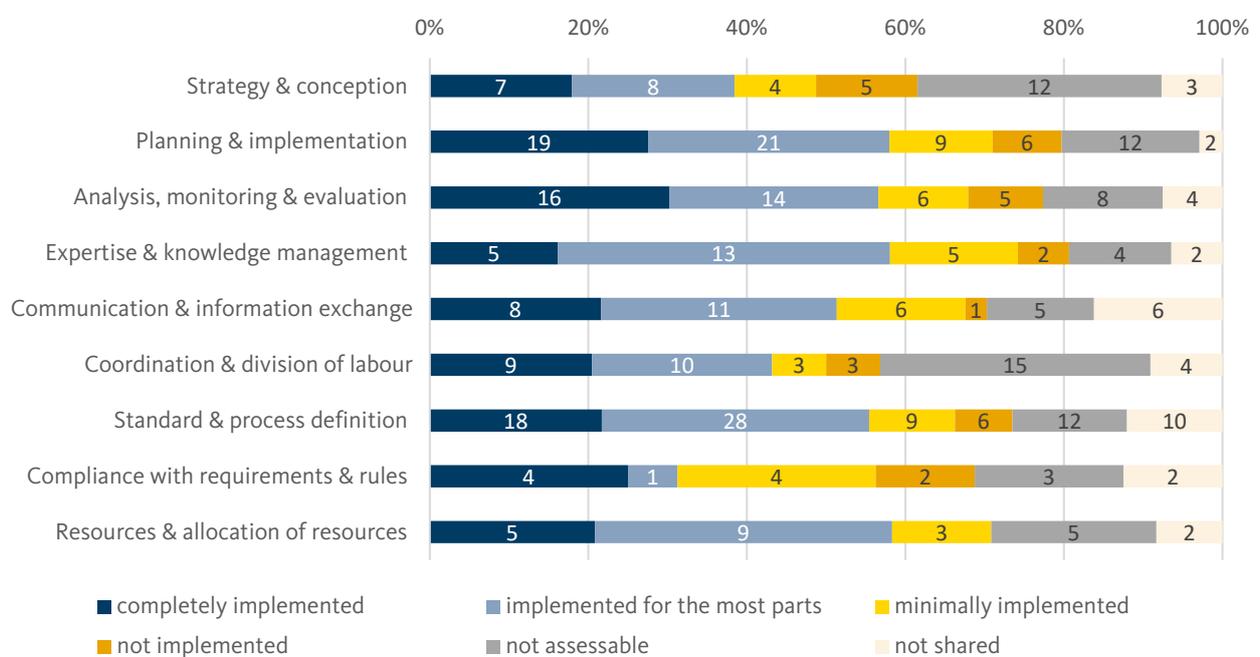
*Multiple categorizations possible

Comparatively high implementation rates can also be seen in “planning & implementation” (74%), “coordination & division of labour” and “standard & process definition” (both 73%). In contrast, addressees implemented recommendations on “compliance with requirements & rules” (43%) to a relatively low extent. These aimed at improving compliance of the addressees or of third parties with existing requirements or

making rules more binding, or indicated which requirements should be included in the new development of processes. It should be noted here that comparatively few recommendations have been assigned to this category (see also Figure 5), limiting the informative value of the analysis at the present time.

Assessing the implementation rate on the basis of the defined implementation steps (see Figure 14), recommendations pertaining to “resources & allocation of resources” (82% implemented completely or for the most part), “coordination & division of labour” (76%) and “standard & process definition” (75%) were implemented most frequently. Moreover, recommendations relating to “analysis, monitoring & evaluation”, “planning & implementation” and “communication & information exchange” (all 73%) as well as “expertise & knowledge management” (72%) were implemented often, whereas the rate is significantly lower (45%) for “compliance with requirements & rules”. Here, too, the informative value is currently limited due to the assignment of comparatively few recommendations to this field of action. In assessing implementation on the basis of the implementation steps, it should also be noted that between 14% and 38 % of the shared recommendations in the various fields of action cannot be assessed on the basis of the implementation steps because these were insufficiently defined.

Figure 14 Assessment of implementation in fields of action on the basis of the implementation steps



*Multiple categorizations possible

If we look at implementation per addressee, we see only moderate differences (see Table 2), especially when we take into account the still comparatively low number of evaluations examined in this report. This means that BMZ, implementing organisations and other addressees implement recommendations at roughly the same frequency.

The moderate differences that do show up may be due to different types of recommendations being oriented towards different addressees (see Section 2.3). For example, recommendations for implementing organisations (IO) often pertained to “planning & implementation”. These recommendations have a relatively high implementation rate compared to other fields of action. Whether this is due to the addressee or the content of the recommendations will be the subject of future analyses.

Table 2 Implementation of recommendations per addressee

	implemented completely/for the most part		not implemented/minimally implemented	
	per DEval recommendation	per implementation step	per DEval recommendation	per implementation step
BMZ	68.1%	66.7%	31.9%	33.3%
Implementing organisations	79.4%	74.5%	20.6%	25.5%
Other stakeholders	78.3%	80.5%	21.7%	19.5%

3.3 Factors influencing how addressees deal with the recommendations

The implementation monitoring supplements the quantitative assessment (at the recommendation level) with qualitative assessment of implementers' statements (at the evaluation level). First indications of factors influencing how addressees deal with DEval recommendations were derived from this data.

At the recommendation level, the influencing factors identified can be found in the structures and responsibilities for implementation, but also in the characteristics of evaluation objects or in developments in their environment: Recommendations were more likely to be implemented if the addressees perceived them as transparent and systematically derived. Recommendations being relevant and useful to addressees also had positive impact. The clear designation of addressees and a balance between abstraction and specificity in the formulation of the recommendations, as well as the sufficient flexibility in implementation that this balance generates, also proved conducive. In addition to the quality of recommendations, the consideration of framework conditions and parallel change processes also had an effect on their acceptance and implementation. The most significant inhibiting factors mentioned in the interviews conducted as part of the implementation monitoring were the lack of resources available to those responsible for the evaluation object as well as inadequate consideration of limited resources in the formulation of the recommendations. Personnel changes and vacancies also had negative impact.

The following section derives conclusions from the integration of the quantitative (Sections 3.1 and 3.2) and the qualitative results presented in this sub-chapter.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As described, this first synthesis report looks at an as yet limited selection of DEval evaluations, some of which came about during the development phase of the institute and in which the processes of implementation planning and monitoring, but also the development of quality criteria for evaluation recommendations were still being drawn up or piloted. Because only a small proportion of DEval evaluations have been examined so far, the conclusions drawn here are not based on correlations or other statistical relationships. They are initial conclusions drawn from the synopsis of recommendation characteristics and the volume of shared or implemented recommendations.

4.1 (Preliminary) conclusions on the implementation of recommendations

Due to the still limited database, it is currently not possible to conclusively assess the degree of sharing and implementation of recommendations determined in this synthesis. The classification of these findings therefore focuses on the reasons for which recommendations were rejected or shared, but not implemented. The following lists five potential factors influencing the implementation of recommendations, which can be identified from the analysis of the implementation monitoring evaluated here in the report.

Addressees were more likely to implement recommendations if they considered them to be transparent and systematically derived. Accordingly, in the context of the implementation monitoring, addressees described the recommendations of the Meta-Evaluation and Evaluation Synthesis of Sustainability as transparent, relevant, appropriate in number and scope, but also as balanced in terms of abstraction and specificity. This may be the reason for the high implementation rate in this evaluation. In the Evaluation of the develoPPP.de Programme, in contrast, having the recommendations formulated as contradictory options for action may have had a negative impact on implementation. This method of formulating different implementation options does not meet the quality requirements that are now applicable at DEval.

A high degree of recommendation implementation correlates with clear responsibilities and/or a responsibility structure. In the Meta-Evaluation and Evaluation Synthesis of Sustainability as well as in the Evaluation of the Integration of the Instruments of Technical Cooperation – both evaluations with a particularly high volume of implemented recommendations – working groups were entrusted with the implementation of the recommendations or responsibilities were otherwise defined in the respective organisational units.

Some evaluations with a high degree of recommendation implementation succeeded in linking the recommendations to ongoing reform processes. Or rather: non-implementation of recommendations is partly related to the lack of consideration of changing framework conditions. In the Evaluation of Cooperation with the Private Sector in Agriculture, the linkage with reform processes has had a positive effect, according to the addressees. On the other hand, implementation monitoring relating to the Evaluation of Agricultural Value Chains showed that there were processes running parallel to the evaluation that could have been taken into account to a greater extent, which in turn had a negative impact on implementation. At the same time, changing processes and/or priorities in the BMZ or development organisations can have consequences: Linking to ongoing reform processes was planned in the case of the Evaluation of the BMZ Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. The recommendations were to be incorporated into the development of a new inclusion strategy. However, the implementation period for the recommendations was concurrent with the development of the “Human rights, inclusion and gender equality” quality feature as part of the BMZ 2030 reform process, and this had an inhibiting effect on implementation.

Evaluations which saw many recommendations being implemented tended to have a clearly defined, homogeneous group of addressees. Recommendations in the Meta-Evaluation and Evaluation Synthesis on Sustainability related to the evaluation units of DC organisations. In other evaluations, where fewer recommendations were implemented, the groups of addressees were larger, more diverse and less homogeneous. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the issue, the evaluation recommendations for the BMZ Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities were oriented towards many different stakeholders.

The implementation of recommendations was influenced by the resources available and their consideration. The interviews with the recommendation addressees in the context of implementation monitoring cited the lack of resources as the most significant inhibiting factor in dealing with recommendations. This concerned both a lack of resources for implementing the recommendations among those responsible for the evaluation object and insufficient account being taken of these resources in the formulation of the recommendations. Personnel changes and vacancies were also a hindrance.

4.2 Learning potential

This synthesis sets out some starting points for improving DEval's recommendations and thus – in line with the goal defined in the DEval Strategy 2022–2026 – the acceptance and usefulness of its evaluations. However, it also points to learning potential for the addressees of DEval recommendations.

Clear definition of responsibilities for the implementation of recommendations: The definition of clear responsibilities for the implementation of recommendations in implementation planning has a positive effect on their realisation. This makes it essential that both the addressees and DEval in its advisory role pay even more attention in future to the definition of responsibilities. One option for overarching recommendations that address a diverse group of organisational units is to establish temporary working groups responsible for implementation or to transfer responsibility for implementation to existing working groups.

Relevance of recommendations for the addressees: If addressees can attach high relevance to a recommendation, they are (understandably) more likely to share and implement it. To this end, it is advantageous if the mutual understanding of DEval and the stakeholder organisations represented in the reference group¹³ with regard to the significance of recommendations can be increased when presenting conclusions and recommendations to the reference group.

Compatibility with current change processes and conditions: The results of this first synthesis indicate that recommendations are generally of greater benefit if they are compatible with current conditions and relate to ongoing reform and change processes. It is therefore of great importance that the organisations represented in the evaluation reference group provide DEval with timely and proactive evaluation-relevant and up-to-date information so that the institute can take this into account in its conclusions and recommendations.

Implications of recommendations for resources: In the vast majority of cases, the implementation of evaluation recommendations requires resources and thus affects the target organisation's absorption capacity with relation to the change impetus generated by the evaluations. A review of the implications for resources in the formulation of recommendations and the consideration of these in implementation planning thus create favourable conditions for realising the envisioned implementation steps for the recommendations in accordance with the planning.

4.3 Outlook: Opportunities for future syntheses

Monitoring the implementation of evaluation recommendations offers excellent opportunities for improving learning processes, learning culture and accountability, thus improving the utilisation of evaluations. Synthesis reports such as this one are of paramount importance in this respect as they can identify structural successes as well as challenges for learning and accountability from evaluations.

Generally speaking, this report produces a satisfactory result with regard to the implementation of recommendations of the DEval evaluations examined. However, there is also room for improvement for greater effectiveness in their implementation. This potential is inherent in both with the organisations targeted by the recommendations and with DEval itself. The report also presents the first important findings on factors influencing the successful implementation of recommendations.

Due to a larger number of evaluations with completed implementation monitoring, it will be increasingly possible in the future to determine relationships between the implementation rate of recommendations and the characteristics of recommendations and evaluations, also on the basis of statistical correlations. This applies, for example, to the question of whether differences in implementation by different addressees are due to differences in the content of the recommendations between the addressees, allowing future analyses to verify and expand on the conclusions drawn in this synthesis.

Subsequent syntheses can examine the effectiveness of the mechanisms of quality assurance for recommendations and implementation plans that have been developed and introduced in the mean-time. Recommendations should be coherent, independent, transparent and oriented towards the addressee, as well as balanced in their level of specificity. Implementation plans should be finalised on time and be complete, understandable and comprehensible. The implementation steps set out therein should be aligned with the intended amendment of the recommendation, and appropriate and suitable in their degree of ambition so that the actual implementation can be monitored.

In the future, it will be possible to analyse whether the increasingly standardised quality assurance will result in changes in how recommendations are dealt with. This will ensure that the contribution to evaluation-based learning, the evidence-based management of German DC and its accountability that this report has begun will continue with future syntheses of the implementation monitoring of DEval evaluation recommendations.

¹³ DEval establishes a reference group for each evaluation. These represent responsible bodies from politics (mostly the BMZ) as well as implementing or funding organisations.

5. LITERATURE

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