
Workflow of a DEval evaluation – role of the reference group

DEval-Standards

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DEval's reference group model

Background

- DEval is tasked with evaluating German development cooperation on an independent and scientifically sound basis. To increase the quality, relevance and usefulness of its evaluations, DEval forms a reference group (RG) for each evaluation. This document serves as basic guidance for members of the reference group(s) to be formed for every evaluation.
- DEval's evaluations are based on the following standards: *usefulness; evaluability; fairness, independence and integrity; accuracy, scientific robustness and transparency; comparability*. To ensure compliance with these principles, DEval and the reference group have developed an idealised workflow chart (described below) for standard use in complex evaluations. Deviations from this workflow are possible in the case of, for example, less complex evaluations.

Functions of the reference group as part of DEval evaluations

- The reference group plays a key role in terms of the development relevance of a DEval evaluation and the usefulness of its findings. It also contributes to ensuring the technical quality of the evaluation (in particular, the correct presentation of the evaluation subject and, where appropriate, the context). The independence of the evaluation is guaranteed at all times. The reference group performs an important function with respect to the advice and comments it provides and is a key 'sounding board' in the evaluation process. Decisions on issues relating to the evaluation, the design and implementation of the evaluation, and its findings and recommendations are made at the discretion of DEval.
- The responsible DEval evaluation team ensures that the members of the reference group are able to incorporate their specific cognitive interests into the respective evaluation and takes these into account when determining the strategic objectives of the evaluation and the resources to be provided. DEval ensures that the members of the reference group are informed of the content of the evaluation and any progress made at appropriate intervals. Reference group members are given the opportunity to comment on DEval's evaluation strategies and draft reports orally and in writing, and to discuss these and thus voice their opinions within the RG.
- In return, the members of the reference group support the evaluation team throughout the entire process; in other words, they provide all necessary data and documents, are available at appropriate intervals to provide information (including arranging contacts), proactively inform the evaluation team about current developments relating to the subject of the evaluation or its relevant environment and comment on evaluation strategies, draft reports and any other products. To ensure that the reference group is able to function properly, all relevant parts of the respective organisation must be informed and involved, and individuals assigned to the RG must have the necessary expertise and decision-making competency within their organisations.

Reference group meetings

The reference group meets – either at BMZ or at DEval – when key evaluation milestones are reached and is informed periodically by the evaluation team about the progress made in the evaluation. Reference group meetings are chaired by DEval (usually by the head of the responsible division).

Economical use of resources, and confidentiality

The evaluation team must approach its tasks in a responsible and transparent manner. The time and personnel resources of those involved are used only to the extent required to address the subject of the evaluation. The number of RG meetings may be adapted to the subject of the evaluation. In the case of shorter evaluations or studies, a reduced or modified consultation mechanism may be used. Adequate time is given for comments (at least two weeks for strategies and at least three weeks for draft reports). Verbal comments are summarised by DEval in the minutes of meetings.

All those involved maintain confidentiality towards third parties on the (preliminary) findings of evaluations until they are published. To increase the usefulness of an evaluation, the duty of confidentiality can be overridden for specific target groups by mutual agreement of all those involved.

Members of the reference group

The reference group is made up of the following members:

- (1) Those responsible for the subject of the evaluation at the political level (usually BMZ; possibly also participants from other government departments in the case of inter-ministerial evaluation subjects)
- (2) The staff responsible for the relevant area of expertise in the implementing or funding organisations
- (3) Where appropriate, national and international experts on the evaluation subject
- (4) Other relevant stakeholders.

In suitable cases, reference groups are also set up in the partner country. In addition to the local development cooperation representatives, these groups are made up of, in particular, those responsible at the political and sectoral level on the partner side and, where appropriate, other donors and stakeholders.

Workflow of a DEval evaluation

The following table provides an overview of an idealised workflow of a DEval evaluation, including the respective tasks and roles of DEval and the reference group members. Deviations from this workflow are possible (in the case of less complex evaluations or studies, for example) and are communicated within the reference group, where necessary.

Workflow of DEval evaluations

Process step	Goal and output	Tasks of DEval	Role of the reference group
Clarification phase	Clarification of the subject of the evaluation and the cognitive interests.	In the run-up to an evaluation, preliminary clarification talks can be held with individual stakeholders. After clarification talks with BMZ and other relevant stakeholders, DEval informs the (probable) RG members about the start of the evaluation and consults them. This is followed by an initial appraisal of documents and information	The RG members inform DEval, upon request, about the subject of the evaluation and their cognitive interests and provide initial data and documents on the subject of the evaluation.
Design phase	Development of the evaluation strategy (usually contains statements on: context, goals/purpose, evaluation approach, addressees, intended use, subject, main questions, possibly an initial outline of the methodological approach and the timeframe).	On the basis of the talks and an initial analysis of the portfolio and of existing evaluations, DEval prepares an evaluation strategy. The key aspects (particularly alignment of cognitive interests, subject/scope and target schedule with existing resources) are discussed in a RG meeting.	The RG members provide further documents upon request. They submit written comments on the evaluation strategy (pooled by each organisation represented) and comment orally at the first RG meeting.
Inception phase	Preparation of an inception report (usually contains a more detailed description of the evaluation issues, approach and design as well as a more detailed methodological approach and results logic/theory of change).	On the basis of further, more detailed analyses of the subject (e.g. context and portfolio analysis), initial interviews and, where appropriate, an exploratory field trip, DEval prepares an inception report (draft and final version after comments have been incorporated).	The RG members provide additional and more detailed information, if required, and are available for interview and possibly to arrange contacts in partner countries. They comment on the inception report orally at the RG meeting and, if possible, in writing beforehand (pooled by each organisation).
Data collection phase	Data is collected using various collection methods, including (where appropriate) an initial evaluation of data in the case of iterative design.	The evaluation team collects data using different data collection methods, including case studies in partner countries where appropriate, and carries out an initial evaluation of the data. At the end of field study trips, DEval informs the stakeholders in the partner country about the findings obtained up to that point and ensures that all information (short reports, presentations) is brought to the attention of the RG members concurrently.	The RG members support the evaluation team by, where required, providing further information, providing the names of contacts, giving organisational support in the partner country and taking part in interviews. The contacts in the partner country are available to provide feedback on the findings obtained up to that point.

Analysis phase	<p>Analysis of the various data collection results</p> <p>Presentation of the findings and initial recommendations, where appropriate</p>	<p>The individual findings are triangulated, analysed and interpreted. DEval informs the RG about key findings and, where appropriate, initial conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation, usually in the form of a presentation. The timing of information sent to the RG in advance is decided on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>The individual members of the RG provide feedback (representing their relevant organisation or part of that organisation) on the presentation provided by DEval on key findings and initial recommendations at the RG meeting (in individual cases, this feedback can be provided before or after the RG meeting).</p>
Reporting phase	<p>Preparation and publication of the evaluation report, end of the evaluation</p>	<p>DEval prepares a draft evaluation report to be commented on by the RG and finalises the report after the RG meeting, taking appropriate account of the comments. DEval submits the final report and a feedback matrix (response grid) on the comments to the RG. The evaluation report is considered as completed once the publication version has been sent to the leadership of the BMZ. The BMZ receives the publication version to be submitted to the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development (AwZ) and prepares a statement to be published at the same time as the DEval report. The evaluation ends three months after the publication version has been sent to the BMZ.</p>	<p>The RG members comment on key aspects of the draft report in good time (pooled and in writing) before and (orally) at the RG meeting. After the discussion in the RG, further, more detailed comments on <i>factual clarifications</i> may be sent to DEval, pooled by each organisation. Any different <i>assessments</i> are marked as such and reasons are given.</p>
Dissemination/ knowledge transfer	<p>Dissemination of the evaluation findings and the conclusions and recommendations derived from these findings</p>	<p>Once the evaluation report has been published, DEval disseminates the evaluation findings in various formats and is available to provide organisations represented in the RG with specific dissemination formats as required, insofar as its personnel resources allow. It also strives to ensure a target group-oriented transfer of knowledge for target groups not represented in the reference group.</p>	<p>The completion of the evaluation report marks the formal end of the reference group's work. However, RG members continue to act as multipliers for evaluation findings in their organisations and, where necessary, as contacts for matters related to dissemination formats prepared specifically for their organisations.</p>



Implementation: After the evaluation report is completed, DEval supports BMZ and any other relevant organizations in preparing an implementation plan for the recommendations shared by the addressed organizations. The actual implementation will be monitored by DEval later on.



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