GIZ’s evaluation system

Corporate strategic evaluations
Publication details

As a federally owned enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

The Corporate Unit Evaluation of GIZ reports directly to the Management Board. She is separate from and independent of GIZ’s operational business. This organisation strengthens the independence. The Corporate Unit Evaluation is mandated to generate evidence-based results and recommendations for decision-making, to provide a credible proof of effectiveness and to increase transparency on the results.

Authors:
GIZ Evaluation Unit

Design, coordination and management:
Dr Annette Backhaus, GIZ, Evaluation Unit,
Head of Corporate Strategic Evaluations Section
Franziska Krisch, GIZ,
Evaluation Unit, senior specialist
Simon Freund, GIZ,
Evaluation Unit, senior specialist
Christoph Mairesse, GIZ,
Evaluation Unit, senior specialist

Responsible:
Dr Ricardo Gomez, GIZ,
Director of the Evaluation Unit

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1 Functions of corporate strategic evaluations

GIZ’s evaluation policy defines three key functions of evaluations: use for evidence-based decisions, transparency and accountability, and organisational learning. GIZ therefore structures the planning, implementation and use of evaluations so that the evaluation’s contribution – both during the evaluation process and in the form of the evaluation findings – to these key functions is optimised.

Corporate strategic evaluations are selected and implemented by GIZ on its own responsibility. They are carried out by the Evaluation Unit on behalf of the Management Board and financed by the Unit’s budget. Corporate strategic evaluations are geared to the specific information needs and the findings required by actors within GIZ. Evidence is compiled in order to support decision-making, strategic positioning and change processes that require an in-depth knowledge of where the company stands, taking into account internationally recognised evaluation principles and standards and, where necessary, with the help of external experts.

The findings of corporate strategic evaluations should enable evidence-based decisions, changes and learning processes both at the strategic and at the operational level in order to boost the effectiveness, cost-efficiency and quality of service delivery and of GIZ’s change processes. They are therefore based on different instruments and span all business sectors. This allows lessons learned to be evaluated and incorporated into innovative and future processes at GIZ.

Within the framework of corporate strategic evaluations, GIZ identifies strategically important themes from the following two areas:

- **Corporate development**: Further development of corporate strategies, structures and processes
- **Service delivery**: Planning and implementation of projects, further development of strategic instruments and range of services, contribution to the (further) development of sector and country strategies

Findings should be generated that:

- facilitate organisational learning as well as evidence-based decision-making and steering at the strategic and operational level;
- support accountability both within GIZ as well as vis-à-vis commissioning parties/clients, partners, target groups and the general public;
- support the updating and further development of approaches and methods of service delivery as well as corporate policies and strategies;
- fine-tune change and learning processes;
- deliver information for strategic positioning, client acquisition and client relationship management at GIZ.

Depending on the specific decision-making and information requirements, corporate strategic evaluations may take the form of ex-ante evaluations (scheduled before measures start), formative evaluations (conducted during a measure), ex-post evaluations or cross-section evaluations (evaluation syntheses, meta-evaluations). One **ex-post evaluation** and one **cross-section evaluation** should be conducted in each evaluation programme. These may relate to strategically relevant projects but should usually examine country or sector-specific portfolios. Depending on requirements, elements of a comprehensive corporate strategic evaluation may be implemented individually and, where necessary, at short notice. These include a portfolio analysis or a standardised (online) survey.

The instrument is consistently geared to the benefits for the company. Utilisation is supported by virtue of the fact that – within the framework of reference groups – the findings required and the implementation capacities of the actors involved are taken into account during design and implementation, as are information needs. A management response system is used to compile,
document and monitor plans of action based on the findings and recommendations of corporate strategic evaluations. Furthermore, key findings, good practices and success factors are also discussed in different learning, dialogue and information events, both to accompany the evaluation itself and on the basis of the evaluation report. They are also disseminated outside of GIZ on the internet and in publications and conference papers.

2 Themes and selection criteria

The evaluation programme is set for two years and is modified annually. Currently, up to five themes are evaluated each year, whereby the scope and orientation of the evaluations vary. The Management Board and GIZ’s first managerial level (Directors of Department and of Corporate Units) propose the themes in response to a request by the Evaluation Unit. Furthermore, the Management Board can, where necessary, select corporate strategic evaluation themes at any stage and commission the Evaluation Unit with implementation. The Evaluation Unit analyses the suggestions and submits the corporate strategic evaluation proposal to the Board for decision-making.

The following criteria are used to choose the projects to be evaluated:

- **Corporate policy significance**: The theme addressed by the evaluation is of overarching significance for corporate policy and this is reflected, for example, in key corporate policy documents and in resolutions, long-term corporate planning, GIZ’s business strategy, top-level measures, annual corporate objectives and in the quality report. It also offers significant potential for business development and/or for improving corporate structures, processes and procedures in all areas and at all levels.

- **Medium-term decision-making requirements**: The theme is related to key decisions/strategic positioning by the company in the medium or long-term (i.e. one to three years). Corporate strategic evaluations are too time-consuming and cost-intensive for short-term decisions and strategic positioning, however.

- **Need for evidence**: Decision-making and strategic positioning require an in-depth knowledge of complex issues related to where the company stands, based on internationally recognised evaluation standards and with support from external experts where necessary.

- **Evaluability**: It is examined whether the definition of the object of the evaluation is specific enough, whether the findings are verifiable and whether an evaluation is the best approach for answering the stakeholders’ questions. It must be possible to address the evaluation questions in sufficient detail, on time and within budget, based on the collection and assessment of primary and secondary data. The data basis must also be sufficient for an evaluation to be conducted.

- **Nature of the assessment**: Evaluations assess implementation of GIZ’s corporate strategy/service delivery by monitoring success and/or capturing results. In this respect, they differ from studies that, for example, process knowledge on a particular area or benchmark similar services offered by different providers and that are commissioned or implemented by other organisational units at GIZ.
3 Quality assurance of corporate strategic evaluations

3.1 Quality standards

Corporate strategic evaluations are subject to the international and national quality standards laid down by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), by the German Evaluation Society (DeGEval) and in GIZ’s evaluation policy (2017). They are geared above all to the standards for the independence, accuracy, usefulness and transparency of evaluations. These standards are implemented as follows:

- **Independence**: The Evaluation Unit reports directly to the Management Board and implements evaluations independently of GIZ’s operational departments and strategic units. The Unit has the scope to present critical evaluation findings to other units, divisions and departments within GIZ and can implement individual evaluations itself or outsource them to external evaluators. The content of evaluation reports, i.e. the rating awarded to the object of the evaluation, is the sole responsibility of the evaluators themselves.

- **Accuracy**: The evaluations are conducted on the basis of recognised quality standards, methods and procedures. For the purposes of quality assurance, the Evaluation Unit has introduced a system of internal and (for projects implemented by GIZ) external peer review. Corporate strategic evaluations deliver transparent findings and document successes and failures as well as the underlying reasons.

- **Usefulness**: Corporate strategic evaluations are geared to the internationally recognised approach of ‘utilisation focus’. Here, the identification of potential users and the intense involvement of relevant actors in reference groups and in the overall evaluation process play a key role.

- **Transparency**: Corporate strategic evaluation reports are published together with comments by GIZ and a management response. This supports GIZ’s positioning as a transparent, self-critical, learning organisation. Depending on the objective and the object of the evaluation, corporate strategic evaluations are also made accessible to partners and other donors. Their central findings and recommendations (management summary) and the action to be taken as a result (management response) are always available in German and English. GIZ only refrains from publishing the main evaluation report if publication would violate the rights of third parties, the anonymisation of personal data cannot be safeguarded, the report contains business secrets or could impact on ongoing national and international negotiations or affect foreign or security policy.

3.2 Quality assurance instruments and procedures

When conducting corporate strategic evaluations, the Evaluation Unit uses the following instruments to ensure that quality standards are observed:

- **Clarification of the mandate**: A comprehensive definition of the purpose and scope of the project evaluation, agreed with the Management Board commissioning the corporate strategic evaluation and with the external evaluators, paves the way for successful evaluation. It prevents conflict from arising during the evaluation and increases the acceptance of the evaluation findings and the satisfaction of all stakeholders with the evaluation process. Evaluation managers must therefore ensure that the outcome of the process to clarify the mandate is as clear and unambiguous as possible.
• **Inception report:** An inception report summarises the preliminary findings of document analyses and interviews related to the object of the evaluation. It also specifies the evaluation design, focus and scope of the evaluation and casts a critical eye over the quality of the available documents. Within the scope of this report, the evaluators entrusted with implementation also fine-tune the details of the instruments used to collect data. The report is a key input from the evaluator and comments by the person commissioning the evaluation and the evaluation managers constitute a key quality assurance instrument.

• **Methodological requirements for external evaluators:** GIZ usually specifies a theory-based evaluation approach that uses instruments such as realist evaluation, process tracing and contribution analysis. The instruments chosen are aligned with the required findings and with the object of the evaluation. The plausibility of the hypotheses can be checked based on existing results modules or on theories of change reconstructed by the evaluators. For the purposes of data collection, appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods are combined in a targeted manner so that they build on each other in an optimal manner in the time frame available for implementing the evaluation.

• **Annotated structure of the report:** Binding guidelines for creating evaluation products such as the inception report and the main report stipulate their content and structure and the quality expected.

• **Comments on the project evaluation report:** The final evaluation report is an independent report produced by the evaluators commissioned by GIZ. When discussing the draft report, the evaluators are free to decide whether or not they will include in the evaluation report the feedback they receive from the person commissioning the evaluation, the reference group and the evaluation managers in the Evaluation Unit, unless the comments relate to services that have been contractually agreed. GIZ’s comments on the independent evaluation report shed light on any divergent assessments or findings.

### 4 Implementation of corporate strategic evaluations

A corporate strategic evaluation is implemented by the Evaluation Unit on behalf of the Management Board and is financed by the Unit’s budget. It starts with the selection by the Management Board of a proposed theme. The Board commissions the Evaluation Unit with implementation. The evaluation finishes when the person commissioning the evaluation has accepted the main report, the Evaluation Unit’s comments (if the evaluation was implemented externally) and the management response (action on recommendations). In order to ensure that the findings can be disseminated and used as rapidly as possible, the report on the corporate strategic evaluation should, where possible, be published directly following completion.

The further process of the management response system (process step ‘Use’), i.e. the development of direct measures to improve quality, decide on implementation and continuously document the implementation status, is not part of the corporate strategic evaluation per se. The process steps are defined and described in detail in Section 6.

Depending on the thematic focus and the availability of human resources, corporate strategic evaluations can either be outsourced or implemented by the Evaluation Unit itself. Factors that indicate that outsourcing is the best option include an emphasis on transparency and accountability, a desire to obtain an external assessment or the need to have specific sectoral or methodological knowledge to respond to the evaluation questions. Implementation by the Evaluation Unit is advisable if an in-depth knowledge of corporate processes is required for the evaluation, confidential data are assessed or classified documents need to be evaluated, or if specific information is required in the short term. In-house implementation is also advisable in situations where the skills and ability to deliver of external evaluators are deemed to be limited.
In practice, the following variants for implementing a corporate strategic evaluation are possible:

- **Outsourcing of the entire corporate strategic evaluation**
  - preparation of the concept note by the Evaluation Unit;
  - invitations to tender/award procedure.

- **Mix of different modules**
  - implementation by Evaluation Unit up to inception report: handling of the initial data collection steps such as the portfolio analysis, evaluation of documents, followed by invitation to tender and award procedure;
  - steering of the entire corporate strategic evaluation including responsibility for reporting; in this context, outsourcing of individual data collection steps such as case studies;
  - implementation by GIZ Evaluation Unit of individual data collection steps (such as online surveys) whose findings are made available to the evaluator responsible for reporting.

- **Implementation by GIZ’s Evaluation Unit**
  - implementation of the entire evaluation by staff in the Evaluation Unit;
  - standard or situation-appropriate process monitoring.

### 5 Governance of the instrument and roles of the different actors involved

Every two years, the Evaluation Unit asks the Management Board and GIZ’s first managerial level (Directors of Departments and Corporate Units) to submit proposed themes for developing a new evaluation programme. The Directors of Department and of Corporate Units can request suggestions from their sections, assess and prioritise them and submit them to the Evaluation Unit. The Unit then compiles evaluation outlines on this basis and proposes a list of themes to the Management Board for the upcoming two-year programme.

#### 5.1 Management Board

The Management Board prioritises the proposals of the Corporate Strategic Evaluations Section and commissions the two-year evaluation programme. Every year, the Management Board receives a report on the implementation status of the individual evaluations and, where necessary in response to trends, decides on adjustments for the remainder of the two-year programme.

#### 5.2 Person responsible for commissioning the corporate strategic evaluation

The Management Board appoints a member of the Board who is mandated to commission a specific corporate strategic evaluation and is given the decision-making powers he/she needs for its implementation. In exceptional cases, the Management Board can delegate this function to a manager at the first managerial level. On the basis of the evaluation outline, this person (re)defines decision-making and accountability requirements (internal/external) as well as any changes that are needed and that the evaluation should address. He/she also acts as the Evaluation Unit’s contact person for the corporate strategic evaluation process in the Management Board and, as the person responsible
for commissioning the corporate strategic evaluation, is involved in all key decisions. The specific requirements in relation to involvement are laid down at the start of each corporate strategic evaluation. The person responsible for commissioning the corporate strategic evaluation fulfils a key role in terms of corporate policy orientation and the evaluation’s acceptance and as regards assessing potential synergies with other relevant processes in the company. Once the main report, the comments and the management response have been accepted, he/she arranges for members of the reference group and, where necessary, other representatives of relevant organisational units to draft the plans of action.

5.3 Reference group

A reference group comprising representatives from relevant organisational units is set up for each corporate strategic evaluation. The person responsible for commissioning the evaluation establishes the group in consultation with the directors of the relevant departments and corporate units based on content-related and corporate policy criteria. Its structure should reflect the scope of the theme as well as responsibilities within GIZ. The sectoral and managerial level should therefore be represented to an equal degree. The group’s members are appointed by the corresponding organisational unit, which also mandates them to represent their unit’s position. By virtue of their sectoral and/or methodological skills and experience, staff can also participate in the reference group in order to advise on and support the evaluation process.

The reference group is not a decision-making body. Throughout the entire evaluation process, it advises the Evaluation Unit and the person responsible for commissioning the evaluation, thereby acting as a sounding board for conceptual and other fundamental issues related to implementation of the evaluation. In this way, it ensures that the evaluation covers GIZ’s requirements and that certain parts of the company are not overburdened by the evaluation process and its recommendations. The group discusses and comments on the draft reports and on the conclusions and recommendations and plays a key role in drawing up the management response and the action plan and in communicating the evaluation findings.

5.4 Bodies

Following acceptance by the person responsible for commissioning the evaluation, the findings of corporate strategic evaluations are presented to the Strategy Committee. The Committee adopts the management response based on the evaluation’s recommendations. The plans of action (listed in a table of measures in the annex to the management response), which the representatives of the corresponding reference group and, where applicable, relevant organisational units (coordinated by the Evaluation Unit) subsequently compile, are adopted by the Management Committee at a later stage.

5.5 Evaluation Unit

The Evaluation Unit is responsible for drafting the evaluation programme that is discussed and decided by the Management Board. When implementing the individual corporate strategic evaluations, a team of two senior specialists usually works with the persons responsible for commissioning the evaluation and members of the reference group to compile the evaluation strategy, organises the invitation to tender/award procedure to consulting firms, steers this process and coordinates implementation of the evaluation. In some cases, the team may even implement the evaluation itself.
The Evaluation Unit is responsible for quality assurance of the entire process, the methodological procedure and for reporting. The evaluators are responsible for the content of the final report. The Evaluation Unit prepares comments on the corporate policy relevance of the object of the evaluation, the quality and on the content of the main report. Based on the discussion in the last reference group meeting, it drafts the management response, discusses and agrees this with the person responsible for commissioning the evaluation and reference group members, and coordinates preparation of the specific action items (unpublished attachment to the management response). Together with the Corporate Development Unit, the Evaluation Unit monitors progress in carrying out the measures commissioned in the implementation agreement.

Furthermore, the Evaluation Unit is responsible for publishing the evaluation reports and for organising learning and presentation events in order to make the evaluation findings available for institutional learning and, where applicable, for national and international sectoral discourse.

Although the Unit takes the reference group’s recommendations into account, the Unit is not involved in the group’s decisions, in order to ensure that the fundamental principle of independence is observed. The Management Board and the persons responsible for commissioning the evaluation have the authority to issue instructions in relation to the specification of the object of the evaluation, but not with regard to the methodological approach and/or the interpretation of the evaluation findings.

5.6 Evaluators

Evaluation Unit staff, external research institutes, consulting firms or (teams of) individual evaluators can be commissioned to carry out the individual evaluations.

Furthermore, in addition to evaluators, renowned international sector experts can be recruited to support the evaluation if this could improve the quality of the evaluation findings from a methodological and sectoral perspective.

The evaluators hold sole responsibility for the content of the evaluation report.

5.7 Communication with BMZ

Once the corporate strategic evaluation programme has been adopted by the Management Board, BMZ’s evaluation division is informed so that it can coordinate it with DEval’s evaluation programme if necessary. The process of publishing the corporate strategic evaluation’s main report includes submission of a copy to BMZ’s evaluation division. If BMZ is interested, the findings can be discussed and presented there. For corporate strategic evaluations that involve BMZ staff in Germany or abroad or request data and information from BMZ, BMZ also receives working documents (evaluation outlines, evaluation strategy, inception report) for information purposes in order to better assess the extent to which BMZ resources will be needed.
6 Process description

6.1 Drafting of the evaluation programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process step</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>Why and how?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collection of themes for corporate strategic evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation Unit (Unit 08)</td>
<td>Submit request to Management Board and first managerial level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal of suggestions</td>
<td>Unit 08</td>
<td>Use selection criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing of suggestions</td>
<td>Unit 08</td>
<td>Draft evaluation outlines for the decision-making process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritisation and decision-making on two-year programme</td>
<td>Management Board</td>
<td>Depends on resources in Unit 08, currently up to five evaluations per annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Board appoints members responsible for commissioning specific corporate strategic evaluation</td>
<td>Management Board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updating/adjustment of the evaluation programme</td>
<td>Management Board</td>
<td>Update status and, where necessary, select new themes for corporate strategic evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2 Individual evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process step</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>Why and how?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarification of commission with person responsible for commissioning the evaluation</td>
<td>Unit 08</td>
<td>Clarify goals of the evaluation, decision-making and information requirements and the targeted use of evaluation findings; Draft suggestions for the reference group; Decide whether to conduct evaluation internally/externally (The following sections describe external evaluations, which is normally the case)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of a reference group</td>
<td>Unit 08, together with the relevant organisational units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafting of the evaluation design (concept note)</td>
<td>Unit 08</td>
<td>Discuss and agree with person responsible for commissioning the evaluation and with the reference group; Specify the object of the evaluation and the evaluation questions as well as the design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision on and, where necessary, steering of the award to external evaluators</td>
<td>Unit 08</td>
<td>Award contract in line with O+R; Examine bids using Unit 08’s quality criteria; Check cost/benefit ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process step</td>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>Why and how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory data collection and analysis</td>
<td>Evaluators, where necessary Unit 08</td>
<td>Clarify data basis; develop data collection instruments; conduct initial interviews and document analyses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafting of inception report</td>
<td>Evaluators, where necessary Unit 08</td>
<td>Agree on how evaluation and data collection will be designed; check whether information requirements are covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of and comments on inception report</td>
<td>Unit 08 + person responsible for commissioning the evaluation and reference group</td>
<td>Arrange for comments by reference group following quality assurance by Unit 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification of inception report and evaluation design</td>
<td>Evaluators, where necessary Unit 08</td>
<td>Accept report following another quality assurance check by Unit 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of inception report</td>
<td>Unit 08, where applicable, person responsible for commissioning the evaluation and reference group</td>
<td>Accept report following another quality assurance check by Unit 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>Evaluators, where necessary Unit 08</td>
<td>Depends on design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>Evaluators, where necessary Unit 08</td>
<td>Conduct document analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft of main report</td>
<td>Evaluators, where necessary Unit 08</td>
<td>Carry out interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of and comments on main report</td>
<td>Unit 08 + person responsible for commissioning the evaluation and reference group, external peer reviewer, where applicable</td>
<td>Arrange for comments by reference group and person responsible for commissioning the evaluation following quality assurance by Unit 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification of the main report</td>
<td>Evaluators, where necessary Unit 08</td>
<td>Accept report following another quality assurance check by Unit 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of the main report</td>
<td>Unit 08</td>
<td>Accept report following another quality assurance check by Unit 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process step</td>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>Why and how?</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafting of comments on the (methodological) quality of the corporate strategic evaluation</td>
<td>Unit 08</td>
<td>Ensure transparency in relation to the reliability of the evaluation findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafting of the management response</td>
<td>Draft by Unit 08, discuss and agree with the person responsible for commissioning the evaluation</td>
<td>Ensure that recommendations are handled transparently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulation of the management response</td>
<td>Strategy Committee</td>
<td>Approve publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication of the evaluation report</td>
<td>Unit 08</td>
<td>Publish reports, bar the specified exceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compilation of action plan</td>
<td>Reference group with relevant organisational unit, moderated by Unit 08</td>
<td>Draft list of specific measures based on the management response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption of the action plan</td>
<td>Management Committee</td>
<td>Ensure the decisions are binding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and implementation of information and learning measures</td>
<td>Unit 08/relevant organisational unit</td>
<td>Disseminate measures, promote conceptual and organisational learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of additional publications (brochures, teasers, etc.)</td>
<td>Unit 08/relevant organisational unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where applicable, presentation of the findings (e.g. to commissioning parties/clients, partners, national and international experts)</td>
<td>Unit 08/relevant organisational unit</td>
<td>Disseminate findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of implementation of agreed measures</td>
<td>Units 08 and 04, relevant organisational unit</td>
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