

Administrative Instruction 3/2022

OSCE Evaluation Policy

This Administrative Instruction supersedes the Evaluation
Framework Administrative Instruction 1/2013

14 November 2022

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1. Reference

PC.DEC/399/Corr.1, Annex 6 – Internal Oversight Mandate

2. Introduction

1. The Evaluation Framework Administrative Instruction 1/2013 (EFI), together with a number of guidelines and tools developed over the years, has been providing guidance for evaluation in the OSCE so far.¹ Reviews of its implementation and other assessments have however shown that its implementation remains patchy and that evaluations are not always made the best possible use of.² This is partly related to the nature of the EFI itself. Its lack of clarity and comprehensiveness with regard to a number of issues (responsibilities for evaluation, evaluation processes, budgeting for evaluation, evaluation use, and operationalization of the EFI at the level of executive structures) has had implications for the coverage with and utility of evaluation, and the establishment of an evaluation culture in the Organization.
2. This Evaluation Policy replaces the EFI based on the experience with implementing the AI to date, while upholding its main standards and original purpose. At the same time, it goes beyond the original EFI in that it reflects a bigger vision for the contribution that evaluation can make to the work of the OSCE, to ensuring that the Organization remains relevant and that it makes a difference for its participating States. The Evaluation Policy is aspirational in nature, comprehensive in its approach, and focused both on evaluation process *and* on ensuring the effective use of evaluations. It is aligned with the Norms and Standards used in the United Nations System. Given the diversity of contexts in the OSCE region, it is understood that implementation of the Policy will differ depending on the given needs, resources and circumstances.

¹ The EFI and the evaluation tools developed by OIO are available on OIO's Evaluation Network Sharepoint Platform, accessible to all staff. A list of new tools that accompany this policy is included in Annex VI of this document.

² The following assessments were conducted by OIO in 2020: Self-assessment of the OSCE evaluation function; External Quality Assessment of OIO's independent evaluations and decentralized evaluations; and a Mapping of the OSCE's evaluation universe. Implementation of the Evaluation Framework Administrative Instruction 1/2003 was reviewed in 2016 and 2018.

3. This Evaluation Policy has been prepared in accordance with OIO's mandate (PC.DEC/399) and through it with Financial Regulations 6.01 and 6.06, and forms an integral part of the OSCE's Common Regulatory Management System (CRMS). It informs relevant Financial / Administrative Instructions and other documents, which are to be aligned with the provisions of this policy.³
4. The Evaluation Policy follows relevant international standards, and is based on a detailed self-assessment and mapping of the OSCE's evaluation function, as well as on extensive consultations across the Organization and with the OSCE's Audit Committee.

3. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation Policy

5. This Evaluation Policy serves as a framework for evaluation in the OSCE. It is intended to strengthen co-ordination, planning, implementation and use of evaluations throughout the Organization, with the ultimate aim to improve the OSCE's work and to strengthen both its focus on longer-term results, and the accountability and transparency in the use of all resources.
6. The Evaluation Policy applies to all OSCE activities regardless of their source of funding.
7. It takes effect on 14 November 2022.

4. Rationale and Principles for Evaluation

8. The OSCE understands evaluation as a systematic and objective assessment of a planned, on-going or completed intervention, project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and achievement of results. The aim is to determine its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. Evaluation also determines the coherence of OSCE interventions with other work conducted by the Organization, as well as their value added when compared to the activities of other actors.

³ These, inter alia, include FAI2, FAI4, and FAI15, as well as the OSCE Project Management Manual, project templates and other relevant documents, templates and guidance material.

4.1 Evaluation Functions in the OSCE

9. In the OSCE, evaluation has three main functions:
 - 1) To contribute to decision-making processes.**

Evaluations provide evidence-based information and recommendations that inform strategic decision-making, and planning processes that are essential for results-based management in the OSCE.
 - 2) To enhance learning and organizational development.**

Evaluations generate insights and lessons learned that support institutional learning, and the improvement of the Organization's work.
 - 3) To ensure accountability for results.**

Evaluations help participating States hold the OSCE's executive structures accountable for implementing the Organization's commitments and for achieving intended results.
10. Depending on the purpose and objectives of an evaluation, as well as the specific evaluation subject, it might serve one, two or all three of the above functions.
11. Evaluation is different, but complementary, to other oversight functions such as audit⁴. For instance, while evaluations in the OSCE usually focus on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coherence and impact of the Organization's activities, audits tend to emphasize issues related to the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational processes and governance, their compliance with internal standards, and the adequacy of internal controls given the risks at stake.
12. Evaluation is also closely related to other types of assessments such as reviews and research. Of particular relevance in the OSCE is the relationship between evaluation and monitoring, and the role that evaluations play in the context of results-based management in general and the programme and project cycle in particular. This topic is further explored below.

⁴ Another aspect of OIO's oversight work is investigation. Investigations focus primarily on fraud within the Organization (as well as on other potential misconduct or critical management issues).

4.2 International Standards and Principles for Evaluation

13. Evaluations in the OSCE are conducted in line with **international standards and principles** for evaluation, as established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation⁵ (see Annex 1). Among these, the overarching principles of *utility*, *credibility*, *impartiality* and *independence* are of particular importance for the OSCE⁶. These are to be respected in all types of OSCE evaluations as described below, in particular the Independent Evaluations conducted by OIO, decentralized evaluations as well as joint evaluations.

The **independence** of the evaluation function comprises two key aspects — *behavioural independence* and *organizational independence*. Behavioural independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence. Free access must be given to OSCE evaluators (or those commissioned to do an evaluation on behalf of the OSCE) to all information deemed necessary by them for the conduct of the evaluation. Organizational independence requires that the central evaluation function is positioned independently from management functions, carries the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda and is provided with adequate resources to conduct its work.

14. Organizational independence of evaluation in the OSCE is ensured by OIO's mandate, PC.DEC/399, which stipulates that the central evaluation function is held by OIO, which reports directly to the Secretary General, the OSCE's Chief Administrative Officer⁷. OIO has the authority to submit evaluation reports directly to the concerned management level, and to publish and distribute them both

In commissioning and conducting an evaluation, there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and take actions accordingly. The **utility** of evaluation is manifest through its use in making relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making processes and accountability for results.

Key elements of **impartiality** include objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias. Evaluators need to be impartial at all stages of the evaluation process, meaning they should not have a stake or past or future involvement in the policy setting, design or management of an evaluation subject.

internally and externally without any undue influence. OIO develops its annual Independent Evaluation Plan, which is done in consultation with management and other relevant stakeholders. OIO's plan is approved by the Secretary General following review and endorsement by the Audit Committee. Notwithstanding, the Director of OIO may, in agreement with the Secretary General, carry out any action within the purview of his or her mandate.

⁵ [United Nations Evaluation Group \(2016\). Norms and Standards for Evaluation. New York: UNEG. Annex I lists all 14 Norms.](#)

⁶ The definitions of these overarching principles provided in the boxes in this chapter are derived from the [UNEG Norms for Evaluation](#).

⁷ *Internal Oversight covers all OSCE activities, institutions and missions regardless of the source of funds.* (PC.DEC/399; para. 3).

15. Evaluations in the OSCE apply the following evaluation criteria:⁸ relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact and coherence. Depending on the objectives of a specific evaluation, other criteria relevant for the OSCE can also be applied, such as for instance value added, partnership-orientation, inclusion and equity, or interconnectedness and interdependence. Not all criteria need to be used in every evaluation. The choice depends on various factors, including the purpose and objectives of the evaluation, available resources, and methodological considerations.

5. Types of evaluations in the OSCE

16. Various types of evaluations are conducted in the OSCE, and, depending on the perspective taken, there are different ways to distinguish them. In the OSCE, distinctions according to the responsible entity within the Organization (i.e. independent, decentralized, joint evaluations or self-evaluations), and the timing of an evaluation (i.e. ex-ante, evaluability assessments, mid-term, ex-post or real-time evaluations) are most relevant.

5.1 Evaluation types according to the responsible entity within the OSCE

5.1.1 Independent Evaluations

17. The evaluations conducted by the OSCE's OIO in accordance with its mandate (PC.DEC/399) are called **Independent Evaluations** because of the Office's independence from those directly responsible for the design and implementation of the OSCE's interventions. OIO's Independent Evaluations are foreseen by its annual Independent Evaluation Plan and most commonly, but not exclusively, focus on strategic issues and thematic areas of relevance to the Organization, and look at them from a cross-organizational perspective. In exceptional cases, OIO may also conduct evaluations of large OSCE projects or programmes implemented by individual executive structures⁹.

Evaluations must be credible. **Credibility** is grounded in independence, impartiality and a rigorous methodology. Key elements of credibility include transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving relevant stakeholders and robust quality assurance systems. Evaluation results (or findings) and recommendations are derived from — or informed by — the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data and by accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis of evidence. Credibility requires that evaluations are ethically conducted and managed by evaluators that exhibit professional and cultural competencies.

⁸ See UNEG definition of evaluation (Annex I).

⁹ This includes situations where OIO agrees to undertake such an evaluation following a request made by an executive structure; or when OIO wants to evaluate this project or programme as part of one of its Independent Evaluations.

18. OIO also synthesizes findings and lessons learned from Independent Evaluations and decentralized evaluations undertaken by executive structures, in order to identify issues that are of relevance to the Organization at large.
19. OIO's evaluations are usually carried out by OIO directly, with or without the support of external consultants. Sometimes, they may also be conducted by external evaluators on behalf of OIO, and under OIO's supervision and quality assurance. All evaluators (OIO as well as external) are required to follow the Ethical Standards for Evaluators as set out by the UN Evaluation Group¹⁰. OIO's evaluations are submitted to the Secretary General and shared with management and staff, as well as with the Audit Committee and the OSCE's External Auditors. A variety of knowledge products related to OIO's evaluations are published on the OSCE's website.

5.1.2 Decentralized evaluations

20. **Decentralized evaluations**¹¹ are evaluations managed by OSCE fund managers, programme or project managers, and conducted by external evaluation consultants. They typically focus on individual projects or on a sequence of projects within a programme, or on the work of one executive structure in a specific thematic area. Similar to OIO's Independent Evaluations, decentralized evaluations need to respect the evaluation principles and standards including ethical considerations as described above. To respect the principle of independence and impartiality, the external evaluators engaged to conduct these evaluations must not have been involved in the design or implementation of the evaluated interventions, on which they shall sign a declaration as part of their contract for the given evaluation. Other than in their capacity as evaluators, they should also not enter into any other type of working relationship with the concerned executive structure or with the beneficiary of the project evaluated for at least a one year time period following submission of the final evaluation report. All the elements above shall be set out in the terms of reference for the assignment.
21. Decentralized evaluations constitute an essential element of the OSCE's overall evaluation system. They inform decision-making and project planning and development, contribute to the improvement of the Organization's work, and help the OSCE demonstrate transparency and accountability vis-à-vis its participating States and, in the case of ExB projects, also towards its resource partners. Decentralized evaluations and OIO's Independent Evaluations are complementary in that a combination of both is needed to ensure adequate evaluation coverage of the OSCE's work. The former are furthermore essential building blocks for the Independent Evaluations, and they

¹⁰ [United Nations Evaluation Group \(revised 2020\). *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*. New York: UNEG.](#)

¹¹ In the OSCE, decentralized evaluations are also known as 'commissioned evaluations'. In this policy, the term 'decentralized evaluation' instead of 'commissioned evaluation' is used to align language with international practice.

contribute to OIO's knowledge management work and organizational learning and development. OIO uses them, for instance, as inputs for synthesis reviews that aim to identify patterns and issues across evaluations as well as lessons learned that are of relevance to the Organization at large. This Evaluation Policy contains a number of provisions that determine whether a particular project, sequence of projects, programme or thematic area needs to be subjected to a decentralized evaluation. They are presented below.

5.1.3 Joint evaluations

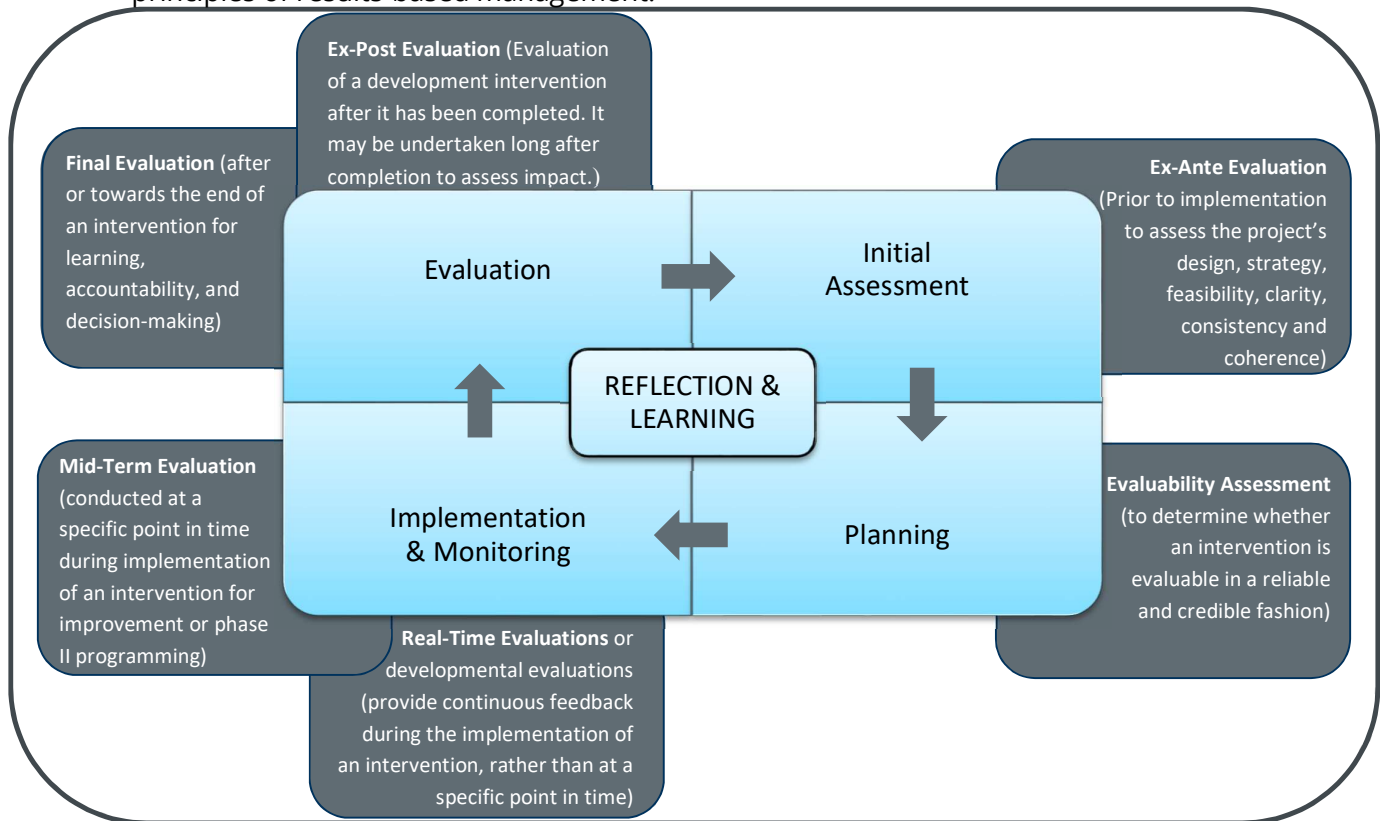
22. **Joint evaluations** are typically evaluations conducted by OIO's evaluation unit in cooperation with an internal partner. They can take many different shapes and forms, depending on the subject of the evaluation, and the role and responsibilities assumed by each partner in the evaluation process. Joint exercises can include combined evaluation-audit assignments, or evaluations conducted by OIO together with a dedicated unit or with the support of a technical expert from an executive structure. As appropriate, joint evaluations of ExB projects may be undertaken with a national partner, a United Nations agency etc., with due respect to the evaluation norms and standards as entailed by this policy.
23. In addition to the benefits offered by other evaluations, joint evaluations can support internal evaluation capacity building, enhance ownership of evaluation recommendations by executive structures, and avoid overlap of OSCE evaluations with similar exercises conducted by partners, thereby saving costs and avoiding evaluation fatigue on the side of counterparts. They also contribute to mutual learning and help to create a shared understanding by all concerned of the issues at stake.

5.1.4 Self-evaluations

24. **Self-evaluations** are critical assessments of a programme's or project's design, implementation, achievements and overall performance by the department or unit of the OSCE executive structure that implemented that programme or project, or by another unit (e.g. a central coordination unit) of this executive structure. Self-evaluations are governed by the OSCE Project Management Manual and by any guidance issued by the Programming and Evaluation Support Unit (PESU) in the Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), and/or by corresponding units or appointed focal points in executive structures. They are used as a key managerial decision-making input in strategic planning, programming and budgeting, as well as for overall accountability and reporting to resource partners and partners.

5.2 Evaluation types according to their timing

25. The following graph illustrates how evaluability assessments, ex-ante, mid-term, final or real-time evaluations can be situated in the programme / project cycle in line with the principles of results-based management.¹²



OIO's Independent Evaluations, decentralized evaluations and joint evaluations can all be conducted either mid-term, at the end of the project cycle, ex-post or real-time. All three can be preceded by an evaluability assessment.

6 Evaluation Responsibilities and Planning in the OSCE

26. Responsibilities for the evaluation function in the OSCE are shared between several stakeholders, including the PC/ACMF, the Audit Committee, the Secretary General, OIO, Fund Managers, Main Programme, Programme and Project Managers and staff, CPC/PESU and Evaluation Focal Points in all executive structures. The table in Annex IV presents an overview.
27. Independent Evaluations are planned by OIO in consultation with the OSCE Secretary General, Heads of Institutions, Heads of Missions, Secretariat Directors, and field offices

¹² Annex V of this Evaluation Policy provides a more detailed description of these evaluation types.

and other relevant stakeholders. A number of criteria are taken into account when preparing OIO's Independent Evaluation Plan¹³. The plan is approved by the Secretary General following review and endorsement by the Audit Committee, and shared with the OSCE's External Auditors, as well as with the ACMF in OIO's Annual Report.

28. Heads of Institutions, Heads of Missions and field offices, and Secretariat Directors supported by executive structures' Evaluation Focal Points, prepare biennial decentralized evaluation plans that list all the decentralized evaluations foreseen to be commissioned in the coming two years. Similar to OIO's evaluation plan, the decentralized evaluation plans are rolling documents that are reviewed, and updated if necessary, after the first year of implementation. These plans are made available to OIO. OIO compiles an Organization-wide Decentralized Evaluation Plan based on the inputs received from executive structures, and shares it together with OIO's evaluation plan on the Evaluation Network Sharepoint Platform¹⁴.
29. The OSCE's Decentralized Evaluation Plan provides an overview of the evaluation coverage of the OSCE's work, and helps OIO pinpoint thematic areas where evaluation coverage is low, and identify decentralized evaluations that could serve as inputs for Independent Evaluations conducted by OIO.
30. In exceptional cases, OIO may decide to conduct an Independent Evaluation of a project or programme foreseen to be subject of a decentralized evaluation, either as a stand-alone Independent Evaluation or as a case study. In order to avoid duplication of efforts, this relieves the particular executive structure of the need to commission a decentralized evaluation of this project. Subject to agreement of the resource partner(s), the extra-budgetary project's decentralized evaluation budget and OIO resources may be pooled to cover the costs of this evaluation.
31. Decentralized evaluations should be conducted for all programmatic Unified Budget (UB) and Extra-Budgetary (ExB) funded interventions where one or more of the following criteria apply:

¹³ Annex III of this Evaluation Policy provides a list of the main criteria used when selecting evaluations for OIO's Independent Evaluation Plan.

¹⁴ OIO also shares the individual decentralized evaluation plans of field operations and Secretariat departments (as well as the reports on decentralized evaluations of field operations and the Secretariat) with CPC/PESU for the purpose of ensuring planning for decentralized evaluations and integration of evaluation findings and lessons learned in project design.

- **ExB project budgets of EUR 400,000 or higher¹⁵;**
- **Consecutive UB or ExB projects and their combination** under a UB programme over a period of at least 4 years that have **combined budgets of EUR 400,000 or higher¹⁶;**
- projects that have or might have created a considerable reputational risk as per the consideration of the Head of the executive structure, the Secretary General or OIO;
- projects that have an innovative or pilot nature as per the consideration of the Head of the executive structure;
- ExB projects with a specific donor requirement for evaluation, irrespective of the volume of the overall project budget;
- non-project activities and processes of strategic relevance to the Organization as per the assessment of the Head of the executive structure, the Secretary General or OIO.

32. If deemed useful and feasible, the Secretary General, Secretariat Directors, Heads of Institutions, Heads of Missions and field offices, may also decide to commission decentralized evaluations of projects and interventions that do not fall in any of the above categories. This could involve combined evaluations of several related UB projects of the same time period¹⁷, or overall country programme evaluations.

7 Resources for Evaluation

33. The provision of adequate resources is a prerequisite for the development of an effective evaluation system and evaluation culture, and for ensuring the independence of the OSCE's evaluation function, both OIO's and decentralized. With respect to financial benchmarking, the United Nations Joint Inspection unit concluded that organizations should consider a range of funding that is between 0.5 and 3.0 per cent of organizational

¹⁵ Donor-led evaluations may be considered as satisfying requirement for decentralized evaluations. Donors, who engage in donor-led evaluations are encouraged to coordinate their approach with the concerned executive structure and OIO.

¹⁶ Given the annual nature of the OSCE's Unified Budget, decentralized evaluations should take place after 4 years for consecutive related *UB and EXB projects of a programmatic type*. Contrary to projects of a more administrative nature, these are interventions that either directly benefit stakeholders in participating States and / or build OSCE staff capacities. Projects are to be considered consecutive, e.g. if they are implemented in various phases, and / or demonstrate thematic continuity or complementarity. Non-programmatic projects should be subject to management review or audit as per the relevant regulations.

¹⁷ An example of such a combined evaluation would be an external evaluation of all Human Dimension interventions of a specific field operation that were implemented during the same time period, or an evaluation of gender mainstreaming in the work of a specific field operation over the past few years.

expenditure¹⁸. Given the fact that the lower part of the range applies to large organizations with multi-billion annual operational budgets, consultations within the OSCE have suggested a realistic target of around 3 per cent of operational costs depending on the size of the programme to be evaluated, bearing in mind a minimum cost for an evaluation is around EUR 10,000 -12,000. This policy therefore sets a target of 3 per cent of its available operational costs budget to be used for evaluation activities in line with international best practice and UNEG Norms and Standards¹⁹. It should be noted that unless additional funding for this is provided for by participating States in the approved unified budget, such resources should come from existing funding envelopes.

7.1 Independent Evaluations

34. The Organization aims to ensure sufficient UB resources to fund an adequately staffed evaluation unit in OIO, and its activities related to Independent Evaluations and other work as per OIO's mandate and this Evaluation Policy.
35. If an individual ExB funded project (or several projects) is covered in-depth by an Independent Evaluation conducted by OIO, this would relieve the concerned executive structure of the need to commission an external decentralized evaluation of that ExB project. In this circumstance, any resources of the ExB project, which were dedicated to a decentralized evaluation, should be made available to cost-share for such evaluation²⁰. To ensure more predictable funding for evaluation participating States are furthermore invited to second professional evaluators and to provide ExB resourcing to OIO should this not be covered by the UB.

7.2 Decentralized evaluations

36. Extra- budgetary programmes and projects, for which a decentralized evaluation is required as per the provisions of the present Evaluation Policy (chapter 6), should include a budget (with a dedicated budget line) for evaluation, and refer to the evaluation in the project proposal document. Planning for evaluation hence starts during the programme or project design phase. The recommended amount to be set aside for decentralized evaluations is normally around 3 per cent of the overall programme / project budget with the recommended minimum budget starting at around EUR 10,000 - 12,000²¹, depending on the size of the programme / project to be evaluated, the objectives and scope of the

¹⁸ UN Joint Inspections |Unit, 2014, para 77; "the general view is that the range of funding between 0.5% and 3% of organizational expenditure is worth consideration depending on the mandate of the organization, the size of the organization, types of evaluations, and role of the function in institutionalization and support to strengthening decentralized evaluation, national capacities for evaluation, and partnerships in evaluation."

¹⁹ United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, 2014 and UNEG Norm 12 and Standards 1.2 , 2016

²⁰ Subject to resource partner consent and to be foreseen in the relevant agreements with the resource partners.

²¹ This amount corresponds to around 3 per cent of EUR 400,000, which is the project size that requires a decentralized evaluation. For larger projects, the evaluation budget should be higher than EUR 12,000, and be calculated at up to 3 per cent of the respective project budget.

evaluation, and the local market rates. In the case of ExB projects, budgeting for evaluation may be adjusted to correspond to the provisions of individual pledge and / or co-operation agreements with particular resource partners. In the case of UB budget projects, budgeting for evaluations would be included as part of the Executive Structures' budget submissions to participating States.

37. Resources for the evaluation of non-project activities and processes of strategic relevance to the Organization as noted in chapter 6 above, should be provided by the larger Programme they are a part of, or by Management (HoM) funds, in line with their budget submission to participating States.

8 Quality Assurance

38. If evaluations are to be useful, they need to be of good quality in line with the relevant standards. Ensuring the quality of decentralized evaluations is the responsibility of the responsible evaluation manager, i.e. the official who contracts the evaluation and oversees the evaluation process, under the authority of the Fund Manager / Main Programme Manager. In some executive structures, this role may be assigned to the HoM's office, while in other executive structures the concerned programme / project manager might be responsible for managing the evaluation, and for ensuring that the evaluator has access to relevant data and interlocutors.
39. Quality assurance starts during the planning phase with the development of detailed evaluation terms of reference and the selection of a qualified and independent evaluation consultant. Evaluation reference groups can be helpful if composed of qualified and committed individuals and if they are used properly. Evaluation reports need to be thoroughly reviewed by the respective evaluation manager for accuracy of findings, consistency, impartiality and the relevance and clarity of the evaluation recommendations.
40. To ensure the quality of OIO's evaluation reports and to strengthen evaluation capacities within the Organization, OIO has established a number of mechanisms including:
 - **Evaluation reference groups** composed of a group of internal stakeholders that provide relevant information and feedback to an evaluation throughout the evaluation process. External stakeholders may also be invited to join if deemed useful. It is recommended that reference groups are established for all Independent Evaluations conducted by OIO, as well as for decentralized evaluations of larger projects.
 - **The involvement of external subject matter experts** in evaluations that require technical inputs and expertise.

- **The involvement of local evaluators** in evaluations that require familiarity with the local context, and to build evaluation capacities locally.
- **Periodic external (and internal) quality assessments** of OIO's Independent Evaluations and decentralized evaluations.
- **Backstopping and advisory functions** regarding decentralized evaluations provided by OIO to Secretariat departments, OSCE Institutions and field operations.
- **Evaluation guidelines and tools**, including sample evaluation TOR and quality assurance checklists, developed and / or collected by OIO and made available to all executive structures through the Evaluation Network and other means.
- **Evaluation capacity development** for staff and counterparts to be provided by OIO online and / or in person with a focus on how to plan for, commission, manage, assure the quality of, and follow up on decentralized evaluations, including in co-operation with PESU and its training on project/programme cycle management.

9 Enhancing evaluation use

41. Utility is one of the key guiding principles for evaluation in the OSCE. Both OIO's Independent Evaluations and decentralized evaluations commissioned by executive structures are motivated by the intention to use the evaluation results for decision making, for learning, to improve the Organization's work, and for accountability purposes. To achieve this, evaluations must not only be independent, impartial, objective, credible and of high quality, and make recommendations that are relevant and timely, but also be carried out with due attention to the evaluation process.
42. The evaluation process, i.e. how an evaluation is conducted, often plays a decisive role in determining whether or not the results of an evaluation will be used, and whether lessons are learned from it. Learning happens *while* an evaluation is conducted, as well as *after* an evaluation was conducted and the results have been disseminated and are being discussed. A number of principles, when taken into account, facilitate learning from evaluation and evaluation use in general:
 - **A strong overall evaluation culture**, as demonstrated by a supply of good quality evaluations and a healthy demand for evaluations, related knowledge products, advisory and support services; and a commitment to apply lessons learned to improve the work of the Organization.
 - **A strategic approach to the selection of evaluation topics**. Having evaluation utility in mind, the selection of the evaluation topic can have a significant influence on whether or not an evaluation is considered useful. When selecting topics for

OIO's Independent Evaluations, a number of parameters are taken into account, such as the strategic priorities and needs of the OSCE, evaluation clients' demand for evaluations of certain interventions or thematic areas, organizational learning needs, as well as accountability-related considerations such as the volume of funding. For decentralized evaluations, programmatic needs, such as for instance the need to course-correct a particular programme or project, or to learn lessons for a potential new phase of an intervention, might stand in the foreground. Resource partner requests for evaluation to provide a credible picture of the results achieved also often play a role.

- An **inclusive approach to evaluation** that engages evaluation stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, applying international standards²². This starts with planning an evaluation and determining the key evaluation needs, assessing evaluability of the intervention, developing the evaluation questions and designing the overall evaluation approach. Stakeholder engagement is also essential during data collection, as well as in the final phases of an evaluation when evaluation findings and recommendations for the way forward are discussed.
- Safeguarding the **quality of evaluations** as discussed in the previous chapter of this policy. Good quality evaluations are characterized by a rigorous methodology, ensuring that evaluations meet internationally agreed evaluation norms and standards, make use of the best available data and involve an accurate analysis of evidence.
- **A good monitoring system** that collects data on progress made at the programme and project level towards the achievement of outputs, short- and mid-term outcomes. The collection of data must be done against a set of SMART performance indicators²³ derived from a sound intervention logic described in the project proposal, the Unified Budget Proposal and related reports. Monitoring data must be presented in good quality narrative monitoring reports and final self-evaluation reports. They represent an essential input for all evaluations conducted in the OSCE, and allow evaluations to provide complementary information and evidence-based findings on higher level effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, coherence and sustainability, as well as on other criteria such as value added or partnership-orientation.
- The dissemination of evaluation results through **evaluation knowledge products**. How and to which audience evaluation findings are presented influences their use. Keeping the purpose of a given evaluation in mind, evaluation

²² See UNEG standards

²³ SMART: Specific, Measurable, Available, Realistic, Time-Bound. Usually, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative SMART indicators is used.

results should be shared with all relevant stakeholders in the most targeted way possible, using a variety of knowledge products. These include evaluation reports, evaluation summaries, OIO's newsletter *OSCEval News*, evaluation briefs, and presentations. Each evaluation should be accompanied by a well-designed dissemination plan that ensures timely and targeted sharing of relevant information to those who have a need to know and / or to learn.

- **Following up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations:** OIO's Independent Evaluations contain a management response of the relevant Fund Manager / Main Programme Manager and action plan for the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. These must be prepared by the concerned executive structure and submitted to OIO following receipt of the final evaluation report. The response contains management's overall position regarding the evaluation findings and recommendations, as well as a detailed description of activities, time-lines and individual responsibilities for recommendation implementation. The management response and action plan constitute an integral part of the evaluation report. Updates on implementation are to be submitted to OIO's evaluation unit on a regular basis upon request by OIO. In addition, OIO may follow up on implementation through discussions with management and with evaluation focal points of executive structures. OIO periodically reports on the status of recommendation implementation to the Secretary General and to the OSCE's Audit Committee.

While a management response is not required for decentralized evaluations, a recommendation implementation action plan should be prepared, signed and its implementation overseen by the Fund Manager / Main Programme Manager. They serve as internal roadmaps that inform course-corrections of ongoing interventions or the design of follow-up projects. Good practices and lessons learned through evaluations should also be shared within and across executive structures, and inform the development of other interventions. Executive structures are encouraged to make the recommendation implementation action plans, as well as the lessons learned reflections available to OIO²⁴.

- Ensuring that **evaluations inform decision-making and planning processes.** This is key and requires the use of the appropriate mechanisms to make sure that findings from evaluations are taken into consideration in the design of new policies, strategies, programmes, projects, as well as relevant instructions and guidelines. With regards to the results of OIO's Independent Evaluations this is a shared responsibility between the concerned senior management, CPC/PESU and OIO. Mechanisms include the Unified Budget preparation process, programmatic

²⁴ OIO will make documents submitted by the Secretariat and field operations available to CPC/PESU.

planning meetings, Hols / HoMs meetings, and ExB project design and review processes. For decentralized evaluations, this is a shared responsibility between the concerned management in the Secretariat, Institutions and field operations, and CPC/PESU and/or corresponding units in executive structures.

10 Dissemination

43. All OIO Independent Evaluations are made available on the OSCE's website unless they contain sensitive information. The website also includes OIO's evaluation newsletters *OSCEval News*, which are dedicated to OIO's Independent Evaluations and other relevant evaluation-related events and interventions. Independent Evaluations are furthermore shared internally by OIO with the Secretary General, Senior Management in the Secretariat, the Heads of Institutions, Missions and field offices, CPC/PESU, members of the Evaluation Network, as well as with the Audit Committee and the External Auditors of the OSCE. It is the responsibility of OSCE's management to disseminate the reports further within their respective departments and executive structures.
44. OSCE executive structures are expected to forward their decentralized evaluation reports to OIO, and encouraged to share the relevant recommendation implementation action plans and reports. As a general principle, sharing and discussion of decentralized evaluation reports is encouraged as a way to improve the OSCE's work, co-operation with counterparts and resource partners, and to strengthen accountability. At the level of executive structures, it is the responsibility of concerned management to disseminate the reports internally as well as to external stakeholders such as resource partners, project partners and beneficiaries as appropriate and useful, i.e. respecting the principle of 'do no harm'. The OSCE's Decentralized Evaluation Plan, compiled by OIO based on the inputs from all executive structures, is made available on the internal Evaluation Network Sharepoint Platform.
45. For all evaluations, dissemination plans should be developed during the evaluation planning phase.

11 Review of the OSCE Evaluation Policy

46. Implementation of the Evaluation Policy will be externally reviewed every four years, and amendments proposed in light of the review findings as well as ongoing observations by OIO and lessons on implementation identified by members of the Evaluation Network. An update on implementation of this Evaluation Policy is provided annually to participating States through OIO's Annual Report.

47. **The focal point for revisions and interpretations of this Evaluation Policy is the Office of Internal Oversight.**

Annexes

Annex I: United Nations Evaluation Group Norms for Evaluation

DEFINITION OF EVALUATION

1. An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.

2. The purposes of evaluation are to promote accountability and learning. Evaluation aims to understand why — and to what extent — intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyse the implications of the results. Evaluation can inform planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting and can contribute to evidence-based policymaking, development effectiveness and organizational effectiveness.

NORM 1 Internationally agreed principles, goals and targets

3. Within the United Nations system, it is the responsibility of evaluation managers and evaluators to uphold and promote, in their evaluation practice, the principles and values to which the United Nations is committed. In particular, they should respect, promote and contribute to the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

NORM 2 Utility

4. In commissioning and conducting an evaluation, there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and actions. The utility of evaluation is manifest through its use in making relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making processes and accountability for results. Evaluations could also be used to contribute beyond the organization by generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders.

NORM 3 Credibility

5. Evaluations must be credible. Credibility is grounded on independence, impartiality and a rigorous methodology. Key elements of credibility include transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving relevant stakeholders and robust quality assurance systems. Evaluation results (or findings) and recommendations are derived from — or informed by — the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data and by accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis of evidence. Credibility requires that evaluations are ethically conducted and managed by evaluators that exhibit professional and cultural competencies.

NORM 4 Independence

6. Independence of evaluation is necessary for credibility, influences the ways in which an evaluation is used and allows evaluators to be impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation process. The independence of the evaluation function comprises two key aspects — behavioural independence and organizational independence. Behavioural independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party. Evaluators must have the full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially,

without the risk of negative effects on their career development, and must be able to freely express their assessment. The independence of the evaluation function underpins the free access to information that evaluators should have on the evaluation subject.

7. Organizational independence requires that the central evaluation function is positioned independently from management functions, carries the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda and is provided with adequate resources to conduct its work. Organizational independence also necessitates that evaluation managers have full discretion to directly submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of decision-making and that they should report directly to an organization's governing body and/or the executive head. Independence is vested in the Evaluation Head to directly commission, produce, publish and disseminate duly quality-assured evaluation reports in the public domain without undue influence by any party.

NORM 5 Impartiality

8. The key elements of impartiality are objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias. The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including planning an evaluation, formulating the mandate and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, conducting the evaluation and formulating findings and recommendations.

9. Evaluators need to be impartial, implying that evaluation team members must not have been (or expect to be in the near future) directly responsible for the policy setting, design or management of the evaluation subject.

NORM 6 Ethics

10. Evaluation must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the 'do no harm' principle for humanitarian assistance. Evaluators must respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, must ensure that sensitive data is protected and that it cannot be traced to its source and must validate statements made in the report with those who provided the relevant information. Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of private information from those who provide it. When evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered, it must be reported discreetly to a competent body (such as the relevant office of audit or investigation).

NORM 7 Transparency

11. Transparency is an essential element of evaluation that establishes trust and builds confidence, enhances stakeholder ownership and increases public accountability. Evaluation products should be publicly accessible.

NORM 8 Human rights and gender equality

12. The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation managers to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning the commitment to the principle of 'no-one left behind'.

NORM 9 National evaluation capacities

13. The effective use of evaluation can make valuable contributions to accountability and learning and thereby justify actions to strengthen national evaluation capacities. In line with General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/237 on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, national evaluation capacities should be supported upon the request of Member States.

NORM 10 Professionalism

14. Evaluations should be conducted with professionalism and integrity. Professionalism should contribute towards the credibility of evaluators, evaluation managers and evaluation heads, as well as the evaluation function. Key aspects include access to knowledge; education and training; adherence to ethics and to these norms and standards; utilization of evaluation competencies; and recognition of knowledge, skills and experience. This should be supported by an enabling environment, institutional structures and adequate resources.

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NORM 11 Enabling environment

15. Evaluation requires an enabling environment that includes an organizational culture that values evaluation as a basis for accountability, learning and evidence-based decision-making; a firm commitment from organizational leadership to use, publicize and follow up on evaluation outcomes; and recognition of evaluation as a key corporate function for achieving results and public accountability. Creating an enabling environment also entails providing predictable and adequate resources to the evaluation function.

NORM 12 Evaluation policy

16. Every organization should establish an explicit evaluation policy. Taking into account the specificities of the organization's requirements, the evaluation policy should include a clear explanation of the purpose, concepts, rules and use of evaluation within the organization; the institutional framework and roles and responsibilities; measures to safeguard evaluation independence and public accountability; benchmarks for financing the evaluation function that are commensurate with the size and function of the organization; measures to ensure the quality and the use of evaluations and post-evaluation follow-up; a framework for decentralized evaluations, where applicable; and provision for periodic peer review or external assessment. The evaluation policy should be approved by the governing body and/or the executive head to ensure it has a formally recognized status at the highest levels of the organization. References to evaluators in the policy should encompass staff of the evaluation function as well as evaluation consultants.

NORM 13 Responsibility for the evaluation function

17. An organization's governing body and/or its executive head are responsible for ensuring the establishment of a duly independent, competent and adequately resourced evaluation function to serve its governance and management needs. The evaluation budget should be commensurate to the size and function of the organization.

18. The governing body and/or the executive head are responsible for appointing a professionally competent head of evaluation and for fostering an enabling environment that allows the head of evaluation to plan, design, manage and conduct evaluation activities in alignment with the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation. The governing body and/or the executive head are responsible for ensuring that evaluators, evaluation managers and the head of the evaluation function have the freedom to conduct their work without risking their career development. Management of the human and financial resources allocated to evaluation

should lie with the head of evaluation in order to ensure that the evaluation function is staffed by professionals with evaluation competencies in line with the UNEG Competency Framework.

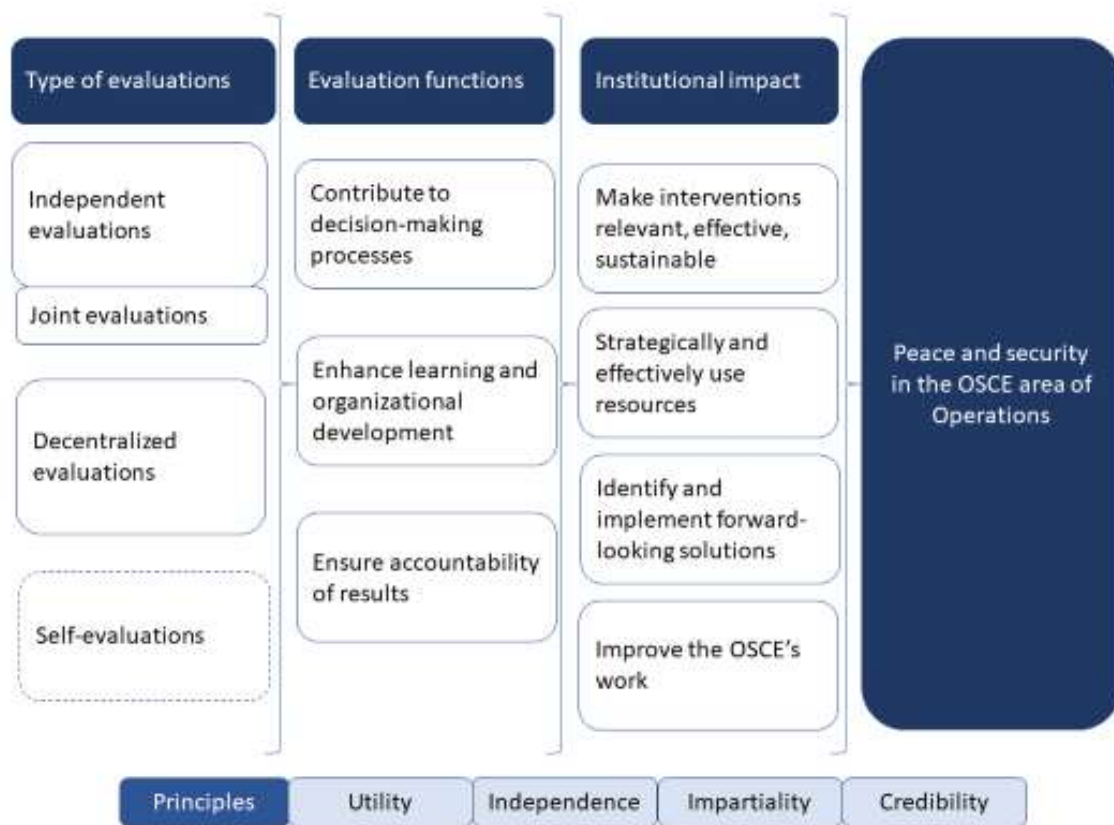
19. Where a decentralized evaluation function exists, the central evaluation function is responsible for establishing a framework that provides guidance, quality assurance, technical assistance and professionalization support.

NORM 14 Evaluation use and follow-up

20. Organizations should promote evaluation use and follow-up, using an interactive process that involves all stakeholders. Evaluation requires an explicit response by the governing authorities and/or management addressed by its recommendations that clearly states responsibilities and accountabilities. Management should integrate evaluation results and recommendations into its policies and programmes.

21. The implementation of evaluation recommendations should be systematically followed up. A periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations should be presented to the governing bodies and/or the head of the organization.

Annex II: Theory of Change for Evaluation in the OSCE



Annex III: Criteria to Select Topics for OIO’s Independent Evaluations

In addition to the evaluability of a given programme or thematic area, the following three criteria are taken into consideration when selecting topics for OIO’s Independent Evaluations:

Selection Criteria	Elements and Considerations
Strategic Priorities and Needs of the Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present and potential future strategic priorities and needs - Upcoming decision making points - Upcoming programming processes
Organizational Learning Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovativeness of the intervention - Potential for scaling up - Demands for additional knowledge
Accountability-related considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation coverage (thematic and geographical) - Significance of investment in relation to the overall portfolio - Resource partner requests for evaluation, including as outlined in Co-operation Frameworks or Contribution/Grant Agreements - Prevalence of risks or potential risks (political, legal, funding, reputational etc.) that results cannot be achieved as foreseen.

Annex IV: Responsibilities for Evaluation in the OSCE

Responsible entity	Responsibilities
OSCE Permanent Council / ACMF	<p>In line with UNEG Norm 13:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguards the independence of OIO's evaluation function • Approves adequate resources for evaluation in the OSCE • Takes note of OIO's Independent Evaluation Plan (as part of OIO's overall Oversight Plan) • Takes note of evaluation findings and recommendations when presented to them
Audit Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews and endorses OIO's annual Independent Evaluation Plan • Takes note of OIO's Independent Evaluation Reports and the status of implementation of evaluation recommendations • Promotes a culture of accountability and learning with OSCE senior management and the OSCE Permanent Council / ACMF
Secretary General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures compliance with the OSCE Evaluation Policy as the Organization's Chief Administrative Officer • Approves OIO's annual Independent Evaluation Plan (as part of OIO's overall Oversight Plan) • Ensures OIO's independence in line with its mandate • Aims to ensure that adequate staffing and resourcing of OIO's evaluation function are provided for in the UBP • Considers findings of OIO's Independent Evaluations in decision making and programming processes • As head of the Secretariat, carries out responsibility for the preparation of management responses and the implementation of recommendations from OIO's Independent Evaluations by the Secretariat, and considers action to follow up with Management on implementation if so informed by OIO • Supports an enabling environment for evaluation, including by promoting evaluation as a tool for decision making, learning and accountability • Encourages Hols/HoMs to strengthen their decentralized evaluation practices, in particular when informed of low evaluation coverage in a particular executive structure by OIO
Office of Internal Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares OIO's annual Independent Evaluation Plan (as part of its overall Oversight Plan) following a consultative process and publishes it on the internal Evaluation Network Sharepoint Platform • Manages, conducts and follows up on Independent Evaluations including management responses and recommendation

	<p>implementation action plans and the implementation status thereof</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes OIO Independent Evaluations and knowledge products available internally and on the OSCE's website unless they contain sensitive information • Compiles the Organization's annual decentralized evaluation plan with inputs from executive structures and publishes it on the internal Evaluation Network Sharepoint Platform • Collects decentralized evaluation reports from executive structures and makes them available to Evaluation Network members through the dedicated internal Sharepoint Platform • Conducts synthesis reviews and quality assessments of Independent and decentralized evaluations • Prepares an annual report reflecting key findings and lessons learned from the evaluative work of the OSCE • Provides advisory, capacity building and other support services to strengthen the OSCE's overall evaluation culture • Manages the OSCE's Evaluation Network • Facilitates sharing of good evaluation practices within the OSCE and with external partners • Prepares, shares and publishes knowledge products related to evaluation in the OSCE, including on cross-cutting issues and lessons learned identified by evaluations
<p>OSCE Management and staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors the implementation of programmes and projects and ensures that robust monitoring data is collected on their relevance and effectiveness • Ensures that decentralized evaluations are planned and commissioned in line with this Evaluation Policy and specific resource partner requirements • Ensures the quality of decentralized evaluations and safeguards their independence • Uses findings from decentralized evaluations to inform policy, programme and project design • Ensures adequate funding of decentralized evaluations in programme and project budgets • Informs OIO of decentralized evaluations planned and conducted, uploads the reports in DocIn / Sharepoint, and shares them with OIO • Shares decentralized evaluation reports as well as OIO's Independent Evaluations within executive structures • Prepares recommendation implementation action plans and lessons learned reflections for decentralized evaluations (and is encouraged to share them with OIO) • Contributes to OIO's Independent Evaluations as requested

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers findings of OIO’s Independent Evaluations in decision making and programming processes • Submits an action plan for the implementation of recommendations from OIO’s Independent Evaluations following receipt of the final evaluation report within the time frame requested by OIO • Periodically reports to OIO on the implementation of recommendations from Independent Evaluations • Develops a communication plan that ensures timely and targeted dissemination of relevant information from evaluations to those who have a need to know and / or to learn • Cooperates with OIO through the OSCE Evaluation Network and other mechanisms
CPC/PESU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides advice, support and capacity building related to project design, project management, project monitoring, project reporting, and self-evaluation practices, project cycle management and programming, as well as methodological aspects of donor applications and donor agreements, to executive structures • Follows up during project design that findings from OIO’s Independent Evaluations and from decentralised evaluations are used by Executive Structures to inform programming processes and project development • Proposes future evaluations to be included in OIO’s Evaluation Plan on matters of strategic importance to the Organization • Ensures that decentralized evaluations are duly reflected in each assessed ExB project proposal, and that a budget line for evaluation is provided for each project that is subject to a decentralized evaluation as per the present Evaluation Policy • Builds decentralisation evaluation into the annual Project walkthrough exercise on Project Management for assurance on Internal Control Standards
OSCE Evaluation Focal Points and Evaluation Network members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as primary points of contact for any evaluation-related issues within their respective executive structures, departments and/or units • Raise awareness of good evaluation practices with management and other staff/mission members • Support leadership in drafting and consolidating inputs to OIO’s annual work plan (and other strategic documents, as requested) • Support leadership in drafting and implementing decentralized evaluation work plans in their respective executive structures, departments and/or units • Advise staff and provide backstopping services on how to plan, manage and follow up on the implementation of recommendations of decentralized /commissioned evaluations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange good practices and lessons learned in monitoring and evaluation with the larger OSCE Evaluation Network • Keep OIO informed of evaluations planned for and completed by the respective executive structures
<p>Evaluation Network Advisory Group to OIO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to discussions about evaluation policy related issues and the strategic direction of the Evaluation Network • Supports OIO in raising awareness of revised/new policy provisions in the Organization - always in co-operation and collaboration with Evaluation Focal Points • Advises on how the evaluation culture and the outreach of the Evaluation Network should be advanced within the OSCE, as well as proactively engage with the leadership of respective executive structures, departments and/or units on those matters • Advises on how to strengthen capacities of the Evaluation Network members in relation to evaluation, and take responsibility for organizing capacity-building events and/or assist with the organization of OIO-led ones • Contributes to shaping the agenda of the annual meetings of the Evaluation Network.

Annex V: Evaluation Types according to their Timing

Ex-ante evaluations are done prior to implementation, once the project proposal is developed. The purpose is to assess the project's design, strategy, feasibility, clarity, consistency and coherence with the OSCE policies and standards, and overall the strengths, weaknesses and chances of success of the initiative. Ex-ante evaluations are, inter alia, done for projects that are capital-intensive, complex in scope, and when a number of serious risks can be identified.

Evaluability assessments are typically conducted during the planning phase of an evaluation to determine whether an intervention is evaluable in a reliable and credible fashion given the clarity of its objectives, or the availability of data.

Mid-term evaluations are evaluations conducted somewhere mid-way during project implementation, usually for projects that are large in scale and span over multiple years. They are usually formative in nature, i.e. they have the objective to make recommendations that help improve performance during the remaining time of implementation, or to inform a follow-up intervention.

Final evaluations are undertaken after or towards the end of an intervention. Ideally, final evaluations should be conducted in time for the results to be able to feed into the next planning cycle. Final evaluations can serve all three functions of evaluation: They provide inputs to decision making, contribute to learning and programme / project improvement, and they serve accountability purposes.

Ex-post evaluations are conducted after an intervention has been completed. They may be undertaken directly after or long after completion depending on the objective of the evaluation. The intention could be to identify factors of success or failure, to assess the sustainability of results, the impact of the intervention, and to draw conclusions that may inform other activities.

Real-time evaluations are very participatory types of evaluations that provide immediate and continuous feedback during programme / project implementation, rather than at a specific point in time. They are also formative in nature, and focus on continuous learning and adaptation in real time.

Annex VI: List of Tools that accompany the Evaluation Policy

TOOLS:	
I.	Overall guidance for evaluation managers
II.	Guidance for the development of a biennial decentralized evaluation plan
III.	Evaluability assessment checklist
IV.	Annotated template for evaluation terms of reference
V.	DHR terms of reference
VI.	Annotated template of an evaluation inception report
VII.	Guidance for developing an evaluation matrix
VIII.	Key evaluation terms
IX.	Annotated template of an OSCE decentralized evaluation report
X.	Checklist for OSCE decentralized evaluation reports
XI.	Guidance for developing evaluation recommendation implementation plans
XII.	Guidance for evaluation follow-up
XIII.	Code of conduct agreement with OSCE evaluation consultants
XIV.	Guidance for preparing a management response and action plan for the implementation of recommendations from OIO's Independent Evaluations
XV.	Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation - Towards UNEG guidance (external tool)