



OSCEval News is the evaluation newsletter of the Office of Internal Oversight.

Its aim is to provide insights into the OSCE's work in evaluation, by sharing key evaluation findings and conclusions, as well as new developments regarding the OSCE's overall evaluation culture.

Evaluation is a management tool that contributes to decision-making, strategic planning, and organizational learning.



This edition of OSCEval News is dedicated to the:

### 2020 Quality Assessment of OSCE Evaluations

This exercise was conducted by an external independent consultant hired by the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO). The Quality Assessment (QA) is part of OIO's efforts to strengthen the OSCE's overall evaluation culture and to enhance the use of evaluations for decision-making, programming, and organizational learning. It reflects OIO's commitment not only to improve the relevance and quality of its own evaluations, but also to help strengthen the OSCE's decentralized evaluation system.

#### Purpose

Specifically, the purpose of this exercise was:

- To assess the quality of OSCE evaluations and provide recommendations to improve it;
- To identify any factors affecting the usefulness of OSCE evaluations; and
- To provide recommendations as to how the OSCE evaluation quality-assurance system could be improved.

As both a retrospective and forward-looking exercise, the 2020 QA aimed at informing OIO's future evaluation work as well as its advisory services, and at improving decentralized evaluations commissioned by executive structures. Its ultimate aim was to contribute to enhancing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coherence and impact of the OSCE's work.

The 2020 QA includes two components:

1. A quality assessment of evaluations issued by the OSCE in the period 2017-2020; and
2. The collection of internal stakeholders' views and perceptions of the usefulness of OIO's independent evaluations, including on their timeliness and level of stakeholder involvement.

#### Methodology

As for the first component, a checklist was established to assess the quality of a sample of 39 evaluation reports against a set of indicators based on the UNEG Norms and Standards (incl. elements of the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports) and their adherence to the OSCE's Evaluation Framework Administrative Instruction No. 1/2013 (SEC.GAL/23/13).

The scorecards included the following ten elements to be assessed: (1) Terms of Reference (ToR) and Design; (2) Report Structure; (3) Evaluation Object; (4) Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope; (5) Evaluation Methodology; (6) Evaluation Findings; (7) Evaluation Conclusions; (8) Evaluation Recommendations; (9) Gender and Human Rights; and (10) Management Responses. Each of these elements included several sub-elements. Overall quality scores were calculated through the simple average of the subtotal scores obtained in relation to the first nine elements only. The rating system included the following four categories: "Satisfactory", "Moderately Satisfactory", "Moderately Unsatisfactory", and "Unsatisfactory". A "Not Applicable" option was foreseen, but there was no need to utilize it in the assessment.

	<i>Satisfactory</i> : All parameters were fully met and there were no shortcomings in the evaluation report	4
	<i>Moderately Satisfactory</i> : The parameters were partially met with some shortcomings in the evaluation report	3
	<i>Moderately unsatisfactory</i> : More than one parameter was unmet with significant shortcomings in the evaluation report	2
	<i>Unsatisfactory</i> : Most parameters were not met and there were major shortcomings in the evaluation report	1
	<i>Not Applicable</i> : Not Applicable/Does not apply since the answer is not available	0

As for the second component, an interview guide to collect the perceptions and views of internal stakeholders was developed, and a series of interviews conducted by the consultant.

## Component 1: Quality Assessment of Independent and Decentralized Evaluation Reports

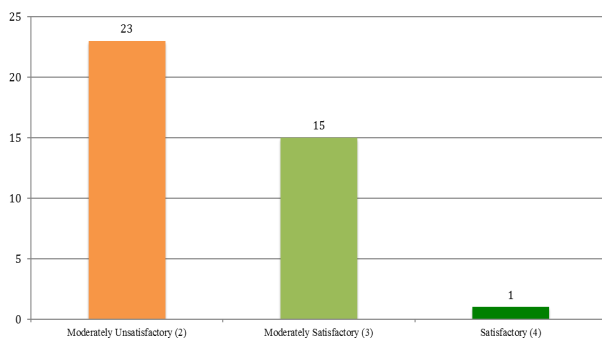
### Evaluation Reports

The sample included 13 independent evaluations, conducted by OIO between 2017 and 2020, and 26 decentralized evaluations, commissioned by OSCE executive structures (incl. field operations, institutions, Secretariat departments/units) over the same period. Decentralized evaluations commissioned by OSCE field operations in Central Asia, Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe, and those commissioned by the Secretariat and institutions, constituted 44% and 23% of the sample, respectively. The remaining evaluations were undertaken by OIO.

### Key Findings

#### Overall Quality

As the graph below shows, about 41% of all evaluations assessed were rated “Satisfactory” or “Moderately Satisfactory”; while the remaining 59% were rated “Moderately Unsatisfactory”. Even though none of the evaluations assessed were rated “Unsatisfactory” overall, this clearly indicates that improvement is needed with regard to their quality. No specific trends associated with geographical distribution or commissioning executive structures emerged.



#### Quality Scores per Report Section

Evaluation reports generally scored well in relation to elements such as the “Report Structure” and “Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope”, while more challenges were identified (and lower scores assigned) in relation to other elements such as “Evaluation Methodology”, “Evaluation Conclusions”, “Evaluation Recommendations”, and “Gender and Human Rights”. The distribution of quality scores per report section highlighted the following good practices and areas for improvement.

### Good Practices

The majority of all evaluation reports (90%) was rated “Moderately Satisfactory” or “Satisfactory” in relation to their **Report Structure**, which was assessed against logic, clarity, and completeness of the information presented. More than half of all evaluation reports scored well with regards to the description of the **Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope** as well as to the discussion of **Evaluation Findings**. Information presented in these sections was generally clear, logical, complete, substantiated by evidence – with findings systematically addressing the evaluation questions and criteria. Almost half of all evaluation reports also scored well in relation to the quality of the **Evaluation ToR**. For instance, these clearly stated the purpose of the evaluations, and adequately outlined the methodological approach to be followed.

### Areas for improvement

More than half of all evaluation reports assessed were rated “Moderately Unsatisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory” in relation to **Evaluation Methodology**. These reports generally lacked transparent descriptions of the methodology applied, of the data collection methods and analysis, data sources, sampling frames, and stakeholders consultation processes. The same scores were assigned in relation to **Evaluation Conclusions** and **Recommendations**. Reports that scored low in those sections generally presented much abbreviated conclusions, which did not add insights to the findings; and recommendations that were not logically connected to the arguments presented earlier in the report, or that lacked enough detail to enable implementation. None of the evaluation reports assessed were rated “Satisfactory” in relation to **Gender and Human Rights**, and more than half of them were rated “Moderately Unsatisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory”. These reports presented shortcomings in the use of gender/HR sensitive language, the disaggregation of data, formulation of methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations – thus falling short of demonstrating to what extent a gender equality perspective and a human rights based approach had been included throughout the evaluation process.

## Component 2: Client Satisfaction and Stakeholder Perceptions

### Key Informant Interviews

To collect stakeholder perceptions about OIO’s independent evaluations, interviews were conducted with 26 OSCE staff/mission members (including Project Co-ordinators, Heads of Programme Offices, Heads of Strategic Units) across OSCE

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executive structures (incl. the Secretariat, institutions and field operations) who had been involved in OIO's evaluations in a variety of ways.

The aim was to gather feedback on the usefulness of OIO's evaluations as sources of information and input for decision-making, strategic planning, and organizational learning, including their timeliness and the level of stakeholder engagement.

## Perceptions and Views

### Credibility

\* OIO's independent evaluations are credible and conducted by qualified people.

### Methodology and Approach

\* OIO's independent evaluations are robust and based on a solid methodological approach.

\* OIO's independent evaluations are independent, credible, and based on triangulated evidence (which is considered critical to carry OSCE messages forward).

\* The scope and methodology of some evaluations was not necessarily clear to some stakeholders.

### Timeliness and appropriateness

\* Most of OIO's independent evaluations are timely, but more participation in OIO's annual evaluation planning process could enhance timeliness.

### Inclusiveness

\* OIO's evaluation processes are inclusive and responsive to stakeholders' feedback.

\* There may be opportunities for more inclusion and collaborative relationships in evaluation design and planning stages, in order to enhance evaluation quality and utility.

### Practical Insights and Recommendations

\* When a 'team approach' with the right expertise was used, OIO's independent evaluations properly captured the challenges faced by the interventions and contained relevant findings and recommendations.

\* In certain cases, a few weaknesses in the evaluation team composition contributed to limitations regarding the usefulness of certain evaluations.

### Dissemination of Results

\* Challenges exist in terms of disseminating the evaluation results more widely.

## The Way Forward



By taking a 'snapshot' of the quality and usefulness of OSCE evaluations (in relation to international quality standards and internal stakeholder perceptions), the 2020 QA provides a baseline for similar exercises in the future. Good evaluation practices and areas for improvement, as well as a

number of actionable recommendations were identified for OIO and/or other OSCE executive structures to follow-up on in the future, in the pursuit of establishing a stronger evaluation culture across the Organization.

### OIO has committed to the following actions:

- ⇒ Continue investing in strengthening the OSCE's evaluation culture (incl. through better communication on the evaluation function's role and greater involvement of the OSCE executive structures in developing OIO's annual and individual evaluation plans).
- ⇒ Address capacity gaps across the OSCE through targeted interventions, including follow-up advisory sessions based on the findings of the 2020 QA.
- ⇒ Strengthen the effectiveness of the Evaluation Network by formalizing it, and strengthening collaboration with other OSCE Networks, in particular those of Project Practitioners and Gender Focal Points.
- ⇒ Enhance gender mainstreaming of OIO evaluation tools as well as of evaluation processes and practices.
- ⇒ Extend access to the EN SharePoint platform beyond the Evaluation Network, and share evaluation-related knowledge products through the OSCE intranet and official website.
- ⇒ Disseminate templates, guidance, good quality evaluation reports and QA criteria beyond the Evaluation Network with a view to improving the use of evaluations in general and the quality of decentralized evaluations in particular.
- ⇒ Use a "team approach" to conduct complex evaluations, and engage external thematic experts if needed.
- ⇒ Continue efforts to mobilize resources for the OIO's Evaluation Unit through secondments and hiring of external consultants.

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