

Finland

Development Evaluation (EVA-11), Office of the Under-Secretary of State, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Mandate

The evaluation of development policy and cooperation in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland is organised in two functions, the central development evaluation office (EVA-11) and the decentralised development evaluation performed by the different operational departments and embassies. The internal by-law on evaluations (norm 4/2011) guides both centralised and decentralised evaluations. The norm constitutes the evaluation policy of the Ministry and the mandate for EVA-11. It defines the position of evaluation and its role in the Ministry, the respective responsibilities of the centralised and decentralised evaluations, how work is planned, the evaluation process, including the management response and back-reporting systems, and the publicity and publication of the evaluation results. The Norm also describes participation in evaluation capacity development of partner countries, in collaboration with the international evaluation communities.

The by-law was prepared through a lengthy iterative and participatory process within the Ministry, including discussions in the Development Policy Advisory Group (DPAG) chaired by the Director General of Department for Development Policy (DGDEV). It was distributed throughout the Ministry and the embassies, and it is available in the Ministry's intranet. It is also introduced in evaluation training.

The role of EVA-11 is to manage wider evaluations, to participate in joint evaluations with others, to develop evaluation capacity, and to provide help-desk service within the Ministry. The centralised evaluations are of strategic significance and of comprehensive scope, such as theme-based evaluations, country programme evaluations, entire development instruments, and the like.

Independence

EVA-11 is an independent, separate entity attached to the office of the Under-Secretary of State for Development Policy and Cooperation (USSDEV). The Director of EVA-11 reports directly to USSDEV. Since 2006 EVA-11 has compiled a 4-year rolling plan of centralised evaluations which is completed after consultations with relevant units. The plan has been discussed in DPAG from 2010. USSDEV approves the plan for the current year at a time. EVA-11 has its own budget line (shared with internal audit) and annual allocations are decided by Parliament. All evaluations are carried out by external consultants selected through competitive bidding.

The decentralised evaluations are a regular and compulsory feature of project plans, and are decided upon by the responsible units in consultation with the management structures, steering committees and advisory boards, of the interventions.

Quality

EVA-11 has included external quality assurance experts within each evaluation team since late 2009 and has executed anonymous peer reviews of all the centralised evaluation reports from 2010. The quality of decentralised evaluations are promoted by EVA-11 through the help-desk advisory function which offers support throughout the evaluation process.

EVA-11 has made full use of the OECD/DAC and EU development evaluation quality standards since their inception. The DAC quality standards have been developed into a matrix tool, combined, with the evaluation report standards of the EU. This matrix is a regular annex to the terms of references of evaluations. The meta-analysis of 2007-2008 evaluations assessed the quality of the process and reports against OECD/DAC evaluation

standards and rated them in average good. The synthesis of 22 wide evaluations of 2008-2010 commended the Ministry for the way with which it commissions and publishes independent evaluations of its activities. The meta-analysis of decentralised evaluation 2010-2011 is on-going. The meta-analysis of centralised evaluations and the evaluation function 2004-2012 is beginning in the end of 2012. Development Evaluation was also reviewed in the 2012 OECD/DAC Peer review of Finland.

Reporting and use

At the end of each evaluation commissioned by EVA-11, a public presentation of results, in which the evaluation results are subjected to public debate, is organised. Evaluation reports are printed and disseminated widely within and outside the Ministry, including the universities, major city libraries and different organizations. Any individual can request a hard copy. Reports are also available in the Ministry's public web-site and in the OECD/DAC's DEREc and the EU's evaluation web-site.

EVA-11 prepares, in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, an evaluation follow-up matrix with draft decisions for a formal management response. From the beginning of 2011 the draft decisions have been discussed in DPAG chaired by DGDEV. Prior to this arrangement the results were discussed in the Development Policy Quality Group. EVA-11 prepares a formal decision after discussions in DPAG. The USSDEV makes the decision upon recommendation by DGDEV, the chair of DPAG. Implementation is followed-up through formal back-reporting after 1-2 years. EVA-11 makes periodic summaries of the back-reports which are discussed in DPAG upon invitation by its Chair.

The evaluation by-law stipulates a management response system also for the decentralized evaluations. The management structure of the interventions is the forum for discussion of evaluation results and for decisions on their implementation. The by-law obliges the follow-up to be included in the regular reporting under a distinct section on the implementation of the evaluation results.

The users of evaluations vary from policy level to everyday operational management. The systematic management response and follow-up reporting have contributed to learning. It has verified that evaluation results have been timely, used widely, and been useful. The new development policy includes directly results of evaluations. Other examples include the evaluation on natural disasters leading to the recognition of natural disasters as a cross-cutting issue in development cooperation. It also contributed to a national strategy of Finland. The evaluation of local development funds, led to a revised norm and guidance and those of the agricultural sector and the cross-cutting themes contributed to the revised guidance papers. The development research evaluation led, among other things, to a completely different level of availability of research results, and recent country programme evaluations contribute to the new strategic planning framework for country programmes in 2012. The establishment of evaluation help-desk and training function are consequences of two meta-analyses (2007 and 2009). The synthesis evaluation of 2008-2010 and the results-based management evaluation contributed crucially to the revision of the guidelines for project management which are due in 2012.

The development evaluation of Finland fulfils the OECD/DAC development evaluation principles.

The staff of EVA-11:

- Director, Senior Capacity Building/Evaluation Expert, and Junior Evaluator (Senior Evaluator will join in November 2012)
- Office assistant/Coordinator
- € 2 080 000 (2012)

- 0,3 % of ODA

- produces an average of 5 to 7 evaluations and 1-3 joint evaluations per year.