1. Background

1.1. Evaluation at the Austrian Development Agency

The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) was founded in 2004 as the operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation. The Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (FMEIA) is responsible for the strategic planning and alignment of Austrian Development Cooperation.

ADA’s three major goals are combating poverty, ensuring peace, and preserving the environment. ADA currently funds around 600 projects and programmes which are implemented through partner organizations in ADA’s key regions and priority countries. Its strategy is described in the “Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2016–2018”\(^1\) outlining principles as well as operational priorities.

ADA regards evaluation as critical in the project cycle as it provides evidence to support project and programme design and guides the implementation of ongoing activities.

Evaluations at ADA adhere to the principles and quality criteria of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Project and programme evaluations follow the ADA Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations (2009).\(^2\) These guidelines outline principles and standards as well as management procedures and include templates for various evaluation documents (ToR, inception report, final report, etc.). They specify that “every project or programme must be evaluated once internally within the project or programme cycle.” Also, they state that projects and programmes with a budget higher than EUR 1 million should be evaluated externally, meaning the evaluation should be coordinated by ADA programme managers, either at Austrian Coordination Office (ACO)- or at headquarter-level. The guidelines also include a checklist of evaluation quality standards based on the “OECD DAC Evaluation Network: DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. March 2006”.

Evaluations at ADA can be commissioned by the following actors:

- ADA’s Evaluation Unit (strategic evaluations, outlined in the two-year evaluation programme for strategic evaluations which is prepared in consultation in consultation with FMEIA) – not part of this meta-evaluation
- ADA Coordination Offices, Departments and Units (so called “external project and programme evaluations”) or
- Project and programme partners (so called “internal project and programme evaluations”)

**Evaluation coverage:** Per ADA’s project management system\(^3\), 193 project and programme evaluations have been planned between 2016-2018. The total number of evaluations completed

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\(^2\) The Guidelines can be accessed here: http://www.entwicklung.at/en/ada/evaluation

\(^3\) Data requested on 16 May 2018.
between 2016 and mid May 2018 amounts to 65, with very few evaluations already completed in 2018. More than 80 percent are internal evaluations; thus, they were commissioned and managed by partner organizations. The internal evaluations also include five evaluations of projects and programmes which are implemented with third party funding (for example European Union). There are far less mid-term evaluations (n= 13) than final evaluations (n= 52). This is true for evaluations conducted in 2016 as well as 2017, as the following graph shows.

![Evaluations completed since 2015](image)

*Source: ADA FMS system, on 16 May 2018. One external final evaluation in 2017 is an ex-post evaluation.*

1.2. Meta-evaluations

There exists a vast literature on meta-evaluations including different ways to define and categorize them⁴. A widely-acknowledged definition in the evaluation community comes from Stufflebeam (2001)⁵ who describes it as:

> “the process of delineating, obtaining, and applying descriptive information and judgmental information—about the utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy of an evaluation and its systematic nature, competent conduct, integrity/honesty, respectfulness, and social responsibility—to guide the evaluation and/or report its strengths and weaknesses.”

More simply put it means “evaluating the evaluation based on the profession’s standards and principles”⁶. Meta-evaluations are to be differentiated from evaluation synthesis which aim to summarize the results of a set of evaluations and to identify common issues. Sometimes, as in this case, meta-evaluations are used as a first step for an evaluation synthesis and represent an analysis of the confidence in the results of the evaluations.

In international development, meta-evaluations often are conducted as a quality control mechanism. They also serve to identify strengths and weaknesses in evaluation capacities, approaches and processes that can be addressed at the organizational level. Ultimately, they can assist organizations

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to “generate an understanding of how the evaluation process itself can contribute to a better understanding of aid...”.

In terms of approaches and methods, there are a range of possibilities to conduct meta-evaluations. Usually they are done using a combination of descriptive information (for example about the type of evaluation, methods used, etc.) as well as qualitative assessments based on a set of criteria. The criteria can be based on internationally recognized evaluation standards (for example the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation Programme Standards, OECD DAC Standards) but also be unstructured. The assessment frameworks should be individually adapted to the organization’s specific evaluation context. An important aspect of such a systematic assessment is that “criteria are previously established, and the perspectives and rationale that are the bases for value judgments are clearly described”.

2. Purpose

The meta-evaluation at hand is ADA’s first meta-evaluation. As a first step it aims to better understand the causal pathways of project and programme evaluations in ADA and what is actually expected and assumed. It aims to assess the quality and usefulness of project and programme evaluations at ADA and to provide an overall assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. It also aims to identify enabling and hindering factors for evaluation quality and use.

The overall goal of the evaluation is to identify ways to improve the quality of (internal and external) project and programme evaluations. It should develop recommendations on what aspects to improve and how to increase the quality and usefulness of project and programme evaluations at ADA. These should include next steps to improve the project and programme evaluation tool (evaluation design and implementation). Ultimately the meta-evaluation should contribute to making project and programme evaluations more effective in increasing ADA’s performance.

The primary stakeholders of the evaluation are the Executive Unit Evaluation and Statistics and ADA Senior Management.

3. Scope and key questions

The meta-evaluation will cover internal and external project and programme evaluations with completion dates from January 2016 until June 2018, hence evaluations completed in the timeframe of the most recent Three Year Austrian Development Policy (FMEIA 2017). It will not cover strategic evaluations managed by ADA’s Evaluation Unit.

For all evaluations, the meta-evaluation will assess the quality of the applied methodology as well as the quality and logical flow of evaluation results: findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned. The meta-evaluation will review the final evaluation reports as well as the inception reports and note differences in terms of planned and implemented methodology. Furthermore, the meta-

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evaluation will assess the use and usefulness of the evaluations by using supplementary methods, as for example a standardized online survey.

The meta-evaluation will not synthesize or consolidate the evaluation results. No assessment of issues and lessons learned regarding ADA’s development cooperation performance will take place.

Key questions to be answered are:

- Are ADA project and programme evaluations of good quality, according to internationally recognized standards?
- Are ADA project and programme evaluations useful and are they being used?
- What factors contribute to these results?
- What can be done to improve the quality of ADA project and programme evaluations?

4. **Approach and methods**

The meta-evaluation will be desk-based with no foreseen travel (apart from an initial kick off workshop. It will be largely summative and should provide a first qualitative assessment of a key aspect of ADA’s evaluation system.

The meta-evaluation is a mostly internal instrument for the improvement of the evaluation quality. Although ADA staff will be consulted, the evaluation itself will not be participatory to the extent that other strategic evaluations carried out by the Evaluation Unit are. As a main reference framework, it will use internationally acknowledged evaluation standards and practices, especially for:

- the overall design of the meta-evaluation: A first review indicates that there exist a variety of useful references of meta-evaluations, in terms of approaches and methods (see background section for references) as well as practical examples of meta-evaluations conducted by other bilateral donor agencies (GIZ 2016, DANIDA 2004, Finland 2015, USAID 2013) which will be considered in the design.
- the criteria that will be used to assess the quality of the evaluations

The main data collection methods that are going to be applied are:

**Document review:** Documents will be consulted that describe

- the design and implementation of other meta-evaluations
- the context in which ADA evaluations take place (like organizational strategy documents, annual reports, etc.)
- the requirements that ADA evaluations must meet (guidelines, standards)

**Quality assessment:** The backbone of the meta-evaluation will be the assessment of evaluation quality which will be conducted based on a sample of evaluation reports (around 50 evaluations). The sampling will most likely be done using a stratified random sample (to ensure that for example external evaluations are sufficiently represented). A detailed quality assessment protocol which reflects international standards as well as ADA guidelines, will be developed together with ADA’s Evaluation Unit. The protocol will be piloted on a small number of evaluations and be adapted if necessary. It will combine statistical and qualitative methods when analysing the selected evaluations.

**Survey and interviews:** For each selected project and programme evaluations the evaluation manager(s) (ADA internal as well as partners) will be consulted. The focus of this consultations will be
the perceived usefulness of project and programme evaluations as well as support functions, challenges and constraints regarding evaluation quality.

5. Envisaged process and timeline

The meta-evaluation is scheduled to take place between August 2018 and December 2018. The meta-evaluation will be conducted by an evaluation team supervised and managed by ADA’s Evaluation Unit. The work of the evaluation team will be coordinated by the team leader and key deliverables (outlined below) will be reviewed and approved by the Evaluation Unit. The team leader is responsible for the quality of the final evaluation report.

It is estimated that the assignment will take a total of 50 working days for the team leader and 35 working days for the team member.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREPARATORY PHASE</th>
<th>JUN-AUG</th>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio analysis: Descriptive analysis of information available in FMS, assessment of coverage of evaluations</td>
<td>Mid June 2018</td>
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<td>Scope of Work – sampling strategy</td>
<td>Mid June 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>ToR</td>
<td>Mid June 2018</td>
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<td>Recruitment of consultants</td>
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<td>Aug 2018</td>
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<td>Design of Protocol</td>
<td>Aug/Sep 2018</td>
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<td>Review of Protocol by Evaluation Unit</td>
<td>Sep 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kick Off Meeting in Vienna</td>
<td>Sep 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Piloting of Protocol</td>
<td>End Sep 2018</td>
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<td>Inception Report (max 10 pages), including final Protocol</td>
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<td>Oct 2018</td>
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<td>Survey and interviews</td>
<td>Oct/Nov 2018</td>
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<td>Preliminary findings (virtual meeting)</td>
<td>Late Nov 2018</td>
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<td>Interviews and additional information if needed (virtual)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting to discuss draft report in Vienna</td>
<td>Dec 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Report – Submission/Approval</td>
<td>Dec 2018</td>
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6. Deliverables and payment

The evaluation team is expected to deliver the following products:

- draft and final quality assessment protocol, in cooperation with ADA Evaluation Unit
- draft and final inception report, including final quality assessment protocol, sampling plan and survey questionnaire
- presentation of preliminary findings (for virtual meeting)
- individual quality assessments for each evaluation
- draft and final evaluation report

All reports must be written in English.
The final report must contain an executive summary and a list of recommendations made by the evaluation team. It should not comprise more than 40 pages (excluding annexes).

An advance payment of one-third of the total budget will be transferred upon acceptance of the inception report by ADA. The remaining cost will be settled by ADA after the presentation of the final invoice and its acknowledgement by ADA.

7. Evaluation team

The meta-evaluation should be conducted by a team of two consultants. The team leader will take the lead in designing the methodology of the evaluation and writing the evaluation report.

The team should have the following qualifications:

Experience/knowledge:

- Extended experience in conducting meta-evaluations and in developing analysis protocols as documented in at least two meta-evaluations during the last 5 years (team leader) and one meta-evaluation (team member)
- Proven knowledge of meta-evaluations and their methodology, as proven ideally by publications in which meta-evaluations played a role (team leader).
- Experience in conducting project and programme evaluations in the international development cooperation arena proven by at least two project and programme evaluations during the last two years (team leader) and by the participation in at least two project and programme evaluations (team member)
- Familiarity with ADC is a major asset
- Experience with evaluation systems of other bilateral donor agencies is an asset

Languages:

- Fluency in both oral and written communication in English is a requirement
- French and Spanish are assets

Other skills:

- Strong analytical skills and ability to work with and as a part of teams
- Excellent report-writing and editing skills
- Excellent data presentation and visualization skills

The consultants should not have been involved in any evaluations of ADA funded project or programmes since 2016.

8. Contracting and selection process

The evaluation team for the meta-evaluation will be hired through a direct contracting process. A call for expression of interest (including the Terms of Reference) will be published in a variety of platforms and networks. Interested candidates/firms should provide a technical offer (maximum 10 pages) and the estimated costs.

The technical offer should include the following:

- Brief description of the understanding of the assignment
• Presentation of a proposed approach including suggestions for dimensions of the quality assessment
• Presentation of a detailed work plan including time schedule and division of tasks
• Detailed CVs and references of similar assignments of the team leader, the team member
  and the consulting firm (if applicable) as annexes

The cost proposal (financial offer) should follow the following breakdown (in EUR):
  • Personnel costs: name of experts, estimated number of working days, fee rate per working day, total amount
  • Travel costs to Vienna (for kick off and draft report)
  • Other costs (for communications, etc)
  • VAT (if applicable)

The received proposals will be assessed by a commission. The technical and financial proposals will be weighed 70:30 respectively. Criteria that will be used to assess the proposals include:
  • Expertise, relevant experience and suitability of evaluation team
  • Relevant experience and capacity of consulting firm (if applicable)
  • Quality and coherence of the proposal, including methodology, timeline and work plan
  • Coherence of financial and technical proposal; efficient use of resources.

Please note that personal data included in the proposals (like CVs) will be stored and used by ADA internally during the review of the Proposals.

Proposals should be submitted until 16 July 2018 to Ms. Sophie Zimm, Evaluation Advisor at the Austrian Development Agency: sophie.zimm@ada.gv.at
Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.