KNOWING WHAT WORKS

Central Project Evaluation

Open Regional Funds for South-East Europe – Promotion of EU Integration through Regional Cooperation PN 2015.2056.8

Evaluation Report

On behalf of GIZ by Julia Mager (Elbarlament) and Alida Vracic

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Contents

List of abbreviations

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CFCU	Central Financing and Contracting Unit
CFCD	Central Financing and Contracting Department
CW	Capacity Works
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DG	Directorate General
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
NASS	National Action Support Scheme
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
ORF	Open Regional Fund
PCA	Peace and Conflict Analysis
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RESPA	Regional School for Public Administration
SEE	South-East Europe
WB	Western Balkans

Project number	2015.2056.8
CRS-Code(s) (Creditor Reporting System Code)	15110
Project objective	Regional learning of the responsible authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved.
Project term	01/2016 – 12/2020
Project volume	EUR 6,600,000
Commissioning body	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)
Lead executing agency	Regional Cooperation Council
Implementing organisations (in the partner country)	Ministries of Foreign Affairs, EU Integration authorities, IPA implementing structures
Other development organisations involved	
Target group(s)	
Officer(s) responsible for the commission (AV)	Dr Filip Radunovic

1 Summary

The subject of this evaluation was the technical cooperation project, 'Open regional funds for South-East Europe – promotion of EU integration through regional cooperation' (PN 2015.2056.8). The project was embedded in the context and framework conditions of the EU integration process in South-East Europe. All countries in the region have made EU membership their key political objective. In January 2018, Montenegro and Serbia had entered negotiations for membership, Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia) were candidates, Bosnia and Herzegovina had applied formally for membership and Kosovo had entered the contractual framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process and remained a potential candidate. Despite being at different stages in the accession process, all six Western Balkans countries faced common challenges in reforming and preparing their economies, political systems and public administrations. Regional cooperation has been a key condition for potential EU accession since at least the late 1990s, and this is also reflected in the EC enlargement strategy of 6 February 2018 and the country reports of 17 April 2018.

Significant improvements in regional cooperation with regard to economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice, and media and security cooperation have arisen from the progress made in state-building by the six Western Balkans states, from the Stabilisation and Association Process, the creation of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in 2008, and other bi- and multi-lateral initiatives, including those supported by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Yet, despite coordinating and steering the EU accession process, those in the involved authorities had lacked the opportunity to engage in mutual learning sessions with others in the region. When it came to coordinating and steering the EU accession process, it was felt that the relevant authorities would benefit from engaging in regional learning activities and in implementing the good practice they learned there in their work within their respective national systems (*core problem*) (GIZ 2015a).

Addressing this challenge regarding regional cooperation, the main objective of project PN 2015.2056.8, which started in January 2016, was to improve the regional learning of the responsible authorities with regard to the steering of the national EU accession process in South-East Europe. To this end, the project focused on the following three intervention areas:
- the regional dialogue between the ministries of foreign affairs of South-East Europe (Ministries of Foreign Affairs Network),
- the cooperation platform between the European Union integration offices of South-East European countries, and
- the network for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) structures.

The focus of all three areas of intervention was on the regional learning of the responsible authorities with the aim of improving national management of the EU accession process. To this end, the project advised, supported and coordinated three regional networks, two of which had already been established by the previous project – networks of ministries of foreign affairs, and cooperation platforms of EU integration authorities. A third network – of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) structures – was established in the framework of this project. The networks consist of focal points, who represent their national institutions. They decide and agree on the relevant activities in the respective intervention fields (GIZ, 2016b).

The project commenced in January 2016 and was envisaged as continuing until April 2019. During the evaluation period the project was extended until December 2020. The evaluation focused on the implementation period of the project from January 2016 until end October 2017. The predecessor project, PN 2012.2261.1 (August 2012 – December 2015), was only assessed to obtain reasonable results on the long-

term impacts and sustainability of the project. The financial scope of the project PN 2015.2056.8 was EUR 6.6 million. Financial aspects of the project were considered for the period January 2016 to end October 2017.

The project covered all countries in South-East Europe involved in the EU accession process, namely: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia. In line with the terms of reference for this evaluation, which was required to assess the success of the project in four project countries, this interim evaluation focused on assessing the success of the project in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia. These five countries were chosen as particularly relevant due to their political challenges concerning constitutional and state-building issues. Due to time restrictions, and according to the terms of reference, Montenegro, the smallest of the six countries and also the most advanced in the accession process, was not considered in this evaluation.

This evaluation was conducted in line with the OECD/DAC criteria, namely: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. In order to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the project, the Evaluation Team applied a contribution analysis approach to three selected hypotheses. Contribution analysis is a theory-based approach that starts by setting out the theory for how the intervention should causally contribute to specific changes, and the likely effects of other contextual factors. Contribution analysis is particularly helpful in testing various aspects of the results chain and confirming or revising a Theory of Change. Group discussions and stakeholder interviews were conducted to obtain qualitative information to strengthen the analysis and to understand the relationship between the project and its achieved results, within the given context in each of the targeted countries. For validation purposes, the various primary and secondary information sources (e.g. relevant policies, GIZ Open Regional Fund (ORF) programme, and project documentation) were supplemented with in-depth qualitative fieldwork. Interview guides for the fieldwork field processes were developed and applied consistently in all countries in line with the Evaluation Matrix. In line with this approach, the evaluation against the OECD/DAC criteria led to the following results.

Relevance

The relevance criterion was evaluated as **very successfully** met, as the project fitted fully into the strategic reference frameworks. The suitability of the strategy/concept matched core problems/needs of the target groups. Moreover, the project interventions were adapted to the strategic orientation of the EU and country strategies and the project was adapted to changes in line with the requirements. While the design of the project was adequately adapted to the chosen goal, an evaluation of the Theory of Change demonstrated the need to make some small adjustments to the results logic. In order to reach 100 points, there was room to optimise strategic alignment with the Regional Cooperation Council – a key stakeholder of the project. Moreover, the target group needed to be adjusted to the actual beneficiaries of the project implementation. Furthermore, gender issues needed to be more specifically addressed, with a gender mainstreaming approach introduced whenever possible and appropriate. (For example, for larger workshops/seminars, a gender-sensitive approach should be recommended to national ministries selecting participants.)

Effectiveness

The effectiveness criterion was evaluated as **very successfully** met, due to the following reasons. First, the project achieved very good results regarding the goal attainment, in accordance with the project objective indicators agreed upon in the contract (evaluation dimension 1). Secondly, the services implemented by the project successfully contributed to the achievement of the goal agreed upon in the contract (evaluation dimension 2). Accordingly, the findings of the contribution analysis indicated that the Theory of Change was plausible and that there was an association between what the project had done and the observed outcome. There was no contradictory evidence and the main alternative explanations for the outcomes occurring had been ruled out. The underlying assumptions and risks of the project were effectively monitored and appropriate action had been taken to control/reduce the risks. Thirdly, the project team had assessed the occurrence of

additional (not formally agreed) positive and negative results linked to the implementation of the project (evaluation dimension 3). Considering the positive spin-offs identified during the evaluation, the project team could strengthen its focus on systematically monitoring unintended results and capitalising on positive results/spin offs that had not been formally agreed, in particular, in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs Network.

Impact

The evaluation of the impact criterion concluded with an overall rating of **successful**. Evaluation dimension 1 (the announced superordinate long-term results are foreseen), was assessed as positive as the contribution of the project to the impact indicators could be plausibly explained. This was due, in particular, to the positive track record in goal attainment at the output and outcome levels, which built the logical foundation for achieving the impact level indicators. Regarding evaluation dimension 2 (the project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results), the evaluation also concluded positive results. The contribution analysis demonstrated that achieving the impact-level indicators was perceived as plausible. However, it was questionable whether these indicators were a measurement of progress on the EU accession path. This was mainly due to the fact that EU accession process was not only a technical process, but also a political one. Consequently, network focal points assumed that unpredictable political dynamics might influence the impact level and in turn affect progress in the EU accession process. A consideration of how best to frame the impact level in order to make it more realistic for partners involved in the project was therefore recommended. Additionally, the project team had assessed the occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive and negative results linked to the implementation of the project (evaluation dimension 3). Considering the positive spin-offs, the project team could strengthen its focus on systematically monitoring unintended results and capitalising on positive results/spin offs that had not been formally agreed, in particular, in one of the three key intervention area: the network of ministries of foreign affairs.

Efficiency

The efficiency criterion was assessed as **very successful.** Production efficiency was evaluated using the efficiency tool and the follow-the-money approach. The overall approach to achieving the outputs was assessed as highly demand-driven, which contributed to the efficiency in achieving all three outputs. This was due to the fact that the implementation strategy regarding all sub-intervention areas focusing on capacity building and exchange of views (i.e. all sub-intervention areas except 'formalisation of network') are based on expressed interests and needs of partners. Regarding the sub-intervention area 'formalisation of network', which was part of all three networks, there was room for improvement. Efficiency in these sub-intervention areas could be maximised by choosing an evidence-based approach to developing a concept on network sustainability and by considering the particularities of the networks as well as existing regional platforms. Regarding the allocation efficiency, the Evaluation Team concluded that the use of resources was appropriate with regard to achieving the project objective. The only way to potentially maximise the outcome would be by reallocating resources in order to increase synergies between the networks.

Sustainability

The evaluation of the sustainability criterion was **successful**. The prerequisite for ensuring the long-term success of the project (evaluation dimension 1: results are anchored in (partner) structures) was established. While the partners regularly used the networks to exchange information and practices even without GIZ support, the networks were not anchored/institutionalised in the partner systems. However, a concept for formalising the networks (exit strategy) would be further developed in the subsequent period. According to the network focal points, the networks would continue to function on an informal level without GIZ support. These informal networks would be used to exchange information, good practices and share views. However, network members claimed to lack capacity to organise network meetings.

Regarding evaluation dimension 2: forecast of durability (results of the project are permanent, stable and long-term resilient), the formalisation of networks – as a specific intervention area – was the basis for durability of the project results. The contribution analysis on the EU integration network assessed the formalisation of this network as the basis for the durability of project results. While informal networks had been established, it would be challenging to maintain a network concept requiring coordination and corresponding financial and human resources. Beyond the project's duration, it was likely that the networks would continue to exchange information and share experiences on the EU accession process in an informal set-up.

Summary of recommendations

Based on the evaluation, a series of recommendations was made. For full details, see Chapter 7 Key recommendations. Here is a summary:

- Achieving sustainability through formalising networks was one of the three outcome indicators, and an intervention area in all three networks. In order **to enhance sustainability of the networks**, a strategic approach to establishing networks driven by local ownership was recommended (for details, see Section 7: Key recommendations)
- Key external stakeholders, in particular the European Commission (EC) and the Regional Cooperation Council were keenly interested in the project and offered themselves for a **more regular exchange of information**. Therefore, it was recommended that a communication strategy on how to engage effectively with the relevant stakeholders be developed. This strategy will also need to be developed by the three networks.
- In line with the EC enlargement strategy of February 2018, and in close cooperation with the EC, **all project stakeholders should explore closer alignment and potentials for specific cooperation** with the EC. This would require an increased strategic focus of the project. In order to maintain a good level of efficiency, it was recommended that work on the output level be delegated, while maintaining the same level of quality.
- For several key beneficiaries involved in the project, tangible progress in the EU accession process was an unrealistic goal. It was recommended that consideration be given to how best to frame the **impact level** in order to make it **more relevant and realistic for partners** involved in the project.
- 'German clout' contributed to the effectiveness and impact of the project, as stakeholders perceived it as a political message from Germany. In their view, this message showed support for the EU accession process of South-East Europe. Hence, it was recommended that this **potential for leverage** be effectively exploited, without creating dependency among partners.
- In order to overcome the lack of a gender-sensitive approach, it was recommended that **female participation and gender-related topics be promoted** when and wherever possible.
- The evaluation of the **Theory of Change/results logic** showed the potential to introduce adjustments in order to reflect the implementation practices and achieved results.

Criterion	Score	Rating
Relevance	*Max. 100 points*	*94 out of 100 points*
Effectiveness	*Max. 100 points*	*93 out of 100 points*
Impact	*Max. 100 points*	*88 out of 100 points*
Efficiency	*Max. 100 points*	*92 out of 100 points*
Sustainability	*Max. 100 points*	*91 out of 100 points*
Overall score and rating for all criteria	*Average score of all criteria (sum divided by 5, max. 100 points see below)*	**92**

92–100	Level 1 = very successful
81–91	Level 2 = successful
67–80	Level 3 = rather successful
50–66	Level 4 = rather unsatisfactory
30–49	Level 5 = unsatisfactory
0–29	Level 6 = very unsatisfactory

2 Evaluation objective and questions

The following section describes the objectives of the evaluation and the evaluation questions.

2.1 Objectives of the evaluation

The objective of this interim evaluation, as stated in the Terms of Reference, was to assess the success of the project.
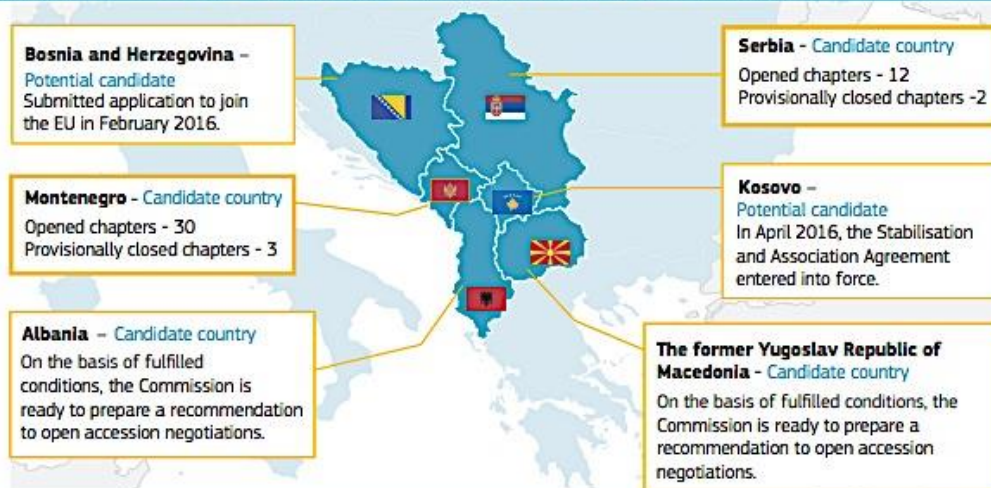
The project was embedded in the context and framework conditions of the EU integration process in South-East Europe. All countries in the region have made EU membership their key political objective. In January 2018, Montenegro and Serbia had entered negotiations for membership, Albania and FYR Macedonia were candidates, Bosnia and Herzegovina had applied formally for membership, and Kosovo had entered the contractual framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process and remained a potential candidate. Despite being at different stages in the accession process, all six Western Balkans countries faced common challenges in reforming and preparing their economies, political systems and public administrations. Regional cooperation has been a key condition for potential EU accession since at least the late 1990s.

The 2018 EU enlargement strategy, 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans', provides a clear enlargement perspective for the countries of South-East Europe. Accordingly, 'the Western Balkan countries will be able to join the European Union once the criteria of Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, including the Copenhagen criteria, are met' (EC, 2018a). While significant progress has been made both on reforms and on overcoming the devastating legacy of war and conflict, countries in the region still need to advance in order to meet all membership conditions (EC, 2018a). In particular, countries need to further foster their democracies, and improve the rule of law, regional cooperation and reconciliation (EC, 2018a). The European Commission (EC, 2018a) points out that there are still important bilateral issues that have to be addressed before the countries in the region can enter the EU.

Yet, the fragile situation in the South-East European countries, which is due to a 'complex interplay of external and internal challenges – in particular – the bleak economic and social situation as well as the weak state of the regions democracies' and an unstable political situation (Lange, Nechev and Trauner, 2017), provides a complex context for any development project.

Significant improvements in regional cooperation with regard to economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice, and media and security cooperation have arisen from the progress made in state-building by the six Western Balkans states, from the Stabilisation and Association Process, the creation of the Regional Cooperation Council in 2008, and other bi- and multi-lateral initiatives, including those supported by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. Yet, despite coordinating and steering the EU accession process, personnel and structures of the competent authorities lack the capacity to engage in regional learning activities. Consequently, when it comes to coordinating and steering the EU accession process, the relevant authorities benefit from engaging in regional learning activities and in implementing the good practice they learn there in the work they do in their respective national systems (core problem) (GIZ 2015a).

OVERVIEW OF THE EU RELATIONS WITH THE WESTERN BALKANS

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Potential candidate
Submitted application to join the EU in February 2016.

Montenegro - Candidate country
Opened chapters - 30
Provisionally closed chapters - 3

Albania – Candidate country
On the basis of fulfilled conditions, the Commission is ready to prepare a recommendation to open accession negotiations.

Serbia - Candidate country
Opened chapters - 12
Provisionally closed chapters -2

Kosovo – Potential candidate
In April 2016, the Stabilisation and Association Agreement entered into force.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Candidate country
On the basis of fulfilled conditions, the Commission is ready to prepare a recommendation to open accession negotiations.

PROVIDING THE FINANCIAL MEANS FOR A SUCCESSFUL ACCESSION

The Instrument for Pre-Accession supports the Western Balkans in their preparation for accession and facilitates regional and cross-border cooperation.

€8.9 BILLION — INVESTED DURING 2007 - 2017

€1.07 BILLION — FORESEEN FOR 2018

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance funding will be even more tailored to the needs of the countries. The implementation of this strategy will require increased funding.

*Kosovo - This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the "Kosovo" declaration of independence.

Figure 1 Overview of EU relations with the Western Balkans, 2018.
Infographic source: European Commission Enlargement Strategy (EC 2018a)

Addressing these challenges regarding regional cooperation, the main **objective** of the project was to improve the regional learning of the responsible authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe. To this end, the project focuses on the following three intervention areas (GIZ, 2015a):

- Intervention area A: regional dialogue between the ministries of foreign affairs of South-East Europe,
- Intervention area B: cooperation platform between the European Union Integration offices from South-East European countries,
- Intervention area C: network for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) structures.

The focus of all three intervention areas was on the regional learning of the responsible authorities with the aim of improving national management of the EU accession process. To this end, the project advised, supported and coordinated three regional networks, two of which had already been established by the previous project – networks of ministries of foreign affairs and the cooperation platform of EU integration authorities. A third network – of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) structures – was established in the framework of this project. The networks consist of focal points who represent their national institutions. They decide and agree on the relevant activities in the respective intervention fields (GIZ, 2015a).

Intervention area A: Regional dialogue between the ministries of foreign affairs of South-East Europe. Here, the project aimed to coordinate, advise and support the Ministries of Foreign Affairs Network. In order to ensure ownership of the network, members of the focal points discuss and agree on the network's activities within the framework of the steering committee of this network. The steering committee consisted of network focal points and the GIZ Project Team, and met twice a year to plan and review the project. Based on an annual plan developed by the steering committee, the GIZ project team tackled three sub-intervention areas:

- sub-intervention A1: Support for the Berlin Process[1],
- sub-intervention A2: Support for EU Acquis[2] chapter 23, 24, 30 and 31, and
- sub-intervention A3: Formalisation of the network.

The GIZ Project Team also developed regional capacity building and events for exchanging views and experiences (GIZ, 2015a, 2017m).

Intervention area B: Cooperation platform between the European Union Integration Offices from South-East European countries. Here, the project focused on coordinating, advising and supporting the network. Building on the same demand-driven steering committee approach as outlined above for the Ministries of Foreign Affairs Network, only with the focus on focal points from EU integration offices, the network and GIZ Project Team met twice a year to develop and review capacity-building measures. Regional capacity-building activities focused on the steering and coordination tasks of EU integration authorities, and on increasing capacity regarding selected chapters of the EU Acquis. Accordingly, this intervention area consisted of four sub-interventions:
- sub-intervention area B1: Supporting the structures for translating of the EU Acquis,
- sub-intervention area B2: Supporting the exchange and learning between Stabilisation and Association Agreement implementation structures,
- sub-intervention area B3: Supporting the structures for coordination of contributions to EU country reports, and
- sub-intervention area B4: Formalisation of the network (GIZ, 2015a, 2017m).

Intervention area C: Network for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)[3] structures. The project aim to establish a new network. It focused on exchange and knowledge in strategic planning, institutional framework conditions, decentral financial management, and approaches to monitoring and evaluation. This intervention area consisted of the following three sub-intervention areas:
- sub-intervention C1: Regional exchange in the network/formalisation of the network,
- sub-intervention C2: Programming (with the focus on sector budget support but also other forms of programming) implementation of the IPA, and
- sub-intervention C3: Monitoring and evaluation of the IPA
(IPA).

This intervention area was based on the same demand-driven steering committee approach as intervention areas A and B (GIZ, 2015a, 2017m).

The project commenced in January 2016 and was envisaged to continue until April 2019. During the evaluation period the project was extended until December 2020. The evaluation focused on the implementation period of the project from January 2016 until end October 2017. The predecessor project, PN 2012.2261.1 (August 2012 – December 2015), was only assessed to obtain reasonable results on the long-term impacts and sustainability of the project. The financial scope of the project PN 2015.2056.8 was EUR 6.6 million. Financial aspects of the project were considered for the period January 2016 to end October 2017. The project covered all South-East European countries involved in the EU accession process, namely: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia. In line with the terms of reference for this evaluation, which was required to assess the success of the project in four project countries, this interim evaluation focused on

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[1] 'With its annual summits the (Berlin) Process has established itself as a new framework to advance regional cooperation, connectivity, and address questions not covered by EU accession directly, such as youth cooperation, 'reconciliation' and bilateral disputes. The method is entirely intergovernmental. So far, four summits have been held: in Berlin (2014), Vienna (2015), Paris (2016) and Trieste (2017). The summits are held at the level of heads of state or government, while foreign affairs ministers and ministers responsible for the economy hold parallel meetings' (Flessenkemper, 2017).

[2] 'The *Acquis* is the body of common rights and obligations that is binding on all the EU member states. Candidate countries* have to accept the *Acquis* before they can join the EU and make EU law part of their own national legislation. Adoption and implementation of the *Acquis* are the basis of the accession negotiations' (EC, 2018).

[3] The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance provides EU funding for both candidate countries and potential candidates (EC, 2018).

assessing the success of the project in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia. These five countries were chosen as particularly relevant due to their political challenges concerning constitutional and state-building issues. Due to time restrictions, and according to the terms of reference, Montenegro, the smallest of the six countries and also the most advanced in the accession process, was not considered in this evaluation.

This evaluation was part of GIZ Evaluation Unit's random sample of central project evaluations. Since it was one of the first pilot evaluations of this new system of central project evaluations within GIZ, the evaluators and other stakeholders of the evaluation will also provide feedback to GIZ Evaluation Unit on the new evaluation system. Moreover, it was expected that the evaluation findings would lead to improvements in policies, projects and procedures of key stakeholders. Details on the reasons for the evaluation, key stakeholders, the expected use of the evaluation findings, and factors influencing the evaluation are outlined below.

The main stakeholders of the evaluation were partners benefiting from the relevant networks established by the project. The project was carried out both by the GIZ project team based in Sarajevo (with GIZ project staff based in all cooperation countries) and national partners in the ministries of foreign affairs, ministries for European integration/EU integration offices, and offices for Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance coordination in all six cooperation countries. The political carrier of the project was the Regional Cooperation Council based in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Stakeholders also included European Commission's (EC) Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and EC delegations in the respective countries of South-East Europe.

The GIZ stakeholders in the evaluation were interested in gaining knowledge for a number of reasons. First, the GIZ project staff were interested in receiving feedback on the success of the implementation up to that point, in order to be able to use the evaluation findings to improve the implementation of the project and to devise the follow-up project during 2018. Secondly, the GIZ evaluation unit might use this pilot as the basis for learning about the central evaluation system and to introduce improvements to its evaluation process and policies. As stated during the semi-structured interviews, the partners benefiting from the project would like to use this evaluation to find out more about potential future support, to improve the functioning of the networks and relevant areas of the EU integration process. Finally, the EU partners were interested in the contribution to and impact of the project on the EU accession process, in order to improve their regional cooperation policies.

The way the project was designed, ensured that the evaluation processes and findings helped strengthen the decision-making competence of the key stakeholders across the project, addressing all relevant issues regarding the implementation of the project and also looking beyond 2018. While there might be some deviations, depending on the stakeholders, the evaluation results were to be used as of the first half of 2018. It was expected that for the partners these improvements would lead to enhancing the process of EU accession in terms of the requirements from the stabilisation and association process. For GIZ, these improvements would lead to more effective project implementation modalities and evaluation policies, processes and services delivered to partners and target groups, and for its commissioning parties and employees. Ultimately, this would increase the effectiveness of public policies and GIZ projects for the target groups, and enhance satisfaction among partners, clients and employees.

2.2 Evaluation questions

Each project was assessed on the basis of standardised evaluation criteria and questions to ensure comparability. This was based on the OECD/DAC criteria for the evaluation of development cooperation, or the evaluation criteria for German bilateral cooperation: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The evaluation dimensions and analysis questions derived from this were specified by the GIZ. In addition to these evaluation criteria, the contributions to Agenda 2030 and its principles (universality,

integrative approach, 'leave no one behind', multi-stakeholder partnerships) who are also taken into account. The evaluation questions also related to crosscutting issues such as gender, the environment and human rights.

In addition to the OECD/DAC criteria-based evaluation questions, the project team and *GIZ Fach- und Methodenbereich* expressed an interest in addressing the following questions, which the Evaluation Team duly took into consideration:
- How should stakeholders be supported in the future?
- How should the project be expended into other areas?
- What could be improved regarding the implementation of the project?
- How did the partner expect the project to go? What could be amended and improved?
- How is this regional project linked with GIZ bilateral projects?

While the third and fifth and (indirectly) the fourth questions were addressed through the evaluation, the first and second questions were not systematically addressed due to limitations on the time that key informants were able to give, and on the number of questions that needed to be asked in order to assess the OECD/DAC criteria.

3 Object of the evaluation

This chapter focuses on defining the evaluation object, on outlining the Results Model and describing the target group of the project.

3.1 Definition of the evaluation object

The subject of this evaluation was the technical cooperation project Open regional funds for South-East Europe – Promotion of EU integration through regional cooperation (PN 2015.2056.8).

The project was embedded, and at the same time contributed to, the policy and political context of the EU integration process in South-East Europe, which in turn provided the framework for its activities. Regarding the policy and political context of the project, it is important to point out that all countries in the region have made EU membership their key political objective. Montenegro and Serbia have entered negotiations for membership, Albania and FYR Macedonia are candidates, Bosnia and Herzegovina has applied formally for membership, and Kosovo has entered the contractual framework of the EU-Stabilisation and Association process and remains a potential candidate (GIZ 2015a, EC 2018b).

According to the EC enlargement strategy of February 2018, progress on the EU integration path requires the cooperation countries in South-East Europe to undertake comprehensive reforms in the fields of rule of law, fundamental rights and governance. Moreover, judicial reforms and the fight against organised crime and corruption have to show real results. Additionally, public administration reform needs to deliver results, and the functioning of democratic institutions needs to be strengthened. Furthermore, economic reforms need to address structural weaknesses, high unemployment and low competitiveness (EC, 2018a, b).

Additionally, progress in the EU accession process demands that the cooperation countries in South-East Europe focus on overcoming the legacy of the conflictual past by solving open issues (in particular border issues) and accomplishing reconciliation. In particular, the issue between Serbia and Kosovo needs to be tackled, and a

comprehensive, legally binding normalisation agreement between both countries is required as a condition for their respective European paths (EC, 2018b).

While significant reform efforts are required by the South-East European cooperation countries, the EU enlargement process has faced a number of difficulties over the past years whereby the speed of integration has had a detrimental impact on countries' motivation and effort to pursue relevant reforms. The lack of a clear EU integration perspective since the EU integration of Croatia in 2013 has led to enlargement fatigue. While all South-East European cooperation countries made progress in the EU accession process, various national and regional political issues, such as the constitutional debate in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the dispute between Serbia and Kosovo, continue to constitute difficulties for the EU accession process (EC, 2018c).

All countries are characterised by a fragile political context linked to the recent conflictual history of the region and the state-building process. This political fragility in the region can easily develop in such ways as to hinder progress in the EU accession process. As pointed out by the International Crisis Group (Prelec, 2017): '(U)nchecked executive power, erosion of the rule of law, xenophobia directed at neighbours and migrants and pervasive economic insecurity' is a pattern becoming more and more dominant in the Western Balkan countries.

Despite these challenges, EU integration is a top priority for all six Western Balkan countries. While all these countries are at different stages of the EU accession process, they face common challenges in reforming and preparing their economies, political systems and public administrations. Regional cooperation has been a key condition for potential EU accession since at least the late 1990s, and this is also reflected in the EC enlargement strategy of 6 Feburary 2018 and the country reports of 17 April 2018. (EC, 2018b, GIZ, 2015a). Significant improvements in regional cooperation with regard to economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice, and media and security cooperation have arisen from the progress made in state-building by the six Western Balkans states, from the Stabilisation and Association Process, the creation of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in 2008, and other bi- and multi-lateral initiatives, including those supported by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Yet, despite coordinating and steering the EU accession process, personnel and structures of the competent authorities lack the capacity to engage in regional learning activities. Consequently, when it comes to coordinating and steering the EU accession process, the relevant authorities benefit from engaging in regional learning activities and in implementing the good practice they learn there in the work they do in their respective national systems (core problem) (GIZ 2015a).

The importance of regional cooperation is also reflected in relevant regional and national policies. The South-East Europe 2020 Strategy also focuses on regional cooperation and 'provides a framework to assist governments in the region to implement their individual development strategies, including EU accession related goals, by enhancing national efforts through focused regional cooperation on those specific issues that can benefit from a shared approach' (RCC, 2013). The South-East Europe 2020's focus on regional cooperation, aimed at adopting an approach based on closer, wider and deeper regional cooperation (RCC, 2013), was the key policy framework for the project at the regional level. Moreover, a review of existing national strategies on South-East Europe 2020 demonstrated the importance of regional cooperation. These strategies prioritised the necessity to continue implementing and developing a regional cooperation policy by creating an environment for more intensive economic integration, the strengthening of political cooperation, and cooperation in all other sectors. This applied, in particular, to the implementation of joint projects within the EU integration process of the countries in the region. All the relevant national strategies highlight the importance of a fast accession process, prioritising specific technical criteria (harmonisation with EU legislation) that need to be kept in focus. Clearly, these strategies address the economy of the region, and specific infrastructural and administrative matters (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010, Government of FYR Macedonia, 2017, Republic of Albania, 2013, Republic of Kosovo, 2016, Republic of Serbia 2014).

Regarding the developmental context, it is important to point out that the EU integration process provides the framework for development cooperation in the Western Balkans. Accordingly, fostering regional cooperation is seen as an essential contribution to the Agenda 2030/SDGs (Int_2, 16, 27). Supporting the Western Balkans EU accession is a multi-actor endeavour that includes many bi- and multi-lateral donors, regional and international, including non-governmental, organisations, all of which have been, for some 20 years, continuously implementing projects and programmes in close partnership with key stakeholders in the public administrations supporting EU integration. GIZ projects, hence, constitute an important, yet necessarily limited, subset of contributions among numerous others.

According to the project document (GIZ, 2015a), close cooperation of the evaluation object with other GIZ Open Regional Fund (ORF) projects was envisaged. Accordingly, cooperation focuses on strategic coherence with other Open Regional Fund (ORF) projects, such as Open regional funds – legal reform (PN 2012.2467.4), Open regional funds – foreign trade (PN 2012.2466.6), Modernisation of municipal services (PN 2012.2465.8), Open regional funds – biodiversity (PN 2014.2215.3) and Open regional funds – energy efficiency (PN 2012.2483.1) (GIZ, 2015a). Furthermore, coordination, cooperation and exchange of experience are foreseen with other GIZ bilateral projects focusing on EU accession. To this end, the project cooperates, in particular, with the following bilateral projects: Support for the European integration process in Kosovo (PN 2013.2156.1), and Support for the harmonisation of economic and trade legislation with EU Acquis in Albania (PN 2014.2198.1) (GIZ, 2015a).

Regarding cooperation with other donors, the project focuses on IPA2 projects, which aim to strengthen the management of EU pre-accession assistance and the EU accession process. Furthermore, the project cooperates with other bi- and multi-lateral donors and other regional Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA0 projects (GIZ, 2015a).

Considering this context and the framework conditions, the main objective of the project was that regional learning of the responsible authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved. The evaluated project focused on the following three intervention areas:

- improving the regional dialogue on EU accession between the ministries of foreign affairs (network),
- strengthening the capacity of EU integration authorities to manage the EU accession process (EUI network), and
- addressing the strategic use of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) in regard to the EU accession (IPA network).

All three intervention areas focused on the regional learning of the responsible authorities, with the aim of improving national management of the EU accession process. The project document does not contain a multi-level approach. According to the project documents, the system boundary was determined through a regional learning approach, i.e. the project was responsible for achieving the outcome (regional learning of the respective authorities as regards the national steering of EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved). Yet the impact level (progress of the partner countries in the EU accession process) was outside the system boundary. This was due to the fact that the project should contribute to achieving the impact level as one of the six Open regional funds (ORFs) for South-East Europe projects (GIZ, 2015a).

The project commenced in January 2016 and was envisaged as continuing until April 2019. During the evaluation period, the project was extended until December 2020. The evaluation focused on the implementation period of the project from January 2016 until end October 2017. The predecessor project, PN 2012.2261.1 (August 2012 – December 2015), was only assessed as obtaining reasonable results on the long-term impacts and sustainability of the project. The financial scope of the project PN 2015.2056.8 was EUR 6.6 million. Financial aspects of the project were considered for the period January 2016 to end October 2017. The project covered all South-East European countries involved in the EU accession process, namely: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia. In line with the terms of reference for this evaluation, which was required to assess the success of the project in four project countries, this interim

evaluation focused on assessing the success of the project in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia. These five countries were chosen as particularly relevant due to their political challenges concerning constitutional and state-building issues. Due to time restrictions, and according to the terms of reference, Montenegro, the smallest of the six countries and also the most advanced in the accession process, was not considered in this evaluation.

The political carrier of the project was the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), a regionally owned framework fostering regional cooperation, European and Euro-Atlantic integration of South-East Europe (GIZ, 2015a, RCC, 2013). The most important partners were representatives of EU integration authorities, ministries of foreign affairs and Instrument for Pre-Accession structures of the six South-East European cooperation countries participating in the networks (GIZ, 2015a).

3.2 Results Model including hypotheses

The following section focuses on the Results Model including hypotheses. It will outline the Theory of Change and underlying hypotheses.

The Theory of Change is outlined in the Results Model of the project, which was reviewed, reconstructed and partially adjusted in close cooperation with the project team during the inception phase of this evaluation. (See Figure 2 for overview.) The Evaluation Team decided to take this approach as the Results Model lacked a narrative explanation of the hypotheses. Accordingly, this part of the report was based on an analysis of the Project Document, the Results Model and semi-structured interviews with the project team.

The overarching development cooperation programme objective (impact level) stipulates that countries of South-East Europe have made progress in the process of EU accession regarding the requirements from the stabilisation and association process. The project aims to improve the regional learning of respective authorities with regard to the national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe (project objective, outcome level). To this end, the following three intervention areas have been determined, which correspond to three regional networks:

- Improving the regional dialogue on EU accession between the ministries of foreign affairs (MFA's network). This intervention area consisted of three sub-intervention areas, which focus on support to the Berlin Process, support to Acquis Chapters 23, 24, 30 and 31, and formalisation of the network.
- Strengthening the capacity of EU integration authorities to manage the EU accession process (Integration authorities network). Focusing on four sub-intervention areas, this network supported the structures for translation of the Acquis, the exchange of learning between Stabilisation and Association Agreement implementation structures, structures for coordination of contributions to EU Country Reports, and formalisation of the network.
- Addressing the strategic use of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) in regard to the EU accession (IPA network). This intervention area was divided into three sub-intervention areas that aimed to establish and formalise this regional network, improve programming and implementation of pre-accession assistance, and strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of pre-accession assistance.

Each of these three intervention areas was based on a results logic aimed at contributing to the outputs, outcome and impact of the project. The division of roles between the GIZ project team and the partners, in particular the focal points of the network, was as follows: The GIZ project team was responsible for managing the project, in particular, facilitating the maintenance of the networks in order to contribute to regional learning. The functioning of the networks depends on the financial and managerial support of GIZ, and the networks do not operate without GIZ support. The focal points of the three networks were closely involved in designing the network activities (regional meetings, workshops, study visits etc.), as well as ensuring the effective implementation and review of the network activities. In order to coordinate and facilitate the work of the

networks, a steering committee was established per network. The steering committee ensured local ownership and met on a semi-annual basis to plan and review project activities. Each steering committee consisted of 12 network focal points, with two representatives of the relevant institutions for six project countries.
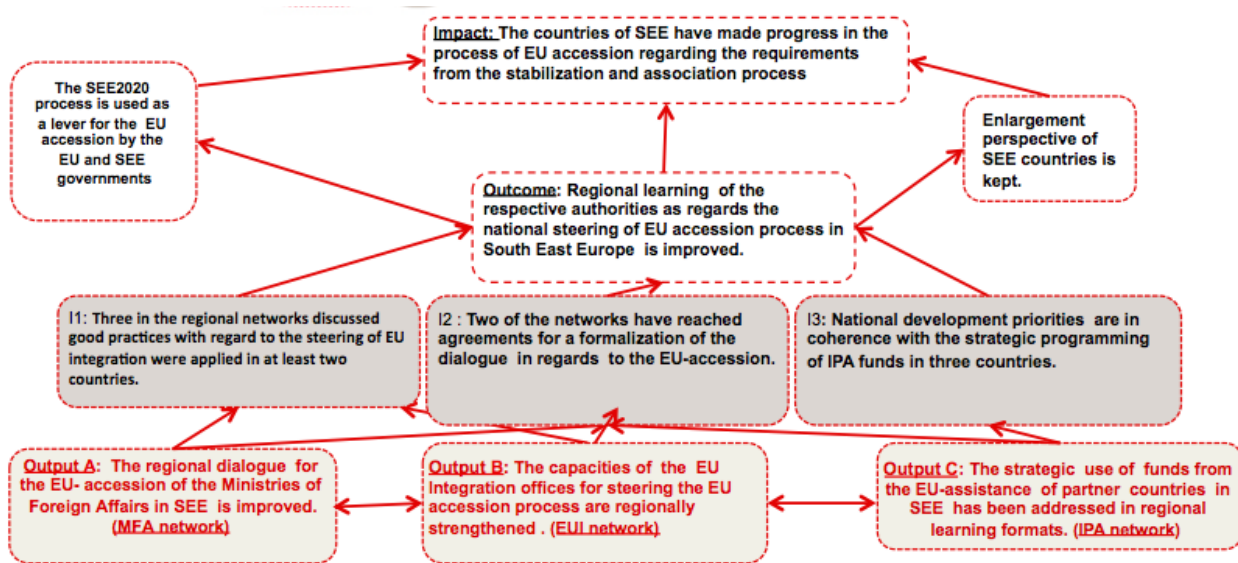

Figure 2 Overview of the project Results Model, with focus on impact, outcome (with outcome indicators I1, I2, I3), and outputs (A, B, C)

The following text outlines the hypotheses of the main intervention areas/networks.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Network – Output A

The main aim of this intervention area was to improve the regional dialogue of the ministries of foreign affairs. This network had already been established during the implementation of the predecessor project. The results logic of this network was based on the following three sub-intervention areas contributing to the network goal, which stipulates that regional dialogue of the MFAs of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession is improved.

Support for Berlin Process (sub-intervention area A1)
This sub-intervention area concerned the commencement of regional cooperation on the Berlin Process, based on agreed cooperation at the national level, in particular, between ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) and officers of the prime ministers and relevant line ministries (if needed) (See Figure 3: Results Model II, 1.1). To this end, focal points developed concepts and organised regional events on selected aspects of the Berlin Process – a diplomatic initiative linked to the future enlargement of the European Union (Results Model II, 1.2). This resulted in regular regional follow-up on the implementation of the Western Balkan summits (Results Model II, 1.3), leading to up to eight instances in which those involved in the MFAs network come together to consult with one another on politically sensitive government positions in preparation for regional processes, such as Western Balkan Six or the Berlin Process (Results Model II, 1.5). In turn, this contributes to achieving Output A: An improved regional dialogue of the MFAs of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession. Furthermore, it was assumed that this regional cooperation on politically sensitive issues contributed to improving regional learning among the respective authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe (Outcome).

Support for Acquis chapters 23, 24, 30 and 31 (sub-intervention area A2)
It was assumed that focal points actively contribute to the development of concepts on capacity building regarding Acquis chapters 23, 24, 30 and 31 (see Figure 3: Results Model II, 1.2). On the basis of these concepts, regional capacity-building events were organised, leading to improved skills and knowledge with

regard to agreed chapters and skills and knowledge disseminated into national institutions (Results Model II, 1.4, 1.5). In turn, this contributes to improved regional dialogue of the ministries of foreign affairs of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession (Results Model II, Output A) and to the regional learning of the respective authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe (see Results Model II, Outcome).

Formalisation of the network (sub-intervention area A3)
This sub-intervention area aimed to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of the network. Building on the steering committee practices, consisting of focal points from all six beneficiary countries, and working in line with agreed cooperation modalities, a concept on future cooperation was developed by GIZ and shared with the focal points for discussion (see Figure 3: Results Model II, 3.1).

If, after a series of consultations, focal points and GIZ agreed upon the cooperation mechanism (Results Model II, 3.2), then the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested (Results Model II, 3.3). If the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested then it would be modified based on the pilot phase (Results Model II, 3.4) If the implementation of the cooperation was adjusted, based on the pilot phase, then an agreement on future cooperation between the network members would be established (Results Model II, 3.5.) If this agreement among focal points was established and put in place (Results Model II, 3.5), then the members of the ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) network had reached a consensual agreement on formalising the network (Results Model II, 3.6). If an agreement on sustainability of the network was reached, then the regional dialogue of the MFAs of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession was improved (Output A). If the regional dialogue of MFAs of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession is improved (Output A), then: *Regional learning at the responsible authorities with regard to national management of the EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved* (Outcome).
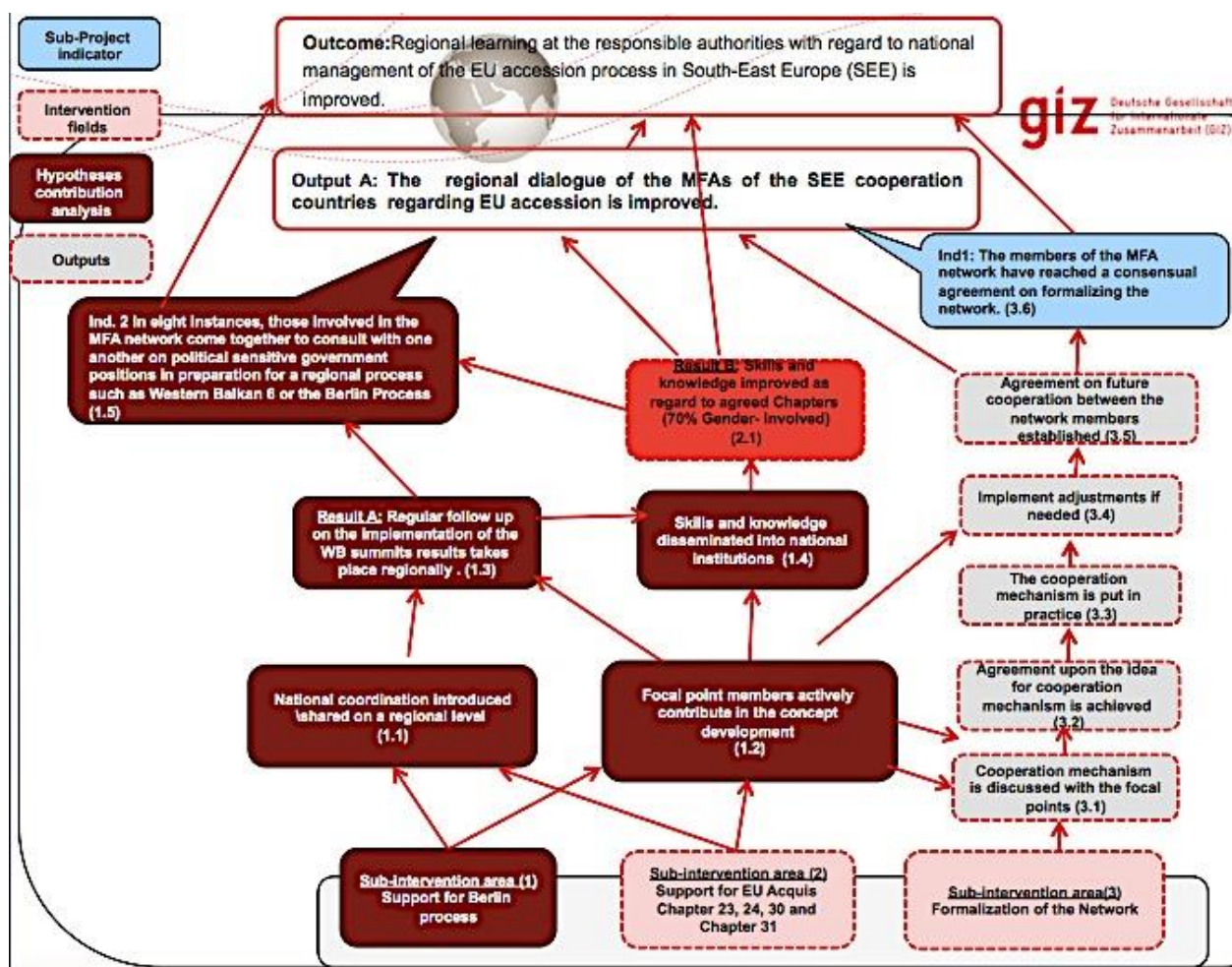
Figure 3 Results Model II – Output A – Ministries of foreign affairs network

EU Integration authorities network– Output B (intervention area 2)

This network aimed to strengthen the capacity of EU integration authorities to manage the EU accession process at the regional level. It had already been established during the implementation period of the previous project and provided support to key institutions responsible for the EU accession process, namely EU integration authorities. These institutions are the technical backbone in charge of fostering the EU accession process in the six project countries. This intervention area focused on the steering and coordination tasks of EU integration authorities in all six project countries, and on increasing capacity regarding selected chapters of the EU Acquis.

Consequently, the results logic of this network was based on the following four sub-intervention areas and corresponding hypotheses:

- sub-intervention area B1: Supporting the structures for translating of the EU Acquis,
- sub-intervention area B2: Supporting the exchange and learning between Stabilisation and Association Agreement implementation structures,
- sub-intervention area B3: Supporting the structures for coordination of contributions to EU country reports, and
- sub-intervention area B4: formalisation of the network (GIZ, 2015a, 2017m).

The following text will outline the hypotheses of each of the sub-intervention areas. Due to the fact that sub-intervention areas B1 and B2 assume almost the same results logic, these areas are described jointly.

Supporting the structures for translation of the Acquis (sub-intervention area B1)
Supporting the exchange and learning between Stabilisation and Association Agreement implementation structures in the fields of rule of law, public administration reform and economic governance (sub-intervention area B2)

The main aims of these two sub-intervention areas are twofold:

- sub-intervention area B1 aims to increase the capacity of the relevant institutions to translate the EU Acquis, i.e. the accumulated legislation, legal acts, and court decisions which constitute the body of European Union law.
- sub-intervention area B2 aims to support the exchange and learning between Stabilisation and Association Agreement implementation structures in the fields of rule of law, public administration reform and economic governance.

Sub-intervention area B2 focuses on increasing capacity in the field of rule of law, public administration reform and economic governance. The hypotheses of the first and second sub-intervention areas are designed as follows: Building on annual implementation plans developed within the framework of the steering committee, regional capacity-building events are designed in close cooperation with focal points of the network (see Figure 4: Results Model III, 2), and coordinated with other EU/donor programmes, such as the Regional School for Public Administration (RESPA) (Results Model III, 1). These demand-driven preparatory activities result in regional expert/training and workshops on selected issues (Results Model III, 3), leading to the following sub-results:

- improved knowledge and skills on the translation of the EU Acquis and coordination of Stablisation and Association Agreement structures (Results Model, III, I), and
- sharing of knowledge and good practices from the region and the EU enabled (Results model, III, II).

Regarding sub-intervention area 2, a third sub-result, namely, a strengthened capacity of EU authorities to coordinate national line ministries, was assumed (Results Model III, III). This was due to the fact that coordination capacities are particularly important to EU integration authorities. Therefore, capacity building focuses particularly on coordination.

If these three sub-results are achieved, then skills, knowledge and good practices are disseminated into national institutions (Results Model, III, 2.1). This process of exchanging skills, knowledge and good practices contributes to a strengthened capacity among EU integration authorities to manage the EU accession process at the regional level (Output B). Furthermore, it was assumed that this improved capacity at the regional level, contribute to: *Improving the regional learning of the respective authorities with regard to the national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe* (Outcome).

Supporting the structures for coordination of the contributions to EU Country Reports (sub-intervention area B3)

This sub-intervention area aimed to support the structures for coordinating contributions to the EU Country Report – a key tool the European Commission uses to assess the annual progress of the EU accession process. This sub-intervention area followed the same intervention logic as sub-intervention areas 1 and 2. Building on annual implementation plans, developed within the framework of the steering committee, regional capacity-building events were designed in close cooperation with network focal points (see Figure 4: Results Model III, 2) and coordinated with other EU/donor programmes, such as the Regional School for Public Administration (RESPA) (Result Model III, 1). These demand-driven preparatory activities resulted in regional training and workshops on selected issues (Results Model III, 3), supporting the structures for coordination of contributions to EU Country Reports, and assessing the progress in the EU accession process. If selected representatives of EU integration authorities participated in regional training and workshops, then the capacity to measure progress in EU accession are improved (Results Model III, 3.1). If 80% of representatives of EU integration authorities taking part in training and events confirmed that their capacity for managing the EU accession process had improved (B2), then the capacity of EU integration authorities in measuring progress on

EU accession has improved (Output B). If this was the case, then: *Regional learning at the responsible authorities with regard to national management of the EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved* (Outcome).

Formalisation of the network (sub-intervention area 4)
This sub-intervention area aimed to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of the EU Integration Authorities Network. This results logic is almost identical to the one outlined above for the MFAs network. Building on the practises of the steering committee, which involved focal points from all six beneficiary countries working in line with agreed cooperation modalities, a concept of future cooperation was developed by GIZ, and shared with the focal points for discussion (see Figure 4: Results Model III, 4.1) If the focal points and GIZ agreed on the cooperation mechanism after a series of consultations (Results Model III, 3.2), then the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested (Results Model III, 4.3). If the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested, then it will have been modified, based on experience in the pilot phase (Results Model III, 4.4). If the implementation of the cooperation was adjusted based on the pilot phase, then an agreement on future cooperation between the network members will have been established (Results Model III, 4.5.). If this agreement among focal points was established and put in place (Results Model III, 4.5), then the members of the European integration authorities network have reached a consensual agreement on formalising the network (Results Model III, 4.6). If an agreement on sustainability of the network has been reached, then the regional dialogue of Ministries of European Integration/EU Integration offices of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession is improved (Output B). If the regional dialogue of the Ministries of European Integration/EU Integration offices in the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession has been improved (Output B), then: *Regional learning at the responsible authorities with regard to national management of the EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved* (Outcome).
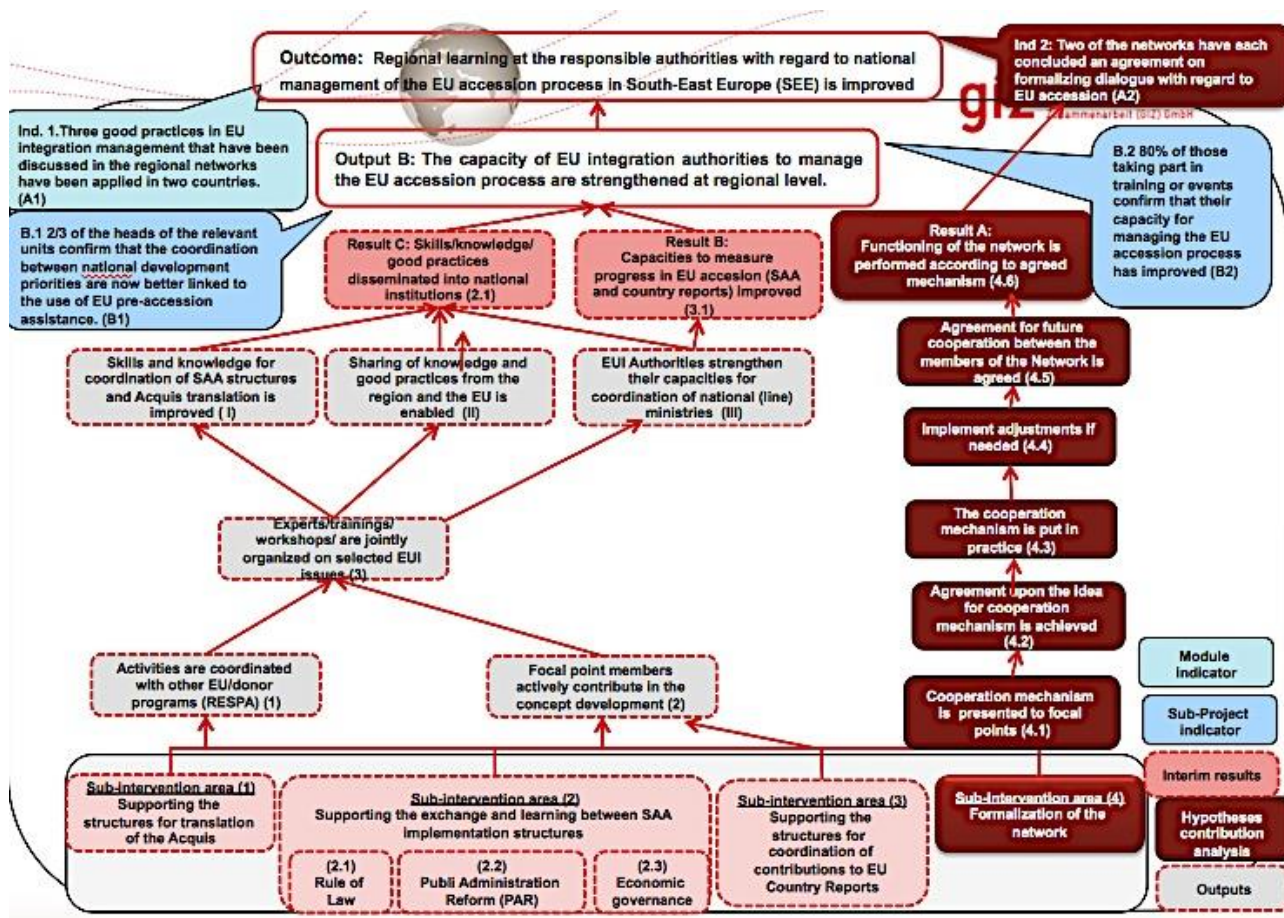

Figure 4 Results Model III – Output B – Network of EU integration authorities

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) network – Output C

The aim of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) network was to address the strategic use of EU IPA funding to promote the EU accession process for South-East European countries on regional learning platforms. The results logic of this network was based on the following three sub-intervention areas and corresponding hypotheses contributing to the Output and Outcome of the project.

Regional exchange of the network/Formalisation of the network (sub-intervention area C1)
This sub-intervention area aimed to establish and ensure the sustainability of the IPA network. This results logic was very similar to the one outlined above for the ministries of foreign affairs network and the EU Integration authorities network. Building on the practices of steering committees consisting of focal points from all six project countries, and working in line with agreed cooperation modalities, a concept of future cooperation was developed by GIZ and shared with the focal points for discussion.

If focal points and GIZ agreed on the cooperation mechanism after a series of consultations (see Figure 5, Results Model IV, 1.1), then the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested (Results Model IV, 1.2). If the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested, then it will have been modified, based on experience in the pilot phase (Results Model IV, 1.3). If the implementation of the cooperation mechanism was adjusted, based on the pilot phase, then the strategic and operational steering of the network was performed (Results Model IV, 1.4), resulting in the establishment and maintenance of a sustainable network of IPA structures (Results Model IV, 1.5). If the network of IPA structures was sustainably established, then the strategic use of EU IPA funding to promote the EU accession process for South-East Europe countries was addressed at the regional level (Output C). If the strategic use of EU IPA funding to promote the EU accession process for South-East Europe countries was addressed at the regional level (Output C), then: *Regional learning at the responsible authorities with regard to national management of the EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved* (Project Outcome).

Programming (with focus on sector budget support, but also other forms of programming) and implementation of Instrument for Pre-Accession (sub-intervention area C2)
This sub-intervention area aimed to improve sector-based programming (and other forms of programming) and implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA). It was assumed that focal points actively contributed to developing participatory concept notes on capacity-building events aimed at strengthening sector-based budgeting and other forms of programming (see Figure 5: Results Model IV, 2.1). This resulted in regional capacity-building events on sector budgeting, programming and linking IPA with the development agenda. These events provided the opportunity to share best practices and lessons learnt, and to improve the capacity to implement IPA (Results Model IV, 2.2). It was assumed that network focal points and selected staff members of IPA structures in the six beneficiary countries would disseminate skills and knowledge on sector-based budgeting and other forms of programming to national institutions (Results Model IV, 2.3), leading to enhanced skills and knowledge on programming and implementing modes (Results Model IV, 2.4). This in turn led to improvements in IPA programming in six cooperation countries, based on multi-year strategic planning documents developed by national structures, applied through a sector approach and agreed with the EU for four sectors per country (Results Model, IV, 2.5). Overall, this results chain contributed to achieving Output C: Addressing the strategic use of EU IPA funding to promote the EU accession process for South-East European countries in regional learning platforms. Moreover, this process led to strategic programming of IPA in three countries consistent with national development priorities, and contributed to achieving the outcome, namely: *Regional learning of the responsible authorities with regard to national management of the EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved.*

Monitoring and evaluation of IPA (sub-intervention area C3)

This sub-intervention area aimed to improve monitoring and evaluation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). While there was little monitoring and evaluation culture in the region, the European Commission pushed for implementing the performance measurements. The hypothesis assumed that capacity development activities (organised by the GIZ project, based on identified needs of focal points/partners in IPA structures), starting with a presentation of a new methodology for monitoring and evaluation (see Figure 5: Results Model, IV, 3.1), and workshops/training on specific aspects of monitoring and evaluation (Results Model, IV, 3.2), would improve knowledge and skills on monitoring and evaluation and strengthen the practical use of these capacities (Results Model, IV, 3.3). These increased capacities contributed also to sub-intervention area 2, as they fostered skills and knowledge on programming and implementation modes (Results Model, IV, 2.4). Following the results chain, it was assumed that increased monitoring and evaluation capacities contributed to focal points/IPA structures producing annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II and the approval/confirmation of these report by the European Commission in four beneficiary countries (Results Model IV, 3.4). This, in turn, contributed to achieving Output C: *The strategic use of EU IPA funding to promote the EU accession process for South-East European countries in regional learning platforms*. Overall, this contributed to *improving the regional learning of the respective authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe* (Outcome).
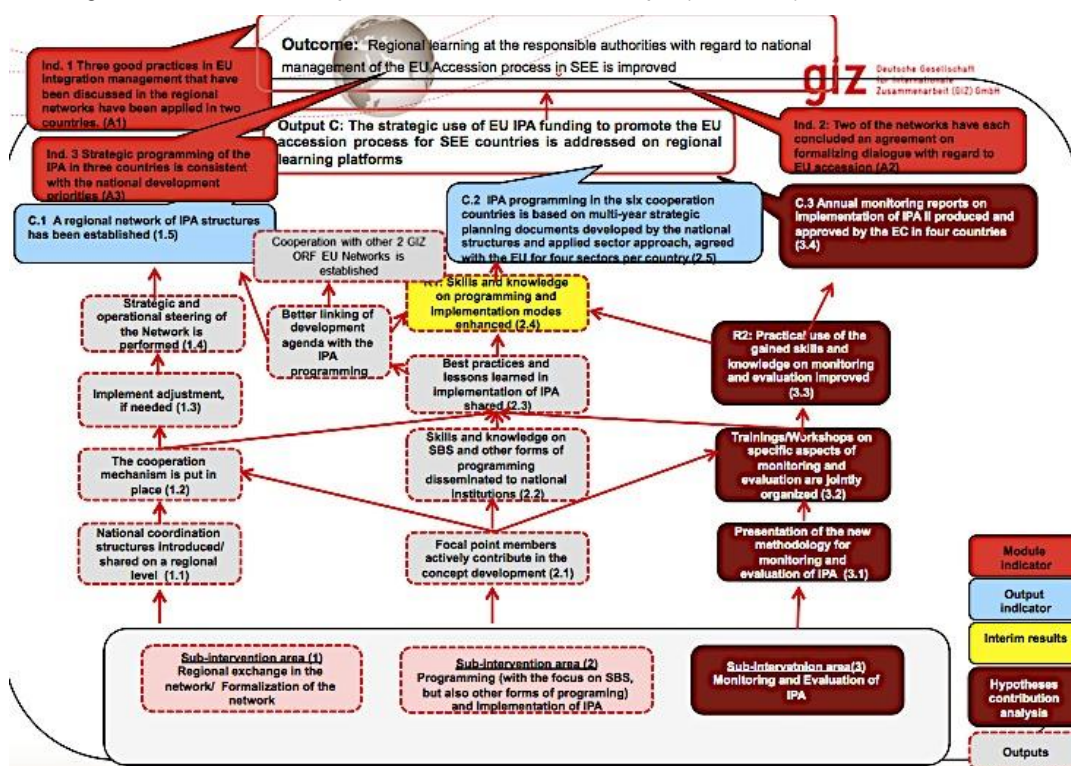
Figure 5 Results Model IV – Output C – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) network

3.3 Target group analysis

According to the project document, the end-result target group of the project are citizens of the countries South-East Europe participating in this project. This notion is based on the assumption that the citizens of the region will benefit from more strategic, well-coordinated, better-organised and utilised EU instruments that provide for a higher standard in everyday life. Having said that, it was assumed that this very diverse population would benefit from the reforms supported by the project. While citizens are certainly the main target group at the impact level, the main stakeholders who are expected to immediately gain from the results of the project are relevant public-sector institutions dealing with the EU accession countries in South-East Europe.

4 Evaluability and evaluation design

This section will elaborate on evaluability and the evaluation design – data sources, data quality and evaluation methods. The report assessed the availability of basic documents, and baseline and monitoring data, including partner data, which will be covered in Section 4.1. This will be followed by an overview of the evaluation design and methods as the basis for assessing OECD/DAC criteria.

4.1 Data sources and quality

This part focuses on basic documents, as well as baseline and monitoring data, including partner data.

Basic documents

Basic document	Is available (Yes/No)	Estimation of actuality and quality	Usage in evaluation
Project proposal and overarching programme/funding proposal etc., and additional information on implementation.	Yes	Project proposal (TC module) Programme proposal	Key background document for reconstructing the Theory of Change and assessing all OECD/DAC evaluation criteria
Modification offers, where appropriate	N/A	N/A	
Contextual analyses, political-economic analyses or capacity assessments to illuminate the social context	Yes	Contextual analyses 2017	Background document on context
Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA Matrix), gender analyses, environmental and climate assessments, safeguard & gender etc.	Yes	PCA matrix 2015, PCA matrix 2013, environmental and climate assessment 2015, gender assessment 2015	Reviewed for relevance
Annual project progress reports and, if embedded, also programme reporting	Yes	Annual progress report, annual programme report	Key background documents for assessing all OECD/DAC evaluation criteria
Evaluation reports	Yes	Project Evaluation Report 2015	Background document for design of project
Country strategy BMZ	No	Instead: BMZ Positionspapier 2016, Fokus Europa – Krisen	Used for assessing OECD/DAC relevance criteria

		und Gräben überwinden und europäische Integration vorantreiben	
National strategies	Yes	EU Europe 2020 Strategy and corresponding national strategies, EC country reports	Used for assessing OECD/DAC relevance criteria
Sectoral/technical documents	Yes	EU integration authorities, IPA, MFAs network reports	Used for assessing effectiveness
Results Matrix	Yes	Results Matrix	Key document used throughout the evaluation process, in particular, for assessing effectiveness and impact
Results Model(s)	Yes	Without narrative and hypotheses	Key document used throughout the evaluation process. The Results Model has been slightly adjusted throughout the evaluation process.
Data of the results-based monitoring system (WoM) (Qsil)	Yes	Monitoring data based on online 'Wirkungsmonitor'	Key document used throughout the evaluation process, in particular for assessing effectiveness, impact, and efficiency
Stakeholder analysis (Qsil)	No	Stakeholder map but no complete stakeholder analysis	Used in the inception in order to determine key stakeholders and develop proposal on interviewees
Capacity development strategy/overall strategy (Qsil)	Yes	CD Strategy	Key document understanding some definitions and the Theory of Change
Steering structure (Qsil)	Yes	Graphic illustration but no narrative	Key background document to understand and verify the steering structure and its implementation
Plan of operations (Qsil)	Yes		Key document used to assess effectiveness and efficiency
CW – self-assessment of the project	Yes		Used as background document
Cost data	Yes		Key document used to assess efficiency

Baseline and monitoring data, including partner data

Regarding the baseline and monitoring data, including data from the partners of the project, the Evaluation Team developed the following analysis.

The project utilised the GIZ online monitoring system to monitor the achievement of milestones. The project set milestones on a regular basis, and monitored them as per internally agreed frequencies, usually at six-month intervals. The online tool allowed for more frequent monitoring processes as well. A review of the data entered in the online tool showed that the tool allowed for entering the indicator data in a narrative and also quantitative manner. The tool was used in the evaluation, focusing on both narrative and quantitative data.

The project team regularly assessed the indicators set for the project. Also, steering committee meetings[4] were organised twice a year, and provided an opportunity for discussing with partners the achievements, progress against the indicators, challenges, and obstacles to implementation. Monitoring was conducted at least twice a year, and steering committee meetings were used to review past activities and plan activities for the next year.

A review of project documentation, in particular the Results Matrix showed elaborated indicators, which contained baselines and targets. An interview with the project team revealed that baselines were set based on targets achieved in the previous programme phase. The main issue with indicators was that they were pretty general by nature and not always SMART. In order to address these issues regarding the indicators, milestones were developed for selected indicators in order to evaluate the effectiveness criterion (see Section 5.2). Yet, the Results Model and its indicators build the basis for this evaluation.

An analysis of the Results Matrix showed (GIZ, 2017n) that baseline information on the main indicators was collected for the development measure before the development measure led to changes or contributed to changes. The baselines were established for indicators, and reflected achievements/results of targets for support achieved during the previous project phase. Overall, the analysis of the Results Matrix showed that the baseline data were reliable. Accordingly, the baseline data were used in the evaluation.

Moreover, the analysis of the Results Matrix (GIZ, 2017n) demonstrated that the project was also one of six Open Regional Fund projects that shared the overall programme objective (impact level) and related indicators. This implied that all projects contributed to the programme objective through their interventions. This would be considered in evaluating the impact criterion.

The online monitoring system contained the list of indicators, and the options to report on them according to an established frequency. In the inception phase, the GIZ Project Team shared with the Evaluation Team the meeting report for a monitoring meeting that took place on 17 to 18 May 2016 (GIZ 2016l). This report presented the team's discussions on each indicator, its definition, etc. The document was a useful aid to understanding the indicators and was also helpful for the evaluation process (GIZ, 2016l).

The project was regional in nature, supporting and facilitating learning among relevant government stakeholders leading the EU integration process. The project's monitoring system was not based on partners' monitoring and evaluation system. This was due to two reasons: the project was not providing fully fledged support to particular institutions, but to specific demand-driven processes. Also, the project offered support regionally, which made it difficult to find data at one institution/country level. Therefore, partner data was only used if linked to the regional nature of the project.

The desk review showed that some indicators' sources of information were based on national and EU documents. Accordingly, the project used national strategies, EU progress reports, Instrument for Pre-

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[4] The steering committee meetings consist of the GIZ Project Team and two focal points of the relevant institution per six beneficiary countries. Each network has its own steering committee.

Accession Assistance (IPA) mid-term reports, Regional School for Public Administration and Regional Cooperation Council documents and data, etc. Considering the regional nature of the project and the implementation status, the evaluation focused mainly on a review of documents produced by the GIZ Project Team, and relevant documents developed by the Regional Cooperation Council, the Regional School for Public Administration and EU, as well as national strategies where appropriate.

4.2 Evaluation design

This part of the report describes the chosen evaluation design. As stipulated in the Terms of Reference for this evaluation, the Evaluation Team applied a contribution analysis approach to three selected hypotheses. The hypotheses were selected in a participatory manner, together with the project team. Key criteria for selecting these hypotheses were the relevance of the respective hypothesis to the success of the project, and its potential contribution to regional cooperation in South-East Europe. Contribution analysis is a theory-based approach that starts by setting out the theory for how the intervention should causally contribute to specific changes and the likely effects of other contextual factors. Contribution analysis is particularly helpful in testing various aspects of the results chain and confirming or revising a Theory of Change. This process helps to analyse why a project has or has not made contributions to certain results, and to identify tools or approaches that may enhance effectiveness for future programming. Yet, it has to be noted that a contribution analysis approach is very time-consuming, as the contribution story had to be reviewed by the GIZ Project Team and the national partners. The involvement of the partners in reviewing the contribution story had to be skipped due to time limitations. However, key findings were verified, using an online survey.

A contribution analysis approach was applied to the following three selected hypotheses, which are particularly important intervention areas:

Ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) network – Support for Berlin process (sub-intervention area A1)
This sub-intervention area concerned the commencement of regional cooperation on the Berlin Process, based on agreed cooperation at the national level, in particular, between ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) and officers of the prime ministers and relevant line ministries (if needed) (Results Model II, 1.1) (see Figure 3). To this end, focal points developed concepts and organised regional events on selected aspects of the Berlin Process – a diplomatic initiative linked to the future enlargement of the European Union (Results Model II, 1.2). This resulted in regular regional follow-up on the implementation of the Western Balkan summits (Results Model II, 1.3), leading to up to eight instances in which those involved in the MFAs network came together to consult with one another on politically sensitive government positions in preparation for regional processes, such as Western Balkan Six or the Berlin Process (Results Model II, 1.5). In turn, this contributed to achieving Output A: An improved regional dialogue of the MFAs of the South-Eastern European cooperation countries regarding EU accession. Furthermore, it was assumed that this regional cooperation on politically sensitive issues contributed to: *improving regional learning among the respective authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-Eastern Europe* (Outcome).

This hypothesis rested on the experience of establishing and working with the MFAs network in the previous project phase, and on an assessment of the particular relevance of the Berlin Process as the key intergovernmental process on the EU integration of MFAs in the six South-East Europe project countries. It had been selected due to the politically sensitive nature of this intervention area. If this hypothesis holds, it could be used as a role model for other politically sensitive areas aimed at fostering compromise and mutual trust and political consensus on politically sensitive areas at the regional level. This would, in turn, increase political stability in the region. Moreover, it had been selected for its relevance to the regional dynamics, given that it was the only existing platform that provided for the collaboration among ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) in South-East Europe.

European integration authorities network – Formalisation of the network (sub-intervention area B4)
This sub-intervention area aimed to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of the EU Integration Authorities Network. This results logic is almost identical to the one outlined above for the MFAs network. Building on the practises of the steering committee, which involved focal points from all six beneficiary countries working in line with agreed cooperation modalities, a concept on future cooperation was developed by GIZ, and shared with the focal points for discussion (see Figure 4: Results model III, 4.1) If the focal points and GIZ agreed on the cooperation mechanism after a series of consultations (Results Model III, 3.2), then the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested (Results Model III, 4.3). If the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested, then it will have been modified, based on experience in the pilot phase (Results Model III, 4.4). If the implementation of the cooperation was adjusted based on the pilot phase, then an agreement on future cooperation between the network members will have been established (Results model III, 4.5.). If this agreement among focal points was established and put in place (Results Model III, 4.5), then the members of the European integration authorities network have reached a consensual agreement on formalising the network (Results Model III, 4.6). If an agreement on sustainability of the network has been reached, then the regional dialogue of Ministries of European Integration/EU Integration offices of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession is improved (Output B). If the regional dialogue of the Ministries of European Integration/EU Integration offices in the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession has been improved (Output B), then: *regional learning at the responsible authorities with regard to national management of the EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved* (Outcome).

This hypothesis rested on the experience of establishing and working with the network of EU integration authorities in the previous project phase. It had been chosen on the assumption that this intervention logic, aimed at increase the sustainability of the network, would provide the basis for the functioning of the network once German and other donor support ceased. Moreover, a very similar logic had been applied in all three networks. Therefore, analysing this hypothesis and developing recommendations will also be of added value for the other two networks.

IPA – Network - Monitoring and evaluation of IPA (sub-intervention area C3)
This intervention area aimed to improve monitoring and evaluation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). While there was little monitoring and evaluation culture in the region, the European Commission pushed for implementing the performance measurements. The hypothesis assumes that capacity development activities (organised by GIZ, based on identified needs of focal points/partners in IPA structures), starting with the presentation of a new methodology for monitoring and evaluation (see Figure 5: Results Model, IV, 3.1), and workshops/training on specific aspects of monitoring and evaluation (Results Model, IV, 3.2) would improve knowledge and skills on monitoring and evaluation and strengthen the practical use of these capacities in IPA structures (Results Model, IV, 3.3). These increased capacities contributed also to sub-intervention area 2, as they fostered skills and knowledge on programming and implementation modes (Results Model, IV, 2.4). Following the results chain, it was assumed that increased monitoring and evaluation capacities contributed to focal points/IPA structures producing annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II and the approval/confirmation of these reports by the European Commission in four beneficiary countries (Results Model IV, 3.4). This, in turn, contributed to achieving Output C: *The strategic use of EU IPA funding to promote the EU accession process for South-East European countries is addressed in regional learning platforms*. Overall, this contributes to *improving the regional learning of the respective authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe* (Outcome).

Due to the fact that monitoring and evaluation is still a quite new field of work, and the relevant practices of the public administrations in the region are quite weak, this intervention area could serve as a good practice example for other EU integration and public administration reform projects.

In line with the Results Matrix (GIZ 2017n), all selected hypotheses outlined in this section rest on three key assumptions. First, countries in South-East Europe are interested in continued cooperation with the Open

Regional Fund (ORF) instrument. Secondly, the partners are still very keen on formats for regional dialogue and learning. Thirdly, there is sufficient political backing for the work of the focal points of the EU integration authorities, ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs), and networks managing EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Considering the fact that the IPA network was only established during this project phase, a fourth assumption stipulating that there is sufficient political will to further develop the IPA management framework was added. According to the Results Matrix, the main risks are that:

- Greater divergence in negotiating stance between the South-East European cooperation countries and the EU would decrease the potential for joint learning, thereby reducing incentives for regional cooperation.
- A lack of political support would restrict capacity increases to the individual level, with no corresponding transfer to the organisation.

For validation purposes, the various primary and secondary information sources (e.g. policy, GIZ Open Regional Fund (ORF) programme, and project documentation) have been supplemented with in-depth qualitative fieldwork. This fieldwork included individual semi-structured interviews, group discussions and focus groups among the project stakeholders in the five target countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia).

The qualitative data collection process was designed to reach the full range of stakeholders, including government stakeholders, other international development partners, and independent experts. The interview partners were selected in close cooperation with the project team in order to ensure that the most relevant stakeholders were chosen. Accordingly, focal points from all three networks from five countries considered in this evaluation were selected and interviewed, as well as additional participants of relevant capacity-building events. Additionally, the selection focused on interviewing partners of relevant regional organisations, such as representatives of the Regional Cooperation Council and the Regional School of Public Administration. Moreover, the selection included representatives of the European Commission based in Brussels (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations – DG NEAR) and EU delegations in the cooperation countries. All stakeholders for the evaluation were represented and interviewed either in person or over the phone.

Based on the Evaluation Matrix (see Annex 1), interview guides for the fieldwork field processes were developed and applied consistently in all five cooperation countries assessed in the framework of this evaluation.

For triangulation purposes, a 'grounded theory' approach to qualitative analysis was used, rooted in the constant comparative method and theoretical sampling. This methodology draws out the variations and similarities between the units of analysis (individuals, groups and projects) through comparison within and between units. The table below demonstrates how this comparison took place at five levels to examine consistency and variation.

Constant comparative method: five levels of comparison	
Level 1. Comparison within individual interviews	The evaluation team summarised content and analysed for internal consistency within each individual interview.
Level 2. Comparison of interviews between different groups within the project	The evaluation team compared individuals within a group (e.g. focal points of a network with similar experiences) to provide a detailed picture of each group.

Level 3. Comparison of interviews between different groups in the same intervention area	The evaluation team compared groups within the same project intervention (e.g. focal points of networks as one group, external partners from regional organisations and European Commission as other groups) to provide a full picture of each of the project interventions.
Level 4. Comparison of interviews between different interventions areas within the same country	The evaluation team compared different intervention areas within the same country to analyse strategies and characteristics that produced positive outcomes within the same operating environment,
Level 5. Comparison of project interventions across countries	The evaluation team compared interventions areas across countries to analyse strategies and characteristics that produced positive outcomes across operating environments.

During all stages of the evaluation process, the evaluation team looked for a comprehensive understanding of important contextual elements of the evaluation and factors that might influence the results of a study. As the evaluation produced justified critical findings, these were stated explicitly and communicated in a way that clearly respected the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth. The Evaluation Team used facilitated validation and clarification processes, involving all relevant stakeholders, prior to finalising the report, while being careful not to compromise the integrity of the evaluation findings.

Methods used

The evaluation was conducted in line with the methods described in the Evaluation Matrix. The Evaluation Team conducted a detailed assessment of the project and relevant contextual conditions. OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability were applied to the design of the Evaluation Matrix, based on the guidance provided in the Terms of Reference and the inception report format, including evaluation questions (EQs) provided by GIZ. Evaluation questions (76 EQs presented in the inception report format provided by GIZ) were translated into criteria, indicators and information sources as a way of clearly structuring the data collection and analysis processes. Information sources used to conduct the evaluation included:

- in-depth desk review of programme and project documentation, project monitoring data, relevant policies and strategies,
- face-to-face interviews, group discussions, focus groups and surveys with representative stakeholders in the five countries selected for the fieldwork,
- phone interviews where face-to-face interviews were not possible, and
- observation of one project event.

In order to increase the validity of the evaluation, various triangulation methods, i.e. data triangulation, researcher triangulation and method triangulation were used.

For data triangulation, data from different sources was collected using different data-collection techniques, i.e. for all analysis questions/topics at least two different data-collection methods, namely, interviews with different stakeholders and document analysis, were used. Additional data-collection methods, such as focus groups (used for the contribution analysis of the ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) network), online surveys (used to follow up the contribution analysis of the EU Integration authorities and MFAs networks) and a comprehensive analysis of different project documents and relevant policy documents were used in order to enhance the

reliability.

OCED/DAC criterion	Method
Relevance	Semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders (GIZ Project Team, GIZ stakeholders, project partners, external experts), group discussion with GIZ Project Team, and document review (project documents, relevant international, EU, regional, bilateral and national strategies).
Effectiveness	Semi-structured interviews with GIZ Project Team, GIZ stakeholders, project partners, document review (project documents, analysis of monitoring data from monitoring tool), online survey (for contribution analysis of European integration offices and ministries of foreign affair (MFAs) networks), observation (steering committee meeting of MFAs network), and focus group with members of the MFAs network, and group discussion with GIZ Project Team.
Impact	Semi-structured interviews with GIZ Project Team, GIZ stakeholders, project partners, external experts, document review (project documents, analysis of monitoring data from monitoring tool), focus group (contribution analysis MFAs network), observation at MFAs network steering committee, and group discussion with GIZ Project Team.
Efficiency	Semi-structured interviews with the GIZ Project Team and project partners, document review (project documents, analysis of monitoring data from monitoring tool), and group discussion with GIZ Project Team.
Sustainability	Semi-structured interviews GIZ Project Team, GIZ stakeholders, project partners, external experts, document review of project documents and analysis of monitoring data, online survey on EUI network, and group discussion with GIZ Project Team.

The evaluation used method triangulation when assessing the success of the project against the OECD/DAC criteria. The basis for the method selection was provided in the Terms of Reference and the Evaluation Matrix, including 76 evaluation questions to assess the OECD/DAC criteria. These evaluation questions were translated into evaluation indicators, against which the project was assessed. To this end, various sources of evidence were used in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the evaluation findings. Accordingly, a document review against the evaluation criteria was conducted. Additionally, multiple sources of evidence were generated for each field visit (including project documentation, face-to-face interviews, phone interviews, group discussions and focus groups). Moreover, a contribution analysis approach was used to assess selected hypotheses within the framework of the evaluation of the effectiveness and impact criteria, and the 'follow the money approach' was used to assess selected aspects of efficiency. The 'follow the money approach' was used to determine potential improvements regarding the efficiency of the project. This approach was selected as a typical level 1 efficiency analysis, which has 'the ability to systematically and exhaustively screen an entire intervention for wasted resources or obvious inefficiencies' (BMZ, 2011). Moreover, this approach was envisaged to be comparatively efficient regarding the time required for conducting the efficiency assessment (BMZ, 2011). In order to conduct the evaluation in line with the 'follow the money approach', an efficiency tool was used, provided by GIZ. This tool allowed costs to be assigned to outputs retrospectively during the evaluation. Yet, assigning costs retrospectively was very complex and may have offered the opportunity to contextualise figures as desired. It is important to point out that all topics/questions were assessed using different methods, in particular, document review, semi-structured interviews, online surveys, focus groups, group discussions and observation.

In order to strengthen the reliability of the findings, the Evaluation Team used targeted sampling methods as follows:

Desk research of policy, programme and project documentation
An in-depth review was conducted of all programme level documents (Open Regional Fund programme strategy, project logical framework and Results Model, progress reports, previous evaluations, monitoring/narrative activity reports).

Field visits
A targeted selection procedure was followed for project stakeholder interviews, group discussions, and focus groups, ensuring a balanced selection of interviewees across project interventions, and sectors.[5] The selection procedure, conducted in close cooperation with the GIZ Project Team, focused on choosing stakeholders in the evaluation who had been closely involved in the implementation and therefore possessed sound knowledge on the project:

- All network focal points (21 senior governmental officials from five cooperation countries) were selected for semi-structured interviews.
- Group discussions were conducted with the GIZ Project Team (five GIZ staff members), complemented by semi-structured interviews of selected project team members, i.e. those who led the implementation of outputs and were in charge of substantive and managerial aspects of the project.
- Key external partners such the political carrier of the project, i.e. the Regional Cooperation Council (one representative) and partners cooperating on a regular basis with the project, such as representatives of the Regional School of Public Administration (one representative) and selected representatives of the European Commission (five representatives), were interviewed.
- Additional senior level input was gathered from GIZ in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia, (i.e. interviews with GIZ Heads of Office in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, and with Team Leaders of bilateral project EU accession projects in Kosovo and Serbia).
- Representatives from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AA) were also included in the selection process (two interviews with Deputy Head of German Embassy and BMZ Advisor both in Kosovo).

Final sampling procedures were completed in collaboration with the GIZ Project Team, who also developed the interview schedule and arranged the meetings for semi-structured interviews.

In-depth findings resulting from the initial data analysis were complemented with online surveys focusing on additional data gathering for the contribution analysis, in particular from the network of European integration authorities and ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs). The surveys were developed and conducted by the Evaluation Team in close cooperation with the GIZ Project Team.

Observation was used to enrich the evaluation of the MFAs network. In order to collect more in-depth data for the contribution analysis, a focus group consisting of focal points from the MFAs network was conducted.[6] Additional interviews were conducted, with five beneficiaries of direct training participating in the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) network. Furthermore, online surveys were developed and conducted to collect additional data from focal points of the European integration Authorities and the MFAs networks.

In order to analyse the data, interview and group discussion protocols were developed during the field mission, and the constant comparative method and the Evaluation Matrix were used to analyse the data. Moreover, a content analysis approach was used in order to conduct a comprehensive review of all documents.

Additionally, researcher triangulation was used throughout the evaluation process: two evaluators collected and

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[5] Details on the field visits and interviews conducted can be found in Annex 3: Interview Schedule.
[6] Due to logistical aspects stemming from the regional nature of the project, there was no chance to gather the focal points of the other networks in one place in order to conduct focus groups.

assessed the same data. In order to assess the findings, a short debriefing was conducted at the end of each day on mission. The findings were recorded and added to the interview notes, which the evaluators shared in order to analyse the data. After the field mission, the evaluators met for an in-depth debriefing in order to discuss the findings, develop the debriefing and agree on the data analysis process. Regarding the latter, it was decided to use the Evaluation Matrix as the analysis tool and to follow the constant comparative method outlined above. This meeting took place on 5 December 2017 in Berlin. The main results of the meeting are summarised in the debriefing presentation and additional notes taken by the team leader. As a follow-up to this meeting, interview and group discussion protocols were constructed to capture data relevant to evaluation needs and to directly reflect the goals and objectives of the project. These data were analysed in line with the constant comparative method outlined above. The Evaluation Matrix was used as the analysis tool by both evaluators, with the aim of ensuring researcher triangulation. Due to the division of roles determined in the Terms of Reference, the leader of this Evaluation Team took the lead in analysing the data and drafting the Evaluation Report. However, the regional expert reviewed the analysis of the team leader and provided input at all stages of the evaluation process in order to increase the reliability and validity of the evaluation findings.

Furthermore, the intention was that the results of this evaluation would be triangulated with the GIZ Project Team in order to review the analysis for mistakes and to systematically assess the collected information. To this end, an initial debriefing took place in December 2017. Moreover, the GIZ Project Team reviewed the draft Evaluation Report. An in-depth discussion of the evaluation was envisaged with the GIZ Project Team in April 2018. Due to time restrictions, the regional nature of the project and the comprehensive nature of the report, national partners were involved in the final review process.

The following limitations inherent to the methods used were identified:

- **Selection bias** – As some informants declined to participate, there was a possibility of selection bias, i.e. those respondents who chose to participate might differ from those who did not in terms of their attitudes and perceptions, their affiliation with government/non-government structures, and socio-demographic characteristics and experience. This might apply to in-person interviews, and group discussions.
- **Recall bias** – Since a number of questions dealt with issues that took place in the past or changes that took place after the projects began, recall bias could not be excluded. Some respondents might have found it difficult to accurately compare organisational arrangements/capacity one or more years ago to the current situation.
- **Halo bias** – There was a known tendency among respondents to under-report socially undesirable answers and alter their responses to approximate what they perceived as the social norm (halo bias). The extent to which respondents were prepared to reveal their true opinions might also vary for some questions that call upon the respondents to assess the performance of their colleagues or people on whom they depend for the provision of services. In order to mitigate this limitation, the evaluation provided the respondents with confidentiality and anonymity guarantees that would be embedded in data collection instruments as opening statements, where possible. Moreover, the interviews were conducted in settings where respondents felt comfortable. Additionally, the Evaluation Team focused on establishing rapport between the interviewer and the respondent.

In order to mitigate the potential effects identified above for qualitative data, where much of the evidence might be anecdotal or inferred, the Evaluation Team used different triangulation methods to identify any inconsistencies and reduce the 'response bias', in which respondents tended to tell the evaluators what they wanted to hear. Use of layered triangulation across different methods, sources of information and evaluators reduced uncertainty in this regard.

In sum, due to the fact that data, researcher and method triangulation was possible and used for most evaluation questions the evidence generated was reliable.

4.3 Evaluation process

The evaluation process was designed as a participatory approach involving key stakeholders in all phases of the evaluation in order to strengthen buy-in and commitment to follow up on the recommendations of the evaluation.

The main stakeholders of the evaluation were partners benefiting from the relevant networks established by the project and can be categorised into groups, depending on the level and the nature of their involvement. The project was carried by the GIZ Project Team based in Sarajevo, with GIZ project staff in all six cooperation countries, and national partners in the ministries of foreign affairs, ministries for European integration/EU integration offices, and offices for Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) coordination in the five cooperation countries. The political carrier of the project was the Regional Cooperation Council. Key stakeholders also include European Commission's (EC) Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and the Regional School for Public Administration. The EC delegations in the respective South-East European countries are also stakeholders of the project.

In order to involve the project stakeholders from the beginning, the GIZ Project Team reviewed and commented on the inception report, while focal points from all networks were invited to participate in an online survey in order to provide input on their specific interest in the evaluation. During the data-collection phase, all key stakeholders of the project were involved in semi-structured interviews, online surveys, and a focus group. The GIZ Project Team received feedback on the evaluation findings during a debriefing conducted in December 2017. The draft Evaluation Report was shared with the GIZ Project Team, and a presentation of the evaluation was made to the GIZ Project Team and the Country Director in Sarajevo at the beginning of April 2018.

5 Assessment of the project's results according to OECD/DAC criteria)

This section of the evaluation report provides an assessment of the project in line with the OECD/DAC criteria. It was based on evaluation dimensions and corresponding criteria elaborated in **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**.

5.1 Relevance

This part of the report focuses on evaluating the criterion of relevance criterion. It focuses on describing the evaluation basis and on presenting the evaluation findings accordingly.

The evaluation of the criterion for **relevance** focused on the extent to which the project was suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor. In order to evaluate the relevance of the project, the following four evaluation dimensions were considered, in line with the Evaluation Matrix:

- *Evaluation dimension 1: The project fits into the relevant strategic reference framework.* All relevant strategies were reviewed, and a comparison made with the project concept in order to find potential blind spots. The strategies reviewed included the following: The BMZ Western Balkan strategy (BMZ, 2016), BMZ country strategies, GIZ EU accession guidelines (GIZ, 2017a), EU enlargement strategy (EC, 2018a), EC Europe 2020 Strategy, Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015), EU Global Strategy (European External Action Service, 2016), National Strategies on EU Europe 2020, if existing, and national Sustainable Development Goal strategies.
- *Evaluation dimension 2: Suitability of the conception to match problems/needs of the target groups.* As outlined in Section 3.3, the key target group of the project was the group directly benefiting from the results of the project, i.e. relevant public sector institutions (i.e. ministries of foreign affairs, EU integration authorities, IPA structures) dealing with the EU accession countries in South-East Europe. In order to assess this evaluation dimension, semi-structured interviews and review of national strategies were conducted.
- *Evaluation dimension 3: The design of the project was adequately adapted to the chosen goal.* In order to evaluate this dimension, the results logic of the project as outlined in the Results Model and the Results Matrix reflecting the Theory of Change was assessed. Moreover, the evaluation focused on whether the strategic reference framework was considered in the conception and intervention logic of the project. Furthermore, input from key stakeholders confirms that the project and its intervention areas are strategically focused (see also **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**).
- *Evaluation dimension 4: The conceptual design was adapted to changes in line with the requirements and re-adapted where applicable.*

The evaluation strategy chosen consisted of a combination of a desk analysis of project documents, relevant strategies and policies and key informant interviews. Overall, data gathered through desk review and semi-structured interviews provided a sound basis to assess the relevance criterion.

The relevance criterion was evaluated as **very successful** and was based on the following evaluation findings:

Regarding **relevance evaluation dimension 1**, the evaluation found the project fully fitted into the relevant strategic reference frameworks. It was embedded in the context and framework conditions of the EU integration process in South-East Europe. All countries in the region had made EU membership the key political objective.

Montenegro and Serbia had entered negotiations for membership, Albania and FYR Macedonia were candidates, Bosnia and Herzegovina had applied formally for membership and Kosovo had entered the contractual framework of the EU-Stabilisation and Association process and remained a potential candidate. According to the new EU enlargement strategy, 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans', published in February 2018 (EC, 2018a), a concrete enlargement perspective was given to the Western Balkans. The European Commission offered Montenegro and Serbia the 'current front-runners' the possibility of entering the EU in 2025 if key steps and conditions in the accession negotiations, as prescribed by the European Commission were met (EC, 2018a). According to this EC strategy, Albania and FYR Macedonia were significantly progressing in the EU accession process. In cases where all conditions are fulfilled, the European Commission offered to formulate recommendations to open accession negotiations. Regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Commission will commence developing an 'Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership application following receipt of comprehensive, complete answers to its Questionnaire' (EC, 2018b). The European Commission has stated that it sees the potential of providing Bosnia and Herzegovina with candidate status if efforts and engagement on the EU accession process are maintained (EC, 2018b). Regarding Kosovo, which made the least progression in the EU accession process, the European Commission also provided an opportunity for the European path through continuous progress in the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (EC, 2018a).

Despite being at different stages in the accession process, all six Western Balkans countries face common challenges in reforming and preparing their economies, political systems and public administrations. Regional cooperation has been a key condition for potential EU accession since at least the late 1990s and has been reiterated and supported ever since. Significant improvements in regional cooperation with regard to economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice, and media and security cooperation have arisen from the progress made in state-building by the six Western Balkans states, from the Stabilisation and Association Process, the creation of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in 2008, and other bi- and multi-lateral initiatives, including those supported by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Yet, despite coordinating and steering the EU accession process, personnel and structures of the competent authorities lack the capacity to engage in regional learning activities. Consequently, when it comes to coordinating and steering the EU accession process, the relevant authorities benefit from engaging in regional learning activities and in implementing the good practice they learn there in the work they do in their respective national systems (core problem) (GIZ, 2016; GIZ 2015).

The main objective of the project was to improve the regional learning of the responsible authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe. The project initiated cooperation between three different institutional structures in the Western Balkans countries:
- a regional dialogue between the ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) of South-East Europe (MFAs network), and
- a cooperation platform between the European integration offices from South-East European countries (EU integration network) and the network of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) structures (IPA network).

Regional cooperation focuses on capacity building related to specific chapters of the Acquis Communautaire (i.e. the body of EU legislation and policies in force), as well as new methodology structures relevant to strengthening the steering and coordination of the EU integration process of South-East European countries.

The project fitted into the relevant strategic reference frameworks, as the EU accession process is the backbone of German development cooperation for countries in the region (Int_2). Accordingly, the project was in line with the strategic directions of German development cooperation: the BMZ Western Balkan Strategy (BMZ, 2016) re-emphasises that regional cooperation is a principle requirement of the EU accession process. Therefore, potential EU member states should cooperate regionally in order to prepare for participation in the

EU and its institutions (BMZ, 2016). BMZ country strategies for the region are not publicly available, but an analysis of the BMZ and GIZ website revealed the following: the strategic goals for Serbia and Kosovo clearly focus on contributing to the EU accession of both countries, while cross-cutting topics such as public administration are in the focus of the BMZ strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Regarding Albania and FYR Macedonia, EU accession is not explicitly mentioned as a strategic priority. Moreover, the project is in line with the relevant GIZ guideline on EU accession (GIZ, 2017a).

Furthermore, the approach of the project is coherent with the strategic directions of relevant EU strategies, namely, the EU enlargement strategy 2015 and EU Europe 2020. Regarding the EU enlargement strategy 2015, it has to be pointed out that the project is fully in line with the strategic directions and contributes to its implementation. In its recently published new EU enlargement strategy, the European Commission re-emphasised the need to further strengthen regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations (EC, 2018a). Furthermore, the EU enlargement strategy 2015 re-emphasises the importance of regional cooperation 'as essential elements of the Stabilisation and Association and enlargement processes, which continue to drive transformation and anchor stability in the countries of south-east Europe aspiring to EU' (EC, 2015). The connectivity agenda, particularly, the Berlin Process – supported by the project – are seen by the European Commission as important elements of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans (EC, 2015; EC 2018a). Focusing on this approach, the European Commission points out that regional cooperation initiatives should be inclusive,[7] regionally owned and driven (EC, 2015). The demand-driven approach of the project fits well within this policy direction. Moreover, the EC points to the importance of tackling bilateral issues (EC, 2015). The project's focus on consulting on politically sensitive issues, including bilateral issues, is seen as an important contribution to this policy direction.

The EU Global Strategy focuses on maintaining a credible accession process for the countries in the Western Balkans and promoting good neighbourly relations (European External Action Service, 2016). Considering the focus of the project on fostering the EU accession process through regional cooperation, the project is in line with, and contributes, to the EU Global Strategy.

The South-East Europe 2020 Strategy also focuses on regional cooperation and 'provides a framework to assist governments in the region to implement their individual development strategies, including EU accession related goals, by enhancing national efforts through focused regional cooperation on those specific issues that can benefit from a shared approach' (RCC, 2013). The South-East Europe 2020's focus on regional cooperation, which is based on closer, wider and deeper regional cooperation, was in line with the project's approach, which clearly contributed to implementing South-East Europe 2020 (RCC, 2013). Indeed, the project and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) worked with the same key stakeholders, such as representatives of the EU Integration Authorities, ministries of foreign affairs and IPA focal points. In order to ensure coherence and to avoid duplication, the project also established close cooperation with the RCC. While partners in the RCC assessed this cooperation as satisfactory, room for improvement was identified with regard to setting priorities. According to the RCC representative, the project set priorities and discussed them with the RCC. Yet, the RCC representative recommended deepening cooperation by taking the RCC output at the strategic and programming level as their input (Interview, RCC).

Furthermore, the approach of the project was consistent with the strategic directions of international standards and agreements, in particular Agenda 2030, including the SDGs and the EU Global Strategy. Agenda 2030

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[7] Inclusiveness is not clearly defined in these strategies of the Euroepan Commission. However, based on the evaluators' understanding of the discourse and context in the South-East European cooperation countries, 'inclusive' means territorial inclusiveness, i.e. all countries in the region equally participate in regional cooperation, disregarding bilateral conflicts and tensions. This understanding of inclusiveness also frames the Thessalonki Agenda and focuses on those countries not recognised by all EU member states (e.g. Kosovo–Serbia). On the country level inclusiveness means ensuring that all essential parts of government, opposition, civil society are involved in fostering the European path, ensuring that existing antagonisms are not further deepened but addressed. Within societies inclusiveness also focuses on antagonisms between men and women, rich and poor etc. In line with this understanding of inclusiveness, and the objective and target group of the project, this project is inclusive as it treats all six cooperation countries in the same manner, it foster regional cooperation on an equal footing and it focuses on ensuring that an inclusive approach is applied whenever possible, for example through IPA programming.

sets the framework for development cooperation and provides 17 sustainable development goals to be achieved by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). The project was in line with, and contributed to, the implementation of Agenda 2030 and, in particular, to SDG 16, focusing on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. Moreover, this goal specifically focused on developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (16.6) and on ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (16.7) (UN, 2015). This was mainly due to the fact that regional cooperation was seen as the bedrock of stability and peace in South-East Europe. According to the EC, regional cooperation should promote reconciliation and help to overcome nationalism and intolerance while fostering mutual understanding and political dialogues in the region (EC, 2015, 2005). Considering this background, advancing regional cooperation in South-East Europe contributed to the Agenda 2030/SDGs – in particular, in the field of good governance and participatory development, as stipulated in the project document and highlighted by senior officials with the BMZ (GIZ, 2015a; Interview 27).

The project intervention, objective and expected results had linkages to the target countries' EU integration strategies, SDG strategies and relevant policies. The EU accession process is one of the key political priorities of all South-East European countries. This was also reflected in relevant strategies and policies, if existing. A review of existing national strategies on South-East Europe 2020 and SDGs revealed strong core linkages with the project, and even if some were not as broad ranging, there were no deviations from the needs and goals expressed in these documents. Both in the EU thematic areas, alignments, accession, and technical aspects, and in terms of future directions of the country in question, a clear path was set for the Sustainable Development Goals. All documents put very high on their list the necessity to continue implementing and developing a regional cooperation policy by creating an environment for more intensive economic integration, and the strengthening of political cooperation and cooperation in all other sectors, particularly in the implementation of joint projects within the EU integration process of the countries in the region. Moreover, all the relevant national strategies highlighted the importance of fast accession processes, prioritising specific technical criteria (harmonisation with the EU legislation) that needed to be in focus. Clearly, these strategies addressed the economy of the region, and specific infrastructural and administrative matters. The project´s priorities contributed to them, while not focusing on all details, which is completely appropriate considering the regional scope of the project. (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2010, FYR Macedonia, 2017, Republic of Albania, 2013, Republic of Kosovo, 2016, Republic of Serbia 2014).

The project documentation/Theory of Change cross-refers to policies and strategies of other relevant GIZ sectors, and avoids duplication and conflicts with other interventions. In particular, it cross-refers to GIZ bilateral projects (e.g. Albania, Kosovo, Serbia) focusing on fostering EU accession. In order to avoid duplication, it also focuses on similar regional projects supported by the EC. Regarding the latter, EC stakeholders in some of the beneficiary countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia) would wish for more regular exchange of information due to the extreme relevance of the project, while DG NEAR, in charge of regional cooperation, is satisfied with the current information flow and coordination of activities.

According to the project documents, the project did not entail an ecological dimension, as stipulated in the environmental and climate assessment conducted during the planning phase of the project. Moreover, the project document was marked with AO-0 (i.e. reducing poverty is neither the main nor a secondary objective of the project) (GIZ, 2015a) regarding its socio-economic impact. Accordingly, the project contributed only on a marginal scale to combatting poverty, as it fostered the EU accession process and networking capacities. It was assumed that the reforms conducted within the framework of the EU accession process would lead to the beneficiary countries becoming increasingly competitive, thereby enabling them to combat poverty. However, the project's contribution to the socio-economic impact was expected to be extremely small and indirect and thus not measurable. Accordingly, this dimension was not been further assessed.

Relevance evaluation dimension 2 (suitability of the strategy/the conception matches core problems/needs of the target groups), had to be considered in line with the following understanding of the target group. According

to the project document, the core problem was that the competent authorities lacked the capacity to engage in and to implement regional cooperation activities. Therefore, regional learning and mutual support for the management of the EU accession process in the relevant authorities in the South-East European cooperation countries had not yet being carried out to a sufficient degree. There was a deficit in the necessary soft skills required for effective regional cooperation and networking (core problem) (GIZ, 2015a). In line with the project document, the target group were citizens of the beneficiary countries (GIZ, 2015a). This notion was based on the assumption that the citizens of the region would benefit from the more strategic, well-coordinated, better-organised and utilised EU instruments that provide for a higher standard of everyday life. Having said that, it was assumed that this very diverse population would benefit from the reforms supported by the project. While citizens were certainly the main target group at the impact level, the main stakeholders who were expected to immediately gain from the results of the project were relevant public institutions/senior civil servants dealing with the EU accession countries in South-East Europe. Considering that all assistance focused on strengthening the capcity of senior civil servants and relevant institutions involved in the EU accession process, the conceptual design of the project did not provide room for reaching out to particularly disadvantaged groups.

The project's gender analysis, conducted during the planning phase, classified the project with GG-0, i.e. the project does not lead to any tangible improvements regarding gender issues, although gender inequalities are an issue in the South-East Europe cooperation countries (European Parliament, 2017). Yet, the GIZ Project Team had two focal points whose specific focus was to raise awareness among team members and partner institutions of gender issues. While this approach led to increased understanding of the issue, it did not systematically consider different perspectives, needs and concerns of women and men, as it mainly focused on involving beneficiaries in certain positions in relevant public administrations. While this approach might be effective in involving senior civil servants in relevant positions, it was recommended that the introduction of a gender mainstreaming approach be considered when the project had the possibility of selecting a larger numbers of beneficiaries, such as for larger regional capacity-building workshops.

In line with a more focused target-group analysis outlined above (i.e. identifying senior civil servants from relevant public sector organisations in charge of European accession as a key target group), the chosen project objective was well framed to address the core problems/needs of this target group (evaluation dimension two), i.e. lack of regional learning capacities of senior civil servants and corresponding institutions involved in the EU accession in cooperation countries in South-East Europe. This was ensured through the demand-driven approach of the project, which provided the opportunity for senior civil servants of relevant institutions to identify their needs and request assistance through regional learning or the National Action Support Scheme. All stakeholders involved in this evaluation assessed this demand-driven approach as very effective and as adding significant value to the project.

The design of the project was adequately adapted to the chosen goal as the Theory of Change, in particular, the hypotheses and the risks were assessed as plausible. Yet, an analysis of the Theory of Change in the inception phase, and the evaluation of its implementation, demonstrated some rather minor changes in the results logic. These changes pertained, in particular, to adjustments regarding the network of European Union integration offices in South-East European countries. As discussed with the project team during the inception phase, Result A (Results Model III, 4.6) needed to be moved to the same level as Result B (Results Model III, 3.1) and Result C (Results Model III, 2.1) (see Figure 4), and relevant milestones adjusted accordingly. With regard to the EU integration authorities network, the results chain for sub-intervention area B4, formalisation of the network, also needed be adjusted with the findings of the inception phase as presented in this report in order to adequately present the intervention logic. Moreover, the sub-intervention area titled 'formalisation of the network', which exists in all three intervention areas, should be renamed 'sustainability of the network' in order to adequately reflect the aim of this sub-intervention area.

Additionally, the strategic reference framework, namely, the EU accession process, built the basis of the

project's intervention logic. This contributed to the strong strategic relevance of the project. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders showed that each intervention area was strategically focused.

During the assessed implementation period, the strategic orientation of the EU and country strategies were monitored and the project interventions adapted, as required. Due to the fact that no major changes of relevant EU and country strategies occurred during the assessed implementation period, **relevance evaluation dimension 4**, the conceptual design of the project was not adapted as no changes occurred, could not be assessed further.

In sum, the criterion of relevance was evaluated as **very successfully met**, as the project fitted fully into the strategic reference frameworks although there is room to optimise strategic alignment with the Regional Cooperation Council, a key stakeholder of the project. Moreover, the suitability of the strategy/concept matched core problems/needs of the target groups. Yet, a gender mainstreaming approach should be introduced if appropriate (i.e. for capacity-building events that provide the possibility of the selection of participants based not only on position but also gender), and the target group should be adjusted to the actual implementation. While the design of the project is adequately adapted to the chosen goal, an evaluation of the Theory of Change demonstrated the need to make some small adjustments to the results logic, as discussed with the Project Team in the inception phase, and reflected in the Chapter on Theory of Change in this evaluation. Finally, the project interventions were adapted to the strategic orientation of the EU and country strategies, and the project was adapted to changes in line with the requirements.

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score
Relevance	The project fits into the relevant strategic reference frameworks.	*Max. 40 points* *40 out of 40*
	The strategy and the conception suitably match the core problems/needs of the target groups.	*Max. 30 points* *27 out of 30*
	The design of the project is adequately adapted to the chosen goal.	*Max. 20 points* *17 out of 20 points*
	The conceptual design of the project was adapted to changes in line with requirements, and readapted where applicable.	*Max. 10 points* *10 out of 10 points*
Overall rating for relevance		*94 of 100 points*

5.2 Effectiveness

This section evaluates the criterion of effectiveness: the extent to which the project's goal was achieved at this stage of the implementation. It provides an outline of the evaluation basis, and evaluates the project

accordingly.

The next part evaluates the **effectiveness criteria**, based on the following assessment dimensions (for details see **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**):

- *Evaluation dimension 1: The project achieved the goal on time in accordance with the projective objective indicators, agreed upon in the contract.* This evaluation dimension was assessed against the project objective indicators. To this end, the project objective and corresponding criteria were assessed in line with the SMART criteria.
- *Evaluation dimension 2: The services implemented by the project successfully contributed to the achievement of the goal agreed upon in the contract.* In order to assess this evaluation dimension a contribution analysis was carried out for three selected hypotheses, focusing on all three intervention areas of the project.
- *Evaluation dimension 3: The occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive results was monitored and additional opportunities for further positive results were seized.* In order to assess this third evaluation dimension, the results of a document review and semi-structured interviews with the project team and network focal points were considered.
- *Evaluation dimension 4: No project-related negative results occurred – and if any negative results occurred, the project responded adequately.* Assessing this fourth evaluation dimension, results of a document review and semi-structured interviews with the project team and network focal points were considered.

Regarding **effectiveness evaluation dimension 1** (*the project achieved the goal on time in accordance with the project objective indicators agreed upon in the contract*) the project achieved very good results. Overall, the goal attainment of the project was high and it was likely that the project would achieve all indicators. This was due to the fact that Indicator 1 had already been partly achieved and was very likely to be completed in the upcoming implementation period. Indicator 2 was partially achieved, and it was assumed that it would be completed by the end of the project. Indicator 3 was achieved 50 percent and it was very likely that it would be accomplished by the end of the project.

Project objective indicators according to the offer / original indicator	Evaluation according to SMART criteria/Assessment	Adapted projective objective indicator
Indicator 1: Three good practices in EU integration management that have been discussed in the regional networks of the ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs), the EU integration authorities or the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) structures have been applied in two countries. *Base value:* 8/1. (8 good practices exist in each country) *Target value:* 3 (three good practices applied in two out of six	Specific: The indicator was not specific enough as it was not clear how a good practice was defined and what scope this good practice must have. However, good practice and its transfer had been defined by the project as follows: 'A good practice is a solution, concept, structure etc., being presented by one network member in one of the regional events and later transferred to two other network member institutions. In order to be eligible to be counted for this indicator the same good practice needs to be	

countries) *Source: Meeting summaries, minutes, reports.*	applied in at least two countries. Some examples for good practices could be 'transfer of the knowledge in the negotiation structures, translation, working groups, implementation structures for IPA' (GIZ, 2016l). The Evaluation Team would base its assessment of this indicator on this definition. Measureable: The indicator had a base value and a target value. However, the data sources were not specified. There were no reference values. The time and effort required to check on the measured values was in a reasonable ratio to the relevance of the indicator and the total volume of the development measure. Achievable: The indicator was realistic and the target value had been assessed objectively. Yet, it could be more ambitious considering that exchange of good practices and regional learning was the main focus of the project. Relevance: The indicator was relevant, as applying good practices identified by target countries was key to regional learning. The indicator was at the correct results level. Time-bound: The indicator was not time-bound and it could only be assumed that the indicator should be completed by the end of the module. Therefore, a milestone against which the project would be evaluated had been developed.	Milestone for the evaluation: At least one good practice was discussed in the regional networks of the ministries of foreign affairs, the EU integration authorities, or the IPA structures and were applied in two countries.
Indicator 2: Two of the networks	Specific: The indicator was	

have concluded an agreement on formalising dialogue with regard to EU accession. Baseline value: 0 (networks have not been formalised and rely on German support) Target value: 2 (networks conclude agreements on formalising cooperation) Sources: Evaluation of the minutes of focal point meetings and allocation of resources for joint activities.	specific enough. Measurable: The indicator had a base value and a target value. However, the data sources were not specified. There were no reference values. The time and effort required to check on the measured values was in a reasonable ratio to the relevance of the indicator and the total volume of the development measure. Achievable: As noted by the project team in the discussion on the indicators, it was not likely to come to an official agreement that would be signed by all partners because of the relations between Serbia and Kosovo. According to the project team, the goal would be achieved. They only needed to see whether they will use signatures. Relevance: The relevance of this indicator was high, as it provides the basis for sustainability. The indicator was at the correct results level. Time-bound: The indicator was time-bound. It was expected that the indicator would be achieved at the end of the implementation of the project.	
Indicator 3: National development priorities in four countries are consistent with the strategic programming of the IPA. Baseline value: 2 (baseline study, June 2016) Target value: 4	Specific: This indicator was specific enough as it says in four out of six countries. Measureable: The indicator had a base value and a target value, and the data sources were specified as baseline study. There were reference values. The time and effort required to check on the measured values required a study. It was in a reasonable ratio	

	to the relevance of the indicator and the total volume of the development measure. However, for this evaluation the time and effort required to check the measured values was not in a reasonable ratio to the relevance of the indicator. Achievable: The indicator was realistic and the target value had been assessed objectively. Relevance: The relevance of this indicator was appropriate. Time-bound: The indicator was time-bound, i.e. By the end of the implementation the indicator would be achieved.	

Indicator 1: Three good practices in EU integration management that were discussed in the regional networks of the ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs), the EU integration authorities or the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) structures were applied in two countries.

This indicator was complemented with the following milestone designed for the evaluation: At least one good practice had been discussed in the regional networks of the MFAs, the EU integration authorities, or the IPA structures and had been applied in two countries. Focusing only on one good practice was seen as realistic, considering the overall implementation status.

One good practice (internship programme) was discussed in the EU integration authorities network and applied in two countries: two representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina went to Montenegro and Serbia to learn more about implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and experiences of answering the Questionnaire.[8] The feedback of the completed internships was very positive from the sending and hosting countries. There is a high demand for applying this good practice as the GIZ Project Team received requests from Albania, FYR Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia. This good practice was identified by Serbia, which used internships to Slovenia and the UK as a tool to increase the capacity of the public administration in the EU accession process (GIZ 2017c, Int_5,7,9,10,13)

It was highly probable that this indicator would be achieved, as additional good practices were already identified. For example, the EU Integration Authorities Network identified a manual on guidelines and procedures increasing the coherence of relevant strategies and Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) funds developed in Serbia. This manual was very relevant for most other beneficiary countries (GIZ, 2017p,

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[8] According to the frequently asked questions of the European Commission, 'the Questionnaire is a formal instrument through which the (European) Commission assesses the state of play and readiness of applicant countries to move forward in the accession process, namely to be granted candidate country status and open accession negotiations. The Questionnaire includes both simple and complex questions aimed at providing precise information about the country, from the respect for political and economic criteria, to the extent of compliance with EU legislation, as well as information on institutional and administrative capacities necessary for the acceptance and implementation of European Union's legislation in each of the 33 policy areas of the EU Acquis (e.g: agriculture, competition, public procurement, education and culture, etc). The number of questions can vary depending on the country. For example, in the case of Croatia there were 4,560 questions.'(EC, 2018)

Int_5,9,10,13,). Furthermore, the IPA network also identified good practices, such as rules of procedures on how to establish sector-monitoring committees, discussed in Tirana in March 2016 and adopted by all beneficiary countries (GIZ, 2016b, Int_4,9,10). Yet, due to the fact that this practice was not fully in line with the definition of good practices for this indicator – understood as a solution, concept, structure etc., being presented by one network member in one of the regional events and later transferred to two other network member institutions (GIZ, 2016l) – the project decided not to consider it.

Considering that countries are at different stages of the EU accession process (negotiation, candidates, and potential candidates) the immediate needs of partners vary. In order to foster the exchange of good practices and to flexibly respond to national needs, the National Action Support Scheme (NASS) was introduced upon the request of partners in autumn 2016 (GIZ, 2016n). While partners can request support in all intervention areas of the project, the NASS was particularly suitable to support bilateral learning through the exchange of good practices, experience and expertise. The NASS was perceived as a very effective tool to increase capacity in specific fields, although it could not replace the regional learning and networking. Yet, it should be noted that partners, in particular, those from EU integration authorities and IPA networks, greatly value the support received through the NASS. For example, one of the EU integration authorities network focal points from Serbia pointed out that due to the legal framework they could only pay very limited amounts to trainers. Yet, the NASS supported them in preparing five two-day training sessions on preparing negotiation positions, with 10 participants in each. Overall, the NASS was shown to be an effective tool to address country-specific needs and to take into consideration the different stage each country had reached in the EU accession process.

Indicator 2: Two of the networks have concluded an agreement on formalising dialogue with regard to EU accession.
This indicator aimed to measure the sustainability of the networks in order to ensure the independent functioning without GIZ/donor support. A concept on formalising the networks was presented to all three networks. However, significant work remained to be done in order to ensure the sustainability/formalisation of two out of three networks (see also contribution analysis/sustainability). While achieving the sustainability of developmental projects was very challenging in the Western Balkans, which has become accustomed to receiving assistance in recent years, the likelihood of indicator attaWinment was assessed as feasible. This was due to the fact that informal networks would most likely be sustainable at this stage (see evaluation of sustainability criterion in Section 5.5 below). Therefore, and considering that the implementation period of the project was extended until 2020, it was likely that an agreement on formalising the networks would be found, as informal networks for exchanging information would continue to exist without GIZ support at this stage of the implementation.

Indicator 3: National development priorities in four countries are consistent with the strategic programming of the IPA.
In order to assess achievements in this indicator, a baseline study was conducted. According to this baseline study, conducted in June 2016 in two of the cooperation countries (Serbia and Montenegro), national development priorities were coherent with the priorities of IPA funds usage. This study would be repeated in 2018. (GIZ, 2017q). Considering that this indicator had already been achieved to 50 percent, and taking into account the inappropriate ratio of time and effort required to assess the proposed milestone, the Evaluation Team decided not to further assess this indictor.

In order to evaluate **effectiveness evaluation dimension 2** (the services implemented by the project successfully contribute to the achievement of the goal agreed upon in the contract), the Evaluation Team conducted a contribution analysis, focusing on the following three selected hypotheses.

Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) network, Support for Berlin Process (intervention area A sub-intervention area A1, Results Model II, hypothesis in dark red)

This sub-intervention area concerned the commencement of regional cooperation on the Berlin Process, based on agreed cooperation at the national level, in particular, between ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) and officers of the prime ministers and relevant line ministries (if needed) (see Figure 6: Results Model II, 1.1). To this end, focal points developed concepts and organised regional events on selected aspects of the Berlin Process – a diplomatic initiative linked to the future enlargement of the European Union (Results Model II, 1.2). This resulted in regular regional follow-up on the implementation of the Western Balkan summits (Results Model II, 1.3), leading to up to eight instances in which those involved in the MFAs network came together to consult with one another on politically sensitive government positions in preparation for regional processes, such as Western Balkan Six or the Berlin Process (Results Model II, 1.5). In turn, this contributed to achieving Output A: An improved regional dialogue of the ministries of foreign affairs of the South-Eastern European cooperation countries regarding EU accession. Furthermore, it was assumed that this regional cooperation on politically sensitive issues contributed to: *Improved regional learning at the respective authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-Eastern Europe* (Outcome).

This hypothesis rested on the experience of establishing and working with the MFAs network in the previous project phase, and on an assessment of the particular relevance of the Berlin Process as the key intergovernmental process in the EU integration for MFAs in the six South-East European project countries. It was selected due to the politically sensitive nature of this intervention area. If this hypothesis holds, it could be used as a role model for other politically sensitive areas, with the aim of fostering compromise, mutual trust and political consensus on politically sensitive areas at the regional level. This would, in turn, increase political stability in the region. Moreover, it had been selected for its relevance to the regional dynamics, given that it was the only existing platform that provides for the collaboration among MFAs in South-East Europe.
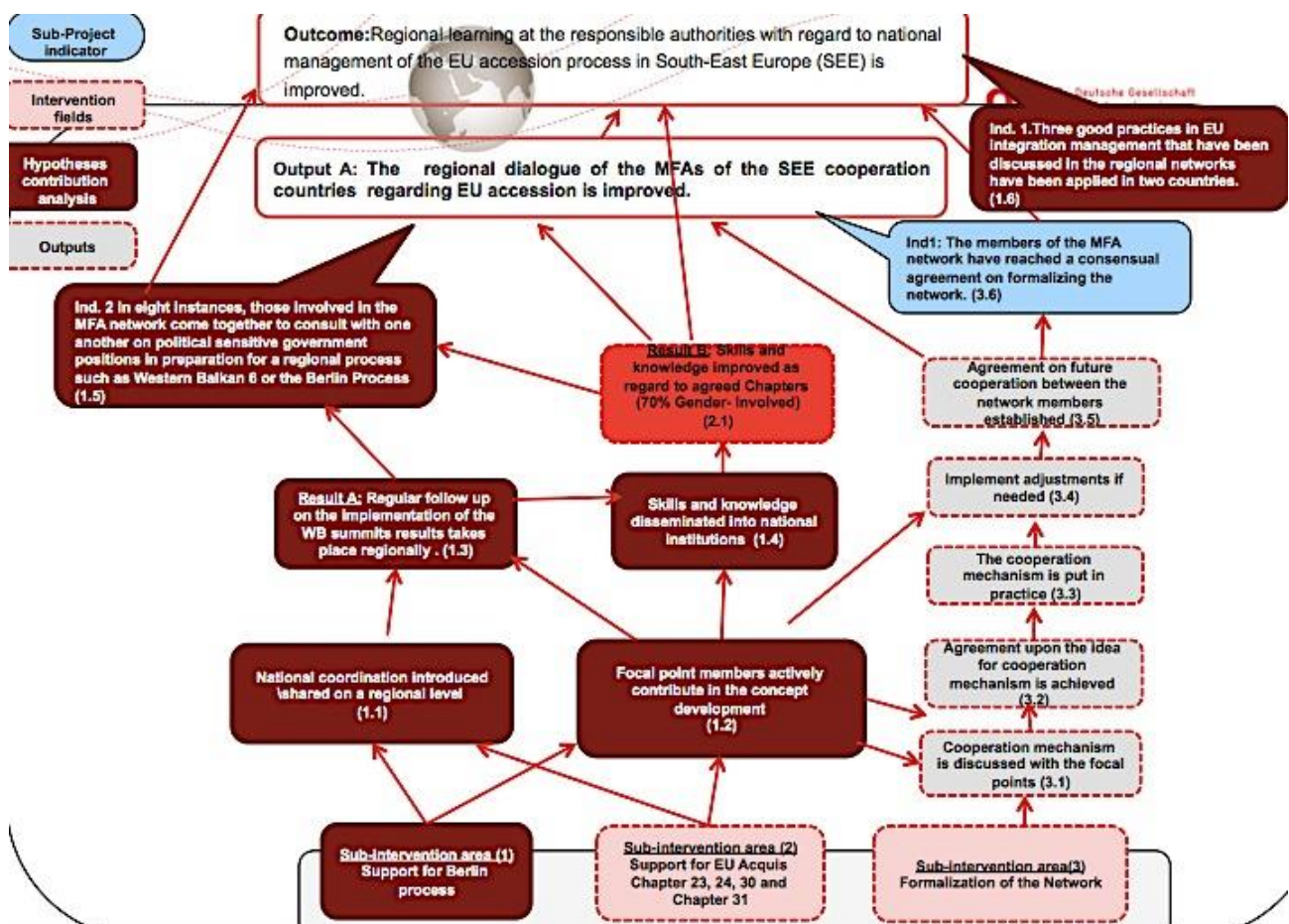

Figure 6 Results Model II – Output A – Network of ministries of foreign affairs

Network of EU integration authorities – Formalisation of the network (Intervention Area Bsub-intervention area B4)[9]

This sub-intervention area aimed to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of the EU integration authorities network. This results logic is almost identical to the one outlined above for the MFAs network. Building on the practises of the steering committee, which involved focal points from all six beneficiary countries working in line with agreed cooperation modalities, a concept of future cooperation was developed by GIZ, and shared with the focal points for discussion (see Figure 7, Results Model III, 4.1). If the focal points and GIZ agreed on the cooperation mechanism after a series of consultations (Results Model III, 3.2), then the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested (Results Model III, 4.3). If the cooperation mechanism was put in place and tested, then it will have been modified, based on experience in the pilot phase (Results Model III, 4.4). If the implementation of the cooperation was adjusted based on the pilot phase, then an agreement on future cooperation between the network members will have been established (Results model III, 4.5.). If this agreement among focal points was established and put in place (Results Model III, 4.5), then the members of the EU integration authorities network have reached a consensual agreement on formalising the network (Results Model III, 4.6). If an agreement on sustainability of the network has been reached, then the regional dialogue of ministries of European integration offices of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession has been improved (Output B). If the regional dialogue of the ministries of European integration/EU integration offices in the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession has been improved (Output B), then: *regional learning at the responsible authorities with regard to national management of the EU accession process in South East Europe is improved* (Outcome).

This hypothesis rested on the experience of establishing and working with the EU Integration Authorities Network in the previous project phase. It had been chosen on the assumption that this intervention logic, aimed at increasing the sustainability of the network, would provide the basis for the functioning of the network once German and other donor support ceased. Moreover, a very similar logic had been applied in all three networks. Therefore, analysing this hypothesis and developing recommendations would also be of added value for the two other networks.
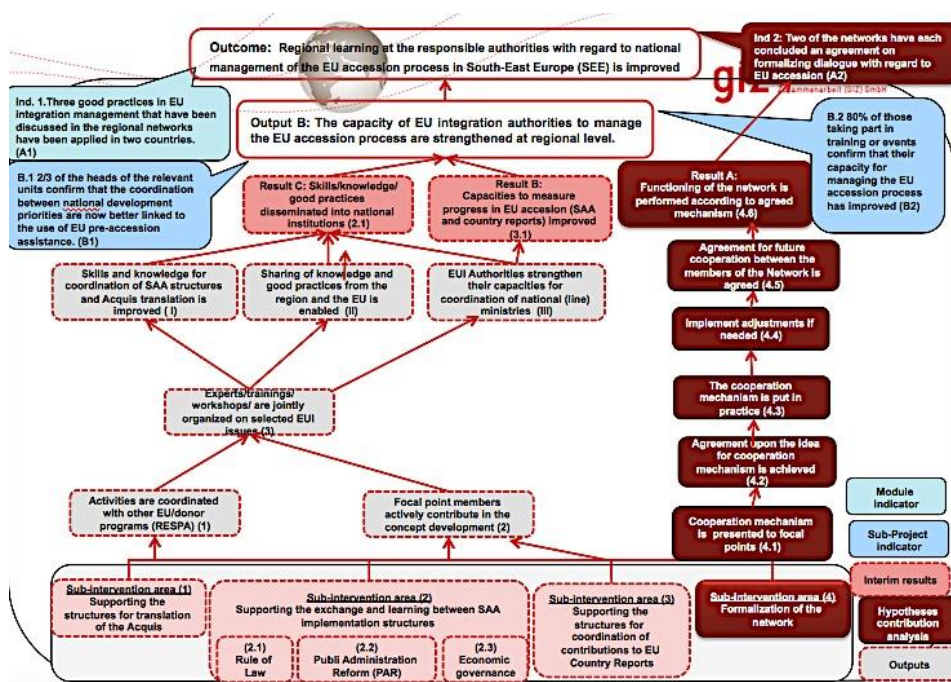

Figure 7 Results Model III – Output B – Network of EU integration authorities

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[9] The following part is based on the reconstruction of the hypothesis based on interviews with the GIZ Project Team in the inception phase, the project document and the Results Model.

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) network (Intervention Area C, sub-intervention area C4)[10]

Monitoring and evaluation of IPA (sub-intervention area C3)

This intervention area aimed to improve monitoring and evaluation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). While there was little monitoring and evaluation culture in the region, the European Commission pushed for implementing the performance measurements. The hypothesis assumes that capacity development activities (organised by GIZ, based on identified needs of focal points/partners in IPA structures), starting with the presentation of a new methodology for monitoring and evaluation (see Figure 8: Results Model, IV, 3.1), and workshops/training on specific aspects of monitoring and evaluation (Results Model, IV, 3.2) would improve knowledge and skills on monitoring and evaluation and strengthen the practical use of these capacities in IPA structures (Results Model, IV, 3.3). These increased capacities contributed also to sub-intervention area 2, as they fostered skills and knowledge on programming and implementation modes (Results Model, IV, 2.4). Following the results chain, it was assumed that increased monitoring and evaluation capacities contributed to focal points/IPA structures producing annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II and the approval/confirmation of these reports by the European Commission in four beneficiary countries (Results Model IV, 3.4). This, in turn, contributed to achieving Output C: *the strategic use of EU IPA funding to promote the EU accession process for South-East European countries is addressed in regional learning platforms*. Overall, this contributes to *improving the regional learning of the respective authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe* (Outcome).

Due to the fact that monitoring and evaluation is still quite a new field of work, and the relevant practices of the public administrations in the region are quite weak, this intervention area could serve as a good practice example for other EU integration and public administration reform projects.
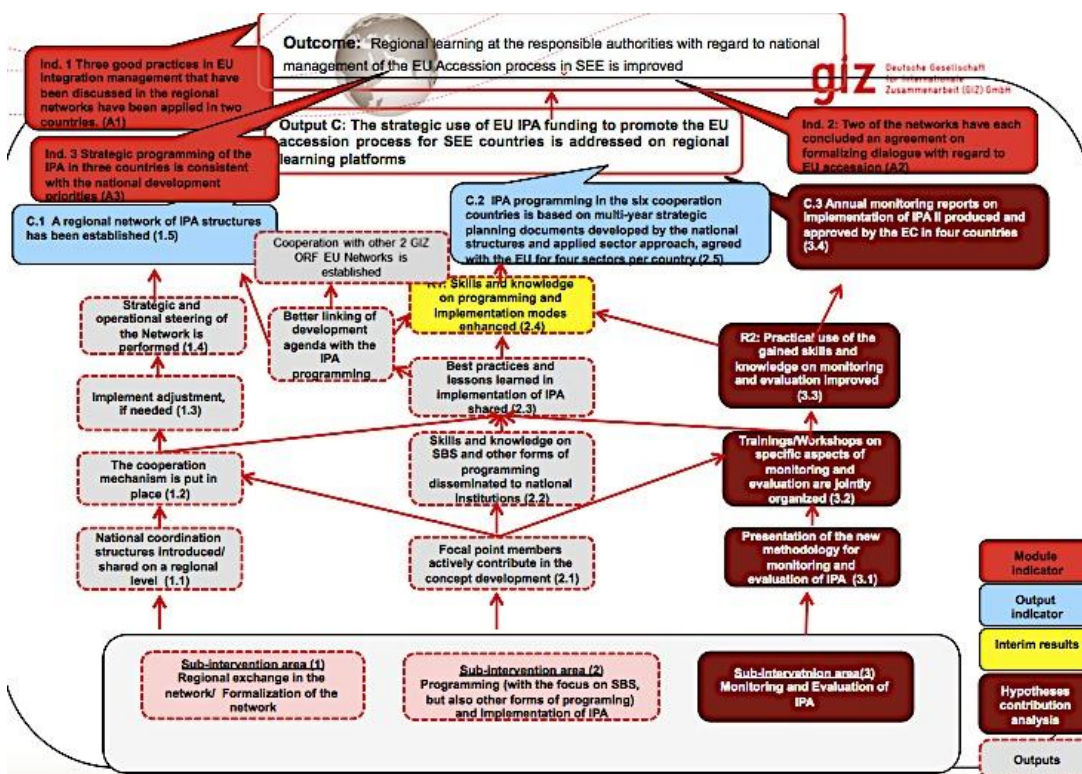

Figure 8 Results Model IV – Output C – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance network

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[10] The following part is based on the reconstruction of the hypothesis based on interviews with the GIZ Project Team in the inception phase, the project document and the Results Model.

Evaluation of the three selected hypotheses in line with the contribution analysis approach

Overall, the contribution analysis regarding all three selected hypotheses demonstrates a plausible Theory of Change. Accordingly, the results of the contribution analysis indicate that there is an association between what the project has done and the observed outcome. There was no contradictory evidence, and main alternative explanations for the outcomes occurring were ruled out. The underlying assumptions and risks of the project were effectively monitored and appropriate action was taken to control/reduce the risks.

Contribution analysis – ministries of foreign affairs network
The main goal of this network was to improve the regional dialogue regarding EU accession of ministries of foreign affairs in the South-East Europe cooperation countries. The contribution analysis focused on the intervention area titled 'Support for Berlin Process', which is politically relevant as it is the key intergovernmental process for regional cooperation supporting EU accession. Within the framework of the contribution analysis the Evaluation Team assessed what concrete contribution the project made to achieve the agreed project objective, measured against the goal indicators.

Overall, semi-structured interviews and a focus group with more than 50 percent of focal points of this network revealed that the project's contribution to regional cooperation was perceived well by key partners. All partners participating in the focus group observed differences in the way of working and cooperating that would not have been possible before the establishment of this network. They valued that the open discussions of the network allowed them to exercise crucial practices for regional cooperation, such as sitting down with their peers from the region, talking, sharing ideas and opinions and agreeing on issues. Certainly, one of the most important aspects of the network was the exchange of views and discussions at formal and informal levels. Considering the war-related legacy of the past, continued tensions between some states (in particular between Serbia and Kosovo), and the fact that one country (Kosovo) is not recognised as an independent state by two other countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), this was seen as important progress regarding regional cooperation.

Regarding the intervention area 'Support for Berlin Process', the evaluation focused on how the project activities contributed to the output and outcome of the project. It found that the project makes a decisive contribution to the intervention area 'Support for Berlin Process'. Additionally, in some parts the contribution of the project even exceeded the expected goals. Throughout the implementation of this hypothesis, the GIZ Project Team assumed the role of a Secretariat of an international organisation, i.e. acting as facilitator in order to bring together, initiate and foster dialogue among representatives of the six cooperation countries in South-East Europe. In order to demonstrate this, the Evaluation Team first assessed the results chain according to the evaluation criterion, as outlined above. The project assumed that, based on agreed cooperation at the national level (see Figure 6: Results Model II, 1.1), in particular between Ministries of Foreign Affairs and officers of the prime minister and relevant line ministries (if needed), regional cooperation on the Berlin Process with countries from the region was commenced.

Focal points nominated by the relevant ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) had met twice a year in steering committee sessions (four times in total since the beginning of the project), organised and led by the GIZ Project Team, in order to agree on the work plan and review past activities. Deploying a demand-driven and flexible approach, focal points, in cooperation with the GIZ Project Team, decided on the topics/issues to be discussed annually, and developed concepts on how to address the selected topics/issues (Results Model II, 1.2). This resulted in 12 regional preparation and follow-up activities (Results Model II, 1.3) to the Berlin Process, organised and facilitated by the GIZ Project Team, and used by the partners from MFAs as a regional platform. These preparation and follow-up activities to the Berlin Process and Western Balkan Six summits led to six instances (out of an envisaged eight instances by the end of the project) in which those involved in the MFAs network come together to consult with one another on politically sensitive government positions (Results Model II, 1.5). Accordingly, at the regional meeting 'Preparation of Western Balkan summit in Paris', organised and

facilitated by the GIZ Project Team on 13–15 April, 2016 in Tirana, Albania, the Macedonian delegation presented agreed future activities (11 confidence-building measures), contributing towards developing their national policy in bilateral affairs in the broader region (GIZ, 2016d).

These consultations on politically sensitive issues were proceeded by the 'Regional follow up meeting on Western Balkan Summit, 2016', organised and facilitated by the GIZ Project Team in Podgorica, at which the Macedonian delegation informed the meeting about progress made towards strengthening the good neighbourly relations in the wider region. The Macedonian delegation elaborated the confidence-building measures that were implemented in the period between the regional preparatory meeting in Tirana and the follow up meeting in Podgorica (GIZ, 2016d). Moreover, at the 'Regional follow up meeting on Western Balkan summit 2016', organised and facilitated by the GIZ Project Team on 14–16 November 2016, in Podgorica, Montenegro, the MFAs network members consulted with each other on their national positions in regard to the liberalisation of the energy market and its consequences, as one of the initiatives in Berlin Process (GIZ, 2016d, 2017q). Furthermore, at the Regional meeting 'Follow up of the Western Balkan 6 meetings within the Berlin Process and preparation for the Western Balkan Summit in Trieste', organised and facilitated by the GIZ Project Team, participants consulted with one another regarding the forthcoming summit in Trieste. The participants shared their national positions on the seat of the Transport Community Treaty and emphasised the importance of having such a seat in the region (GIZ, 2017h). While Albania had argued for the seat of the Transport Community to be in Tirana, it withdrew its candidacy and supported the location of the seat in Kosovo.

Further on, the Regional MFAs meeting consultation on bilateral issues, organised and facilitated by the GIZ Project Team from 27–29 April, 2017 in Tirana, Albania offered a regional consultation between the ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) on the on-going bilateral issues in the framework of the Berlin Process. On this occasion, Kosovo representatives presented background information about their internal deliberations in regard to the demarcation agreement with Montenegro (GIZ, 2017h).

Considering the political dynamics in the region, the regular exchange of politically sensitive government positions demonstrated the added value of this network. Some countries perceived the network as a tool to overcome political obstacles in the region, in particular, those issues linked to the recognition of Kosovo (Int_6,11,19,20,28). In line with the Results Model, this showed a very clear contribution of the project (GIZ Project Team and partners) to achieving the output and the outcome of the project. As demonstrated above, the assumed results logic was confirmed, as all activities led to achieving the main indicator. In other words, those involved in the MFAs network come together to consult on politically sensitive government positions in preparation for the Berlin Process (Results Model II, 1.5). Accordingly, this indicator led to the improved dialogue of the MFAs of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession (Results Model I, Output A) and improved regional learning among the responsible authorities with regard to national management of the EU accession process in South-East Europe. Furthermore, the Results Model assumed that this regional cooperation on politically sensitive issues contributed to improved regional learning at the respective authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-Eastern Europe (Results Model II, outcome). This was demonstrated, in particular, by discussing and identifying good practices in the MFAs network that were applied in two countries (Results Model II, 1.6). While at this stage of the implementation no country-specific practice had been implemented in two other countries, the National Action Support Scheme (NASS) was effectively used to share good practices in line with country-specific needs. Using the NASS, partners can request assistance based on identified needs, which will be addressed through regional learning. While the NASS is perceived as a very valuable tool, and some partners even requested an increase in funds, the majority of focal points clearly preferred regional networking, as providing unique communication channels and an atmosphere of cooperation (GIZ, 2016n, Int_6,11,19,20,28).

The following factors contributed to successfully achieving the output and outcome. as outlined above:
- The key beneficiaries (i.e. representatives of MFAs) perceive the network facilitated and led by the GIZ

Project Team as a unique platform on which to foster streamlining of very important information, to share views and to develop joint positions. The unique standing of the network in the regional architecture contributes to achieving the results.

- An adequate selection of focal points and deputies (promoted by the GIZ Project Team, approved by high-ranking officials in the MFAs network), with effective relations to senior political circles, led to direct filtering of the information gained via networks in governmental circles, strategies, policies and practices. In some instances, in particular in Serbia, this was a two-way street, which led to the fact that results of network discussions were used to provide direct input for the political agenda in senior government circles at the level of the advisor to the premier minister. Vice versa, the policy advisor of the premier minister provided the focal point of the network with input, which was then presented and tested in the network. In this way, Serbia (steering committee, Belgrade 2017), put forward a wider (regional) discussion on gender, as a theme. The policy advisor of the Serbian prime minister delivered the idea and it has now become part of the regional interest. In this instance, the network was effectively used as a mechanism, and it even demonstrated an overachievement (unintended positive spin off, see below).
- The 'German clout' contributed to the achievement of the results, as the financial support of Germany is perceived as a concrete political message of Germany's support for the EU integration process.
- Clear ground rules established by the GIZ Project Team contributed to trust and confidence. For example, Kosovo is status neutral, and participants of meetings have only names on badges and name plates.

On the other hand, the following factors might have hindered the project, or prevented it from fully achieving the expected results:

- Political developments and dynamics at regional and national levels. This was due to the fact that the political situation in the region was very fragile both at national and regional levels. Bilateral issues still presented realist impediments to progress in the EU accession process.
- Changes in the institutional set-up of partners, such as restructuring of ministries and administrations after elections or constitutional dynamics.
- Turnover of staff in MFAs, leading to more attention needing to be given to the 'institutional' base' rather than to just a few people.

Looking into potential alternative reasons contributing to the results achieved so far (see contribution analysis above), it has to be pointed out that the network itself filled an existing gap in the MFAs in the region – a component that had not been touched (at least in systematic and longer-term way) by other donors and/or by the EU (Int_6,10,11,18,19,20,28,32). EU policy on not being involved in countries' foreign policy led to the absence of concrete activities, so GIZ's project was very timely. Moreover, the network had received direct and immediate exposure to the Berlin Process, a political process set up for the countries of the region, with the aim of strengthening regional cooperation and putting forward specific goals to be fulfilled in respect to the infrastructure and connectivity. Research and feedback from all stakeholders involved in this network confirmed that for the Berlin Process there was no other regional hub to exchange views and practices (Int_6,10,11,18,19,20,28,32). Therefore, a conducive political atmosphere at the regional level and the GIZ support contributed to achieving this result. In sum, the achieved results – *improved regional dialogue of the ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) of the South-East European cooperation countries regarding EU accession* (Output A) and *Improved regional learning at the responsible authorities with regard to national management of the EU accession process in South-East Europe* (Results Model II, Outcome) could be directly attributed to the contribution of the project, and alternative explanations can be ruled out. As outlined above, this was measured through network consultations on politically sensitive government positions (Results Model II, 1.5) and the exchange of good practices (Results Model II, 1.6).

Core support and management processes of the project established and provided by the GIZ Project Team, in particular, the steering committee meetings and the regional set-up of the GIZ Project Team, were designed in such a way that they contributed to achieving the project objective. In some instances, even overachievements could be noted. This was due to the fact that the practice of holding demand-driven regular steering committee

meetings led to local ownership of the process, resulting in an informal network used beyond the actual project activities. This led to the following positive spin-offs. First, this network, in particular, the steering committee group, was sometimes used to test policy positions and present wider regional initiatives, such as, for example, the Serbian initiative on gender outlined above (Int_9). Secondly, at the time of preparations for the Berlin Process, informal relations had intensified and relaxed, leading to the exchange of important strategic documents that would otherwise not have been circulated (Int_6,10,11,18,19,20,28,32). Thirdly, the establishment of the relations between Kosovo and Serbia saw some real progress on the ground, as an exchange between both countries commenced which previously would not have been possible (e.g. Serbian senior diplomats visiting Kosovo and exchanging views). Involved stakeholders, in particular senior diplomats from Serbia and Kosovo, confirmed the positive contribution that would not have been possible without this project (Int_19,28). These positive spin-offs demonstrated that nurturing a new culture of informal connections significantly influenced the traditional modus operandi of MFAs in the region. The implications of these new practices need to be further assessed.

Contribution analysis EU integration authorities network
This network aims to strengthen the capacity of EU integration authorities to manage the EU accession process at the regional level. Overall, beneficiaries perceived the network as very valuable, as it provided them with contacts and an informal network throughout the region. All focal points interviewed (six out of 12 focal points) assessed the assistance received in all intervention areas as very positive (Int_8,13,23,25). Within the framework of the contribution analysis, the Evaluation Team assessed the intervention area titled 'formalisation of the network'. This intervention area aimed to strengthen the sustainability of the network for European integration authorities. The hypothesis, assessed within the framework of the contribution analysis approach (Results Model III, hypothesis marked in dark red), could only be partially verified, as the implementation of this sub-intervention area only commenced in summer 2017 and the implementation focused on one activity (Results Model, III, 4.1). Therefore, the following analysis focused on the likelihood of achieving the result of this sub-intervention area: sustainability of the network.

In order to create a sustainable cooperation mechanism, a concept of the sustainable future of the network was developed by the GIZ Project Team in August 2017 and presented to the focal points of this network (GIZ, 2017b). According to the concept, it was decided that formalisation does not mean that network practices should look the same once the network had been handed over to domestic ownership. While the concept on formalisation would still need to be further defined, based on input from the focal points and expert advise (Int_5), the vision of the Project Team was that the network can be defined as a regional meeting (held without GIZ), organised by the hosting country of a regional event organised by the European Commission or the Regional School for Public Administration (RESPA) (GIZ, 2017b, interview 5,10). This approach would be further tested and refined in 2018 and beyond (Results Model, III, 4.3). While the concept of formalising or reaching sustainability of the network still needed to be finalised, the majority of interviewed focal points agreed that the network would continue without GIZ support on an informal level. This informal network would be used to exchange information and good practices (Int_13,23,25). Yet, the majority of focal points were very sceptical that they would continue organising formal meetings and capacity-building events (Int_8,13,23,25). Consequently, it would be very likely that an informal network would continue to exist even without GIZ support, yet the formalisation of the network in local ownership seemed to be challenging. Accordingly, it would be very probable that result a) *the functioning of the network according to the agreed mechanism*, will be achieved if the concept on sustainability includes the establishment of a rather informal network (Results Model III, 4.6). This would positively impact on the outcome of the project, which also foresees that two of the networks have concluded an agreement on formalising dialogue with regard to EU accession.

On the one hand, the following factors contribute to, and/or have the potential to positively contribute to, accomplishing sustainability of the network (Results Model II, sub-intervention area A4):
- A formal agreement legally anchored could build the basis for the sustainability of the network. This agreement could be incrementally adjusted in order to make the network function effectively without

external support. In line with the experience of the Serbian focal points, this could take a decade (Int_13). Yet, considering the political sensitivities in the region, it might be challenging to find agreement for a legally binding document (Int_5,10, 13).

- A coordination function would need to be established in order to maintain the network and provide for organising events (Int_8,13,23,25).
- Financial resources, which are extremely limited in the beneficiary countries (Int_8,13,23,25).

On the other hand, the following factors/reasons might negatively affect achieving the objective:

- While finances are an issue, they are not the main issue, which is coordination.
- Focal points of the network expect difficulties in maintaining the network without a coordinator/leader and political moderation. While some partners might have more capacity to take over this coordination function, they hesitate to do so due to the negative perception of a potential regional leader.
- Existing regional organisations, such as RESPA, are not seen as an alternative platform that provides the possibility for structured exchange of experiences.
- The high turnover of staff working in EU integration authorities in the region, including focal points.

The design of core, support and management processes could be improved in such a way that they contribute to the achievement of the project objective. This is mainly due to the design of the project, which does not require any meaningful contribution by its partners. This design issue is mainly linked to the fact that the project only requires very limited in-kind contributions from the beneficiaries, which does not provide the foundation for sustainability of the network. Considering that the beneficiary countries have, to some extent, become accustomed to donor assistance in recent years, and taking into account the practice of other donors, who request as a standard policy a partner contribution, this very limited partner contribution negatively affects the goal achievement: sustainability of the network. Moreover, partners' understanding of the need to actively improve sustainability requires improvement. In order to strengthen the likelihood that the network will continue to exist without GIZ support, the Project Team should develop a strategy on how to decrease donor dependence step-by-step, and increase incentives for networking without external assistance.

Contribution analysis of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) network
The aim of this network is to address the strategic use of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) to promote the EU accession process for South-East European countries on regional learning platforms. Generally, the direct beneficiaries interviewed were satisfied with the assistance provided within the framework of the project. In particular, they assessed the possibility of exchanging experiences, approaches and practices with colleagues from the region as positive. However, the different stages of each country in the EU accession process (Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are not yet part of the indirect management of IPA), limited the contribution the project could make (Int_4,7,26,30,31,41,42,43).

Within the framework of the contribution analysis, the Evaluation Team focused on assessing the sub-intervention area with the aim of improving monitoring and evaluation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) (Results Model IV, sub-intervention area C3). The project contributed to the achievement of the agreed project objective, measured against the goal indicators in the following way. In line with the Results Model, all beneficiaries (i.e. IPA structures of six cooperation countries) received a general presentation of the new methodology and evaluation of IPA by the GIZ Project Team (Results Model IV, 3.1). Later, the GIZ Project Team organised and led tailor-made workshops and coaching at the national level, aimed at strengthening the monitoring and evaluation capacities of the beneficiaries, leading to improvements such as advanced knowledge on using and defining indicators (Results Model IV, 3.2). While the workshops focused on providing general assistance on monitoring of IPA II, the coaching offered hands-on assistance in preparing the annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II (Results Model IV, 3.2) (Icon Institute 2017a, 2017b). Consequently, the beneficiaries used the practical skills and knowledge they gained in the training (Results Model IV, 3.3) to develop the annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II (Results Model IV, 3.4). This led to achieving indicators C3: Annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II produced and

approved by the EC in four countries (Results Model IV, 3.4).

While the majority of beneficiaries agreed that they improved their capacity in monitoring and in developing the annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II, there was still room for improvement, as this is a very new sub-intervention field (Int_4, 41-43, Icon Institute 2017a, 2017b). Yet, this sub-intervention area had already contributed to Output C: *The strategic use of EU IPA funding to promote the EU integration of South-East European cooperation countries is addressed on regional learning platforms.*

Moreover, strengthening the monitoring capacities of IPA structures contributed to: *Improving strategic programming of IPA in line with national development priorities* (Results Model III, A3). Beyond capacity-building activities outlined above, the GIZ Project Team focused on providing tailor-made assistance to beneficiary countries requiring improved coherence between national development priorities and strategic programming for IPA. Within this framework, the GIZ Project Team provided the following assistance (GIZ 2017f, Int_4,38-41):

- Kosovo received support on the development of a policy paper, including concrete recommendations on designing and using IPA II sector-budget support in line with the budget process.
- A training on how to effectively link the national strategy on transferring the Acquis with IPA II helped Macedonian authorities.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina received support for establishing an online consultation process between civil society and state authorities in order to strengthen the planning of IPA II.
- In Serbia, an analysis of absorption capacities of EU funds at local level was developed.

Moreover, cooperation with the European Commission (EC) Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) provided for effective exchange on programming IPA II and the development of strategic programming documents (Int_4,10). Overall, this sub-intervention area contributed to: *Improving regional learning at the respective authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe* (Results Model III, Outcome).

The following factors in the implementation contributed to progress in the process of achieving the project outcome:

- The tailor-made capacity building provided within the framework of the project leading to advances in this field,
- The flexible and demand-driven assistance received through the National Support Action Scheme,
- Stable institutional set-up and trained staff capable of working on IPA II and strategic programming,
- Good coordination and cooperation with ministries and IPA structures fostering coordination on strategic programming and monitoring of IPA II.

As this was a mid-term evaluation, it was not expected that the project objective would have been fully achieved. Therefore, the evaluation focused on other/alternative reasons that contributed, or had the potential to contribute, to the fact that the objective would not be fully achieved:

- political changes such as elections leading to a new government introducing significant organisational changes and/or changes in policy priorities regarding the EU accession process,
- high turnover of staff in IPA structures, leading to a situation that the beneficiary institutions frequently had to train new staff, as skilled and more experienced staff often left the institution after a few years.
- restructuring of institutions leading to merging of ministries and relevant institutions, as well as job losses or transfers to new positions,
- lack of experience in monitoring and strategic programming as a new field, and
- lack of coordination and cooperation of relevant ministries and institutions involved in IPA II and strategic programming.

Core, support and management processes were designed by the GIZ Project Team to support achieving the

objective of the project. In particular, the demand-driven approach, which took into consideration the capacity of beneficiary countries when devising a regional approach, contributed to accomplishing the goal of the project.

Effectively monitoring the political situation in the region, networking with key stakeholders of EU institutions, and following developments regarding the EU accession process, provided the GIZ Project Team with a sound basis to address risks and assumptions of the Theory of Change in the implementation and steering of the project. Overall, the contribution analysis regarding all three selected hypotheses demonstrated a plausible Theory of Change. While the hypothesis on the MFAs network (sub-intervention area A1: Support for Berlin Process) and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) could be verified, the implementation of sub-intervention area B4, formalisation of the European integration authorities network, did still not progress sufficiently to verify the hypotheses. Accordingly, the results of the contribution analysis indicated that there was an association between what the project had done and the observed outcome. There was no contradictory evidence, and main alternative explanations for the outcomes occurring were ruled out. The underlying assumptions and risks of the project were effectively monitored, and appropriate action was taken to control/reduce the risks.

Regarding **effectiveness evaluation dimension 3**, the GIZ Project Team regularly assessed the occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive and negative results linked to the implementation of the project. During the implementation of the project the GIZ Project Team met on a monthly basis in order to review the monitoring system, using the online monitoring tool. Additionally, the GIZ Project Team used the evaluation of the events to monitor whether the activities were going in the right direction, and whether there were any unintended results requiring consideration and follow-up. It also monitored unforeseen positive results, in particular unforeseen synergies, while negative unintended results did not occur. For example, the GIZ Project Team recognised that there was a need to build synergies between the networks and the institutional structures dealing with the EU integration process at the national level. While establishing these synergies was not foreseen in the original project design, the GIZ Project Team addressed this need and organised a joint retreat between the two networks (European integration authorities and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance networks). This project activity showed that coherence between the EU integration coordinating structures was needed, and future project activities were adjusted accordingly. Partners perceived these changes in the implementation strategy as of additional added value. No evidence was found of increased consideration of environmental, economic, social aspects as a result of the project (Int_1,4,5,9,10,11, GIZ 2017c,q). Considering the positive spin-offs pointed out above, the project team could strengthen its focus on systematically monitoring unintended results and capitalising on informal positive results/spin offs occurring, in particular in the MFAs network (see above).

In sum, the effectiveness criterion was evaluated as **very successful** due to the following reasons: First, the project achieved very good results regarding the goal attainment in accordance with the project objective indicators agreed upon in the contract (evaluation dimension 1). Secondly, the services implemented by the project successfully contributed to the achievement of the project objective (evaluation dimension 2). Accordingly, the findings of the contribution analysis indicated that the Theory of Change was plausible and that there was an association between what the project had done and the observed outcome. There was no contradictory evidence and the main alternative explanations for the outcomes occurring were ruled out. The underlying assumptions and risks of the project were effectively monitored and appropriate action was taken to control/reduce the risks. Thirdly, the project team had assessed the occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive and negative results linked to the implementation of the project (evaluation dimension 3). Considering the positive spin-offs pointed out above, the project could strengthen its focus on systematically monitoring unintended results and capitalising on informal positive results/spin offs occurring, in particular in the MFAs network (see above).

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score
Effectiveness	The project achieved the goal on time in accordance with the projective objective indicators agreed upon in the contract.	*Max. 40 points* *40 out of 40 points*
	The services implemented by the project successfully contributed to the achievement of the goal agreed upon in the contract.	*Max. 30 points* *30 out of 30 points*
	The occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive results was monitored, and additional opportunities for further positive results were seized. No project-related negative results occurred – and if any negative results occurred the project responded adequately.	*Max. 30 points* *23 out of 30*
Overall rating for effectiveness		*93 of 100 points*

5.3 Impact

This section evaluates the impact criterion. To this end, it will first outline the evaluation basis and then present the evaluation findings. Due to the fact that this was a mid-term evaluation and the project implementation continued until 2020, the analysis focused on the potential contribution to intended future changes at the impact level. In line with the evaluation dimensions and analysis questions provided in the Evaluation Matrix, the evaluation will focus on the following evaluation dimensions (see Evaluation Matrix, Annex 1):

- Evaluation dimension 1: The announced superordinate long-term results have occurred or are foreseen (should be plausibly explained).
- Evaluation dimension 2: The project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results.
- Evaluation dimension 3: The occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive results was monitored and additional opportunities for further positive results were seized. No project-related negative results occurred – and if any negative results occurred the project responded adequately.

Impact evaluation dimension 1 was assessed focusing on the project's contribution to superordinate long-term results. To this end the evaluation focused on the extent to which relevant programme objective indicators were achieved. In line with the Results Matrix, the impact level of the project was the programme objective, which stipulates that countries of South-Eastern Europe made progress in the process of EU accession regarding the requirements of the stabilisation and association process. The programme objective was the same for all six

Open Regional Fund (ORF) projects. Accordingly, it is assumed that all six ORF projects contributed to achieving it, not only this project. The Results Matrix contained the following programme objective indicators to measure the progress against the programme objective:

- Programme objective indicator 2: Within the regional cooperation, involving three or more partner countries, 32 agreed positions will be adopted in the sectors supported by the programme.
- Programme objective indicator 3: A total of 35 instruments, processes and procedures developed or disseminated by networks supported by the project were implemented in four of the countries supported by the programme.

As the programme objective indicators exceed the scope of the present project, the analysis focused on the potential contribution of achieved outcomes to the intended future changes at the impact level (i.e. focusing on plausible forecasts instead of already measureable changes at the impact level). Moreover, as stipulated in an analysis of the GIZ *Fach- und Methodenbereich*, this project could not contribute to all impact level indicators as programme objective indicator 1 is perceived as not applicable, while it is expected that the project makes a contribution to indicators 2 and 3. Therefore, the evaluation only focuses on programme indicators 2 and 3. Yet, at this stage of the project implementation it is only possible to measure the share the project is contributing to the impact level.

Considering the importance of reconciliation and stability through regional learning and cooperation, an additional evaluation basis, building on the assigned identifiers, namely peace and security (FS-1) and participatory development and good governance (PD/GG-2), were added and assessed. This was perceived as particularly important as the impact dimension of the programme does not capture impact related to reconciliation and stability at the regional level.

Impact evaluation dimension 2: The project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results. This evaluation dimension was assessed within the framework of the contribution analysis, i.e. focusing on one hypothesis: Ministries of Foreign Affairs Network – Support to Berlin Process. Evaluation findings linked to the impact level resulting from the analysis of the one hypothesis[11] will be presented in the section below.

Impact evaluation dimension 3: The occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive results was monitored and additional opportunities for further positive results were seized. No project-related negative results occurred – and if any negative results occurred, the project responded adequately. This evaluation basis was assessed by reviewing the project documents and analysing the semi-structured interviews.

The evaluation comes to the following findings:
Regarding **impact evaluation dimension 1**, the announced superordinate long-term results are as follows:

- Programme objective indicator 2: Within the regional cooperation, involving three or more partner countries, 32 agreed positions will be adopted in the sectors supported by the programme.
- Programme objective indicator 3: A total of 35 instruments, processes and procedures developed or disseminated by networks supported by the project were implemented in four of the countries supported by the programme.

Due to the fact that the project is one of six Open Regional Fund (ORF) projects, it was assumed that it would contribute to the above-mentioned indicators with three agreed positions (programme objective indicator 3) and three instruments, processes and procedures developed or disseminated by networks (programme objective indicator 2) respectively (Int_10). In the assessed period (January 2016 to end October 2017), the project team focused on achieving outputs and outcomes, while the subsequent period would be dedicated to the impact level. Therefore, no progress was made in achieving the relevant indicators (Int_4,5,9,10,11). Yet, considering the overall positive contribution of the project it was plausible that the project would achieve the relevant targets

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[11] Due to the implementation status of the respective hypotheses of the EUI and IPA network, impact could not be meaningfully assessed at this stage.

by the end of the implementation in 2020. This was due to the fact that programme indicators 2 and 3 can be seen as the logical follow-up to the project indicators already partially achieved at the outcome level. The sharing of good practices, in particular, perceived as very important by all partners involved in the project, builds the foundation for an effective contribution at the impact level. Moreover, the sharing of politically sensitive government positions (MFAs network, Output Indicator A2) and tackling bilateral issues also prepared the ground for achieving the impact indicators. Additionally, all partners interviewed highlighted the importance of sharing experiences, exchanging information and developing common positions on the EU accession process (Int_6-11,13,15,19,22,23,25,26,28,30-32,38-41). Considering these reasons, the Evaluation Team assessed the contribution of the project to the impact indicators as plausible and likely.

Focusing on analysis question 2, impact evaluation dimension 1, the Evaluation Team found that the project contributed to the implementation of the partner country's national strategy for implementing Agenda 2030/Sustainable Development Goals. Accordingly, the project fostered regional cooperation – one of the key criteria to progress in the EU accession process. These improvements in the EU accession process would in turn contribute to the partners' national strategies for implementing Agenda 2030/SDGs (if existing). In particular, it would contribute to SDG 16: promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (United Nations, 2015).

The project does not entail an ecological dimension, as stipulated in the environmental and climate assessment conducted during the planning phase of the project. Moreover, the project document is marked with AO-0 (i.e. reducing poverty is neither the main nor a secondary objective of the project) (BMZ, 2017) regarding its socio-economic impact. Consequently, the project contributed only on a marginal scale to combatting poverty, as it fostered the EU accession process and networking capacities. It was assumed that the reforms conducted within the framework of the EU accession process would lead to increased competitiveness of beneficiary countries contributing to combatting poverty. However, the project's contribution to the socio-economic impact was expected to be extremely small and indirect and thus not measurable. Accordingly, this evaluation question had not been further assessed.

The Agenda 2030 principle 'leave no one behind', targeting marginalised groups, was not in the focus of the project, which had a strong emphasis on supporting relevant public institutions dealing with the EU accession process in South-East Europe. Considering that this was a mid-term evaluation and the project would run until 2020, evidence of results achieved at target group level (i.e. citizens as stipulated in the project document) was not tangible at this stage of the project implementation. It was plausible that the very diverse population of the region would benefit from reforms supported by the project, but it would be extremely challenging to assess this contribution of the project due to the significant amount of donor assistance partners had received over the last decade.

Regarding the impact in areas of assigned identifiers, namely participatory development and good governance (PD/GG-2), as well as, peace and security (FS-1). The Evaluation Team found that the project contributed to peace and security, in particular, while the contribution to participatory development and good governance was less tangible at this stage of the implementation. The project made a sound contribution to peace and security, in particular regarding reconciliation within the region, as demonstrated through the following examples: relations between Serbia and Kosovo improved as a result of the project. Representatives of the MFAs network from both countries stated that relations between the countries were established that had not previously existed. In fact, the Serbian delegation even went to Pristina for a network meeting. Later, the Serbian focal points perceived these relations as resilient, providing a foundation for developing suitable solutions on the Pristina–Belgrade dialogue when requested by his superiors. Moreover, they stated that some agreements between Pristina–Belgrade would have been better if the network contacts had been effectively used (Int_19,28). Additionally, the representative from Bosnia and Herzegovina pointed out that the network helped them to establish regular contacts with Kosovo, although they do not officially recognise it as a state and do not

have any diplomatic relations (Int_6).

Regarding the impact on peace and security, the counterfactual provides a strong explanation, as this level of trust and regional cooperation would not have been possible with the project. The impact of the project on good governance and public administration reform was not tangible at this stage, although the approach of the project went in the right direction at the meta–level, as it focused on behavioural change among the key stakeholders. In this regard the focus was mainly on changing the perception of the EU accession process. This required stepping away from the conditionality narrative, while introducing a new narrative: that the process of reform would continue even once countries had become member states of the EU. This would only be possible through a change of the mindsets of civil servants in the public administrations and a stepping away from the 'tick box' approach that dominated in reform efforts in the region. While this approach was valid at the metalevel, it lacked concrete steps on nudging public administrations in the region.

Regarding **impact evaluation dimension 2** (the project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results), the evaluation came to a positive rating.

Within the framework of the contribution analysis, the evaluation focused on how the results at the output and outcome levels achieved within the framework of the MFAs network contributed to achieving superordinate results, as stipulated in the programme objective.

Ministries of Foreign Affairs network – Support for Berlin Process – Contribution analysis – outcome to impact
While there was a clear consensus of the interviewed focal points (nine out of the twelve of whom were interviewed) that the project contributed to the output and outcome level, its contribution to the impact level was perceived less likely and plausible. This was mainly due to the fact that most focal points of the MFAs network assumed that many political factors beyond their control determined progress made regarding the EU accession process. Consequently, achieving the impact-level indicators was perceived as plausible, but it was questionable whether these indicators were a measurement of progress on the EU accession path. Some partners also pointed out that progress in the EU accession process was unrealistic, and proposed different milestones on the impact level, such as regional integration as a preliminary step to preparing for EU accession (Int_6,18,19,20,28,32).

The envisaged superordinate long-term results are linked to very important framework conditions, namely the EU accession process and progress regarding the stabilisation and association process. Over the past years the European Commission followed a rather restrictive EU enlargement policy, which led to a so-called 'accession fatigue' in the region. Moreover, developments within the European Union, such as Brexit, negatively affected the overall atmosphere regarding the EU accession process. Yet, changes in the EU enlargement policy of the European Commission, providing countries in the region with a clearer accession perspective, would certainly influence superordinate long-term results. Consequently, the effectiveness of the development measures can be positively or negatively influenced by the EC's enlargement policy for South-Eastern Europe.

Additionally, the extent to which the project benefited from the 'German clout' in the region influences the effectiveness of the development measure. This was mainly due to the fact that the majority of partners and also external stakeholders perceived this project as a political message from Germany. They saw the project as a German tool to support the EU accession process in the region. This perception made a difference as it positively influenced the buy-in and motivation of the beneficiaries.

Considering that this was a mid-term evaluation, assessing the contribution of widespread impact in line with four dimensions (relevance, quality, quantity, sustainability) scaling-up approaches – vertical, horizontal, functional or combined (as stipulated in analysis question 6, evaluation dimension 2) – seems to be premature.

Regarding the question of whether it will be possible for the project to achieve widespread impact, the Evaluation Team concluded that at this stage of the implementation only the MFAs network might have the capacity to contribute to widespread impact. This assessment was based on the current achievements and the fact that donor support to MFAs in general and to the MFAs network in particular could have more impact than assistance to EU integration authorities and IPA structures.

Regarding **impact evaluation dimension 3**, the Evaluation Team has assessed the occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive and negative results linked to the implementation of the project. During the implementation of the project, the GIZ Project Team met on a monthly basis in order to review the monitoring system, using the online monitoring tool. Additionally, the GIZ Project Team also used the evaluation of the events to monitor whether the activities were going in the right direction, and whether there were some unintended results requiring consideration and follow-up. It also monitored unforeseen positive results, in particular, unforeseen synergies, while negative unintended results did not occur. For example, the GIZ Project Team recognised that there was a need to build synergies between the networks and the institutional structures dealing with the EU integration process at the national level. While establishing these synergies was not foreseen in the original project design, the GIZ Project Team addressed this need and organised a joint retreat between the two networks (i.e. European integration authorities and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance networks). This project activity showed that coherence between the EU integration coordinating structures was needed and future project activities were adjusted accordingly. Partners perceived these changes in the implementation strategy as additional added value. (Int_1,4,5,9,10,11, GIZ 2017c, 2017q). Considering the positive spin-offs pointed out above, the project team could strengthen its focus on systematically monitoring unintended results and capitalising on the occurrence of positive results/spin offs not formally agreed, in particular in the MFAs network (see above for details).

The evaluation of the impact criterion concludes with an overall rating of **successful.** Evaluation dimension 1 (the announced superordinate long-term results were foreseen), was assessed as positive, as the contribution of the project to the impact indicators can be plausibly explained. This was due, in particular, to the positive track record in goal attainment at the output and outcomes levels, which built the logical foundation for achieving the impact level indicators. Regarding evaluation dimension 2 (the project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results), the evaluation concludes positive results. The contribution analysis demonstrated that achieving the impact level indicators was perceived as plausible, although it was questionable whether these indicators were perceived as a measurement of progress on the EU accession path. This was mainly due to the fact that political dynamics might influence the impact level. Therefore, a consideration of how best to frame the impact level in order to make it more realistic for partners involved in the project, was recommended. Additionally, the project team assessed the occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive and negative results linked to the implementation of the project (evaluation dimension 3). Considering the positive spin-offs pointed out above, the project team could strengthen its focus on systematically monitoring unintended results and capitalising on the occurrence of positive results/spin offs not formally agreed, in particular in the MFAs network (see above for details).

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score
Impact	The announced superordinate long-term results occurred or were foreseen (should be plausibly explained).	*Max. 40 points* *40 out of 40*
	The project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results	*Max. 30 points* *25 out of 30*
	The occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive results was monitored and additional opportunities for further positive results were seized. No project-related negative results have occurred – and if any negative results occurred, the project responded adequately.	*Max. 30 points* *23 out of 30*
Overall rating for impact		*88 of 100 points*

5.4 Efficiency

The efficiency criterion are assessed in this section of the report. The evaluation was conducted in line with two evaluation dimensions:

- Evaluation dimension 1: The project's use of resources was appropriate with regard to the outputs achieved (production efficiency).
- Evaluation dimension 2: The project's use of resources was appropriate with regard to achieving the projective objective (outcome) (allocation efficiency).

Evaluation dimensions 1 and 2 were evaluated in line with GIZ guidelines and relevant analysis questions in the Evaluation Matrix. In order to evaluate the production efficiency, the 'follow the money approach' (GIZ, 2017o) was applied to determine potential improvements regarding the efficiency of the project. This approach was selected representing a typical level 1 analysis, which has 'the ability to systematically and exhaustively screen an entire intervention for wasted resources or obvious inefficiencies' (BMZ, 2011). Moreover, this approach was envisaged to be comparatively efficient regarding the time required for conducting the efficiency assessment (BMZ, 2011). In order to conduct the evaluation in line with the 'follow the money approach', an efficiency tool was used, provided by GIZ. This tool enabled the assigning of costs to outputs retrospectively during the evaluation.

Production efficiency

Before assessing production efficiency, it is important to provide a brief overview of the financial data of the project. The overall project budget was EUR 3.5 million up to the start of 2018. Due to a project extension until the end of 2020 the budget was increased to EUR 6.6 million. As the extension of the project coincided with this evaluation, the evaluators did not consider the new budget linked to the project extension. The project was not co-funded and only in-kind resources of partners were considered.

Using the efficiency tool, which allows costs to be retrospectively assigned to outputs, the attainment of the outputs measured by the attainment of respective output indicators was determined as follows:

Output A – The regional dialogue of the MFAs of the South-East Europe cooperation countries was improved – the two relevant output indicators show the following progress in the implementation:
- Indicator A-1: The members of the MFAs network have reached a consensual agreement on formalising the network. This indicator was achieved to 30%.
- Indicator A-2: In eight instances those involved in the MFAs network come together to consult with one another on politically sensitive government positions in preparation for a regional process such as the Western Balkan Six meetings or the Berlin Process. This indicator was achieved to 50%.

Output B – The capacity of the EU integration authorities to manage the EU accession process at regional level are strengthened – the two relevant output indicators show the following attainment rates:
- Indicator B-1: Two-thirds of the heads of the relevant units confirm that the linking of IPA issues with national development priorities was now better coordinated. Attainment rate: 66% of heads of units, i.e. two heads of unit in one country (Serbia), confirmed that the linking of IPA issues with national development priorities was now better coordinated
- Indicator B-2: 80% of those taking part in training or events confirm that their capacity for managing the EU accession process has improved. Attainment rate: 100%

Output C – The strategic use of EU IPA funding to promote the EU integration of South-East European cooperation countries was addressed on regional learning platforms – three relevant output indicators show the following attainment rates:
- Indicator C-1: A regional network of IPA structures was established. Attainment rate: 100%
- Indicator C-2: IPA programming in the six cooperation countries was based on strategic planning documents agreed with the EU, and sector-based development papers prepared by relevant national units for 4 sectors per country. Attainment rate: 25%
- Indicator C-3: Annual quality monitoring reports on implementation of IPA II were confirmed by the EU for 4 countries. Attainment rate: 33%

In line with the efficiency tool allowing costs to be assigned retroactively, 18% of the budget (EUR 314,537) was spent on each output. The balanced spending for each output was also reflected in the corresponding approach to utilising GIZ project staff: the team leader spent approximately one-third of his or her time supporting each of the three outputs. Also, the division of national staff focused on equal support for each output, which one local project manager per output.

The overarching costs (costs not spent on specific outputs), consisted of the following budget items:
- 34% of GIZ Project Team salaries – due to the fact that the following tasks and responsibilities only contributed indirectly to achieving the outputs: planning and monitoring of finances, procurement of goods (including monitoring of inventory directories), monitoring of contracts, reporting, monitoring of indicators, filing and archving of documents. Additionally, the project team invests time in goals beyond the project, such as on the further development of GIZ in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. To this end, members of the GIZ Project Team participated in management meetings and focused on fulfilling GIZ's

annual targets. Moreover, the GIZ project contributed to project evaluations, internal controls and different working groups (gender mainstreaming, digitalisation etc.

- 100% of ZAS (*Zeitaufschriebe*). ZAS refers to costs that are indirectly linked to the outputs, such as the effort (in number of working hours) colleagues of the country office contribute to the project: accounting, management of contracts, advice from the Country Director, Head of Fund and Administration, and colleagues from headquarters.
- 10% of consultants/external services contracted by headquarters (e.g. contracts from headquarters in Eschborn that cannot be linked to the outputs, such as the project evaluation)
- 40% of the costs for consultants/external local services (e.g. IT support, driver etc.)
- 30% of international staff costs (e.g. travel costs not linked to achieving outputs: internal management meetings)
- 10% of national staff costs (e.g. travel costs not linked to achieving outputs: training, team meetings)
- 100% of procurement of material goods e.g. cars, laptops etc.
- 100% of operating costs – e.g. rents for offices etc.
- 25% of additional external services – additional contracts and invoices on local engagement not linked with the outputs (e.g. minor external engagement such as cleaning services, IT support in the project countries, driver, salary accounting, painting and moving services).
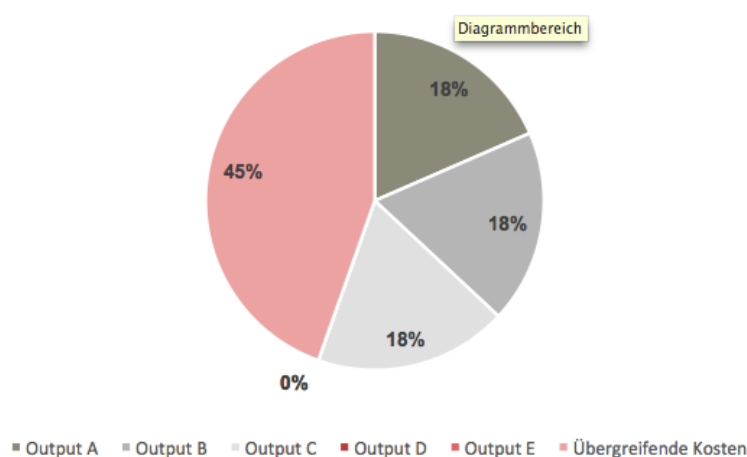

Figure 9 Overall costs in line with outputs and overarching costs in percentage.

Regarding **production efficiency** – the appropriateness of the project's use of resources with regard to the achieved outputs – the project accomplished sound results. In order to assess the question whether the outputs could have been maximised with the same amount of resources and under the same framework conditions and with the same quality (maximisation principle), each output was separately assessed. In order to avoid duplications in presenting the evaluation results, commonalities in approach leading to the same results in each output are presented first, while a separate analysis per output follows below.

The implementation strategy used to accomplish the outputs was highly demand-driven, which contributed to the efficiency in achieving all three outputs. This was due to the fact that the implementation strategy regarding all sub-intervention areas focusing on capacity building and exchange of views (i.e. all sub-intervention areas except the sub-intervention areas titled 'formalisation of network') are based on expressed interests and needs of partners. The steering committee structure of the networks was demonstrated to be an efficient tool in this respect. Within the framework of the steering committee meetings, activity planning for each output was conducted once a year, resulting in an annual implementation plan that provided the basis for the efficient use of resources. Moreover, the annual review of the implementation within the framework of the steering committee also provided a tool for the efficient management of the implementation of the outputs

(Int_4,5,6,7,8,10,11,13,19,20,22,23,24,25,2628,30,31,32).

In order to build capacities and facilitate the exchange of views, the project team relied mainly on national and regional experts with recent experience in the EU accession process. This approach of using experts from within the region or from countries that had recently joined the EU (in particular Croatia) was very efficient, as these experts possessed comparable experiences and knowledge gained in similar contexts. Consequently, the quality provided was higher, while the costs were lower or the same as using experts from outside the region. Furthermore, using experts from the region contributed to strengthening local markets and supported the idea of networking among peers.

In the process of assigning costs to outputs and overarching costs, no hidden costs were identified. Assessing the overarching costs (i.e. costs not directly linked to achieving outputs), it had to be pointed out that without a reference project of similar nature it was very challenging to evaluate the overarching costs. In order to overcome this issue, the evaluation focused on the purpose of the overarching costs and found that the spending of all items was justified and was required in order to increase the overall quality of the project implementation and to contribute to the strategic development of GIZ in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The set-up of the project team consisting of an international team leader, three local project managers each in charge of the implementation of one of the outputs, and eight support staff in the six project countries was very efficient in terms of achieving the outputs. This was due to the fact that the team leader held oversight responsibilities, while the project managers contributed to the day-to-day operational running of networks, mainly focusing on the organisation of network events (e.g. regional meetings, regional capacity building seminars, activities within the framework of the National Action Support Scheme) and the necessary follow-up. This aspect of the project was essential in order to ensure the efficient implementation of the outputs and to maintain the networks (see also sustainability criterion in Section 5.6) (Int_4,5,9,10,11).

Looking at the question of whether the outputs could have been increased through changing the activities, the Evaluation Team first assessed the sub-intervention area 'formalisation of the network', which was part of all three outputs. As the approach chosen was the same in all three outputs, this assessment was conducted jointly.

These sub-intervention areas aimed to ensure sustainability of the networks in order to maintain respective platforms for dialogue and exchange of experience once GIZ ceased to support the networks. In order to decrease donor dependencies and increase sustainability, this was an efficient implementation strategy as it focused on sustainability during the implementation and did not just consider it once the implementation had come to an end. There was room for improvement regarding the process in order to increase the production efficiency. This was due to the fact that a concept paper was shared with the partners in all three networks, proposing the same approach to achieving the sustainability of the respective network (GIZ, 2017b). However, this proposal was not based on a systematic assessment of the views of partners regarding sustainability of the respective network and existing good practices of transferring projects to domestic ownership (Int_4,10,5,6,11,8,13,17-20,23,25,28,32,). Therefore, this concept on sustainability might not have been fully accepted by partners. This approach could potentially result in the need to invest additional resources in order to find a consensus on achieving sustainability of the networks. Moreover, lacking an evidence-based approach might lead to weaknesses in the concept.

It was also questionable whether the same approach was suitable for each network. Due to the different needs of the networks and diverse existing regional structures, a joint approach for all three networks did not seem to be very effective. This was particularly the case as existing regional platforms in the Regional School for Public Administration and the Regional Cooperation Council might have provided a sustainable 'home' for the networks. Yet, this was not considered in the approach taken by the project team (GIZ, 2017b). Considering these aspects, it has to be pointed out that efficiency in these sub-intervention areas could be maximised by choosing an evidence-based approach to developing a concept on network sustainability and by considering

the particularities of the networks as well as existing regional platforms.

A more in-depth analysis of the approaches chosen to achieve the outputs follows, reviewing the implementation strategy for the three outputs and the expenditures per output.

Ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) network – Output A – The regional dialogue of the ministries of foreign affairs of the South-East European cooperation countries was improved
The possibility of maximising the outputs with the same amount of resources and under the same framework conditions and with the same or better quality showed a decent intervention strategy.

Sub-intervention area A1: Support for the Berlin Process – In preparing for relevant Western Balkan summits, the GIZ Project Team facilitated the exchange of viewpoints. Moreover, it provided a platform for following up on these events. To this end, the Project Team organised regional network meetings. These meetings resulted in consultations on politically sensitive government positions in the preparatory and follow-up process of large Western Balkan summits. Considering that the Berlin Process was perceived by project partners – senior officials in MFAs in each project country – as the most important regional intergovernmental process on EU integration (Int_6,17-20,28,32), supporting the Berlin Process was an efficient way of achieving the Output, namely regional dialogue of the MFAs of the South-East European cooperation countries.

Sub-intervention area A2 focused on providing technical assistance regarding EU Acquis chapters 23, 24, 30 and 31 relevant to foreign ministries. This exchange of experience and learning on technical aspects at the regional level was also an efficient approach to achieving the output. This was mainly due to the fact that the discussion on technical matters showed the project partners that they all faced similar issues in their institutions and provided them with room to learn from each other. This positive experience of learning from each other was a crucial motivation factor for the partners to participate in the network (Int_6,17-20, 28,32). Consequently, this approach was assessed as very efficient.

Regarding expenditure, 18% (EUR 314,537) of the overall budget was spent on this output, while the attainment of the indicators was at 30% and 50% respectively. This positive relation between input and output attainment was considered efficient. It also important to emphasise that the implementation of the latter output indicator on formalising the network only started in August 2017. Furthermore, the resources spent on this output were adequate, considering that one indicator (on consultations on politically sensitive government positions) essential for achieving Output A and the project outcome was already 50% achieved. The input–output ratio for the indicator on formalising the network was also adequate, as it had a positive relation and was essential for achieving the output and the project outcome.

Network of EU integration authorities – Output B – The capacity of EU integration authorities to manage the EU accession process at regional level are strengthened.
The design and intervention strategy of this network was assessed as efficient regarding the maximisation principle: the question of whether this output could have been maximised with the same amount of resources and under the same framework conditions and with the same quality. This was due to the following reasons. First, the design of the sub-intervention areas reflected key needs of EU integration authorities in the project countries. Secondly, the implementation strategy consisting of regional exchange of experiences and capacity-building events on selected topics based on demand, provided an efficient strategy to address the capacity needs in different countries. Thirdly, in order to consider the different levels of progress in the EU accession process leading to differences in capacities and needs of EU integration authorities, the project team developed a new approach: the 'national support action scheme'. Within the national support action scheme, project partners were able to request assistance, based on identified needs. Overall, each partner institution had the opportunity to receive assistance amounting to EUR 6,000 annually. The majority of project partners perceived the assistance received within the national action support scheme as highly efficient. Fourthly, the regional approach was essential, as learning from the experiences of peers, and supporting each other, could

not be substituted through bilateral project interventions.

Regarding spending, 18% (EUR 314,537) of the budget was spent on this output, while the attainment of the output indicator on improving capacity as a result of training/events was 100%. The attainment rate of the indicator on measuring the linking of IPA issues with national development priorities would only be able to be assessed in 2018 through a complex study. This positive relation between spending and output indicator achievements was very efficient considering that at least 50% of the expected implementation results were already achieved, while only 18% was spent. The resources spent on this output were considered adequate given that training/events led to increased capacities for managing the EU accession process.

Network of instrument for pre-accession funding institutions – Output C – The strategic use of EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funding to promote the EU integration of South-East European cooperation countries was addressed on regional learning platforms
Considering the question of whether this output could have been maximised with the same amount of resources, under the same framework conditions and with the same quality, this evaluation concluded that the design and the implementation strategy were very efficient as they addressed the key needs of relevant institutions. Considering the design, it needs to be pointed out that addressing the whole programming cycle from programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation was an efficient approach. Regarding the implementation, it has to be pointed out that the mix of regional and national capacity building, as implemented regarding the sub-intervention area on monitoring and evaluation of IPA, seems to be particularly efficient in addressing diverging needs and building capacities. Moreover, efficiency in the implementation was also increased through the use of the national support action scheme, which gave partner institutions the opportunity to develop tailor-made activities.

Regarding the output attainment rate spending, 18% (EUR 314,537) of the overall budget was spent on this output, while the attainment of the indicators was at 100%, 25% and 33% respectively. This ratio of spending and output indicator achievements was adequate considering the achievements: a network of IPA structures was established, IPA programming was based on strategic planning in one out of four sectors in all cooperation countries, and the quality of annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II was increased and confirmed by the EU for four cooperation countries.

In order to maximise outputs by reallocating resources, and considering the output/resources ratio, the GIZ Project Team established and built synergies between the three networks whenever it contributed to achieving the outputs. These synergies had not been foreseen in the original design of the project, however, during the implementation the GIZ Project Team recognised that there was a need to establish better synergy between the networks and ultimately between the structures dealing with the overall coordination of the EU integration process on national level. To this end, the GIZ Project Team organised a joint retreat between the networks of the European integration offices and of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, which showed that coherence between the coordinating structures was needed. A continuation of this approach was planned and a follow-up was envisaged in the upcoming project implementation phase. In order to increase synergies and to maximise the output/resources ratio, a joint retreat of all three networks was planned, as well as joint activities/workshops/retreats between these structures on a national level (Int_4,5,10,11, GIZ 207c, GIZ 2017l). This approach demonstrated that reallocating resources and the output–resource ratio was considered in order to maximise outputs. Moreover, planned expenditures were meaningfully distributed among the targeted outputs as this approach on resource maximisation and establishing synergies was continued (Int_4,5,10,11).

Allocation efficiency

Applying the 'follow the money approach' in order to identify potential areas for efficiency improvement, the evaluation found the following level of goal attainment, in line with the efficiency tool that allowed costs to be assigned to outputs retrospectively.

The Evaluation Team assessed that the use of resources was appropriate with regard to achieving the projective objective (outcome). The only way to potentially maximise the outcome with the same amount of resources and the same, or better, quality (maximisation principle) could be by reallocating resources in order to further increase synergies between the networks. To this end, a joint event for focal points of the EU integration authorities and IPA networks was organised in 2017, which was demonstrated to be very efficient as resources were saved and the impact was increased. The latter was mainly due to the fact that coordination between relevant institutions – the MFAs, ministries/authorities for EU integration and IPA – was frequently not sufficient on the national level. Therefore, organising joint network events had a positive effect on coordination at the national level, leading to sharing and applying good practices between networks: positively contributing to achieving outcome indicator 1. Additionally, this also led to potential spill-over effects. For example, if one network agreed on a mechanism to ensure sustainability of the network (outcome indicator 2), the other networks could see this as a role model. This could result in achieving outcome indicators on sustainability and sharing of good practices in a more efficient and effective manner (Interview 5,11). The outcome–resources ratio and alternatives were carefully considered during the conception of the project, which built on the project evaluation conducted in 2015 (GIZ, 2015b). During the evaluation process the outcome–resource ratio was adjusted in order to increase the efficiency of achieving outcomes. These adjustments were possible due to an extension of the project until 2020, which was linked with an increase of funds of EUR 3.1 million, leading to a total budget of EUR 6.6 million. Options for scaling up were not considered, due to limited absorption capacities of partners. IPA and European integration offices networks partnered with the Regional School for Public Administration (RESPA) in order to share costs of events and increase efficiency. Both GIZ and RESPA stakeholders perceived efficiency gains through this arrangement, as the relationship between the costs and the results was appropriate (Int_4,5,36).

Project objective	Indicators	Goal attainment in %
Regional learning of the responsible authorities with regard to national steering of the EU accession process in South-East Europe is improved.	1. Three good practices in EU integration management that were discussed in the regional networks of the ministries of foreign affairs the EU integration authorities or the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) structures were applied in two countries.	33%
	2. Two of the networks concluded an agreement on formalising dialogue with regard to EU accession.	30%
	3. National development priorities in four countries were consistent with the strategic programming of the IPA.	50%

In conclusion, the efficiency criterion was assessed as **very successful**. **Production efficiency** was evaluated by assigning costs to outputs retrospectively during the evaluation and by using the 'follow the money' approach to analyse this data. The overall implementation strategy to achieve the outputs was assessed as highly demand-driven, which contributed to efficiency in accomplishing all three outputs. This was due to the fact that the implementation strategy regarding all sub-intervention areas focused on capacity building and exchange of views (i.e. all sub-intervention areas except the sub-intervention areas 'formalisation of network') are based on expressed interests and needs of partners. Regarding sub-intervention area 'formalisation of network', which was part of all three networks, there was room for improvement. Efficiency in these sub-

intervention areas could be maximised by choosing an evidence-based approach to develop a concept on network sustainability and by considering the particularities of the networks as well as existing regional platforms. Regarding **allocation efficiency**, the Evaluation Team concluded that the use of resources was appropriate with regard to achieving the project objective (outcome). The only way to potentially maximise the outcome could be by reallocating resources in order to increase synergies between the networks.

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score
Efficiency	The project's use of resources was appropriate with regard to the outputs achieved [Production efficiency: Resources/Services in accordance with the BMZ]	*66 out of 70 points*
	The project's use of resources was appropriate with regard to achieving the projective objective (outcome). [Allocation efficiency: Resources/Services in accordance with the BMZ]	*26 out of 30 points*
Overall rating for efficiency		*92 of 100 points*

5.5 Sustainability

This part of the report evaluates the sustainability criterion in line with the following evaluation dimensions (see **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.**):

- Evaluation dimension 1: Prerequisite for ensuring the long-term success of the project: results are anchored in (partner) structures. In order to assess this evaluation dimension, the evaluation focused on sub-intervention area 'formalisation of network', which aimed to ensure the sustainability of the networks. All three networks tackled this intervention area separately. The evaluation dimension was assessed through a combination of semi-structured interviews and a review of the project documentation.
- Evaluation dimension 2: Forecast of durability: Results of the project are permanent, stable and long-term resilient. Assessing whether the project results are permanent, stable and long-term resilient, the formalisation of networks was taken as the evaluation basis. In order to assess this evaluation dimension, the analysis draws on selected aspects of Section 5.2 (e.g. the formalisation of one network as the basis for the durability of project results).
- Evaluation 3: Results of the project are economically, socially and ecologically balanced. This evaluation dimension was assessed in line with the project documents. As pointed out on several occasions in this report, it was not perceived as relevant due to the fact that, according to the assessment in the planning phase, the project did not contain an ecological dimension (see climate assessment, GIZ, 2015f) and the socio-economic impact was marked as marginal, in other word, not measurable (see assessment on socio-

economic impact marked as AO-0).

The evaluation found the following:

Evaluation dimension 1 (results are anchored in (partner) structures as a prerequisite for ensuring the long-term success of the project): the project focused on a specific sub-intervention area 'formalisation of network', which aimed to ensure sustainability of the networks. All three networks tackled this intervention area separately. It aimed to establish an agreement on a cooperation mechanism as the basis for strategic and operational steering of the network without donor support. At this stage of the implementation a concept on future modalities (exit strategy) was presented to all networks in August 2017 (GIZ, 2017b), while follow-up consultations and further development of the concept on sustainability/formalisation were planned for 2018 (Int_4,5,10,11).

While the partners regularly used the networks to exchange information and practices, even without GIZ support (Int_6,7,8,19,20,22-26,28,30-32), the networks were not anchored/institutionalised in the partner systems. Accordingly, there was a consensus among network focal points that the networks would continue to function on an informal level without GIZ support. These informal networks would be used to exchange information, good practices and share views. However, network members claimed to lack the capacity to organise network meetings, mainly due to the fact that they lacked the coordination capacity required to organise regional network meetings. While some partners might have more resources, they were anxious about taking over the coordination role in case they were perceived as regional leader. Moreover, political sensitivities in the region, particularly regarding the status of Kosovo, might hinder the organisation of events. In future, strict protocols within the relevant institutions would make the organisation of regional events very complicated, requiring more human and financial resources than the partner institutions possessed (Int_6,7,8,19,20,22-26, 28, 30-32). Due to the fact that the networks had not been anchored in partner institutions/relevant regional organisations policies, guidelines and other relevant documents on networking as a tool for regional learning did not exist. Moreover, national structures and mechanisms were not in place to ensure continuous support to the achieved results. Developing a concept on how to institutionalise/anchor the networks in partner systems was required as a prerequisite for strengthening sustainability.

The draft exit strategy of the project foresaw that the networks would be maintained, with a decentralised structure and nominated focal points in all partner institutions. Regional network meetings would be organised at least once a year, ideally in different locations, potentially back to back to other regional events. These meetings would be prepared by rotating focal points as 'temporary convener' (GIZ, 2017b). This exit strategy would be further refined, involving focal points of the networks and expert advice. Semi-annual steering committee meetings would be used to review the implementation of the project and to document lessons learnt. Considering the different institutional framework conditions and positions of networks,[12] leading to differences in how partners value and perceive the relevant networks, tailor-made solutions for the three networks could provide a more effective exit strategy, adjusted to the needs and interests of the networks.

Evaluation dimension 2 (forecast of durability): the results of the project are permanent, stable and long-term resilient. The formalisation of networks – as specific sub-intervention area – was the basis for the durability of the project results. The contribution analysis on the EU Integration Authorities Network in Section 5.2 assesses the formalisation of one network as the basis for the durability of project results. While informal networks were established, it would be challenging to maintain a network concept requiring coordination without corresponding financial and human resources. Beyond the project's duration, it was likely that the networks would continue to exchange information and share experiences on the EU accession process in an informal set-up.

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[12] The MFA network is fully unique, without competition, while IPA and EU integration networks can be seen as one project among many donor-led initiatives in these fields.

On one hand, the following risks could hamper the durability of the networks (Online survey, EU Integration Authorities Network, Int_5,8,13,23,25,30):

- the political dynamics in the region, in particular, bilateral tensions,
- decreasing interest of the beneficiary states in the EU accession process,
- new EU enlargement policy changes course, leading to less cohesion among the countries in the region,
- internal developments in the European Union (e.g. new priorities, Brexit etc),
- political and institutional fragility of institutions in beneficiary institutions, and
- high regional dependence on donors.

On the other hand, there was the following potential for the protection of long-term results (Online survey, EU Integration Authorities Network, Int_5,8,13,23,25,30):

- EU accession process as political priority of the beneficiary countries,
- clear vision on EU enlargement provided to the beneficiary states in the EU enlargement strategy of the EC, published at the beginning of February 2018.

The project was fully aware of these risks and potentials, which were partially also considered in the Results Matrix of the project (Int_9,10,11, GIZ 2017n). In line with the new EC enlargement strategy, and in close cooperation with the EC, the potentials should be further assessed and streamlined in the future implementation of the project.

Evaluation dimension 3: According to the project documents, the project does not entail an ecological dimension, as stipulated in the environmental and climate assessment conducted in the framework of screening of programme documents, and it was marked with AO-0 regarding its socio-economic impact (GIZ, 2015a, f). The project contributed indirectly to combatting poverty, as it fosters the EU accession process and networking capacities. It was assumed that the reforms conducted within the framework of the EU accession process would lead to increased competitiveness of beneficiary countries, contributing to combatting poverty. Accordingly, this dimension had not been further assessed.

To conclude, the evaluation of the sustainability criterion was **successful**. The prerequisite for ensuring the long-term success of the project – results were anchored in (partner) structures (evaluation dimension 1) – were provided. While the partners regularly used the networks to exchange information and practices even without GIZ support, the networks were not anchored/institutionalised in the partner systems. There was a concept on formalising the networks (exit strategy), which would be further developed in the upcoming period. According to the network focal points, the networks would continue to function on an informal level without GIZ support. These informal networks would be used to exchange information, good practices and share views. However, network members claimed to lack the capacity to organise network meetings. Therefore, developing a concept on how to institutionalise/anchor the networks in partner systems was required as a prerequisite for strengthening sustainability. Regarding the evaluation dimension 2 (forecast of durability), the results of the project were permanent, stable and long-term resilient. The formalisation of networks – as a specific intervention area – was the basis for the durability of the project results. The contribution analysis on EU integration authorities network in Section 5.2 assessed the formalisation of one network as the basis for the durability of project results. While informal networks were established, it would be challenging to maintain a network concept requiring coordination without corresponding financial and human resources. Beyond the project's duration, it was likely that the networks would continue to exchange information and share experiences on the EU accession process in an informal set-up.

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score
Sustainability	Prerequisites for ensuring the long-term success of the project: results were anchored in (partner) structures	*Max. 40 points* *36 out of 40 points*
	Forecast of durability: results of the project were permanent, stable and long-term resilient	*Max. 30 points* *25 out of 30 points*
	The results of the project were ecologically, socially and economically balanced.	*Max. 30 points* *30 out of 30*
Overall rating for sustainability		*91 of 100 points*

5.6 Long-term results of predecessor

As in the previous sections, this part outlines the evaluation basis and puts forward the evaluation findings. The project built directly on a predecessor project (PN: 2012.226.1) (July 2012 – December 2015) that aimed to improve the framework conditions for regional cooperation regarding the EU accession process of the South-East European countries. In order to assess the long-term results of the predecessor project, the programme objective (impact level) and the outcome level of the predecessor were analysed. In line with the project document, the impact and outcome levels of the predecessor project were formulated as follows (GIZ, 2012, GIZ 2015b):

Programme objective (impact level): The countries of South-East Europe have made progress in the process of EU accession regarding the requirements from the Stabilisation and Association process.

Programme objective indicators:
Programme objective indicator 1: Cooperation countries of the programme undertook eight successful reform efforts in the sectors, supported by the programme and in relevant intervention areas.

Programme objective indicator 2: Representatives of the networks of the South-East Europe cooperation countries confirmed an increase of zero to nine jointly agreed positions between three or more cooperation countries.

Programme objective indicator 3: A total of 13 instruments, processes and procedures developed or disseminated by the networks supported by the programme were implemented in 4 of the cooperation countries at the national level

Project/module objective (outcome): Framework conditions for regional cooperation on EU accession are improved.

Project/module objective indicators:

Project objective indicator 1: At least six commitments by other donors to fund project initiatives of the networks of partners in the Open Regional Fund (ORF) sectors (each of at least six months duration).

Project objective indicator 2: Individual measures contributed to the jointly agreed and pursued objectives (impacts) of the programme.

Project objective indicator 3: 70% of training participants confirmed that their capacity for regional cooperation had improved.

The predecessor project focused on three intervention areas (outputs):

1. Programme management and coordination – aimed to establish coherent and strategic Open Regional Fund (ORF) interventions and improved management and support processes in the programme.

2. Cooperation management – referred to the function of the project to represent and position both the ORFs and their partners with third parties to improve the sustainability of these interventions through external funding.

3. Regional networks to foster regional exchange regarding the steering and coordination of the EU accession process. To this end, two networks were established, providing a platform for Directorates of EU integration in ministries for foreign affairs (MFAs), and for EU integration authorities (GIZ, 2012, GIZ 2015b).

The evaluation assessed the impact and sustainability of the predecessor project. The evaluation found that the predecessor project focused on establishing the MFAs and EU integration authorities networks and entailed two management components (intervention areas/outputs 1 and 2) in order to streamline managerial approaches of all ORF projects. While the approach to management of the ORF projects (i.e. intervention area/output 1 and 2) was changed and the managerial responsibilities handed over to the team leaders of the respective ORF projects, the MFAs and EU integration authorities networks continued to effectively function within the framework of the evaluated project. Accordingly, the predecessor project and its results laid the foundation for the on-going project interventions, in particular the functioning of the MFAs and EU integration authorities networks. The project builds on the predecessor project and its lessons learnt are effectively incorporated into the implementation strategy. Furthermore, previous project results positively contributed to achieving the results/goals, as stipulated in the Results Matrix. It was not possible to conduct a more detailed evaluation of sustainability and impact of the predecessor project as the interventions on the MFAs and EU integration authorities networks continued without a break after the predecessor was completed. This was also reflected in the impact level of the predecessor and current projects, which were almost identical. The change from the predecessor project to the on-going project was mostly administrative and did not directly affect the work of the networks. Therefore, a specific evaluation of the sustainability and impact of the predecessor project was not possible.

6 Overall rating

The project contributed to the EU integration process of the Western Balkans and provided an important contribution to the EU approximation process as it fostered regional cooperation, which was a key condition for potential EU accession. Having assessed the project in line with the OECD/DAC criteria, this project was seen as very successful overall. It achieved solid results measured against all OECD/DAC criteria. Considering the policy context of the project, it also contributed to the implementation of the new EU enlargement strategy, re-emphasising the need to further strengthen regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations (EC, 2018b). Moreover, the project contributed to the South East Europe 2020 strategy and relevant national strategies, focusing on enhancing regional cooperation. Most importantly, the project had a positive impact on reconciliation within the region, in particular on improved relations between Serbia and Kosovo. Yet, the project was also affected by national and regional political dynamics, which have the potential to hinder the EU approximation process. Furthermore, the fragile political context in the region could potentially negatively affect the EU accession process. The GIZ Project Team gained a sound basis from which to adjust the implementation strategy by monitoring the political situation in the region, networking with key stakeholders of EU institutions, and following developments regarding the EU accession process.

Within the framework of the contribution analysis, the evaluation focused on assessing the following three hypotheses:
- Ministries of Foreign Affairs Network – Support for Berlin Process (sub-intervention area A1)
- European Integration Authorities Network – Formalisation of the Network (sub-intervention area B4)
- Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) – Monitoring and Evaluation of IPA (sub-intervention area C3)

While the hypotheses on the MFA network and the IPA could be verified, the implementation of the European Integration Authorities Network did not progress sufficiently in order to verify the hypotheses. The findings of the contribution analysis indicated that the Theory of Change was plausible and that there was an association between what the project has done and the observed outcome. There was no contradictory evidence and main alternative explanations for the outcomes occurring were ruled out. The underlying assumptions and risks of the project were effectively monitored, and appropriate action was taken to control/reduce the risks.

The evaluation showed the following factors, which could foster or hinder achieving the expected outcome and outputs.

Success factors contributing to achieving the expected outcome and outputs on a strategic/political level were as follows:
- There was strategic alignment of the project on EU enlargement and close cooperation with key external partners such as the European Commission, the Regional School for Public Administration and the Regional Cooperation Council.
- The networks were assessed as highly relevant, with sufficient buy-in of partners, who perceived the networks as highly relevant to their work on EU accession.
- The 'German clout' contributed to the achievement of the results, as the financial support of Germany was perceived as a concrete political message of Germany's support to the EU integration process.
- The regional set-up of the GIZ project represented in all project countries contributed to achieving the results, as the team could easily reach out to partners in relevant national public administrations and EU institutions.
- The cooperation between the political carrier and the partners (mainly network focal points in national public administrations) was well established and provided the basis for the effective and efficient

implementation of this project.

Success factors contributing to achieving the expected outcome and outputs on a strategic/operational level:
- Demand-driven approach – the project activities were based on the needs and interests of project partners.
- The tailor-made capacity building provided within the framework of this project provided the foundation to advance in this field.
- Implementation modalities – the steering committee structure provided for local ownership, which was highly valued by partners. Clear ground rules established by the GIZ Project Team contributed to trust and confidence, i.e. Kosovo was status neutral, participants of meetings had only their names on their badges and name plates.
- Flexibility was provided, in particular through the National Support Action Scheme, which was perceived as an effective capacity development tool.
- There was an adequate selection of focal points and deputies (promoted by the GIZ Project Team, approved by high-ranking officials in the relevant ministries).
- The institutional set-up was stable, and trained staff were capable of working on technical aspects of the EU accession process.
- Adequate financial management of the project ensured the efficiency of the implementation.

The following factors could hinder achieving the outputs and outcome of the project:
- Changes in the EU enlargement process, in particular, changes in the speed and conditionality which might affect the coherence of the networks and the motivation of the Western Balkan states to foster required reforms.
- Political developments and dynamics at regional and national levels. This was due to the fact that the political situation in the region was very fragile both at national and regional levels. Bilateral issues still present realist impediments for progress in the EU accession process.
- Political changes, such as elections leading to a new government, could introduce significant organisational changes and/or changes in policy priorities regarding the EU accession process.
- Changes in the institutional set-up of partners, such as restructuring of ministries and administrations after elections or constitutional dynamics.
- High turnover of staff in partner institutions leading to a situation in which the beneficiary institutions frequently have to train new staff as skilled and more experienced staff often leave the institution after a few years.
- Lack of coordination and cooperation of relevant ministries and institutions involved in the EU accession process.
- Lack of an evidence-based approach on achieving sustainability of the networks.
- Potential cooperation pitfalls of the GIZ Project Team in engaging partners in this politically sensitive environment.

The quality of the implementation was high, due to the demand-driven approach of the project, which focused on exchanging experiences within the region. Moreover, the financial and management arrangements were assessed as very effective, and cooperation with external partners was on a high level.

Considering these overall findings, the following overall rating in line with the assessment of the OECD/DAC criteria conducted previously was established:

Relevance

The relevance criterion was evaluated as **very successfully** met, as the project fits fully into the strategic reference frameworks. The suitability of the strategy/concept matches core problems/needs of the target groups. Moreover, the project interventions were adapted to the strategic orientation of the EU and country strategies and the project was adapted to changes in line with the requirements. While the design of the project

was adequately adapted to the chosen goal, an evaluation of the Theory of Change demonstrated the need to make some small adjustments to the results logic. In order to reach 100 points, there was room to optimise strategic alignment with the Regional Cooperation Council – a key stakeholder in the project. Moreover, the target group needed to be adjusted to the actual beneficiaries of the project implementation. Furthermore, gender issues needed to be more systematically addressed, with a gender mainstreaming approach introduced whenever possible and appropriate. (For example, for larger workshops/seminars, a gender-sensitive approach should be recommended to national ministries selecting participants.)

Effectiveness

The effectiveness criterion was evaluated as **very successfully** met, due to the following reasons. First, the project achieved very good results regarding the goal attainment, in accordance with the project objective indicators agreed upon in the contract (evaluation dimension 1). Secondly, the services implemented by the project successfully contributed to the achievement of the goal agreed upon in the contract (evaluation dimension 2). Accordingly, the findings of the contribution analysis indicated that the Theory of Change was plausible and that there was an association between what the project had done and the observed outcome. There was no contradictory evidence, and the main alternative explanations for the outcomes occurring had been ruled out. The underlying assumptions and risks of the project were effectively monitored, and appropriate action had been taken to control/reduce the risks. Thirdly, the project team had assessed the occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive and negative results linked to the implementation of the project (evaluation dimension 3). Considering the positive spin-offs identified during the evaluation, the project team could strengthen its focus on systematically monitoring unintended results and capitalising on the occurrence of positive results/spin offs not formally agreed, in particular, in the ministry of foreign affairs network.

Impact

The evaluation of the impact criterion concluded with an overall rating of **successful**. Evaluation dimension 1 (the announced superordinate long-term results are foreseen), was assessed as positive, as the contribution of the project to the impact indicators could be plausibly explained. This was due, in particular, to the positive track record in goal attainment at the output and outcome levels, which built the logical foundation for achieving the impact level indicators. Regarding evaluation dimension 2 (the project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results), the evaluation also concluded positive results. The contribution analysis demonstrated that achieving the impact level indicators was perceived as plausible. However, it was questionable whether these indicators were a measure of progress on the EU accession path. This was mainly due to the fact that EU accession is not only a technical process, but also a political one. Consequently, network focal points assumed that unpredictable political dynamics might influence the impact level and in turn affect progress in the EU accession process. A consideration of how best to frame the impact level in order to make it more realistic for partners involved in the project was therefore recommended. The project team had also assessed the occurrence of additional (not formally agreed) positive and negative results linked to the implementation of the project (evaluation dimension 3). Considering the positive spin-offs, the project team could strengthen its focus on systematically monitoring unintended results and capitalising on positive results/spin offs that had not been formally agreed, in particular, in one of the three key intervention areas: the ministry of foreign affairs network.

Efficiency

The efficiency criterion was assessed as **very successfully met.** Production efficiency was evaluated using the efficiency tool and the 'follow the money' approach. The overall approach to achieving the outputs was assessed as highly demand driven, which contributed to the efficiency in achieving all three outputs. This was due to the fact that the implementation strategy regarding all sub-intervention areas focusing on capacity building and exchange of views (i.e. all sub-intervention areas except 'formalisation of network') were based on

expressed interests and needs of partners. Regarding the sub-intervention area 'formalisation of network', which was part of all three networks, there was room for improvement. Efficiency in these sub-intervention areas could be maximised by choosing an evidence-based approach to developing a concept on network sustainability and by considering the particularities of the networks as well as existing regional platforms. Regarding the allocation efficiency, the Evaluation Team concluded that the use of resources was appropriate with regard to achieving the projective objective (outcome). The only way to potentially maximise the outcome would be by reallocating resources in order to increase synergies between the networks.

Sustainability

The evaluation of the sustainability criterion was successful. The prerequisite for ensuring the long-term success of the project (evaluation dimension 1: results are anchored in (partner) structures) was established. While the partners regularly used the networks to exchange information and practices even without GIZ support, the networks were not anchored/institutionalised in the partner systems. However, a concept for formalising the networks (exit strategy) would be further developed in the subsequent period. According to the network focal points, the networks would continue to function on an informal level without GIZ support. These informal networks would be used to exchange information, good practices and share views. However, network members claimed to lack capacity to organise network meetings. Regarding evaluation dimension 2: forecast of durability (results of the project are permanent, stable and long-term resilient), the formalisation of networks – as a specific intervention area – was the basis for durability of the project results. The contribution analysis on the EU Integration Authorities Network assessed the formalisation of this network as the basis for the durability of project results. While informal networks had been established, it would be challenging to maintain a network concept requiring coordination and corresponding financial and human resources. Beyond the project's duration, it was likely that the networks would continue to exchange information and share experiences on the EU accession process in an informal set-up.

Criterion	Score	Rating
Relevance	*Max. 100 points*	*94 out of 100 points*
Effectiveness	*Max. 100 points*	*93 out of 100 points*
Impact	*Max. 100 points*	*88 out of 100 points*
Efficiency	*Max. 100 points*	*92 out of 100 points*
Sustainability	*Max. 100 points*	*91 out of 100 points*
Overall score and rating for all criteria	*Average score of all criteria (sum divided by 5, max. 100 points see below)*	*92*

100-point-scale (Score)	6-level-scale (Rating)
92–100	Level 1 = very successful
81–91	Level 2 = successful
67–80	Level 3 = rather successful
50–66	Level 4 = rather unsatisfactory
30–49	Level 5 = unsatisfactory
0–29	Level 6 = very unsatisfactory

7 Key recommendations

In line with the evaluation results and the experience of the Evaluation Team, the following recommendations were elaborated for the GIZ Project Team and the GIZ Evaluation Unit.

Recommendations to GIZ Project Team:

- Achieving sustainability through formalising networks is challenging, and is one of the three outcome indicators and sub-intervention areas in all three networks. The sub-intervention area 'formalisation of network' was analysed within the framework of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability criterion, and room for improvement was identified. In order to enhance sustainability of the networks, a strategic approach to establishing networks driven by local ownership was recommended, as follows:
  - The different institutional framework conditions and positions of the three networks led to differences in how partners valued and perceived the relevant networks, it was recommended that tailor-made sustainability concepts based on a clearly defined network visions were developed for the three networks.
  - Participatory mechanisms, such as working groups (also online) of focal points that provide partners with the possibility of developing a sustainability concept for the network based on their needs, interests and possibilities should be established in order to facilitate buy-in and local ownership. This should be supported by expert advice, steering the networking process to sustainability.
  - In order to anchor the networks in partner institutions, it was recommended that all relevant partner institutions formally adopted the sustainability concept of the networks. A participatory process should determined at which hierarchical level the sustainability concept should be adopted.
  - The nomination of focal points should be consistent across networks and partner countries, transparent and simple in view of the turnover of staff. The aim should be to ensure continuity of focal points through hand-over procedures, which could be accompanied by project staff and project participants, including from other participating countries to strengthen the network.
  - Regarding potential financial contributions of partner institutions to maintaining the networks, it is recommended considering the introduction of a small financial contribution by partners (e.g. 7%–15% of travel costs) which would be the basis for financial sustainability. This financial contribution could be degressive, e.g. 100% covered in 2018, 80% costs reimbursement in 2019, 60% in 2020. Alternatively, a lump sum, calculated in an equitable manner and decreasing, could be considered. It is recommended that financial aspects be included in the sustainability concept.
  - One key challenge regarding sustainability is the fact that partners only have limited coordination capacity, insufficient to maintain an active network. In order to overcome this issue, ways should be found to anchor the networks in existing regional structures, e.g. Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Regional School for Public Administration.
- As pointed out in evaluating the relevance criterion, key external stakeholders, in particular the European Commission and the RCC, are very interested in the project and offered themselves for a more regular exchange of information. Therefore, it is recommended that a communication strategy on how to effectively engage the relevant stakeholders be developed. This strategy could usefully be applied to all three networks.
- During the evaluation period, the new EC enlargement strategy was published on 6 February 2018. This strategy sets the course for the enlargement process until 2025. In line with the EC enlargement strategy of February 2018, and in close cooperation with the EC, all project stakeholders should explore closer alignment and potentials for specific cooperation with the EC. This required the project to have an increased strategic focus. In order to maintain a good level of efficiency, it was recommended that work can be delegated on the output level while maintaining the same level of quality.

- Evaluating the effectiveness and impact criterion demonstrated that the 'German clout' contributed to the effectiveness and impact of the project. It was recommended to effectively exploit this leverage in the project implementation while not creating dependency among partners.
- As demonstrated in the evaluation of the relevance criterion, the project lacked a systematic gender mainstreaming approach. Due to serious gender inequalities in the cooperation countries of South-East Europe, the evaluation recommended introducing a gender mainstreaming approach whenever possible.
- The national action support scheme was perceived by focal points of the EU integration authorities and IPA networks as a very effective tool. It was recommended that funding opportunities be expanded through this tool.
- The evaluation of the Theory of Change/results logic demonstrated the need to introduce minor adjustments in order to fully reflect the implementation practices and achieved results:
  - Change the results logic in line with the Theory of Change elaborated in cooperation with the project team during this evaluation. In particular, Results Model III – Network of the EU Integration Authorities Network should be updated, as discussed and agreed on with the Project Team in the inception phase, and presented in this evaluation. In other words, Result A needed to be moved (see Section 5.1).
  - The impact of the project was not sufficiently captured in the Results Model (i.e. in programme objective indicators) and should be adjusted. This is due, in particular, to the fact that some partners pointed out that progress in the EU accession process became unrealistic, and they proposed different milestones on the impact level, such as regional integration as a preliminary step in preparation for EU accession. This proposal should be further assessed when revising the Results Model.
  - Consider rephrasing the intervention area 'formalisation of the network' to 'sustainability of the network' and linking it with outcome indicator 2. This is due to the fact that the latter better captures the foreseen intervention and would also avoid the term formalisation, which might be politically not feasible due to the Kosovo–Serbia issue.
  - The National Action Support Scheme does not appear in the performance management system of the project; it is neither part of the Results Model, nor the monitoring and the reporting system of the project. It is recommended that it be included under outcome indicator 1. Alternatively, country-specific improvements linked to the National Action Support Scheme should be documented and assessed as progress against relevant indicators.
  - IPA network: Indicator C-3 should be rephrased, as it does not correspond with the reality. The indicator states that annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II are produced and approved by the EC in four countries. Yet, the EC does not approve these reports; it acknowledges them and sometimes provides comments. Therefore, the wording of this indicator should be rephrased in such a way that progress can be measured.
- In order to impact the identifiers, participatory development and good governance (PD/GG-2), it is recommended that an approach to nudging public administrations in the region be developed.

Recommendations for the ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) network, based mainly on the results of the contribution analysis:

- To document and assess positive spin-offs of the project in terms of a regional exchange of positions, information and its contribution to the policy cycle in order to share these spin-offs within the network and further strengthen regional learning.
- In order to address the issue of high turnover of staff, which is common practice in the diplomatic service, effective ways of maintaining the institutional memory of the network should be considered, such as a common database or a collaborative online platform for the network.
- The work of the network influenced the traditional modus operandi of MFAs and nurtured a new culture of informal connections. This has to be further explored and documented, if possible, to analyse pros and cons and, in particular, whether there is a danger of relaxing the exchange of information too much or

whether/how these new practices could contribute in other fields (i.e. beyond the Berlin Process).

- Develop a concept on sustainability of the network, considering options for anchoring the network in existing regional structures (e.g. the Regional Cooperation Council).

Recommendations for Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) network, based mainly on the results of the contribution analysis:

- While capacities regarding monitoring and evaluation were increased, there was still a need to build on the workshops and coaching in order to further foster a culture on monitoring and evaluation in line with the specific needs of relevant beneficiaries.
- Connecting and ensuring access of senior civil servants to decision-makers will increase the effectiveness of the interventions.

Recommendations for EU integration authorities network, based mainly on the results of the contribution analysis:

- The concept on sustainability should include an approach on how to institutionalise/anchor the networks in partner systems. In this light, good practices of handing over a UNDP project to the Regional School for Public Administration (RESPA) might be considered.
- Connecting and ensuring access of senior civil servants with decision-makers will increase the effectiveness of the interventions.

Recommendations to GIZ Evaluation Unit:

- To streamline Evaluation Matrix and consider reducing the number of evaluation questions.
- To improve the functioning of evaluation tools, in particular, the efficiency tool, before advising on its further use.
- A fully fledged contribution analysis approach would require interaction with key stakeholders at several stages in the evaluation process: after collecting and analysing the data in order to present and discuss the contribution story, and again in circumstances where it was revised. Accordingly, this methodology required the possibility of interacting with a group of key stakeholders at different stages of the evaluation process. Considering the regional set-up of the project, this was extremely challenging, and was not suitable for a methodological approach involving a two-week mission.
- A participatory approach to evaluations, including an evaluation reference group, would significantly add value to the evaluation. However, in order to effectively use this tool, the framework of the evaluation would need to be changed, allowing for more field trips in order to effectively involve the reference group.
- The role of the regional evaluation expert required a review, and it would be advisable to provide an adequate number of days to allow the Evaluation Team to work together throughout the evaluation period.
- The role of the project team in providing logistical support to the Evaluation Team needed to be clearly defined. The project team needed to be fully aware of its role and the support required by the Evaluation Team.
- Plan for a longer duration of the overall exercise from tendering to delivery, taking into account the overall evaluation design (minimum 6 months, not counting extended holiday periods such as Christmas). The planning process should allow for input of the client conducting the evaluation.
- Consider introducing the practice of developing a narrative Theory of Change, which could be used as the basis of the evaluation.

Ministerial conference on EU country reports, Podgorica, January 2016, GIZ Project Team

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and EU networks: Joint GIZ and European Commission – regional round table on communicating EU visibility, Tirana, June 2017, GIZ Project Team

Ministries of foreign affairs network – Study visit to Sofia, 'Preparation for EU–WB Summit, Sofia, April 2018, GIZ Project Team

Ministries of foreign affairs network – Seminar on Common Foreign and Security Policy – Implementation of restrictive measures, MFA Netzwerk, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 4–5 October 2017

EU Integration Authorities Network – COSAP conference, Skopje, Mazedonien, 26 February 2018, GIZ Project Team

Annex

Annex 1: Evaluation matrix

Relevance = 100 points						
Evaluation dimension	**Analysis questions**	**Evaluation indicators**	**Evaluation results from interviews per stakeholder group**	**Evaluation results per document analysis, focus groups, observation as stipulated in IR matrix**	**Conclusions and rating (points)**	**Recommend-ations**
The project fits into the relevant strategic frameworks.	Which framework conditions or guidelines exist for the project? To what extent does the project contribute to the implementation of the underlying strategies (if available, especially the strategies of the partner countries)? To what extent does the TC-measure fit into the programme and the BMZ country strategy (if adequate)? How was the country's implementation and accountability for Agenda 2030 set up and what support needs were	The approach of the project is coherent with the strategic directions of GDC: BMZ Western Balkan Strategy BMZ Country Strategies GIZ EU accession guidelines (2) The approach of the project is coherent with the strategic directions of EU strategies: EU enlargement strategy EU Europe 2020	Semi-structured interviews with all stakeholders demonstrate that the project fits fully into the strategic frameworks. The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) representative recommended deepening cooperation by taking the RCC output at the strategic and programming level as their input (Interview, RCC).	The approach of the project fully meets indicators 1-5. Project design does not meet indicator 6, i.e. it does not include in its intervention logic sustainability dimensions of (a) support to environment, (b) economy, (c) social. The project does not entail an ecological	The analysis of all data reveal that the project fully fits into the strategic frameworks. 40 out of 40	Consider deepening relations with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) representative taking the RCC output at the strategic and programming level as their input (Interview, RCC).

	defined?

Sectors etc. Is there a prioritisation of the objectives of Agenda 2030 within a country context? To which SDGs does the project contribute? To what extent is the contribution of the intervention to the national/global SDGs reflected in the ToC?

Cross-sectoral change strategies, etc. Where has work been carried out on a supra-sectoral basis and where have such approaches been used to reinforce results/avoid negative results?

To what extent are the interactions (synergies/trade-offs) of the intervention with other sectors reflected in conception and ToC – also regarding the sustainability dimensions (ecological, economic and social)? | (3) The approach of the project is coherent with the strategic directions of international standards and agreements:
Agenda 2030 (German contribution)
SDGs
the EU Global Strategy (EUGS)

(4) The programme interventions, objectives and results have linkages to the target countries' EU integration strategies, SDG strategies and relevant policies
National strategies on EU Europe 2020
National SDG strategies

(5) Project documentation/ToC reflects cross-reference to policies and strategies of other relevant GIZ? sectors and avoids duplication and conflicts

(6) Project design includes in its intervention logic | | dimension as stipulated in the environmental and climate assessment conducted in the framework of screening of programme documents, and it is marked with AO-0 regarding its socio-economic impact. Accordingly, the project contributes indirectly to combatting poverty as it fosters the EU accession process and networking capacities. It is assumed that the reforms conducted within the framework of the EU accession process will lead to increased competitiveness of beneficiary countries contributing to combatting poverty. Accordingly, this dimension has not been further assessed. | | |

		sustainability dimensions of (a) support to environment, (b) economy, (c) social				
Suitability of the strategy/ the conception/ to match core problems/needs of the target groups	To what extent was the concept designed to reach particularly disadvantaged groups (LNOB principle)? Which prerequisites were addressed for the concept and used as a basis? How are the different perspectives, needs and concerns of women and men represented in the change process and how are the objectives represented (Safeguard & Gender)? To what extent is the chosen TC-measures' goal geared to the core problems/needs of the target group?	(1) Evidence of project's alignment to the specific expressed needs of particularly disadvantaged groups (2) Project integrates different perspectives, needs and concerns of women and men (gender mainstreaming) in the change process (3) The project is based on sound analyses of opportunities, problems and barriers (including in terms of institutional environment) to achieving progress in the process of EU accession. (4) Evidence of coherence and contribution of chosen TC-measures' goal to addressing core problems/needs of the target group	(1) Target group is defined very broadly as citizens. Disadvantaged groups not targeted as not feasible considering the projects goal. (2) No gender mainstreaming approach is integrated in the project. (3) The project is based on sound analyses of opportunities, problems and barriers (including in terms of institutional environment) to achieving progress in the process of EU accession. (4) All stakeholders interviewed perceive the project as relevant addressing their needs.	The document analysis confirmed the findings of the interviews	Suitability of the strategy/ the conception/ matches core problems/needs of the target groups. Yet, gender mainstreaming and a more detailed target group analysis would increase its suitability. 27 out 30 points	Consider introducing a gender mainstreaming approach whenever possible. Consider diversifying the target group analysis.

The design of the project is adequately adapted to the chosen goal.	Results logic as a basis for monitoring and evaluability (Theory of Change) Are the hypotheses plausible? Are the risks presented plausibly? Is the strategic reference framework well anchored in the concept? To what extent does the strategic orientation of the project address changes in its framework conditions? How is/was the complexity of the framework conditions and guidelines handled? How is/was any possible overloading dealt with and strategically focused?	Results logic and ToC in line with GIZ guidelines The effectiveness of key interventions are based on previous evidence The strategic reference framework builds the bases for the project's concept/intervention logic Key stakeholders of each intervention area confirm that interventions were strategically focused.	Indicators 1–4 are met as confirmed in stakeholder interviews. Yet, the review of the ToC showed that some adjustments are required in order to adopt the ToC to the reality.	An analysis of project documents confirms the stakeholder interviews.	Overall, the design of the project is adequately adapted to the chosen goal. However, the ToC requires some small adjustments mainly in the wording. 17 out of 20 points	Adjust the ToC in line with the discussion conducted in the evaluation (details see recommendation section 7)
The conceptual design of the project was adapted to changes in line with requirements and re-adapted where applicable.	What changes have occurred? How were the changes dealt with?	Project interventions have been adopted to the strategic orientation of the EU and country strategies	All stakeholders confirm that project interventions have been adopted to the strategic orientation of the EU and country strategies	A review of documents confirms the analysis of stakeholder input.	10 out of 10 points	

Effectiveness = 100 points						
Evaluation dimension	Analysis questions	Evaluation indicators	Evaluation results from interviews per stakeholder group	Evaluation results per document analysis, focus groups, observation as stipulated in IR matrix	Conclusions and rating (points)	Recommendations
The project achieves the goal on time in accordance with the TC-measures' goal indicators agreed upon in the contract.	To what extent has the agreed TC-measures' goal already been achieved at the time of evaluation, measured against the goal indicators To what extent is it foreseeable that unachieved goals will be achieved during the current project term?	Present degree of goal-attainment and anticipated degree of goal-attainment until the end of the project term for the following indicators: Indicator 1: Three good practices in EU integration management that have been discussed in the regional networks of the ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs), the EU integration authorities or the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) structures have been applied in two countries. Complemented with milestone for the	The analysis of data collected in semi-structured interviews and in presentations of the project team shows a high level of goal attainment. Indicator 1/Milestone for the evaluation: One good practice (internship programme) has been discussed in the EUI network and applied in two countries, i.e. two representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina went to Montenegro and Serbia in order to learn more about implementation of the SAA and experiences on answering the questionnaire respectively. It is very likely this that indicator will be fully achieved. There is even a potential on overachieving this indicator. Indicator 2: Two of the networks have concluded an agreement on formalising dialogue with regard to EU accession.	An analysis of the project document, progress reports and the data on the monitoring system 'Wirkungsmonitor' confirms that the present degree goal attainment meets the indicators/milestones agreed with the project in the inception phase.	Overall the goal attainment of the project is high and it is likely that the project will achieve all indicators. 40 out of 40 points	It is recommended to focus in particular on indicator 2 which will require an elaborated strategy based on this evaluation to be achieved.

		evaluation: At least one good practice has been discussed in the regional networks of the ministries of foreign affairs, the EU integration authorities, or the IPA structures and have been applied in two countries.	This indicator aims at increasing the sustainability of the networks in order to ensure the independent functioning without GIZ/donor support. So far a concept on formalising the networks has been presented to the networks. However, significant work remains to be done in order to ensure the sustainability/formalisation of two networks (see also sustainability). It is likely that an agreement on formalising the networks will be found considering that informal networks aiming at exchanging information would already continue to exist without GIZ support.		
		Indicator 2: Two of the networks have concluded an agreement on formalising dialogue with regard to EU accession.			
		Indicator 3: National development priorities in four countries are consistent with the strategic programming of the IPA.	Indicator 3: National development priorities in four countries are consistent with the strategic programming of the IPA.

According to baseline study conducted in June 2016 in two of the cooperation countries (Serbia and Montenegro) national development priorities are coherent with priorities of IPA funds usage. This study will be repeated in 2018. | | |

The services implemented by the project successfully contribute to the achievement of the goal agreed upon in the contract.	What concrete contribution does the project make to the achievement of the agreed TC-measures' goal, measured against the goal indicators? Which factors in the implementation contribute successfully to the achievement of the project objectives? What other/alternative reasons contributed to the fact that the objective was achieved or not achieved? Are core, support and management processes designed in such a way that they contribute to the achievement of the objective? To what extent have risks (see also Safeguards & Gender) and assumptions of the Theory of Change been addressed in the implementation and steering of the project?	This criterion refers to the contribution analysis . Details see above selection of hypotheses for contribution analysis 4.2 and evaluation strategy 5. Further guiding questions are rather descriptive than evaluative, i.e. no further indicators are required.	MFA network – project staff and focal points – hypothesis on Berlin Process: Positive feedback on contribution of project as unique platform for regional learning. Regarding the 'Support for Berlin Process', the project achieved positive spin-offs, which require a follow-up. EUI network – hypothesis on sustainability/formalisation of network: The implementation of this intervention area only commenced. However, focal points are all agree that an informal network exists which already would continue to exist without external support. Focal points assume that the network would continue to exist without GIZ support on an informal level, but they are sceptical whether the network would continue to functioning on a more formal level, in particular, coordination, organisation and financing of network events are questioned. IPA network – hypothesis on monitoring and evaluation:	MFA network: An analysis of progress reports, monitoring system and activity reports confirms the positive contribution of the project. Additionally, a focus group and survey also confirm this positive contribution of the project to regional learning. EUI network – hypothesis on sustainability/formalisation of network: A review of system and activity reports confirms the analysis of data gathered through semi-structural interviews. It also demonstrated that there is a need to further develop the concept on sustainability. IPA network – hypothesis on monitoring and evaluation: An analysis of the progress reports, activity reports, monitoring system confirm the contribution of the project.	Overall, the contribution analysis regarding all three selected hypotheses demonstrates a plausible Theory of Change. Accordingly, the results of the contribution analysis indicate that there is an association between what the project has done and the observed outcome. There is no contradictory evidence and main alternative explanations for the outcomes occurring have been ruled out. The underlying assumptions and risks of the project are effectively monitored and appropriate action has been taken to control/reduce the risks. MFA network: Contribution of the project to goal attainment is clear as GIZ is the only actor	MFA network To document and assess positive spin-offs of the project in terms of regional exchange of positions, information and its contribution to the policy cycle in order to share these spin-offs within the network and further strengthen regional learning. In order to address the issue of high turnover of staff that is natural in diplomatic service, effective ways of maintain the institutional memory of network should be considered. The work of the network influenced the traditional modus operandi of MFA's and nurtured a new culture of informal connections. This has to be further explored and documented if possible, to analyse

				A positive contribution of the project to increasing capacities on monitoring used in the development of annual implementation monitoring reports on IPA II exists. However, as this is the mid-term evaluation there is still room to build on the existing capacitates. Yet, a positive contribution of this intervention area to the project outcome can be already determined.		active in this field.	pros and cons, in particular, if there is a danger of relaxing the exchange of information too much or whether/how these new practices could contribute in other fields (i.e. beyond the Berlin process).
						EUI network – hypothesis on sustainability/formalisation of network: The contribution of the project to the objective is clear as an informal network has been established. Yet, going beyond this informal level will be very challenging.	EUI network: Develop a tailor-made approach on sustainability considering the findings and detailed recommendations of this report.
				Adjust indicator C3 needs to be adjusted to reality, i.e. the EC does not approve annual implementation report on IPA II.		IPA network – hypothesis on monitoring and evaluation: The project contributed to increased capacities in the field of monitoring of IPA II, in particular, regarding the development of annual monitoring reports on the implementation of IPA II. 30 out of 30 points	IPA network: While capacities regarding monitoring and evaluation have been increased, there is still a need to built on the workshops and coaching in order to further foster a culture on monitoring and evaluation in line with the specific needs of relevant beneficiaries.

						Adjust indicator C3 to reality, i.e. the EC does not approve annual implementation report on IPA II.
The occurrence of additional/ not formally agreed positive results and unintended negative results was assessed and adequately addressed where required.	To what extent were risks of unintended results assessed as observation fields by the monitoring system (e.g. compass)? To what extent have the project's benefits produced results that were unintended? How were negative unintended results and interactions counteracted and synergies exploited? What measures were taken? Which positive or negative unintended results (economic, social, ecological) does the project produce? Is there any identifiable tension between the ecological, economic and social dimensions	Evidence that monitoring system (e.g. Wirkungsmonitor) is used to assess risks of unintended results as observation fields. Evidence of unintended results achieved by the project. Project's risk assessment and mitigation measures are applied. Evidence of increased consideration of environmental, economic, social aspects/ mechanisms as a result of Project support.	The monitoring system is used regularly. However, unintended results are not assessed systematically. There is evidence on unintended positive results. It was not required to use the risk assessment of the project. No evidence of increased consideration of environmental, economic, social aspects/ mechanisms as a result of Project support	Review of the monitoring system confirm the findings.	Overall, the project monitors unintended results. However, a more systematic approach could be devised in order to capitalise effectively on positive results which already occurred. 23 out of 30	Considering the positive spin-offs pointed out above, the project team could strengthen its focus on systematically monitoring unintended results and capitalising not formally agreed positive results/ spin offs occurring, in particular, in the MFA network

Impact = 100 points						
Evaluation dimension	**Analysis questions**	**Evaluation indicators**	**Evaluation results from interviews per stakeholder group**	**Evaluation results per document analysis, focus groups, observation as stipulated in IR matrix**	**Conclusions and rating (points)**	**Recommend-ations**
The announced superordinate long-term results have occurred or are foreseen (should be plausibly explained).	To which superordinate long-term results should the project contribute (cf. project and programme proposal, if no individual measure; indicators, identifiers, narrative)? To what extent will the project contribute to the implementation of the partner country's national strategy for implementing Agenda 2030/to the SDGs? Which dimensions of sustainability (economic, ecological, social) does the project affect at impact level? Were there positive synergies on the three levels? 'Leave No One Behind': To what extent have targeted marginalised groups (such as women, children, young people, the elderly, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, refugees, IDPs and migrants, people living with HIV/AIDS and the poorest of the poor) been reached and is there evidence of the results achieved at target group level?	See indicators for programme objectives: Indicator 2: Within the regional cooperation, involving three or more partner countries, 32 agreed positions will be adopted in the sectors supported by the programme. Indicator 3: A total of 35 instruments, processes and procedures developed or disseminated by networks supported by the project have been implemented in	Interviews with the project team show that the impact level has not been systematically addressed yet. The improvements in the EU accession process will in turn contribute to the partners' national strategies for implementing Agenda 2030/SDGs (if existing). Particularly, it will contribute to SDG 16. The project does not entail an ecological dimension as stipulated in the environmental and climate assessment conducted in the framework of screening of programme documents, and it is marked with AO-0 regarding its socio-economic impact. Accordingly, it is not further assessed.	The findings of the document analysis confirm the results of the stakeholder interviews,	Positive assessment as the contribution of the project to the impact indicators can be plausibly explained. 40 out of 40	

		four of the countries supported by the programme.	The motto 'Leave No One Behind' targeting marginalised groups is not in the focus of the project which has a very strong emphasis on supporting relevant public institutions dealing with the EU accession process in South Eastern Europe. Considering that this is a mid-term evaluation and the project will run until 2020 evidence of results achieved at target group level (i.e. citizens as stipulated in the project document) is not tangible at this stage of the project implementation. It is plausible that the very diverse population of the region would benefit from reforms supported by the project, however, it will be extremely challenging to assess this contribution of the project due to the significant amount of donor assistance partners received over the last decade.			
The project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results.	To what extent is it plausible that the results of the project on the output and outcome levels (project goal) contribute to the superordinate results? (contribution-analysis approach) What are the alternative explanations/reasons for the results observed? (e.g. the activities of	The question refers to the contribution analysis, elaborated in section 4 and 5.	Considering the positive track record regarding the goal attainment and the plausible links between the outcome and impact level, the evaluation team assesses the contribution of the	Findings of the stakeholder interviews are confirmed in the document analysis	The contribution analysis demonstrated that achieving the impact level indicators is	Consider how best to frame the impact level in order to make it more realistic for partners involved

	other stakeholders) To what extent do changes in the framework conditions influence superordinate long-term results? To what extent is the effectiveness of the development measures positively or negatively influenced by other policy areas, strategies or interests (German ministries, bilateral and multilateral development partners)? What are the consequences of the project? To what extent has the project made an active and systematic contribution to widespread impact? (4 dimensions: relevance, quality, quantity, sustainability; scaling-up approaches: vertical, horizontal, functional or combined)? If not, could there have been potential? Why was the potential not exploited? Referring to the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, ecological, social): How was it ensured that synergies were exploited in the three dimensions? What measures were taken? (-> discussion of interactions in the sense of trade-offs below for unintended results)		project to the impact indicators as plausible and likely. Within the framework of the contribution analysis, the evaluation focused on how the results on the output and outcome levels achieved within the framework of the MFA network contributed to achieving superordinate results as stipulated in the programme objective. According to the stakeholders, the project contributed to the intended superordinate long-term results, the evaluation concludes positive results. The contribution analysis demonstrated that achieving the impact level indicators is perceived as plausible, however, it is questionable whether these indicators are a measurement of progress on the EU accession path. Some partners also pointed out that progress in the EU accession process became unrealistic, and proposed		perceived as plausible, however, it is questionable whether these indicators are a measurement of progress on the EU accession path. Some partners also pointed out that progress in the EU accession process became unrealistic, and proposed different milestones on the impact level such as regional integration as a preliminary step preparing EU accession. 25 out of 30	in the project. Effectively exploit 'German clout' while not creating dependencies of partners In order to impact the identifiers participatory development and good governance (PD/GG-2), it is recommended developing an approach on how to nudge public administrations in the region.

			different milestones on the impact level such as regional integration as a preliminary step preparing EU accession. Project depends on framework conditions in particular EU enlargement policy and the German clout. Three dimensions of sustainability not applicable.			
Unintended superordinate long-term (positive or negative) results have occurred.	Which unintended positive and/or negative results/changes at the level of superordinate results can be observed in the wider sectoral and regional environment of the development measure (e.g. cross-cutting issues, interactions between the three sustainability dimensions)? To what extent is the (positive or negative) contribution of the project plausible? What are the alternative explanations/reasons for the results observed? (e.g. the activities of other stakeholders)	Although unintended effects may add value to the project, the absence of unintended positive results has no implications for the evaluation. Therefore, no indicators is required.			23 out of 30	

No project-related negative results have been observed – and the project responded adequately if any negative results were determined at any time.	Have negative results occurred? To what extent were the risks of negative, unintended, superordinate results identified and assessed in the monitoring system? To what extent were these negative results in the sense of (negative) interactions or trade-offs in the ecological, economic and social dimensions already known during the conception of the project and reflected (e.g. in the project or programme proposal)? Was there a corresponding risk assessment in the TC-measures' proposal? How was the ability to influence these risks originally assessed? To what extent have the project's services caused negative (unintended) results (economic, social, ecological)? Is there any identifiable tension between the ecological, economic and social dimensions? Economically: Impairment of competitiveness, employability, etc. Socially: How should the impact be assessed in terms of distributive results, non-discrimination and universal access to social services and social security systems? To what extent can particularly disadvantaged population groups benefit from the results or have negative results for particularly disadvantaged population groups been created?	Potential project-related negative results are considered in the risk monitoring (see also the respective indicator at the Effectiveness level) The rationale of management decisions based on the identification of potential unintended results is documented and conducive towards the overarching development goal			

	Ecologically: What are the positive or negative environmental impacts of the project? What measures have been taken by the project to counteract the risks/negative interactions? To what extent have the framework conditions for the negative results played a role? How did the project react to this?					

Efficiency = 100 points

Evaluation dimension	Analysis questions	Evaluation indicators	Evaluation results from interviews per stakeholder group	Evaluation results per document analysis, focus groups, observation as stipulated in IR matrix	Conclusions and rating (points)	Recommendations
The project's use of resources is appropriate with regard to the outputs achieved. [Production efficiency: Resources/Services in	To what extent are there deviations between the identified costs and the projected costs? What are the reasons for the identified deviation(s)?[2)] To what extent could the outputs have been maximised with the same amount of resources and under the same framework	Will be analysed in line with the GIZ efficiency tool. The core criteria for the efficiency evaluation are scenario-based instead of measurement based (i.e. relying on counterfactual assumptions regarding alternative resource allocations, instruments uses and methodological	Semi- structured interviews with GIZ stakeholders involved in the project implementation demonstrate a high level of production efficiency. The use of different instruments is assessed as efficient. Increases in efficiency are limited through the absorption capacities of external partners.	Analysis of efficiency tools (as much possible due to imperfections of the tool) and relevant documents i.e. cost obligo overview, operational plans of project, monitoring data demonstrate that funds are used in a efficient manner	Project resources are used efficiently and the GIZ project focuses on increasing efficiency by maximising the use of resources in order to achieve the outputs. Overall rating 66 out of 70.	It is recommended to consider increasing the partner contribution of the project if politically possible in order to increase the efficiency and sustainability of the networks. Synergies between networks would be systematically built in

accordance with the BMZ]	conditions and with the same or better quality (maximum principle)?[3] To what extent could outputs have been maximised by reallocating resources between the outputs?[3] Were the output/resource ratio and alternatives carefully considered during the design and implementation process – and if so, how? For interim evaluations based on the analysis to date: To what extent are further planned expenditures meaningfully distributed among the targeted outputs?	approaches for the maximisation of outputs and outcomes). Therefore, we recommend abstaining from formulating indicators (which are associated with actual measurement) and rely on the guiding questions which are sufficiently evaluative ('to what extent …')	Possibilities of maximising the outputs with the same amount of resources and under the same framework conditions and with the same or better quality are rather limited. The only option could be to increase the contribution of the partners if politically feasible. Reallocation of resources among outputs would not increase the efficiency. The project builds on the predecessor project. Experience and the evaluation of the previous project guided the allocation of resources for this project. The project staff constantly tries to maximise efficiency and the planned expenditure is meaningfully distributed among targeted outputs.			order to increase efficiency

| The project's use of resources is appropriate with regard to achieving the TC-measures' goal (outcome). [Allocation efficiency: Resources/Services in accordance with the BMZ] | To what extent could the outcome have been maximised with the same amount of resources and the same or better quality (maximum principle)?[4] Were the outcome-resources ratio and alternatives carefully considered during the conception and implementation process – and if so, how? Were any scaling-up options considered? [4] To what extent was more impact achieved through synergies and/or leverage of more resources, with the help of other bilateral and multilateral donors and organisations (e.g. Kofi, MSPs)? If so, was the relationship between costs and results appropriate? | | The use of resources to achieve the outcome level is appropriate, but could be improved. Establishing and using synergies between networks could lead to increasing the efficiency on the outcome level. The staff allocation mainly focuses on the output level and omits sufficient resources on the outcome level. The outcome-resource ratio builds on the PEV 2015. Options on scaling-up are limited due to the absorption capacities of partners. Synergies with relevant stakeholders, e.g. RESPA are already established and could be further exploited. | Analysis of efficiency tools (as much possible due to imperfections of the tool) and relevant documents i.e. cost obligo overview, operational plans of project, monitoring data demonstrate that funds are used in a efficient manner | Project resources are used efficiently and the GIZ project focuses on increasing efficiency by maximising the use of resources in order to achieve the outcomes. However, there is room for improvement, in particular, to foster the strategic achievements of the project. Overall rating 26 out of 30 points. | Synergies between networks would be systematically built in order to increase efficiency The strategic work on the outcome level and beyond is crucial for the implementation of the project. Resource allocation should be optimized in order to provide the Team Leader with more time to deal with outcome level issues. It is reco mmended to expand cooperation and synergies with external stakeholders such as RESPA, RCC, EC and European Fund for Development. |

Sustainability = 100 points

Evaluation dimension	Analysis questions	Evaluation indicators	Evaluation results from interviews per stakeholder group	Evaluation results per document analysis, focus groups, observation as stipulated in IR matrix	Conclusions and rating (points)	Recommendations
Prerequisites for ensuring the long-term success of the project: results are anchored in (partner) structures	What has the project done to ensure that the intended effect can be achieved in the medium to long term by the partners themselves (working aid review)? Which advisory contents, approaches, methods and concepts of the project are anchored/institutionalised in the (partner) system? To what extent are they continuously used and/or further developed by the target group and/or implementing partners? To what extent are (organisational, personnel, financial, economic) resources and capacities in the partner country (longer-term) available to ensure the continuation of the results achieved (e.g. multi-	Processes and procedures of the networks are regularly used Concept on future modalities (exist strategy after the project has been completed) is positively received by the partners. Partners are interested in maintaining the networks after the implementation is completed Policies, guidelines, and other relevant documents are	While the partners regularly use the networks to exchange information and practices even direct without GIZ support, the networks are not anchored/institutionalised in the partner systems. (1) There is concept on formalising the networks (exit strategy) which will be further developed in the upcoming period (2). There is a consensus among network focal points that the networks would continue to function on an informal level without GIZ support. These informal networks would be used to exchange information, good	The review of documents, in particular, the sustainability concept confirms the analysis of stakeholder interviews.	Prerequisite for ensuring the long-term success of the project are provided and still can be improved. 36 out of 40 points	Considering the different institutional framework conditions and positions of networks[13] leading to differences in how partners value and perceive the relevant networks, it is recommended to develop tailor-made solutions for all three networks respectively. In order to ensure buy-in and local ownership it is recommended to establish participatory mechanisms, such as working groups or online discussion for a consisting of a number of focal points, which will provide partners with the

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[13] MFA network fully unique without competition, while IPA and EUI networks can be seen as one project among many donor led initiatives in these fields.

	stakeholder partnerships (MSPs)?

To what extent are national structures and accountability mechanisms in place to support the results achieved (e.g. for the implementation and review of Agenda 2030)?

What is the project's exit strategy?

How are the lessons learnt prepared and documented? | available and used by national partners

National structures and mechanisms in place to ensure continuous support to achieved results

Lessons learned and recommendations from previous project integrated in the current project

Previous project results are positively contributing to achieving relevant results/goals as stipulated in the results matrix | practices and share views, however, network members claim to lack capacities to organise network meetings. (3)

Policies, guidelines, and other relevant documents developed within the framework of the project are available and used by national partners (4).

National structures and mechanisms are not in place to ensure continuous support to the achieved results.(5) | | possibility to develop a sustainability concept for the respective network based on their needs, interests and possibilities.

In order to anchor the networks in partner institutions, it is recommended that all relevant partner institutions formally adopt the sustainability concept of the networks.

In terms of substance the sustainability concept should include a regulation on nominating focalpoints. Considering the high turnover of staff, this should be kept simple while ensuring continuity.

Regarding potential financial contributions of partner institutions to maintaining the networks, it is recommended considering introducing a small financial contribution by partners |

						(e.g. 7-15 percent of travel costs) which would be the basis for financial sustainability. It is recommended to include this contribution in the sustainability concept. One key challenge regarding sustainability is the fact that partners only have limited coordination capacities required to maintain an active network. In order to overcome this issue, it should be considered anchoring the networks in existing regional structures, e.g. RCC and RESPA, if possible
Are the results of the project ecologically, socially and economically balanced? Forecast of durability: Results of the	Evaluation of the outcome results with regard to interactions between the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability Which positive or negative intended and unintended results (economic, social, ecological) does the project produce? (Assign intended and	The evaluative judgement will be based on a qualitative analysis of potentially relevant sustainability dimensions and the respective interrelations and	N/A	Document review confirmed lack of evaluation basis.	According to the project documents, the project does not entail an ecological dimension as stipulated in the environmental and climate assessment conducted in the framework of screening of programme	

project are permanent, stable and long-term resilient	unintended results from the effectiveness evaluation to the three sustainability dimensions) Is there any identifiable tension between the ecological, economic and social dimensions? Economically: Impairment of competitiveness, employability, etc. Socially: How should the impact be assessed in terms of distributive results, non-discrimination and universal access to social services and social security systems? To what extent can particularly disadvantaged population groups benefit from the results or have negative results for particularly disadvantaged population groups been created? Ecologically: What are the positive or negative environmental impacts of the project? If negative interactions have been avoided and synergies exploited, how was this ensured? What measures were taken?	possible trade-offs. Since the analysis focuses interdependencies rather than individual, pre-defined variables, we recommend abstaining from formulating indicators and rely on the guiding questions only.			documents, and it is marked with AO-0 regarding its socio-economic impact. Accordingly, this dimension has not been further assessed. 30 out of 30	

Forecast of durability: Results of the project are permanent, stable and long-term resilient	To what extent are the results of the project durable, stable and resilient in the longer-term under the given conditions? What risks and potential are emerging for the long-term protection of the results and how likely are these factors to occur? (Example: Adaptability of target groups and institutions regarding economic dynamism & climate change; particularly disadvantaged groups are able to represent themselves in the long term and their individual countries have the capacity for their participation; changes in behaviour, attitudes and awareness among target groups and institutions that support the sustainability of the project's results, etc.? What has the project done to reduce these risks and exploit potential?	Networks formalisation as basis for durability. The contribution analysis on formalisation of the EUI network will provide insights regarding the potential to achieve durable, stable and longer-term results	Regarding the second evaluation dimension, namely, forecast of durability – results of the project are permanent, stable and long-term resilient, the formalisation of networks - as specific intervention area- is the basis for duarablity of the project results. Part 5.2 Contribution analysis on EUI network assesses the formalisation of one network as basis for the duarability of project results. While informal networks have been established, it will be challenging to maintain a network concept requiring coordination corresponding financial and human resources. Beyond the project's duration, it is likely that the networks will continue to exchange information and share experiences on the EU accession process in an informal set-up.	These findings have been confirmed in the document analysis.	There is a sound foundation for forecast durability which needs to be further exploited. 25 out of 30

Annex 2 List of resources

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WISSEN WAS WIRKT

Leistungsbeschreibung

Zentrale Projektevaluierung des Vorhabens

„Kapazitätsstärkung für EU-Integration und Management der EU-Heranführungshilfe in Südosteuropa/ Strengthening of capacities for EU Integration and IPA Management in South-East Europe'

Inhalt

Abkürzungsverzeichnis

AN	Auftragnehmer
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
DeGEval	Gesellschaft für Evaluation
EU	Europäische Union
GA	Gutachter/-in
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GVR	Gemeinsamen Verfahrensreform
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance/Instrument für Heranführungshilfe
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PN	Projektnummer
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council/Regionaler Kooperationsrat
ReSPA	Regional School of Public Administration

1. Zentrale Projektevaluierungen der GIZ

1.1 Hintergrund und Zielsetzung

Das Evaluierungssystem der GIZ sieht sich mit einer Reihe neuer Herausforderungen konfrontiert: die zunehmende Diversifizierung von Auftrags- und Vorhabenstypen, die zunehmende Komplexität von Durchführungskontexten und Vorhaben, neue Erkenntnisinteressen der Politik (kurzfristige Ergebniserzielung, andere Evaluierungskriterien u. ä.). Hinzu kommen die neuen Evaluierungsanforderungen, die sich aus der Agenda 2030 für Nachhaltige Entwicklung und aus der Gemeinsamen Verfahrensreform (GVR) im Auftragsverfahren mit dem BMZ ergeben. Auch die Anforderungen an die Nutzung von Evaluierungen der GIZ haben sich verändert. „Lernen aus Evaluierungen" bleibt nach wie vor eine wichtige Funktion von Evaluierungen. Die Aufgabe besteht dabei vor allem darin, das von Evaluierungen generierte Wissen zielgerichtet für Entscheidungsfindungsprozesse aufzubereiten. Zum anderen haben sich die Anforderungen an Rechenschaftslegung – und somit an die Qualität und Unabhängigkeit von Evaluierungen und Evaluierungsberichten – in den letzten Jahren deutlich verschärft. Vor diesem Hintergrund hat der Vorstand der GIZ im Dezember 2016 entschieden, das Evaluierungssystem der GIZ grundlegend zu reformieren. Ziele dieser Reform sind vor allem folgende:

- **Wirkungsnachweis verbessern:** Das neue Evaluierungssystem soll die GIZ besser in die Lage versetzen, längerfristige Wirkungen sowie die Nachhaltigkeit und Verankerung der Ansätze in den Partnerstrukturen zu betrachten. Dazu sollen Evaluierungen zu einem Zeitpunkt erfolgen, zu dem Aussagen über Wirkungen und Nachhaltigkeit möglich und sinnvoll sind, und methodisch und prozedural so konzipiert sein, dass sie das leisten können.

- **Glaubwürdigkeit von Evaluierungsergebnissen erhöhen:** Wir wollen die Glaubwürdigkeit unserer Evaluierungsergebnisse weiter erhöhen, indem wir zum einen die Unabhängigkeit der Projektevaluierungen stärken. Die Projektevaluierungen werden daher zukünftig von der Stabsstelle Evaluierung gesteuert und verantwortet, die organisatorisch direkt dem Vorstand untersteht und vom operativen Geschäft getrennt ist. Die Durchführung erfolgt durch spezialisierte externe Evaluatorinnen und Evaluatoren. Die Evaluierungen werden nach national und international gültigen Standards und Qualitätskriterien durchgeführt und die Evaluierungsberichte werden veröffentlicht.

- **Projektevaluierungen auf neue Herausforderungen ausrichten:** Zentrale Projektevaluierungen sollen der zunehmenden Komplexität von Vorhaben und Durchführungskontexten, den erhöhten Anforderungen an Rechenschaftslegung sowie den evaluativen Herausforderungen aus der Agenda 2030 und der GVR Rechnung tragen.

1.2 Gestaltung der Durchführung des mehrjährigen Evaluierungsportfolios

Gegenstand der zentralen Projektevaluierungen sind regelmäßig Vorhaben, die die GIZ im Auftrag des BMZ durchführt. Zentrale Projektevaluierungen beinhalten den kritischen analytischen Rückblick auf die Wirkungen und die Implementierung eines Vorhabens. Sie können zu unterschiedlichen Zeitpunkten stattfinden. Vorhaben, die enden, werden rund 8 Monate nach Ende der meist 3-jährigen Laufzeit evaluiert (Schlussevaluierung). Vorhaben mit geplanten Folgemaßnahmen werden auch während der Laufzeit evaluiert (Zwischenevaluierung) – je nach „intended use" (Zulieferung für Planung des Folgeauftrags, Vorhabensteuerung, Berichterstattung an den Auftraggeber, Strategische Reflexion). Sowohl bei den Zwischen- als auch bei den Schlussevaluierungen werden - wenn inhaltlich sinnvoll - Vorgängervorhaben mitbetrachtet, um Aussagen über längerfristige Wirkungen und Nachhaltigkeit treffen zu können.
Im BMZ-Geschäft werden alle Vorhaben über 3,0 Mio. EUR Auftragswert in das Evaluierungsverfahren standardmäßig einbezogen. Die Auswahl der zu evaluierenden Vorhaben erfolgt in einem zweistufigen Verfahren. In einem ersten Schritt werden die zu evaluierenden Vorhaben über eine regional geschichtete Zufallsstichprobe ausgewählt. In einem zweiten Schritt wird die Stichprobe durch Evaluierungen ergänzt, die nach spezifischen Erkenntnisinteressen ausgewählt werden (kriterienbasierte Auswahl).

Insgesamt soll mittelfristig für die Grundgesamtheit aller Vorhaben über 3,0 Mio. EUR Auftragswert im BMZ-

Geschäft ein Deckungsgrad an Projektevaluierungen zwischen 30% und 50% gewährleistet werden. Im BMZ-Geschäft werden so langfristig jährlich ca. 100 zentrale Projektevaluierungen durchgeführt werden. Die Gesamtzahl der evaluierten Vorhaben soll groß genug sein, um eine repräsentative Aussage hinsichtlich der Bewertung der OECD/DAC-Kriterien aller Vorhaben der Grundgesamtheit treffen zu können.

Die Durchführung des ersten Evaluierungsportfolios wird EU-weit ausgeschrieben. Ziel sind Rahmenvereinbarungen, mit sektorfachlich und regional strukturierten Pools von Evaluatoren/-innen, die die Evaluierungen aus dieser Stichprobe bis 2020 durchführen. Da mit dem Abschluss des Vergabeverfahrens erst im zweiten Quartal 2018 gerechnet werden kann, werden die ersten Pilotevaluierungen für Ende 2017 und Anfang 2018 als einzelne Leistungen im Wettbewerb nach Short-list bzw. E-tender-Verfahren ausgeschrieben.

2. Gegenstand und Ziel der Evaluierung

2.1 Projektbeschreibung und Gegenstand der Evaluierung

Die Länder Südosteuropas - Albanien, Bosnien und Herzegowina, Kosovo, Mazedonien, Montenegro und Serbien - haben die Mitgliedschaft in der EU als eine der obersten Prioritäten definiert. Zwar befinden sie sich in unterschiedlichen Stadien der Annäherung, teilen aber viele der **Herausforderungen bei Reformen in politischen und wirtschaftlichen Bereichen sowie in der öffentlichen Verwaltung**. Die Europäische Kommission hat die **regionale Zusammenarbeit in Südosteuropa** ist als eine wichtige Bedingung für einen möglichen EU-Beitritt festgelegt. In den vergangenen Jahren sind in der regionalen Zusammenarbeit bereits Verbesserungen in Bezug auf die wirtschaftliche und soziale Entwicklung, Infrastruktur und Energie, Justiz, sowie die Medien- und Sicherheitszusammenarbeit zu verzeichnen. Allerdings fehlt es weiterhin sowohl an der Bereitschaft als auch an notwendigen Umsetzungskapazitäten für regionales Lernen der Mitarbeiter/innen in den relevanten Behörden für die **Koordinierung und Steuerung des EU-Annäherungsprozesses**. Regionales Lernen und die Steuerung der Prozesse im Hinblick auf die EU-Annäherung erfolgen in den zuständigen Stellen der Länder Südosteuropas noch nicht ausreichend **(Kernproblem).**

Das **Modulziel** lautet daher: Regionales Lernen der zuständigen Stellen in Bezug auf die nationale Steuerung des EU-Annäherungsprozesses in Südosteuropa ist verbessert.
Im Handlungsfeld 1 „Regionaler Dialog zur EU-Annäherung der Außenministerien" wird das Vorhaben das Netzwerk der Außenministerien koordinieren, beraten und unterstützen. Das Vorhaben wird gemeinsam mit den Kontaktstellen (sog. *Focal Points)* regionale Lern- und Austauschformate konzipieren, welche den Bedarf der Außenministerien widerspiegeln und für die die Teilnehmenden nach gemeinsam vereinbarten Profilen benannt werden. Im Handlungsfeld 2 „Kapazitäten der EU-Integrationsbehörden zur Steuerung des EU-Annäherungsprozesses" wird das Netzwerk der EU-Integrationsbehörden durch das Vorhaben in der Steuerung und Koordination beraten und unterstützt. Regionale Lernformate beziehen sich sowohl auf Steuerungs- und Koordinierungsaufgaben der Integrationsbehörden, als auch auf einzelne Kapitel des EU-Acquis. Im Handlungsfeld 3 „Nutzung der Mittel der EU-Heranführungshilfe (*Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance*, IPA) im Hinblick auf die EU-Annäherung" unterstützt das Vorhaben den Aufbau eines neuen Netzwerks der IPA-Strukturen. Durch dieses Netzwerk wird der Austausch von Wissen und Erfahrungen zu strategischer Planung, institutionellen Rahmenbedingungen, dezentralem Finanzmanagement und zu Verfahren im Bereich Monitoring und Evaluierung in ausgewählten Aspekten vorangebracht; insbesondere sind Maßnahmen in den Bereichen strategische Programmierung sowie Monitoring geplant. Beide Bereiche legen den Grundstein für ein strategisches Management von IPA-Mitteln auf Programmebene in der Förderperiode 2014-2020. Das Vorhaben ist in den Beitrittsländern in Südosteuropa tätig und Teil des EZ Programms „Stärkung des Prozesses der EU-Annäherung in Südosteuropa". Beratungs- und Trainingsmaßnahmen werden nach dem Rotationsprinzip in den Ländern der Netzwerkpartner durchgeführt. Politischer Träger ist der Regionale Kooperationsrat (*Regional Cooperation Council,* RCC*).*
Das Vorhaben hat eine Laufzeit von drei Jahren (01/2016 bis 12/2018) mit Kosten des deutschen TZ-Beitrags von bis zu 3.500.000 EUR.

Gegenstand der Evaluierung ist das TZ-Modul (PN 2015.2056.8) mit der Laufzeit von 01/2016 bis 12/2018. In die Betrachtung einbezogen werden soll – sofern inhaltlich zweckmäßig – das Vorgängermodul PN 2012.2261.1 (08/2012 – 12/2015), um Aussagen über längerfristige Wirkungen und Nachhaltigkeit des Vorhabens treffen zu können.

2.2 Ziel der Evaluierung

Die Nutzungsorientierung ist eine wesentliche Säule der Evaluierungsarbeit in der GIZ. Die zentralen Projektevaluierungen betten sich darin ein und sollen Entscheidungsfindung unterstützen:

- Evaluierungsprozesse und -ergebnisse tragen dazu bei, die Entscheidungskompetenz von Entscheidungsträgern und weiteren Change Agents zu stärken;
- dies führt zu Entscheidungen, die entweder öffentliche Politiken oder die Ausgestaltung und Implementierung von GIZ-Vorhaben oder GIZ-Unternehmensstrategien verbessern;
- diese Verbesserungen führen wiederum zu einer verbesserten Leistungserbringung der Partner für ihre eigenen Bürger/-innen, der GIZ für ihre Partner und Zielgruppen sowie für ihre Auftraggeber und Mitarbeiter/-innen;
- dadurch wird schließlich die Wirksamkeit öffentlicher Politiken und GIZ-Vorhaben für die Zielgruppen sowie die Partner-, Kunden- und Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit erhöht.

Mit der Evaluierung soll der Erfolg des aktuellen Moduls (PN 2015.2056.8) bewertet werden. Dies soll auf der Grundlage der OECD-DAC-Kriterien – gestützt auf Zahlen, Daten und Fakten – und im Rahmen eines vorgegebenen Benotungssystems erfolgen. Darüber hinaus soll, wie unter 2.1. bereits angeführt, - sofern inhaltlich zweckmäßig - hinsichtlich Aussagen über längerfristige Wirkungen und Nachhaltigkeit des Vorhabens auch das Vorgängermodul mit betrachtet werden.

Da es sich hier um eine Zwischenevaluierung handelt, soll die Evaluierung darüber hinaus Hinweise für die Folgemaßnahmen erbringen, die in die Prüfung der Folgemaßnahme einfließen können.

In einem Auftaktgespräch des AN mit der Stabsstelle Evaluierung und dem/der AV des Vorhabens und ggf. Partner wird das Erkenntnisinteresse präzisiert und der Gegenstand der Evaluierung gemeinsam definiert.

3. Prozess und Leistungen

3.1 Verantwortlichkeiten

Verantwortlich für die Planung und Steuerung des Evaluierungsportfolios der zentralen Projektevaluierungen ist die Stabsstelle Evaluierung. Der Auftragnehmer (im Folgenden AN) ist verantwortlich für die Vorbereitung, Durchführung, Qualitätssicherung / Backstopping und Berichterstattung der Einzelevaluierung unter Berücksichtigung der unter 4. angeführten Leistungsanforderungen. Das Evaluierungsteam besteht immer aus einem Zweier-Team (internationale/r + lokale/r Gutachter/in). Punktuell unterstützt die GIZ in den einzelnen Prozessschritten.

Die Unterstützung durch das Projekt oder Landesbüro vor Ort umfasst:

- Bereitstellung relevanter Dokumente
- Empfehlung für ein gut gelegenes Hotel
- Identifikation relevanter Interviewpersonen + Zulieferung von Kontaktdaten und ggf. Unterstützung bei der Kontaktherstellung
- Wenn vor Ort kein Fahrer des Projekts abkömmlich sein sollte, Kontaktherstellung zu einem geeigneten Fahrdienst /Taxiunternehmen

Der Ablauf der Evaluierung inkl. Rollenklärung ist der folgendes Prozessübersicht zu entnehmen. Das Prozesschart basiert auf den Erfahrungen der Stabsstelle Evaluierung mit dem Programm der Unabhängigen Evaluierungen sowie den dezentralen Projektevaluierungen und soll nun im Rahmen der zentralen Projektevaluierungen geprüft und bei Bedarf schrittweise angepasst werden. Hierfür ist zum Abschluss der Evaluierung eine gemeinsame Auswertung mit dem AN vorgesehen.

3.2 Prozessübersicht zentrale Projektevaluierung

Die u.a. Leistungen sind im Zeitraum vom 14.09.2017-31.01.2018 zu erbringen. Die Vor-Ort-Mission der Evaluierung wird in der Region Südosteuropa, voraussichtlich in Serbien, Albanien, Kosovo, Mazedonien, Montenegro und ggf. in Belgien stattfinden.

Arbeitsschritt	Wann	Verantwortlich	Mitwirkend	Zu informieren
Vorklärungen inkl. Abstimmung Zeitpunkt der Evaluierung	Jul 2017	Sts Eval.	AV, Partner	
Bereitstellung Dokumente	Bis 15. Sep 2017 (KW 37)	AV/Projektteam (Projektdokumente), Sts Eval. (Evaluier-ungsdokumente)		

Auftragsklärung inkl. Rollenklärung GA-Team	Mitte Sep 2017	Sts Eval.	Int. GA, lokal. GA	
Auftaktgespräch (bei Bedarf) zwecks Rollenklärung und Erkenntnisinteresse	Mitte Sep 2017	Sts Eval.	AV, Partner, Int. GA, lokal GA	
Informationsschreiben zum Start der Evaluierung an zentrale Stakeholder (inkl. Informationen zu Prozess und Rollen)	Anfang/Mitte Sep 2017	Sts Eval.		AL, LD bzw. GL, AV, Partner, BMZ
Desk Study inkl. erster inhaltlicher Vorklärung in GIZ	Ende Sep 2017 (KW 38 + 39)	Int. GA	GIZ-MA	
Vor-Ort-Check **- Datenlage (u.a. WoM)** **- Partnersysteme** **- Erkenntnisinteresse der Partner**	Ende Sep 2017 (KW 39)	Lok. GA	AV, Partner	
Reisevorbereitung **(z.T. erst nach IR möglich)**	Okt/Nov 2017	Int. GA	Lok GA, AV/ Projektteam, (Landesbüro)	
Erstellung Entwurf Inception Report (IR) (entsprechend GIZ Vorgaben und Formatvorlage, Berichtssprache: Englisch)	Abgabe IR 09. Okt 2017	Int. GA	Lok. GA	
Qualitätsprüfung IR	Rückmeldung an AN: 23.Okt 2017	Sts Eval.	AV/Partner (bzgl. sachl. Richtigkeit)	
Überarbeitung IR	Ende Okt 2017 (KW 43)	Int. GA	(Lok. GA)	
Abnahme IR	Anfang Nov 2017 (KW 44)	Sts Eval.		BMZ
Erstellung und Abstimmung Interviewplan	Okt/Nov 2017 (KW 41-45)	Int. & lok. GA	AV, Partner	
Durchführung der Mission	Vorzugsweise 13.-24. Nov (KW 46 + 47) (ggf. alternativ 06.-17. Nov)	Int. GA, Lok. GA		

Auftaktgespräche /Briefing vor Ort	Vorauss. 13. Nov. 2017 (abh. von Missionsbeginn)	Int. GA, Lok. GA	AV/Projektteam, LD, Partner, Botschaft	
Dokumentation der vorläufigen Ergebnisse für Abschlusspräsentation vor Ort (entsprechend GIZ-Vorlage)	Mitte November (KW 47)	Int. GA, Lok. GA		
Debriefing / Abschlussgespräche vor Ort	Mitte November (KW 47)		AV/Projektteam, LD, Partner, Botschaft	
Auswertung, Analyse und Berichtslegung	Ende Nov/ Anfang Dez (KW 48-50)	Int. GA	Lok. GA	
Berichtslegung (entsprechend GIZ Vorgaben und Formatvorlage, Berichtssprache: Englisch)	Abgabe: 15. Dez 2017	Int. GA	(Lok. GA)	
Qualitätsprüfung Evaluierungsbericht	Rückmeldung an AN: Anfang Jan 2018 (KW 1-2)	Sts Eval.	AV/Partner (bzgl. sachl. Richtigkeit)	
Überarbeitung Evaluierungsbericht (inkl. sprachl.- redaktioneller Qualitätssicherung)	Mitte Jan 2018 (KW 3)	Int. GA	(Lok. GA)	
Abnahme Evaluierungsbericht	Ende Jan 2018 (KW 4)	Sts Eval.		
Abschlussgespräch per Skype (gemeinsame Auswertung der Evaluierung)	Ende Jan 2018 (KW 4)	Sts Eval., Int. GA	(Lok. GA)	AV
Veröffentlichung des Evaluierungsberichts	Feb 2018	Sts Eval.		GA, AV, Partner

4. Spezifische Leistungsanforderungen

Die Leistungen sind, wie oben unter 3.2. bereits angeführt, im Zeitraum vom 14.09.2017 bis zum 31.01.2018 zu erbringen. Der Evaluierungsbericht ist bis zum 15.12.2017 in Englischer Sprache abzugeben, eine evtl. Überarbeitung auf Basis der Rückmeldung des AG muss bis KW 3 2018 erfolgen (für den detaillierten Ablauf siehe die Prozessübersicht unter 3.2.).

4.1 Qualitätsanforderungen der zentralen Projektevaluierungen

Die GIZ orientiert sich bei ihren Evaluierungen an den Standards für Evaluation der Gesellschaft für Evaluation (DeGEval): Nützlichkeit, Durchführbarkeit, Fairness und Genauigkeit sowie den Qualitätsstandards für die Entwicklungsevaluierung des OECD-DAC. Als Basis für die Entwicklung von Instrumenten zur Qualitätssicherung formuliert die Stabsstelle Evaluierung Qualitätsstandards für die Prozessqualität, die methodische Qualität und die Produktqualität.

Die **Nützlichkeit** einer Evaluierung gewährleistet, dass das Erkenntnisinteresse der Nutzer/-innen der Evaluierung berücksichtigt wird und diesen die gewünschte Information bereitgestellt wird.

- Identifizierung der Beteiligten und Betroffenen: Die am Evaluierungsgegenstand beteiligten oder von ihm betroffenen Personen bzw. Personengruppen sollen identifiziert werden, damit deren Interessen geklärt und so weit wie möglich bei der Anlage der Evaluation berücksichtigt werden können.
- Klärung der Evaluationszwecke: Es soll deutlich geklärt sein, welche Zwecke mit der Evaluierung verfolgt werden, so dass die Beteiligten und Betroffenen Position dazu beziehen können und das Evaluierungsteam einen klaren Arbeitsauftrag verfolgen kann.
- Glaubwürdigkeit und Kompetenz des Evaluators / der Evaluatorin: Wer Evaluierungen durchführt, soll persönlich glaubwürdig sowie methodisch und fachlich kompetent sein, damit bei den Evaluierungsergebnissen ein Höchstmaß an Glaubwürdigkeit und Akzeptanz erreicht wird.
- Auswahl und Umfang der Informationen: Auswahl und Umfang der erfassten Informationen sollen die Behandlung der zu untersuchenden Fragestellungen zum Evaluierungsgegenstand ermöglichen und gleichzeitig den Informationsbedarf des Auftraggebers und anderer Adressaten und Adressatinnen berücksichtigen.
- Transparenz von Werten: Die Perspektiven und Annahmen der Beteiligten und Betroffenen, auf denen die Evaluierung und die Interpretation der Ergebnisse beruhen, sollen so beschrieben werden, dass die Grundlagen der Bewertungen klar ersichtlich sind.
- Vollständigkeit und Klarheit der Berichterstattung: Evaluierungsberichte sollen alle wesentlichen Informationen zur Verfügung stellen, leicht zu verstehen und nachvollziehbar sein.
- Rechtzeitigkeit der Evaluierung: Evaluierungsvorhaben sollen so rechtzeitig begonnen und abgeschlossen werden, dass ihre Ergebnisse in anstehende Entscheidungsprozesse bzw. Verbesserungsprozesse einfließen können.
- Nutzung und Nutzen der Evaluierung: Planung, Durchführung und Berichterstattung einer Evaluierung sollen die Beteiligten und Betroffenen dazu ermuntern, die Evaluierung aufmerksam zur Kenntnis zu nehmen und ihre Ergebnisse zu nutzen.

Die **Prozessqualität** entspricht den DeGEval Standards Durchführbarkeit und Fairness. Die Art und Weise, wie der Prozess einer Evaluierung gestaltet wird, ist für die Nutzung der Evaluierung entscheidend. Um die Evaluierung so nützlich wie möglich für Entscheidungsprozesse zu gestalten, sollten folgende Standards erfüllt werden:

- Angemessene Verfahren: Evaluierungsverfahren, einschließlich der Verfahren zur Beschaffung notwendiger Informationen, sollen so gewählt werden, dass Belastungen des Evaluierungsgegenstandes bzw. der Beteiligten und Betroffenen in einem angemessenen Verhältnis zum erwarteten Nutzen der Evaluation stehen.
- Diplomatisches Vorgehen: Evaluierungen sollen so geplant und durchgeführt werden, dass eine möglichst hohe Akzeptanz der verschiedenen Beteiligten und Betroffenen in Bezug auf Vorgehen und Ergebnisse der Evaluation erreicht werden kann.
- Effizienz von Evaluierung: Der Aufwand für Evaluierung soll in einem angemessenen Verhältnis zum Nutzen der Evaluierung stehen.
- Formale Vereinbarungen: Die Pflichten der Vertragsparteien einer Evaluierung (was, wie, von wem, wann getan werden soll) sollen schriftlich festgehalten werden, damit die Parteien verpflichtet sind, alle Bedingungen dieser Vereinbarung zu erfüllen oder aber diese neu auszuhandeln.
- Schutz individueller Rechte: Evaluierungen sollen so geplant und durchgeführt werden, dass Sicherheit, Würde und Rechte der in eine Evaluierung einbezogenen Personen geschützt werden.
- Vollständige und faire Überprüfung: Evaluierungen sollen die Stärken und die Schwächen des Evaluierungsgegenstandes möglichst vollständig und fair überprüfen und darstellen, so dass die Stärken weiter ausgebaut und die Schwachpunkte behandelt werden können.

- Unparteiische Durchführung und Berichterstattung: Die Evaluierung soll unterschiedliche Sichtweisen von Beteiligten und Betroffenen auf Gegenstand und Ergebnisse der Evaluierung deutlich machen. Berichte sollen ebenso wie der gesamte Evaluierungsprozess die unparteiische Position des Evaluierungsteams erkennen lassen. Bewertungen sollen fair und möglichst frei von persönlichen Gefühlen getroffen werden.
- Offenlegung der Ergebnisse: Die Evaluierungsergebnisse sollen allen Beteiligten und Betroffenen soweit wie möglich zugänglich gemacht werden.

Die **methodische Qualität** einer Evaluierung bezieht sich auf die Anwendung der Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung zur Datenerhebung und -auswertung und entspricht dem DeGEval Kriterium der Genauigkeit.

- Beschreibung des Evaluierungsgegenstandes: Der Evaluierungsgegenstand soll klar und genau beschrieben und dokumentiert werden, so dass er eindeutig identifiziert werden kann.
- Kontextanalyse: Der Kontext des Evaluierungsgegenstandes soll ausreichend detailliert untersucht und analysiert werden.
- Beschreibung von Zwecken und Vorgehen: Gegenstand, Zwecke, Fragestellungen und Vorgehen der Evaluierung, einschließlich der angewandten Methoden, sollen genau dokumentiert und beschrieben werden, so dass sie identifiziert und eingeschätzt werden können.
- Angabe von Informationsquellen: Die im Rahmen einer Evaluierung genutzten Informationsquellen sollen hinreichend genau dokumentiert werden, damit die Verlässlichkeit und Angemessenheit der Informationen eingeschätzt werden kann.
- Valide und reliable Informationen[14]: Die Verfahren zur Gewinnung von Daten sollen so gewählt oder entwickelt und dann eingesetzt werden, dass die Zuverlässigkeit der gewonnenen Daten und ihre Gültigkeit bezogen auf die Beantwortung der Evaluierungsfragestellungen nach fachlichen Maßstäben sichergestellt sind. Die fachlichen Maßstäbe sollen sich an den Gütekriterien der empirischen Sozialforschung orientieren.
- Systematische Fehlerprüfung: Die in einer Evaluierung gesammelten, aufbereiteten, analysierten und präsentierten Informationen sollen systematisch auf Fehler geprüft werden.
- Analyse qualitativer und quantitativer Informationen: Qualitative und quantitative Informationen einer Evaluierung sollen nach fachlichen Maßstäben angemessen und systematisch analysiert werden, damit die Fragestellungen der Evaluierung effektiv beantwortet werden können.
- Begründete Schlussfolgerungen: Die in einer Evaluierung gezogenen Folgerungen sollen aus Ergebnissen hergeleitet werden, damit die Adressatinnen und Adressaten diese nachvollziehen können.

4.2 Profil der Gutachter

- Evaluierungserfahrung
- Erfahrung mit komplexen Evaluierungsdesigns
- Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungsmethoden (quant./qualitat. und partizipative Methoden)
- Sektorkenntnisse und -erfahrung: Prozesse der EU-Annäherung/EU-Integration, regionale Zusammenarbeit in Südosteuropa, insbesondere Management/Nutzung von IPA (Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance/Instrument für Heranführungshilfe), Verwaltungsreformen
- Kenntnisse der Funktionsweise von regionalen Organisationen (z.B. RCC, ReSPA) sowie anderen regionalen Kooperationsinstrumenten (multi beneficiary)
- Erfahrungen mit der GIZ
- Regionalerfahrung/Landeskenntnisse in Südosteuropa (Albanien, Bosnien und Herzegowina, Kosovo, Mazedonien, Montenegro und Serbien)
- Erfahrung mit Anwendung / Bewertung der OECD-DAC Kriterien
- Sprachkenntnisse: Englisch, Deutsch

Wie oben bereits angeführt, soll die Evaluierung durch ein Gutachterteam (international/regional) durchgeführt werden. Zum Zeitpunkt des Angebots muss der/die regionale Gutachter/-in noch nicht feststehen. Für die Bewertung des Angebots wird somit lediglich das Profil der/des internationalen Gutachters/-in berücksichtigt. Für den/die regionale/n Gutachter/-in gelten dieselben, o.a. Profilanforderungen bis auf die Deutschkenntnisse. Wie die Zusammenarbeit und Arbeitsteilung erfolgen soll, ist im Angebot darzulegen (siehe hierzu die

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[14] D. h. gesicherte und verlässliche Informationen

Vorgaben unter 5. Umfang und Inhalt des abzugebenden Angebots). Beide Gutachter/-innen dürfen aus Gründen der Unabhängigkeit weder an der Konzeption, Planung, Implementierung, Beratung oder Evaluierung des Vorhabens beteiligt gewesen sein.

4.3 Methodisches Vorgehen

Bei den zentralen Projektevaluierungen genügt es in der Regel, als Grundlage einer glaubwürdigen Rechenschaftslegung den Beitrag des betrachteten Vorhabens zur Zielerreichung *(Kontribution)* möglichst robust zu erfassen. Es geht darum, eine plausible Beziehung zwischen Vorhaben und Wirkungen aufzuzeigen, also durch methodische und Datentriangulation hinreichende Belege dafür zu sammeln, dass die beobachteten intendierten Wirkungen höchstwahrscheinlich auf das Vorhaben zurückzuführen sind. Neben der Erfassung des Projektbeitrags sollen das Verständnis und das Wissen darüber erhöht werden, *was funktioniert und was nicht*, um auf dieser Basis fundierte Entscheidungen über die zukünftige Ausrichtung des Vorhabens treffen zu können.

Um in den zentralen Projektevaluierungen einen robusten Wirkungsnachweis zu ermöglichen, gibt die GIZ einen theoriebasierten Evaluierungsansatz vor. Theoriebasierte Ansätze wie beispielsweise Realist Evaluation, Process Tracing und die Kontributionsanalyse zeichnen sich durch folgende methodischen Elemente aus:

- Ein *Wirkungsmodell*, das bei der GIZ im Projektvorschlag enthalten ist und Erwartungen an die Ursache-Wirkungs-Beziehungen des Vorhabens visualisiert sowie Pfade von den Inputs über Aktivitäten und Outputs hin zu den angestrebten Wirkungen aufzeigt.

- Eine auf dem Wirkungsmodell basierende *Theory of Change*, die *Wirkungshypothesen* und ggf. *Mechanismen* zur Erläuterung der im Wirkungsmodell hinterlegten Ursache-Wirkungs-Beziehungen formuliert, die in der Evaluierung geprüft und bewertet werden können. Dabei sind auch mögliche Risiken bei der Implementierung des Vorhabens zu berücksichtigen.

- Eine *Kontributionsgeschichte*, die auf der Grundlage belastbarer, nachvollziehbarer und glaubhafter Evidenz die beobachteten Veränderungen und den Wirkungsbeitrag des untersuchten Vorhabens aufzeigt. Dafür müssen auch alternative Erklärungsansätze (beispielsweise Kontextfaktoren oder Maßnahmen Dritter) analysiert und die *Theory of Change* ggf. angepasst werden.

In den zentralen Projektevaluierungen sollen vornehmlich theoriebasierte Evaluierungsdesigns ausgewählt werden, die auf das Erkenntnisinteresse und den Evaluierungsgegenstand abgestimmt sind. Auf der Grundlage des Wirkungsmodells und des WoM der GIZ können die im Angebot formulierten Indikatoren und im Wirkungsmodell hinterlegten Wirkungshypothesen als Grundlage der Bewertung herangezogen und auf ihre Plausibilität hin überprüft werden. Bei der Datenerhebung kommen angemessene quantitative und qualitative Methoden zum Einsatz, beispielsweise Dokumentenanalyse, explorative Einzel- und Gruppeninterviews sowie standardisierte Onlinebefragungen. In Ergänzung zur theoriebasierten Vorgehensweise müssen zusätzliche Methoden zur Erfassung nicht intendierter Wirkungen sowie zur Bewertung der Effizienz eingesetzt werden.

4.4 Partizipatives Vorgehen

Die Partnerorientierung stellt ein wichtiges Charakteristikum der zentralen Projektevaluierungen dar. Dies spiegelt sich in den verschiedenen Phasen der Projektevaluierung und im Evaluierungsmanagement wider (bspw. durch die Verankerung des Erkenntnisinteresse der Partner in den ToR, Briefing zu Beginn der Evaluierung vor Ort, Erfassung der Partnerperspektive, Debriefing).

5. Umfang und Inhalt des abzugebenden Angebots

Die Stabsstelle Evaluierung möchte sicherstellen, dass die Auswahl der Gutachter/-in konform mit der notwendigen Unabhängigkeit dieser ist. Nach Definition der Stabstelle Evaluierung trifft dies auf alle Gutachter/-innen zu, welche nicht an der Konzeption, Planung, Implementierung, Beratung oder Evaluierung des Vorhabens beteiligt waren. Es werden nur solche Angebote in der Auswertung berücksichtigt, welche dem Kriterium der Unabhängigkeit in vollem Maße entsprechen. Ist das Kriterium nicht erfüllt, führt dies

zum Ausschluss des Bieters aus dem Wettbewerb.

Des Weiteren sieht das Evaluierungsdesign vor, das angebotene Know-How der / des AN durch weitere Expertise und regionale Erfahrung eines / einer regionalen Gutachter/-in zu ergänzen. Die Auswahl und Einbindung des/der regionalen Gutachter/-in liegt in der Verantwortung des/der AN.

Das abzugebende Angebot sollte folgende Aspekte umfassen und den Umfang von drei bis fünf Seiten (exklusive CV) nicht überschreiten:

- Skizzierung eines methodisch anspruchsvollen Vorgehens inklusive eines theoriebasierten Ansatzes. Sowohl das Design als auch die Methoden der Datenerhebung sollten angemessen dargestellt werden. Die Stabsstelle Evaluierung möchte in Zukunft vermehrt kontributionsanalytische Ansätze in den Projektevaluierungen verfolgen. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Möglichkeit diesen Ansatz umzusetzen wird in der Auswertung positiv berücksichtigt.
- Darlegung des Auswahlprozesses des/der lokalen Gutachter/-in und Arbeitsteilung mit diesem/dieser.
- Erfahrung in der deutschen und internationalen EZ/IZ, insbesondere mit der GIZ bzw. deren Vorgängerorganisationen
- Umfang und Qualität der Evaluierungserfahrung
- Sektorkenntnis und –erfahrung bzw. andere Kenntnisse und Erfahrungen, die für die Bewertung des Vorhabens relevant ist
- Auslandserfahrung (als GA oder Langzeit- bzw. Kurzzeitfachkraft) in der Region
- Sprachkompetenz
- Referenzen

Bitte verwenden Sie die CV-Formatvorlage, die Sie im Anhang an diese Ausschreibung finden.

6. Mengengerüst

Das Mengengerüst sollte insgesamt 64 FKT nicht überschreiten
- Inceptionphase bis zu 20 FKT
- Durchführung der Mission vor Ort inkl. Vorbereitung und Reisetage bis zu 28 FKT
- Auswertung und Berichtslegung bis zu FKT 16

Das Verhältnis der FKT von internationale/r Fachkraft und regionaler Fachkraft sollen sich an dem folgenden Verhältnis orientieren:
Internationale Fachkraft bis zu 43 FKT (inkl. evtl. Reisetage)
Regionale Fachkraft bis zu 21 FKT (inkl. Reisetage)

Wie unter 4.2 aufgeführt, muss zum Zeitpunkt des Angebots der/die regionale Gutachter/-in noch nicht feststehen. Bitte nehmen Sie diese Position als Budget in Höhe von 15.000 Euro unter "weitere Kosten" in das Preisblatt auf.
Reisekosten
Im Finanziellen Angebot sollen die Reisekosten nach Brüssel sowie voraussichtlich nach Belgrad (pauschal) für die Internationale Fachkraft enthalten sein. Reisen in bis zu vier weitere Länder innerhalb der Region Südosteuropa, voraussichtlich Albanien, Kosovo, Mazedonien, Montenegro, sind mit 1.000,- Euro zu kalkulieren (Erstattung gegen Nachweis). Zusätzlich sind Übernachtungskosten und Tagegelder zu kalkulieren.

Die Beauftragung des / der regionale/n Gutachter/in hat durch den AN nach Vertragsschluss bis spätestens zum 14.09.2017 zu erfolgen
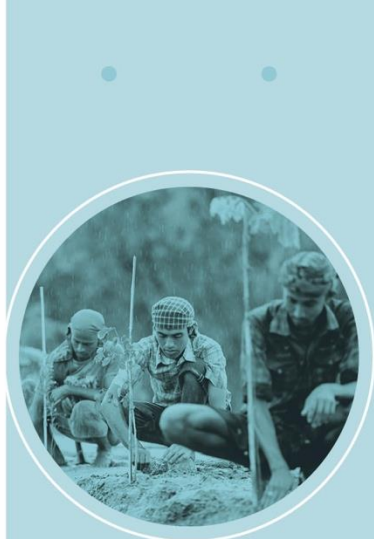
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