



IOB Protocol 2019

Policy and Operations Evaluation Department

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Mandate



Remit



Activities



Independence



**Monitoring and
implementations of
recommendations**



Mandate



- IOB enhances knowledge about the implementation and impact of Dutch foreign policy.
- IOB carries out policy and implementation evaluations in all policy areas that fall within the **Homogenous Budget for International Cooperation (Homogene Groep Internationale Samenwerking, HGIS)**.
- IOB is independent in terms of content.
- IOB advises on the **evaluation programming** and the carrying out of evaluations that fall under the responsibility of the policy departments and diplomatic missions

> **Homogenous Budget for International Cooperation.** *The Homogenous Budget for International Cooperation (HGIS) consolidates the foreign policy expenditures of various ministries, includes the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

> **Evaluation programming.** *IOB works with a multi-annual programming plan for evaluations, policy reviews and other studies. This plan is updated at least once a year.*



Remit



- Carry out **high-quality evaluations** for learning and accountability purposes.
- Ensure a **balanced evaluation programming** in the field of foreign policy.
- Help to enhance the quality of evaluations carried out by, or on behalf of, policy departments and implementing organisations, institutions subsidised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and multilateral organisations.
- **Promote knowledge and disseminate evaluation results.**
- Advise on current and new policy based on (policy) evaluations.

High-quality evaluations

IOB evaluation processes and reports are always supervised by IOB **internal peer reviewers** and by an external reference group. The external reference group advises the director of IOB on the quality of the research. The group consists of three external experts in the field, in addition to representatives of the policy departments and/or implementing organisations involved in the research.

> **Internal peer reviewers.** *Internal peer reviewers are IOB researchers who contribute to the internal quality control of the progress of the evaluation process and the quality of reports.*



Remit



The reference group meets at least three times at key moments: during discussions about the **Terms of Reference**, the sub studies and the draft final report. Minutes are drafted of each reference group meeting, which are submitted to participants for approval.

> **Terms of Reference.** Research proposal.

Balanced evaluation programming

Considerations for programming

The Order on Periodic Evaluation and Policy Information (Regeling periodiek evaluatieonderzoek, RPE) requires each policy area to be periodically subjected to a policy review or policy evaluation at the level of operational objectives. The current evaluation programming distinguishes between three types of evaluation: **policy reviews (policy evaluations)**, **ex-post impact studies** and **other evaluation studies**. Policy reviews and ex-post impact studies fall under the RPE.

- > **Policy reviews.** Research into the effectiveness and efficiency of a substantial, coherent part of the policy, which is conducted on the basis of one or more policy articles or policy objectives of the national budget. Essentially, a policy review is based on and synthesises a number of partial studies, including impact studies. The Order on Periodic Evaluation and Policy Information provides specific indications on the approach and the evaluation questions.
- > **Policy evaluations.** Research into the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy.
- > **Ex-post impact studies.** Research that establishes the effects of policies and regulations implemented ex post and compares them with the original objectives of the policy.
- > **Other evaluation studies.** Exploratory or other studies aimed at increasing knowledge on certain policy areas, or pilot programmes aimed at testing a new methodological approach.



Remit



Complex policy, new themes

In addition to the RPE guidelines, IOB also uses other criteria for including evaluations in its evaluation programming. The comprehensive policy reviews are carried out by IOB. Essentially, other evaluations are only carried out completely by IOB if:

- they are too complex for the departments to carry out properly, for example because they transcend the theme, department or directorate general; and
- they deal with new research themes that are relevant to the departments, as a result of which IOB's involvement has added value.

Roles and responsibilities for evaluation programming

The quality and relevance of policy reviews benefit from a careful and transparent decision-making process. This process starts with the programming of evaluations. At MFA, the Financial and Economic Affairs Department (directie Financieel-Economische Zaken, FEZ) holds overall, institutional responsibility for all evaluation programming at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Together, FEZ and IOB conduct annual programming talks with the policy departments to determine the planning of the evaluation research and who (the policy department or IOB) is responsible for it. IOB publishes the final evaluation programming on its website. FEZ ensures that the evaluation programming is incorporated into the annual government budget according to the applicable regulations.

Promoting knowledge and disseminating evaluation results

IOB advises the ministry and disseminates the evaluation results internally to MFA as well as to external parties, including implementing organisations. IOB studies are generally uploaded onto the website <https://english.iob-evaluatie.nl/>.



Activities



- Carry out, commission or supervise evaluation reports, policy reviews and other studies.
- Consolidate (evaluation) knowledge produced elsewhere.
- Draw up and implement generally applicable quality standards and guidelines for carrying out evaluations.
- Advise on the design and implementation of individual evaluations by systematically assessing the quality of these evaluations or commissioning **peer reviews** from **evaluation services**.
- Disseminating this knowledge to relevant parts of the ministry, implementing organisations and other relevant stakeholders.
- Train and educate stakeholders for policy learning and capacity building.

> **Peer review.** *Quality assessment or review by peer evaluation services, for example of the design of the work process and the work delivered.*

> **Evaluation services.** *Peer evaluation services or departments of other bilateral donors or multilateral institutions such as the World Bank or UN Agencies.*



Independence



- IOB makes its own substantive considerations
- IOB is given free access to data
- IOB's evaluations are publicly available
- Special position of the IOB director

IOB makes its own substantive considerations

IOB is independent in terms of the content of its work. This means that IOB does not allow itself to be influenced by non-substantive considerations (of a political or commercial nature, for example) relating to research methods, data assessments or alternative explanations. Ministers and public officials take note of the evaluations carried out by IOB or on behalf of IOB. They refrain from giving instructions about the formulations, results, research methods or assumptions that underlie IOB's research.

IOB is responsible for designing the scope, research questions and research methods of its evaluations, following consultation with the external reference group. These can be adjusted by IOB during the course of the research.



Independence



IOB is given free access to data

A key part of IOB's independent position within MFA regarding content is that IOB has unfettered access to all information available to the policy departments and implementing organisations. In addition, IOB researchers, as well as those working on behalf of IOB, are able to specifically request information by means of interviews with relevant actors and stakeholders, including policy officials.

IOB evaluations are publicly available

The Terms of Reference for research that is yet to be published are uploaded immediately after they have been adopted by the director of IOB. Every IOB publication states that IOB is solely responsible for the content. The Office of the Secretary-General of MFA ensures that regular evaluations and policy reviews are submitted to parliament within three months. Reports are published on the website <https://english.iob-evaluatie.nl/>.

Special position of the IOB director

The director of IOB has final responsibility for the content of the policy reviews, evaluations and other studies that IOB publishes in its name. The director is appointed from outside the MFA, is hired for a fixed term and is not eligible for further appointments within the Ministry.



Monitoring implementation of Recommendations



FEZ will schedule a follow-up meeting with the most closely involved DG(s) and director(s) and the directors of FEZ and IOB no later than 12 months after IOB has presented a policy review or major evaluation to the minister. In this meeting, they discuss how the policy recommendations in the review or evaluation have been or will be implemented. A report of these meetings will be drawn up with possible further points for follow-up. This report is shared with the ministry's **management board**.

> **Management board.** *The secretary-general (SG), the deputy secretary-general (DSG) and the four directors-general (DGs) comprise the ministry's high-level management and management board. Final responsibility rests with the SG, who is also chair of the management board. The management board is responsible for the organisation and functioning of the policy department and the embassies and consulates.*



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P.O. Box 20061 | 2500 EB Den Haag | The Netherlands

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