

Management Response to the External Evaluation of ECDPM 2016-2020¹

December 2020

Introduction

- The evaluation report responds to the Terms of Reference set out by ECDPM's Board of Governors and is generally welcomed by ECDPM management.
- As confirmed by the evaluation's independent Reference Group² the methodology of the reports globally meets the quality standards of an independent assessment performed with methodological rigour, and with a significant evidence base (although with differences among sections covered).
- We thank the important quality control input made by the evaluation's specialist independent Reference Group and the ECDPM Board.
- We appreciate the achievement of the external evaluation team given the challenging circumstances they had to work in, due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The team only met virtually, there was no opportunity to physically interact between the external evaluation team and the Centre and almost all external conversations and interviews were virtual.
- Most of the conclusions and recommendations contain useful elements for ECDPM's learning, accountability and preparing the Centre for the future. The report also presents a number of interesting suggestions for improvements in ECDPM (albeit with varying levels of feasibility after being considered by management).
- The iterative approach of the evaluation team and regular exchanges during the evaluation period between the evaluation team and ECDPM management and the team developing ECDPM's strategy for 2022-2026 allowed us to integrate a number of suggestions of the external evaluation team and insights contained in earlier versions of the report in the new strategy development process.
- The following two sections elaborate on the views and responses of management to the conclusions and recommendations made in the report, the vast majority of which we agree with, partly because they are based on already ongoing change processes.
- The management perspective on how ECDPM is going to respond to these issues so as to be well placed to make impact while also offering value for money in a difficult environment, also funding wise, is articulated below, and we will act on these in 2021 and beyond.

¹ Cook, F., Keita, A., Wachira, G. M. and Wolff, P. 2020 External Evaluation of ECDPM 2016-2020.

² Members of the independent evaluation Reference Group are Wendy Asbeek Brusse (Director, International Research and Policy Evaluation Department (IOB), Ministry of Foreign Affairs Netherlands), Riitta Oksanen (Deputy Director General, former Adviser at the Development Evaluation Unit, MFA Finland), Jörg Faust (Director, German Institute for Development Evaluation - DEval Germany). The evaluation team and ECDPM had two meetings with the Reference Group, one on the draft inception report and one on the final draft report.

1. Overall response to the Conclusions

We structured the conclusions in four main areas, relating to ECDPM's outcomes and niche, the strategic priorities, Europe-Africa relations, and the organisational structure and funding. We have concentrated our response on the major points of convergence and divergence.

Outcomes and niche

- We welcome the conclusion that *“overall, ECDPM has adequately and successfully implemented its Strategy 2017-2021, and achieved relevant outcomes during the evaluation period.”* (p.7)
- We appreciate that the evaluation team concludes that ECDPM's *“Its thematic (programmatic) focus, the use of political, gender, policy coherence, and climate change assessments along with the Centre's various cross-cutting imperatives and coupled with active fulfilment of its three core roles and methods of working allowed ECDPM to have plausible and excellent, top drawer contributions towards its key outcome area objectives”.* (p.7)
- We value the conclusion that *“the Centre unquestionably [...]*
 - *Enjoys a strong reputation as a credible and rigorous think tank and do tank, deeply knowledgeable about EU and MS, that is also a historically important knowledge keeper on Africa, able to influence policy by brokering knowledge and providing advice.*
 - *Is active on the EU Africa bridge, and a good source of insight to the Africa-EU relations, despite a shifting reputation in this particular area, in particular, but not only, from African perspectives.”* (p.7-8)
- The management welcomes the appreciation of the evaluation team for the Centre's *“fine and eloquent application of its roles and working methods. It is this particular combination that ensures ECDPM is both a “think” and a “do” tank, and holds a niche in the international cooperation Europe arena; and influences the 'Europe-Africa' arena.”* (p.8)
- And we appreciate that the report concludes on ECDPM's niche and identity *“as a “think and do” tank, it very clearly occupies an important niche with unique selling points, not least as a provider of analysis delivered with a rigorous ‘nexus’ lens”.* (p.9)
- We welcome the point noted in the executive summary, the *“Centre is arguably one of the top go-to think tanks on understanding EU policy making and the Brussels external action sector, and to some extent its [Member States]. ECDPM provides a plethora of reliable, rigorous and interesting publications and events on contemporary policy debates. Its commitment to strengthening EU - Africa relations is a driving focus, and its deep understanding of EU policy making processes reinforces its potential to contribute to mutual appreciation of diverse interests and priorities of European and African policy makers.”* (p.vi).

Strategic priorities

- We acknowledge that during the past strategic period the translation of strategic priorities into the programmes and organisational structure was uneven (p.8), and that there is room to grow in advancing them. Rendering some of the strategic priorities to Task Forces has not provided the central steering to ensure these would be addressed (particularly on North Africa and Gender). Moreover, when two priorities (EU-Africa and North Africa) were

assigned to one Task Force, the drive to meet the latter became weaker. However, the strategic priority on EU-Africa relations was not affected, as it was pursued through *all programmes* (as it concerns a shared priority) with the Task Force only playing a limited complementary role when needed (e.g. in terms of information exchange and preparing special events such as AU summits in a coordinated way).

- We disagree with the conclusion that the current structure does not allow ECDPM to realise its *“goal to fully integrate EU-Africa relations in its programmes”* (p.9). As mentioned above, all programmes were mandated to work on EU-Africa relations (independently of the coordinating role of the Task Force) and have defined a diverse set of engagement strategies to this end. This *“mainstreaming”* approach to working on EU-Africa relations also explains why we decided not to draft a specific Theory of Change (ToC) on this topic. Our work on EU-Africa relations is so central in all of ECDPM’s work, that drafting a specific ToC would be very similar to the all-Centre ToC.
- The conclusion that *“there was no explicit or measurable “Africa strategy”, no “Africa-EU relations” strategy”* (p. 8) does not represent the choice made by the Centre or how we followed through on them. All programmes (maybe with the exception of the European External Affairs programme), have either a strong African pillar, or are almost entirely focused on work in Africa. All of them look at their respective issues through the EU-Africa lens (as can be seen in our publications). We explicitly opted for such a ‘decentralised’ / thematic approach to defining our approach towards Africa and EU-Africa relations. We believe this a better practice than formulating very generic overall strategies and in line with the practice of most think tanks and policy oriented knowledge institutions.
- Indeed not all programmes have *“yet fully incorporated North Africa”* (p.8). However, ECDPM also made the conscious choice to have an exploring approach and to gradually build up the Centre’s profile on North Africa. The Centre agrees it should step up the efforts.

Europe-Africa relations

- Before providing concrete feedback, a general observation is needed on this part of the evaluation work done. In the external evaluation sections related to the Centre’s work *“on”* Africa or regarding EU-Africa *“relations”* (a distinction made by the external evaluation team but not well explained and consistently assessed), there is often a confusing mix of observations, opinions, quotes and suggestions which are presented as *“findings”* without a solid process of filtering all these different inputs and coming with clear and coherent messages. This, inevitably, weakens some of the ensuing conclusions and recommendations.
- We accept that *“In terms of its Africa-EU relations, and related “Africa” “niche”, the results are patchy at higher continental and regional political/political/policy process levels; whilst its credibility and effectiveness around themes, and therein related to Africa, remains strong.”* (p.9). For ECDPM management, this conclusion directly links to the conclusion of the evaluation team that *“The support to Africa-EU relations, in particular, despite some good outcomes and output, and the thinking through of the Centre’s approach to Africa, are in need of a reconceptualisation to fit in with the current evolutions around de-colonisation of aid, decolonisation of knowledge, and the need for stronger and better “co-creation”, and realistic assessment of the Centre’s value added going forward.”* (p.8).
- The Centre agrees the Africa-EU relations work needs to be partly reconceptualised, building on accumulated experiences gained over the past 20 years and in the light of the current

debates around decolonising development. Key factors to take into account have to do with progressive strengthening of African institutions and non-governmental organisations/ think tanks that have occurred over the past 10-15 years to the point that the demand for a European based think tank to directly support African policymaking has diminished. This is a very healthy evolution and we should be happy that we are less called in for these types of roles. However, we can still play a fundamental role in acting as a sounding board for both parties i.e transmitting information and critical analysis on EU policy agendas to African players and transmitting African concerns and expectations to the European policymaking world.

- On the strategic choices: *“A fourth [choice] was to remain in Europe and to not expand to have a permanent and physical presence in Africa.”* (p.9), the Centre’s management more generally agrees and already acts upon the recommendation *“to re-consider modalities for increasing co-creation, co-analysis with Africa, in Africa - when it comes to addressing relations between the two continents, and when it comes to addressing topics of particular interest to Africa”* (p.9). See further the management response to the recommendations below. We also note that the evaluation team at the same time concludes that *“Most importantly, though, the Centre is reviewing what it means to “do” in Africa, as it moves forward, and considering how to ensure it has sufficient co-creation in Africa, given evolving contexts, and this is commendable.”* (p.9).

Organisational structure and funding

- We appreciate that the external evaluation team concludes that the further professionalisation of the support units has had tangible and relevant impacts, though we recognise that each area has room to grow (p.9).
- We fully recognise that the organisational structure and funding-financing structures are complex (p.9). Several alternative models have been tried in the past. A reflection has been initiated to see how the advantages of the present system (high degree of accountability, putting a premium in entrepreneurial attitude) can be combined with encouragement of cross-programmatic work, division of labour within bigger teams and the search for more impact.

2. Responses to the key recommendations

Following the headings of the key recommendations of the evaluation team (from section 4 of the report) the management has the following responses:

1. Strategic Choices as Opportunities for Sustained Outcomes and Impact (p.10)

Key recommendations of the evaluation team	Management response
<p>Reflect on how the Centre can influence the debate about the future of European development cooperation, within international cooperation more broadly, the “values” vs “interests” and the "decolonisation of aid and knowledge" debates and what these mean for "international cooperation" (including increased focus on finance mechanisms and private sector and other global actors); and reflect on how this translates across ECDPMs strategic choices.</p>	<p>Agree. We commit to further reflect on “the debate about the future of European development cooperation, the “values” vs “interests” and assess its impact on other aspects of the EU-Africa relations. The new strategy also reflects on the "decolonisation of aid", debates “and what these mean for "international cooperation (including increased focus on finance mechanisms and private sector and other global actors)”. This also implies that we need to consider which values are applied, and understand if and how African and European values differ (in all their diversity), which can only be done in collaboration with European and African institutions, actors and stakeholders.</p>
<p>Reflect, in collaboration with European and African stakeholders, on how the Centre might aspire to influence the conversation about nexus areas between European/EU strategic priorities and African strategic aspirations as identified in policy documents (e.g., Agenda 2063 and Europe/EU Priorities, EU-Africa Strategy).</p>	<p>Agree. We will continue to systematically reflect on these areas of work for which the Centre is known and respected.</p>
<p>Consider strengthening and broadening non-EU Europe analysis and focus, and the interplay between EU actors and other European actors, and not only in relation to Africa.</p>	<p>Agree. We will retain a Europe-Africa primary focus, and look at how Europe engages in global agendas including looking at the interplay between EU official actors and other European actors. Yet our ability to engage in this is related to capacity and we need to be mindful that it does not come at the expense of diluting other areas of analysis or following up on other recommendations made.</p>
<p>Reflect on how the Centre might aspire to influence the dialogue about relations between the two; and ensure an explicit Africa-EU relations strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - think politically – what does a political analysis tell us about trade-offs from 	<p>Agree. The Centre has invested heavily in the past five years to systematically “think and act politically”, including by the use of political economy analysis (PEA). In our experience this allows us to better grasp the agendas and interests of both European and African actors in</p>

<p>EU or from Africa perspectives, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review how this informs their relations, and choices made by the Centre. 	<p>all diversity, including trade-offs between these various perspectives, and review how this informs their relations, and choices made by the Centre. We think we can still play a useful role in acting as a sounding board for both parties i.e transmitting information and critical analysis on EU policy agendas to African players and transmitting African concerns and expectations to the European policymaking world.</p>
<p>Invest in strategic partnering and presence in Europe and in Africa. Politically analyse policies from multi-perspectives, and contribute to policy influence and deliberations.</p>	<p>Agree in principle. The Centre recognises the need to further invest in strategic partnering and presence in Europe and in Africa, for which there are various ways. Management undertakes to look into this issue again with an open mind, recognising the challenges related to partnering / presence in Africa (beyond the AU and Addis) and feasibility aspects (including funding).</p>
<p>Enhance the strategy to manage external know how, outreach and uptake as integral to delivering relevant quality knowledge.</p>	<p>Agree. We aim to team up, co-produce and broker knowledge jointly so as to create more space for different voices and expertise and integrate diverse perspectives systematically in our work.</p>
<p>Create a strategy to co-create and partner with and in Africa.</p>	<p>Agree. Based on past efforts and lessons learnt across programmes, we will further refine our response strategies to team up, co-produce and broker knowledge jointly and more systematically build partnerships with African experts and knowledge institutions, depending also on demands and opportunities. In the context of the strategy implementation plan we will spell out how we will deal with this in the new strategic period.</p>
<p>Ensure organisational structure and tracking reflect strategic priorities.</p>	<p>Agree. In the next strategic period, the organisational structure should ensure there is stronger central steering, with a clear mandate to champion and monitor the priorities set in the strategy while understanding that funding priorities, opportunities for policy engagement, and staffing knowledge will also influence this as in most knowledge institutions with a policy focus.</p>

2. Review Niche and Identity (p.17-18)

Key recommendations of the evaluation team	Management response
<p>Retain EU's external actions and geopolitical role in the international context as the Centre's strategic niche area, and provide room and adaptability to integrate global agendas – global sustainable development - and key global players. Consider explicitly broadening the European scope beyond EU.</p>	<p>Agree. The Centre intends to retain Europe and Africa-Europe in an international context as the Centre's strategic niche areas while also looking at how both continents interact in global affairs, this is also integrated in the new strategy. Broadening the Europe scope beyond the EU institutions will feature more prominently while balancing the need to follow up on other commitments.</p>
<p>Retain Africa-EU strategic priority and focus on Africa as niche areas that require a certain recentring of the identity towards greater multi-actor co-creation with Africa and drill down on the juxtaposition or commonalities of African and European perspectives.</p>	<p>Agree. ECDPM will continue to focus on Europe-Africa relations and seek to deepen our understanding of African dynamics and explore new ways of working together in a mutually beneficial way. As recognised by the external evaluation team, the Centre has already a track record in multi-actor co-creation and can build on this. The large majority of our publications on Europe-Africa issues systematically integrate the various perspectives and seek to facilitate convergencies.</p>
<p>Consider a re-centring towards paying more attention to emerging trends and opportunities (e.g. revitalised agency and strengthened capacities of Africans to address their own priorities as well as the global BLM movement which resonates deeply there) and to contributing to, and playing an important part in, decolonisation of knowledge and analysis.</p>	<p>Agree. We commit to explore ways and means to decolonise the production, communication and use of knowledge in international cooperation and development. This means reflecting on methodologies and sources, refining our analysis of narratives and discourse in international cooperation and development and adapting the ways we organise ourselves and collaborate with others.</p>
<p>Emphasise the nexus lens as a key identifying element of ECDPM and a niche area upheld by the intense multi-disciplinarity of ECDPM and its capacity to mix multi-and inter-disciplinary analysis with cross-cutting analytical lenses (gender, climate, politics, economics etc on a broad number of topics).</p>	<p>Agree. In our new strategy, we will continue to deepen our already adopted nexus approach of bridging policy domains and knowledge communities, through interdisciplinary analysis, perspectives and tools as one of the key elements of ECDPM's approach.</p>
<p>Interpret explicitly “development” as global sustainable development, with development cooperation as one policy area to be managed, with others, towards sustainable development and as part of international cooperation.</p>	<p>Agree. The Centre already uses “<i>development as global sustainable development, with development cooperation as one policy area to be managed, with others, towards sustainable development</i>” and also sees this as a core part of the international cooperation agenda that it focuses on.</p>

<p>Consider how the Centre's strengths will fit into the evolving environment, and whether some of these, and niche areas it can fill in future, may need to be branded differently, moving forward.</p>	<p>Agree. We will further plan the implementation of the new strategy during the year 2021 reflecting on the organisational set up and framing of areas for engagement are articulated.</p>
<p>Seize and address emerging priorities and diversity in Africa and Europe</p>	<p>Agree. We seek to become a more agile and flexible organisation, able to respond to an expanding and evolving sustainable development agenda. We recognise we need to better capture the diversity of priorities particularly those expressed by non-official actors.</p>
<p>Reflect these dynamics in the Centre's institutional and organisational structures.</p>	<p>Agree. We will further refine our plans to implement the new strategy during the year 2021, including by considering how we will organise ourselves and how we will manage our talent, how we will work and how we will partner.</p>
<p>Devise a system to allow more systematic delivery of cross-cutting lenses results</p>	<p>Agree. In the next strategic period, the organisational structure should ensure there is stronger central steering, with a clear mandate to champion the priorities set in the strategy, including by coherent allocation of funding.</p>
<p>Consider more co-creation with actors beyond the Centre to reinforce credibility, identity and effective uptake.</p>	<p>Agree. As noted above and recognised by the EE team, we already have accumulated quite some experience in co-creation processes with African actors. We will seek to refine our approaches in order to team up, co-produce and broker knowledge jointly so as to create more space for different voices and expertise and integrate diverse perspectives systematically in our work. Related to co-creation we also believe that gaining and sharing knowledge in forums with different perspectives is also important for effective uptake, learning and identity. We will seek out and look to create more opportunities for this.</p>

3. Engage Differently and More Dynamically (p.11-12)

Key recommendations of the evaluation team	Management response
<p>with, in, and on Africa: Deepen political analysis of policy implications of “all sides” Africa, Europe and globally (think politically about policy choices). Consider drilling down on the obstacles and pathways to change - and exposing these from various perspectives.</p>	<p>Agree. Centre management already acts since years in the way recommended here, amongst others by an extensive use of political economy tools across programmes. Experiences suggest we need to go further along this line by “drilling down on the obstacles and pathways to change - from various perspectives”.</p>
<p>with, in, and on Africa: Ensure more co-creation, ring-fence funds.</p>	<p>Agree. We support the recommendation to “ensure more co-creation”, something that the Centre has been doing already for many years but which could be strengthened, and we welcome the suggestion to “ring-fence funds” for this purpose.</p>
<p>with, in, and on Africa: Consider a dedicated African focused strategy/initiative, core-fund financed, led by a senior, politically well leveraged and networked, African researcher and policy expert.</p>	<p>Partially agree. The Centre intends to ensure there is a strong and dedicated effort to further strengthen African focused initiatives across <i>all</i> programmes, and sees various options for this. A senior African expert role might be one, though this could also be an overly optimistic if not simplistic recipe to create political awareness and understanding of “African” perspectives. Already in 2018, when we unanimously amalgamated the former African Institutions programme in AIRD, it was based on the premise that African agendas, priorities and expertise are core to all our work areas and should therefore be better integrated in all workstreams of the Centre. We believe this is a more promising approach to ensure balanced work on EU-Africa relations across the board. Further diversifying our staff is another way to strengthen African focused initiatives of the Centre.</p>
<p>with, in, and on Africa: Establish presence in Africa - at least in Addis Ababa – to engage with the AU, Member States (PRC) and RECs policy processes to enhance update and brokerage of knowledge strengthen co-creative partnerships and co-creation with think tanks and collaboration with peer institutes in Africa towards a dialogue of equals; including as an important factor in strengthening analysis of Europe-Africa relations and the varied perspectives therein. This would help to reinforce the more systematic integration of</p>	<p>Partially disagree. ECDPM recognises the point of the external evaluation team to increase our overall presence in Africa. Indeed, the Brussels office is extremely valuable as it allows ECDPM to have people on the ground who can on a daily basis and at short notice integrate with officials and decision makers. In the past decade, we’ve explored different options on how to be more effective in working on and in Africa across all programmes. We recognise this is an ongoing challenge, which also evolves over time, as African assertiveness and</p>

<p>African dimensions across workstreams; and increase return on investments in deeper partnerships. (footnote: feasible in a post COVID context to have such presence remotely and innovatively and at minimal costs– by sharing hosting costs with a like-minded think tank).</p>	<p>capabilities grow and the “decolonisation” debate puts new questions on our plate which we have to address (as all think tanks). However, the management is also of the opinion that there are different ways (e.g. broadening programme associates to more African experts, Young International Professionals, teaming up with African think tanks) of ensuring a greater presence in Africa in an effective and financially viable way. It would have been helpful if the evaluation report would have further spelled out the options. For example, presence in Addis only, also given the existing African Think Tanks, is probably inadequate. The AU is only one level of governance where we need to find adequate strategies of proximity and presence. Other levels are equally important (i.e. the regional, national and local levels) and merit equal attention. The idea of a strategy co-creation is the most practical solution which is welcomed as we have experience in this area. This approach is currently integrated in the new strategy. The Centre will look into this issue again with an open mind, building on past experiences and lessons learnt.</p>
<p>Broaden multi-actor focus on dynamic public and private actors and their partnerships in Africa, including beyond EU/European actors.</p>	<p>Agree. We will connect and facilitate dialogue between policymakers and other stakeholders, including private sector and civil society actors in Africa and Europe, capitalising on increased digital connectivity to expand and diversify our networks.</p>
<p>in Europe, beyond EU: Continue to work with actors in EU member states (not only governments) on teasing out the influence of EU’s internal diversity on its external policies.</p>	<p>Agree. We already work with a number of non-official European actors and have scaled up our engagement with non-official actors in member states. While we desire to further develop this up given there are 27 different EU countries we can only do this to a limited extent, on particular issues, and with particular countries at strategic moments.</p>
<p>in Europe, beyond EU: Extend the ETTG to eastern and southern Europe as a research and dialogue platform for the development of coherent EU-policy concepts.</p>	<p>Agree. In June 2019 ETTG adopted a policy to gradually enlarge the network with a few new members from Northern, Eastern and Southern Europe. Between September 2019 and March 2020 exploratory visits have taken place to the Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI), the Nordic Africa Institute (Uppsala), the Polish Institute of International Affairs (Warsaw) and</p>

	<p>the Elcano Royal Institute of International Affairs (Madrid). In its June 2020 meeting the Board of ETTG adopted a decision to include Elcano as a new ETTG member and this will come into effect as of 1st of January 2021.</p>
<p>in Europe, beyond EU: Consider geopolitics of EU within broader Europe, but also beyond Africa.</p>	<p>Agree. Focusing in particular on Europe-Africa relations, we will support European, African and global actors to develop and implement coherent policy responses to critical sustainable development challenges. We also explore ways that Europe and Africa can join forces to push for multilateral solutions to global challenges. We have scaled up our work on geopolitics of the EU within Europe and beyond Africa and it forms a backdrop and context to much of our work on how the EU and Europe actors engage externally on the policy issues and regions (predominantly Africa) that we focus on. Again the level and depth of this will be dependent on resources available.</p>

4. Reimagine Influence and Brokering Modalities (p.12)

Key recommendations of the evaluation team	Management response
<p>Invest in institutional partnerships and collaboration as a means of delivery, knowledge production, uptake and brokerage with European and African stakeholders - political institutions, think tanks and other research bodies.</p>	<p>Agree. This recommendation is already since years a constant priority of the various programmes. We have learnt that partnerships require an explicit “demand” from African institutions, real investments of time on both sides and ideally a joint mobilisation of funding. The Centre will continue to explore ways and means to develop, nurture and sustain such strategic partnerships where possible.</p>
<p>Strengthen EU Africa bridge – enhance niche & credibility in and on Africa, establish longer term strategies for consolidated partnering with African stakeholders, consider greater presence, towards more balance of perspectives but also a focus on EU's need to “get behind the scenes” to better understand Africa – and vice versa - towards a dialogue of equals.</p>	<p>Agree. As noted in section 1 and 3 above, the Centre has a longstanding tradition of exploring how to be more effective in working on and in Africa across all programmes. We recognise this is an ongoing challenge, which also evolves over time, as African assertiveness and capabilities grow and the “decolonisation” debate puts new questions on our plate which we have to address (as all think tanks). Therefore, the Centre welcomes this recommendation and aims to continue identifying effective approaches to “<i>enhance niche & credibility in and on Africa</i>”, and “<i>establish longer term strategies with African</i></p>

	<i>stakeholders ... to better understand Africa”.</i>
Critically assess the Centre’s influence and brokering strategies – strengthen links between influencing policy debates and processes, outreach, communications, co-creation and brokering knowledge for enhanced credibility and depth of knowledge. Communications and outreach are intrinsic to credibility and uptake, impact, and partnering, and not just to visibility.	Agree. As can be seen from our Internal Assessment report the Centre invests systematically in critically assessing the Centre’s influence and brokering strategies. We will continue this good practice, as recommended by the external evaluation team.
Integrate audience knowledge needs at the early stage of workstream conceptualisation and management to increase potential influence and uptake; and ensure the "fit for purpose" knowledge is identified and "fit for purpose" knowledge sources are used and "fit for purpose" knowledge products released.	Agree. We will revisit the ToC approach to better integrate audience needs, we intend to integrate the consideration of audience needs in the strategic planning and learning cycle at activity level.
Upgrade infrastructure and IT tools for more digitally smart, mobile-platform friendly, user friendly modern and multi-lingual communications platforms and presence; including social media.	Agree. The Centre aims to <i>“Upgrade infrastructure and IT tools for more digitally smart, mobile-platform friendly, user friendly modern and multilingual communications platforms and presence, including social media.”</i> (see also section 6 below).
Reach further into Africa with multi-lingual research products and processes; and increase publications in French, Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish.	Agree. The Centre intends to explore using AI resources for multi-language communications.

5. Enhance the Corporate Culture and Increase Diversity (p.13)

Key recommendations of the evaluation team	Management response
Accelerate delivery on the Management Review recommendations.	Agree. Many of the actions or at the least the preparation for them are 'ongoing'. Since the Centre will be finalising its next five year strategy shortly and as “functions create form” the Centre expects an acceleration in the follow up on the recommendations of the Management Review.
Establish a Board led "diversity exercise" to identify a pathway to change across ECDPM pertaining to the 3 Gs - gender, geography (race), generation and other corporate-culture topics so as to broaden internal dialogue, analytical scope and depth.	Partly agree. The corporate culture is of course a pertinent point for ECDPM, including the diversity pertaining to the 3Gs. Since the Management Review, ECDPM did adapt. However, a dedicated and renewed effort to diversify ECDPM’s staff is still needed, not only internally, but also by expanding our

	Programme Associates and our strategic partnerships with African institutions, think tanks and experts.
Devise a diversity strategy (human resources and programming) that recognises that this is not only, nor primarily, a numbers game. It is about ensuring depth and quality to the analytical process used to frame research, and bolstering credibility	Agree. The Centre has recently put in place a Diversity and Inclusion strategy (human resources and programming), and is in the process of elaborating a five-year action plan for its implementation.

6. Restructure towards a Fit-for Future Organisation (p.13)

Key recommendations of the evaluation team	Management response
Consider a simplified, more matrixed and more flexible structure that helps ensure a maximum focus on whichever key future priorities and cross cutting imperatives are identified (few programs, several cross-centre teams matrixed around workstreams better able to include cross-cutting and multi-thematic analysis and actors, no task forces).	Partially agree. In the context of the new strategy we are indeed looking into a more matrixed and flexible structure. However, we are not convinced this matrix and more flexible structure is also a more 'simplified' structure. The Centre is aware that also matrix and flexible structures have their challenges. In 2021, ECDPM will develop the new structure of the Centre, based on the reflections on the current system mentioned above, to implement its next strategy.
Strengthen the office of the Directors (director and deputy director) toward an integrated vertical and horizontal decision making modality, led by the Directors and the Management Team (with staff representation), to help avoid 'silo effect'.	Agree. ECDPM management is indeed planning to reform the MT to <i>an integrated vertical and horizontal decision making modality, to help avoid 'silos'</i> .
Strengthen the Africa focus at each level through a senior African advisor/manager position; and more consistent and permanent presence and representation in Africa; backed up by more African staff, associates and external experts.	Partially disagree. This recommendation contains several elements related to expanding use African associates/experts or enhancing our presence in Africa on which we largely agreed in above sections. We have also agreed above on the need to look for ways to maintain and deepen our internal knowledge base on Africa, but across all future programmes [as noted in section 1, 3 and 4]. That is why we disagree with the the option proposed to create a specific position for a senior African advisor / manager. We do not believe hiring one single person is going to address the challenge of deepening knowledge on Africa. We prefer a much broader approach based on mainstreaming a diversity of African expertise

	<p>and voices across the board.</p> <p>Furthermore, we also hope to attract African [senior] expertise for new jobs in ECDPM or to fill in vacancies when the generational shift is further completed. We believe a diverse package of measures is a more promising approach to further enhance our knowledge base on Africa.</p>
<p>Retain and strengthen the LQS unit to support planning, internal quality control, improvement, accountability and peer learning etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extend LQS mandate to develop 'cross cutting themes and analytical tools' focused on upskilling for (not on delivering on) richer more pertinent analysis. - Consider one theory of influence (change) per pillar/programme theme with simplified modalities for each workstream to ensure corporate relevance and identify how it will influence change pathways. - Ensure that modalities for tracking delivery against key future priorities and thematic imperatives are implemented. 	<p>Agree. The Centre management supports this recommendation.</p>
<p>Raise prominence of, and resources for, Outreach and Communications as make or break for a think tank institution like ECDPM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - upgrade IT and communications infrastructure for mobile friendly and top quality search enabled platforms - devote AI resources to multi-language communications - ensure early audience and stakeholder analysis per workstream/activity, with subsequent outreach, engagement and communications plan as sine qua non for moving forward (and secure funding for this) 	<p>Agree. ECDPM welcomes the analysis of the external evaluation team in terms of prominence and resources for <i>“Outreach and Communications as make or break for a think tank institution like ECDPM”</i>.</p> <p>Concrete suggestions like a mobile friendly website and using AI resources to multi-language communications are certainly directions ECDPM will further explore.</p> <p>We also intend to work with action plans for our projects, to ensure strategic relevance and to identify how the work will reach the key audience identified.</p>
<p>Review Finance Allocation and Structural Modalities - keep the right balance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beef up core funding or maintain to at least current levels of total funding. ECDPM's unique place is heavily reliant 	<p>Agree. The recommendations to <i>“Review Finance Allocation and Structural Modalities - keep the right balance”</i> are useful principles and new perspectives that management will certainly explore. Yet as we enter into a more</p>

<p>on the independence this provides.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to diversify funding, and beef up programme (not project) funding in order to assure the right balance and avoid any danger of being market-driven rather than strategy driven - Revise budget allocation system (driven by Directors, with Management Team and staff representation), with a more centralised overview of budget allocations and approach to fund raising in order to ensure core funding for key priorities, and (continue to) avoid being market-driven rather than strategy driven. - Consolidate centralisation of fund raising, reflect on fundraising pressures, upskilling requirements and the need to allow programme teams to focus mostly on delivery of substance (not fundraising) - Ensure key strategic priorities and areas that solidify "niche" are properly financed (and tracked), for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allocations and long-term strategies for "presence and credibility" in Africa/with Africa and in Europe/with Europe. - nexus lens capacities, including ability to work in cross-centre teams, integrate diverse voices, and use the results of "cross cutting" assessments (policy coherence, gender, climate, youth, technology, political analysis, relational analysis, relational analysis, change management, etc) - ability to attract, retain, upskill quality staff with field experience - Consolidate centralisation of fund raising, reflect on fundraising pressures, upskilling requirements and the need to allow programme teams to focus mostly on delivery of substance (not fundraising) 	<p>challenging funding environment they will be difficult to fully live up to and need to be looked at in terms of their feasibility.</p>
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