

Management Response to ECDPM's External Evaluation of ECDPM 2022-2025

December 2025

Executive Summary

This document serves as the Management Response to the External Evaluation of ECDPM's 2022-2026 Strategy, a requirement stipulated by the Board and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS). Management welcomes the evaluation report as a thorough, methodologically rigorous document that utilises a comprehensive, mixed-methods evidence base. Insights from the evaluation have already been integrated into the ongoing development of the Centre's 2027-2031 strategy. Management agrees with the vast majority of the report's conclusions and recommendations, albeit with some important nuances, and commits to acting on these in 2026 and beyond to ensure ECDPM continues to deliver impact and excellent value for money.

The management response is structured around the five main assessment areas of the evaluation:

- **Relevance:** Assessed as **High to Very High** due to workstreams' quick adaptation to environmental changes while maintaining a focus on long-term values. Management emphasised maintaining all thematic areas for strategic coherence.
- **Added Value and Efficiency:** Both were rated **Very High**. ECDPM is acknowledged as a highly influential "think and do tank" whose core assets include its human resources, professional reputation, extensive network across the EU and Africa, and capacity for independent brokerage. Management notes the assessment that "**no one matches ECDPM in terms of its in-depth knowledge and network across the EU.**"
- **Effectiveness and Coherence:** Coherence is "**Good and becoming better,**" though management recognises the need for further internal progress. Uptake and implementation of ECDPM's work by its core policy constituencies received a "**Very Good**" assessment.
- **Outcome and Impact:** ECDPM was found to be **highly successful** across its strategic impact areas, especially in "EU and Africa in the World." Knowledge co-production with African partners was rated **Very Good**.
- **Overall Assessment:** The Centre delivers **excellent value for money**, having been a **highly influential and successful centre** despite limited staff and funding.

In responding to future challenges and lessons learned, management agreed on the centrality of flexible funding for adaptive programming, the unique value of bridging divides and brokering consensus, and the importance of focusing on the "how" of implementation. However, the response noted important strategic pivots, including:

- Prioritising the development of **new partners** outside traditional development think-tank circles to reach new audiences and impact newer thematic areas.

- Committing to a **'whole of ECDPM' approach** to increasing visibility and communication, ensuring all staff are equipped with the necessary skills and tools.
- Identifying the **trade-off between the desired scope of work and resource limits** as the major challenge for the coming strategic period.
- Agreeing to develop a new **outcome reporting framework** to replace the existing Theory of Change and to invest in **targeted staff development** to meet the complex demands of their roles.

Management partially disagreed with the assessment that its work typically leaves out local actors, noting that we have indeed undertaken this type of work, but arguing that deeper local-level work across multiple settings would over-stretch the Centre's comparative advantage as a European-based policy think tank.