

Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Final Report

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AP	Approach Paper
CCPCJ	UNODC Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
CLP	Core Learning Partners
CND	UNODC Commission on Narcotic Drugs
DPA	UNODC Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs
ECD	Evaluation Capacity Development
ED	Executive Director
EQA	Evaluation Quality Assessment
ExCom	UNODC Executive Committee
EvalNet	OECD-DAC Network on Development Evaluation
EFP	Evaluation Follow-up Plan
EPE	Evaluation Practice Exchange
EQA	Evaluation Quality Assurance
FinGov	UNODC Open-ended Working group on Governance and Finance
UN/GA	United Nations General Assembly
G staff	General Service staff (G1 the most junior, G6 the most senior)
GBs	Governing Bodies
GE	Gender Equality
HQ	UNODC headquarters in Vienna
HR	Human Rights
IDE	In-Depth Evaluation
IEU	UNODC Independent Evaluation Unit
IMDIS	Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System
IPE	Independent Project Evaluation
ISWE	Independent System-Wide Evaluation
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
MA	Meta-Analysis
MR	Management Response
MSS	Member State/s
NECD	National Evaluation Capacity Development
OIOS	UN Office of Internal Oversight Services
P staff	Professional staff level (P1 the most junior, P5 the most senior)
PM	Project/Programme Manager
PR/P	Peer Review/Panel
ProFI	UNODC Programme and Financial Information Management System
PRP	Peer Review Panel
RBM	Results-Based Management
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPIA	Strategic Planning and Interagency Affairs Unit
SPU	Strategic Planning Unit
ToRs	Terms of Reference
UNEG	UN Evaluation Group
UNEG N&S	UNEG Norms and Standards
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Executive Summary

Introduction

- ES 1. The OECD-DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) and the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) maintain a Joint Task Force to support professional Peer Reviews (PRs) of the evaluation functions of UN organizations. Each Peer Review aims at identifying good practices and opportunities to further strengthen the evaluation function in the organization under review, and at ultimately contributing to improved performance in international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Since its establishment in 2005, the Task Force has conducted 13 Peer Reviews, including three 'second-round' Peer Reviews.
- ES 2. In mid-2015, UNODC Senior Management and the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) requested a Peer Review of the Office's evaluation function. A Panel was formed, comprising the Director of the UNEP Evaluation Office; the Deputy Head of UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office and co-chair of the UNEG Sub-Group on Peer Reviews; a representative of EvalNet from the Evaluation Unit of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark; and an independent consultant.
- ES 3. The Peer Review focused, following the standard framework, on the independence, credibility and utility of the UNODC evaluation function. The main purpose was defined as *"...to help UNODC to ensure that its evaluation function is well positioned and equipped to make the best contribution to the work of the organization, and those it serves."* The Panel was also asked to assess UNODC evaluation and accountability culture and IEU's engagement with UNEG and UN-system wide evaluation processes.
- ES 4. The Panel conducted its work over the period September 2015-April 2016, and strived to maintain an extensive and open dialogue with IEU staff, and with UNODC Senior Management and Programme Officers. The main tools for the PR included: in-depth discussions with IEU staff; semi-structured interviews with 40 stakeholders in UNODC headquarters and decentralized offices, including Member States, Senior Management, operations, technical divisions and administration; a detailed desk-review of relevant documents; the quality assessment of a randomly-selected sample of 31% of evaluation reports issued by UNODC in the period 2011-2015; and a questionnaire survey for evaluation consultants recruited in the period 2014-15.
- ES 5. The first draft report of the PRP was shared with IEU. Once their factual corrections, comments and suggestions were included as considered appropriate, an advanced draft was shared with UNODC Senior Management. No comments were received and the report was finalised. The Peer Review Report makes a number of recommendations for management attention. They are **not** presented in any order of priority or importance. The final report will be presented to FinGov and widely circulated within UNODC.

Relevant information about UNODC

- ES 6. UNODC is the leading entity in the UN system, and a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. The Office has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria, and a network of decentralized offices across the world. Its mandate includes technical assistance, research and analysis, and normative work, the latter strongly linked to its role as guardian of international treaties on related topics.
- ES 7. UNODC total budget largely originates from Member States' ear-marked voluntary contributions (Special Purpose funds), with 7% coming from the UN Secretariat (Regular Budget) and 2%, from un-earmarked voluntary contributions (General Purpose fund), also by Member States. UNODC administrative, financial and IT services are provided by the Division

for Management (DM), which is shared with the United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV); the Executive Director of UNODC is also the Director-General of UNOV.

ES 8. The Governing Bodies of UNODC are the Commission for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), which are Functional Commissions of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). They meet once per year, and through a Reconvened meeting session. Increasingly, the two Commissions jointly carry out their governance function of UNODC through FinGov, a Working Group that allows almost monthly interaction between the Member States and the Office.

Findings: the evaluation function in UNODC

ES 9. Since the establishment of IEU in 2010 as an independent unit directly reporting to the Executive Director of the Office, the evaluation function in UNODC has made significant progress towards becoming independent, credible and useful and at serving the dual purposes of learning and accountability. This is all the more remarkable considering the very limited resources it has had at its disposal. The most important achievements have been:

- visibility of and respect for the Independent Evaluation Unit among Member States, Senior Management and Programme Managers, both in headquarters and in the decentralized network;
- a steady growth of IEU in terms of staff capacity and scope of its work;
- rules and procedures on evaluation and templates and guidelines developed in support of the function at all levels;
- a new evaluation policy;
- completing a large volume of work in pursuit of systematic accountability (through 100% evaluation coverage of projects)
- a positive trend in the quality of evaluation reports
- a user-friendly and comprehensive on-line application to facilitate evaluation management;
- a database to monitor the uptake and implementation of evaluation recommendations and lessons learned and make knowledge originated from evaluations available to stakeholders; and
- a set of tools for canvassing feedback from stakeholders on evaluation, for internal IEU learning purposes.

ES 10. UNODC GBs have played an instrumental role in supporting the evaluation function with key resolutions in 2009, and more recently as well, repeatedly stressing the need for institutional, managerial and financial independence and for developing an evaluation culture within UNODC. The GBs also made themselves key stakeholders in the function, by asking Member States to take an active role in implementing the evaluation policy.

ES 11. Evaluation reports are simultaneously circulated to Member States and Senior Management and 'evaluation' is a standing agenda item in FinGov. This allows high visibility for the function, and presentation and discussion of all In-depth Evaluations (IDEs) and of a good number of Independent Project Evaluations, directly with the Permanent Representations in Vienna. All stakeholders appreciate IEU presentations that sometimes also take the form of side-events to the GBs' meetings. In addition, IEU also has frequent bilateral interactions with representatives of the Member States, on specific evaluations.

ES 12. The current institutional set-up and appears to be effective and balanced. The PRP identified only one adjustment that appears worth pursuing, to enhance the Member States' ownership for, and raise the profile of, some specific aspects of the evaluation function. This is proposed in Recommendation 1 below.

Recommendation 1. To UNODC Member States and Senior Management, about ad-hoc agenda items on evaluation

UNODC, including Member States and Senior Management, should enable through ad-hoc agenda items, the discussion and endorsement of specific key evaluation issues, such as the approval of a new evaluation policy, at the Reconvened Meeting of CCPCJ and CND.

ES 13. The Executive Director supports the function and relationships are based on mutual respect at all levels. IEU is visible and well-known, and participates in relevant corporate processes, such as in the Project Review Committee (ex-officio) to ensure that new projects include provisions for evaluation; and as required, in the Executive Committee with the Executive Director and the Directors of Division. Evaluation results are quoted in corporate reports and in the view of stakeholders, recommendations are broadly implemented. In the overall institutional set-up, the PRP sees as one main drawback the seniority of the Unit Head at P5 level, which does not reflect the responsibility and the 'gravitas' that the position deserves and requires.

ES 14. The second key issue is the current scope of IEU's work. On the one hand, it stretches to cover the role of UNODC Focal Point for the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) and for the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). On the other hand, it is curtailed by both resource constraints and an institutional arrangement that does not enable evaluations to analyse the effects of the policies, rules and procedures issued by the shared UNODC-UNOV Division of Management on the Office's projects and programmes. This situation can become a source of tensions, conflicts of interest, inefficient use of resources and gaps in the accountability framework of the Office. Recommendation 2 addresses these key issues.

Recommendation 2. To UNODC Management on the institutional role of IEU

UNODC Management should:

- 1) Raise the seniority of IEU Head to D1, in recognition of the role and responsibility that the position requires;
- 2) Enable IEU to include in its evaluations, the assessment of the consequences on UNODC projects and programmes stemming from the policies, rules and procedures of the Division of Management;
- 3) Re-assign the role and responsibility of IMDIS reporting and of Focal Point for JIU and OIOS, elsewhere in UNODC.

ES 15. In 2015, UNODC issued a new version of its evaluation policy. The document broadly meets UNEG Norms and is a good show-case of IEU's achievements so far, while contributing to consolidating these within the Office. However, the PRP noted that the language and contents of the Policy could be strengthened to further enhance the independence of the function. In addition, it emerged that the process leading to the endorsement of the new Policy lacked strong engagement of Member States representatives and Senior Management to candidly discuss policy matters. Recommendation 3 addresses these issues.

Recommendation 3. To IEU and UNODC on the next version of the Evaluation Policy

A future revised UNODC Evaluation Policy should:

- 1) Be developed through an inclusive process engaging Member States representatives and Senior Management from the early stages, and be endorsed by the Governing Bodies at their Reconvened Meeting;
- 2) Clarify with stronger language couched in 'must' rather than in 'should' the responsibilities of the Executive Director in protecting the independence of the evaluation function, as well as the shared responsibility in the function, with respect to the use evaluation findings and recommendations through adequate follow-up mechanisms.

ES 16. In addition, the policy does not clearly define the level of financial resources to be allocated to the evaluation function. The lack of sufficient staff and operational resources to manage and conduct quality evaluations is a crucial challenge for IEU and for the function as a whole. The PRP analysis shows that the total share of UNODC resources that go to evaluation in practice, including IEU staff, is well below the reasonable range of resources for evaluation units in the UN system, as recently estimated by the JIU.

ES 17. Pressure on IEU human resources is further compounded by the rule of 100% evaluation coverage included in the Policy. In addition, the delegation of responsibility for evaluation plans to Programme Managers and Country Offices, results in a long list of completed evaluations every year of variable quality. Moreover, the current funding pattern represents a strong limitation to expanding the scope of UNODC evaluation beyond the boundaries of projects and programmes, to tackle corporate and cross-cutting issues, as some Member Countries and Senior Managers would appreciate. Among the various examples of possible topics mentioned, were the evaluation of gender equality in the work of UNODC and in recruitment; evaluations of Sub-programmes such as Transnational Crimes; or evaluations of corporate policies, such as Full Cost Recovery.

ES 18. In many ways, the UNODC is at a crossroads where it is important for it to make a strong investment into the evaluation function (resources and staffing) or risk a gradual dissipation of many recent evaluation-related achievements because the limited resources available for such work are 'spread too thinly'. The PRP developed three scenarios for evaluation funding and management mechanisms for consideration. These are proposed as possibilities for further and more detailed elaboration in house. The PRP acknowledges there may be additional scenarios that could also be identified and elaborated.

ES 19. One way forward appears to be the development of a mechanism that centralizes both planning and resources for evaluation under the decision-making authority of IEU, and allows strategic priority-setting and more efficient use of the available resources. This would consist in the creation of an Evaluation Fund managed by IEU, wherein all projects would be required to transfer a fixed percentage share of their budgets, probably in the order of 0.5% from each and every project, to be used to manage and carry out IDEs, IPEs and other corporate evaluations. The existing GLOH92 project could also be used for this purpose. This mechanism would tackle several issues at once, as it would:

- improve corporate compliance with the GBs' 2010 decision with respect to sustainable funding of the evaluation function;
- significantly increase the control by IEU on the planning and quality of evaluations;
- introduce a more equitable cost-sharing for evaluation across all projects;
- reduce the internal transaction costs of staff time in negotiating resources for evaluation, consultants' profiles, methodological approaches and support to evaluation management; and
- enable IEU to prepare annual or biennial corporate evaluation plans to be developed, based on a strategic analysis of the corporate needs in terms of accountability and learning and clear criteria for priority setting, and to be discussed at and endorsed by FinGov.

ES 20. In such a scenario, the need for strategic and corporate level evaluations would also be discussed with, and endorsed by, Member States at FinGov. In the case where the GBs requested specific evaluations for which resources are not fully available, donors could contribute additional resources to the common pool, thus minimizing the risk of conflicting interests. Furthermore, through a more strategic approach to evaluation planning, one thematic, country or cluster evaluation would encompass all projects falling within the scope of that single evaluation effort. In this way, a more efficient and effective evaluation coverage would still provide accountability for 100% of UNODC projects, with significant savings in funds and staff time.

ES 21. A second scenario is based on the selective focus by IEU on a number of IPEs each year selected for their strategic importance and complemented, for full coverage, by Internal Project Reviews managed by Programme Managers¹. In this scenario, all projects would still be required to contribute to the IEU funds to conduct both the selected IPEs, the usual IDEs and thematic and corporate evaluations, though with a levy in the order of 0.2-0.3% of the total project budgets. The IPRs would still need to be fully budgeted in the project budget from the beginning. In the final phase of a project, IEU (with management input) would decide whether an IPE or IPR is required; should the former be considered more useful, matching funds to allow a fully-fledged IPE would be made available from IEU's increased resources. The PRP notes that the gains made in building an 'evaluation culture' need to be protected and nurtured. Project-manager-led Internal Project Reviews would be introduced selectively for projects with low 'accountability risk.'² The PRP envisages that the proportion of IPRs would steadily increase over time in-step with the emerging evaluation culture. A third scenario perhaps captures the original intent of the partially fulfilled CCPCJ Resolution 18/6 and CND Resolution 52/14 and would be to increase IEU staff and operational resources, from the UNODC Regular Budget and PSC, and thus strengthen the capacity of the function without directly impacting on Special Funds.

ES 22. The first step in any case should be conducting an accurate and thorough analysis of the total amount that UNODC spends for all evaluations it carries out, including staff costs plus the direct costs for IPEs and IDEs. An estimate of time spent by Programme Managers in managing evaluations would also help as an input, if feasible. This, together with an estimated budget for different scenarios in terms of evaluation needs and outputs, should be the basis for making an evidence-based decision about the mandatory percentage share that each project should contribute to the Evaluation Fund. Undoubtedly, the mechanism might not be compatible with the rules and regulations of some donors, whose project evaluations would still be evaluated through the same funding mechanism as IPEs, but under the direct management of IEU. Recommendation 4 addresses these issues. The PRP proposed mechanism is suggested as an option, though possibly others options also exist.

Recommendation 4. To IEU and Senior Management on financial resources for the evaluation function

UNODC should act to ensure the sustainable funding of the evaluation function, at a level that allows sufficient evaluative coverage of the work of the Office to meet Member States' and Management requests and expectations in terms of independence, quality, utility, accountability and learning. The key principles underpinning the new funding modality mechanism should be:

- 1) equitable contribution to the evaluation function from all projects in UNODC;
- 2) full transparency in the allocation and use of the financial resources for evaluation;
- 3) full transparency and inclusiveness in the development of evaluation plans;
- 4) integration of the agreed funding modality in the UNODC Evaluation policy.

ES 23. The PRP was asked to also assess the extent of integration of an 'evaluation culture' in UNODC work, as this has become a pillar in IEU's work. The concept encompasses an effective, respected and well-funded evaluation function and a managerial attitude open to use evaluation findings as a tool to improve performance and achieve better results. In the view of most stakeholders, the evaluation culture in the Office has grown, in particular at headquarters

¹ IEU could also assess a sample of IPRs for quality each year, and / or provide backstopping at various points in the review process, ideally using a risk-based approach to the allocation of IEU's backstopping / quality assurance efforts.

² Internal Project Reviews would be an option for low value projects or project / programmes where UNODC Managers have previously demonstrated strong uptake of the results and accountability-oriented 'evaluation culture' through their engagement in completed evaluation processes.

but not only. A major indicator of this is the almost universal integration of evaluation provisions in projects. In addition, the number of evaluations per year has increased and Programme Managers more frequently request assistance and support in conducting evaluations.

ES 24. A closely linked issue to the integration of evaluation culture in UNODC is the delegation of responsibility for IPEs management to Programme Managers. This has led to mechanism where these evaluations are largely managed by Programme Managers, frequently under their sole responsibility, with differing levels of backstopping by IEU. This raises a number of issues, the most prominent being the conflict of interest throughout the evaluation process. The current IPE modality could, however, be retained with minor modifications but considered an Internal Project Review under the responsibility of Programme / Project Managers rather than IEU.

ES 25. The PRP is concerned that decisions such as 100% coverage and the delegation of evaluation planning and management to Programme Managers, may have implications in the longer term for the independence and credibility of the evaluation function in UNODC. With specific reference to the IPE management and evaluation quality, Recommendation 5 was formulated.

Recommendation 5. To IEU and UNODC, on evaluation management and quality

IEU and UNODC should develop and introduce a substantive change of approach in the management and quality assurance mechanisms of both IDEs and IPEs in UNODC, starting from the preparation of the Terms of Reference to the editing of the final reports, to safeguard the minimum required quality standards and strengthen the independence and credibility of its evaluations.

ES 26. This having been said, the PRP appreciates the good management of IEU and the efforts made by the Unit to ensure that UNODC produces good quality evaluations. In particular, IEU has been highly active in issuing procedures, guidelines and templates, as well as on-line modules and platforms to support the management and conduct of evaluations. All this is noteworthy, considering the limited staff resources of the Unit. The addition of a pilot initiative on National Evaluation Capacity Development for 2016/17, in the wake of the 2014 UN General Assembly resolution on this topic, appears to be an additional item to the already heavy agendas of IEU staff members. In this regard, if NECD is to be further pursued by the IEU the PRP suggests a modest and cautious approach.

ES 27. Finally, IEU has also developed a very useful repository of evaluation Recommendations and Lessons Learned, which will be instrumental in drawing lessons from large numbers of evaluations and the follow-up steps. On this, the PRP noted a few possible improvements in the process, towards greater transparency of the process, and possibly the level of accountability towards the evaluation function. Recommendation 6 addresses these.

Recommendation 6. To IEU and UNODC Senior Management, on Management Responses to evaluations

With the purpose of raising the transparency and accountability of the follow-up process to evaluations in UNODC, IEU and Senior Management should:

- 1) Make the narrative Management Response mandatory and fully integrated in the EFP; and
- 2) Make the Management Response³, including the narrative and the detailed implementation plan, a public document available in IEU Web site with the respective evaluations;

³ Management response narratives already form part of the published evaluation report for IDEs.

3) Introduce the deadline of two years for action on accepted recommendations, after which a recommendation will be considered as non-implemented.

ES 28. **In conclusion, the PRP is convinced that UNODC has made impressive progress since 2010, to develop an evaluation function that is broadly independent and credible, and is used.** The more cautious assessment of independence and credibility, despite the ascertained good utility of evaluations, stems from the concern of the Panel that IEU may lose ground on both independence and credibility, if issues highlighted in this report are not acted upon with a certain urgency. The suggestions and recommendations that have been formulated here should, to the best understanding and knowledge of the Panel, contribute to the further strengthening of the evaluation function in UNODC as it continues to strive for excellence and maturity.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Peer Review

1. The OECD-DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) and the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) maintain a Joint Task Force to support professional Peer Reviews (PRs) of the evaluation functions of UN organizations. Each Peer Review aims at identifying good practices and opportunities to further strengthen the evaluation function in the organization under review, and at ultimately contributing to improved performance in international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Since its establishment in 2005, the Task Force has conducted 13 Peer Reviews, including three 'second-round' Peer Reviews.⁴

2. In early 2015, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, also called hereinafter the Office) informed the Joint Task Force of its interest to undertake the first Peer Review of its evaluation function, with the aim of ensuring that the latter is fully fit-for-purpose and matched to UNODC's evolving approach. The primary audiences for the Peer Review in the Office are the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU), Senior Management and the Member States (MSs) through their governance system that includes the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCCPJ), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the standing Open-ended intergovernmental Working group improving the governance and financial situation of the UNODC (FinGov).

3. The Joint Task Force established a Peer Review Panel (PRP),⁵ comprising:

- Mr Michael Spilsbury, Director of the Evaluation Office, United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Ms Inga Sniukaite, Deputy Head of UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office, New York, USA, and co-chair of the UNEG Sub-Group on Peer Reviews;
- Ms Marianne Vestergaard, Evaluation Specialist, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark.
- Ms Tullia Aiazzi, evaluation expert, independent consultant.

4. The Peer Review was planned to take place in the last quarter of 2015. In late September 2015, UNODC requested the Panel to postpone its work to early 2016, as the roll-out of UMOJA in the Vienna-based UN Secretariat entities required the full attention of Management during the last months of 2015. The PR time-table was therefore revised: a preparatory mission took place in early December and the Panel's full mission to UNODC Headquarters took place in the week 11-15 January.

5. The advanced draft of the report was shared with the Executive Director, the Executive Committee⁶ and Management in UNODC. No formal comments were received and the report was finalised. The final report was presented at the September FinGov meeting by the Panel Chair and the Evalnet representative. The report will be proactively discussed and disseminated beyond these constituencies, including to the members of UNEG and DAC Evaluation Network, in their capacity as secondary audience for all Peer Reviews conducted under their framework, for information on issues of evaluation quality and utility. The Peer Review Panel will also provide feedback on the Peer Review process to the Joint Task Force on Peer Reviews to contribute to the further development of the instrument.

⁴ As of January 2016, UN organizations that had gone through one Peer Review were: FAO, OIOS, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNIDO, UN Women. Agencies with two Peer Reviews were the GEF, UNDP and WFP. It was also planned that, by the end of 2016, at least three additional first-round Peer Reviews, including that of UNODC, would be completed. See: <http://www.uneval.org/document/peer-review-reports>

⁵ See methodology, Section 2.2, for details on the selection criteria.

⁶ The Executive Committee comprises UNODC Executive Director and D2-level Directors (4).

1.2 Purpose and scope of the Peer Review

6. The purpose of the Peer Review, as stated in the Terms of Reference,⁷ was “...to help UNODC to ensure that its evaluation function is well positioned and equipped to make the best contribution to the work of the organization, and those it serves.” Its overarching question was: “Are the agency’s evaluation policy, function and its products and services: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed by a Panel of professional evaluation peers against the UN Norms and Standards (2005) and the evidence base?”⁸

7. The ToRs also asked that PR to assess UNODC evaluation and accountability culture and IEU’s engagement with UNEG and UN-system wide evaluation processes, e.g. UN-SWAP⁹ and National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD).

8. The scope of the UNODC Peer Review, following the core principles within the DAC-UNEG Peer Review framework,¹⁰ encompassed the Independence, Credibility and Utility of the Office’s evaluation function, with particular emphasis on the quality, use and follow-up of evaluations across UNODC to promote accountability, learning and improvement. The Peer Review Panel focused on how the evaluation function was currently operating, taking into account that it had only recently been re-established in 2010. References to the pre-2010 period were included only whenever a ‘longer time perspective’ added to understanding the current set-up and its results.

9. Finally, the Peer Review was to provide recommendations to the Independent Evaluation Unit and to the Executive Director, Senior Management and Member States with the aim of improving the quality of UNODC’s evaluation function generally, and specifically to inform discussions and decisions about the role, mandate, positioning, and resourcing of IEU.

2 Peer Review framework and methodology

2.1 The Panel

10. Consultations between the UNEG/DAC Joint Task Force and UNODC/IEU led to the establishment of the Panel of professional evaluators responsible for conducting the UNODC Peer Review. A number of important considerations were taken into account when composing it:

- i. relevant professional experience;
- ii. independence: to avoid any potential or perceived conflict of interest or partiality, the Panel members did not have any close working relationship to UNODC that might influence the Panel’s position and deliberations; and
- iii. institutional affiliations: members were drawn from a variety of multilateral and bilateral development agencies.

11. Of particular importance for the understanding of the opportunities and challenges IEU faces in discharging its evaluation mandate, was the selection of Panel members who, in their current position, work for UN organizations broadly similar to UNODC in terms of size and institutional set-up. For example, UNEP is part of the UN Secretariat, and abides by the same budgetary and procedural rules and regulations as UNODC. The corporate budgets of UN Women and UNODC are of the same

⁷ See Annex 1, Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Terms of Reference, October 2015.

⁸ UNEG N&S are among the UNEG Foundation Documents. The current version was approved in 2005 by UNEG Members.

⁹ The UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

¹⁰ The current version of the Peer Review Framework was approved by UNEG Annual General Meeting in 2011, see <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/945>

order of magnitude. Also, UNEP and UNODC were ranked in the same group in the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) Evaluation Maturity Index,¹¹ and the three evaluation units have reached similar scores in the 2012/13 UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) Scorecards.

2.2 The framework

12. The UNODC Peer Review Normative Framework focused, as already stated, on the core principles of Independence, Credibility and Utility of the evaluation function in the Office. To some extent, the additional and complementary core criteria of impartiality and transparency were also considered.

13. The ToRs for the PR identified six main areas of analysis, namely:

- I. UNODC Evaluation policy and the Governance of the Evaluation Function;
- II. Management of the Independent Evaluation Unit;
- III. Evaluation Planning;
- IV. Evaluation quality;
- V. Evaluation follow-up and use; and
- VI. External relations of the Independent Evaluation Unit.

14. Each area of analysis also included a sub-set of issues, identified by IEU and the PRP, which were then individually linked to the respective core principle. The resulting matrix became the Peer Review Normative Framework, that provided the basic analytical tool of the PR.¹²

15. The Peer Review assessed UNODC's evaluation function as a snap-shot at the end of 2015, beginning of 2016. In its analysis, however, the Panel took into account the evolution of the function since 2009, in particular in terms of institutional set-up, resources available in IEU, integration of an evaluation culture in UNODC and quality of evaluation reports.

2.3 The process and methodology

16. The Professional Peer Review of UNODC Evaluation Function was conducted in line with the UNEG Peer Review Guidance document¹³ and was characterized by constant, extensive, cordial and open dialogue between the Peer Review Panel members and the staff of UNODC Independent Evaluation Unit. This open and transparent approach also informed the interaction with other key stakeholders in the Office.

17. IEU, on behalf of UNODC, prepared the first draft of the Terms of Reference¹⁴ and Normative Framework (NF) for the PR. The two documents were finalized by the Peer Review Panel, following in-depth discussions between Panel members and IEU staff to clarify the issues to be analysed and harmonize the list of areas and issues for assessment across the two documents.

18. IEU also conducted a self-assessment of its status and performance, against the Peer Review Normative Framework, and updated the UNODC Evaluation Maturity Matrix prepared by JIU in 2013. Both documents were shared with the PRP before its mission in January 2016. The original JIU Maturity Matrix and the OIOS scorecards provided additional baseline information to inform the PR assessment.

19. The PR used the following methods, tools and approaches:

¹¹ https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2014_6_English.pdf.

¹² See Annex 2, UNODC Peer Review Normative Framework.

¹³ Peer Review Guidance, draft unpublished document prepared by the UNEG Peer Review Task Force, February 2015.

¹⁴ Draft ToRs were initially based on those used for the 2nd PR of the World Food Programme.

- a. Desk review of background documents and evaluation guidelines and tools made available by IEU and complemented through a Web-based search. These included: UNODC Governing Bodies resolutions, documents and minutes of meetings; external assessments of UNODC and IEU performance by OIOS and JIU; Senior Management circulars; IEU methodological guidelines, templates and tools, power-point presentations, analysis, monitoring documents, etc. Each document was also classified against the issues listed in the ToRs;
- b. Review and assessment of a random and statistically representative sample of 33 evaluation reports issued by UNODC in the period 2011-2015 out of a total of 106 (31%); the scoring was completed against a framework largely based on IEU Evaluation Quality Assurance template. The same sample was also used to analyse financial resources dedicated to each evaluation and explore potential effects on evaluation quality;
- c. Analysis of IEU Self-Assessment and updated JIU Maturity matrix;
- d. In-depth discussions and exchanges with IEU staff throughout the process; in addition to teleconferences during the preparatory and report-writing phases, the Panel conducted a preparatory mission of 4 working days, to gather information on various aspects of IEU work and modus operandi; and dedicated one full day to discussions with IEU staff during its week at UNODC Headquarters;
- e. Peer Exchange session between IEU staff and the PRP, on three agreed topics; this consisted of a two-hours informal and open discussion on various aspects of IEU work, drawing on the experience of the Panel Members within their own or other organizations;
- f. Check-lists for semi-structured interviews with the different groups of stakeholders;
- g. Thirty-six face-to-face and phone interviews with 40 stakeholders, including eight representatives of Member States, 18 among Senior Managers and officers based in Headquarters, five Programme Managers in decentralized offices and five UNODC evaluation team leaders,¹⁵
- h. A questionnaire-based survey for canvassing the views of all (44) evaluation consultants who worked for UNODC in the period 2014-15 (henceforth called the Questionnaire Survey).¹⁶

20. Finally, the draft report of the PRP was shared with IEU, and factual corrections, comments and suggestions integrated, as appropriate. The draft report was shared with UNODC Senior Management for comment with the final report being presented by the Panel Chair and Evalnet representative to member states at the FinGov meeting in September 2016.

21. This report is structured following the six main areas of analysis listed highlighted above, and discusses the extent to which the UNODC evaluation function complies with the three core principles of the Peer Review, in a concluding section. Throughout the report, text in bold corresponds to key findings, suggestions for improvements, and observations, some of which will be included in the PRP recommendations for consideration by IEU and UNODC Senior Management, through a formal Peer Review Management Response.

2.4 Limitations

22. The ToRs defined the Peer Review as a 'light exercise', in consideration of the limited funds available for the PR and the size of UNODC evaluation function. In practice, the PRP carried out two missions to UNODC Headquarters, and could engage through interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, in Headquarters and at decentralized locations. This, in addition to the range of tools used and the following analysis of data gathered carried out by the Panel, enabled it to gain an in-depth understanding of the performance of the evaluation function in the Office. Thus, the initial

¹⁵ See Annex 3 for the complete list of interviewed stakeholders.

¹⁶ See Annex 4, Report on the Questionnaire Survey for UNODC evaluators in 2014-15.

limitation of time and resources was to a large extent overcome through an effective use of the resources and time available.

3 UNODC, a brief overview

23. An exhaustive description of UNODC's mandate and work falls outside the PRP's task. Thus, this section focuses on those features of the Office that have, or may have, relevance for its evaluation function and impact on its scope, efficiency and effectiveness.

3.1 Mandate and structure¹⁷

24. UNODC is the UN leading entity, and a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. Established in 1997 in Vienna, the Office was re-organized in 2003 by merging the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention. It operates in all regions of the world through an extensive network of field offices.

25. UNODC is mandated to assist Member States in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime and terrorism. UNODC is also the guardian of a number of international conventions related to the Office's areas of work such as the three international drug control conventions, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the Protocols, the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the universal legal instruments against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, all legally binding bodies.¹⁸

26. In the Millennium Declaration, Member States resolved to intensify efforts to fight transnational crime in all its dimensions, to redouble the efforts to implement the commitment to counter the world drug problem and to take concerted action against international terrorism. In the 2030 Agenda, of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), seven are reflected in UNODC's work.¹⁹

27. The three pillars of the UNODC work programme are:

- Field-based technical cooperation projects to enhance the capacity of Member States to counteract illicit drugs, crime and terrorism;
- Research and analytical work to increase knowledge and understanding of drugs and crime issues and expand the evidence base for policy and operational decisions;
- Normative work to assist States in the ratification and implementation of the relevant international treaties, the development of domestic legislation on drugs, crime and terrorism, and the provision of secretariat and substantive services to the treaty-based and governing bodies.

28. In the words of JIU, UNODC is "*An Office with diversified and demanding mandates*".²⁰ This is partly reflected in its Headquarters structure that comprises: the Division for Operations which oversees the regional sections, located in Headquarters, and the field offices; the Division for Treaty Affairs which includes the Secretariat to the Governing Bodies (GBs); and the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs which includes liaison offices in Brussels and New York. In addition to the

¹⁷ This section extensively draws on UNODC Web site: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/index.html?ref=menutop>

¹⁸ Review of Management and Administration in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, JIU/Rep/2010/10

¹⁹ UNODC Annual Report 2014 at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/annual-report.html>

²⁰ Review of Management and Administration in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, JIU/Rep/2010/10

two liaison offices, at the beginning of 2016 UNODC included: one regional centre, two sub-regional project offices, nine regional offices, ten country offices and 28 project offices.²¹

29. With respect to financial resources management services, human resources management services and information technology and communications services, UNODC is supported by a Division for Management (DM), shared with the United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV). UNOV was established on 1 January 1980 and performs representation and liaison functions with permanent missions to the United Nations (Vienna), the host Government and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in Vienna.²² The Executive Director of UNODC is also the Director-General of UNOV.

30. UNODC operates through two main programmatic streams: Regional Programmes, which are *'multi-year strategies complemented by country-level activities, that focus on key priority areas for concerned countries...maximizing regional and national ownership'*, and Thematic Programmes that provide *'policy guidance in their respective sectors, integrating the various components of the Office's expertise in the areas of advocacy, trends and threats analysis, legislative and legal support, norm setting and technical assistance'*. Since 2008, the two streams are coordinated through an Integrated Programme Approach, that *'identifies synergies between the multiple mandates, guides the delivery of UNODC's technical assistance activities and provides the framework, tools and support necessary to effectively implement innovative, multi-dimensional programmes'*.²³

3.2 Institutional set-up and governance

31. UNODC is part of the UN Secretariat and a member of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. Its Executive Director (ED) is appointed by the UN Secretary-General, with a four-year mandate for a maximum of two terms. Mr Yuri Fedotov of the Russian Federation is the current Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Director-General of the United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV). He was appointed by the UN Secretary General on 9 July 2010 and holds the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.

32. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) are Functional Commissions of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the policymaking bodies within the United Nations system that guide international action against drugs and crime. In addition, both Commissions act as Governing Bodies (GBs) for UNODC.

33. The two GBs are membership bodies, with 53 and 40 Members respectively. In practice, the Commissions function as open-ended working groups within the so-called 'Vienna spirit', i.e. by consensus.²⁴ CCPCJ and CND meet separately for a week once per year in Spring, and typically devote half a day each to UNODC governance matters. In addition, since 2011, following a JIU recommendation²⁵ the two GBs hold a joint co-chaired one-day session during their Reconvened Meetings that are held back-to-back, to discuss and agree on common resolutions and strategic issues.

34. The governance of UNODC, which is increasingly becoming a jointly discharged function by the two Commissions, basically consists of approving the Office's budget, exercising oversight on the

²¹ See map at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/field-offices.html?ref=menutop>

²² <http://www.unvienna.org/>

²³ UNODC, Organized Crime, Narcotics and Terrorism, power-point presentation part of the package for newcomers to UNODC prepared by the Office of the Executive Director.

²⁴ The members of the two GBs have to vote only whenever decisions have to be made in relation to the respective treaties, following their rules and procedures.

²⁵ Ibidem.

respective main thematic programmes and providing guidance on operational matters. The Commissions agree on the Offices' work-plan for the following year; following their endorsement, UNODC Management negotiates with donors about resources to implement the resolutions.

35. The governance structure is thus operating at a high level of oversight and guidance. In 2009, ECOSOC, with decision 2009/251, established the "standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime" (FinGov), whose provisional agenda was defined in CND and CCPCJ resolutions²⁶ to include: i) Consolidated budget for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; ii) Governance and financial situation of the Office; iii) Evaluation and oversight; and iv) Other matters."²⁷ In 2011, 2013 and 2015, ECOSOC renewed the mandate of FinGov, and the current deadline for its existence is the first half of 2017.

36. FinGov, in the words of many stakeholders, is the "closest to an Executive Board that UNODC has", although it does not have a decision-making power. It has also been called 'the sounding-board' for Member States' views on UNODC. FinGov meets on average 8 times per year, with an attendance of approximately 20-30 delegations at a time. It is a highly appreciated platform for sharing information and discussing issues of concern to the Office among the Members and Senior Management.

3.3 Resources

37. UNODC, like other UN Secretariat entities, is funded from both the UN Secretariat and a range of donors that include; major and emerging national government donors, UN Agencies, Multi-Donor Trust Funds, Inter-Governmental Organizations, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and private donors, including private sector entities and foundations.²⁸

38. UNODC classifies its financial resources as follows:

- contributions from the UN Secretariat budget, called Regular Budget (RB), allocated by the United Nations General Assembly;
- the un-earmarked voluntary contribution by Member States to the General-purpose fund (GP), used to finance normative work, limited core programmatic functions not funded by the Regular Budget, research, UNODC corporate initiatives and programmatic shortfalls;
- the earmarked voluntary contributions by Member States to the Special-purpose funds (SP), namely the Fund of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Fund, to finance UNODC's technical cooperation and other substantive activities at Headquarters (Vienna) and in the field.
- the so-called Project Support Cost (PSC), which represent the reimbursement from the Special-purpose funds for the administrative and programme support expenses incurred by UNODC for the management of the SPs themselves. PSC is capped at 13 per cent, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/217, and is restricted to pay for indirect support under the following categories: central administration, central programme/departmental administration, other internally and externally provided services (including Secretariat initiatives), and overarching programme/departmental programme services.²⁹

²⁶ CND resolution 52/13 and CCPCJ resolution 18/3.

²⁷ See: https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/FINGOV/CND_Resolution-52-13_E.pdf and https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/FINGOV/CCPCJ_Resolution-18-3_E.pdf.

²⁸ UNODC Web site at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/donors/index.html?ref=menuaside>, January 2016

²⁹ E/CN.7/2013/15-E/CN.15/2013/28, Consolidated budget for the biennium 2014-2015 for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - Report of the Executive Director, 8 October 2013.

39. The report of UNODC Executive Director to ECOSOC on the Office consolidated budget for 2016-17³⁰ shows the figures for the four streams of funding, over the three biennia 2012-13, 2014-15 and 2016-17 (see Box 1 below). The table shows a constant increase in the Special-purpose fund and a related growth in the PSC, a dramatic reduction in the General-purpose fund and a small decrease in the Regular Budget.

Box 1. UNODC financial resources over time

Table 1
Resource projections, 2012-2013, 2014-2015 and 2016-2017
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Fund category	Resources (thousands of United States dollars)				
	2012-2013 (actual)	2014-2015 (revised budget)	2014-2015 (final projections)	2016-2017 (initial)	2016-2017 over 2014- 2015 final
A. General-purpose	21 187.4	15 874.5	15 044.2	9 587.2	(5 456.9)
B. Special-purpose	414 542.0	608 543.9	518 381.8	550 619.7	32 237.9
C. Programme support cost	37 187.6	46 711.5	43 851.5	45 982.6	2 131.0
D. Regular budget	45 959.5	45 524.0	45 143.8	44 936.5	(207.3)
Total	518 876.5	716 653.9	622 421.3	651 126.0	28 704.7

Source: E/CN.7/2015/17-E/CN.15/2015/20, Consolidated budget for the biennium 2016-2017 for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - Report of the Executive Director, 10 November 2015

40. The figures also clearly show that the Office relies on voluntary contributions, mainly from Governments, for 90-91% of its budget.³¹ This means that every single manager has to engage in resource-mobilization and fund-raising, to ensure the sustainability of his/her programme of work. Furthermore, the limited size of the Regular Budget and General-purpose fund means that the contribution from these funds to IEU, both in terms of staff and operational funds, can only be small compared to what would be the required resources to evaluate the work of the Office as a whole, SP funds included.

41. In terms of staff resources, UNODC employs approximately 1,200 between Professionals and General Service staff. One quarter of these are based in Headquarters, one quarter in Colombia, which is the largest country-office for the Office, and the remaining half works in the decentralized network of regional, country and project offices.

42. In the 2014-15 biennium budget, UNODC, in response to the UN General Assembly resolution 62/208 for the United Nations development system to further standardize and harmonize the concepts, practices and cost classifications related to transaction cost and cost recovery, introduced a revised funding model based on Full Cost Recovery (FCR).

43. Lastly, like all other UN Secretariat entities UNODC, in late 2015, went through the roll-out of Umoja a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software that provides a harmonized and streamlined approach to core organizational functions including administrative, finance and budget management, human resources management, etc. As of January 2016, the introduction of Umoja had directly affected the evaluation function in UNODC by deleting the previously used Evaluation Budget Line

³⁰ E/CN.7/2015/17-E/CN.15/2015/20, Consolidated budget for the biennium 2016-2017 for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - Report of the Executive Director, 10 November 2015.

³¹ This includes PSC as part of the SPs.

(BL5700), which until then had allowed clear and transparent allocation of financial resources for evaluation within the corporate budget monitoring and management system.

4 The Evaluation Function in UNODC

44. UNEG Norms 2 and 3, supported by various Standards, focus on the governance and institutional framework of the function, including the need for an evaluation policy and adequate resources. For example, Standard 1.1 states that *'United Nations organizations should have an adequate institutional framework for the effective management of their evaluation function'*.³² The Standard clarifies that the evaluation function goes beyond the evaluation units per se and requires *'a comprehensive institutional framework for the management of the evaluation function and conduct of evaluations is crucial to ensure an effective evaluation process'*. Among others, the institutional framework should address the following requirements:

- *Provide institutional and high-level management understanding of and support for the evaluation function's key role in contributing to the effectiveness of the organization.*
- *Ensure that evaluation is part of the organization's governance and management functions. Evaluation makes an essential contribution to managing for results.*
- *Promote a culture that values evaluation as a basis for learning.*³³

45. This section discusses the UNODC evaluation function on these specific issues, including a short description of the evolution of the evaluation function in the Office, and an in-depth analysis of the resources available to it.

4.1 The evolution of the evaluation function in UNODC

46. The Independent Evaluation Unit was first established in UNODC in 2003, upon a demand by the Member States. The Unit was located within the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs (DPA), was led by a Chief who reported directly to the Executive Director of the Office, and was fully funded through voluntary contributions, with no resources from the Regular Budget of the Office.

47. According to one OIOS report,³⁴ in 2006-2007 IEU comprised four full-time Professional staff and two full-time General Service staff members. IEU's objective was to ensure that all evaluations managed directly by the Unit or by other UNODC staff complied with the UNEG Norms and Standards (N&S) and served to improve the strategic effectiveness of UNODC. IEU staff engaged in a range of activities, from managing and participating in In-Depth Evaluations (IDEs) to providing guidance, backstopping and capacity development to UNODC staff for managing project evaluations.

48. Between 2008 and 2009, a management decision led to the dismantling of IEU and the transfer of the evaluation function, supported by one staff member, to the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU), to form the Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Section. The same OIOS report, issued in November 2009, raised serious concerns about the sustainability of the evaluation function in the new institutional set-up and stated that in UNODC *'an independent evaluation function is currently absent'*.³⁵ The funding pattern of IEU, fully dependent on voluntary resources, and the limited size of funds available were also a matter of concern for OIOS.

³² See UNEG Standards, at <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/22>.

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ Inspection of Programme Level Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), OIOS, 2009.

³⁵ Ibidem.

49. OIOS observations and recommendations were immediately taken up by UNODC Governing Bodies at their Reconvened Sessions in December 2009, and issued parallel resolutions, namely CCPCJ Resolution 18/6 and CND Resolution 52/14, deciding that ‘ *the proposed consolidated budget for the biennium 2010-2011 for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime should contain adequate provisions for the establishment of a sustainable, effective and operationally independent evaluation unit...*’. Further, the Resolutions stated that the newly re-established unit should be located in the Office of the Executive Director, and provided clear guidance on the unit’s reporting lines.³⁶

50. In January 2010, the Executive Director’s report to ECOSOC informed Member States, as requested by the Resolutions themselves, about the transfer of a P5 position from SPU to establish the position of IEU Head and that the latter’s recruitment was on-going.³⁷ One SPU staff member, who had professional experience within evaluation units of International Financial Institutions and the UN, was appointed ad-interim head of the re-established unit. The same staff member was confirmed as the Head of the IEU in 2011, after a competitive selection process managed by the Office of the Executive Director.

51. The PRP has not come across any other formal document reporting on the progress made by UNODC in implementing the two 2009 Resolutions. Nevertheless, the Panel has found solid evidence of the measures taken by UNODC in compliance with the two Resolutions, as well as significant achievements since 2010, - all quite remarkable considering the heavy legacy that a dismantled, albeit soon resuscitated, function can bear on the behavioural independence of a newly re-established Unit. Evidence of progress made includes:

- visibility of and respect for the Independent Evaluation Unit among Member States, Senior Management and Programme Managers, both in headquarters and in the decentralized network;
- growth of IEU in terms of staff capacity and scope of its work and a corresponding growth in the number of IDEs;
- a good use of evaluation findings and recommendations in corporate-level documents and in programmatic work;
- rules and procedures on evaluation and templates and guidelines developed in support of the function at all levels;
- a new evaluation policy;
- completing a large volume of work in pursuit of systematic accountability (through 100% evaluation coverage of projects)
- a positive trend in the quality evaluation reports
- a user-friendly and comprehensive on-line application to facilitate evaluation management;
- a database to monitor the uptake and implementation of evaluation recommendations and lessons learned and make knowledge originated from evaluations available to stakeholders; and
- a set of tools for canvassing feedback from stakeholders on evaluation, for internal IEU learning purposes.

³⁶ Synthesised from: E/2009/30/Add.1 E/CN.15/2009/20/Add.1; E/CN.15/2009/20/Add.1 (Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Report on the reconvened eighteenth session (3-4 December 2009) Economic and Social Council Official Records, 2009 Supplement No. 10A; E/2009/28/Add.1 E/CN.7/2009/12/Add.1 United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Report on the reconvened fifty-second session (1-2 December 2009), Economic and Social Council Official Records, 2009 Supplement No. 8A.

³⁷ E/CN.7/2010/13-E/CN.15/2010/13, Economic and Social Council, Changes required to the strategic framework and their implications for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and for the allocation of resources to the sub-programmes of the programme of work, and the establishment of the independent evaluation unit and the sustainability of the Strategic Planning Unit, Report of the Executive Director, 27 January 2010.

4.2 Governance and institutional set-up

52. The CCPCJ and CND resolutions in December 2009, in addition to deciding the re-establishment of IEU, also provided clear guidance on several aspects of the function, as follows:³⁸

- a. resources to be made available to IEU from the proposed consolidated budget of UNODC, including from the Regular Budget for the Head of the Unit;
- b. the responsibility of the Executive Director, who should ensure independent, timely and effective evaluations;
- c. the location of IEU in the Office of the Executive Director and its functional and operational independence, including on all personnel and operational decisions concerning staff and consultants;
- d. the simultaneous circulation of all evaluation reports to the ED and MSs, and to the GBs for their consideration, in a timely manner before their sessions;
- e. full-disclosure policy for all evaluation reports, that should be public and accessible to all.

53. The same Resolutions request that the Head of IEU, regularly briefs Member States on evaluation findings and recommendations, preferably through FinGov, and invites *'Member States to take an active role in the development and application of the evaluation policy'*. At the same time, the Executive Director should, i.e. is "supposed to", create an enabling environment for *'independent, timely and effective evaluations, in line with the standards and norms of the United Nations Evaluation Group and following the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services'*.³⁹

54. With the two Resolutions, therefore, UNODC Governing Bodies clearly defined the governance framework for the evaluation function, and took upon themselves a role and responsibility, both as pro-active guardians of the evaluation function and as recipients and users, of the evaluation products. Compared to many UN Secretariat evaluation functions, these governing body resolutions provide a strong mandate for an independent evaluation function in UNODC.

55. Compliance with the resolutions was found to be high. First, all final reports are officially shared simultaneously with UNODC Executive Director and Member States, complete with the Management Response (MR) in the case of IDEs. The PRP heard no comment or concerns about the timeliness in circulating the evaluation reports before the GBs' sessions.

56. Most importantly, since FinGov was established in 2009, evaluation has been part of its core functions and a standing agenda item. FinGov discussed evaluation reports and evaluation-related documents, for example JIU reviews and UNEG papers, beginning as early as 2010. Since 2011, IEU has frequently made presentations at FinGov meetings, with a peak of seven out of 8 sessions in 2014, with different products: specific evaluations of particular relevance to the Members; its work-plan and related updates; other relevant matters, including for example updates on this Peer Review. Typically, whenever an evaluation report is on the agenda, the Evaluation team leader presents the key findings and recommendations of the evaluation, in conjunction with the responsible Programme Manager who 'responds' to each recommendation with the specific action/s included in the Evaluation Follow-up Plan (EFP), in a form of dialogue between Evaluation and Management.

57. Virtually all Member States representatives met by the PRP stated their appreciation for all IEU presentations at FinGov, as well as for the frequent exchange and communication they have with the Unit. All underlined the usefulness of these events to allow in-depth discussions on specific evaluations and in reaching out to a larger number of Member States on evaluation issues. It was also stated several times that IEU's presentations at FinGov are a good indicator of the transparency and

³⁸ See reference to the two Resolutions.

³⁹ See reference to the two Resolutions.

openness of the evaluation function at the corporate level. Positive comments on IEU presentations at FinGov were also expressed by several UNODC Managers. IEU also organizes side-events during the CCPCJ and CND sessions, or back-to back with FinGov, to present specific evaluations or synthesis of findings and recommendations from across a number of evaluations.

58. The PRP discussed with its interlocutors the possibility of reaching out to more Member States through CCPCJ and CND, and/or through the Reconvened Meetings. Although a few considered this as a possible option, in general replies were cautious with the main reason being the limited time available to the GBs for the governance of the Office itself. Holding side-events with targeted presentations to the different audiences in CCPCJ and CND of aggregate findings and recommendations, as currently happens, appeared to be a more feasible solution to comply with the 2009 Resolutions. **At the same time, interlocutors considered that ad-hoc discussions at CCPCJ and CND would be appropriate on evaluation issues that require a GB decision, such as the approval of any new evaluation policy..**

59. With regards to the institutional set-up, the Independent Evaluation Unit is located within the Office of the Executive Director and its Head, a P-5 staff member, reports directly to the Executive Director. The PRP found plenty of evidence that the communication between IEU and the Office of the ED is frequent, fluid and constructive. The IEU Head also has full authority to issue evaluation reports. In the view of most interviewees, this institutional set-up, strengthened by the respectful and appreciative attitude of current Senior Management towards evaluation and the integrity of the Unit's staff themselves, are all good safeguards for the independence of the Unit. Limited concerns were raised about independence, mostly by consultant evaluators through the Questionnaire Survey, as discussed later in the report.

60. With respect to IEU's functional relationships within UNODC, the Unit participates in the Executive Committee by invitation,⁴⁰ and attends ex-officio the Programme Review Committee (PRC), which revises all projects and programmes with budget above US\$ 10 million as well as all Global/Regional and Country Programmes, to formally 'clear' the evaluation provisions in new or revised projects/programmes. IEU also clears for evaluation provisions, new and revised project documents that do not have to go through the PRC approval.

61. With respect to the integration of the Evaluation Function within the Results-Based Management (RBM) system of the Office, the PRP noted that in the draft UNODC biennial Strategic Frameworks 2016-17 and 2018-19⁴¹, evaluation is only related to the good governance of field offices.⁴² Furthermore, in the 2016-17 document, the indicator is expressed as a negative achievement: i) *Increased number of field offices without qualified audit and evaluation opinions*; and ii) *Decrease in adverse audit and evaluation observations for field offices*. Member States in following meetings suggested alternative 'positive' indicators, leading to the integration in the SF 2018-19, of the indicator '*Percentage of accepted evaluation recommendations implemented*', which is widely used among UNEG members in their respective RBM systems. The question remains why the evaluation indicator should only apply to the decentralized offices rather than to the whole of UNODC.

62. In contrast to the above, IEU has been tasked with an important role in UNODC with respect to the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS). At the time of its re-

⁴⁰ The Executive Committee comprises UNODC Executive Director, his Office and the four Division Directors. In 2014, IEU attended two ExCom meetings out of eight.

⁴¹ E/CN.7/2014/CRP.4, CND Fifty-seventh session, Vienna, 13-21 March 2014, Proposed strategic framework 2016-2017 for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and E/CN.7/2015/CRP.8-E/CN.15/2015/CRP.8, Proposed strategic framework for the period 2018-2019 for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 8 December 2015.

⁴² Objective (b) Enhanced transparency, effectiveness, accountability and good governance of UNODC field offices.

establishment in 2010, IEU was made responsible for ensuring that UNODC reports to the UN Secretariat on its progress in implementing its Strategic Framework, through IMDIS. The reporting process is time-consuming and has to be completed twice per year; it requires considerable - interaction between UNODC and the Secretariat in New York, ensuring that deadlines are respected, editorial work on the actual narratives provided by the different divisions. Reporting on the status of implementation of the work of the UNODC programme is a formal corporate monitoring requirement and rests, in most UN Secretariat agencies, with management rather than with evaluation functions. **In the view of the PRP the role of IMDIS reporting in UNODC should rest with a management unit of the Office, and not with IEU, as these are responsible for the implementation of the SF.**

63. Last but not least, an unresolved aspect of the institutional mandate of IEU, that was also raised by OIOS and JIU, concerns the relationship between UNODC and the shared UNODC-UNOV Division of Management. UNOV, which is a de-facto regional office of the UN Secretariat, does not fall directly under the evaluation mandate given to IEU by the CCPCJ and CND, even if UNODC ED is also UNOV Director-General. Nevertheless, the decisions, policies and procedures issued by DM on financial, administrative and human resources management, have an impact on UNODC programme delivery. Just to mention the most recent ones, Full Cost Recovery and the deployment of Umoja were said to have major consequences and impact on UNODC's decentralized network and its projects and programmes.

64. The fact that these decisions and procedures are mandatory policies decided by the UNGA or the UN Secretariat in New York, and/or are rules embedded in the way the UN system works, does not mean that evaluations should not assess their consequences on implementation efficiency and effectiveness and whenever possible, suggest solutions or recommend that mitigating actions are identified. **Thus, in the view of the PRP and several among the Member States representatives and Senior Managers in UNODC, it falls squarely in IEU's mandate to assess through its evaluations, the consequences of DM's decisions and procedures on UNODC structure and delivery.**

4.3 Evaluation Policy

65. UNEG N&S devote a number of items to the need for, and the minimum quality standards of, evaluation policies; further, the in-depth analysis of the Evaluation Policy of the assessed evaluation function is a basic requirement of the UNEG/OECD-DAC Peer Review Framework. An evaluation policy is a foundation document for any evaluation function and its preparation is an opportunity for: in-depth discussions among all stakeholders concerned, of the lessons learned on the critical issues related the function under the previous framework; joint identification of solutions; and agreement on the way forward. The PRP thus dedicated particular attention to analysing the 2015 UNODC evaluation policy against the relevant Norms and Standards. This section discusses the highlights of this analysis, in addition to the several references to it throughout the whole report.

66. The first UNODC Evaluation policy was issued in 2004, to be updated in 2007 against UNEG N&S. It focused on what evaluation is, its methods and on how evaluation was conducted in UNODC. It made no mention of reporting lines or communication between IEU and Member States. IEU's mandate focused mostly on its enabling role for evaluations conducted by Programme Managers, in addition to conducting major evaluations included in the Unit's work-plan that was approved by the Executive Committee. There was no mention of financial resources for IEU or evaluations, besides the generic statement that '*adequate resources have to be budgeted*' to conduct Independent Project Evaluations (IPEs). Emphasis was given to balancing participation and consultation throughout the evaluation process, while maintain impartiality in formulating conclusions and recommendations. This approach is still at the core of the evaluation function in UNODC.

67. At the time IEU was re-established in 2010/11, no immediate action was taken to draft a new Policy reflecting the new institutional set-up. In June 2015, after informal discussions with some managers, IEU shared a fully-revised Evaluation Policy with the Executive Committee and in September 2015, with the Member States at FinGov. The document is available on IEU Web site, from various entry-points, and also through UNEG Web site, thus meeting the need for transparency and enabling easy access to it for both UNODC stakeholders and the international evaluation community.⁴³

68. Despite the on-line visibility of the new Policy, the PRP noted in its meetings with the representatives of Member States and Senior Management, that the Policy per se did not seem to attract much attention, although the 2009 Resolution 'invited' them to take an active role in implementing it. Their lack of awareness might be a consequence of the relatively light engagement of the two groups of stakeholders in its preparation.⁴⁴

69. The Policy firmly states adherence to UNEG principles and N&S and is aligned with Norm 3, by providing '*a clear explanation of the concept, role and use of evaluation within the organization, including the institutional framework and definition of roles and responsibilities; an explanation of how the evaluation function and evaluations are planned, managed and budgeted; and a clear statement on disclosure and dissemination.*'⁴⁵ The main purposes of evaluation in UNODC are identified in accountability, organizational learning and knowledge generation; and its principles include: independence, impartiality, transparency, participation, utilization, alignment with the international standards for evaluation conduct, and integration of Human Rights and Gender Equality perspectives in evaluations. Also, evaluators are expected to abide by UNEG ethical standards.

70. Overall, all the elements listed in Norm 3 are included in the Policy, albeit to different degrees of clarity and detail. On closer scrutiny, however, the PRP identified a number of issues that in its view deserve further attention, as follows.

- a. UNEG Norm 2 and its sub-norms state that the Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organization in the UN System are responsible for the evaluation function, in terms of, inter alia, creating an enabling environment, safeguarding its independence, making use of evaluation results. The GB's decision states that "*The Executive Director should delegate authority to make all personnel and operational decisions concerning staff and consultants to the head of the unit in line with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and in conformity with the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations*". The UNODC Evaluation Policy, however, gives the whole responsibility for the evaluation function to the Head of IEU, which is, in the view of the PRP, slightly problematic for two main reasons.
 - First, the Head of IEU should be accountable for most tasks related to the evaluation function, including management of IEU staff and financial resources, evaluation planning, evaluation quality, etc.; however, the evaluation function as a whole, is a shared responsibility of the Executive Director with Senior Management, who allocate resources to IEU, guarantee the independence of the function, accept recommendations and assign responsibilities for their implementation; thus, attributing the full responsibility for the function exclusively to the Head of IEU creates a gap in accountability⁴⁶;
 - Second, the roles and responsibilities of both Executive Director and Governing Bodies do refer to the 2009 resolutions that automatically entail legal provisions, but are also

⁴³ See at <http://www.uneval.org/about/memberagencies/detail/33>

⁴⁴ From the Peer Reviewers' perspective, this differed from other UN agencies (e.g. FAO, UNDP and WFP) where the respective evaluation policies were developed with intensive participation of various groups of stakeholders and would always be mentioned when discussing the evaluation function. Other UN Secretariat Evaluation Policy preparation processes (e.g. UNEP and UN-Habitat) were similar to UNODC's. Nevertheless active stakeholder participation in policy preparation is desirable.

⁴⁵ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>.

⁴⁶ assigns a responsibility that is mismatched with the delegated authority

couched in a language, namely the use of 'should' rather than 'must', that allows potential room for arguments against the independence of the function, including the direct line of communication between IEU and the Member States.

- b. UNEG Norm 2.3 makes explicit reference to the responsibility of Heads and Governing Bodies of UN organizations, in '*ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and with due independence*'. The 2009 resolutions also included a very similar request, with the additional caveat of making sure that Regular Budget resources should be used to fund the position of the Head of the Unit. As discussed in detail later in the report, the current major challenge to the independence and credibility of the Evaluation function in UNODC exactly originates in the limited financial resources for conducting Independent Project Evaluations (IPEs) and In-depth Evaluation (IDEs), and the absence of resources for any cross-cutting or corporate-level evaluation. However, the Policy only mentions financial resources with respect to the mandatory provisions in projects and programmes,⁴⁷ in addition to a vague indication about staff resources for IEU. This does not appear to have been supported by a prior analysis by IEU of what would be adequate staff and/or operational resources for the function, which may have been a missed opportunity to secure adequate resources for IEU;
- c. Finally, and most importantly, the language used and writing style are not as forceful about independence and protection of the evaluation function, nor on follow-up of recommendations and commitment to learning from evaluation, as would be desirable in the view of the PRP.

71. Other elements in, or currently lacking from, the Policy that would deserve attention when the Evaluation Policy is next revised, include the following:

- d. the Policy does not include any provision for its own update and for the review of the Evaluation function; admittedly, this gap notwithstanding, the current Professional Peer Review took place even if it was not foreseen in the Policy; nevertheless, updates of the policy, and reviews of the function, should be explicitly planned every 5-6 years and it would thus be worth integrating such provisions in a future version of the Policy;
- e. Article 15 of the Policy foresees that a biennial Evaluation report should be presented to FinGov and '*if possible*' to both CCPCJ and CND; the first such report is expected in 2017; in the light of the observations by MSs discussed above, as this document would likely not require any 'decision making' per se, a side-event presenting the key findings and conclusions could be sufficient;
- f. If the aims of both 'organizational learning' and 'knowledge generation' are to be retained as separate purposes of the evaluation function at the same level of hierarchy, the PRP suggests that the intended use of the 'knowledge generated' beyond organisational learning be made explicit.

72. In conclusion, UNODC Evaluation Policy issued in 2015 is a good show-case of IEU's achievements so far and contributes to consolidating these within UNODC. **When next revised, the evaluation policy should address the challenges identified here, and take advantage of IEU's strong engagement with Member States and Senior Management in the evaluation policy approval process, to further pursue the strengthening of the function and embedding evaluation in the Office.**

4.4 Evaluation culture

73. The concept of 'evaluation culture' frequently recurs in UNODC corporate language, to broadly define a well-established and performing evaluation function at a corporate level. The

⁴⁷ Incidentally, due to the UMOJA roll-out, the whole mechanism of financial provisions for evaluation in project budgets appears at risk at the time of writing.

Evaluation Policy issued in 2007 already indirectly referred to it in relation to evaluation's role in supporting Results-Based Management, with the opening statement that *'Evaluation aims to establish an open and self-critical culture with the objective of continually improving practice'*. The 2010 JIU report stressed *'the need to further promote a corporate evaluation culture, as a shared responsibility'* among Member States, Senior Management, the Evaluation Unit and UNODC managers at large.⁴⁸

74. In March and April 2011, CCPCJ with Resolution 20/1 and CND with Resolutions 54/10 requested *'... the Secretariat to promote a culture of evaluation throughout the organization, to mainstream the use of relevant monitoring and evaluation tools in programme planning and implementation and to provide adequate training, as appropriate and within available resources, to staff both at headquarters and in field offices'*. In the following years, the two Commissions reiterated several times their support to the pursuit of an evaluation culture within the Office.

75. In response to the 2011 Resolutions, and following the JIU recommendation on shared responsibility, IEU developed an "Evaluation Culture Roadmap (2011-2013)", which established four core objectives, as follows:

- 1. UNODC evaluation function is operationally independent, effective and sustainable;
- 2. Evaluation principles are advocated for;
- 3. Evaluation principles are institutionalised and implemented;
- 4. Evaluation is used for decision making and future planning.

76. The Roadmap concept was also embedded in IEU work-plans and logframes at the level of Outcome (see Section 5.1). The 2014 logframe reads *"Increased accountability and credibility of UNODC by enhancing a culture of evaluation throughout the organization"*. The 2015 version reads *"Member States' national capacities for evaluation strengthened by implementing GA resolution A/C.2/69/L.35; internal and external stakeholders take ownership of the culture of evaluation; ensured accountability and transparency within UNODC."* Relevant indicators were: number of times evaluation was mentioned in Senior Management and GB meetings, number of projects evaluated, number of staff actively engaged in evaluations, trainings for IEU staff, number of meta-analyses completed, number of briefings with ED and MSs, number of questionnaires sent out on evaluation, number of UN oversight bodies using IEU as Focal Point in UNODC. Achievements in the implementation of the Roadmap were reported through the GLOH92 Annual Project Progress Reports and through presentations for FinGov and the Executive Committee. The 2016 logframe consolidates in one single Output, the work to be conducted to enhance a 'culture of accountability and evaluation'.

77. The 2015 Evaluation Policy reaffirms the concept, by including Evaluation Culture among the three pillars underpinning the work of IEU, together with Evaluation reports and Normative Work and including the creation of an enabling environment for an evaluation culture to develop, among the responsibilities of the Executive Director and FinGov.

78. A formal definition of Evaluation Culture was not developed, however the concept aims at *'making explicit the context around evaluation'* and according to IEU staff, it entails and can be measured as follows:

- managers are inquisitive, creative, and integrate evaluative thinking in their work;
- a culture of reflection, accountability and internal capacity in evaluation;
- integration of different tools and activities dealing with critical thinking, analysis and evaluation;
- 'carrot and stick' approach embedded in the delegation of IPEs management to PMs;

⁴⁸ JIU/Rep/2010/10, op.cit.

- supporting UNODC managers to mainstream knowledge and develop metrics for assessing their work and;
- evaluation results feed into decision-making.

79. The PRP found that in the view of most interviewees, UNODC Executive Director has strongly taken on board the concept of evaluation culture and that evaluation is a shared function wherein Management also has a responsibility. Evidence of the importance given by Senior Management to evaluation also comes from the systematic reference in the “Annual Reports by the UNODC Executive Director to ECOSOC on the Activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime”, to findings and recommendations stemming from evaluations. Since 2012, these reports also include suggestions for ECOSOC and UNODC GBs, aimed at enhancing the visibility of and mainstreaming evaluation in the Office’s modus-operandi.

80. Member States, who are important UNODC stakeholders, appear to have embraced an evaluation culture in its early days, with the request in 2003 to establish the Independent Evaluation Unit, the decision to re-establish a more independent IEU in 2009, and the continuous support to the function they have stated over the years in their resolutions. The responses to the IEU questionnaire for the Permanent Representatives in early 2015 were positive: both evaluation and audit are considered very important for accountability and the quality of project management, followed by Results-Based Management (RBM), Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance. Respondents also stated strong interest for evaluation as a tool to enhance UNODC transparency and to learn lessons about programmes. The PRP heard similar feedback during its interviews.

81. IEU is undoubtedly devoting high attention to supporting the evaluation culture in UNODC. The decision to adopt a 100% coverage policy for project evaluation, discussed later in the report, was also linked to the goal of strengthening the Office’s evaluation culture. Similarly, in the view of IEU, the delegation of responsibility for IPEs management to Programme Managers should be seen as contributing to the development of an evaluation culture. In this respect, however, developing a 'culture of evaluation' must require that IEU is the sole entity to both manage and decide on the quality of an evaluation. **The PRP considers that the pursuit of accountability through the promotion of an evaluation culture within the Office should continue to be encouraged. However, a clear delineation between evaluation and review processes is desirable, as discussed later in the report.**

82. In the view of some Member States representatives and several UNODC Managers, the Office as a whole has made progress in adopting an evaluation culture. A major indicator among those identified by IEU staff of the improvement, is the almost universal integration of evaluation provisions in projects. Also, the number of evaluations of completed projects per year has increased and Programme Managers more frequently request assistance and support in conducting evaluations. Many of the Managers interviewed by the PRP, both in headquarters and in country office, appeared to have understood and embraced the evaluation culture.

83. Despite the obvious gains UNDOC has made in adopting an evaluation culture, other Member States representatives are, however, more cautious and see a need for further work in this direction. There are still some cases where discussions with PMs about whether, when and how to carry out an evaluation are lengthy and complicated and require extensive negotiations, both at project approval time and when time comes to organize the evaluation. Despite the mandatory requirement for evaluation, the PRP had clear evidence that some Managers still have a negative attitude towards evaluation considering it as a waste of resources, or simply not applicable to their area of work. Evaluation consultants, who have the privilege of frequently interacting with both headquarters, and field offices and for some of them even repeatedly over the years, reported a stronger resistance to evaluation in the field offices, though usually linked to personality issues. The need to continue efforts to build an evaluation culture, especially away from headquarters, is evident.

4.5 Resources for the Evaluation Function

84. The 2009 CCPCJ and CND Resolutions, as already mentioned, decided that 'adequate resources' had to be made available from UNODC Regular Budget, to re-establish an independent and effective evaluation function and that the post of the Head of the new unit should be charged to the RB.

85. The January 2010 report by the Executive Director on the initial implementation of the CCPCJ and CND resolutions on evaluation, informed the MSs that '*voluntary contributions are required for in-depth evaluations and a sustainable, effective and operationally independent evaluation unit.*'⁴⁹ The estimated budget for a fully functional unit in addition to the Head, comprising five positions (one P-4, one P-3, one P-2 and two General Service staff) and an operational budget for evaluation work, was calculated at US\$ 1,560,000 per biennium, of which only half was available at the time. This is the only reference to a precise level of financing for IEU that the PRP has been able to identify and has thus been used as benchmark to measure compliance with the GBs' decision and IEU requirements to pursue its mandate.

86. The post of IEU Head was created, transferring a P5 position from the Strategic Planning Unit; progressively, one P-4 and one P-3 post were also established in IEU, budgeted for in the Office of the Executive Director Regular Budget line. As of January 2016, the P2 position funded through the Regular Budget had not been established. Resources for General Service staff, a G6 and a G4 positions, were also made available to IEU through Project Support Costs and reportedly, no additional posts are available through this source.⁵⁰

87. The staffing situation of IEU in January 2016 was: an RB-funded P5, as Head of the Unit; an RB-funded P4, Deputy; a Germany-funded Junior Professional Officer (JPO) at P2 level, for the period October 2015-September 2017; a one-year temporary P2 post, paid from softly-earmarked voluntary contributions; a PSC-funded G4 staff, Team Assistant. Two positions, the RB-funded P3 post and the PSC-funded G6 post, were vacant, with selection and recruitment processes respectively on-going.

88. The figures below were made available by IEU and calculated based on UN standard salary costs for 2014-2017:

- i. The Regular Budget and Project Support Costs allocated to IEU for its staff resources in the 2014/2015 biennium amounted to US\$ 1,129,542, including US\$ 49,800 for 'other temporary Human Resources';
- ii. UNODC resources allocated to IEU staff costs for the biennium 2016/17 amount to a total of US\$ 587,171/year or US\$1,174,342/biennium; break-down by post category in 2016/17 is:
 - Regular Budget posts: 1 P5, 1 P4, 1 P3 = US\$ 338,071/year or US\$ 676,142/biennium
 - Project Support Cost positions, 1 G6 and 1 G4: US\$ 224,200/year or US\$ 448,400/biennium;
 - Project Support Cost for other temporary human resources: US\$ 24,900/year or US\$ 49,800/biennium.

89. When IEU staff costs are compared to UNODC overall resources, it appears that during the two biennia 2014/15 and 2016/17, IEU did and will absorb 0.18% of UNODC total budget, i.e. including

⁴⁹ E/CN.7/2010/13-E/CN.15/2010/13, op.cit.

⁵⁰ In UNODC, PSC is not fungible, which means that PSC resources assigned to Human Resources cannot be used for operational purposes.

Special Purpose funds.⁵¹ This is significantly less than what was recently suggested and recommended by JIU for UN evaluation functions.⁵²

90. The Evaluation Policy mentions resources for IEU only in paragraph 12, comprising the Head and 'a Deputy, Evaluation Officers and Associates in addition to an adequate number of general service staff and consultants/analysts'. The only other reference to resources in the Policy focuses on the share of programme budgets and is discussed later in this section. Project budget resources, however, are only to be used for IPEs or IDEs direct costs, i.e. consultant honoraria and evaluation team's travel expenditures, with no reimbursement foreseen of staff-time when IEU staff participate as a manager and/or member in IDEs, or when they backstop IPEs.

91. The PRP acknowledges the constraints for UNODC in strengthening IEU in terms of staffing with RB and GP resources. Nevertheless, the PRP notes that the position of Head of the majority of evaluation functions in the UN system are established at D1 or D2 level. This is considered important for the responsibility entailed in the role, for the gravitas that it would afford to the findings recommendations and processes of IEU, and for enhancing the visibility of the function. This had also been raised as an issue by JIU in 2013.⁵³

92. In addition to the staff resources and since its early days of existence, IEU has been the manager of a project (GLOH92) through which both hard- and softly-earmarked bilateral contributions are made available to IEU. Recurrent donors to GLOH92 have been Australia, Canada, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and the USA. Since its establishment in the early 2000s, the project received contributions in the order of USD 3.8 million, and the available budget for 2016 was, in mid-January 2016, of USD 478,000. Over time, these funds have been mostly used to pay for:

- temporary positions in the Unit;
- consultants for normative work, e.g. the Evaluation Quality Assurance team in 2015 and the Meta-Analysis;⁵⁴
- the development of the Evaluation Module in ProFI;
- training of Evaluation Focal Points training;
- travel for IEU staff to UNEG meetings and other events;
- additional resources for conducting IDEs;
- fees for UNEG and the contribution to the Peer Review costs; and
- training for IEU staff and some utilities.

93. With the exclusion of the reported additional contributions to complement resources for IDEs, resources from this project have not been used so far for conducting evaluations, for example

⁵¹ If UNODC resources excluding Special Purpose funds were used, the share of IEU staff cost would grow to an average of 1.12% for the two biennia. However, in the view of the PRP, the calculation has to be made against the total UNODC resources, i.e. US\$ 622 million in 2014/15 and US\$ 645 million foreseen for 2016/17, because the core task of IEU staff is backstopping, managing and participating in evaluations of projects and programmes financed through Special Purpose funds.

⁵² 'In this regard, the general view is that the range of funding between 0.5% and 3% of organizational expenditure is worth consideration depending on the mandate of the organization, the size of the organization, types of evaluations, and role of the function in institutionalization and support to strengthening decentralized evaluation, national capacities for evaluation, and partnerships in evaluation.' and Recommendation 3: *The legislative bodies should request the executive heads of United Nations system organizations to develop comprehensive budget frameworks and resource allocation plans for their respective evaluation functions, based on the cost of maintaining an effective and sustainable evaluation function that adds value to the organization. The plans should be submitted for consideration to the legislative bodies within existing budgetary and reporting mechanisms and processes.*, JIU 2014, op. cit.

⁵⁴ ProFi is the UNODC corporate information management system, accessible to all staff and Permanent Representations of Member States.

evaluations of cross-cutting themes, strategies and corporate issues. In the absence of a secure mechanism for replenishment of the project, IEU feels compelled to a cautious rationing of the available resources which represent the only operational funds the unit has at its disposal, and this appears to be a wise approach.

94. However, it is important to underline at this point that the funding pattern for the evaluation function in UNODC impacts negatively on the independence of IEU to propose what should and could be evaluated. Another major consequence of IEU limited staff resources is the forced partial shift of the workload for IPE management to Programme Managers. This results in lowering the quality of the evaluation products, as analysed by the PRP in Section 5.4, and a potential weakening of the credibility of the function.

95. Another consequence is that the evaluation of a corporate policy such as Full Cost Recovery that would be welcomed by Member States or other issues of corporate interest (see the section on Planning) cannot be conducted for lack of financial resources. It could be argued that such obstacles could be by-passed by drawing evidence from IPEs and IDEs on specific subjects, through meta-analysis. However, if evaluations are focused on specific projects or programmes, it is unlikely that they would gather and analyse the evidence for evaluating higher-level issues. In other words, by definition the current evaluation portfolio only allows findings and recommendations at the level of individual projects and programmes and the possibilities to scale up recommendations to the policy or strategy level are very limited. Meta-analysis themselves cannot go very far, if higher-level questions and related evidence are not included in evaluation terms of reference and reports. In any case, this process would take much longer and be based on less robust evidence and analysis than an evaluation designed for the purpose.

96. IEU is wary that receiving earmarked funds from a donor for a specific evaluation outside of project/programme focussed IDEs or IPEs, might generate a conflict of interest and impinge on the Unit's independence. **A way forward to limit the bias implicit in one single donor's funding would be that FinGov and/or the GBs requested specific evaluation/s to be conducted, with funds either from PSC resources or from pooled voluntary contributions from a group of donors.**

97. With respect to resources for IPEs and IDEs, in November 2011 a Senior Management's Special Message introduced mandatory consultation with IEU,⁵⁵ before any new project or extension gets approved, to ensure that adequate provisions for evaluation are included in project budgets, agreements and documents. According to the Message, IEU is asked in turn to '*propose a concrete evaluation methodology for all programmes at the planning stage itself*'.⁵⁶ The Message also refers to Budget Line 5700 for this purpose, but does not explicitly mention any amount or budget share to be allocated to evaluation.

98. The Evaluation Policy is somewhat ambiguous on this: paragraph 51 on IDEs mentions that 2-3% of the total budget should be set aside for these evaluations and should be managed by IEU; whereas paragraph 52 on IPEs, states that a '*sufficient amount*' should be set aside. During the PRP interviews with Programme Managers all said that the 2-3% rule had to be met before a new project was cleared by IEU, and there is a very high degree of compliance with it.

99. When the time comes for an evaluation to be conducted, however, reality seems to be somewhat different. IEU staff and Programme Managers all agreed that for a variety of reasons, the actual funds available for an evaluation are often lower, and sometimes significantly so, than the

⁵⁵ As mentioned above, IEU systematically participates in the Project/Programme Review Committee to clear projects in terms of their evaluation provisions.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

amount initially planned. In some cases, IEU suggests pooling funds from different projects to conduct joint or cluster evaluations, although this is not always feasible due to donors' regulations. A number of PMs also claimed that funds often appear insufficient because IEU 'imposes' the recruitment of international consultant evaluators that are much more expensive than national ones.⁵⁷ The end result is that a significant number of IPEs are conducted with insufficient resources to allow enough time for data gathering, analysis and report writing and, sometimes, utilise sub-optimal expertise.

100. The PRP analysed project budgets and number of consultants in the evaluation teams within its random sample of 33 evaluations, by using the benchmark of USD 30,000 required for an IPE with one consultant, as indicated by IEU.⁵⁸ The following emerged, as also shown in Box 2 below:

- a. In 15 evaluations, evaluation costs were below 0.9% of the project budgets, the latter ranging from USD 3.1 million to USD 235 million;
- b. in 5 evaluations, evaluation costs represented 1.0 to 1.9% of the project budgets, the latter ranging from USD 1.9 to USD 8 million;
- c. in 8 evaluations, evaluation costs represented between 2.0% to 2.9% of the project budgets, which ranged from USD 1 million to 3.9 million;
- d. in five evaluations, evaluation costs were above 3% of the project budget, namely: two at 3.4%, one at 3.9%, one at 6% and one at 7.3%.

Box 2. Number of evaluations in the PRP sample by evaluation cost expressed as percentage of project budget

Evaluation cost in % of total budget, based on number of consultants	Number of evaluations in the group	Percentage of evaluations in the sample
Below 1%	15	45.5%
1.0-1.9%	5	15.1%
2.0-2.9%	8	24.1%
3.0-3.9%	3	9.1%
6%	1	3.1%
7.3%	1	3.1%
Total	33	100%

Source: PRP quality assessment of 33 UNODC evaluation reports

101. In other words, the data above indicate that **project budget size was an objective limiting factor for evaluation in only 5 cases, while the total calculated expenditure for the 33 evaluations corresponded to 0.32% of the total financial resources available for the concerned projects.**⁵⁹ The cost of 20 UNODC evaluations in 2015/16, based on self-reported data by Programme Managers in ProFI, represent 0,23% of their total budgets. Although the PRP sample is not statistically representative of the full spectrum of UNODC projects,⁶⁰ the data above show that the share of financial resources currently spent on evaluations in UNODC is most likely less than 0.5% of the total available resources in the Special Purpose funds.

102. This finding would be welcome in itself, if UNODC evaluations fully met the expected quality standards with so little investment. This however, in the view of the PRP, does not fully hold true, as discussed in Section 5.4 and Annex 5. In addition, and **most importantly**, if the 33 projects reviewed by the PRP had directly transferred this 0.5% of their total budgets to IEU, the Unit would have had at its

⁵⁷ IEU's approach is to deploy balanced teams, including both international and national consultants.

⁵⁸ Although some economies of scale apply in the case of multi-member teams, the calculation was done considering that each consultant would cost US\$ 30,000.

⁵⁹ The total calculated expenditure for the 33 evaluations corresponded to 0.37% of the total financial resources available for the concerned projects net of the PSC.

⁶⁰ The PRP sample is representative of UNODC completed evaluations, not of UNODC universe of projects.

disposal an amount of US\$ 1 million, net of direct evaluation costs, to be used for better management, larger teams and therefore improved quality of the evaluations, in addition to being in the situation to broaden the scope of its work to cover other evaluation topics with strategic or corporate scope.⁶¹

103. With a centralized management of the resources for evaluation, the evaluation of projects with budgets below USD 1 million would also be easier to tackle. ProFi data shows that among the projects classified as on-going on 1 February 2016, 18% of these had budgets below US\$ 1 million, which is the threshold amount below which the estimated cost of an IPE would represent more than 3% of the budget.⁶² The PRP is fully aware that if these projects also deserve 'evaluative attention', this does not always need to be through an IPE. More cost-effective approaches can be adopted to avoid having to 'squeeze' disproportionate amounts of financial resources from relatively small initiatives (see section 5.2).

104. Last but not least, at the time of writing this report, there were still huge uncertainties about how Umoja will affect the allocation of financial resources to evaluation. The PRP cannot provide any guidance on these matters. Nevertheless, it appeared important to list the major concerns from the IEU's perspective:

- since 1 January 2016, BL 5700 has disappeared and there is no longer a dedicated line in project budgets for evaluation;
- all allocated budget must be spent within the financial year of allocation: this means that funds for evaluation should be allocated in the year when the evaluation should take place; should there be a decision to postpone, Programme Managers will have to learn to rapidly 'juggle' between budget lines;
- donors' contributions have to be linked to activity level; the multi-donor project model typical of UNODC means that late-incoming or long-contributing donors may be reluctant to accept that their funds will be more likely to be used for the evaluation of the programme.

105. In conclusion: although an accurate full analysis is missing of the total amount that UNODC spends on evaluations, i.e. staff costs plus the direct costs for IPEs and IDEs, **the PRP analysis shows that UNODC dedicates approximately 0.5% of its total financial resources to evaluation.** This amount is significantly below the internationally recognized standards. In the view of the PRP, this cannot be called '*a sustainable, effective and operationally independent evaluation unit*' as requested by CCPCJ and CND in 2009. This also appears to have implications on the quality and to some extent, on the credibility of the evaluations. In addition, the current mechanism for ensuring that sufficient resources are made available for both IPEs and IDEs is rather cumbersome and source of extensive negotiations between IEU and Programme Managers concerned. Lastly, as previously raised by JIU, the position of IEU Head should be established at D1 level, to harmonize with UN system practice and strengthen the gravitas and visibility of the function.

106. At the same time, the discussion in Section 3.3 above suggests that the opportunities for IEU to leverage additional softly earmarked contributions for staff or operational costs, are rather slim. Similarly, it is unlikely that requests for significant additional funds from either the RB or PSC budgets

⁶¹ In 2011, after several years of applying the same approach to humanitarian interventions, FAO Office of Evaluation extended to development projects a levy of 0.8% of project budgets to be transferred to the Office itself to backstop and conduct project evaluations. By the end of 2014, a project evaluation team of three staff members was fully funded through these resources and had allowed the in-depth management and backstopping of 22 project or cluster evaluations in the year. See http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/oed/docs/Evaluation_Docs/Guidelines/FAO_procedures_funding_project_evaluations_final.pdf

⁶² In the PRP sample, four projects (12% out of 33) belong to this group.

of the Office can be met. It appears that some alternative mechanism has to be developed, to ensure the sustainability of the evaluation function in UNODC, as suggested later in the report.

5 The evaluation process and its management

107. This section analyses in detail different aspects of the evaluation function in UNODC, with specific focus on IEU role and management, the evaluation process, from planning to use, the quality of evaluations conducted in UNODC and the relations between IEU and external partners. Given the breadth of issues raised under the Evaluation management umbrella, these have been partly analysed in other sections, namely: the issue of financial resources for evaluation has been discussed in the previous section; evaluation coverage is discussed in Section 5.2 along with Planning; presentation of evaluation products is discussed in Section 5.3, Evaluation follow-up and use; the development of evaluation tools and guidelines is discussed in Section 5.5, Evaluation Quality.

5.1 IEU and evaluation management

108. The IEU, currently comprising five staff members all located in UNODC Headquarters,⁶³ is a relatively small Unit considering its mandate. This notwithstanding, the Unit and its staff are well known and respected within UNODC and among the Member States representatives. Box 3 below provides a comparison of staffing levels between UNODC, UN-Women and UNEP.

Box 3. Comparison of Staffing levels for the evaluation offices/unit of UNODC, UN-Women and UNEP

	D1	P5	P4	P3	P2	IC	G7	G6	G5	G4
UNODC				UR				UR		
UN-WOMEN			*							
UNEP										

* (One P4 Evaluation Officer at headquarters, plus 5 Regional Evaluation Advisors)

Regular Budget Funded = , XB Funded =
 UR= Under recruitment at time of review
 IC= Individual Contractor (consultant)

109. All IEU members, are required by their job descriptions not to have any conflict of interest, have professional experience in evaluation and/or have attended courses in evaluation. As part of the UN Secretariat plans, staff members undergo at least five days of training every year. In 2016, all IEU staff who are not already accredited as Auditors, will attend a relevant training organized by IAEA. All staff members are highly committed to their work and to pursuing professional growth.

110. IEU staff members work well together and the atmosphere in the Unit is pleasant, open and collaborative. Communication is constant among members and all work as good team-players. All IEU staff appear to be working long hours, at the top of their capacity, with little room for improving their productivity, although there is also due attention to ensuring a good balance between private and professional life.

111. In UNODC, and in IEU as a consequence, there is no requirement to keep time-sheets with records of how much time is devoted to each different task. This means that no robust assessment can be made of the balance of efforts between evaluation work, backstopping, production of knowledge

⁶³ For one year, IEU had a Regional Evaluation Officer posted in Afghanistan. The position was cancelled when funds for UNODC programme in the country were significantly reduced.

products or other tasks. The only available indication is that some IEU staff consider devoting about 30% of their time to developing ‘evaluation culture’, including work with Programme Managers, in particular in the field, and supporting them in managing IPEs. However, no better analysis of the amount of time IEU staff devote to tasks that do not really fall within its remit, e.g. being the focal point for IMDIS and JIU is possible. Similarly, it is not possible for the PRP to ascertain how much time Programme Managers dedicate to the management of IPEs, including steps that could be considered as, falling within IEU’s mandate.

112. Indirect evidence of the focus of work in IEU and its change over time, which was strongly influenced by the Unit’s staffing capacity, is the number of completed evaluations. The total number of IDEs and IPEs completed in UNODC with published reports over the period 2011-2015 is shown in Box 3 below. The number of IDEs has grown strongly during the last year, while the number of IPEs has been more variable over time.

Box 4. Number of evaluation reports completed in the period 2011-2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
<i>In-depth</i>	2	4	3	7	11	27
<i>Project/programme</i>	22	14	14	22	11	83
Total	24	18	17	29	22	110

Source: IEU Web site, 30 January 2016

113. The PRP appreciates that ‘evaluation work’ is only one pillar of IEU’s work, as clearly explained in the Unit’s annual work-plans and progress reports. These are formally prepared for the project GLOH92, but in practice cover the whole work of the Unit. In 2014, the logframe for the project GLOH92 (see description later) went through a major update and since then has been regularly adjusted. In 2014 and 2015, the three outcomes were “Evaluation work”, “Evaluation culture” and “Evaluation normative tools”, with “Evaluation work” including the support to and conduct of evaluations; “Evaluation culture” encompassing capacity building, presentation of evaluations; and the last, focused on producing guidelines and tools in support of the other two outcomes.

114. The 2016 logframe introduces an Outcome on ‘Enhanced evaluation capacity leading to improved accountability...’, that makes reference to the 2014 UN General Assembly on National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD),⁶⁴ and the Sustainable Development Goals, in the wake of the International Year of Evaluation and in view of the Agenda 2030 commitment to country-led reviews and evaluations. This outcome encompasses outputs on both culture of accountability and evaluation, and on NECD.

115. IEU did engage in evaluation capacity building activities in 2014, in particular aiming at the development of a network of Evaluation Focal Points in UNODC. This output was funded through voluntary contributions and consisted of a number of workshops both in Headquarters and in the decentralized offices to develop the skills and competences in evaluation, of a number of UNODC programme staff. The effort was not highly effective: the high turn-over of staff in particular in the decentralized offices meant that already by late 2015, only one or two managers out of approximately 20 who had participated in the training were still working for UNODC. Moreover, the job-descriptions of participants were not adjusted for the new role, which meant that they had little time to act as Evaluation Focal Points in their own units. However, the PRP did interview a participant in the workshop, who, unlike other staff, has remained in post. He was highly appreciative of the experience

⁶⁴ A/RES/69/237, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2014 [on the report of the Second Committee (A/69/473)], 69/237. Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, 29 January 2015.

and thanks to repeated exposure to managing IPEs, acts as an informal Evaluation Focal Point for colleagues in his country-office.

116. The 2016 output on NECD consists of a pilot experience to develop the evaluation capacity within a national organization partner of UNODC. The pilot should be followed by a stock-taking exercise, on the basis of which it will be decided whether the initiative should be continued, expanded or terminated. No funds for this output were available yet as of mid-January 2016, although a donor had shown interest if IEU could submit a project proposal. The PRP has some doubts regarding IEU's decision to move in this direction and further diversify its work. Expanding the scope of work risks shifting the efforts of IEU's limited human resources away from its core mandate and from the need, stemming from the PRP's own assessment, to dedicate more resource and attention to 'evaluation work' proper in order to enhance its quality and credibility. **If NECD is to be further pursued by the IEU the PRP suggests a modest and cautious approach.**

117. With respect to IEU's work under the 'Evaluation tools Outcome', the Unit has produced over time a significant number of tools, guidelines and templates (see Section 5.4). An additional major achievement within this Outcome has been the development of an Evaluation Application in ProFI, which functions as repository for all evaluation reports, recommendations and their Follow-up Plans, Lessons Learned, as well as any record and communication for each and every evaluation. The first part of the module, developed to improve the management of IPEs, had become operational in 2013, whereas the larger data-base with recommendations and lessons learned for all evaluations, and also facilitating IDE management, was launched in 2015. Feedback from Programme Managers is very positive and the whole module appears user-friendly and highly efficient.

118. The IEU Outcome on 'Evaluation work' includes both the support to the management of IPEs and the direct management of IDEs. Until mid-2014, the UNODC evaluation function also included Participatory Self-Evaluations (PSEs), which consisted of a check-list of indicators against which Programme Managers were supposed to assess their own programmes before closure. The result of the self-assessment was to be shared and discussed with stakeholders, in the context of a workshop aimed at validating it. In practice, many PSEs did not include the workshop, were incomplete and the whole process often became a 'box-ticking' exercise. IEU and Senior Management agreed to abolish the modality. Some Programme Managers told the PRP that they regretted the decision, as they had found a value in the tool. It might be useful for IEU and Senior Management to clarify that nothing prevents Managers from applying the PSE tool to their own projects, on the understanding that this is not regarded as a substitute for an evaluation proper.

119. A key issue of relevance to both IDEs and IPEs is the selection of the consultant evaluators. The selection process per se follows Human Resources Management Service rules as well as IEU norms and standards, including requirements for extensive experience in evaluation and thematic issues relevant to UNODC mandate. IEU checks the CVs proposed by PMs and is responsible for their final endorsement. The selection of the consultant is often also linked to the financial resources available for the evaluation, and this step has frequently been referred to by both IEU and UNODC staff, to be a highly controversial moment in the evaluation process. To improve the quality of consultants recruited for evaluations, and after testing different approaches, IEU is systematically updating the roster with consultants who have worked for IEU. In the long run, this should increase access to experienced consultant evaluators.

120. The standard Evaluation Terms of Reference also include a declaration from consultants to ensure that there is no conflict of interest and consultants are screened against this. The mechanisms and measures to enforce the Code of Conduct for evaluators are included in the relevant section of the evaluation ToR template.

121. Also common to both IDEs and IPEs is the need to engage throughout the evaluation process, with the key stakeholders, including sharing findings and conclusions, draft reports and addressing their comments. The Core Learning Partners (CLP), elsewhere often called 'reference groups', have only rarely been active fora of discussion and interaction on the respective evaluations. IEU has already recognized that there is room for improving CLP's participation in the evaluation process and plans to pursue this in the immediate future.

122. With respect to IDEs only, Paragraph 37 of the Policy rules that country, regional, thematic and global programmes,⁶⁵ are evaluated through an IDE. Cross-cutting issues of corporate relevance would also be evaluated through IDEs. The IDE portfolio broadly corresponds with this requirement. Further, the Evaluation Policy states that '*IEU commissions, manages and implements this type of evaluation in consultation with respective managers, ensuring the overall quality, validity, relevance and usefulness of the evaluation deliverables.*'⁶⁶ IDEs are also the evaluations typically presented to FinGov, in side-events of the GBs and in dedicated presentations to Member States.

123. The process for an IDE is as follows: the first draft of the Terms of Reference is prepared by the Programme Manager (PM) based on a standard template; IEU then takes the lead for its finalisation, in consultation with the PM. IEU also shares a list of potential consultant evaluators with the PM and the decision is made normally by consensus with IEU having the last word in case of any conflict. IEU staff are systematically part of IDEs in the role of Manager and, insofar as possible, also team members; a role in which they actively participate in country missions, data gathering and report-writing.

124. Participation of evaluation units' staff as team members is common practice for many UNEG members and has the added value of making an in-depth knowledge about the Office directly available to the evaluation team. Obviously, this would become a problem if IEU staff members with the role of evaluators were recruited from within UNODC projects and programmes, as this would generate a conflict of interest.

125. When IEU's role is restricted to management of the evaluation, it still has a strong say on methods and typically dedicates close attention to the process and its products. In this model, all deliverables, including the inception report and the various draft reports, are first shared with IEU. In general, consultant evaluators reported that the interaction with IEU in the conduct of an IDE is quite intensive.

126. Overall, IDEs are conducted in line with UNEG N&S. The PRP noted a potential limitation to the scope of the evaluation as a consequence of delegating the preparation of the first draft ToRs to the Programme Managers. Complex evaluations like IDEs require extensive preparatory work to understand what the issues are to be assessed, gauge the scope at the right level and develop an adequate methodology.⁶⁷ This may be more difficult to achieve when the draft ToRs, although based on an IEU template, are de-facto prepared by a PM and focus, as inevitably happens in most cases, on operational aspects of the Programme. Reportedly, on one occasion IEU prepared the draft itself, but was not highly successful because in the process, important information and knowledge about the programme to be evaluated was not integrated. Other UNEG members tend to conduct a first round of in-depth discussions with PMs and other key stakeholders to canvass their views, and gather information on what should be the scope and the questions in the evaluation, before drafting the ToRs and sharing the document with PMs for further feedback and suggestions on the scope and the evaluation questions.

⁶⁵ This definition also includes flagship programmes run from Headquarters.

⁶⁶ Paragraph 51, UNODC Evaluation Policy, 2015

⁶⁷ A number of UNEG members call this phase 'evaluability assessment', although 'preparatory phase' is more accurate.

127. The Policy foresees a change in the funding model of IDEs which, however, is still under the control of Programme Managers due to the roll-out of UMOJA. No specific problems in this respect were mentioned to the PRP. Some IDE reports, however, mention lack of financial resources for more in-depth assessments, among the limitations faced by evaluations

128. With respect to IPEs, the Evaluation Policy states that the unit of analysis for IPEs is '*... an individual project designed to achieve specific objectives within specified resources, in an adopted time span and following an established plan of action.*'⁶⁸ The Policy states less stringent rules for the funds to be set aside for IPEs, as discussed already in Section 4.4., and instructs that '*Following detailed guidelines in the Evaluation Handbook, managers and independent consultants will work according to clearly assigned roles to conduct these evaluations.*'⁶⁹

129. IEU devoted energy and efforts to develop a step-by-step evaluation platform, available through its Web site, to manage the IPE process. This includes Standard Operating Procedures, guidelines, templates and tools, which provide significant support to UNODC staff who are engaged in the evaluation process both at Headquarters and in the field.

130. In theory, the direct role of IEU in IPEs consists of the Evaluation Quality Assurance (EQA) (see Section 5.4), which involves revising and clearing the draft ToRs prepared by the Programme Managers, clearing the consultant evaluator/s proposed again by the PMs on the basis of the CV, and clearing in second instance both draft inception and final reports. The PM's role is formally to revise the drafts in terms of factual corrections, although there is no control on possible communication between the PM and the consultant outside the ProFI module. IEU can, and did on a few occasions, terminate an evaluation and block the publication of the evaluation report when the quality of the final product was/is deemed too low.

131. In practice, IEU's support in the case of IPEs varies, depending on the PM, the consultant evaluator and the IEU staff responsible for the EQA. The PRP came across a range of different and sometimes contradictory views among stakeholders, about the control and EQA that IEU can actually exert on IPEs. IEU clearance of the consultants and various deliverables often takes the form of a relatively light exercise due to lack of staff time available for detailed review. The feedback from the consultant evaluators interviewed was that interactions with IEU in the case of IPEs are minimal, and this was further confirmed in the open-ended responses to the Questionnaire Survey. As a minimum, the management styles and degrees of involvement show considerable heterogeneity.

132. The PRP's observation of the process identified two steps where easy and relatively cost-neutral changes in the process could enhance the independence and credibility of IPEs. The first is the relationship between IEU and the consultants recruited by PMs to conduct an IPE. IEU sends a standard message with a set of documents, including a declaration about absence of conflict of interest, but often this is the only direct contact between IEU and the consultants. This was recognized by IEU to be a weakness in the process that could be easily tackled with systematic briefings of the consultants by IEU. This would have the advantage of strengthening the support and guidance provided directly to the consultant and contribute to developing a sense of mutual engagement between IEU and the consultants, as well as accountability to IEU.

133. Another moment where the process is at risk of interference is the revision of inception and final draft reports. Communication between the Programme Managers and consultants occurs outside

⁶⁸ Paragraph 37, Op.cit.

⁶⁹ Paragraph 52, Op.cit.

ProFI, and is not recorded. Comments are, apparently, made directly into the reports, including the evaluators' responses, as IEU has not developed a template for recording the whole comment-trail. IEU stated that potential interference on the findings and conclusions are usually identified, however both the PRP's own review of 33 evaluation reports and the narrative responses to the survey questionnaire for evaluation team leaders and members, point to some problematic cases in this respect.

134. In this regard, the Quality Assessment run by the PRP of a sample of evaluation reports (see Section 5.4) identified three IPE reports with a noticeable level of internal inconsistency, i.e. evidence and findings described poor performance of the programme, but the conclusions were positive. In a fourth case, the Executive Summary was written in a completely different style. Although nothing tangible can be inferred from these observations, some legitimate doubts about potential risks of interference with, or influence on, the findings and conclusions of the evaluators are inevitable.

135. A small and easy improvement on these steps in the process, that could have a strong result on final credibility, would be the default sharing of the drafts with both PMs and IEU at the same time. The former would be asked to provide feedback on the accuracy of information, whereas IEU could comment on the structure, robustness of evidence and analysis, flow of conclusions and recommendations.

136. Nevertheless, the IPE mechanism is such that in practice, Programme Managers play a significant role in the management of these evaluations. This has two main drawbacks:

- it engenders potential conflicts of interest for Programme Managers who have to manage the evaluation process of their own work, from drafting the ToRs including the key questions, through proposing evaluation consultants and organizing evaluation team schedules, to revising inception and draft evaluation reports; and
- it requires from Programme Managers a set of professional tasks that significantly exceed what would normally be expected to be part of the average 'evaluation culture' of any Manager who is not a professional evaluator; in other words, the majority of IPEs in UNODC are managed by professional staff who perform this work intermittently and whose terms of reference and required competences and skills, do not include evaluation.

137. Overall, in the view of the PRP, the IPE management process often has limited independence and represents a risk for the credibility of the evaluations, and is possibly one of the main causes of the quality limitations identified by the PRP⁷⁰, as discussed later in the report. For many other UNEG members, this type of exercise would be called a 'review', would fall outside the direct responsibility of the evaluation unit and would not be regarded as an evaluation.

138. The current IPE mechanism, further compounded by the large demand for evaluations to meet the target of 100% coverage thus clashes with a number of other requirements and principles: the request of the GBs for an independent evaluation function; IEU efforts to prove its credibility through the independence and quality of its work; and UNEG-wide efforts to professionalize the evaluation function. Lastly, in consideration of the high transaction costs between IEU and Programme Managers in negotiating evaluation funds, methods and consultants, it is legitimate to question the cost-efficiency of the process.

139. The PRP sees two possible solutions to the debate of quality versus coverage, based on the recognition that the current IPE model needs improvement. In both cases, this would entail focusing the independent IEU evaluative attention on a number of selected, strategic IPEs wherein IEU would

⁷⁰ OIOS and JIU have also assessed the quality of UNODC evaluation reports; the summative results were quite positive. Further detail on this issue is provided in para. 180 of this report. (See page 40 of the following link for the OIOS assessment) http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc_id=1473&file_id=1931

ensure closer back-stopping and quality assurance. This would be complemented by two different options. The first is that IEU maintains the 100% coverage principle but implements it through a more diversified approach, discussed in the following section. Or, secondly, the request for 100% coverage would be met through final project assessments, undertaken through Internal Project Reviews (IPRs), fully managed by Programme Managers. These would be different from the terminated Participatory Self-Assessments, by involving external consultants and the process would largely follow the steps of current IPEs. The IEU would promote the use of templates and guidance for IPRs and selectively provide backstopping / quality assurance using a risk-based approach⁷¹. The IEU would introduce 'incentives' for IPRs to be conducted to the desired standards through the conduct and transparent disclosure of quality assessments, undertaken by IEU, for a sample of completed IPRs each year.

140. Finally, the Questionnaire Survey explored other aspects of the evaluation process, in addition to those raised elsewhere in this report.⁷² Responses to these were as follows:

- i. Briefings by IEU were appreciated as being of adequate or good quality in the case of IDEs, whereas consultants noted that only few took place in the case of IPEs, as discussed above;
- ii. Only a minority of respondents for both IDEs and IPEs, 20% and 15% respectively, received any guidance from IEU on the subject of the evaluation, although when it happened, it was assessed as good;
- iii. Debriefings in HQ after completing the data-gathering phase were considered useful or better, by almost 50% of respondents for both IDEs and IPEs; and
- iv. The roles of IEU, Evaluation Managers, team members and Programme Managers were clear for 40-50% of respondents in the case of IDEs, and for 48-65% of respondents for IPEs;
- v. With reference to the Human Resources management function, contractual procedures were poor or inadequate in almost 20% of the cases for both types of evaluations;

141. The positive feedback from the survey, in particular for IDEs, provides useful food-for-thought and suggestions to IEU, when revisiting its evaluation procedures and approaches.

5.2 Evaluation planning and coverage

142. Paragraph 14 of UNODC Evaluation Policy states that *'The biennial work plan is adopted by IEU following full consultation with Member States and UNODC management based on several criteria including, i.a., relevance, budget, accountability, risk priorities, innovation, replicability potential and evaluation history...'*. The Policy foresees the necessary degree of flexibility in the work-plans, to accommodate changing circumstances that may affect priorities or feasibility of evaluations.

143. In 2009, CCPCJ and CND took note *'...of the draft workplan of the independent evaluation unit for the biennium 2010-2011 as a transitional step towards the re-establishment of the unit, decides that the workplan should be implemented without delay, and requests the unit to report to Member States on follow-up in that regard'*.⁷³ From 2010 onward, and since 2014 in a more consistent and regular manner, IEU has been sharing its work-plans with MSs through FinGov, after endorsement by Senior Management.

144. In April 2014, IEU sought suggestions from both Member States and Senior Management through an anonymous questionnaire, about their evaluation priorities for the biennium 2014-15. The

⁷¹ Projects of low value or that have already received substantial evaluative attention would be deemed lower accountability risk. Projects that have PMs that have been through evaluations and are acknowledged to have been results- oriented (i.e. already have adopted a results/evaluation culture) may also be regarded by IEU as lower accountability risk and therefore accountability needs could be met through IPRs..

⁷² See Annex 4 for details on sample and responses.

⁷³ Op.cit.

questionnaire had an acceptable rate of responses from Member States, but too low from Management to be representative. In late 2015, IEU sent out a new questionnaire that also included a tentative list of evaluations based on ProFi data about the evaluation pipeline, i.e. the list of projects due for evaluation because of approaching closing date. As of mid-January 2016, the responses had yet to be analysed, although IEU had noticed that the response rate from Member States had been low.

145. During the PRP interviews, a number of Member States representatives confirmed having received the questionnaire at the time of the 2015 Reconvened Meeting. This meant that although they appreciated the opportunity to contribute, many of them had no time to respond until the deadline had passed. Possibly, this was an important factor contributing to the low MS response rate.

146. Managers responded along similar lines, with appreciation for the initiative but limited time to respond. One of them suggested that face-to-face meetings could have been more productive, possibly as part of regular IEU-Management discussions on evaluations. Given the size of UNODC, and the prevalent corporate culture of direct interactions, it might indeed be wise to use a variety of means to gain input into the work plan e.g. holding meetings with all Division Directors and Section Chiefs, and with Regional Offices, rather than relying solely on a questionnaire.

147. Paragraph 48 of the Policy also clarifies that *'all projects and programmes in UNODC are to be evaluated,⁷⁴ the planning for evaluation in line with UNODC evaluation policy and handbook is the responsibility of Project and Programme Managers.'* The objective of reaching 100% coverage of all projects through an evaluation every four years was introduced in 2014, irrespective of budget size and focus of each project. When this is added to the typical scope of IDEs discussed above (see Section 5.1), it emerges that:

- the criteria in the Policy are eventually applied only to a limited number of cases, to decide whether a project should go through an IPE or an IDE; arguably, fund availability for evaluation becomes the real factor in this decision; and
- evaluation planning in UNODC mainly focuses on integrating evaluation provisions in new and extended projects and in ensuring that evaluations are conducted in a timely manner.

148. This does not undermine the value of consultation with Member States and Managers to build ownership and interest for evaluations early on in the process. In the view of the PRP, the questionnaire-based approach with Member States is very interesting and worth pursuing and building upon. This could become an even more constructive process if it were followed by **a plenary discussion in FinGov and endorsement by the Reconvened Meeting of the final biennial work-plan** that would grant the work-plan and IEU a stronger status.

149. Programme Managers are requested to prepare their own Annual Evaluation Work-Plans, as the responsibility for planning is fully delegated to them.⁷⁵ Experience so far, according to IEU, is that evaluation processes often start too late to allow proper planning, and without sufficient funding. On the other hand, if an extension is granted in the last six months of a project's life, the planned evaluation automatically gets postponed; this means that Managers may also be right in delaying the launching of an evaluation process if they have any hint that an extension of the project might be approved. This situation creates a sizable evaluation pipeline every year, i.e. evaluations that should be conducted but may eventually be postponed. Although an evaluation could be useful in the case of extensions granted for the formulation of new phases, a mandatory evaluation before extending any project might well result in 'over-kill'.

⁷⁴ The PRP suggests that this might be re-worded in any future policy revision; *'all projects and programmes in UNODC are subject to evaluation'*

⁷⁵ A move to IPRs would not represent a major reform. IEU would not be concerned about the timing of IPRs or the dynamic pipeline.

150. Since the ProFi Evaluations module went live in May 2015, the timing of every single project/programme evaluation as per the respective project/programme document or revision is recorded in IEU's portfolio analysis and is therefore readily available. This should allow: a more realistic estimate of the likelihood of follow-on projects after a final evaluation; improved planning and more timely launching of each evaluation process.

151. As the 2014 rule of mandatory evaluation could not be retro-active, at the time of the PR some old projects were still on-going that did not include evaluation provisions and could not be evaluated. Similarly, other projects had planned Participatory Self-Evaluations and did not have funds for an IPE proper. Lastly, as donors' requirements for evaluation vary, the project funding pattern in different regions will always have an impact on the extent of the evaluation coverage in the different regions. As of early 2016, IEU considered that approximately 70% of the total project portfolio since 2012/13 had been evaluated.

152. According to IEU, the policy of 100% coverage stems from several reasons, all of them very legitimate. First, the observation that UNODC has limited supervision of projects, and therefore evaluation is often the first opportunity for a project to fall "in the radar" of an external eye. Second, the development of an evaluation culture in the Office required a strong signal from Management that evaluation was "equal for all". And lastly, there was a request from Member States for full coverage. A mix of IPEs, and IPRs would still meet these concerns and foster a results culture based on learning and accountability.

153. During its interviews with Member States representatives, however, the PRP heard a few of them raising doubts on the necessity for 100% coverage, whereas most of them and several among Senior Managers, expressed interest for different types of evaluations, pitched at a higher level of analysis than current IPEs or IDEs. Among the various examples of possible evaluation themes mentioned, were cross-cutting issues such as gender equality in the work of UNODC and in recruitment; evaluations of Sub-programmes such as Transnational Crimes; or corporate policies, such as Full Cost Recovery.

154. In practice, the great majority of projects in UNODC undergo a final IPE, although in the case of projects longer than four years, mid-term evaluations are also proposed and, if possible, budgeted for. In some cases, clusters of projects were evaluated through IPEs or IDEs, with mixed results. In the case of Afghanistan, evaluating the cluster simply meant piling up evaluation reports; in Colombia, on the contrary, three connected programmes were jointly evaluated and this worked well.

155. The 100% coverage requirement also means that projects for which an evaluation would be irrelevant or not feasible, are subject to evaluation and therefore consume scarce IEU staff time for a marginal 'evaluation return' e.g. a project that funds the biennial meetings of one of UNODC Conventions. The usefulness of such an evaluation, isolated from an assessment of UNODC work for that Convention, appears debatable. This would be a clear case where an Internal Project Review would be largely sufficient for accountability purposes. A mix of IPEs and IPRs would still yield comprehensive information for meta-level assessments.

156. Clearly, budget size should not be the sole criterion for deciding whether an evaluation should be conducted, as the evaluation of a small pilot projects could be highly effective and useful for validation, upscaling and visibility purposes or may have high strategic relevance in the case of emerging issues. At the same time, **full evaluation coverage may be achieved in different ways:** through fully-fledged evaluations of each and every project, as the case in UNODC now; or by clustering projects in the same geographical area and within the same thematic programme, as indeed was the case in Colombia with three Alternative Development projects; and / or by evaluating all the

projects that contribute to the same strategic sub-programme, e.g. all that has been implemented under the Crime prevention umbrella.

157. Furthermore, the contribution from different types of evaluations to the evaluative knowledge generation for organizational learning and accountability should also be considered. For example, final evaluations have a strong role on accountability both in terms of assessing performance and accounting for the use of staff time and financial resources, whereas their usefulness for learning may be limited unless the evaluation questions are very clearly focused on these aspects and sufficient attention is devoted to diffusing results. Mid-term project evaluations provide a rich feedback to the projects themselves, but may have limited utility beyond that. And IDEs should really represent opportunities, as their name suggests, for addressing much broader, and possibly cross-cutting thematic and corporate issues that could not be analysed through IPEs.

158. **Thus, the PRP considers that IEU should be more selective and conduct a more strategic analysis of the project portfolio to identify trends, areas of risk and emerging issues. There is a need to establish a clearer and stronger priority-setting process, to ensure that the mix of evaluations to be closely supported in IEU's workplan, has a balance of accountability-oriented evaluations, learning-oriented ones (e.g. MTEs) and those that address both learning and accountability purposes e.g. large projects / programmes with follow on phases.** This should be accompanied by a systematic classification of projects at the time of approval and extension, and by the promising consultation approach launched by IEU in 2014. Such an approach might in fact prove to be more cost-effective than attempting full project / programme coverage, at a time of resource-scarcity.

5.3 Evaluation follow-up and use

159. Evaluations, according to UNEG N&S, have to be circulated and diffused among stakeholders once completed and need a Management Response and an implementation plan for each recommendation. Also, the proof of evaluation utility is when findings and recommendations are taken into account in the formulation of new policies, strategies, programmes and projects. The Terms of Reference for the PR thus focused on the mechanisms in place with respect to the follow-up procedures, and to inform and communicate about evaluations, as well as on the various evaluation products and use thereof in UNODC. This section presents and discusses the PRP's findings on these topics.

5.3.1 Evaluation follow-up

160. Once evaluations are completed, UNODC Managers are requested to prepare what is called the Evaluation Follow-up Plan (EFP), wherein they state whether each recommendation is accepted, fully or partially, or rejected, and what will be the actions taken for its implementation.⁷⁶ IEU issued an adequate and user-friendly template that includes all necessary information. EFPs became mandatory for IDEs in 2012, and in late 2014 for IPEs. This means that too little data was available at the time of the PRP, to assess any meaningful trend in the implementation rate of recommendations. Also, EFPs are not part of the evaluation reports and are not publicly available as such, although they are accessible to internal stakeholders including Permanent Representations, through ProFi and in the case of IDEs, they are presented at FinGov with the evaluation reports.

161. In the case of IDEs, Management also has the opportunity, though not the obligation, to express its views on the evaluation process, the report and its recommendations, through the

⁷⁶ UNEG calls 'Management Response' a document that corresponds to UNODC's Evaluation Follow-up Plans plus the introductory overall Management's opinion about the evaluation. MRs are considered in UNEG, mandatory for all kinds of evaluation.

Management Response which is basically a narrative text included at the beginning of the respective evaluation report. Typically, MRs are positive and tend not to challenge or criticize the evaluations. In consideration of the small additional effort that preparing the narrative text requires once the EFP is prepared, **it would appear reasonable to harmonize the Management response template across all evaluations and enhance the transparency and public access to these documents.**

162. In 2015 IEU launched through ProFI, an on-line repository of Evaluation Recommendations and Lessons Learned. The application includes a trigger for Programme Managers to provide information on progress in implementing recommendations, starting one year after finalising the evaluation report, and will be active until the statement '*action terminated*' or '*action completed*' is included. IEU's role in the process is limited, for the time being, to controlling the clarity of the statements on progress. The current EFP requires both start dates and end dates for management actions. In the experience of the PRP, establishing a fixed deadline by which implementation of actions agreed in response to a recommendation be complete, greatly enhances accountability. Usually, a two-year period allows sufficient time to tackle most types of recommendation, even at a high strategic level. All recommendations being 'closed' after this time-period with the level of implementation recorded (e.g. 'not completed' or 'partially completed').

163. As of January 2016, it was still early days to assess the extent of compliance and of progress in the implementation of recommendations and other trends. Nevertheless, this is a significant step forward in contributing to developing a sense of accountability on evaluation results and the system appeared to be highly effective and useful. The database has already been put to good use: a UNODC consultant evaluator reported that in 2015, he could use the information available in the data-base from previous evaluations in the region where he was conducting a final evaluation, as an evaluative baseline.

164. The feedback canvassed by the PRP on these steps in the evaluation process indicate room for improvement on the following:

- a. **some Member States are not well informed on the follow-up process** and would like to be better informed, including on how IEU monitors follow-up on the evaluations;
- b. Management in Headquarters acknowledges that **follow-up, in particular of IPEs, is not optimal and** an effort would be required in this sense, to enhance accountability.

165. IEU staff are indeed well aware that the next step would be assessing the veracity of these progress reports and statements. This would clearly require additional resources.⁷⁷ A simpler approach to this challenge, already partly adopted in some UNODC evaluations, is the integration of a request to assess the extent of implementation of the recommendations of the first or mid-term evaluation in the Terms of Reference of a second or final evaluation. This has clearly some limitations, but it is a first step towards developing longer-term accountability on evaluation use.

5.3.2 Evaluation products and use

166. UNODC has adopted the full-disclosure of evaluation reports since 2010, as also clearly stated in the Evaluation Policy.⁷⁸ This was highly appreciated by all stakeholders and the PRP itself could verify how easily accessible all reports were from IEU and UNODC Web site pages.

⁷⁷ The only example known to the PRP was the FAO Office of Evaluation which in the period 2012-2014, ran Validation processes of the Follow-up Reports for a few selected, highly visible evaluations of corporate strategies. The process consisted of recruiting a consultant who had had no involvement in the original evaluation nor in the implementation of its recommendations, to assess progress on selected key recommendations. The validation report was presented to the concerned Governing body at the same time as Management was resending its Follow-up report. Overall cost was in the order of one person/month of consultancy fee, plus travel to Headquarters for a week.

⁷⁸ See Paragraphs 60, 61, 62 of the UNODC evaluation Policy, 2015.

167. IEU believes in good communication and takes it very seriously. This means that the reported 10-15 presentations per year within UNODC only, including for FinGov, side-events and Executive Committee, absorb a significant amount of staff time.⁷⁹ By way of comparison, most other evaluation units in the UN Secretariat make far fewer formal presentations to MSs. This level of communication and engagement seems to pay back in terms of profile within the Office, though the scarcity of staff resources for other evaluative tasks, may require some re-thinking about the opportunity costs associated with this approach.

168. The main evaluation products in UNODC are: evaluation reports; evaluation briefs of IDEs, which are two-pagers synthesising information about the evaluation and its findings, conclusions and recommendations; presentations to FinGov, Executive Committee and other partners; an Evaluation Newsletter (one issue so far); an Evaluation Meta-analysis (see below). All are available on IEU Web site page, easily accessible.

169. Member States, through the IEU questionnaire in early 2015, provided quite diverse opinions on evaluation products and dissemination. There seemed to be less interest for individual report presentations and more for consolidated analysis of evaluation reports. A preference was stated for evaluation synthesis, consolidated reports of findings and recommendations and meta-evaluations. This was also confirmed through the PRP's interviews.

170. The Evaluation Meta-analysis issued by IEU in June 2015 was prepared anticipating the request of Member States for this type of product. The analysis was issued as an information document, with no request for an Evaluation Follow-up Plan nor a Management Response, and was presented at FinGov as such. The PRP found full evidence that it had been well received by both Senior Management and Member States and generated interest and discussions. With some adjustments,⁸⁰ the Meta-analysis represents an excellent model for the biennial report on the status of the evaluation function in UNODC to be presented to the Governing Bodies and Senior Management (see Section 4.2), as well as for other analyses of evaluation findings. However, in the view of the Panel, a mandatory Management Response would have raised the profile of the document and its impact.

171. The Analysis is based on 90 evaluation reports, including 76 IPEs and 14 IDEs, published in the period January 2011-December 2014 which all together contain 1003 recommendations, 834 findings, and 445 lessons learned. The methodology was quite articulate and appropriate. The document is well structured, with extensive infographics that easily convey the messages, including on Good Practices to encourage organizational learning. The document also takes the opportunity to conduct some self-assessment of IEU's performance in integrating a Gender Equality perspective in evaluations. **This effort, that would deserve more visibility in the Executive Summary and Overall Conclusions, enhances the credibility and robustness of the analysis. Similar self-assessments could be conducted of other aspects of the evaluation process and its products, for example, how recommendations and Lessons Learned are formulated, etc.**

172. With respect to the use made of evaluation reports, Member States representatives confirmed that to some extent, evaluations are one of the elements contributing to decisions about further investment or dis-investment in given programmes. In addition, their perception was that in general, UNODC managers do take evaluation findings and recommendations into account, but that the process is uneven across the Office, which remains a challenge. IEU itself considers that UNODC absorption capacity of evaluations and related recommendations is at risk. With the aim of reducing

⁷⁹ Based on the information received by IEU staff themselves, the Unit devotes 2-3 person/days to each presentation. This amounts to almost two months/person in a year.

⁸⁰ The document would have benefitted from in-depth editing, to enhance readability and use, and therefore overall value.

the work-load that implementation of recommendations imply, IEU is structuring evaluation recommendations in two groups, Key and Important.

173. Within the Office, management's views on the use of evaluations varied, as follows:

- the positive example of the HIV/AIDS Global Programme was highlighted, where the evaluation recommendations were being integrated into the on-going programme even before the evaluation had been finalized;
- several examples were made of programmes that integrated evaluation recommendations to a good extent in their new phases, including Terrorism Prevention, Maritime Crime, Human Trafficking and the second generation of Regional Programmes; also, a 'positive' example was mentioned of two programmes that were terminated because the respective evaluations had shown that returns did not justify the investments;
- the large majority of Senior and Programme/Project Managers interviewed, stated that evaluations had been useful and their intention to take into account evaluation findings and recommendations, whenever possible;
- the IEU questionnaires to UNODC Field representatives and to Programme Managers after completion of evaluations, although not statistically significant, indicated an overall appreciation of the '*usability of evaluation recommendations and findings*' in the respective regions, as well as the universal sharing, or intention to, of the reports with various groups of stakeholders, including for fund-raising purposes;⁸¹
- few managers stated that evaluations were not useful due to the low quality of recommendations; and
- a concern was voiced about low rate of follow-up of IPE findings and recommendations.

174. A recurrent issue raised in interviews and in IEU questionnaires alike, mostly with reference to IPEs, is the 'missed opportunity' to integrate findings and recommendations into new projects when an evaluation is final and no additional extensions or similar initiatives are financed. The PRP's experience is that many final project evaluations in the UN system do indeed risk being under-used, if not downright falling in the void, for two main reasons: i) the directly concerned managers move on to other assignments and the concerned organization has no mechanism for 'managing the knowledge' generated by the specific project experience, including its evaluation; and ii) the evaluation questions in the ToRs and the report remain by definition highly focused on the specific project and miss the opportunity to expand and tackle other issues, related to either the context or corporate-level policies and procedures, that could eventually feed into periodic evaluation meta-analysis.

175. The Meta-Analysis issued by IEU in 2015 helps to address some of these common problems. In addition, both reasons for under-use could be mitigated by IEU, at least to some extent. In the first case, as indeed reportedly already happens, when IEU staff clear new or extended project documents, they bring to the attention of Programme Managers lessons learned and/or recommendations stemming from previous evaluations or evaluations of comparable projects⁸². Also, very importantly, a 2013 UNODC Inter-Office Memorandum by the ED required that thematic programmes integrate changes stemming from evaluations.⁸³

176. With respect to the evaluation questions in the ToRs of final evaluations, as discussed later in the report, the main weakness identified by the PRP is the limited extent of tailoring IPE key questions

⁸¹ It is highly likely that some of the managers interviewed by the PRP had also responded to the questionnaire, thus the two groups cannot be added.

⁸² And /or a requirement to articulate lessons learned from previous projects could be introduced into UNODC project document formats.

⁸³ M14/2013, Conceptualization, approval and review of thematic programmes, 13 September 2013.

to the specificities of the programme and to the timing of the evaluations, due to the IPE management process and gaps / variability in the Evaluation Quality Assurance mechanism.

177. A discussion on how to establish or improve Knowledge Management in UNODC is beyond the PRP's mandate. With respect to the focus of final IPEs, on the contrary, the PRP sees that IEU can play a stronger role in improving the relevance and quality of evaluative evidence for corporate Knowledge Management. This is discussed in the next sub-section. In any case, the ProFi database on Recommendations and Lessons Learned can contribute to a more intensive use of evaluation reports and Senior Managers have expressed to the PRP, their interest for 'digging into it' for information.

178. Last but not least, IEU has also recently introduced a number of tools that are collectively called Results-Based Management for evaluation and include both qualitative assessments of evaluations/evaluation function and monitoring tools about evaluation coverage and follow-up, as well as the project portfolio analysis. These tools will allow IEU to receive feedback from various groups of stakeholders on the quality and usefulness of evaluations, as well as to extract, compare and analyse information from larger number of evaluations to provide evidence at a higher level of consolidation.

5.4 Evaluation quality

179. The Terms of Reference for the Peer Review and its Normative Framework locate the area of Evaluation Quality within the principles of Credibility and Utility, and encompass in it, all aspects of the evaluation cycle: the quality of its design, including methods, criteria and indicators, integration of Human Rights and Gender Equality perspectives and inclusiveness of the process; the credibility and independence of the evaluators; the breadth of the evidence, the robustness of the findings, conclusions and recommendations in the reports as well as their clarity and readability; the views of the final users on the quality. This sub-section discusses the key findings and conclusions that emerged from the PRP assessment of these aspects. A more detailed assessment of this topic is included in the report as Annex 5.

180. Quality of evaluations has always been a core concern of the UN evaluation functions and the external reviews of UNODC were not an exception. Back in 2009, OIOS found that *'the quality of project and thematic evaluation reports and their use'* was robust, although there was a gap with respect to the analysis of impact.⁸⁴ JIU in 2010 stressed that IEU had to produce high-quality evaluation reports as part of its 'shared responsibility' for the evaluation function. In 2010/11 and in 2012/13, OIOS through its Scorecards Assessment, ranked the quality of UNODC evaluation reports as 'Good'. In 2013, JIU in its Evaluation Maturity Index assessed the quality of UNODC evaluation reports as 'medium overall', with variations and significant improvements⁸⁵. **The PRP heard overall appreciation for the quality of evaluation reports from Member States representatives and UNODC Managers.**

181. From 2011 onward, IEU systematically included UNEG and UNODC quality standards as benchmarks for its evaluation outputs within its work-plans. The internal Evaluation Quality Assurance (EQA) process of evaluation reports has been a constant in IEU's work, clearly depending on the Unit's staffing capacity. As of 2014, quality assessments of evaluation reports were also included as indicators and targets in IEU logframes.

182. Along the same lines, IEU has, over the years, produced a wide range of guidelines and templates to harmonize evaluation processes and products and mainstream quality standards across IPEs and IDEs. The feedback from consultant evaluators on these, however, was positive only for half or less of the respondents, while most among the others stated they had not used them. This raises

⁸⁴ OIOS, Op.cit.

⁸⁵ The PRP notes that both the OIOS and JIU studies did not disclose the analysis underpinning these judgments.

some concerns about the relevance and cost-effectiveness of the efforts dedicated to this area of work. In late 2015, following the recommendations of an external Quality Assessment exercise (see below), IEU also launched a complete revision of its Evaluation Handbook, to further improve the quality of the evaluation process.⁸⁶ **In light of the feedback from the consultants, IEU should possibly consider broadening inputs to this revision, by including more evaluation practitioners in the process.**

183. Quality of evaluations is also well integrated in the 2015 Evaluation Policy, where it is mentioned several times: as a result of transparency in the evaluation process; in stressing the importance of quality standards in the evaluation process; as part of IEU role to ensure the quality of IDEs, and by foreseeing possible external and independent quality assurance mechanisms of evaluation reports. Furthermore, the Policy states that evaluation in UNODC is conducted by the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, namely relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, and also uses the additional criteria of partnerships and Gender and Human Rights. Programme Management is also typically included in the templates for Terms of Reference and reports, as well as Innovation as an optional criterion.

184. Two IEU staff are responsible for the EQA of IPEs, with a third staff member responsible for EQA of IPEs in one linguistic area, and of IDEs.⁸⁷ As differences always exist in how judgements are made, IEU developed formal checklists for the assessment of the various reports. It was also stated that an EQA is always done in pairs. IEU procedures for EQA include the revision of evaluation ToRs, inception reports and draft final reports and IPEs can be discontinued if the quality does not meet minimum standard requirements. This happened three times since 2014.

185. In 2015, IEU recruited, with softly earmarked funds, an External Team of two consultants to conduct a Quality Assessment of 33 evaluation reports issued in the period mid-2013-April 2015. The overall quality of the reports was assessed as 'Good', over a four-point scale, with two reports assessed as Very Good and none Unsatisfactory. The parameters that were scored the highest were Presentation and structure, Findings and Conclusions; at the other end of the spectrum, the lowest scoring went to Purpose and Scope. The synthesis report was presented at FinGov, but the report is not publicly available.

186. The PRP decided to conduct its own assessment with a very similar framework as the External Team's, though articulated over a six-point scale.⁸⁸ The assessment sets the quality bar high, expecting conformity with accepted international good practice. A sample of 33 randomly-selected evaluation reports that included 12 IDEs and 21 IPEs, within a total of 106 issued over the period 2011-2015, were reviewed.⁸⁹ **A major finding was that evaluation quality improved over time**; IEU stronger capacity in terms of staff, the development of guidelines and template to support both evaluation managers and the EQA, and possibly a growing 'evaluation culture' in the Office, all seem to have contributed to this. Additional key findings were:

- i. The average overall rating was 'Good' for two evaluations, 'Sufficient' for 11, 'Insufficient' for 18 and 'Poor' for two. The average overall rating for the whole sample was 'Insufficient';

⁸⁶ In November 2015, the PRP reviewed each and every IEU guideline and template. These however were no longer 'valid' by January 2016, as IEU started working on its new Handbook, which will have a completely new structure and integrate new tools and templates. Thus, the PRP only shared verbally with IEU its observations on the 'old' guidelines and templates.

⁸⁷ As of early 2016, also another staff member is contributing to this task.

⁸⁸ See Annex 6 for the results of the assessment and the related framework. The PRP shared the detailed assessment of each evaluation with IEU.

⁸⁹ There were differences in the rankings by the PRP and the External Team, discussed more in detail in the Annex 5. Main reasons were likely to be: the inclusion of older evaluation reports in the PRP sample, the use of an analytical framework with standards introduced by IEU only in more recent years, the scoring scale that was changed from a four-point to a six-point scale, and the unavoidable difference in human judgment.

- ii. The parameters that were rated on average as 'Sufficient' for the whole sample were Presentation and Completeness, Executive Summary, Background of Project evaluated, Evaluation findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations. Methodology was rated 'Insufficient' at the level of the whole sample, with internal differences across sub-groups;
- iii. Evaluation quality improved over time, the average rating for overall report quality for 2014-2015 was 'Sufficient'.
- iv. The parameters with better performance in both assessments were Findings and Conclusions. These are obviously the core essence of an evaluation and their positive ranking confirm the overall credibility of IEU's work and the soundness of the evaluation function in UNODC;
- v. Weaknesses in the presentation and formulation of evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons learned, suggest a combination of insufficient professional experience among the consultant evaluators, and / or lack of time in IEU to follow up closely on the draft reports;
- vi. Many reports were found to be poorly written in terms of English language and would have greatly benefitted from editorial revision.

187. A separate discussion is required for the parameter Human Rights and Gender Equality, which received very low scoring by the PRP. This had also been noted by the External Team and is a recurrent feature of many evaluation units across the UN. In the case of UNODC, it strongly suggests that guidance to evaluation teams on these aspects is not sufficient and that the EQA process is not capturing the weaknesses in the teams and reports on these issues. Some progress was noted by the PRP over time, in particular in the Terms of Reference that in more recent evaluations, all included Human Rights and Gender Equality questions. There is no doubt however that this criterion still requires significant efforts by IEU, including on its internal capacity to integrate these aspects into evaluations, to achieve the minimum quality standards. It may also suggest that such considerations also need to be factored into UNODC interventions at the project design stage.

188. In-depth attention is also required with respect to the overall scoring as 'Insufficient' of the parameters Scope and Purpose, that stem from weaknesses in the process of preparation of the Terms of Reference for IDEs and IPEs alike and in their overall quality. Main issues were the lack of both clear objectives and over-arching questions, highly generic, and excessive number of evaluation questions and only vague methodological guidance and for the consultation process with stakeholders, including IEU in the case of IPEs. The PRP has already noted earlier in the report, the need for a different approach to the preparation of IDE ToRs and for better tailored evaluation questions in final project evaluations, to enable a more effective use of this type of evaluations for broader corporate learning. In this respect, there seems to be a general consensus among the PRP, consultant evaluators and IEU to some extent, that this is a step in the evaluation process in UNODC that requires dedicated attention and improvement.

189. Most importantly, the PRP analysed the difference in the quality of IDEs and IPEs. This led to the key finding that **IDEs systematically rated as being of higher quality than IPEs, which is a very positive finding overall for the evaluation function in UNODC**, as the number of IDEs over time is on the increase and the level of IEU control over IDEs is much higher. Nevertheless, this also raises additional concerns on the efficiency and effectiveness of the current management and EQA systems for IPEs. Actual causes are difficult to attribute, possible causes could include:

- the checklists and guidance documents informing the EQA process need strengthening;
- the approach within IEU for their application needs to be better harmonized;
- a number of IPEs may go through a light EQA by IEU due to limited staff time; or
- IEU does not engage to a sufficient extent with consultant evaluators recruited to conduct IPEs, and Programme Managers, who are not evaluation experts and tend to be less concerned about evaluation quality standards, often have a major role in the final reports.

190. With respect to methodology, the overall scoring of this parameter improved over time, and IDEs performed better than IPEs. Still, in 13 (39%) evaluations, the scoring was insufficient or below. In the view of the PRP, seven IPEs out of 21 reviewed in total the methodology was seriously inadequate to tackle the scope of the evaluation. This was mostly due to insufficient time dedicated to collect data and interact with stakeholders at country level, as well as for data analysis and report writing. Taking into account the absence of robust monitoring data, discussed earlier, such a methodological constraint can become a major issue. Similar, albeit less serious methodological weaknesses, were also identified in five out of 12 IDEs. For both groups of evaluations, the methodology limitations had a negative impact on the quality of the evaluation reports.

191. With respect to the resources dedicated to evaluations, the PRP Assessment showed that in 18 cases, evaluation teams comprised only one consultant: this typically requires mitigation measures through significant inputs from the evaluation manager backstopping the exercise. This does not seem to have happened, as confirmed by the questionnaire survey to consultant evaluators. The issue is clearly not one of increasing evaluation costs per se, rather of ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated that allow quality standards to be achieved. Resources do play a role in the quality of evaluations, as shown above. However, the total project budgets were an objectively limiting factor in only 3 out of the 13 evaluations with low scores for quality.

192. The PRP also notes that one factor impacting on the overall quality of evaluations is the limited capacity and/or efforts made by projects and programmes to monitor their own performance and record relevant information on progress and results. UNODC is not unique in this, as limited attention to monitoring systems and data is a recurrent and widespread problem in the UN system.⁹⁰ From an evaluation perspective, this means that the evaluators have to develop their own indicators and baselines and then assess any change brought about by the intervention. This clearly increases the time and efforts required for an evaluation and in a context of scarce resources allocated to evaluations it definitely would tend to negatively affect the quality of the evaluation process. IEU has been discussing the possible use of evaluability assessments⁹¹ as the determining factor in the decision about conducting an evaluation or not. In the view of the PRP, such a tool should rather be used during the clearance phase of a new project or its extension by the Programme Managers themselves, to ensure that the appropriate monitoring systems are in place and data available, to later enable a more effective evaluation.

193. Some unevenness in the quality of UNODC evaluation reports and, inevitably, on the quality of consultant, was mentioned by some Member States and Programme Managers. In one particular case, one evaluation report was completed but it is not publicly available due to serious weaknesses in the findings; another evaluation was not completed due to the low quality of the deliverables. Along the same lines, a Member State responding to the 2015 IEU questionnaire on the evaluation function, suggested that UNODC evaluations could have a bit 'more bite' in them.

194. The credibility currently enjoyed by the IEU might thus be eroded over time. Despite the efforts of dedicated IEU staff to EQA, further improvements appear necessary as a minimum by enhancing the consistency of the Evaluation Quality Assurance of both ToRs and draft reports. Evaluation questions should be formulated in a more focused manner; methodologies should be better tailored to match the scope of the evaluation; and more guidance and support should be provided to evaluation teams throughout the full evaluation process.

⁹⁰ For example, the 2014-2015 UNEP Evaluation Synthesis report across 66 project level evaluations has an identical finding.

⁹¹ The OECD/DAC definition of evaluability assessment is "*The extent to which an activity or project can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion*" and check-lists are the ideal tool to verify that the project to be evaluated meets a number of conditions in terms of data availability.

195. The PRP is aware that the suggested changes are almost impossible under the current funding pattern for and working modality of IEU, and low RBM implementation in UNODC. **It appears that a substantive change of approach is required to the management and quality assurance mechanisms of both IDEs and IPEs in UNODC, to safeguard the minimum required quality standards and further strengthen the independence and credibility of its evaluations.**

5.5 IEU external relations

196. The Terms of Reference asked the PR to also assess the relations that IEU holds with external partners, grouped in two main categories:

- i. the global development/security evaluation community, including OIOS, JIU, the Independent System-Wide Evaluation mechanism (ISWE) and UNEG; and
- ii. external stakeholders including national partners, donors, NGO partners.

197. With respect to relations with OIOS and JIU and as stated in the Evaluation policy, IEU is the Focal Point in UNODC for their evaluation exercises and studies (Article 17). IEU stressed the importance of these partnerships that also include the Geneva-based UN Board of Auditors with whom IEU coordinates oversight actions of UNODC. The PRP noted that in other UN entities, although the respective evaluation units are included among OIOS and JIU stakeholders for interviews and consultation, the role of Focal Point is typically assigned to the strategic planning units or Senior Management's offices. The reason for this being that interactions with these oversight bodies require managerial decision-making, at a minimum, on the response to the recommendations and related follow-up reporting. And these roles fall in the remit of the Management function, not of the evaluation function. **In consideration of the above, the PRP suggests that UNODC management re-assign the role of Focal Point for JIU and OIOS outside IEU.** This should not in any case undermine what appears to be an open and constructive partnerships between IEU and these bodies.

198. With respect to UNEG, and ISWE through it, UNODC Evaluation Policy states that the Function is firmly aligned with and abides by the Group's Norms and Standards. IEU actively participates in UNEG work and events, within its staffing capacity. Initially participation was mostly limited to the Head's attendance at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the UNEG Heads group. In this respect, it is important to mention that IEU provided substantive support to the organization of the AGM in Vienna in Spring 2010. As of 2014/15, IEU staff members contribute to UNEG activities through the working groups on: the Independent System-Wide Evaluation of National Statistics Capacity Development, the Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE) seminar, and the decentralization of the evaluation function. IEU also actively participated in the organization, with the other Vienna-based UN evaluation functions and OSCE, of a High-Level Event on the International Year of Evaluation, wherein approximately 150 people across Permanent Representations, the Austrian Government and UN senior staff, participated in a discussion on evaluation.

199. IEU also contributes to the UNEG work on National Evaluation Capacity Development, including attendance at the Fourth International Conference on National Evaluation Capacity in Bangkok in November 2015, and support to planned presentations during the 2016 EPE seminar on this topic. Lastly, IEU staff attend seminars of the American Evaluation Association.

200. With respect to the second category of stakeholders, as already mentioned, IEU has frequent interactions with the Member States representatives who have a particular interest in evaluation, to discuss more in-depth specific evaluations, respond to queries and for fund-raising. Compared to other UN evaluation units, this is quite a unique approach that appears to have contributed to raising the profile of the Unit and of the function within UNODC at large. In the view of the PRP, IEU could better leverage this social capital to engage even more with Member States in discussions about, for example, the revision of the evaluation policy, the inclusion of more strategic evaluations in its work-plan,

establishing procedures aimed at enhancing the operational resources for evaluations, all issues that are independent from their role as fund-providers.

201. Relations with governments and NGOs at the national level, which typically fall under the remit of evaluation teams rather than IEU staff, appear to be less than optimal during the conduct of individual evaluations. As already mentioned, the PRP found that in several cases, the lack of sufficient financial resources for evaluations severely limited interaction with national stakeholders and the use of simple tools such as surveys with participating stakeholders, such as NGOs, and non-participating ones for counter-factual purposes. Also, as raised by one Member State representative, evaluation teams do not usually engage with the national institutions in donor countries that often participate in UNODC GBs' meetings and conferences as subject-matters specialist and therefore, would have a more in-depth understating of project relevance and possibly results, than diplomats in the Permanent Representations. This would be easily tackled by arranging tele-conferences with relevant officers in the donor countries' institutions.

202. Overall, IEU is active at keeping good and constructive relations with a broad range of external stakeholders. In the view of the PRP, however, there is room for improving efficiency and effectiveness of the evaluation function. Additionally, **IEU could further improve the consultation process with Member States by extending out-reach of evaluation teams to other groups of key informants and by engaging with Permanent Representatives on strategic evaluation issues, besides fund-raising.**

6 Assessment of the Evaluation Function in UNODC against the three core criteria: independence, credibility and utility

203. This section analyses the findings discussed above through the lens of each of the three principles of the Peer Review.

6.1 Independence

204. The ToRs for the Peer Review defined the principle of Independence of evaluation and the evaluation system(s) as follows: *The evaluation process should be impartial. This requires that the persons and entities undertaking the evaluation should be independent of those concerned with the policy, programme or activities to be evaluated, to avoid possible bias or conflicts of interest. At the same time, in practice, the guarantees of independence are necessarily defined according to the nature of evaluation work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. In this regard, the activities of Office of Evaluation can be expected to have greater degree of independence than evaluation activities at decentralized levels.*

205. Independence of the evaluation function in UNODC has been a recurrent request of Member States since the establishment of the function. In their interviews with the PRP, Member States representatives appeared satisfied with the institutional set-up for the function. The Executive Director's commitment to an independent evaluation function, IEU's location in the Office of the ED; the frequent interactions Members have with IEU through FinGov, side events and bilateral meetings; the simultaneous circulation of evaluation reports to Member States and Senior Management; the views of most among other stakeholders; and the "absence of any evidence to the contrary"; all are proof that overall, evaluation in UNODC is independent.

206. The 2015 Evaluation policy, in turn, affirms the independence of both IEU and the evaluation function. In the view of the PRP however, the language of the Policy could and should be stronger to protect the evaluation function from any arguments aimed at curtailing its independence. This

potential risk is further aggravated by the full responsibility for the 'independent evaluation function of UNODC' being given, as per the Policy, to the Head of the Unit, rather than this being shared with the Executive Director and Senior Management, with regards to allocating resources to the function, safeguarding its independence and making active use of its findings and recommendations.

207. Similarly, the Policy is mostly silent on the resources to be made available to the evaluation function, let alone 'firewalling them'. In practice, the funding pattern for the evaluation function in UNODC limits the mandate and scope of the function itself which has a direct impact on the independence of IEU in proposing what should and could be evaluated.

208. Finally, the PRP noticed that a number of times IEU staff referred to the dismantling of the evaluation function in UNODC's recent history. Although the function was swiftly resuscitated, and has been steadily growing since, this event seems to loom heavily on IEU's staff perceived freedom in carrying out their work. In other words, "if it happened once, it could happen again", as the saying goes. Thus, unless strong measures are put in place to safeguard the IEU and its staff from potential retaliations in the case of unpopular evaluations and findings, a silent self-censorship may affect the candour and strength of the work of the Unit.

209. When all of this is taken into account, **the PRP's overall assessment of the independence of UNODC evaluation function is largely positive but with some caveats**. There is no doubt that under current Management, the UNODC evaluation function is independent and respected. There are, however, insufficient safeguards in the Policy to protect it from potential infringements in future. At the same time, the current funding patterns and procedures for IPE management do not ensure that evaluation topics can be freely selected and that evaluations are routinely conducted fully free from potential pressures.

6.2 Credibility

210. The definition of Credibility of evaluations in the ToRs for the Peer Review was: *The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes, as well as failures. Recipient partners should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluations in order to promote credibility and commitment on their side. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps build ownership merits close attention.* It should also be noted that credibility, possibly more than the other principles, is a more elusive concept that rests on more intangible evidence, and is thus more difficult to demonstrate.

211. Findings indicate that overall, the evaluation function in UNODC is credible thanks to the competence, professionalism and commitment of IEU staff, the respect and attention Senior Management and Member States have for IEU and its products, the initiatives by the Unit to canvass feedback from stakeholders for the improvement of evaluation management and products.

212. At the same time, the PRP heard a number of times from UNODC managers and a few consultant evaluators through the Questionnaire Survey, that the competence and, at times, the independence of consultants recruited by UNODC to conduct evaluations has been uneven. Furthermore, the PRP Evaluation Quality Assessment has pointed to several weaknesses in the quality of the process and products, including generic and un-structured Terms of Reference, poorly-written reports, internal contradictions between negative findings and positive conclusions, minimal involvement of partners and less than optimal transparency throughout the process, that have all affected the overall quality and therefore credibility of the evaluations. In the view of the PRP, a major cause for the lower credibility of IPEs is their management process and the implicit risk for conflict of interest.

213. The PRP has made a few suggestions in the report, easy to implement and cost-neutral, that might help in strengthening both quality and credibility of IPEs. Nevertheless, only a major change in the management process of this type of evaluations can address what is, in the view of the PRP, a risk of erosion of IEU internal and external credibility.

6.3 Utility

214. Last, the PR ToRs also provided a definition for Utility of evaluations: *To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as credible, relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development cooperation. However, measures to ensure the utility of evaluations are only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving, and using evaluations.*

215. The evidence gathered by the PRP through its interviews and desk-review suggests that UNODC Member States, Senior Management and Programme Managers, all make use of the findings and recommendations contained in evaluations. For example, the systematic inclusion of evaluation as a standing agenda item in FinGov is an excellent opportunity for IEU to share evaluative evidence with key stakeholders and Member States have confirmed using evaluations at times as a factor contributing to decision-making for new projects or extensions of those on-going. Further, UNODC Executive Director frequently refers to evaluation findings in his reports to ECOSOC and Programme Managers have provided examples of direct integration of evaluation recommendations in their programmes.

216. Moreover, the positive opinions expressed by Senior Management about IEU's first Meta-Analysis of evaluation findings, all confirmed their interest for what evaluation can produce and there is a clear demand among Member States for meta-analysis and synthesis of evaluation findings at a level of aggregation higher than the individual projects and programmes.

217. A few critical voices stated that evaluations had not been useful to their programmes and the concern was raised, that the follow-up to IPEs was often weak. By the time the PRP was carried out, no analysis was available on the rate and pace of implementation of evaluation recommendations, but an efficient system had just been put in place for this purpose and will generate important insights into the actual uptake by Managers of evaluation findings. These are areas for further analysis and IEU has to be congratulated for launching a number of questionnaires and feed-back tools to the various groups of stakeholders, on various aspects of the evaluation process, including the usefulness of its products.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

218. The Terms of Reference raised the following overarching question for the Peer Review to answer: *'Are the agency's evaluation policy, function and its products and services: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed by a Panel of professional evaluation peers against the UN Norms and Standards (2005) and the evidence base?'*

219. The Panel's overall answer is **that since 2010, the evaluation function in UNODC has made significant progress towards becoming independent, credible and useful and at serving the double purpose of learning and accountability within the Office.** This is all the more remarkable considering the very limited resources it has had at its disposal and the difficulties linked to re-developing the

function from scratch after it had been dismantled. In the view of the PRP, the most important achievements have been:

- visibility of and respect for the Independent Evaluation Unit among Member States, Senior Management and Programme Managers, both in headquarters and in the decentralized network;
- a growth of IEU in terms of staff capacity and scope of its work and a corresponding growth in the number of IDEs;
- a good use of evaluation findings and recommendations in corporate-level documents and in programmatic work;
- rules and procedures on evaluation and templates and guidelines developed in support of the function at all levels;
- a positive trend in the quality evaluation reports ;
- a new evaluation policy;
- completing a large volume of work in pursuit of systematic accountability (through 100% evaluation coverage of projects)
- a user-friendly and comprehensive on-line application to facilitate evaluation management;
- a database to monitor the uptake and implementation of evaluation recommendations and lessons learned and make knowledge originated from evaluations available to stakeholders; and
- a set of tools for canvassing feedback from stakeholders on evaluation, for internal IEU learning purposes.

220. The Governing Bodies of UNODC, CCPCJ and CND, have played an instrumental role in these achievements after they decided the re-establishment of the function in late 2009, by supporting it with more recent resolutions that repeatedly stressed the need for institutional, managerial and financial independence and for developing an evaluation culture within UNODC. The GBs also made themselves key stakeholders in the function, by asking Member States to take an active role in implementing the evaluation policy.

221. A major demonstration of Member States commitment to evaluation has been its inclusion as a standing agenda item in the FinGov agenda. IEU's presentations at FinGov, along with the side-events organized during the CCPCJ and CND sessions and Reconvened Meetings are well appreciated by virtually all stakeholders, and provide excellent opportunities for the Unit to present evaluation plans and results and thus raise the profile of the function and the uptake of evaluation findings and recommendations. Also, evaluation reports are simultaneously circulated to Member States and Senior Management.

222. The current set-up appears to be effective and balanced. The PRP identified only one adjustment that appears worth pursuing, to enhance the Member States' ownership for, and raise the profile of, some specific aspects of the evaluation function. This is proposed in Recommendation 1 below.

Recommendation 1: To UNODC Member States and Senior Management, about ad-hoc agenda items on evaluation

UNODC, including Member States and Senior Management, should enable through ad-hoc agenda items, the discussion and endorsement of specific key evaluation issues, such as the approval of a new evaluation policy, at the Reconvened Meeting of CCPCJ and CND.

223. UNODC Senior Management also has been highly supportive of the evaluation function since 2011. The Independent Evaluation Unit was re-established within the Office of the Executive Director

and Regular Budget professional positions were also created in addition to the post of Head of the Unit. In the view of virtually all interviewees, the relationship between Senior Management and IEU is fully informed by mutual respect and constructive collaboration. Among the various measures taken in support of the function, for example, the Executive Director has facilitated the mandatory inclusion of evaluation provisions in new and extended projects and programmes the abolishment of Participatory Self-Evaluations and most importantly, is a good advocate of the importance of evaluation for UNODC.

224. The institutional location of IEU enables its visibility within UNODC, as well as easy access to all divisions and decentralized offices. This, notwithstanding the drawback that the seniority of the Unit Head at P5 level, does not reflect the responsibility and the 'gravitas' that the position deserves and requires. IEU is also invited to attend Senior Management Executive meetings (ExCom) and attends ex-officio the Programme Review Committee, to ensure that new or extended projects and programmes include sufficient and appropriate provisions for their future evaluation.

225. The current scope of the Unit's work is, however, currently too broad on the one hand; it stretches to cover the role of UNODC Focal Point for IMDIS and for JIU, while it is curtailed, on the other hand, by both resource constraints and an institutional arrangement that does not enable evaluations to analyse the effects of the policies, rules and procedures issued by the shared UNODC-UNOV Division of Management on the Office's projects and programmes. Lastly, the evaluation function is not well reflected in the UNODC Strategic Framework.

226. In the view of the PRP, these uneven roles and responsibilities can become a source of tensions, conflicts of interest, inefficient use of resources and gaps in the accountability framework of the Office. Recommendation 2 addresses these key issues.

Recommendation 2: To UNODC Management on the institutional role of IEU

UNODC Management should:

- 1) Raise the seniority of IEU Head to D1, in recognition of the role and responsibility that the position requires;
- 2) Enable IEU to include in its evaluations, the assessment of the consequences on UNODC projects and programmes stemming from the policies, rules and procedures of the Division of Management;
- 3) Re-assign the role and responsibility of IMDIS reporting and of Focal Point for JIU and OIOS, elsewhere in UNODC.

227. One of the building-blocks of the institutional set-up for the evaluation function is the Evaluation Policy. UNODC issued a new version of the policy in 2015 that broadly meets UNEG Norms for this type of document and is a good show-case of IEU's achievements so far, while contributing to consolidating these within the Office. However, the PRP noted that the language and contents of the Policy could be strengthened to further enhance the independence of the function. In addition, it emerged that the process leading to the endorsement of the new Policy lacked strong engagement of Member States representatives and Senior Management to candidly discuss policy matters. Recommendation 3 addresses these issues.

Recommendation 3: To IEU and UNODC on the next version of the Evaluation Policy

A future revised UNODC Evaluation Policy should:

- 1) Be developed through an inclusive process engaging Member States representatives and Senior Management from the early stages, and be endorsed by the Governing Bodies at their Reconvened Meeting;
- 2) Clarify with stronger language couched in 'must' rather than in 'should' the responsibilities of the Executive Director in protecting the independence of the evaluation function, as well as the shared

responsibility in the function, with respect to the use of evaluation findings and recommendations through adequate follow-up mechanisms.

228. Another gap in the Policy concerns the lack of definition of clear and uncontroversial levels of financial resources to be allocated to the evaluation function, despite the importance given to it by the Governing Bodies in their resolutions. The only clear statement concerns the allocation of 2-3% of project resources to conduct IDEs. Indeed, lack of sufficient staff and operational resources to manage and conduct quality evaluations is a crucial challenge for IEU and for the function as a whole. This is further compounded by the rule of 100% evaluation coverage included in the Policy, which adds to the demand for IEU staff time in backstopping IPEs.

229. As shown by the PRP analysis, the total share of UNODC resources that go to evaluation in practice, including IEU staff, appears to be well below what JIU recently considered is a reasonable range of resources for evaluation units in the UN system. At the same time, both IEU and the PRP are fully aware that additional 'fresh' resources for evaluation are unlikely to be available, either from the Regular Budget, the PSC or softly-earmarked voluntary contributions.

230. The PRP also found that the current planning process for evaluations, as a consequence of both 100% coverage rule and the delegation of responsibility for evaluation plans to Programme Managers and Country Offices, results in a long list of completed evaluations every year of variable quality. Moreover, the current funding pattern represents a strong limitation to expanding the scope of UNODC evaluation beyond the boundaries of projects and programmes, to tackle corporate and cross-cutting issues, as some Member Countries and Senior Managers would appreciate. Among the various examples of possible topics mentioned, were the evaluation of gender equality in the work of UNODC and in recruitment; evaluations of Sub-programmes such as Transnational Crimes; or evaluations of corporate policies, such as Full Cost Recovery.

231. One way forward appears to be the development of a mechanism that centralizes both planning and resources for evaluation under the decision-making authority of IEU, and allows strategic priority-setting and more efficient use of the available resources. This would consist in the creation of an Evaluation Fund managed by IEU, wherein all projects would be required to transfer a fixed percentage share of their budgets, probably in the order of 0.5% from each and every project, to be used to manage and carry out IDEs, IPEs and other corporate evaluations. The existing GLOH92 project could also be used for this purpose. This mechanism would tackle several issues at a time, as it would:

- improve corporate compliance with the GBs' 2010 decision with respect to sustainable funding of the evaluation function;
- significantly increase the control by IEU on the planning and quality of evaluations;
- introduce a more equitable cost-sharing for evaluation across all projects;
- reduce the internal transaction costs of staff time in negotiating resources for evaluation, consultants' profiles, methodological approaches and support to evaluation management; and
- enable IEU to prepare annual or biennial corporate evaluation plans to be developed, based on a strategic analysis of the corporate needs in terms of accountability and learning and clear criteria for priority setting, and to be discussed at and endorsed by FinGov.

232. In such a scenario, the need for strategy- and corporate level evaluations would also be discussed with, and endorsed by Member States at FinGov. In the case where the GBs requested specific evaluations for which resources are not fully available, donors could contribute additional resources to the common pool, thus minimizing the risk of conflicting interests. Furthermore, through a more strategic approach to evaluation planning, one thematic, country or cluster evaluation would encompass all projects falling within the scope of that single evaluation effort. In this way, a more

efficient and effective evaluation coverage would still provide accountability for 100% of UNODC projects, with significant savings in funds and staff time.

233. A second scenario is based on the selective focus by IEU on a number of IPEs each year selected for their strategic importance and complemented, for full coverage, by Internal Project Reviews managed by Programme Managers. In this case, all projects would still be required to contribute to the IEU funds to conduct both the selected IPEs, the usual IDEs and thematic and corporate evaluations, though with a levy of 0.2-0.3% of the total project budgets. The IPRs would still need to be fully budgeted in the project budget from the beginning. In the final phase of a project, IEU (with management input) would decide whether an IPE or IPR is required; should the former be considered more useful, matching funds to allow a fully-fledged IPE would be made available from IEU's increased resources.

234. A third scenario would be to increase IEU staff and operational resources, from the UNODC Regular Budget and PSC, and thus strengthen the capacity of the function without directly impacting on Special Funds.

235. The first step in any case should be conducting an accurate and thorough analysis of the total amount that UNODC spends for all evaluations it carries out, including staff costs plus the direct costs for IPEs and IDEs. An estimate of time spent by Programme Managers in managing evaluations would also help as an input, if feasible. This, together with an estimated budget for one or two different scenarios in terms of evaluation needs and outputs and an analysis of the available options, should be the basis for making an evidence-based decision about the preferred scenario as well as on the percentage share that each project should contribute to the Evaluation Fund. Undoubtedly, the 'levy' mechanism proposed might not be compatible with the rules and regulations of some donors, whose project evaluations would still be evaluated through the same funding mechanism as IPEs, but under the direct management of IEU. Recommendation 4 addresses the over-arching issue of resources.

Recommendation 4: To IEU and Senior Management on the financial resources for the evaluation function

UNODC should operate to ensure the sustainable funding of the evaluation function, at a level that allows sufficient evaluative coverage of the work of the Office to meet Member States' and Management requests and expectations in terms of independence, quality, utility, accountability and learning. The key principles underpinning the new funding modality mechanism should be:

- 1) equitable contribution to the evaluation function from all projects in UNODC;
- 2) full transparency in the allocation and use of the financial resources for evaluation;
- 3) full transparency and inclusiveness in the development of evaluation plans;
- 4) integration of the new modality in the UNODC Evaluation policy.

236. To some extent, the level of financial resources allocated to an evaluation function is also a reflection of the level of evaluation culture in an organization. The PRP noted how 'evaluation culture' is a recurrent element in UNODC discourse on evaluation, and its development a key commitment for IEU which has made of it, a pillar of its work. Although the concept has not been formally defined, it encompasses an effective, respected and well-funded evaluation function and a managerial attitude open to use evaluation findings as a tool to improve performance and achieve better results. In the view of most stakeholders, from Member States to Senior Management to consultant evaluators, the evaluation culture in the Office has grown, in particular, but not only, at headquarters. A major indicator of this is the almost universal integration of evaluation provisions in projects. In addition, the number of evaluations per year has gone up and Programme Managers increasingly request assistance and support in conducting evaluations.

237. The goal of strengthening the evaluation culture in UNODC has informed a number of management decisions by IEU. Two examples of this are: the objective of achieving 100% of evaluation coverage, already discussed, and the delegation of responsibility for IPEs management to Programme Managers. In the view of the PRP, both decisions, legitimate as they were, have impacted on the quality of evaluations UNODC produces, which has been assessed to be systematically lower for IPEs than IDEs.

238. The IPE mechanism currently in place is such that in practice, these evaluations are largely managed by Programme Managers, frequently under their sole responsibility. This raises a number of issues, the most prominent being the conflict of interest throughout the evaluation process. The current IPE modality could, however, be retained with minor modifications but considered an Internal Project Review under the responsibility of Programme / Project Managers rather than IEU.

239. Thus, although the PRP understands the reasons for 100% coverage and the delegation of evaluation planning and management to Programme Managers, it is also concerned about the implications they may have in the longer term for the independence and credibility of the evaluation function in UNODC and invites IEU to consider in all its management decisions, their potential effects on the professionalization and credibility of the evaluation function. With specific reference to the IPE management and evaluation quality, Recommendation 5 was formulated.

Recommendation 5: To IEU and UNODC, on evaluation management and quality

IEU and UNODC should develop and introduce a substantive change of approach in the management and quality assurance mechanisms of both IDEs and IPEs in UNODC, starting from the preparation of the Terms of Reference to the editing of the final reports, to safeguard the minimum required quality standards and strengthen the independence and credibility of its evaluations.

240. This having been said, the PRP appreciates the good management of IEU and the efforts made by the Unit to ensure that UNODC produces good quality evaluations. In particular, IEU has been highly active in issuing procedures, guidelines and templates, as well as on-line modules and platforms to support the management and conduct of evaluations. All this is noteworthy, considering the limited staff resources of the Unit. The addition of a pilot initiative on National Evaluation Capacity Development for 2016/17, in the wake of the 2014 UN General Assembly resolution on this topic, appears to be an additional challenge to the already heavy agendas of IEU staff members. In this regard, **if NECD is to be further pursued by the IEU the PRP suggests a modest and cautious approach.**

241. Finally, IEU has also developed a very useful repository of evaluation Recommendations and Lessons Learned, which will be instrumental in drawing lessons from large numbers of evaluations and the follow-up steps. On this, the PRP noted a few possible improvements in the process, towards greater transparency of the process, and possibly the level of accountability towards the evaluation function. Recommendation 6 addresses these.

Recommendation 6: To IEU and UNODC Senior Management, on Management Responses to evaluations

With the purpose of raising the transparency and accountability of the follow-up process to evaluations in UNODC, IEU and Senior Management should:

- 1) Make the narrative Management Response mandatory and fully integrated in the EFP; and
- 2) Make the Management Response, including the narrative and the detailed implementation plan, a public document available in IEU Web site with the respective evaluations;

3) Introduce the deadline of two years for action on accepted recommendations, after which a recommendation will be considered as non-implemented.

242. In conclusion, the PRP is convinced that UNODC has made impressive progress since 2010, to develop an evaluation function that is broadly independent and credible, and is used. The more cautious assessment of independence and credibility, despite the ascertained good utility of evaluations, stems from the concern of the Panel that IEU may lose ground on both independence and credibility, if issues highlighted in this report are not acted upon with a certain urgency. The suggestions and recommendations that have been formulated here should, to the best understanding and knowledge of the Panel, contribute to the further strengthening of the evaluation function in UNODC as it strives for excellence and maturity.

Annexes

Annex 1 Terms of Reference for the Peer Review of UNODC Evaluation Function

Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Terms of Reference, September 2015

Introduction

The OECD-DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) and the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) maintain a Joint Task Force to support professional Peer Reviews of the evaluation functions of UN organizations. Each Peer Review is intended to identify good practice and opportunities to further strengthen the evaluation function in the agency under review, with a view to contributing ultimately to improved performance in international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

This will be the first OEC-DAC/UNEG Peer Review of the evaluation function at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It was requested by UNODC, to provide an independent assessment of its evaluation function with the aim of ensuring that the evaluation function is fully fit for purpose and matched to UNODC's evolving approach

The Professional Peer Review is conducted in line with the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Function of UN Organizations.⁹² This framework lays emphasis on three key principles: independence, credibility, and usefulness of the evaluation function. In addition, the Peer Review will also explore some features of UNODC evaluation function, selected from among those identified by UNODC Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) and by the Joint Inspection Unit in its Evaluation Maturity Index.⁹³ Nevertheless, the light nature of the Peer Review will limit the scope of analysis of these additional elements.

The primary audiences for the Peer Review are Senior Management and Member States (Open-ended Working group on Governance and Finance/FinGov, Commission on Narcotic Drugs/CND and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice/CCCPJ), as well as the evaluation function itself. The Peer Review report will be presented to the Executive Director, the Executive Committee⁹⁴ and FINGOV, and proactively discussed and disseminated beyond these constituencies.

Furthermore, the Peer Review will also be presented to the members of UNEG and DAC Evaluation Network for information and feedback on issues of evaluation quality and utility. In this context, the Peer Review Panel will provide feedback on the Peer Review process to the DAC-UNEG Joint Task Force on Peer Reviews to contribute to the further development of the peer review instrument.

This document sets out the Terms of Reference for the Professional Peer Review of the evaluation function of UNODC. It describes the background and rationale for the Peer Review, its purpose, scope, general approach, methods, time schedule and funding arrangements. The Terms of Reference have been finalized and approved by the Panel members, after in-depth discussions with the Independent Evaluation Unit, and were shared with senior UNODC Management.

⁹² The current version of the Peer Review Framework was approved by UNEG Annual General Meeting in 2011, see <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/945>

⁹³ https://www.unjuu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2014_6_English.pdf

⁹⁴ The Executive Committee comprises UNODC Executive Director and D2-level Directors (4).

Background

The Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) of UNODC was originally established in 2003 under the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs (DPA). During 2009, the Unit ceased to exist and was re-established as a stand-alone, independent unit on 27 January 2010, as per resolutions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, CND 52/14 (2 December 2009) and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, CCPCJ 18/6 (3 December 2009).

Since then, the re-established evaluation function had the opportunity to start implementing its mandate. Among others, a new strategic vision for the unit is under development to meet UNODC's internal and external demands for accountability and learning as well as contributing to the broader international agenda, comprising the GA resolution, the SDGs and their review mechanism, the new developments in system-wide evaluation, initiatives within UNEG, etc. All of this makes this a timely moment to conduct a UNEG Peer Review. UNODC's Executive Director supports the timing and scope of this externally led assessment.

Over the last five years, a number of key events have directly affected the evaluation function in UNODC. The previous evaluation unit was disbanded in 2008 and, as mentioned above re-established in 2010 with reporting lines to both the Executive Director and Member States. Requests were made to fund four posts in the IEU from Regular Budget at P5, P4, P3, and P2 levels. In 2011, a new Executive Director arrived in UNODC and a new Chief of Evaluation was appointed. Staff for the IEU were recruited and a budget line (5700) for evaluation all UNODC operational interventions was established. Evaluation has been established as a standard agenda item for reporting to FinGov, UNODC's quasi-governmental body. In recent years the IEU's access to internal organizational decision-making bodies and processes has increased as has the level of evaluative activity at the regional and country levels. The IEU has also articulated the aim of offering full evaluation coverage of all UNODC projects and programmes. Finally a new evaluation policy was endorsed by the Executive Committee in 2012?

The external landscape has also evolved significantly in the last five years. Fundamental issues regarding international development and security are being widely debated and discussed, including the role and organization of the UN system, the framing of the post-2015 international Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and stronger leadership by countries of their development processes. These discussions carry implications for evaluation in the UN, including increased emphasis on country-led evaluation, joint evaluation and arrangements for UN system-wide evaluation.

Most importantly, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/69/237 "Capacity building for the evaluation of development activities at the country level" and acknowledged 2015 as the international year of evaluation. In addition, 2015 is marked by the introduction of the Umoja Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software across the UN Secretariat, which will also impact on the business processes of the evaluation function at UNODC.

In the areas of UNODC's mandate, where the international architecture is changing, the UN Transformative Agenda calls for improved accountability and learning: presenting evaluation with challenges and opportunities. Increased attention is being given to evaluation of crosscutting themes such as equity, human rights, gender equality, comprising the borderless dimensions of UNODC's mandate: drugs, crime and terrorism. Meanwhile, in the context of reduced resources, there is demand for greater attention to assessment of value for money and efficiency.

Within the field of evaluation itself, discussions on evaluation focus, methodological choices and methodological rigor have continued. This is posing a number of technical challenges, for example in relation to impact evaluation, real-time evaluation, evaluation of normative work and evaluation in complex contexts. This is compounded by the fact that information related to UNODC's mandates is often very sensitive: data quality and availability typically pose a significant hurdle.

Purpose of the Peer Review

The Peer Review is taking place at a time of strategic change with significant implications for the evaluation function. An independent Professional Peer Review will help UNODC to ensure that its evaluation function is well positioned and equipped to make the best contribution to the work of the organization, and those it serves.

In line with this goal, the Peer Review will undertake an assessment of the independence, credibility and utility of UNODC's evaluation function, focusing on the quality, use and follow up of evaluations across UNODC to promote accountability, learning and improvement.

In this, the Peer review will also include a light assessment of both UNODC's evaluation and accountability culture and IEU's engagement with UNEG and UN-system wide evaluation processes, e.g. UN-SWAP and National Evaluation Capacity Development.

Finally, the Peer Review will provide recommendations to the evaluation function directly and to the Executive Director, Senior Management and Member States with the aim of improving the quality of UNODC's evaluation function generally, and specifically to inform discussions and decisions about the role, positioning, resourcing and mandate of the Independent Evaluation Unit.

Subject, Scope, and Limitations

The DAC-UNEG Peer Review follows an agreed framework with a blend of standardized and flexible elements to reflect the diversity of UN organizations and their respective evaluation arrangements.

The overarching assessment question is: "Are the agency's evaluation policy, function and its products and services: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed by a Panel of professional evaluation peers against the UN Norms and Standards (2005) and the evidence base?"

In addition, the Peer Review will also address, albeit in a light manner, aspects related to the evaluation and accountability culture in UNODC and IEU engagement with UN-wide evaluation processes and activities.

The Peer Review will carry out its assessment applying the three core criteria that UNEG established should be satisfied for the evaluation function and products to be considered of high quality:⁹⁵

- A. Independence of evaluations and the evaluation system(s). The evaluation process should be impartial. This requires that the persons and entities undertaking the evaluation should be independent of those concerned with the policy, programme or activities to be evaluated, to avoid possible bias or conflicts of interest. At the same time, in practice, the guarantees of independence are necessarily defined according to the nature of evaluation work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. In this regard, the activities of Office of Evaluation can be expected to have greater degree of independence than evaluation activities at decentralized levels.
- B. Credibility of evaluations. The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes, as well as failures. Recipient partners should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluations in order to promote credibility and commitment on their side. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps builds ownership merits close attention.
- C. Utility of evaluations. To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as credible, relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development cooperation. However, measures to ensure the utility of evaluations are only

⁹⁵ See Footnote 1 and <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/945>

partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving, and using evaluations.

Furthermore, the core criteria of impartiality and transparency will also be considered, as they are strongly related to the criteria of independence, credibility and utility. Impartiality is enabled by independence and is a fundamental element of the credibility of evaluations. Transparency is another fundamental element of credibility and is an important basis for the utility of evaluations.

Within this framework, the Peer review will analyse the main areas of focus and issues listed below:

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1. The UNODC EVALUATION POLICY and Governance of the Evaluation Function, including:
 - a. the institutional location and visibility of the evaluation function, and its reporting line/s;
 - b. responsibility for and safeguards in place for ensuring:
 - the independence and impartiality of the evaluation function;
 - adequate allocation of financial and human resources to the evaluation function;
 - fair and competence-based recruitment of the Chief of IEU, including rules and procedures for her/his performance assessment and termination;
 - maintaining and updating technical skills and knowledge for evaluation within the UNODC.
 - c. the organizational relationships of the Independent Evaluation Unit with Management and Member States;
 - d. mechanism for calculating the allocation of financial and human resources for IEU, including stability over time, and transparency of the mechanism (, e.g. formula, percentage,) at central and decentralized level;
 - e. mechanisms to protect evaluation funding from influence which might undermine the independence and impartiality of evaluation work;
 - f. mechanisms to protect evaluation findings and reporting from influence which might undermine the independence and impartiality of evaluation work;
 - g. the extent to which the evaluation policy conforms with UNEG standards, internal and external contextual changes and whether it needs to be updated;
 - h. Identity of the evaluation function within UNODC, including:
 - to what extent it is distinct from management and operational functions in UNODC;
 - to what extent IEU credibility is affected by the independence (or lack thereof) of the evaluations conducted in a decentralised modality;
 - to what extent other UNODC policies, e.g. RBM, budgeting, etc., affect the independence of IEU.
 - i. arrangements for oversight of evaluation activities conducted outside IEU;
 - j. arrangements for periodic reviews of the evaluation function;
 - k. Intentionality of the evaluation function, including its purpose within the organization, links to the results-based management system (if one exists), arrangements for accountability on follow-up to evaluations;
 - l. consistency of the evaluation policy with other policies or frameworks relevant to the evaluation function (notably, UNODC's Strategic Framework; as well as those concerning results-based management, monitoring; harmonization and alignment; strategic planning; budgeting; and human resources management);
 - m. disclosure policy for UNODC evaluation reports;

⁹⁶ The Peer Review Normative Framework in Annex 4 shows the links between issues, questions and core criteria.

- n. extent to which the policy sets out clear functional and organizational arrangements to ensure that evaluation contributes effectively to learning, accountability and performance improvement within the UNODC;
 - o. the role of Governing Bodies in evaluation governance and use, appreciation and understanding;
 - p. mechanisms to provide the Chief of Evaluation with adequate access and opportunities to contribute to key corporate processes and decisions, including the deliberations of UNODC's Strategic direction.
2. MANAGEMENT of the Independent Evaluation Unit, including the following:
- q. management arrangements, working procedures and the internal organization of the unit in support of the fulfilment of evaluation policy commitments and the achievement of strategic evaluation objectives;
 - r. mechanisms and systems in place to:
 - ensure that evaluations are conducted and undertaken in an independent manner;
 - prevent or manage conflict of interest, for both IEU staff and consultants;
 - safeguard behavioural independence and integrity and protect evaluators and their career development;
 - deal with comments and disagreements to reports and ensuring independence, credibility and accuracy.
 - provide clearance to and present evaluation reports, including protecting evaluation reports from undue influence;
 - s. mechanisms and measures to apply and enforce the code of conduct for evaluators and to ensure a reasonable turn-over among consultants;
 - t. approaches used to plan and manage evaluations and follow up, including arrangements to manage the quality and duration of the evaluation process;
 - u. mechanisms to inform stakeholders, and which categories thereof, about the evaluation process and to get their inputs and feedback on deliverables; alternatively, mechanisms to ensure ownership and accuracy of final reports;
 - v. mechanisms to ensure that the evaluation process is clear for stakeholders, including transparency in the way conclusions and recommendations are formulated and comments taken into account;
 - w. adequacy of financial and human resources to ensure sufficient evaluation coverage, and typical work load;⁹⁷
 - x. share of financial resources allocated to: IEU regular staff; evaluation work; (consultants, travel, etc.); staff capacity development; running costs;
 - y. provisions to ensure that evaluators have the right competencies and that evaluation teams collectively have the necessary professional competence for issuing evaluation reports of adequate quality;
 - z. presentation of Aggregate Evaluation Results, e.g. through an annual / biennial evaluation report based on conducted evaluations, that can provide credible, well-substantiated conclusions on UNODC overall programme performance;
 - aa. systems in place to ensure that both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations are carried out:
 - with a clear intent, as stated in the evaluation design;
 - that evaluations are carried out and reports are produced and shared in a timely manner;

⁹⁷ UNEG has not provided indication about adequacy; the Peer Review will discuss with IEU what would be an appropriate level of evaluation activities (e.g. 30% of portfolio, or minimum 8 evaluations per full time staff equivalent per annum, etc.).

- bb. the development, provision and use of guidance, methods and tools to support and strengthen management of evaluations managed outside IEU, i.e. Independent Project Evaluations;
 - cc. the balance of effort between undertaking new evaluations and synthesizing and disseminating existing findings and lessons.
3. EVALUATION PLANNING, including consideration of the following:
- dd. systems in place to choose subjects of evaluation for both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations, that ensure:
 - independent choices from managers' influence;
 - impartial and balanced choices of subjects for evaluation (including good and poor performers) and/or representative of the UNODC portfolio;
 - ee. methods and criteria used for strategic planning of evaluation activities, both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations;
 - ff. systems in place to choose subjects of evaluation for both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations, that ensure:
 - contribution to decision-making, accountability and learning;
 - coverage of a sample representative enough to enable comparative analysis and drawing lessons across the UNODC portfolio;
 - considerations of timing of evaluations in relation to relevant decision-making processes and mitigating factors should there be potentially divergent schedules.
 - gg. extent to which topics selected for evaluation by IEU meet the strategic directions, concerns, needs and demands of UNODC's key stakeholders, balancing accountability and learning;
 - hh. extent to which topics selected for how far topics selected reflect the strategic directions and concerns of the UN system.
4. EVALUATION QUALITY of all evaluations undertaken under the auspices of the IEU, i.e. both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations (see Annex 3). This will include consideration of the following:
- ii. with respect to evaluation design:
 - which evaluation criteria are used, their clarity and alignment with common definitions of terms;
 - extent to which corresponding indicators are included in project and programme design to enable evaluability;
 - adequacy, robustness and impartiality (e.g. approach to selecting country case studies or site visits) of evaluation methodology in the evaluation ToRs or equivalent document;
 - integration of a gender and human rights perspective in evaluation terms of reference, process and reports;
 - jj. the quality and credibility of evaluation reports, including robustness of evidence, analysis, results and recommendations, and treatment of gender equality issues;
 - kk. the independence and credibility of evaluation team leaders and members;
 - ll. ways in which the accuracy and utility of the reports is enhanced, including how stakeholders are consulted and facilitated to comment on draft reports;
 - mm. mechanism and procedures for Quality Assurance for both in-depth and Independent project evaluations;
 - nn. system/s in place to ensure that evaluation designs and methodologies:
 - have a clear intent;

- consider milestones when evaluation information is needed and can be fed back into decision-making processes.
 - oo. readability of evaluation reports, in terms of clarity, conciseness, lay-out, etc.;
 - pp. opinion of key stakeholders about the utility of evaluations.
5. EVALUATION FOLLOW UP AND USE. Important aspects include the following:
- qq. mechanism/s for communicating evaluation results and lessons for In-depth and Independent Project Evaluation, both within UNODC and for other stakeholders, such as member countries, donors, and cooperating partners; this also applies to joint evaluations and system-wide evaluations;
 - rr. system/s in place and responsibilities to ensure that formal, corporate, substantive and timely Management Responses are prepared and that follow-up actions to evaluation recommendations are taken, recorded/tracked, and reported on;
 - ss. the absorptive capacity of the organization, and arrangements for managing evaluation results in contributing to the corporate knowledge management strategy, including internal and external web presence;
 - tt. system/s in place for disseminating evaluation findings and reports, including:
 - extent to which the needs of different audiences are taken into account in the dissemination of evaluation reports;
 - effectiveness of the dissemination strategy;
 - uu. the use of evaluation evidence in the development of new policies and programmes and in decision-making, to the extent that this can be assessed;
 - vv. extent to which management implements decisions based on evaluation recommendations in developing organizational policy, strategy and programming;
 - ww. ownership of evaluation at HQ and Field level and the impact of evaluations, to the extent this can be assessed, including their influence in supporting learning, enhancing accountability and organizational improvement at the relevant levels;
 - xx. to what extent evaluation reports are easily retrievable, e.g. through a searchable website.
6. EXTERNAL RELATIONS of the Independent Evaluation Unit:
- yy. to what extent IEU networks with the global development/security evaluation community, including OIOS, JIU, ISWE, UNEG as well as participates in relevant activities, conferences and provides support for national evaluation capacity development;
 - zz. to what extent IEU relates to external stakeholders including national partners, donors, and NGO partners.

The Peer Review Panel will focus on the how the evaluation function is currently implemented, in the light of UNODC's corporate objectives and organizational arrangements and taking particular account of recent changes. The JIU Maturity Matrix and the OIOS scorecards will provide baseline information to measure, in so far as feasible, any change since their own assessment. In addition, the Panel will analyse a sample of evaluation reports issued by UNODC since 2013.

Based on the evidence of the review, the Panel will submit recommendations to strengthen UNODC's evaluation function.

By necessity, a professional Peer Review of the evaluation function is not a full-fledged evaluation that can comprehensively evaluate practices, processes, and outcomes in depth. The Panel will report on the limitations of its work. However, it is expected that the Panel will be resourceful, drawing on a solid methodology as well as on their own experience as evaluators and managers within and outside the UN system.

Approach, methods and tools

UNODC's Independent Evaluation Unit will undertake a self-assessment covering, i.a., UNEG Norms and Standards against the Normative Framework described in Annex 2. In addition, the IEU will comment on the detailed UNODC maturity matrix assessment prepared by JIU, providing any evidence of any changes / progress since the review was conducted.

This will be supplemented by further information to be assembled by the consultant advisor, based on a review of relevant documentation from within and outside of UNODC. The consultant advisor will also carry out a quality review of a sample of evaluation reports, selected from among reports of both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations issued in the period 2013-2015. The sample will include evaluation reports assessed as good and poor by IEU itself and will contribute to validate the Quality Assurance mechanism of the Unit. To assess the quality of evaluation reports, the Peer Review will use a quality assessment tool based on UNEG and the DAC quality criteria.

The consultant will also undertake a preliminary visit to consult IEU staff and gather relevant documentation. These activities will provide the basis for a preliminary assessment; the Peer Review Panel will discuss preliminary findings and seek any required clarifications with IEU staff via videoconference. These consultations are expected to provide timely input for IEU consideration in preparing the evaluation work plan and budget.

Regarding the assessment of the evaluation culture at UNODC, and IEU engagement with UN-evaluation activities and processes, the Peer Review Panel will include a few specific questions in its interviews within UNODC and will briefly consult with UNEG members.

Equipped with the preliminary assessment, members of the Peer Panel will conduct a visit to UNODC Headquarters in January 2016. This will include a round of meetings, interviews and focus group discussions with UNODC staff at both HQ and field levels, senior management and Member States, at HQ or in capitals. During this visit, the Peer Review and IEU staff will also organize a Peer Exchange session, during which a few key issues of high relevance to UNODC evaluation function will be discussed.

Based on these activities, the Panel will prepare a draft report.

Reporting

The final report of the Peer Review will present an overview and assessment of the evaluation function at UNODC and conclusions and recommendations for action. The report will be a maximum of 50 pages in length, supplemented by a short executive summary and annexes.

The Panel will first share its draft report to IEU for comments and suggestions. After integrating these as considered appropriate, the Panel will submit the final report to the Executive Director and FinGov through IEU. It is expected that Management would be invited by the IEU to submit a Management Response at the same session.

The final report will also be provided to the joint DAC-UNEG Task Force, for dissemination among its respective constituencies and to interested cooperating partners. The Peer Panel will report on the Review's progress to UNODC Independent Evaluation Unit and the joint DAC/UNEG Task Force.

The Peer Review Panel and UNODC Independent Evaluation Unit will also provide the DAC-UNEG Task Force with feedback on the experience of the Peer Review to enable the members of UNEG and DAC EvalNet, to learn from UNODC's experience and further strengthen the peer review mechanism.

Responsibility of UNODC's Independent Evaluation Unit

The UNODC's Independent Evaluation Unit serves as the main contact point within UNODC for the Panel and its advisors.

The budget for the Peer Review will be jointly provided by UNODC's Independent Evaluation Unit and UNEG funds, which are allocated for this purpose (see section on Resources below and Annex 4).

The Office will provide requested information and data, including the following:

- Names and details of contact persons whom the Panel or its advisors wish to contact;
- Complete list of the unit's evaluations (2010-present);
- List of Independent Project Evaluations (2010-present);
- Independent quality assurance of evaluations (2014-15)
- List of persons to meet in the UNODC Senior Management and in Fin GOV;
- Database and contact information of evaluation team leaders;
- E-library of evaluation products accessible via Internet, and any other evaluation report issued in UNODC;
- Detailed findings from external assessments of the evaluation functions such as those of OIOS and the JIU.

IEU will provide the Panel with a self-assessment prior to the start of the Peer Review.

IEU has briefed the Executive Director and Member States about the Peer Review. IEU will also submit the Panel's report and recommendations to the Executive Director and to Member States.

Documents to be consulted (not exhaustive see annex 1)

- Evaluation Policy
- All UNODC evaluation reports (2007 - present)
- Independent quality assurance of evaluations (2014-15)
- Guidelines, templates, and other evaluation tools as published by IEU
- Other relevant IEU documents including the Strategic Framework, as well as documents concerning RBM, monitoring, operational procedures, and risk management.
- References made to IEU in speeches made by the Executive Director
- References made to IEU in strategic documents, e.g. BoA reports or documents from oversight functions

Persons to meet or to contact (by advisor and/or Peer Panel Members)

- Chief of IEU and Staff;
- The Executive Director or his representative and senior staff in UNODC, including Directors;
- UNODC Staff dealing with results-based management, knowledge systems, programme appraisal, management response on evaluations, good practices and portfolio quality improvement, as well as risk management and internal audit;
- Former evaluation team leaders;
- Staff members of a selected number of UNODC units, including technical departments;
- Staff members in regional, sub-regional, and country offices to be interviewed through teleconferencing or Skype;
- Member States of the UNODC FinGov;
- Former Member States representatives that played a role in setting up the evaluation function;
- Counterparts placed in capitals or within key institutions;
- Key evaluation consultants the evaluation function has regularly engaged with;
- Chairs of UNEG Working Groups in which IEU participates.

Peer review time-schedule and process

The Peer Review will begin in September 2015, and the Peer Review Panel will undertake formal visits to UNODC HQ in January 2016, providing a final report for presentation to the Executive Director and Member States in March 2015.

Key findings and conclusions will be presented first to the Executive Director, UNODC Senior Management and subsequently to Fin GOV and Member States. The final Review Report will be submitted for consideration to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCCJ).

The Peer Review process has five main phases (indicative timing is shown in brackets):

- i. Preparation (July – August 2015): Mobilization of the Panel;
- ii. Fact-finding (September –October 2015): IEU will undertake a self-assessment against the normative framework. The Peer Panel, supported by an independent consultant, will undertake extensive document review and consultations with IEU and prepare a preliminary assessment. This will be discussed by IEU and Panel members (via videoconference);
- iii. Visit by the Panel to UNODC HQ (January 2016); interviews with selected UNODC Members and staff of relevant UNODC units and Senior Management; analysis and triangulation of findings; preparation of draft report; this will include a Peer Exchange session between the Peer Review Panel and IEU staff.
- iv. Report preparation (January-February 2016): the Panel will prepare its draft report and share an advanced version with IEU for comments and suggestions before finalizing it.
- v. Presentation of Final Report (April 2016): CND and CCCJ

Resources

The cost of the Peer Review will be covered as follows:

- The participation of the Panel members will be covered by their own organizations;
- The costs of hiring the consultant advisor will be covered by the Peer Review budget and IEU;
- Costs in UNODC (including in-kind contributions of staff time) will be covered by IEU.

Panel Composition

Following consultations with the UNEG/DAC Joint Task Force as well as with the UNODC/IEU, a Panel of professional evaluators has been assembled. A number of important considerations were taken into account when composing it:

- i. relevant professional experience;
- ii. independence: to avoid any potential or perceived conflict of interest or partiality, the Panel members do not have any close working relationship to UNODC that might influence the Panel's position and deliberations; and
- iii. institutional affiliations: members to be drawn from a variety of multilateral and bilateral development agencies, as well as from institutions in the South and transition countries.

The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of serving on the Panel resulted in the following composition:

- Mr. Michael Spilsbury, Director of the Evaluation Office, United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Ms. Inga Sniukaite, Deputy Head of UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office, New York, USA;
- Ms Marianne Vestergaard, Evaluation Specialist, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark.

The Panel will be assisted by a consultant advisor responsible for (a) data collection and information gathering; (b) preliminary assessment of the collected information, and c) preparation of substantive inputs to the preliminary draft peer review report.

ToR Annex 1 List of key documents to be consulted.

- ECOSOC, CND and CCPCJ resolutions related to evaluation
- OIOS Inspection report 2009
- Evaluation Policy
- Annual and Bi-annual work plans
- Logframe monitoring table
- All major evaluation reports (2007 - present)
- Thematic and programme evaluation reports
- Country/regional level evaluation reports
- Project level evaluation reports
- Independent quality assurance of evaluation reports (2014-15)
- Handbook, Guidelines, templates, and other evaluation tools as published by IEU
- Project/Programme Evaluation Application in ProFi (Programme and Financial Information Management System)
- Project Document Global Programme on Evaluation (GLOH92)
- Progress reports GLOH92
- UNODC Evaluation Meta-Analysis (2014-15)
- Organigram of the unit 2011-2015
- Recorded Agenda of the evaluation unit
- Budget documents of the unit 2011-15
- RBM data on evaluation culture
- Fin Gov power point presentations
- Presentations to senior management.
- Management Instructions relating to evaluation (e.g. for project approval/revisions; Regional, Country and Thematic Programmes; etc.)
- Selected Programme Review Committee (PRC) minutes
- Selected Executive Committee (ExCom) minutes
- Analysis of questionnaires to Member States, Project Managers and Field Representatives
- Other relevant IEU documents including the Strategic Framework, as well as documents concerning RBM, monitoring, operational procedures, and risk management. (e.g. Project approval/revision table; etc.)
- OIOS score card 2011/2012 and 2013/2014
- OIOS assessment of UNODC (2013)
- JIU evaluation study of UNODC evaluation functions (2014)
- IEU UN-SWAP 2013 and 2014

ToR Annex 2 - Peer Review Schedule

2015	Key activities UNODC	Peer Review Panel
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of preliminary TOR • Prepare the electronic folder with documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Panel membership

September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEU undertake self-assessment • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire consultant support • Full draft TOR discussed with UNODC and finalised • Panel review the documents
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of the visit to HQ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses self-assessment and review • Panel prepares interview protocols
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of the visit to HQ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel Member Visit to UNODC HQ • Interviews with selected UNODC Members and staff of relevant UNODC units and Senior Management.
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and triangulation of findings; • Preparation of draft report
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive the draft report • PR findings and recommendations discussed on informal Annual meetings and consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel Review addresses the comments
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior manager, Member States and IEU prepare management response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Review Panel present the Report Senior manager, Member States and IEU

ToR Annex 3 - UNODC IEU: number evaluation reports on web site

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
In-depth	2	4	3	7	6	22
Project/programme	22	14	14	22	6	78
Total	24	18	17	29	12	100

8 Annex 4. Budget for the Peer Review

Contribution by UNODC = \$24,000

Maximum Top-up available from UNEG = \$16,000

Maximum Total = \$40,000

Annex 2 UNODC Peer Review Normative Framework

UNODC Peer Review, Normative Framework						
Area of focus	Criterion/detailed questions	UNEG N&S	Criterion/detailed questions	UNEG N&S	Criterion/detailed questions	UNEG N&S
	Independence	N.6	Credibility		Utility	
1. UNODC Evaluation Policy and Governance of the evaluation function						
	a. the institutional location and visibility of the evaluation function, and its reporting line/s;	N.2.2; N.6.1	g. the extent to which the evaluation policy conforms with UNEG standards, internal and external contextual changes and whether it needs to be updated;	N.3	k. Intentionality of the evaluation function, including its purpose within the organization, links to the results-based management system (if one exists), arrangements for accountability on follow-up to evaluations;	N.1.1; N.1.3
	b. responsibility for and safeguards in place for ensuring:		h. Identity of the evaluation function within UNODC, including:		l. consistency of the evaluation policy with other policies or frameworks relevant to the evaluation function (notably, UNODC's Strategic Framework; as well as those concerning results-based management, monitoring; harmonization and alignment; strategic planning; budgeting; and human resources management);	N.1.3
	• the independence and impartiality of the evaluation function;	N.2.1; N.5; N.6	• to what extent it is distinct from management and operational functions in UNODC;	N.1.4; N.1.5; N.7.1	m. disclosure policy for UNODC evaluation reports;	N.3
	• adequate allocation of financial and human resources to the evaluation function;	N.2.3	• to what extent IEU credibility is affected by the independence (or lack thereof) of the evaluations conducted in a decentralised modality;		n. extent to which the policy sets out clear functional and organizational arrangements to ensure that evaluation contributes effectively to learning, accountability and performance improvement within the UNODC;	N.1.1
	• fair and competence-based recruitment of the Chief of IEU, including rules and procedures for her/his performance assessment and termination;	N.2.5; N.9.2	• to what extent other UNODC policies, e.g. RBM, budgeting, etc., affect the independence of IEU.		o. the role of Governing Bodies in evaluation governance and use, appreciation and understanding;	N.2.1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintaining and updating technical skills and knowledge for evaluation within the UNODC; 	N.9.3	i. arrangements for oversight of evaluation activities conducted outside IEU;		p. mechanisms to provide the Chief of Evaluation with adequate access and opportunities to contribute to key corporate processes and decisions, including the deliberations of UNODC's Strategic direction.	
	c. the organizational relationships of the Independent Evaluation Unit with Management and Member States;	N.6.2	j. arrangements for periodic reviews of the evaluation function;			
	d. mechanism for calculating the allocation of financial and human resources for IEU, including stability over time, and transparency of the mechanism (, e.g. formula, percentage,) at central and decentralized level;					
	e. mechanisms to protect evaluation funding from influence which might undermine the independence and impartiality of evaluation work;;	N.2.4				
	f. mechanisms to protect evaluation findings and reporting from influence which might undermine the independence and impartiality of evaluation work;					
2. Management of evaluations						
	q. management arrangements, working procedures and the internal organization of the unit in support of the fulfilment of evaluation policy commitments and the achievement of strategic evaluation objectives;	N.6.2	t. approaches used to plan and manage evaluations and follow up, including arrangements to manage the quality and duration of the evaluation process;	N.6.2	z. presentation of Aggregate Evaluation Results, e.g. through an annual / biennial evaluation report based on conducted evaluations, that can provide credible, well-substantiated conclusions on UNODC overall programme performance;	N.1.3

	r. mechanisms and systems in place to:		u. mechanisms to inform stakeholders, and which categories thereof, about the evaluation process and to get their inputs and feedback on deliverables; alternatively, mechanisms to ensure ownership and accuracy of final reports;	N.10; N.6.5	aa. systems in place to ensure that both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations are carried out:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that evaluations are conducted and undertaken in an independent manner; 	N.6	v. mechanisms to ensure that the evaluation process is clear for stakeholders, including transparency in the way conclusions and recommendations are formulated and comments taken into account;	N.10.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> with a clear intent, as stated in the evaluation design; 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prevent or manage conflict of interest, for both IEU staff and consultants; 	N.6.3; N.6.4	w. adequacy of financial and human resources to ensure sufficient evaluation coverage, and typical work load;	N.2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> that evaluations are carried out and reports are produced and shared in a timely manner; 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> safeguard behavioural independence and integrity and protect evaluators and their career development; 	N.2.4; N.11.1	x. share of financial resources allocated to: IEU regular staff; evaluation work; (consultants, travel, etc.); staff capacity development; running costs;		bb. the development, provision and use of guidance, methods and tools to support and strengthen management of evaluations managed outside IEU, i.e. Independent Project Evaluations;	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> deal with comments and disagreements to reports and ensuring independence, credibility and accuracy. 		y. provisions to ensure that evaluators have the right competencies and that evaluation teams collectively have the necessary professional competence for issuing evaluation reports of adequate quality;	N.2.5; N.9.3; N.11.1	cc. the balance of effort between undertaking new evaluations and synthesizing and disseminating existing findings and lessons.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide clearance to and present evaluation reports, including protecting evaluation reports from undue influence; 	N.6.2				
	s. mechanisms and measures to apply and enforce the code of conduct for evaluators and to ensure a reasonable turn-over among consultants;	N.6.3; N.6.4				

3. Evaluation Planning						
	dd. systems in place to choose subjects of evaluation for both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations, that ensure:	N.2.6	ee. methods and criteria used for strategic planning of evaluation activities, both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations;		gg. extent to which topics selected for evaluation by IEU meet the strategic directions, concerns, needs and demands of UNODC's key stakeholders, balancing accountability and learning;	N.1.1
	• independent choices from managers' influence;		ff. systems in place to choose subjects of evaluation for both In-depth and Independent Project Evaluations, that ensure:	N.1.1; N.1.3; N.1.5; N.4.2	hh. extent to which topics selected for how far topics selected reflect the strategic directions and concerns of the UN system.	
	• impartial and balanced choices of subjects for evaluation (including good and poor performers) and/or representative of the UNODC portfolio;	N.5.3	• contribution to decision-making, accountability and learning;			
			• coverage of a sample representative enough to enable comparative analysis and drawing lessons across the UNODC portfolio;			
			• considerations of timing of evaluations in relation to relevant decision-making processes and mitigating factors should there be potentially divergent schedules;	S.3.1		
4. Evaluation quality		N.8			nn. system/s in place to ensure that evaluation designs and methodologies:	
			ii. with respect to evaluation design:		• have a clear intent;	
			• which evaluation criteria are used, their clarity and alignment with common definitions of terms;	N.8.1	• consider milestones when evaluation information is needed and can be fed back into decision-making processes.	
			• extent to which corresponding indicators are included in project and programme design to enable evaluability;	N7.1	oo. readability of evaluation reports, in terms of clarity, conciseness, lay-out, etc.;	N.8.2; N.13.2

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequacy, robustness and impartiality (e.g. approach to selecting country case studies or site visits) of evaluation methodology in the evaluation ToRs or equivalent document; 	N.2.4; N.5	pp. opinion of key stakeholders about the utility of evaluations.	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> integration of a gender and human rights perspective in evaluation terms of reference, process and reports; 	N.11.4		
			jj. the quality and credibility of evaluation reports, including robustness of evidence, analysis, results and recommendations, and treatment of gender equality issues;	N.8.2		
			kk. the independence and credibility of evaluation team leaders and members;	S.2.1- 2.4		
			ll. ways in which the accuracy and utility of the reports is enhanced, including how stakeholders are consulted and facilitated to comment on draft reports;	S.3.11		
			mm. mechanism and procedures for Quality Assurance for both in-depth and Independent project evaluations;	N.4.2; N.7		
6. Follow-up and use of evaluations						
			qq. mechanism/s for communicating evaluation results and lessons for In-depth and Independent Project Evaluation, both within UNODC and for other stakeholders, such as member countries, donors, and cooperating partners; this also applies to joint evaluations and system-wide evaluations;		uu. the use of evaluation evidence in the development of new policies and programmes and in decision-making, to the extent that this can be assessed;	

			rr. system/s in place and responsibilities to ensure that formal, corporate, substantive and timely Management Responses are prepared and that follow-up actions to evaluation recommendations are taken, recorded/tracked, and reported on;	N.2.6; N.12	vv. extent to which management implements decisions based on evaluation recommendations in developing organizational policy, strategy and programming;	N.2.6 N.12.2
			ss. the absorptive capacity of the organization, and arrangements for managing evaluation results in contributing to the corporate knowledge management strategy, including internal and external web presence;	N.1.3; N.1.5	ww. ownership of evaluation at HQ and Field level and the impact of evaluations, to the extent this can be assessed, including their influence in supporting learning, enhancing accountability and organizational improvement at the relevant levels;	N.1.5C ; N.13.1
			tt. system/s in place for disseminating evaluation findings and reports, including:	N.2.7	xx. to what extent evaluation reports are easily retrievable, e.g. through a searchable website.	N.2.7; N.10.2; N.13.2
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent to which the needs of different audiences are taken into account in the dissemination of evaluation reports; 	N.13		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effectiveness of the dissemination strategy; 	N.13		
7. IEU networking and external relations						
			yy. to what extent IEU networks with the global development/security evaluation community, including OIOS, JIU, ISWE, UNEG as well as participates in relevant activities, conferences and provides support for national evaluation capacity development;		zz. to what extent IEU relates to external stakeholders including national partners, donors, NGO partners.	

Annex 3 List of stakeholders interviewed during the UNODC Peer Review

Title	Name	Surname	Role/Department	Organization	Country / duty station
Mr	Sergey	Agadzhanov	Chief, Human Resources Management Service	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Senta	Alabbadi	Alternate Permanent Representative	Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Office of the United Nations and other International Organisations in Vienna	Vienna
Mr	Peter	Alan	Consultant evaluator		United Kingdom
Ms	Crisitina	Albertin	Country Representative	UNODC	Nigeria
Mr	James	Applegate	Acting UN Affairs Counselor	United States Mission to the International Organizations in Vienna	Vienna
Mr	Roberto	Arbitrio	Chief, Office of the Director General/Office of the Executive Director, Strategy Advisor to the Executive Director	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Punit	Arora	Consultant evaluator		
Mr	Ignacio	Baylina	Counsellor	Permanent Representation of Spain to the United Nations in Vienna	Vienna
Mr	John M.	Brandolino	Director, Division for Treaty Affairs, Office of the Director	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Flor	Cam	Chief of Accounts, Division of Management, Financial Resource Management Service	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Ilias	Chatzis	Chief, Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Yatta	Dakowah	Policy Coordination Officer, Office of the Director General/Office of the Executive Director	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Amado	De Andres	Regional Representative, Central America and the Caribbean	UNODC	Panama
Ms	Jo	Dedeyne-Amann	Chief, Secretariat to Governing Bodies, Division for Treaty Affairs	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Emmanuelle	Diehl	Consultant evaluator		
Mr	Gilberto	Duarte	Programme Manager, Brazil country office	UNODC	Brazil
Mr	Yuri	Fedotov	Executive Director	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Oleg	Gavrilov	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the International Organizations in Vienna	Vienna
Mr	Gilberto	Gerra	Chief, Drug Prevention and Health Branch, Division for Operations	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Charlotte	Gunnarson	Associate Evaluation Officer,	UNODC	Vienna

			Independent Evaluation Unit		
Mr	Petr	Havlik	First Counsellor	Delegation of the European Union to the International Organisations in Vienna	Vienna
Mr	Oscar	Huertas	Consultant evaluator		Colombia
Ms	Katharina	Kayser	Head, Independent Evaluation Unit	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Ekaterina	Kolykhalova	Programme Officer, Regional Section for Europe, West and Central Asia, Europe Team, Division for Operations	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Aldo	Lale-Damoz	Deputy Executive Director and Director, Division for Operations	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Riku	Lehtovuori	Adviser, HIV/AIDS Unit	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Jean-Luc	Lemahieu	Director, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Emanuel	Lohninger	Independent Evaluation Unit	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Bo	Mathiasen	Country Representative	UNODC	Colombia
Ms	Angela	Me	Chief, Research and Trend Analysis Branch	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Flavio	Mirella	Chief, Regional Section for South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Anna	Nazarova	Second Secretary	Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the International Organizations in Vienna	Vienna
Ms	Martina	Osterhus	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of Norway to the International Organisations in Vienna	Vienna
Ms	Catherine	Perret	Chief of Budget, Division of Management, Financial Resource Management Service	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Stefano	Polacco	Programme Management Officer, Strategic Planning and Interagency Affairs Unit (SPIA), Public Affairs and Policy Support Branch, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Trevor M.	Rajah	Chief, Terrorism Prevention Branch	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Pascale	Reinke-Schreiber	Associate Expert, Independent Evaluation Unit	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Elena	Rigacci Hay	Programme Coordination Officer, Terrorism Prevention Branch, Division for Treaty Affairs	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Regina	Rohrbach	Secretariat to the Governing Bodies	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Adan	Ruiz Villalba	Deputy, Independent Evaluation Unit	UNODC	Vienna

Mr	Tullio	Santini	Chief, Regional Section for Latin America and the Caribbean, Integrated Programme and Oversight Branch, Division for Operations	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Alexandre	Schmidt	Chief, RSEWCA and Representative for South Eastern Europe, Regional Section for Europe, West and Central Asia, Division for Operations	UNODC	Vienna
Mr	Roland	Seeger	Alternate Permanent Representative	Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Office of the United Nations and other International Organisations in Vienna	Vienna
Mr	Polinikis	Sophocleus	Chief, Financial Resources Management Service	UNODC	Vienna
Ms	Elca	Stiegter	Consultant evaluator		the Netherlands
Mr	Ian	Tennant	Political Attaché	United Kingdom Mission to the UN Vienna	Vienna
Ms	Charlotta	Tideman	Counsellor	Permanent Mission of Sweden to the International Organizations Vienna	Vienna
Mr	Jose	Villa Del Castillo	Regional Representative, Eastern Africa region	UNODC	Kenya

Annex 4 - Questionnaire Survey for Consultant Evaluators, Draft Report

9 Introduction

243. Among its assessment tools, the PRP prepared a questionnaire survey to canvass the views of all consultant evaluators who were recruited to conduct the 12 IDEs and 30 IPEs that UNODC carried out during the period 2014-15. A list of 44 names was compiled with the support of IEU and all were emailed the questionnaire on 28 January 2016. Only one bounced back due to error in the email address. The option was given to respond it either on-line, through a Survey-monkey supported questionnaire, or through a MS Word attachment to be returned to the PRP consultant. A reminder was sent out to addressees on 4 February, four days before the deadline and the survey was closed on the planned date. Respondents did not have to disclose their names.

244. Among the 43 recipients, 19 responded through the on-line tool and four through the MS Word attachment, which were manually entered by the consultant, for a total of 23. However, two responses were blank throughout all records, which led to 21 valid responses. This is statistically representative of the sample, at 95% confidence level and 15% confidence interval. Given the small size of the sample however, the PRP decided to interpret the responses only as indicative.

245. The questionnaire included four types of questions:
- Questions with the possibility of choosing one option only;
 - Questions that required ranking of performance and/or processes (see ranking scale below);
 - Questions that required indicating the level of agreement or disagreement with a statement;
 - Open-ended questions.

246. The scoring used for ranking is shown below:

1	Very poor
2	Poor
3	Inadequate/Unsatisfactory
4	Adequate/Satisfactory
5	Good
6	Excellent
NA	Not applicable
No	The reply to the question is 'I did not...'

247. In addition to one set of questions aimed at defining the profile of the respondent, the questionnaire included 4 sets of closed questions exploring the efficiency and independence of the evaluation process, from preparation to report-writing, as well as the role of and support received from IEU, Programme Managers and other stakeholders. All closed questions had to be responded separately for IDEs and IPEs, to allow a comparison between the two types of evaluations. All sets of questions could also be complemented with open-ended comments and observations.

10 Findings

248. Among the respondents, 19 provided their names and addresses to be contacted. The mailing list had included 16 women (37%) and 27 men (63%). Among the respondents, women's share was slightly higher than in the universe, at 42% out of the 19 respondents who provided their names. The most frequent role among the respondents, 29%, was that of IPE Team Leader, with no additional team members. Twelve respondents (57%) had only taken part in IPEs, and half of these in only one IPE. The second largest group, 8 respondents out of 21 (38%), had taken part in both IDEs and IPEs.

249. The role of IEU in the evaluations was one of 'Quality assurance of Inception report and draft final report' in the majority of IDEs (6 out of 14) and of IPEs (14 out of 24) and in four IPEs, IEU was reported as having no role at all.

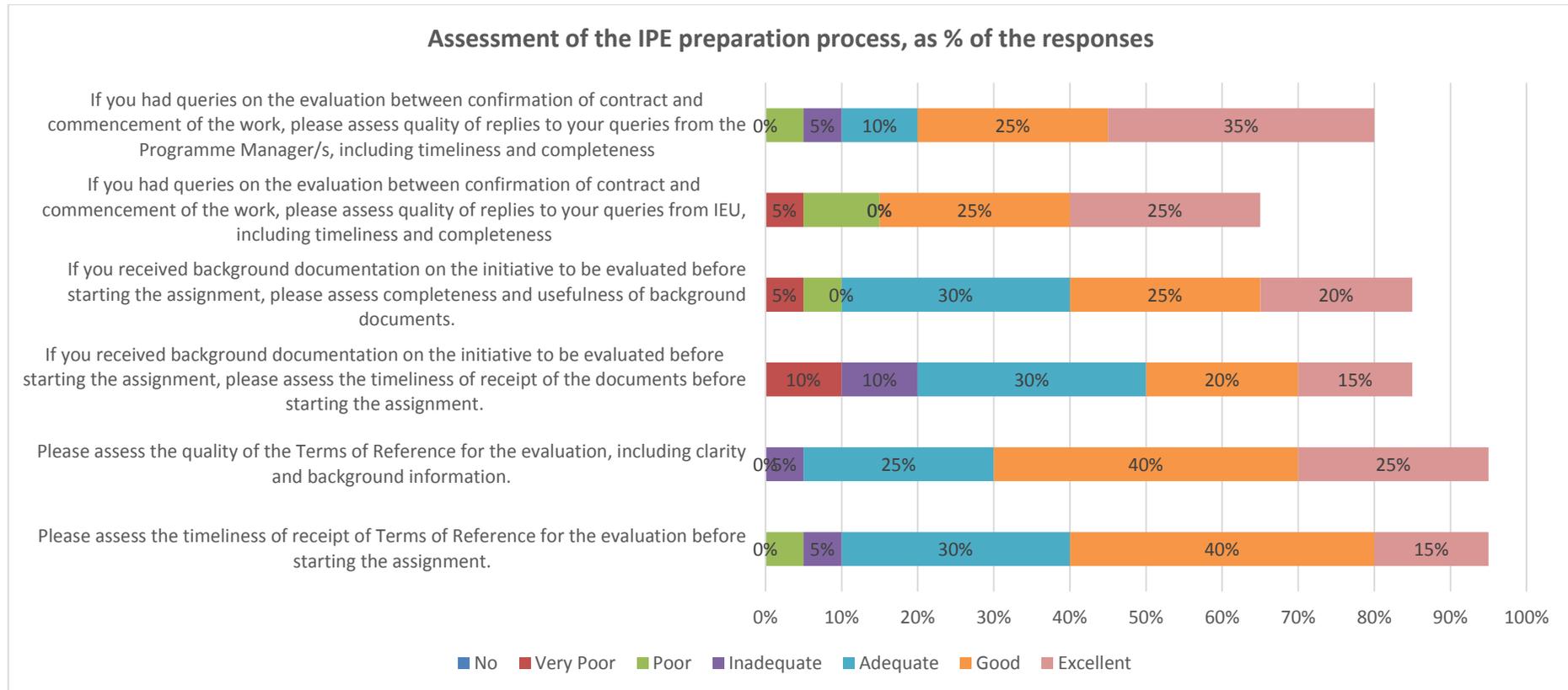
250. Responses to the closed questions under the heading 'Please provide information on the preparatory process for the evaluation/s you took part into' are shown in Boxes 1 and 2 below and show that there is room for improving the quality and timeliness of the preparation process, in particular in the case of IDEs. More in detail:

- iii. The quality of the Terms of Reference for the evaluations, and timeliness in making them available, were adequate to excellent in 85% of the IPEs but only in 60% and 40% of the cases respectively for IDEs;
- iv. The parameters that scored the lowest were the usefulness of background documents and timeliness in making them available, with 40% of the responses in the case of IDEs and 20% for IPEs of negative assessment when adding insufficient to very poor; in this respect, Programme Managers were assessed as slightly better performing than IEU in the context of IPE;
- v. Contractual procedures were poor or inadequate in almost 20% of the cases for both types of evaluations.

251. In the qualitative comments, evaluators mentioned the occasional delay in signing contracts, the inadequacy of documentation provided and criticism of the ToRs being too long, with too many questions and at times inaccurate about the evaluand. One evaluator also challenged the boundaries and clarity in the roles of evaluation manager and team leader, with respect to decisions about the methodology and actual contribution to the work.

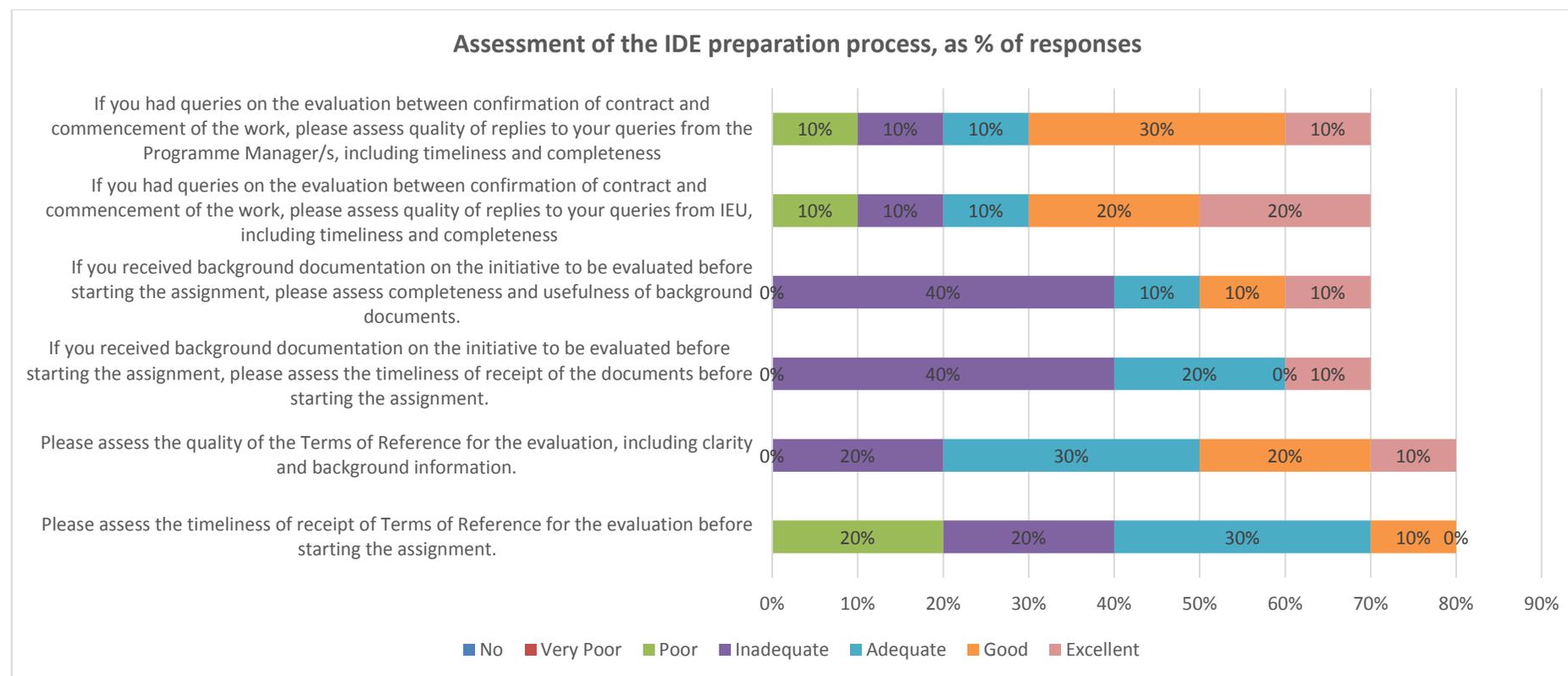
252. Boxes 1 and 2 below show the quantitative responses on the quality of the evaluation preparation process.

Box 5. Assessment of the preparation process for IPEs, 20 valid responses



Note: the 'No' responses indicate that the reply to the questions was 'No, I did not'. The Not Applicable option, i.e. the respondent could not provide an assessment for any reason different from having a No reply, accounts for values short of 100%

Box 6. Assessment of the preparation process for IDEs, 10 valid responses



Note: the 'No' responses indicate that the reply to the questions was 'No, I did not'. The Not Applicable option, i.e. the respondent could not provide an assessment for any reason different from having a No reply, accounts for values short of 100%

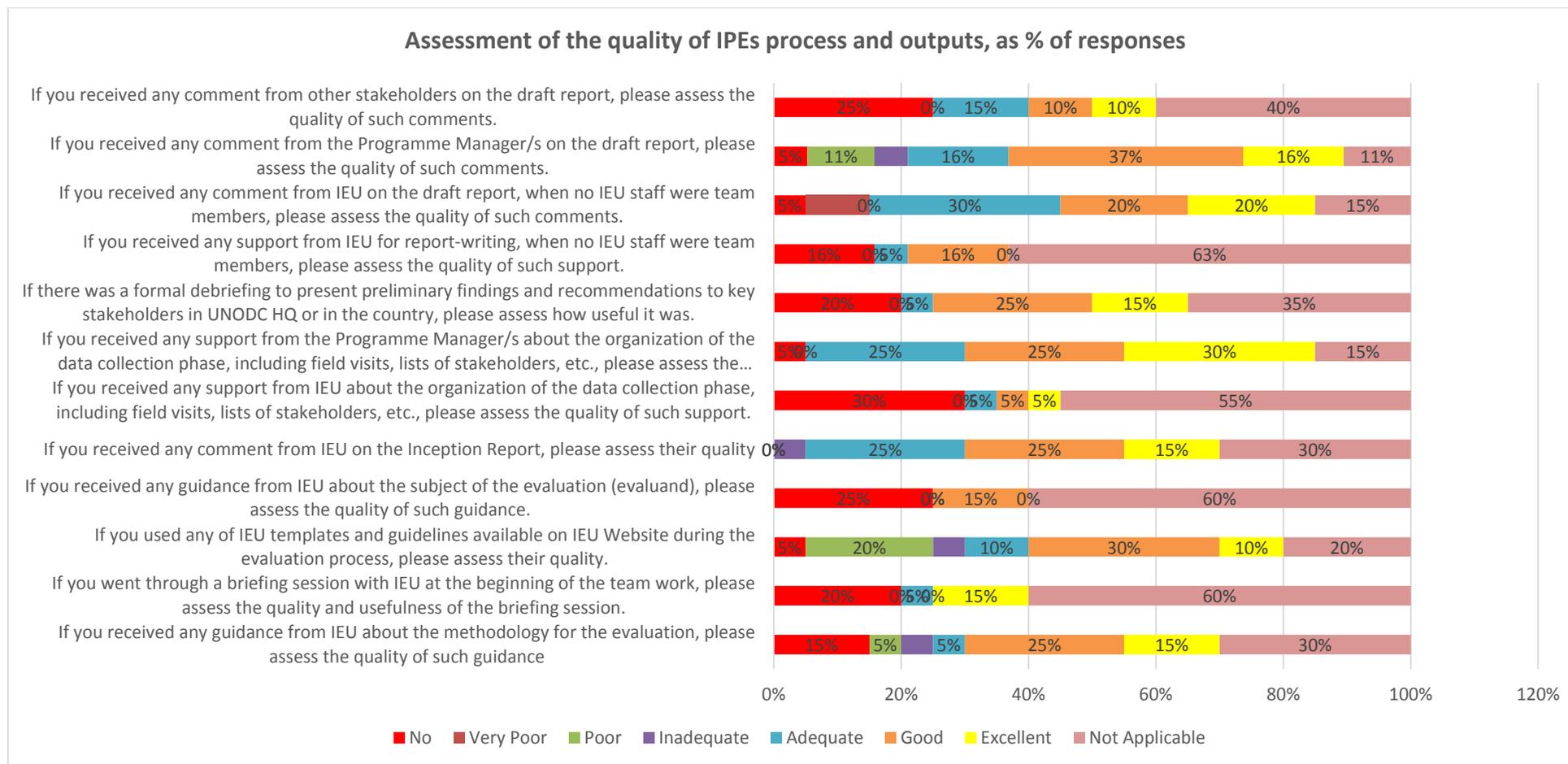
253. The next set of questions focused on the quality of the evaluation process and outputs. The rate of response was the same as for the previous block of questions. However, the No and Not Applicable options together received the highest share of responses in the case of IPEs, and the second highest for IDEs. This indicates an overall low level of support and guidance from IEU and UNODC in general throughout the evaluation process, which confirms the findings from the PRP interviews with evaluators. More in detail:

- vi. Methodological guidance from IEU was assessed as adequate or better by 60% of respondents on IDEs, and 45% of respondents on IPEs; most of the other did not receive any guidance and few assessed the support as of poor quality;
- vii. Briefings by IEU were appreciated as being of adequate or better quality in the case of IDEs, whereas only few took place in the case of IPEs;
- viii. The quality of IEU guidelines, tools and templates was considered adequate or better by 40% of respondents in the case of IDEs, and 50% of respondents for IPEs; most of the other did not use the guidelines and few assessed them as being of poor quality;
- ix. Only a minority of respondents for both IDEs and IPEs, 20% and 15% respectively, received any guidance from IEU on the subject of the evaluation, although when it happened, it was assessed as good;
- x. Support during the data-gathering phase came almost exclusively from Programme Managers in the case of IPEs, and was assessed as adequate or better by 80% of the respondents; IEU provided adequate or better support to 60% of the respondents on IDEs;
- xi. Debriefings in HQ after completing the data-gathering phase were considered useful or better, by almost 50% of respondents for both IDEs and IPEs;
- xii. Support in report-writing was assessed as adequate or better by 40% of respondents on IDEs, and 21% of respondents on IPEs
- xiii. Comments on the Inception and draft reports by IEU were considered to be adequate or better by 60% and 50% of respondents respectively in the case of IDEs, and 65% -70% respectively in the case of IPEs;
- xiv. Comments from Programme Managers were well appreciated, as adequate or more, in 69% of IPEs and 78% of IDE responses.

254. Through the open-ended comments, respondents provided some additional explanations: the main criticism about guidelines and templates was on the evaluation report template, that apparently is imposed by UN Secretariat. Other issues raised were: lack of clarity in the roles of IEU staff and evaluators, significant differences and some inconsistencies in the support from IEU staff, with examples made of very good support received; limited inputs from IEU, Programme Managers and other stakeholders.

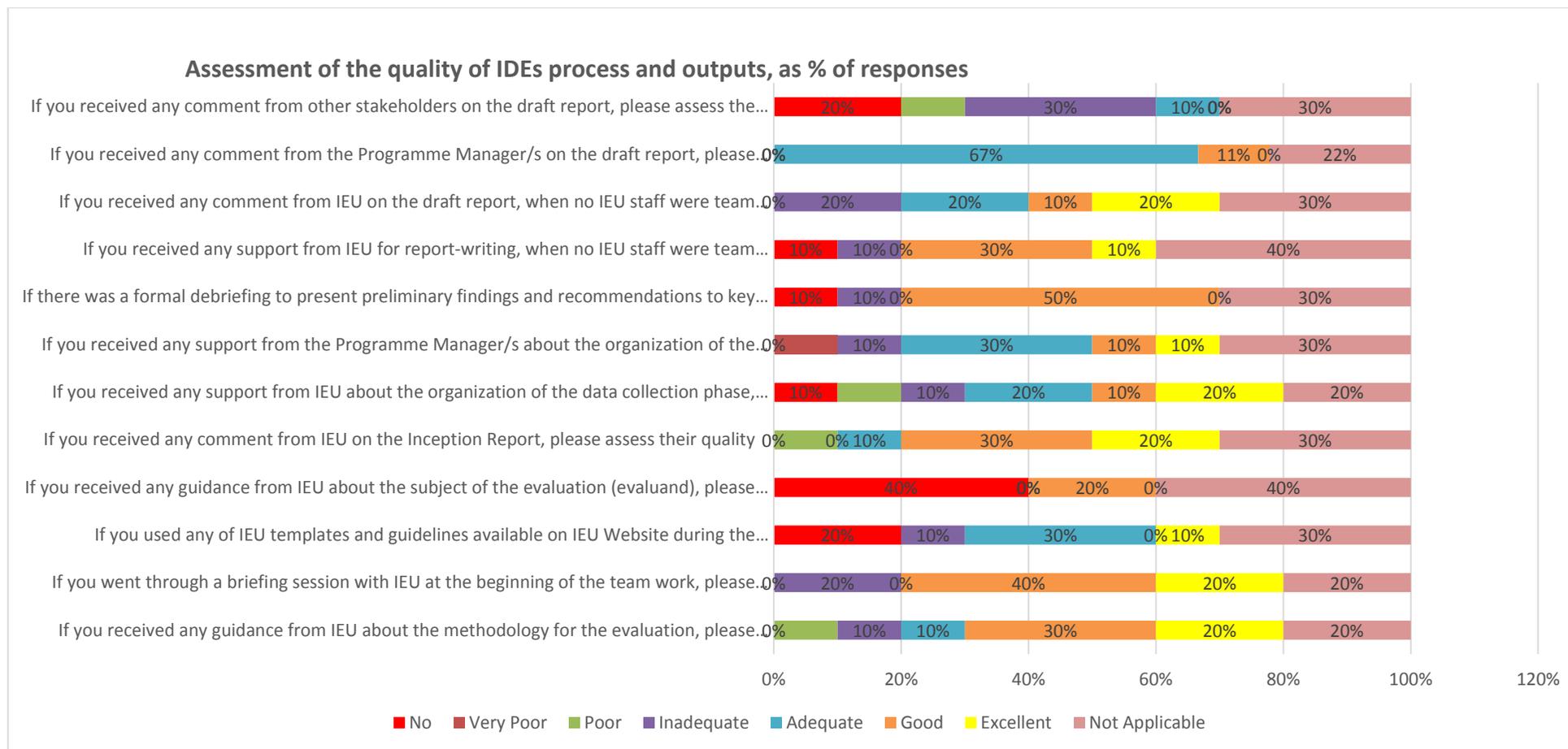
255. Boxes 3 and 4 below show the quantitative responses on the quality of the evaluation process and outputs.

Box 7. Assessment of the quality of the process/outputs for IPEs, 20 valid responses



Note: the 'No' responses indicate that the reply to the questions was 'No, I did not. The Not Applicable option, i.e. the respondent could not provide an assessment for any reason different from having a No reply, accounts for values short of 100%

Box 8. Assessment of the quality of the process/outputs for IDEs, 10 valid responses



Note: the 'No' responses indicate that the reply to the questions was 'No, I did not'. The Not Applicable option, i.e. the respondent could not provide an assessment for any reason different from having a No reply, accounts for values short of 100%

256. The last set of questions focused on roles in the evaluation process, clarity in their definition, and on independence of the process, and was structured as the Likert scale (agreement/disagreement with a statement). Disagreements overall were twice as more frequent for the responses on IDEs. The overall results for both IPEs and IDEs, raise some questions with respect to the independence of the evaluation process, the clarity of the roles and the resources available to adequately conduct the evaluations. More in detail:

- xv. The roles of IEU, Evaluation Managers, team members and Programme Managers were clear for 40-50% of respondents in the case of IDEs, and for 48-65% of respondents for IPEs;
- xvi. The role of Team Leader on the contrary was very clear for the large majority of respondents;
- xvii. The questions on 'absence of undue pressure' resulted for IPEs in 15% of disagreements with respect to IEU and 10% with respect to Programme Managers and other stakeholders; for IDEs, disagreements were at 30% with respect to IEU, and 10-20% with respect to Programme Managers and other stakeholders;
- xviii. The methodology was considered adequate to the scope of the evaluation in 60% of the IDEs and in 90% of the IPEs; and
- xix. Resources were considered adequate in 80% of the IPEs, and in 30% of the IDEs.

257. The additional narrative comments contributed by the respondents, tended to explain the reasons for the disagreements on the perceived Undue pressure, both from IEU and Programme Managers, to modify the draft reports. This appeared to be both on the language used to present the evidence to make it more 'diplomatic' and 'digestible', and on substance. It is however difficult to assess to what extent requested changes in the language also ended up affecting the substance, as suggested in a couple of responses.

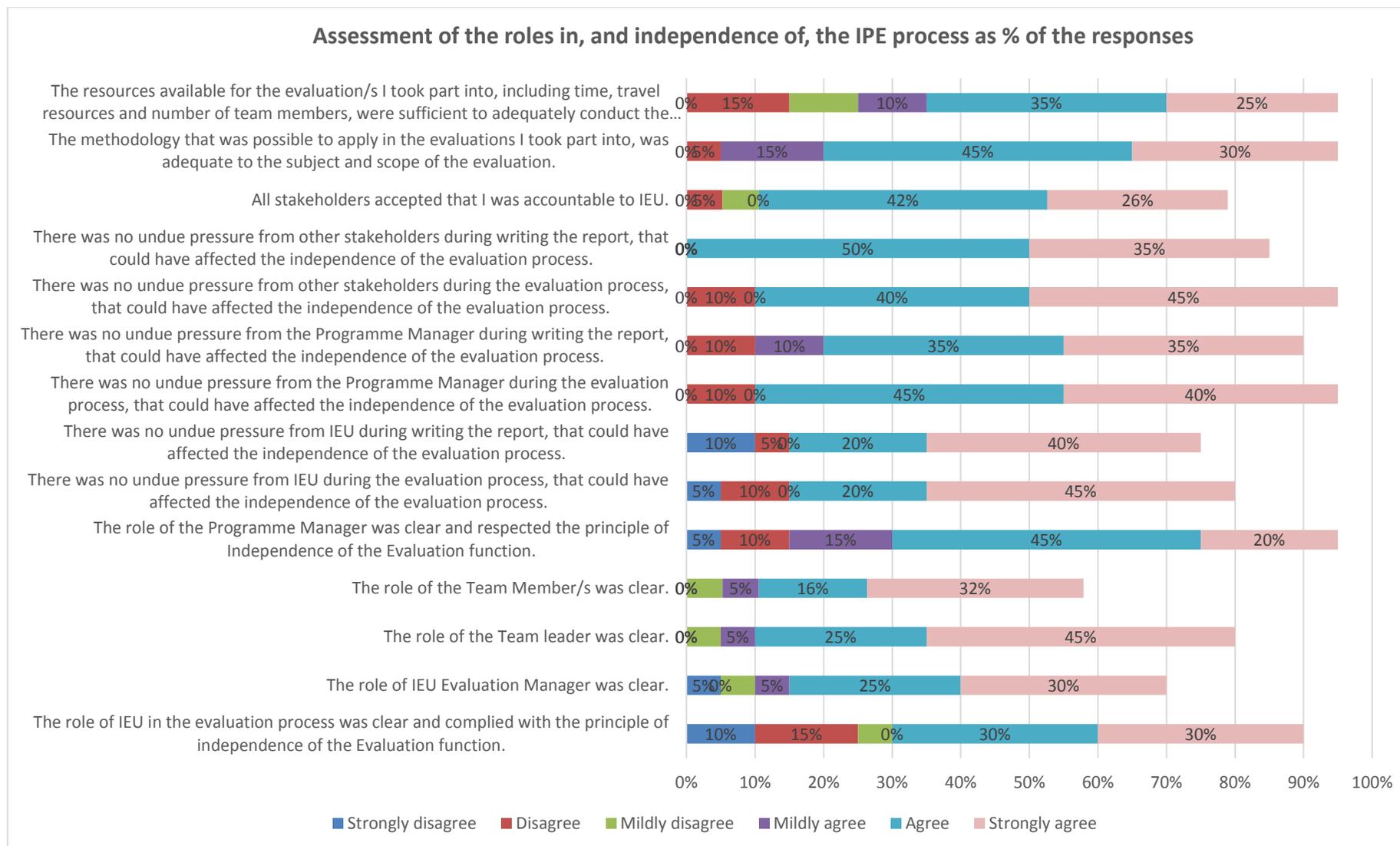
258. An additional repeated comment concerned the independence of IEU, which was considered by some as 'unavoidably non independent' due to its institutional location within UNODC. This view may also add to the perception of undue pressure from IEU. Indeed, this tends to be a recurrent criticism from both from internal and external observers, about evaluation units being part of the organizations they are mandated to evaluate. This is one of the reasons why UNEG stresses the importance of both institutional independence and related reporting lines, and the importance of behavioural independence, which can be understood as either a soft-skill or a personality trait.

259. Other issues raised touched upon the lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities, low professional competence among evaluators, conflicts of interest in the case of some team members. Although these may be isolated cases, the simple fact of their occurrence flags this as a matter for IEU's immediate attention.

260. Other comments included a request for consultants to be assessed by IEU about their performance, as well as positive remarks of IEU performance, in particular of IEU support in the case of challenges from management on difficult findings, and in one case, of understanding that IEU staff was under heavy work pressure.

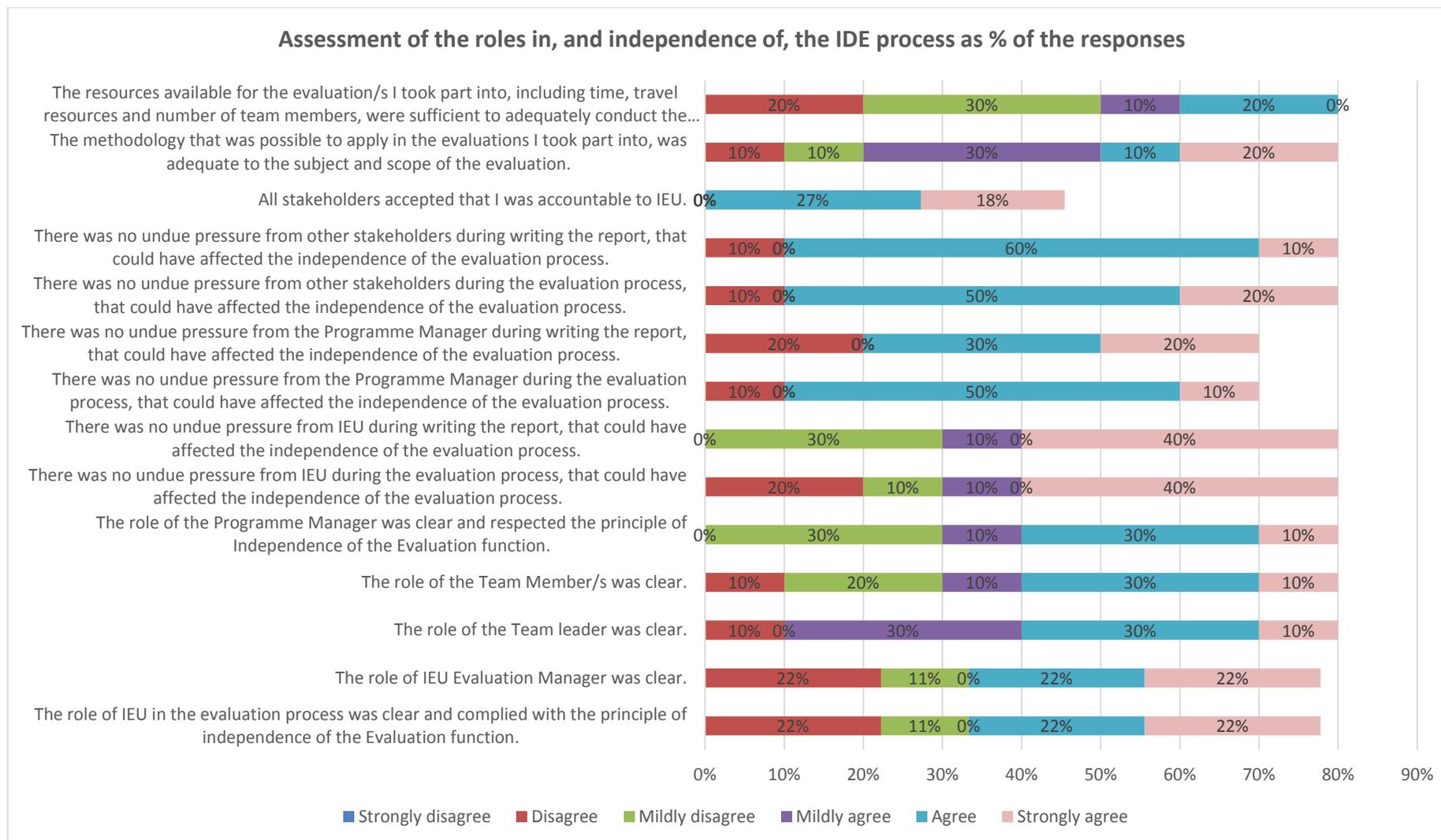
261. Boxes 5 and 6 below show the quantitative responses on the quality of the evaluation process and outputs.

Box 9. Assessment of the roles and independence in the process/outputs for IPEs



Note: The Not Applicable option, i.e. the respondent could not provide an assessment for any reason different from having a No reply, accounts for values short of 100%

Box 10. Assessment of the roles and independence in the process/outputs for IDEs



Note: The Not Applicable option, i.e. the respondent could not provide an assessment for any reason different from having a No reply, accounts for values short of 100%

Annex 5 Analysis of UNODC Evaluation quality

1. The Terms of Reference for the Peer Review and its Normative Framework locate the area of Evaluation Quality within the principles of Credibility and Utility, and encompass in it, all aspects of the evaluation cycle: the quality of its design, including methods, criteria and indicators, integration of Human Rights and Gender Equality perspectives and inclusiveness of the process; the credibility and independence of the evaluators; the breadth of the evidence, the robustness of the findings, conclusions and recommendations in the reports as well as their clarity and readability; the views of the final users on the quality. This sub-section discusses all these aspects.
2. Quality of evaluations has always been a core concern of the UN evaluation functions and the external evaluative reviews of UNODC were no exception. Back in 2009, OIOS found that *'the quality of project and thematic evaluation reports and their use'* was robust, although there was a gap with respect to the analysis of impact.⁹⁸ JIU in 2010 stressed that IEU had to produce high-quality evaluation reports as part of its specific remit within the 'shared responsibility' for the evaluation function. In 2012/13, OIOS through its Scorecards Assessment, ranked the quality of UNODC evaluation reports as 'Good'. In 2013, JIU in its Evaluation Maturity Index assessed the quality of UNODC evaluation reports as 'medium overall', with variations and significant improvements.
3. IEU in turn, from 2011 onwards, systematically included UNEG and UNODC quality standards as benchmarks for its evaluation outputs within its work-plans. The internal Evaluation Quality Assurance (EQA) process of evaluation reports has been a constant in IEU's work, clearly depending on the Unit's staffing capacity. As of 2014, quality assessments of evaluation reports were also included as indicators and targets in IEU logframes.
4. Along the same lines, IEU has produced over the years a wide range of guidelines and templates to harmonize evaluation processes and products and mainstream quality standards across IPEs and IDEs. In late 2015, following the recommendations of an external Quality Assessment exercise (see below), IEU also launched a complete revision of its Evaluation Handbook, to further improve the quality of the evaluation process.⁹⁹
5. Quality of evaluations is also well integrated in the 2015 Evaluation Policy, where it is mentioned several times: as a result of transparency in the evaluation process; in stressing the importance of quality standards in the evaluation process; as part of IEU role to ensure the quality of IDEs, and by foreseeing possible external independent quality assurance mechanisms of evaluation reports. Furthermore, the evaluation policy states that evaluation in UNODC is conducted by the standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, namely relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, and also uses the additional criteria of partnerships and gender and human rights. Programme management is also typically included in the templates for Terms of Reference and reports, as well as Innovation as an optional criterion.
6. Two IEU staff are responsible for the EQA of IPEs, and a third staff member is responsible for EQA of IPEs in one linguistic area, and IDEs. As differences always exist in how judgements are made, IEU developed formal checklists for the assessment of the various reports. It was also stated that an EQA is always done in pairs.

⁹⁸ OIOS, Op.cit.

⁹⁹ In November 2015, the PRP reviewed each and every IEU guideline and template. These however are no longer 'valid' because in the meantime, IEU started working on its new Handbook, which will have a completely new structure and will integrate new tools and templates. Thus, it was decided to informally communicate to IEU the PRP's observations on the 'old' guidelines and templates, and not to include that analysis in this report.

7. IEU procedures for EQA include the revision of evaluation ToRs, inception reports and draft final reports. IPEs can be discontinued if the quality does not meet minimum standard requirements, which has so far happened only once (in 2014). As already mentioned, with respect to inception and draft reports, consultant evaluators stated that IEU provides minimal feedback in the case of IPEs, while there are high expectations and numerous iterations in the case of IDEs.

8. With respect to Terms of Reference of IPEs, IEU staff stated that often, extensive revisions and iterations with programme managers are necessary before clearance. In the view of the PRP, the ToRs for many IDEs and IPEs reviewed in its assessment, tended to be inadequate: too long, lack identification of key overarching issues/questions and too many, and too generic, questions, standard methodological tools with limited attempt at tailoring methods to the specific circumstances. These observations were also raised by some consultant evaluators through the Questionnaire Survey, who however indicated that IPE's Terms of Reference were of better quality than those for IDEs.

9. The quality of ToRs can affect the quality of the whole exercise. The PRP noted elsewhere in the report, a need for a different approach to the preparation of IDE ToRs. Similarly, a need for better tailored evaluation questions in final project evaluations was pointed out, to enable a more effective use of this type of evaluations for broader corporate learning. Despite the differences in assessing the quality of ToRs between the PRP, the consultant evaluators and IEU itself, there is a general consensus that this is a step in the evaluation process in UNODC that requires dedicated attention and improvement.

10. In the case of inception reports, the EQA should focus on the methodology proposed and on the extent to which the evaluators have grasped the key issues to be evaluated. Feedback from evaluators suggest that IEU provides minimal feedback on the inception reports in the case of IPEs, while there are high expectations for inception reports in the case of IDEs.

11. In the case of draft final reports, EQA typically consists of formulating comments and proposing changes on the formal aspects of the reports, including language, style, format, internal logic, conciseness and structure of the report, without interfering with the substantive contents of the report. The benchmark of reference is a report template that IEU systematically shares with evaluation teams at the beginning of the assignment and that IEU staff also uses as a checklist and for making specific comments to evaluators. The EQA process can also call the attention of the evaluators in the case of gaps in the reports, for example when substantive analytical parts are missing or incomplete.

12. All these steps can be quite time-consuming and may entail extensive iterations, when IEU staff have time to dedicate to the evaluation. IPEs can be discontinued if the quality does not meet minimum standard requirements, which happened once (in 2014).

13. In 2015, IEU recruited with softly earmarked funds, an External Team of two consultants to conduct a Quality Assessment of 33 evaluation reports. This included a few reports issued in 2013 and all reports issued in 2014 and in 2015, until April 30. The team produced 33 individual assessments against a template framework specifically developed for this purpose, and a synthesis report.

14. The framework largely follows the IEU Guidelines for UNODC Evaluation reports, with some inconsistencies and overall, it largely resembles UNEG 2010 Evaluation Report Quality Assessment template, albeit with a number of modifications discussed below. In common with the UNEG template, the IEU EQA is very detailed, with several criteria for each area of analysis: this does not seem to be very helpful as it obliges quality assessors to synthesise, in one single score, elements that may differ quite significantly in quality.

15. The Framework is structured on a four-point scale: 'unsatisfactory', 'fair', 'good', 'very good'. In practice, as the reviewers say in their report, 'fair' was used when there were gaps and the criteria were not met, thus it was used as a negative assessment. The original IEU version also included a 'very poor' option that was merged into the 'unsatisfactory' category by the consultants. It also asked for a final weighting of each section, and for an overall scoring, that corresponds to the score that received the highest weight.

16. The detailed observations on the external team's framework are as follows:

- c. There is inconsistency between the Guidelines and the EQA with respect to the section Background of Project/programme evaluated. According to the former, this section should focus on: "The overall concept and design of the project and include an assessment of its strategy, the planned time and resources and the clarity, logic and coherence of the project document." The EQA expands this to include the context and the logic model of the project, that the Guidelines include under Findings, but leaves out for example the planned time and resources. At the same time, the UNEG framework suggests more detailed information, which are missing from IEU EQA, namely: scale, complexity, geographic context and boundaries, resources;
- d. In the methodology section, the wording used with respect to triangulation (bullet 'c' of the document) and human rights and gender equality (bullet 'e' of the document), should be reworded to harmonize with other items and purpose of this document. The UNEG wording seems more appropriate, i.e. "The methods employed are appropriate for analysing gender and rights issues identified in the evaluation scope". Further, a rather important item is missing: "The methods employed are appropriate for the evaluation and to answer its questions."
- e. Under 'Conclusion', a bullet point states 'Conclusions were developed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders'; this is rather tricky request that could potentially seriously affect the independence of the evaluation,¹⁰⁰ also, nowhere in the IEU manual is this step described or clarified, thus it could be easily taken out;
- f. The EQA includes references to gender equality and human rights at key points; which is fine. There is room for further integration, e.g. references to gender-sensitive language and gender balance of evaluation teams;
- g. The use of the term 'fair' for scoring is problematic: the team stated that they used the term as follows: "As a result, 'Fair' was used when the criteria were generally not met, and therefore that score can be understood to mean that the reports, or pieces of the reports, were not well done." However, for most English-speakers, and in the dictionaries as well, 'fair' usually conveys a positive meaning. Thus, there is a high likelihood of misunderstanding. The scoring terminology should be revised.
- h. The IEU initially proposed five-point scale which has the disadvantage of skewing responses towards the centre. Further, the current four-point scale does not allow for 'acceptable/average' and 'below average but not poor' scoring. In general, the scoring system adopted is tight and unclear and is not supported by descriptors for each item and point. The PR could suggest adopting a six-point scale (see footnote 102 below) and develop associated descriptors.¹⁰¹
- i. The template also foresees weighting each element and a final overall scoring, also on a 4-point scale. The attribution of weights is as follows: 35 points given to 'Findings', 15 to 'Recommendations' and 5 or 10 to all other elements. It is true that findings and

¹⁰⁰ UNEG template mentions Consultation with stakeholders with respect to recommendations, while also asking for a description of the process of consultation on recommendations. At the time the template was issued, there were quite a few heated discussions on this point, as some UNEG members considered that consultation with stakeholders on conclusions/recommendations risked affecting the independence of the evaluation.

¹⁰¹ The UNEG check-list does not use any scoring system.

recommendations are very important, but so are 'Conclusions' and 'Methodology'. Some rebalancing could be suggested, e.g. 'Methodology', 'Conclusions' and 'Recommendations' 15 each, and 'Findings' 25. In addition, no option is foreseen for Not Applicable, which penalizes evaluations that, for example, did not identify any Lesson Learnt (five points). Or an evaluation can still be very good but the report not well presented (10 points). Thus, the drawing of one single scoring for the whole report/evaluation may still be not very useful, even with a more balanced distribution of weights. More interesting would be to develop a scoring system on the quality of evaluated projects:

17. The overall quality of the reports was assessed as 'Good' over a four-point scale, with two reports assessed as 'Very Good' and none 'Unsatisfactory'. The parameters that were scored the highest were 'Presentation and structure', 'Findings and Conclusions'; at the other end of the spectrum, the lowest scoring went to 'Purpose and Scope'. The synthesis report was presented at FinGov, but it did not become a public document.

18. The External Team also formulated recommendations, including the need to revise in depth the IEU Evaluation Handbook. As mentioned above, this was work-in-progress as of January 2016. Other recommendations focused on the need in UNODC for more training on logframes and results data collection, making the EQA public, establishing a permanent external Quality Assessment mechanism and further analysing the links between evaluation reports quality and other factors, such as financial resources and complexity of the evaluation scopes.

19. The PRP decided to conduct its own assessment with a very similar framework as the External Team, articulated over a six-point scale.¹⁰² A sample of 33 randomly-selected evaluation reports that included 12 IDEs and 21 IPEs issued over the period 2011-2015, were reviewed, with the following results:¹⁰³

- xx. Average overall ranking was 'Good' for two evaluations, 'Sufficient' for 11, 'Insufficient' for 18 and 'Poor' for two. The average overall rating for the whole sample was 'Insufficient';
- xxi. Parameters that were ranked on average as 'Sufficient' for the whole sample were 'Presentation and Completeness', 'Executive Summary', 'Background of Project evaluated', 'Evaluation findings', 'Conclusions, and Recommendations'. 'Methodology' was ranked 'Insufficient' for the whole sample but at a more disaggregated level, two sub-groups out of four were scored as 'Sufficient'.
- xxii. When analysing differences in evaluation quality over time, i.e. by grouping the evaluations in two groups by completion year, 2011-13 and 2014-15, several parameters improved from 'Insufficient' to 'Sufficient', namely 'Presentation and Completeness', 'Executive Summary', 'Methodology', 'Findings', 'Conclusions', 'Recommendations' and 'Overall Quality'. The parameter 'Background of Project' evaluated was ranked at the level of 'Sufficient' over the whole period;
- xxiii. When analysing differences in evaluation quality between IDEs and IPEs, IDEs were ranked on average 'Sufficient' on 'Presentation and Completeness', 'Methodology', 'Conclusion' and 'Overall Quality', whereas IPEs were ranked 'Insufficient' on these same parameters. For the parameters 'Executive Summary', 'Background of Project evaluated', 'Findings' and 'Recommendations', both IDEs and IPEs were ranked 'Sufficient', with slightly higher scores for IDEs;
- xxiv. The parameters 'Evaluation Purpose and Scope', 'Human Rights and Gender Equality' and 'Lessons Learned' scored 'Insufficient' at both aggregate and disaggregate level, with only minor improvements over time and between IDEs and IPEs.

¹⁰² The six-point scale is: 1-Very poor, 2-Poor, 3-Inadequate/Unsatisfactory, 4-Adequate/Satisfactory, 5-Good, 6-Excellent.

¹⁰³ The sample of 33 evaluations was statistically representative, with a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 15%, of the universe of 107 UNODC evaluations completed in the period 2011-November 2015.

20. The difference in rankings by the PRP and the External Team is likely due to a variety of factors, including the older evaluation reports in the PRP sample, the use of an analytical framework with standards introduced by IEU only in more recent years, the scoring scale that went from a four-point to a six-point scale, and the unavoidable difference in human judgment. It does not appear relevant to discuss these differences in detail. What appears more useful are the commonalities between the two assessments, and those findings of the PRP analysis that did not emerge from the External Team's work, that are discussed here below.

21. There is an improvement in the quality of evaluation reports over time; evaluations conducted in 2014/15 scored systematically better in the PRP assessment, as confirmed by the better average scoring of the External Team. Undoubtedly, IEU's stronger capacity in terms of staff, the development of guidelines and templates to support both evaluation managers and the EQA, and possibly a growing 'evaluation culture' in the Office, all have been contributing positive factors to improving the quality of evaluations over time.

22. The parameters with better performance were 'Findings' and 'Conclusions' for both assessments. These are obviously the core essence of an evaluation and their positive ranking confirm the credibility of IEU's work and the soundness of the evaluation function in UNODC. The PRP ranking was 'Sufficient' for both parameters, with overall scoring at 3.6 and 3.5 respectively. IEU however aims at excellence, which means that more will have to be done to get there.

23. 'Presentation and Structure' was also among the better scoring parameters in both Assessments. In the case of the PRP analysis, however, the aggregate ranking on 'Presentation and Completeness' masked differences over time and between IDEs and IPEs. For example, many reports were found to be poorly written in terms of English language and would have greatly benefitted from editorial revision.

24. Furthermore, if the structure of the report followed the guidelines, this did not necessarily mean that content correctly matched the structure itself and in fact, many evaluation reports were found to be poorly written in terms of contents. Examples included: frequent confusion and mismatch between the evidence brought to bear and the evaluation criterion under which this should be discussed; lack of clarity about what is a recommendation and how it should be formulated; executive summaries including information not reported in the main report, sometimes even contradictory; the poor performance of the parameter 'Lessons Learned' in the PRP Assessment, caused by frequent misunderstanding of what actually should be a Lesson Learned. All of this seems to be part of a broader problem in the quality of evaluations, possibly stemming from a combination of insufficient professional experience among the evaluators, and / or lack of time in IEU to follow up closely on the draft reports.

25. Both assessments rated the parameter 'Scope and Purpose' as low; this suggests weaknesses in the process of preparation of the Terms of Reference for IDEs and IPEs alike: the IEU template has become the standard ToR, with infrequent attempts at identifying over-arching questions and issues or at tailoring of the sub-questions under each criterion, to the specific circumstances of the project or programme to be evaluated. In general, ToRs include long lists of generic evaluation questions, that can never be fully answered and, possibly, miss the key issues at stake.

26. The very low scoring by the PRP of the parameter 'Integration of Human Rights and Gender Equality', which had also been noted by the External Team, is still a recurrent feature of many UN evaluation units. In the case of UNODC, it strongly suggests that guidance to evaluation teams on these aspects is not sufficient and that the EQA process is not capturing the weaknesses in the teams and reports on these issues. Some progress was noted by the PRP over time, in particular in the Terms of

Reference that in more recent evaluations, all included Human Rights and Gender Equality questions. There is no doubt however that this criterion still requires significant efforts by IEU, to achieve the minimum quality standards.

27. The PRP analysed the difference between IDEs and IPEs, with IDEs systematically performing better than IPEs. Taking into account the fact that IEU has a stronger control over IDEs and often participates in them, this is a crucial finding that raises questions regarding the current management and EQA systems for IPEs. Actual causes are difficult to attribute, possible causes could include:

- the checklists and guidance documents informing the EQA process need strengthening;
- the approach within IEU for their application needs to be better harmonized;
- a number of IPEs may go through a light EQA by IEU due to limited staff time; or
- IEU does not engage to a sufficient extent with consultant evaluators recruited to conduct IPEs, and Programme Managers, who are not evaluation experts and tend to be less concerned about evaluation quality standards, often have a major role in the final reports.

28. With respect to 'Methodology', although the overall scoring of this parameter improved over time, and IDEs performed better than IPEs, scoring for 13 (39%) of sampled evaluations was 'Insufficient' or below. The PRP Assessment identified seven IPEs, out of 21 reviewed in total, where the methodology was seriously inadequate to tackle the scope of the evaluation. This was mostly due to insufficient time dedicated to collect data and interact with stakeholders at country level, as well as for data analysis and report writing. Similar, albeit less serious, methodological weaknesses were also identified in five out of 12 IDEs. For both groups of evaluations, the methodology limitations had a negative impact on the quality of the evaluation reports. Project budgets were an objectively limiting factor in only 3 out of the 13 poorly-scored evaluations.

29. IEU confirmed that tools and methods revolve around desk-reviews and analysis of secondary data, interviews with various groups of stakeholders (PMs, donors at country level, Permanent Representatives in HQ, political and technical counterparts, participants), direct observation of events and achievements. Some consultants have proposed the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach, but rarely are quantitative methods proposed. IEU tends to push for surveys in the case of IDEs, but views are diverging on their effectiveness. Also, it was stated that a weak element in UNODC evaluations is how purposeful sampling is conducted as criteria are not explicit.

30. With respect to the resources dedicated to evaluations, the PRP Assessment showed that in 18 cases, evaluation teams comprised only one consultant: this typically requires mitigation measures through significant inputs from the evaluation manager backstopping the exercise. This does not seem to have happened, as confirmed by the questionnaire survey to evaluation team leaders and members. Furthermore:

- among the 18 evaluations that were conducted by 1 evaluator only, only 5 (27%) scored Sufficient as overall average ranking; in half of the cases, evaluation costs were likely 2% or less of the project budget and a two-consultant team would have cost 3% or less of the project budget;
- among the 15 evaluations conducted by 2 or more evaluators, 8 (53%) scored Sufficient or Good as overall average; in 13 cases, evaluation costs were likely 2% or less of the project budgets.

31. These data match the analysis in Section 4.4 of the main report, about the limited investments made in practice for evaluation in UNODC. The issue is clearly not one of increasing evaluation costs per se, rather of ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated that allow quality standards to be achieved.

32. The PRP also notes that one factor likely to have an impact on the overall quality of evaluations, is the limited capacity and/or efforts made by projects and programmes to monitor their own performance and record relevant information on progress and results. UNODC is not unique in this as limited attention to monitoring systems and data is a recurrent problem in the UN system. From an evaluation perspective, this means that the evaluators have to develop their own indicators and baselines and then assess any change brought about by the intervention. This clearly increases the time and efforts required for an evaluation. IEU has been discussing the possible use of evaluability assessments¹⁰⁴ as the determining factor in the decision about conducting an evaluation or not. In the view of the PRP, such a tool should rather be used during the clearance phase of a new project or its extension by the Programme Managers themselves, to ensure that the appropriate monitoring systems are in place and data available, to later enable a more effective evaluation.

33. Finally, it is important to stress that during its interviews, the PRP **heard overall appreciation for the quality of evaluation reports from Member States representatives and UNODC Managers.** However, there were also comments from both groups of stakeholders, about some unevenness in the quality of UNODC evaluation reports and on the quality of consultants.

34. The credibility currently enjoyed by the IEU might thus be eroded. Despite the efforts of dedicated IEU staff to EQA, further improvements appear necessary as a minimum by enhancing the consistency of the Evaluation Quality Assurance of both ToRs and draft reports. Questions should be formulated in a more focused manner; methodologies be better tailored to match the scope of the evaluation; and more guidance and support provided to evaluation teams throughout the full evaluation process.

35. The PRP is aware that the suggested changes are almost impossible under the current funding pattern and working modality. It appears that a substantive change of approach is required to the management and quality assurance mechanisms of both IDEs and IPEs in UNODC, to safeguard the minimum required standards of quality and possibly, to go beyond these and achieve excellence.

Annex 6 PRP Summary data - Quality Assessment of evaluation reports

Full data in excel form is available from the Peer Review Panel Chair on request.

¹⁰⁴ The OECD/DAC definition of evaluability assessment is “*The extent to which an activity or project can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion*” and check-lists are the ideal tool to verify that the project to be evaluated meets a number of conditions in terms of data availability.