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Annual evaluation report 2020–21

Purpose of the document

This document provides the Governing Body with a progress report on the work of the ILO's Evaluation Office covering the reporting period 2020–21, as measured against the indicators and targets in its results-based Evaluation Strategy 2018–21. It also looks at the ILO's overall effectiveness and includes findings on what lessons are being learned in terms of the ILO's response to the COVID-19 crisis and its contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals. The Governing Body is invited to endorse the recommendations in this report (see the draft decision in paragraph 95).

Relevant strategic objective: All.

Main relevant outcome: Enabling outcome B: Effective and efficient governance of the Organization.

Policy implications: Yes. Work across the policy outcomes on issues relevant to decent work and productivity.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: Yes.

Author unit: Evaluation Office (EVAL).

Related documents: [GB.340/PFA/6](#); [GB.337/PFA/6](#); [GB.334/PFA/6](#); [GB.332/PFA/8](#); [GB.331/PFA/8](#).

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► Introduction

1. The ILO's annual evaluation report typically spans two calendar years, covering the last quarter of the previous year (in this case, 2020) and the first three quarters of the ongoing year (in this case, 2021). Stating that the reporting period has been distressing and challenging is almost certainly an understatement. The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply affected everyone around the world, without exception, and has required people to adjust, innovate and adapt, including by applying new and mostly virtual work methods. As reported in the annual evaluation report 2019–20,¹ the ILO's Evaluation Office (EVAL) quickly responded to the pandemic by issuing a detailed COVID-19 risk-based guidance note in March 2020, and regularly updating it,² with practical tips on how to adapt and continue evaluations during the pandemic. This proactive response allowed EVAL to honour its commitment to the evaluation schedule. Challenges posed by the pandemic did not diminish the need for evaluation, but rather amplified the importance of evaluative evidence to ensure continued accountability and real-time learning.
2. While the implementation of the ILO's results-based Evaluation Strategy 2018–21³ was only partly affected by the crisis during the reporting period, the good progress that was being made in respect of the more transformative elements (such as the structural adjustments to the decentralized evaluation process, the development of pooled funding modalities for ex ante and ex post evaluations, and measures to adopt a more strategic approach towards thematic and geographic evaluation coverage) were delayed or had to be put on hold to allow for crisis adjustments. Shifting evaluation priorities, anticipated or new, also required a redirection of staff time and other resources to support preparatory work related to the demand for comprehensive evaluations of the ILO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (to be conducted and completed in 2022) and the 2022 independent evaluation of the ILO's evaluation function (2022 IEE) and the request by constituents to further institutionalize EVAL's annual assessment of the ILO's development effectiveness in order to monitor, inter alia, whether the pandemic has affected the ILO's overall performance.
3. Part I of this report details the progress made, by outcome, towards achieving the biennial milestones identified in the Evaluation Strategy 2018–21. As the end of the strategy's implementation period is approaching, the report provides an assessment of the results for the 19 biennial milestones and identifies areas where further work is required. The report calls for an extension of the Evaluation Strategy's implementation period by one year, until the end of 2022, to allow for the consolidation of the progress made so far and for the new Evaluation Strategy 2023–25 to be informed by the results of the 2022 IEE. A total of 18 biennial milestones have been fully or partially achieved, while 1 has registered modest progress and was therefore not achieved. Overall, EVAL managed to meet its operational targets and maintain quality standards despite the pandemic, but came up short of fully completing the ambitious longer-term transformational process that it had embarked on following the 2016 IEE.

¹ GB.340/PFA/6.

² ILO, *Implications of COVID-19 on evaluations in the ILO: Practical tips on adapting to the situation*, 24 April 2020.

³ GB.332/PFA/8.

4. Part II of the report provides EVAL's annual rating-based assessment of the ILO's development effectiveness against the background of the pandemic. This reporting period shows that, while the ILO performed remarkably well despite the pandemic during 2020, its performance dropped slightly during the first half of 2021. This year, the report also includes findings from synthesis reviews, with more qualitative findings on what is being learned in terms of the ILO's response to the COVID-19 crisis and its contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In October 2020, EVAL issued a protocol on collecting evaluative evidence related to the ILO's COVID-19 response ⁴ and, since then, all evaluations have been required to systemically assess this response. A review of information shows that credible evaluations conducted in the midst of the crisis are an important input into ongoing and future decisions by the ILO and its development partners. While information on actual results and impact will take more time to materialize, interesting lessons have already emerged, and it is becoming clear that adaptive approaches will need to be maintained to sustain the high strategic alignment of the ILO's work with new emerging priorities in the wake of the pandemic. Increased efforts to ensure a higher level of constituent involvement and to strengthen strategic relationships with other actors (including United Nations (UN) agencies and the development community) will be required to advance progress towards the goals set in the global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. ⁵
5. With less than ten years to go, Part II also touches upon emerging lessons from the ILO's contribution to the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs. The crushing pandemic has not only put progress towards their achievement at risk, but has likely also eroded some of the progress that had been made.

► Part I. Progress made towards achieving key milestones

6. Part I of this report is organized by strategic outcome as identified in the Evaluation Strategy 2018–21. For each sub-outcome, the status with respect to meeting the biennial milestone (2020–21) of the relevant indicator is provided (“achieved”; “partially achieved”; or “not yet achieved”). Details are also provided on the linkages and assumptions that are identified in the Evaluation Strategy as being essential to achieving the end targets. Of the 19 biennial milestones and targets, 18 were “fully achieved” (13) or “partially achieved” (5); and 1 registered modest progress and was therefore considered “not achieved”. While the Evaluation Strategy's implementation period officially ends in 2021, the report recommends an extension until 2022 – with a proposed additional 2022 target for each sub-outcome indicator provided at the end of the status update. This will allow for the consolidation of progress made so far and for the Evaluation Strategy 2023–25 to be informed by the results of the forthcoming 2022 IEE. To ensure independence, the 2022 IEE will be implemented using a similar approach to that used in 2016, ⁶ the report

⁴ ILO, *Protocol on collecting evaluative evidence on the ILO's COVID-19 response measures through project and programme evaluations*, 9 October 2020.

⁵ ILO, *Resolution concerning a global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient*, International Labour Conference, 109th Session, 2021.

⁶ As for the 2016 IEE, a technical committee under the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) will be established to oversee the process. This will ensure that the IEE is conducted in a manner that enhances the utility of its findings for the ILO, while also maintaining the independence of the process. During its 37th Session, the EAC recommended (based on the model followed in 2016) that the Office of Internal Audit and Oversight head this committee, supported

of which will be presented to the Governing Body at its 346th Session (October–November 2022), together with the proposed new Evaluation Strategy.

Outcome 1. Enhanced capacities and systems of evaluation for better practice and use

Sub-outcome 1.1. Evaluation activities conducted in a timely fashion and in accordance with Evaluation Policy requirements

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 1.1: All mandatory evaluations are completed in a timely manner for use by management, constituents and donors.	Baseline: 90% coverage for independent evaluations and 33% coverage for internal evaluations.	(a) Capacity to ensure independence of evaluations within regions through strengthened capacity and independence of regional evaluation officers; (b) Creation of regional evaluation advisory committees; (c) Quality control and assessment of evaluations.	Partially achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, 95% of independent evaluations and 75% of internal evaluations are completed in a timely manner to influence decision-making.			

7. Project evaluations describe the extent to which ILO interventions support decent work outcomes and contribute to organizational learning. Evaluation planning is consistently managed through EVAL's publicly accessible system, *i-eval Discovery*, which provides data on planned evaluations, in addition to completed evaluation reports and their related recommendations, lessons learned, good practices and management responses (see sub-outcome 3.1).
8. The biennial milestone (2018–19) was achieved for independent evaluations, with a completion rate of 99 per cent. A total of 48 independent project evaluations were completed in the current reporting period,⁷ representing a decrease of 10 independent evaluations from the previous reporting period (figure 1). An additional six independent evaluations that were scheduled to be completed in 2020 had to be postponed, largely because of project extensions – representing a delay of 13 per cent of scheduled independent evaluations and a completion rate of 87 per cent. Combined with the

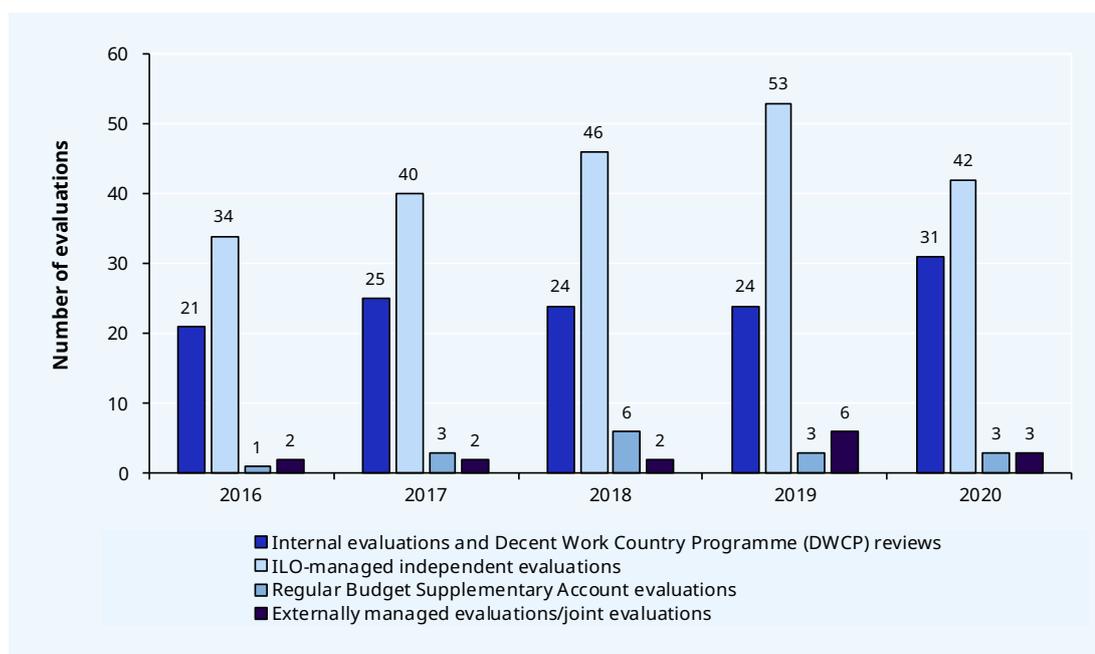
by the ILO Procurement Bureau and technical advisors not associated with EVAL, including an external senior evaluation expert.

⁷ This includes ten clustered evaluations, three Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) evaluations, two external evaluations, one joint evaluation and one review. Two evaluability assessments were also completed in 2020, but are not included in the overall total of independent evaluations completed that year.

completion rate for independent evaluations in the previous reporting period (90 per cent), a total of 89 per cent were completed in a timely manner – falling slightly short of the biennial target (2020–21) of 95 per cent. While these delayed evaluations will eventually be completed, these results nevertheless point to capacity challenges in regions with already high workloads that are further compounded by the effects of the pandemic.

9. Submission rates for internal project evaluations have substantially improved over the reporting period, but challenges continue nonetheless. In the current reporting period, 31 of the scheduled 45 internal evaluations were completed, indicating a 69 per cent completion rate – an increase of 25 per cent from the previous reporting period.⁸ Despite these improvements, the average biennial submission rate still falls below the target of 75 per cent. Lower completion rates for internal evaluations are largely caused by a lack of self-discipline combined with a risk-assessed approach by EVAL to focus its scarce resources on the completion of independent evaluations of larger projects.
10. *Proposed end target (2022):* 95 per cent of independent evaluations and 85 per cent of internal evaluations are completed in a timely manner to influence decision-making.

► **Figure 1. Number of completed evaluations by type, 2016–20**



Selecting high-level evaluation topics for strategic use

11. The selection of topics for high-level evaluations is determined through a consultative process that culminates in a four-year rolling work plan (table 1). The process includes: conducting a historic review of policy outcomes or institutional matters that have not been covered for at least two biennia; obtaining input from the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC); reviewing ILO Governing Body documents that refer to the need for evaluation; and providing constituents with an opportunity to comment on the draft work plan formulated by EVAL, based on the process described above.

⁸ The outstanding internal evaluations are both decentralized (Africa, Arab States, and Europe and Central Asia) and centralized (Enterprises Department and Research Department).

► **Table 1. Rolling work plan of high-level evaluation topics, 2021–25**

Year	Institutional or outcome level	Outcome level	Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP)	Remarks
	Topic	Topic	Region/subregion	
2025	Skills	Social protection	Latin America and the Caribbean	Evaluation could feed into recurrent discussion on social protection tentatively scheduled for 2026 Selection of topics considered premature by one constituent group
2024	Development and use of labour statistics	Social dialogue	Africa	Evaluation could feed into recurrent discussion on social dialogue tentatively scheduled for 2025 Selection of topics considered too early by one constituent group. One constituent group made a suggestion to conduct the delayed evaluation of the application of international labour standards in 2024 ¹
2023	Rural employment	Fundamental principles and rights at work	Arab States	Evaluation could feed into recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work tentatively scheduled for 2024
2022	The ILO's response to the implications of COVID-19	Independent evaluation of evaluation function ²	Europe and Central Asia	Preparatory work is ongoing
2021	Gender equality and mainstreaming	Migration	Asia and the Pacific (South-Asia)	Ongoing

¹ This evaluation was initially scheduled for 2022, but has been moved a number of times based on earlier feedback received, and to allow for other pressing topics to be evaluated.

² The five-yearly independent evaluation of the evaluation function is due in 2022. While the evaluation will be managed externally to EVAL, it will nevertheless place heavy demands on EVAL, which will be called on to provide all required inputs to the external evaluation team. Accordingly, only one large institutional-level evaluation (on COVID-19) is proposed for 2022.

Recommendation 1: Endorse the topics for high-level evaluations for 2022 and 2023 identified in the rolling work plan and the extension of the Evaluation Strategy's implementation period by one year, to allow for the completion of the five-yearly independent evaluation of the evaluation function in 2022.

Sub-outcome 1.2. Strengthened evaluation capacity of staff in regions and departments

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 1.2.1: ILO staff evaluation capacities are upgraded.	Baseline: By the end of 2017, 77 staff members had been certified as evaluation managers, and 2 were certified as part of the Internal Evaluation Certification Programme (IECP).	Interest in and use and availability of the Evaluation Manager Certification Programme (EMCP) and the IECP.	Achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, at least 120 ILO staff members are certified as evaluation managers or internal evaluators.			

12. The 2018–19 biennial milestone called for 30 additional staff members to be certified as evaluation managers and internal evaluators. At the end of that reporting period, EVAL had trained 42 staff members. The current (2020–21) biennium’s milestone requires that a cumulative number of at least 120 ILO staff members will have been certified as evaluation managers or internal evaluators. So far, 133 ILO staff members have been certified as evaluation managers and 27 have been certified as internal evaluators – exceeding the milestone.
13. With regard to the quality of training, in a 2020 survey, close to 70 per cent of evaluation managers said that the Evaluation Manager Certification Programme (EMCP) had well prepared them to manage evaluations. The most common reason given by respondents was that the training provided a comprehensive introduction to evaluation management at the ILO, as well as tools and skills.
14. The 2021 training numbers (table 2) have decreased from previous years, due to the pandemic, causing EVAL to postpone its training programmes. The EMCP was reconceptualized to be delivered online in March 2021. Feedback was satisfactory – however, the need for further revisions came to light.

► **Table 2. Number of ILO officials who received evaluation training, 2021 (calendar year)**

Type of training	Africa	Latin America and the Caribbean	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and Central Asia	HQ	Total
General monitoring and evaluation			10	83			93
Evaluation management certification	20 *			25	4		49
Total	20		10	108	4	TBC	142

Notes: Any activity that has a duration of less than one day is counted as awareness-raising rather than training, and is not included in this table.

* Projected figure, as additional training will take place in the fourth quarter of 2021.

15. Because of a low demand for internal evaluators, the decision was made to phase out the Internal Evaluation Certification Programme (IECP). In its place, EVAL will develop an Advanced Evaluation Manager Certification Programme (EMCP+), incorporating many of the advanced concepts that were taught in the IECP. Such a programme would respond to a demand for more in-depth knowledge about the evaluation process, and motivate certified evaluation managers to manage additional independent evaluations.
16. *Proposed end target (2022):* The EMCP+, incorporating elements of the IECP, and the online version of the EMCP, with further revisions, have been developed and tested.

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 1.2.2: The ILO evaluation network is functioning based on clearly established roles and job descriptions.	Baseline: Currently, evaluation network functions (departmental level and evaluation managers) are performed on a voluntary basis, resulting in limited availability of evaluation capacity.	Independence of regional evaluation officers and departmental evaluation focal points is strengthened, and capacity-building for evaluation activities is established in regions and departments.	Partially achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, a fully functioning evaluation network is firmly embedded in the relevant regional and departmental functions, and appropriate resources and incentives are allocated.			

17. A fully functioning evaluation network for independent and credible evaluations requires clearly established roles, job descriptions and appropriate incentives. In the previous biennium (2018–19), the milestone of ensuring that certified evaluation managers and departmental evaluation focal points receive standardized assessments in their performance appraisals was accomplished. Progress was made during the current reporting period on establishing a dedicated job family and tailored job descriptions for evaluation staff in the ILO. The job descriptions are under review for priority approval by a working group set up by the Office. The recommendation of the 2016 IEE to reconfigure the reporting lines of regional evaluation officers (to establish direct reporting to EVAL) has been discussed twice at Global Management Team meetings, but remains unresolved.
18. The other structural issue that requires a solution is the lack of adequate incentives for certified evaluation managers to perform evaluation-related tasks, in addition to their existing work. Providing them with skills, certification and recognition through their performance evaluation has not always been sufficient to motivate them and their supervisors to take on this extra workload. To enhance incentives, EVAL will review cost-recovery options to compensate managers for the time their staff devotes to these tasks that benefit the Organization in respect of its overall evaluation responsibilities.
19. *Proposed end target (2022):* A cost-recovery scenario to compensate for staff time devoted by evaluation managers to evaluation-related tasks has been developed and proposed to senior management.

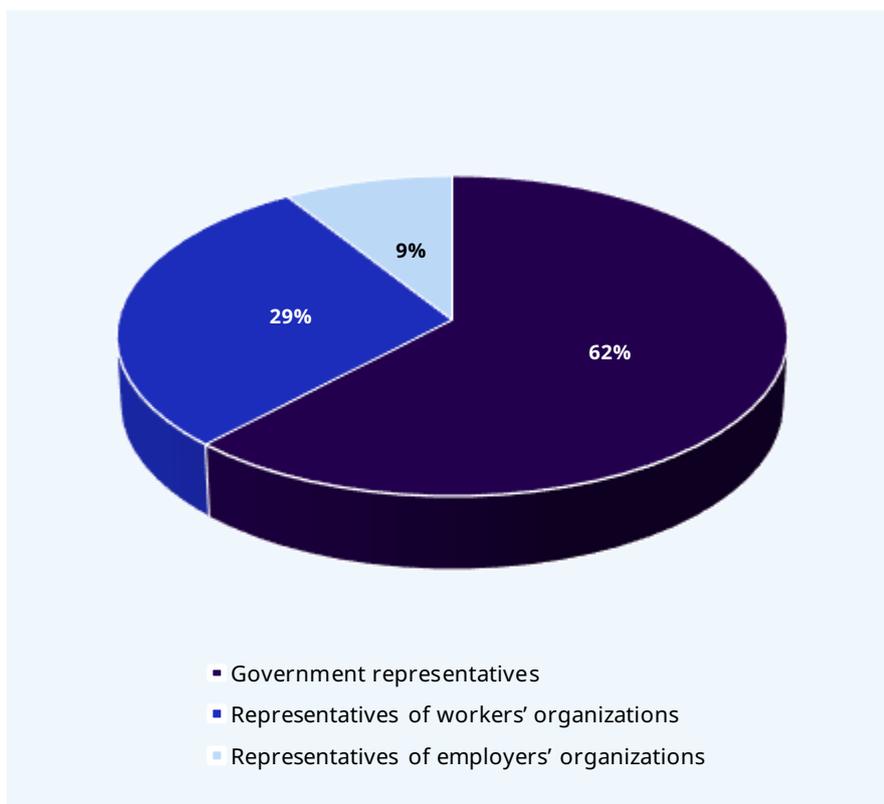
Sub-outcome 1.3. Constituents engaged in monitoring and evaluation of DWCPs and development cooperation activities in an SDG-responsive manner

	Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 1.3: Relevant monitoring and evaluation training is mainstreamed into training and capacity-building programmes for constituents, in order to enhance their participation in evaluations.	Baseline: During 2010–17, 1,052 constituents were trained, 124 of them in 2016.	Achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, at least 150 constituents (in equal proportions from the three groups) given tailored evaluation training, as part of larger EVAL and ILO-wide training programmes.		

20. During the Evaluation Strategy's implementation period, EVAL has successfully mainstreamed evaluation into training initiatives for all three constituent groups, to maximize their contributions to evaluation processes at the country, regional and global levels (figure 2). Building on achievements made in respect of the previous biennial milestone, a total of 297 representatives of governments and of employers' and workers' organizations were trained on evaluation, notably in the context of the SDGs, exceeding the target set for the current biennium. Synergies with other departments, regions and the International Training Centre of the ILO ensured optimal delivery. Since early 2021, the training programme for ILO constituents on evaluation, the Decent Work Agenda and its link to the SDGs is available on EVAL's website,⁹ to provide continuity of learning services to constituents in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tailored evaluation training initiatives with under-represented constituent groups will be enhanced, in collaboration with other entities during the Evaluation Strategy's extended implementation period.

⁹ ILO, "Evaluating the Decent Work Agenda in the SDG era: A training programme for ILO Constituents".

► **Figure 2. ILO constituents trained in monitoring and evaluation, 2018–21**



- 21. *Proposed end target (2022):* At least one joint initiative is conducted to provide tailored evaluation training to employers’ organizations as part of larger EVAL and ILO-wide training programmes.

Sub-outcome 1.4. Evaluations integrated in DWCPs and development cooperation activities, including a focus on SDGs

	Linkages and assumptions	Status
<p>Indicator 1.4: Number of DWCPs and development cooperation projects that have well-established evaluation processes and mechanisms in place, and that regularly engage with constituents in meeting monitoring and evaluation requirements.</p> <p>Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, 75% of DWCPs and development cooperation projects have mechanisms in place to assess their evaluability and SDG-responsiveness and the level of participation of constituents in monitoring and evaluation.</p>	<p>Baseline: No baseline yet established.</p> <p>Collaboration within the ILO enhances the evaluability, SDG-responsiveness and level of participation of constituents in monitoring and evaluation of DWCPs.</p>	<p>Partially achieved.</p>

- 22.** In the previous biennium (2018–19), EVAL updated its guidance, with the publication of the fourth edition of its policy guidelines on evaluation¹⁰ and a specific guidance note on evaluability,¹¹ and piloted new tools to enhance the evaluability of development cooperation initiatives and Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), thus leading to the achievement of the biennial milestone for the Evaluation Strategy's implementation period.
- 23.** During the current biennium (2020–21), work continued to strengthen the institutionalization of these mechanisms, in close coordination with key departments. Of strategic importance was the joint work conducted by EVAL and the Strategic Programming and Management Department on revisiting the ILO's guidance on DWCPs to integrate it into EVAL's [evaluability diagnostic instrument](#). This will ensure that newly designed DWCPs have the monitoring means to demonstrate the ILO's contribution to national development goals, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and the SDGs. EVAL also worked with the regions to integrate targeted evaluability assessments into reviews of DWCPs¹² to improve monitoring and evaluation and reporting. Since 2020, a slow but positive trend has been observed in the number of new DWCPs that have conducted evaluability assessments, following the recommendation set out in the new guidance on DWCPs.¹³
- 24.** At the system-wide level, EVAL co-led the development of new United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines on the evaluation of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. The aim is to ensure consistency and alignment of monitoring and evaluation requirements among UN agencies in an SDG-responsive manner.
- 25.** At the project level, despite the establishment of evaluability mechanisms for development cooperation initiatives, only 19 per cent¹⁴ of the assessments due in 2020 and 2021 have been completed by management and submitted to EVAL. To date, results from the ex post quality assessment of decentralized project-level evaluations show that in 66 per cent of cases, constituents were involved in evaluation activities in 2020, highlighting the need for continued effort in this area.
- 26.** *Proposed end target (2022):* For 45 per cent of DWCPs, the institutionalized evaluability mechanisms that engage constituents in meeting monitoring and evaluation requirements are applied.

¹⁰ ILO, *ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations (4th edition)*, November 2020.

¹¹ ILO, *Guidance Note 1.3: Procedure and Tools for Evaluability*, June 2020.

¹² See ILO, *Country Programme Review of DWCP China (2016–20)*; ILO, *Decent Work Country Programme for Lao People's Democratic Republic 2017–2021*; and ILO, *Pakistan Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP III) Progress Report 2016–2017*, 2018.

¹³ To date, a third of DWCPs developed since 2020 have conducted an evaluability assessment at the design stage.

¹⁴ This figure is based on the number of evaluability assessments that have been conducted as a compulsory requirement for high-value projects, following the endorsement by the Governing Body at its 331st Session of Recommendation 2 in the annual evaluation report 2016–17.

Sub-outcome 1.5. Established capacity of regions and departments to mainstream and use evaluation

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 1.5: Evaluation-related initiatives taken by regions and departments other than mandatory requirements are systematized.	Baseline: Examples of such initiatives and their use have not been systematically documented since the annual evaluation report 2014–15	(a) Development of guidelines within ILO Evaluation Policy guidelines; (b) EVAL provides minimal facilitation and support; (c) Advocacy role of evaluation network; (d) Decentralized monitoring and evaluation of capacity in regions and departments.	Achieved.

Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, a systematic process for quantitative and qualitative documentation of initiatives by departments and regions will be in place to show progressive increase and added value.

- 27.** There continues to be strong potential in the regions and departments to integrate initiatives other than mandatory evaluations. These initiatives include comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks; the application of EVAL’s evaluability diagnostic instrument (see sub-outcome 1.4); thematic evaluations; capacity-building on monitoring and evaluation (for example, a workshop for programme and monitoring and evaluation officers in Asia); knowledge management and communications related to evaluation; and impact assessments and evaluation of national policies and plans.¹⁵ Some of these initiatives are the result of required follow-up to recommendations presented in high-level and other evaluations. A recent trend is the more noticeable focus on baseline surveys, pre- and post-surveys in preparation for impact assessments, and tools to support the development of indicators and measurement for enhanced evaluability. Regional evaluation officers are also active participants in UN system initiatives. During the Evaluation Strategy’s implementation period, there has been growing investment in monitoring and evaluation staff in projects managed by regions and departments, with numbers increasing from close to 30 in 2019 to 40 in 2020 and over 45 in 2021.
- 28.** *Proposed end target (2021–22):* A systematic online documentation process of evaluation initiatives to facilitate the coordination, sharing and mutual use of evaluation initiatives

¹⁵ See table 3 in the annual evaluation report 2018–19 (GB.337/PFA/6) and table 2 in the annual evaluation report 2019–20 (GB.340/PFA/6) for a selective overview of non-mandatory evaluation initiatives by type, region and department.

across regions and departments is embedded in EVAL's suite of knowledge management tools.

Outcome 2. Enhanced value of evaluation through the use of more credible and higher-quality evaluations (independence, credibility and usefulness)

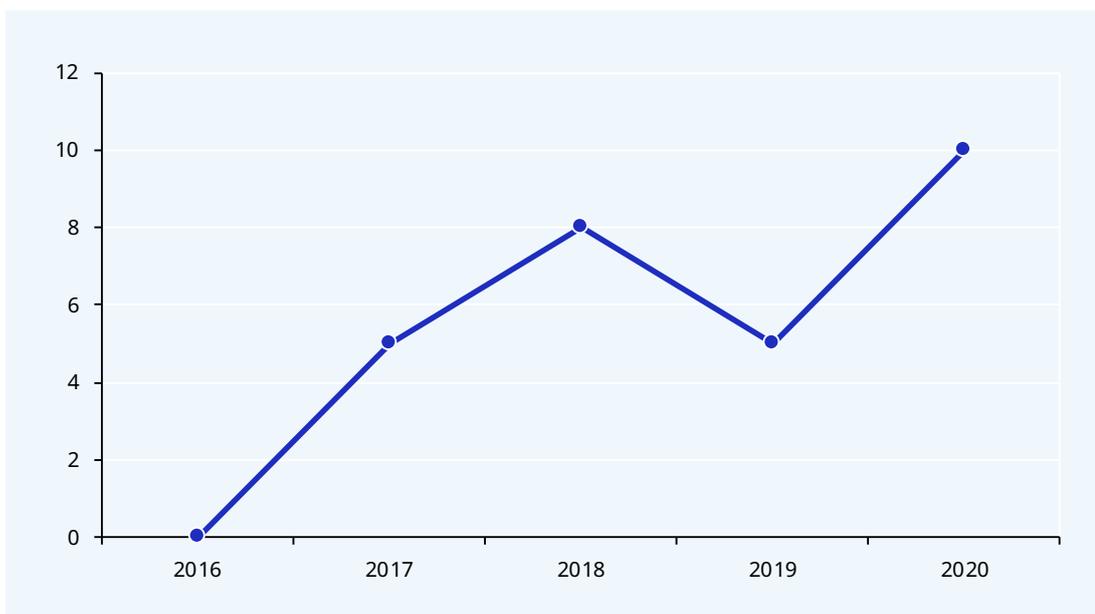
Sub-outcome 2.1. Use of strategic cluster evaluations to gather evaluative information more effectively

	Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 2.1: Strategic clustered evaluations established as a modality in a substantial proportion of programmes and projects.	Baseline: Currently, no documented processes or procedures are in place to conduct strategic clustered evaluations for development cooperation projects.	Achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, a procedure for strategic clustered evaluations approved by a critical number of donors (25%) will be in place.		

29. As part of the work to reach the previous biennial milestone (2018–19), a procedure and guidance note on strategic clustered evaluations ¹⁶ was developed. During the Evaluation Strategy's implementation period, 21 independent clustered evaluations have been conducted, covering the evaluation requirements for close to 80 projects (figure 3). These clustered evaluations included projects funded by a critical number (50 per cent) of donors from the ILO's 20 largest contributors. Clustering as a procedure often emerges as an opportunity from EVAL's evaluation planning process. As the number of large programmes with integrated logical frameworks and multiple-donor funding increases, clustered evaluations are expected to become the default option. Strategic discussions with donors to illustrate the advantages of such evaluations early on, as part of the negotiations, could accelerate this process.
30. A recent survey of evaluation managers (2020) further supports EVAL's experience that clustered evaluations improve cost and time efficiencies, reduce evaluation fatigue and enhance understanding among the tripartite constituents of the advantages of looking at the bigger picture of aggregated results at the country or thematic levels. While challenges remain (such as insufficient evaluative details for each project within the clustered evaluation, and lack of experience by many evaluators with the approach) and transaction costs can be high (reconciling different stages of project implementation and ensuring donor agreement), programme designs that embed a clustered approach to monitoring, reporting and evaluation from the start would substantially lessen those challenges.

¹⁶ ILO, *Guidance Note 3.3: Strategic clustered evaluations to gather evaluative information more effectively*, June 2020.

► **Figure 3. Number of clustered evaluations, 2016–20**



- 31. *Proposed end target (2022):* A document detailing the experience and strategic value of the clustered evaluation approach has been developed, so as to further enhance the use of the modality.

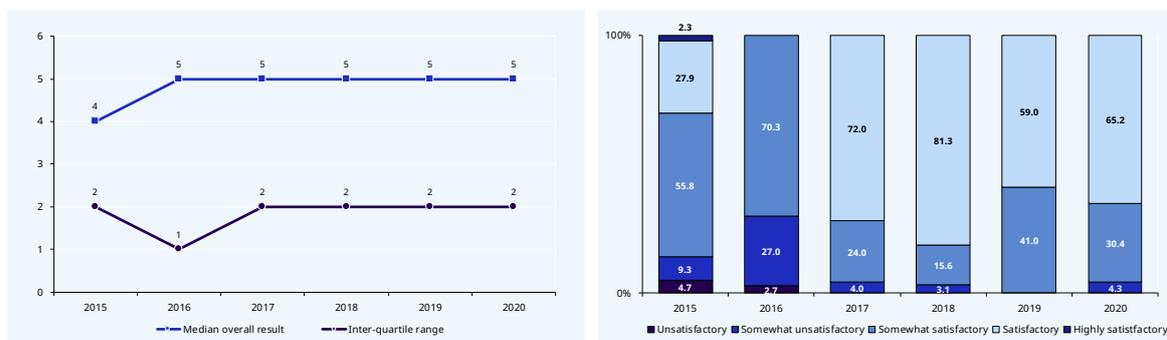
Sub-outcome 2.2. Improved quality of internal, decentralized and centralized evaluations

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 2.2.1: All evaluations of development cooperation projects comply with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNEG norms and standards, and are tailored to the ILO’s specific mandate and learning needs.	Baseline: Ex post quality assessment for 2015–17 shows that about 90% of development cooperation project evaluations meet the required quality standards.	Highest level of independence and impartiality of evaluations, further improving the use of findings at the regional level; use of a rigorous quality control system; compliance with requirements for evaluability reviews.	Achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, quality assessment confirms that 95% of development cooperation project evaluations meet OECD and UNEG standards.			

- 32. The 2018–19 biennial milestone called for updated guidelines to incorporate new evaluation models that reflect the ILO’s specific mandate. This milestone was achieved in 2020, with the publication of the fourth edition of EVAL’s policy guidelines for evaluation.

33. The 2020–21 biennial milestone is more ambitious. Analysis shows that 100 per cent of reports completed in 2019 (assessed in 2020) received a rating equal to or above “somewhat satisfactory”. For reports completed in 2020 (assessed in 2021), despite the pandemic, the number of reports that received the same rating was 98 per cent. Together, the average quality assessment rating is 99 per cent – exceeding the target.

► **Figure 4. Project evaluation reports: Overall ratings and annual trend**



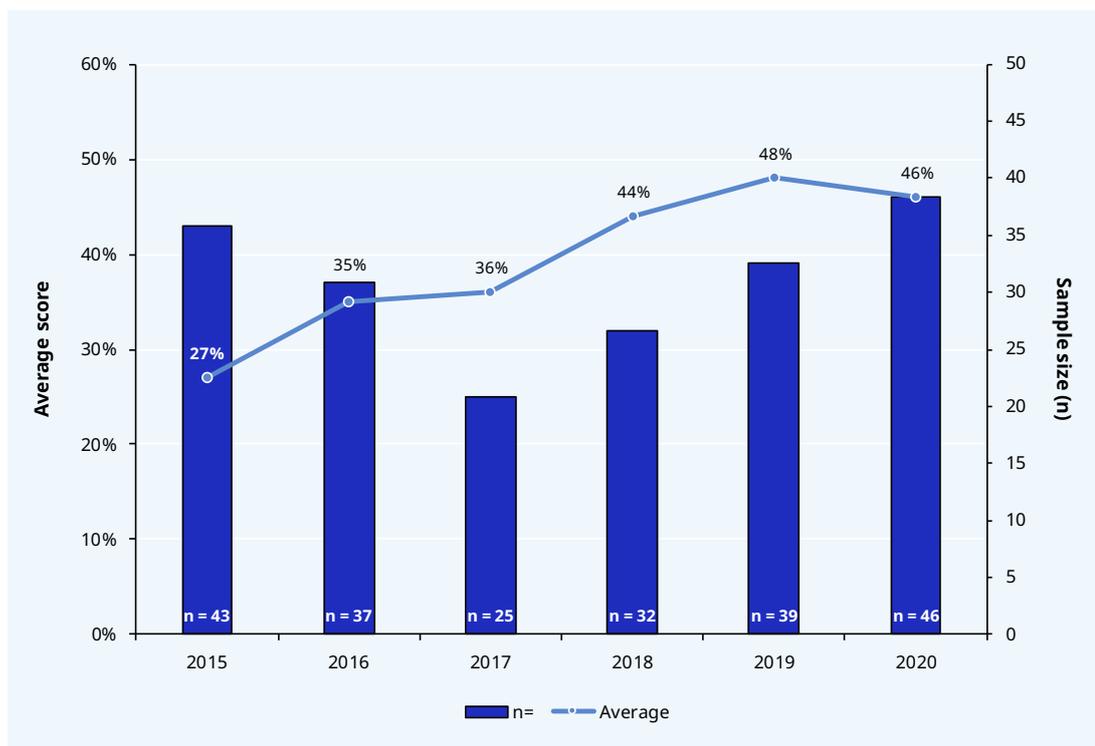
34. In the reporting period, the external appraisers updated the protocols that they use to conduct appraisals to reflect whether evaluations address the impact of the pandemic and environmental issues. The contribution to the SDGs, gender equality and disability issues have been included in the protocol for many years.
35. The assessment of 46 evaluation reports showed that they contained an average of 91 per cent of the components that are essential for an evaluation report. The quality of the reports was measured on a scale of 1 to 6 (1 being “highly unsatisfactory” and 6 being “highly satisfactory”). The median score was 5 (“satisfactory”).¹⁷ The quality of appraised reports has received a rating of “satisfactory” over the last six years (figure 4).¹⁸
36. Analysis undertaken each year of how gender is reflected in evaluation reports shows that the positive trend since 2015 has been retained, but is under pressure (figure 5). While the evaluations conducted in 2020 continued to be close to meeting requirements, a slight decrease on the average rating is found, from 4.31 (2019) to 4.13 (2020).¹⁹ A disaggregated overview of results shows that, whereas evaluations increasingly reflected a gender analysis in their findings, conclusions and recommendations between 2019 and 2020, they seemed to be lagging in terms of ensuring gender-responsive methodology, methods and data analysis techniques.
37. *Proposed end target (2022):* By the end of 2022, quality assessments confirm that 95 per cent of development cooperation project evaluations meet OECD and UNEG standards.

¹⁷ The overall scores are calculated by aggregating the ratings obtained for all items pertaining to the “quality” dimension of the quality assessment, thus excluding the comprehensiveness and United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) dimensions. The results of the UN-SWAP assessment are presented separately.

¹⁸ The scores were clustered quite tightly around the median. Overall, the dispersion of ratings around the median remains low, suggesting a certain homogeneity in the quality of reports over the years.

¹⁹ According to the 2018 [UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator Technical Note](#), the threshold to “meet requirements” is established at 6.50. It should be noted that comparing the ILO’s scores with those of other UN agencies can only realistically be done with those that also use external assessments, as the ILO does for its evaluations.

► **Figure 5. Adjusted meta-scores for gender issues mainstreamed in reports, 2015–20 (percentage)**

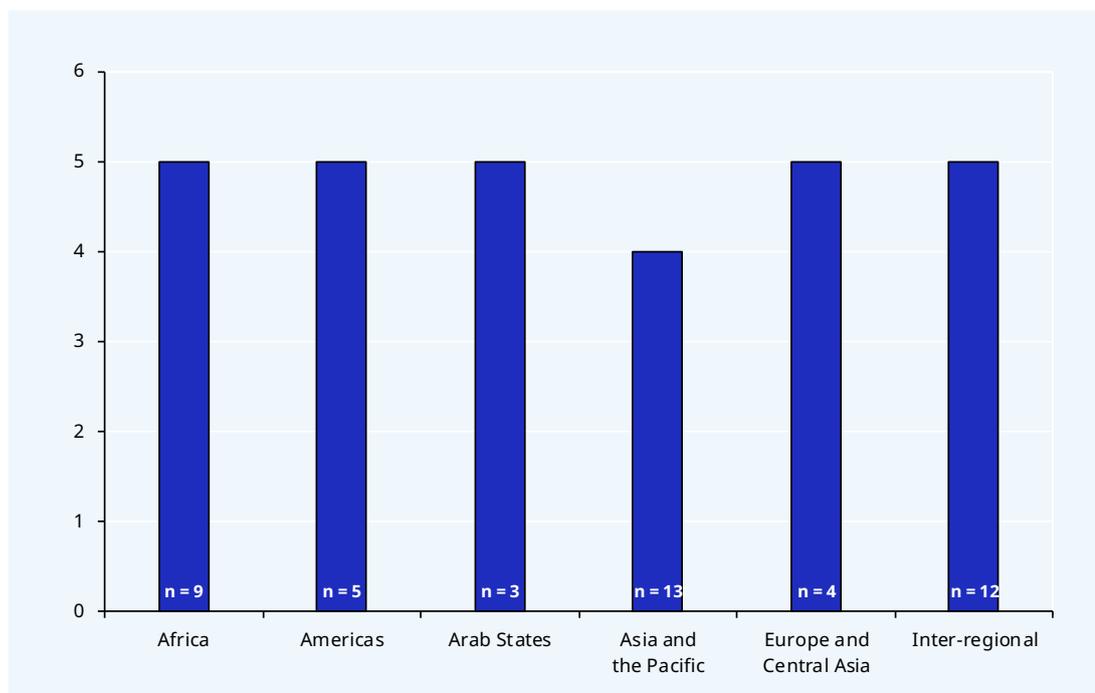


	Linkages and assumptions	Status
<p>Indicator 2.2.2: Additional capacity released in EVAL at headquarters to focus on new evaluation models, by reducing oversight of regional evaluations of development cooperation projects.</p> <p>Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, all evaluations in the regions are conducted to the highest standard of independence, requiring minimal oversight by EVAL at headquarters.</p>	<p>Baseline: The 2016 IEE identified the issue of independence at the regional level as a priority, and recommended the integration of regional evaluation officers as full staff members of EVAL.</p> <p>ILO-specific evaluation models and approaches that reflect the ILO’s specific mandate and context.</p>	<p>Partially achieved.</p>

- 38. The preparation of a detailed report, analysing the reporting lines of regional evaluation officers for review by senior management, was achieved in the last biennium (2018–19). In the current biennium (2020–21), progress on reducing oversight by EVAL at headquarters of regional evaluations through changed reporting lines has stalled, leading to a status of “partially achieved” (see indicator 1.2.2).
- 39. Nevertheless, evaluations in the regions were conducted to the highest standard, as demonstrated by the results of the quality assessments (figure 6). These results have come at a high opportunity cost. To ensure independence and quality, staff at

headquarters provide substantial oversight, sometimes even managing project evaluations, which contributes to the heavy workload. This oversight has been provided in parallel with work to develop new evaluation models (see sub-outcome 2.4).

► **Figure 6. Median scores of the quality assessments by region, 2020**



40. *Proposed end target (2022):* The reporting models for regional evaluation officers have been reviewed to reach an acceptable format that complies with the IEE 2016 recommendation.

	Linkages and assumptions	Status
<p>Indicator 2.2.3: Corporate governance-level evaluations incorporate UNEG norms and standards, and are tailored to the ILO's specific mandate and learning needs.</p> <p>Biennial milestone (2020–21): The 2021 independent evaluation of the ILO's evaluation function confirms that corporate governance-level evaluations are tailored to the ILO's specific mandate, and continue to be of good quality, as benchmarked against similar evaluations in comparable UN agencies.</p>	<p>Baseline: Independent review in 2013 confirmed quality met required standards, as reconfirmed by the 2016 IEE.</p> <p>Use of evaluation models and approaches that reflect the ILO's specific mandate and context.</p>	<p>Achieved (pending IEE confirmation).</p>

41. Previous independent reviews (2013 and 2016) confirmed the quality of high-level corporate evaluation reports. In 2021, in anticipation of the 2022 IEE to confirm achievement of this target, EVAL commissioned an external ex post quality assessment of a sample of ten high-level evaluations undertaken since 2015. A stratified approach to

sampling was adopted to ensure that the selected evaluations were representative of their types: institutional, DWCP and programme and budget outcome evaluations. Of the assessed evaluations, 90 per cent received a rating equal to or above “somewhat satisfactory”. Since the start of the Evaluation Strategy’s implementation period in 2018, high-level evaluations have satisfactorily incorporated specific approaches to addressing social dialogue, tripartism and the SDGs. Results suggest some improvements are still required to ensure a better systematic reflection of international labour standards.

42. Preliminary findings from the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network 2020 assessment provide some external assurances of good quality, by stating that “the ILO has a robust and quality-focused evaluation function that has the necessary policies and mechanisms in place”.²⁰
43. *Proposed end target (2022)*: The 2022 IEE confirms quality and provides a solid update on the baseline.

Sub-outcome 2.3. Credible impact evaluations conducted to build knowledge for effective policy interventions

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 2.3: Impact evaluations are considered credible and used for documenting effective policy interventions.	Baseline: Quality of impact evaluations not optimal or uniform, as indicated in EVAL stocktaking report of 2014. A new ex post quality analysis of a sample of impact evaluations, to be carried out in 2018, will establish a new baseline.	Impact evaluations are within the responsibility of regions and departments, with EVAL providing technical support though guidance and a methodological review facility.	Not achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, 85% of impact evaluations at the ILO will be considered credible and will meet required quality and relevance standards.			

44. A total of 17 impact evaluations and studies were completed in the past five years. The biennial milestone was not achieved, as the quality of these evaluations and studies was not assessed; however, the updated impact evaluation inventory will be used in the upcoming ex post quality control exercise to establish a baseline for credible impact evaluation. The impact evaluation review facility continues to offer support to help ensure the quality and credibility of impact evaluations but is largely underused. Increased efforts to improve the facility’s visibility and use will be launched by the end of 2021.

²⁰ The assessment report will be made available on the website of the [Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network](#).

45. A desire for more ex post evaluations has gained momentum. For instance, follow-up actions to the high-level evaluation on sustainable enterprises ²¹ (2020) have resulted in collaboration with an upcoming ex post evaluation of the ILO's global programme on Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (the SCORE programme). In addition, EVAL issued internal guidance on the subject matter in response to a request from the EAC.
46. *Proposed end target (2022)*: An ex post quality review of impact evaluations has been completed and informs a new framework for assessment.

Sub-outcome 2.4. Evaluation framework further aligned with ILO mandate and context, including SDGs

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 2.4: ILO-specific evaluation approaches, models and methods used for evaluations at various levels.	Baseline: Currently, minimal ILO-specific approaches and models are used in ILO evaluations.	Linked to risks and assumptions under sub-outcomes 1.2, 1.3 and 1.5.	Achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): Updated evaluation framework applied in 50% or more of evaluations, and 20% of evaluations have SDG-specific indicators.			

47. The 2018–19 biennial milestone called for work to pilot an evaluation framework specific to the ILO's mandate. In response, EVAL developed a guidance note on adapting evaluation methods to the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate. ²² Key evaluation protocols, templates and checklists for high-level and decentralized evaluations were revisited to further mainstream ILO-specific approaches (including the SDGs) and to ensure their application.
48. Consultants interested in working with the ILO continue to be requested to undertake the online self-induction programme that EVAL developed to increase their familiarity with the unique aspects of the ILO's mandate, its Evaluation Policy (2017) ²³ and Evaluation Strategy 2018–21. To date, 142 consultants have obtained their attestations of completion (a desirable requirement for consultants to engage in ILO evaluation assignments).
49. As of the biennium 2020–21, it is requested that EVAL's updated framework is used for all mandatory evaluations in order to better capture the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate, and its contributions to the SDGs. A 2021 survey of evaluation managers shows that 67 per cent considered the guidance developed on this subject to be relevant to their tasks. The ex post quality assessments of evaluation reports (2020) concludes that 50 per cent of project evaluations satisfactorily included questions relevant to

²¹ ILO, *High-level evaluation of ILO's strategy and action for promoting sustainable enterprises 2014–19*, 29 September 2020.

²² ILO, *Guidance Note 3.2: Adapting evaluation methods to the ILO's normative and tripartite mandate*, June 2020.

²³ GB.331/PFA/8.

international labour standards, tripartism and social dialogue, and 67 per cent satisfactorily included SDG considerations as part of the evaluation questions.

50. EVAL's meta-analysis on the ILO's overall effectiveness (see Part II) confirms that evaluations increasingly provide performance information that is relevant to the ILO's specific mandate. In 2020, 95 per cent of project evaluations yielded evidence on normative work and standards promotion, and 100 per cent did so with respect to tripartism, social dialogue and the SDGs.
51. In October 2020, EVAL issued a protocol²⁴ to better inform evaluations conducted during the pandemic and bring real-time learning for future action. The first phase of a synthesis review on the performance and emerging lessons of the Office's immediate crisis response in 2020–21 has been completed (see Part II).²⁵ The second phase of the review will follow in late 2021, to bring learning on the overall effectiveness of the ILO's actions that will inform the high-level evaluation on the ILO's response to the implications of COVID-19 in 2022.
52. *Proposed end target (2022)*: The updated evaluation framework is applied in 60 per cent or more of evaluations, and 70 per cent of evaluations provide relevant evidence on contributions to the SDGs.

Outcome 3. Stronger knowledge base of evaluation findings and recommendations

Sub-outcome 3.1. Strengthened accessibility and visibility of evaluation information through *i-eval* Discovery

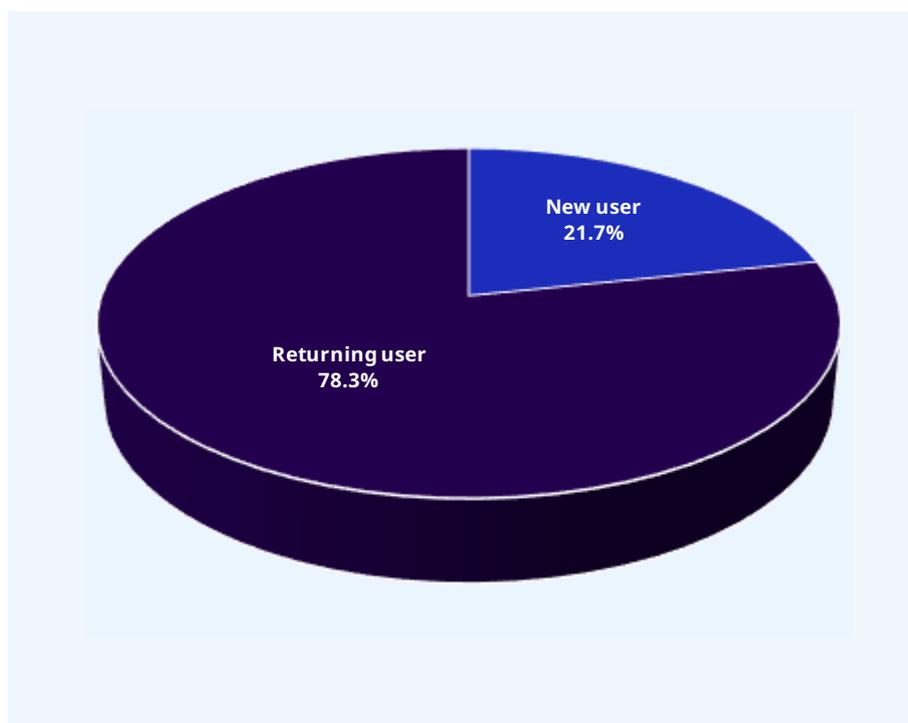
		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 3.1: <i>i-eval</i> Discovery contains all planned and completed evaluations, including recommendations, lessons learned and good practices; it is consistently accessed by internal and external users, and is considered the gateway to ILO evaluation information.	Baseline: Based on data provided by the Information and Technology Management Department, the average use was in the range of 2,000 during 2018–19.	(a) Required coverage and availability of evaluation; (b) Information and outcomes; (c) Awareness and support activities of a communication campaign.	Achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, <i>i-eval</i> Discovery will be broadly used internally and externally as the gateway to reliable ILO evaluation information. Biennial milestone 2020-21: 50% increase over baseline level			

²⁴ ILO, *Protocol on collecting evaluative evidence*.

²⁵ ILO, *ILO's response to the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work: Evaluative lessons on how to build a better future of work after the pandemic*, August 2021.

53. The *i-eval* Discovery dashboard publicly displays all planned evaluations and completed evaluations along with their related recommendations, lessons learned, good practices and management responses. It was launched in 2016 for transparency, accountability and accessibility purposes for constituents, donors and ILO staff. To date, *i-eval* Discovery currently holds over 1,300 evaluation reports, 3,000 lessons learned and good practices, and nearly 2,000 recommendations.
54. A total of 2,972 users accessed *i-eval* Discovery during the reporting period, just over 78 per cent of whom were new users (figure 7).²⁶ This represents a substantial increase from last year's figure (1,471 users), indicating the increased visibility and usefulness of the dashboard to constituents, ILO staff and the public since its launch. A grand total of 4,443 users accessed *i-eval* Discovery during the course of the biennium, representing an increase of 45 per cent over the baseline level. If this trend continues for the remainder of 2021, the biennial target will be easily achieved.
55. Since 2020, EVAL has been working closely with the Information and Technology Management Department to modernize the database that underpins *i-eval* Discovery.
56. *Proposed end target (2022)*: There has been a 60 per cent increase over the baseline level in the number of users accessing *i-eval* Discovery and a new state-of-the-art dashboard to store and display integrated evaluation information has been developed.

► **Figure 7. Type of user accessing *i-eval* Discovery, 2020–21**



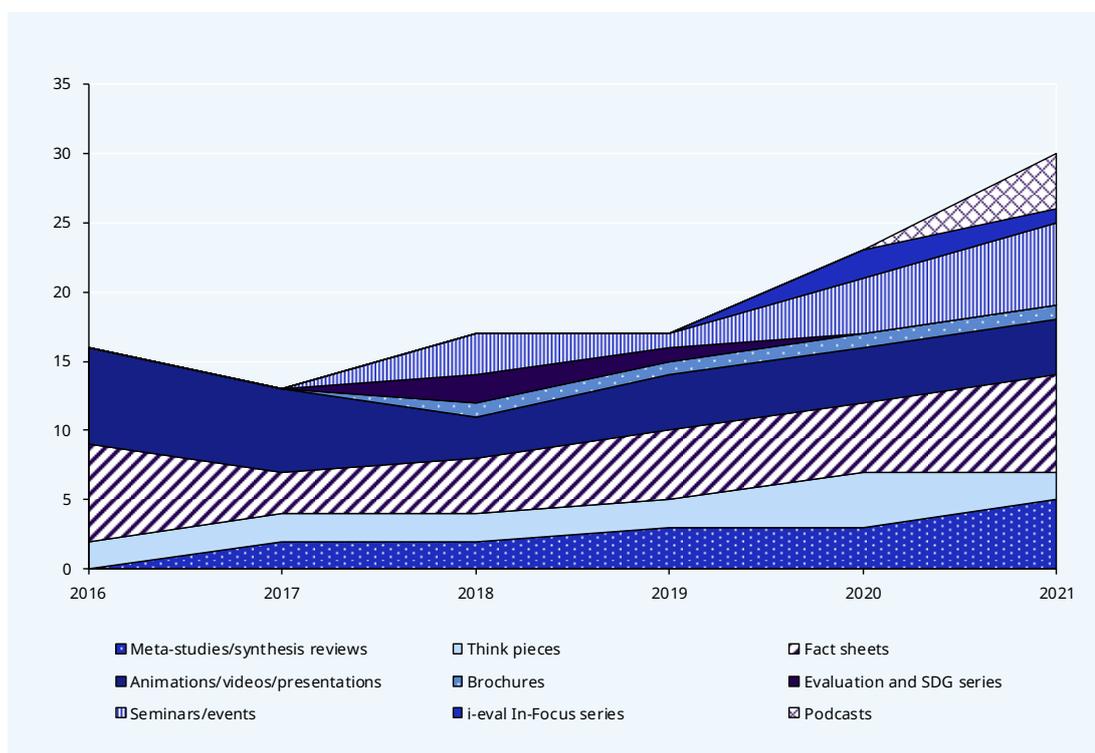
²⁶ As at 27 July 2021.

Sub-outcome 3.2. More targeted communication of evaluation findings

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 3.2: Revised communication strategy leads to better targeting of evaluation findings to management, constituents and other users.	Baseline: The 2016 IEE recognized progress made (newsletters, think pieces and <i>i-eval</i> Discovery) but called for better presentation of evaluation findings to improve use.	(a) Communication products linked to critical points of possible use of evaluations in the results-based management cycle; (b) Rebranding and use of innovative methods and support activities.	Achieved (pending IEE confirmation).
Biennial milestone (2020–21): The 2021 independent evaluation of the ILO's evaluation function acknowledges progress made in the communication strategy.			

57. EVAL's communication plan for 2018–21 is designed to better serve the needs of stakeholders and to convey evaluation findings to management, constituents and other users. While the 2022 IEE will provide an update on the communication plan's actual progress, it is already clear that steady results have been made. Of the plan's 17 targets in 2020, 10 were achieved or exceeded expectations, 1 was partially achieved, 5 were not achieved and 1 is pending more information. The biennial milestone is considered achieved pending confirmation by the 2022 IEE.
58. As in the previous reporting period, EVAL added new communication products, such as podcasts for training events and material adapted to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic (figure 8). A special issue of the *i-eval* In-Focus internal learning series *ILO's response to the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work: Evaluative lessons on how to build a better future of work after the pandemic* was produced.
59. Various communication events have been held internally and externally to convey evaluation results to broad audiences. Similarly, over a period of four days in November 2020, EVAL held its sixth biennial workshop to review progress made in implementing the Evaluation Strategy 2018–21, and to reflect on the path ahead after the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshop was held virtually, owing to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. It brought together almost 30 members of the ILO's evaluation function – including regional evaluation officers, departmental evaluation focal points, external speakers and experts – to address pertinent issues and to implement solutions.
60. *Proposed end target (2022)*: The number of communication products has increased by 10 per cent over 2021 figures, and one new communication method and at least five communication-related initiatives have been organized by the evaluation network.

► **Figure 8. Number of evaluation products, 2016–21**



Note: Each year, one annual evaluation report, three high-level evaluations and three newsletters are produced. The number of these communication products has remained constant. The number of social media platforms has also remained constant since 2016, in addition to the number of modules in *i-eval* Connect (EVAL’s knowledge-sharing platform).

Sub-outcome 3.3. Improved use of evaluation findings and recommendations by constituents and management for governance and decision-making

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 3.3.1: EAC advice on timing and use of evaluation prompts more robust uptake of evaluation findings for policy and strategic decisions at the global and regional levels.	Baseline: The EAC met on average four times per year, and qualitative analysis showed that it held strategic debates on about 40% of the corporate governance-level evaluations. Although the regions participate in the EAC, there are no regional evaluation advisory committees.	(a) High-level evaluation of a credible quality produced; (b) Appropriate composition of the EAC.	Achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, the EAC continues to meet on a consistent basis (four times annually), holds strategic discussions on 75% of corporate governance-level evaluations, and maintains a			

renewed focus on coalescing support to address systemic issues identified in evaluations. A target on expanding the practice of establishing regional evaluation advisory committees to be set subject to outcome of pilot.

61. The 2018–19 biennial milestone called for four meetings of the EAC per year and strategic discussions on 50 per cent of the corporate governance-level evaluations. That milestone was partially achieved, with seven EAC meetings being held during the reporting period. The number of strategic discussions exceeded the target, reaching 89 per cent.
62. The 2020–21 biennial milestone ²⁷ increased the target on strategic discussions from 50 to 75 per cent. As shown in table 3, strategic discussions were held on 11 high-level evaluations during the current reporting period, out of a total of 15, or 85 per cent (an increase from 62 per cent reported in the previous year). When the average (74 per cent) is combined with the 89 per cent from the previous biennium, the overall average number of strategic discussions for the Evaluation Strategy's implementation period is 81 per cent – exceeding the target of 75 per cent. In addition to achieving the milestone, some progress was achieved on the goal of establishing regional evaluation advisory committees. Under the leadership of its regional directorate, the Latin America and the Caribbean region established a regional monitoring and evaluation committee. With EVAL technical support, the committee discusses monitoring issues and progress on the implementation of recommendations from decentralized evaluations.

► **Table 3. Strategic discussions on high-level evaluations by the EAC, 2020–21**

High-level evaluation	Status of work plan and implementation	Review of discussions that took place in the EAC
Capacity development (2018)	Work plan approved. Implementation in progress.	Work plan approved in February 2019 with minor revisions. In February 2020, a verbal progress report was not approved. The EAC received a second verbal progress report in March 2021. The Chairperson of the EAC decided to keep capacity development on the agenda for another update at the end of the 2021.
Informal economy (2019)	Completed. ¹	Work plan approved in February 2020. Verbal progress report approved in September 2020. Three recommendations only partially addressed. Second progress report approved during July 2021 meeting.
Southern African Development Community (2019)	Completed. ¹	In February 2020, more details were requested on Recommendation 3. Work plan approved in September 2020. Verbal progress report approved in July 2021.

²⁷ This milestone is determined by the number of follow-up work plans or written and verbal progress reports of governance-level evaluations that require more than one discussion before approval, reflecting the detailed and substantive nature of the review. Completions and discussions of systemic issues or briefings by EVAL on particular topics, as requested by EAC members, are included in this category of strategic discussion as well.

High-level evaluation	Status of work plan and implementation	Review of discussions that took place in the EAC
Public-private partnerships (2019)	Completed. ¹	Work plan approved in February 2020. Verbal progress report delayed because more consultations with the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) were required at the senior management level. Verbal progress report approved in March 2021.
Andean countries (2020)	Work plan approved. Implementation in progress.	Amended work plan approved in March 2021. Progress report was requested in six months.
Research and knowledge management (2020)	Work plan approved. Implementation in progress.	Work plan was reviewed March 2021. Returned with a request for revisions. Revised work plan approved in July 2021.
Sustainable enterprises (2020)	Work plan approved. Implementation in progress.	Work plan was reviewed March 2021. Returned with a request for revisions. Revised work plan approved in July 2021.
Other strategic discussions of systemic issues	Preparations for the IEE.	Considered during the July 2021 meeting.
	EVAL's rolling work plan. Ex post evaluation.	Considered during the July 2021 meeting. Considered during the July 2021 meeting.

¹ "Completed" indicates that the verbal and written final progress reports submitted by the responsible department have been accepted by the EAC, and no additional reporting is required.

63. *Proposed end target (2022):* A review has been conducted of the key factors that determine the EAC's role in ensuring a more robust uptake of evaluation findings for policy and strategic decisions, and a meaningful and measurable indicator developed.

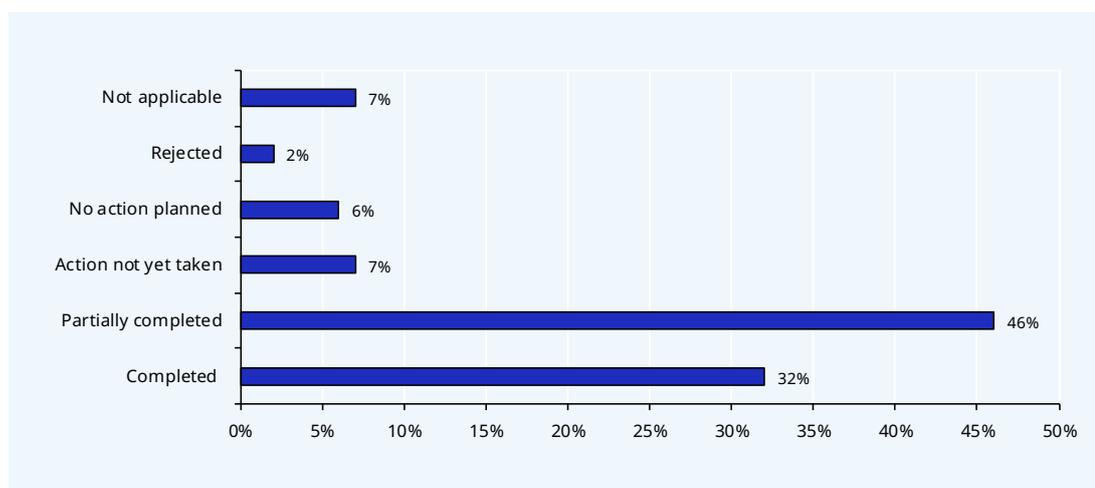
		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 3.3.2: Enhanced follow-up to evaluation recommendations through systematic monitoring.	Baseline: Follow-up to management response stood at 83% in 2016 (partially addressed and completed).	The use of an automated follow-up management system will provide analytical data on the ongoing use of recommendations.	Partially achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, the automated application for management to follow up on evaluation recommendations will lead to both a higher quality of evaluations and a higher quality of management responses to evaluation recommendations (target 90%).			

64. In 2018, EVAL, in partnership with the Information and Technology Management Department, developed the Automated Management Response System to facilitate the workflow process and ensure accountability for completing management responses to

evaluation recommendations. Since its launch, the level of compliance and the quality of management responses have improved. Regarding the latter, the Automated Management Response System permits quality controllers throughout the approval process to return management responses of poor quality for improvement.

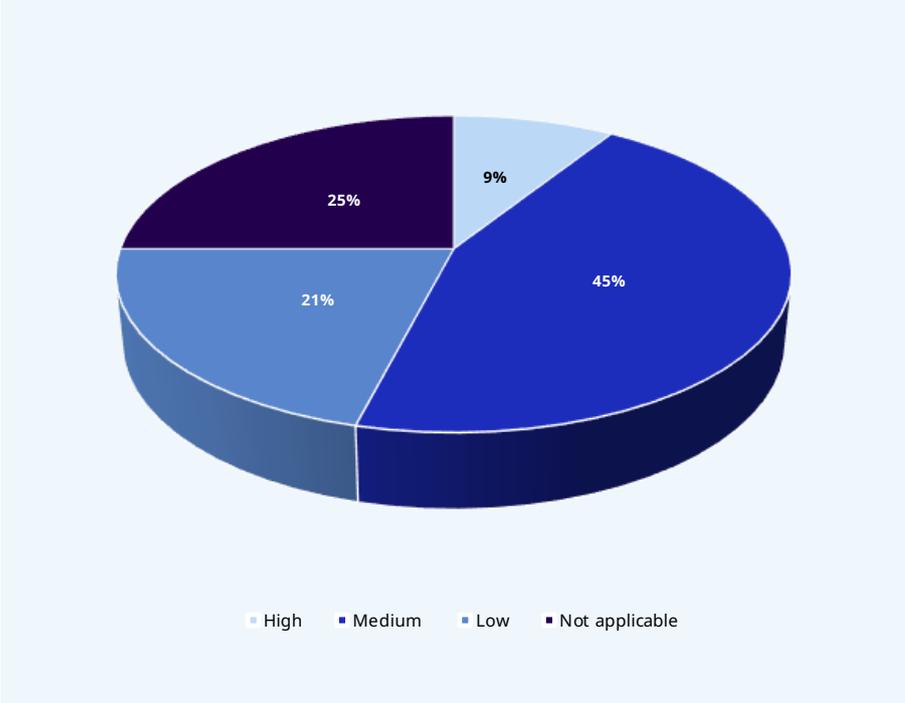
65. Management responses are required for recommendations from independent evaluations. Line managers are required to indicate whether: action taken in response to a recommendation has been completed or partially completed; no action is planned; action has not yet been taken; the recommendation has been rejected; or the recommendation is not applicable (table 4).
66. For the period under review, 42 of the 45 required management responses to independent evaluations were received (93 per cent),²⁸ accounting for a total of 376 recommendations. In response to 78 per cent of these recommendations, action had been “completed” or “partially completed” (figure 9). Together with the figures from the previous reporting period (90 per cent), a total of 84 per cent of recommendations were adequately addressed over the biennium – slightly below the biennial target of 90 per cent. A total of 21 per cent of recommendations involved low resource implications (figure 10), thus indicating the recommendations’ high degree of attainability. Similarly, 55 per cent of recommendations required short-to-medium time frames (figure 11), also pointing to the realistic expectations for the fulfilment of the recommendations.

► **Figure 9. Management responses to evaluation recommendations, 2020**

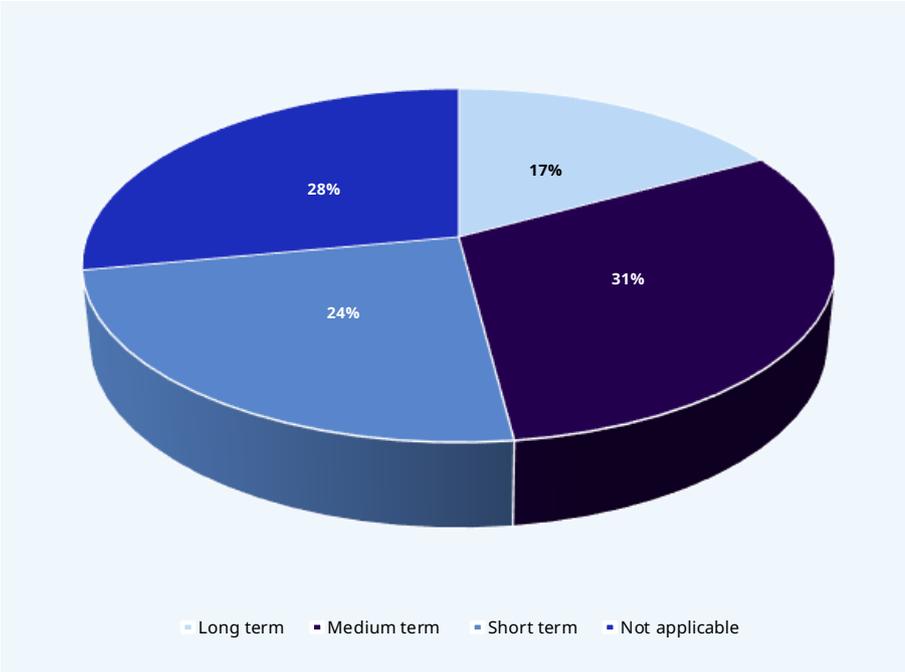


²⁸ Outstanding management responses include two from the ILO Country Office for Indonesia and Timor-Leste, and one from the ILO Regional Office for Africa.

► Figure 10. Recommendations by resource implications



► Figure 11. Recommendations by time frame



► **Table 4. Management responses to evaluation recommendations by administrative region or office/unit, 2020**

Administrative region or office/unit	Evaluation reports requiring management response (45) No. of recommendations	Completed	Partially completed	No action planned	Action not yet taken	Rejected	Not applicable
Africa	73	21	29	5	3	1	14
Arab States	37	7	16	8	5	1	0
Asia and the Pacific	110	54	33	1	4	4	14
Europe and Central Asia	35	5	25	1	4	0	0
Latin America and the Caribbean	35	13	15	3	3	1	0
Subtotal for regions	290	100	118	18	19	7	28
Better Work Branch	9	0	8	0	1	0	0
Development and Investment Branch	8	1	3	1	3	0	0
Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch	11	8	2	1	0	0	0
Green Jobs Programme	14	5	9	0	0	0	0
Inclusive Labour Markets, Labour Relations and Working Conditions Branch	12	3	8	0	1	0	0
Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health Branch	9	0	9	0	0	0	0
Small and Medium Enterprises Unit	13	0	9	0	4	0	0

Administrative region or office/unit	Evaluation reports requiring management response (45)	Completed	Partially completed	No action planned	Action not yet taken	Rejected	Not applicable
No. of recommendations							
Social Protection Department	6	0	6	0	0	0	0
Conditions of Work and Equality Department	4	2	2	0	0	0	0
Subtotal for offices/units	86	19	56	2	9	0	0
Grand total	376	119	174	20	28	7	28
Percentage		31.6	46.2	5.3	7.44	2.0	7.44
Total of completed and partially completed management responses			77.8				

67. *Proposed end target (2022):* Management follow-up to evaluation recommendations has led to 90 per cent of management responses being partially or fully completed within 12 months after an evaluation's completion.

	Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 3.3.3: Enhanced use of evaluations in strategic guidance, reviews and reporting for strategic plans, programme and budget records, and other high-level plans and strategies.	Baseline: The annual evaluation report documents the use of recommendations and lessons learned from evaluations (40–50% for the period 2010-15, based on stocktaking exercise).	Linked to sub-outcome 3.2.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, 80% of evaluation recommendations and findings are fully or partially reflected in relevant strategic guidance and reporting (for example, implementation reports, 2020–21 programme and budget reports, and other strategic and programmatic documents).		Achieved (pending Programme Implementation Report 2020–21).

68. The Office continues to increase its use of evaluation findings and recommendations to inform strategic guidance and reporting. During the last biennium (2018–19), 83 per cent

of high-level evaluations were reflected in the Programme Implementation Report. Two out of the three high-level evaluations were reflected in the Programme and Budget for 2022–23 and the ILO’s Strategic Plan for 2022–25. Seven out of nine high-level evaluations (77 per cent) were reflected in strategic guidance documents for the Office during the Evaluation Strategy’s implementation period.

69. Information on the Programme Implementation Report 2020–21 was not available at the time of writing the present report, but there is high expectation that it will include substantial information from the high-level evaluations, and that the milestone will be achieved. Table 5 illustrates various examples of use from evaluations that have contributed to strategic plans and strategies.
70. A good example of interest in promoting and improving the use of evaluations is that shown by the Policy Portfolio and the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific,²⁹ which undertook surveys to analyse the use of evaluations in their respective departments/region. Of the eight departments surveyed by the Policy Portfolio, six reported that evaluation findings were “often” taken into account in the design of new projects. The exercise undertaken by the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific revealed that 40 per cent of survey respondents used evaluation findings in their everyday work. The findings provide significant insight into how evaluations are being used; also, the undertaking of the surveys themselves shows growing interest among entities other than EVAL in capturing the information from evaluations – an indicator of a strengthened evaluation culture in the ILO.
71. *Proposed end target (2022):* An update on the continued use of evaluations in strategic level documents has been prepared, incorporating information from the Programme Implementation Report 2020–21.

► **Table 5. Examples of evaluation use**

Examples of used evaluations	Specific reference of use	Observations
High-level independent evaluation: Sustainable enterprises (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and Budget proposals for 2022–23 • Input into new strategy on sustainable enterprises • Input into the work plan of the Green Jobs Programme and a new proposal for organizational reform, to better place green jobs as a cross-cutting issue 	Input to the strategy and lessons learned for outcome 4
High-level independent evaluation: Research and knowledge management (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme and Budget proposals for 2022–23 • ACT/EMP uses recommendations from the report to inform strategic advice and to ensure that constituents’ needs are taken into consideration in project proposals • The ILO’s Strategic Plan for 2022–25 noted that the high-level 	Input and recommendations for improving the Office’s research and knowledge management work

²⁹ The survey by the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific was undertaken in the context of a training workshop for programme and monitoring and evaluation officers in June 2021.

Examples of used evaluations	Specific reference of use	Observations
High-level independent evaluation: DWCP strategies and actions in the Mekong subregion (2017)	<p>evaluation provides important guidance on how to strengthen knowledge management</p> <p>Input into the work of the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific on identifying, collecting and reporting evidence on the impact of ILO work</p>	Reviewed how impact was being reported
Final independent project evaluation: Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities programme in Turkey (2021)	Recommendations were used strategically in planning the approach to the work with refugees and communities	Evaluation provided insights and perspectives from beneficiaries that would not have been otherwise available to the Country Office
High-level independent evaluation: Public-private partnerships (2019)	ACT/EMP uses the recommendations when reviewing public-private partnerships	The finding is used as a trigger when there are long, unknown delays/bottlenecks in public-private partnerships' approval processes
High-level independent evaluation: Capacity development (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILO-wide strategy for institutional capacity development, 2019 • Programme and Budget proposals for 2020-21 and 2022-23 	<p>Provided input to the programme and budget from ACT/EMP perspective</p> <p>Provided definition of levels for the strategy and served as a basis for the strategy's implementation plan</p>
Independent project cluster evaluation: Employment-intensive investment programmes in Jordan and Lebanon (2020)	Employment-intensive investment programme document (phase IV)	Adjustment in the implementation strategy for phase IV
Independent project cluster evaluation: Vision Zero Fund (2020)	Recommendations informed the new flagship strategy	

Sub-outcome 3.4. Evaluations used to meet strategic knowledge requirements through further analysis of findings and results of evaluations

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 3.4.1: Evaluation findings analysed, synthesized and documented in knowledge products in support of planning and knowledge-building.	Baseline: In the previous strategy period, 22 think pieces, meta-studies and synthesis reviews were carried out.	(a) Adequate EVAL capacity; (b) Existence of appropriate topics.	Achieved (pending 2022 IEE confirmation).
Biennial milestone (2020–21): By the end of 2021, the number of knowledge products produced will have increased by 25% and the 2021 independent evaluation of the ILO's evaluation function will have confirmed that topics are in line with strategic knowledge requirements.			

- 72.** In consultation with departments and regions, EVAL regularly engages in the development of new knowledge products. In the current reporting period, EVAL completed 12 new knowledge products: 4 synthesis reviews of evaluation reports; 2 think pieces; 1 meta-study; 1 In-Focus learning series; and 4 joint evaluation-related reports.³⁰ Combined with the 9 knowledge products that were developed in the previous reporting period (2019–20), a total of 21 were prepared over the biennium 2020–21. Together with the 9 knowledge products that were produced in the biennium 2018–19, a grand total of 30 knowledge products were produced over the Evaluation Strategy's implementation period. The biennial target is therefore achieved. The 2022 IEE will confirm that topics are aligned with the ILO's strategic knowledge requirements.
- 73.** Collaborative initiatives, such as joint evaluations or joint synthesis reviews with other development partners, have increased in number and scope during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis sparked a growing interest in joint endeavours to foster collaboration, create synergies, avoid duplication and support a more effective (collective) response to and recovery from the pandemic.
- 74.** *Proposed end target (2022):* The number of knowledge products developed has increased by 15 per cent over 2021 levels.

³⁰ The joint evaluation-related reports are on the themes of: children on the move; COVID-19 and food security; early lessons and emerging evidence COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery efforts; and the work of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. Multiple UN bodies, the OECD and the Global Evaluation Coalition were involved in the preparation of the reports. Numerous joint initiatives are also ongoing.

		Linkages and assumptions	Status
Indicator 3.4.2: The annual evaluation report provides an annual overview of overall effectiveness of the ILO.	Baseline: Analysis of decent work results and effectiveness of ILO development cooperation completed, covering 2009–16, with ongoing revision of methodology.	Linked to sub-outcomes 3.1 and 3.2.	Achieved.
Biennial milestone (2020–21): Analysis conducted up to 2021 and communicated to relevant parts of the ILO for use, and the annual evaluation report provides information on the uptake and use of the findings.			

- 75.** Based on a robust methodology using 26 performance indicators – refined over the last decade – EVAL has perfected and institutionalized the analysis of ILO decent work results and effectiveness, using ILO development projects as proxies. Based on the evaluation reports, performance sheets are produced for each project over US\$1 million on a rolling basis. These assessments are aggregated and reviewed to provide the annual performance assessment of the ILO’s strategic relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency. Part II of this report provides a summary of this exercise.
- 76.** *Proposed end target (2022):* A synthesis review looking back five years and using completed annual assessments over that period has been produced, to allow for a comparative assessment of effectiveness by region and department.

► Part II. Assessing the ILO’s effectiveness and results

- 77.** This part of the report presents an overview of EVAL’s initiatives in the context of results-based management, as required by the Evaluation Strategy (indicator 3.4.2).
- 78.** Since 2011, EVAL has been providing annual assessments of selected areas of the ILO’s work, analysing its effectiveness through its development cooperation activities, focusing on their strategic relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency. The latest annual meta-analysis presented in this report provides an impartial assessment of the ILO’s results by reviewing all project evaluations from 2020 and a partial sample for 2021.³¹
- 79.** Twenty-six predefined performance criteria were used to assess the effectiveness of operations, categorized into three performance areas: strategic relevance and alignment; effectiveness, sustainability and impact; and implementation performance and efficiency of management and resource use. Performance was rated on a four-point scale, consisting of: “unsuccessful”; “partly successful”; “successful”; and “highly successful”. To enable more comprehensive reporting and the validation of results vis-à-

³¹ This is done as part of the rolling process of appraisal of evaluation reports with a cut-off date for this report of April 2021.

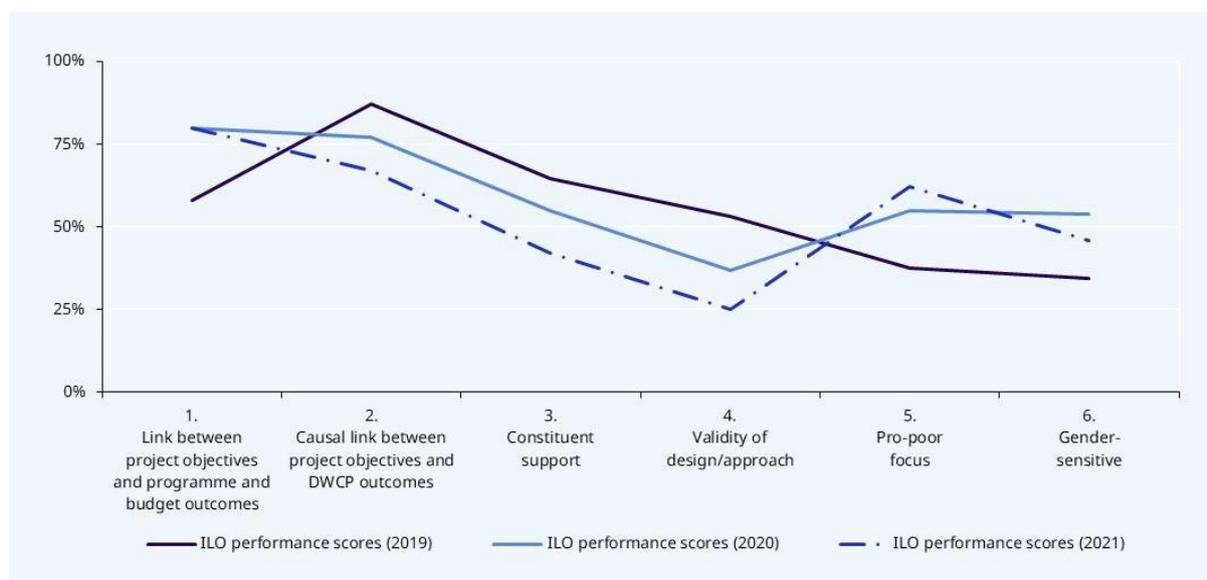
vis current development cooperation concerns, three additional criteria were included in the latest analysis: consistency with and contribution to the SDGs, and the integration of disability inclusion and a just transition to environmental sustainability into interventions.

- 80.** Overall, results for 2020 showed that, despite the pandemic, there was improvement in the relevance and cost-efficiency of interventions, reaching a score of “successful”, with steady trends for effectiveness, management efficiency, monitoring and reporting, and sustainability. Preliminary results for 2021 show some decline in the overall performance, notably for the criteria of strategic relevance, efficiency and sustainability, which scored only “partly successful”.

Development effectiveness

Strategic relevance and alignment

► **Figure 12. Percentage of projects with “highly successful” or “successful” scores for strategic relevance and alignment**

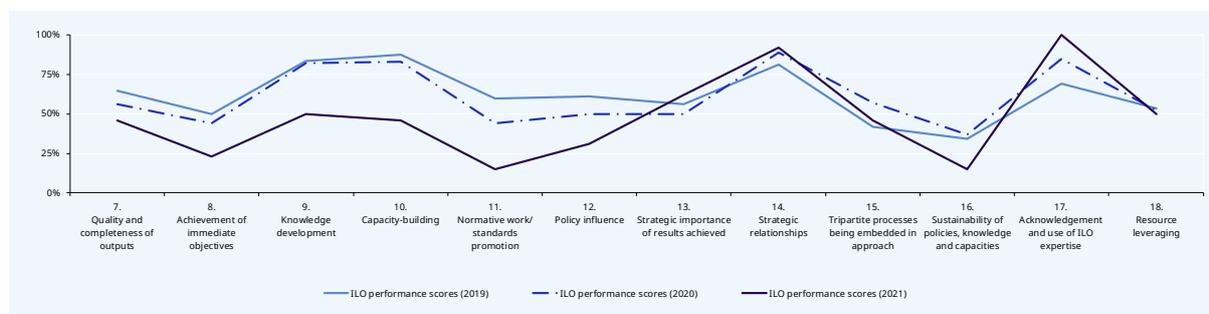


- 81.** While there has been variability in terms of results related to strategic relevance and alignment over time (figure 12), results from 2020 and the partial sample for 2021 followed positive trends. Common areas of strength were the strong linkage between project objectives and programme and budget outcomes (criterion 1), and the alignment of project objectives with DWCP outcomes or country programme outcomes (criterion 2). One area with increased performance during this period was the gender-responsiveness of interventions (criterion 6), which was possible because most projects included a gender-sensitive approach and progress was made towards gender-related objectives. Another area with increased performance was the extent to which poverty reduction was addressed in both the design and implementation of projects (criterion 5). More than half of assessed interventions integrated a pro-poor perspective while promoting decent work and identified specific target groups from vulnerable populations with evidence of success.
- 82.** A performance area with slightly weaker results in this category was the involvement of constituents in projects, with better performance in 2020 than in 2021 (criterion 3). The area with the weakest results of all was the validity of design/approach (criterion 4), with

over 50 per cent of the interventions assessed presenting inconsistencies in strategies and objectives, overambitious designs and a lack of contextual and risk analysis.

Effectiveness, sustainability and impact

► **Figure 13. Percentage of projects with “highly successful” or “successful” scores for effectiveness, sustainability and impact**

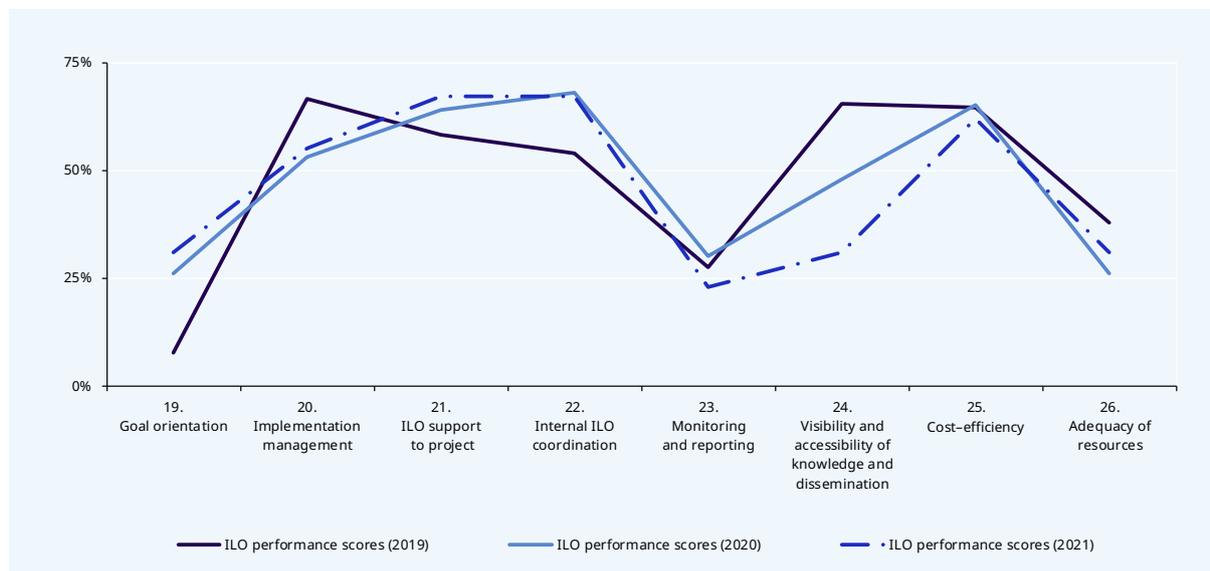


- 83.** Overall performance with regard to the effectiveness, sustainability and impact of development cooperation projects in 2020 followed the same positive trend as in 2019 (figure 13). A slight increase was found in the 2020 performance ratings for the development of strategic relationships and the appreciation and use of the ILO's expertise (criteria 14 and 17), with prominent partner organizations being constructively involved in ILO projects, allowing the Organization to achieve and consolidate project results. Capacity-building and knowledge development (criteria 10 and 9) remained areas of continued strength, followed by the resource leveraging efforts of the Organization and the integration of tripartism and social dialogue into project design and implementation (criteria 18 and 15). Overall, the partial results for 2021 confirmed this performance trend, with higher ratings for the acknowledgement and use of ILO expertise, the building of relationships, and the achievement of strategic results (criteria 17, 14 and 13).
- 84.** Most concerning in this period were the lower performance ratings for other effectiveness areas, which can possibly be attributed to the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. While, in 2020, good quality and complete outputs were achieved in over half of interventions evaluated (criterion 7), this was no longer the case in 2021. Moreover, a noticeable drop in ratings was found for the promotion of international labour standards and normative work (criterion 11), policy influence (criterion 12), knowledge development (criterion 9) and capacity-building (criterion 10). The suspension or cancellation of activities and the overall delays in implementation caused by the pandemic affected the achievement of outputs and progress towards immediate objectives.³² The likelihood of sustaining interventions (criterion 16) decreased from 2020 onward, with only 15 per cent of projects evaluated in 2021 obtaining successful ratings. Newly emerging priorities, shifts in focus to national and regional COVID-19 responses and the suspension of projects and reallocation of funds to COVID-19-specific efforts were factors that likely affected the sustainability of the ILO's interventions designed prior to the pandemic.

³² Recurrent activities were training sessions, workshops, South–South cooperation initiatives, technical studies, and the development and launching of knowledge products. Several instances were found of disrupted progress towards key deliverables, as these could not be validated through tripartite consultations and dialogue, which limited policy influence and the achievement of strategic results. Restrictions on movement and public meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic limited stakeholder engagement and capacity development.

Implementation performance and efficiency of management and resource use

► **Figure 14. Percentage of projects with “highly successful” or “successful” scores for implementation and efficiency of management, and use of resources**



- 85.** Average ratings were found for the different criteria associated with implementation performance and efficiency of management and resource use (figure 14); in a very few areas, however, the ratings were slightly better than in previous years. The ILO technical support to projects and coordination within the ILO (criteria 21 and 22) were two areas of relative strength in 2020. Another area of good performance was the cost-efficiency of ILO interventions (criterion 25). In contrast to previous years, implementation management obtained average ratings in 2020, with over half of reports obtaining a “successful” score (criterion 20). Average performance was also found for the capacity to document and disseminate the knowledge generated by interventions, with less than half the projects performing well (criterion 24).
- 86.** The lowest scores of all in this category continued to be given to the availability of and timely access to human and financial resources, and the results-based management approach and goal orientation of the ILO’s initiatives (criteria 26 and 19). Only one quarter of reports showed evidence of adequate resources to deliver project objectives and quality results frameworks. Project monitoring and reporting continued to be an area in need of improvement, with only 30 per cent of interventions rating “successful” (criterion 23).
- 87.** Preliminary performance results for 2021 in this category followed trends from previous years, with some areas of decline, notably on monitoring and reporting, and visibility and accessibility to knowledge (criteria 23 and 24).

Fostering real-time learning

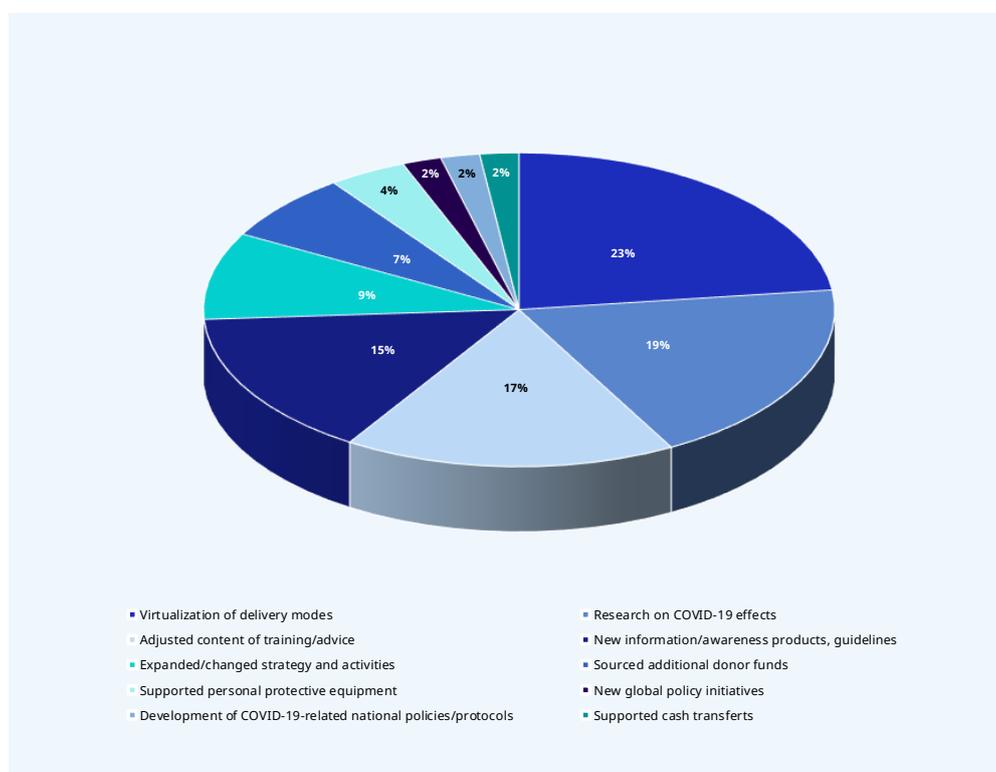
Evaluative insights on the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the ILO’s performance

- 88.** Throughout 2020–21, evaluations in the ILO have been required to include questions following EVAL’s protocol on collecting evaluative evidence on the ILO’s COVID-19

response measures.³³ To foster real-time organizational learning, a synthesis review³⁴ was conducted in 2021 to provide an overview of key findings and lessons learned on the effectiveness of the ILO's targeted responses to COVID-19.

89. The review revealed various factors that have promoted or hindered the progress and success of the ILO's work during the pandemic, aligned with the performance results presented in the assessment of development effectiveness. Overall, evaluative evidence showed good institutional readiness and the capacity of the ILO to adapt to the unexpected restrictions imposed by the pandemic (see figure 15). Despite implementation delays and setbacks, projects were able to adjust their planned activities to ensure strategic relevance to the suddenly changed circumstances, and demonstrated responsiveness to the needs and priorities of constituents during the crisis.

► **Figure 15. Types of adjustments made to enhance relevance in the pandemic**



90. While the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated certain areas of weakness, the evaluations found an elevated significance of the ILO's work and its comparative advantage in promoting decent work through social dialogue, international labour standards and social protection for all. The ILO's research and knowledge development capabilities were found to be especially effective, and acknowledged by constituents and partners. This was evident through various publications and policy guides developed in response to the pandemic, but especially through the global reach of the serial publication *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work*. This publication was found to have received a

³³ ILO, *Protocol on collecting evaluative evidence*.

³⁴ ILO, *ILO's response to the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work*. The review analysed a purposive sample of 22 evaluation reports (78 per cent from 2020 and 22 per cent from 2021), encompassing high-level, independent and internal evaluations.

very high profile as a source for high-level analysis on the impact of the pandemic on the labour market.

91. In terms of the ILO's operational efficiency, the synthesis review on the ILO's response to the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work showed that, when faced by crisis, the ILO strengthened its internal collaboration and developed new collaborative approaches – notably, global teams that harnessed the expertise within headquarters and the field. Furthermore, innovation in communications led to the use of creative virtual/remote delivery methods and collaborative technology that optimized the ILO's efficiency in delivery.

Evaluative insights on a way forward for the ILO's post-COVID-19 strategy

92. The synthesis review on the ILO's response to the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work yielded key lessons to consider for future action during the COVID-19 recovery:
- Adaptive approaches will need to be maintained to sustain the high strategic alignment of the ILO's work with new emerging priorities in the wake of the pandemic. Increased efforts to ensure a higher level of constituent involvement and the creation of strategic relationships with other actors (including UN agencies and the development community) will be required to advance progress towards achieving the objectives of the Decent Work Agenda and the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, as set forth in the global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient.³⁵
 - The disproportionate effects of the pandemic on the world of work will require intensified alliances with constituents towards an even and human-centred recovery, notably tackling the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups and women, the reversal of progress towards the elimination of child and forced labour, and the heightened vulnerability of migrant workers and refugees.
 - Maintaining its role as a thought leader on decent work in a changed post-COVID-19 world was found to be a driver for sustained results. Moving the focus from product-centred approaches towards more localized solutions, and working on resilience at all levels to respond to future shocks, were identified as the most recurrent priorities for future action.

Recommendation 2: The ILO should continue real-time learning on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and use evaluation results optimally to advance the global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient.

► Box 1. COVID-19 one year on: What worked to ensure adequate and effective protection at work for all?

The synthesis review identified key factors for the effectiveness of interventions focusing on policy areas related to the protection of workers that may provide insights for future work. During the pandemic, some larger interventions were able to effectively “reinvent themselves” to respond to the immediate problems at hand, particularly those focused on occupational safety and health and the situation of migrants. Others – including those working to protect factory workers in the garment sector (such as the Better Work programme) and the textiles

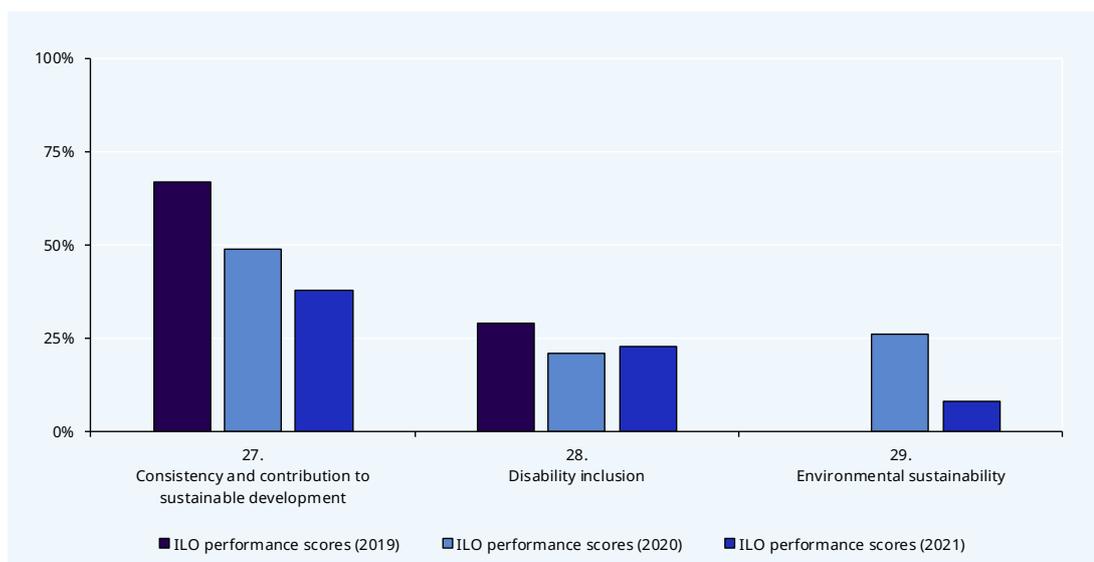
³⁵ ILO, Resolution concerning a global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient, International Labour Conference, 109th Session, 2021.

and leather sector – responded well to protecting workers in the context of COVID-19, though these sectors were at the same time facing job losses that these programmes could do little about.

The Vision Zero Fund is a global initiative that brings together constituents, companies and other stakeholders to advance jointly towards achieving zero severe and fatal work-related accidents, injuries and diseases in global supply chains. The Fund has highlighted the important role played by social dialogue in its operational approach, pursuing an objective of strengthening it to improve the knowledge and awareness of workers and employers of occupational safety and health-related issues. This approach was maintained as the Fund responded to the new circumstances of the pandemic and has led to the participatory development and validation of strategies to address primary, country-specific occupational safety and health issues in global supply chains.

Specific development cooperation concerns: SDGs, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability

► **Figure 16. Percentage of projects with “highly successful” or “successful” scores for consistency and contribution to the SDGs, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability**



93. Development cooperation projects implemented in 2020–21 continued to face limitations in respect of addressing more recent development cooperation concerns (figure 16). While many projects’ objectives were linked to specific SDG targets, implementation in coordination with other initiatives of the UN system was limited (criterion 27). Highly successful projects showed clear links between their national development strategies and SDGs, and built on synergies to achieve progress towards SDG targets (box 2).
94. Low levels of performance persisted for disability inclusion in 2020 and 2021, with less than one quarter of projects incorporating a disability inclusion perspective in their design and implementation (criterion 28). A similar trend in performance results was observed regarding the integration of a just transition to environmental sustainability into ILO interventions (criterion 29). While there were some elements promoting environmental sustainability in certain projects, the majority of interventions did not take this policy driver into account in their design and implementation.

► **Box 2. The ILO’s contribution to the SDG 8 (2019–20): Highlights from EVAL’s synthesis review**

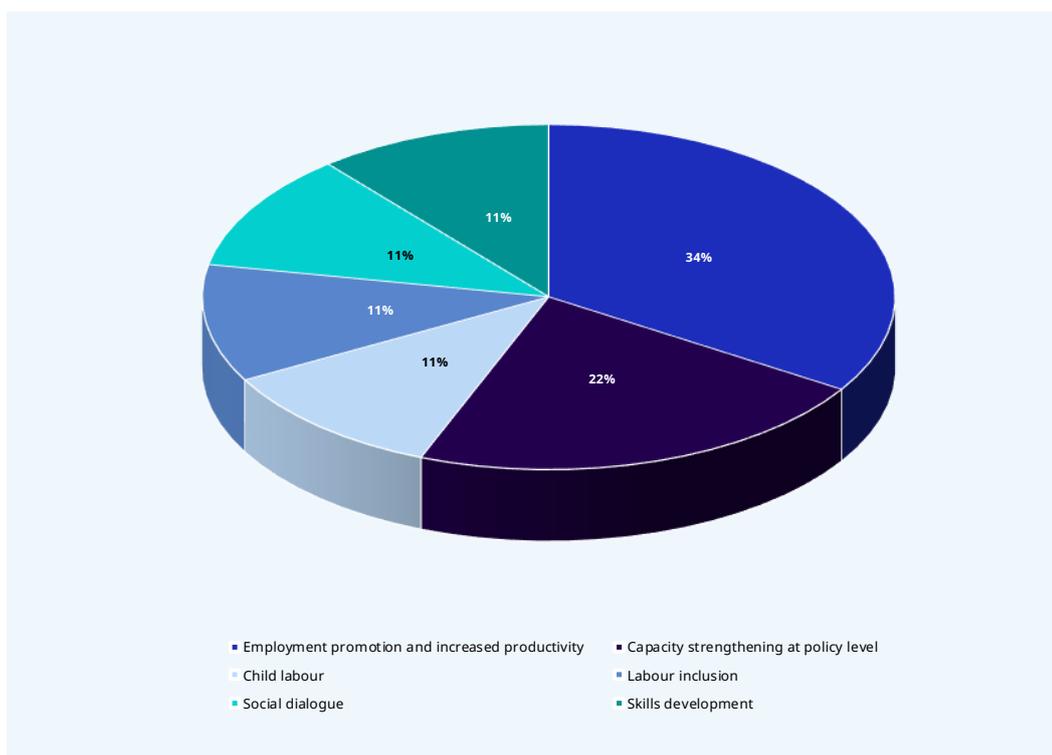
In 2021, EVAL conducted a synthesis review of the ILO’s work on SDG 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) for the period 2019–20, including an analysis of how performance could have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis. * Overall, it was found that more than 90 per cent of assessed projects were aligned with the SDGs, and 85 per cent of interventions were relevant to ILO constituents, national plans and strategies. Project typologies that were best aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focused on employment promotion and increased productivity, capacity strengthening, the elimination of child labour, labour inclusion, social dialogue, and technical and vocational education and training (see figure 17).

The main driver for the achievement of SDG targets was capacity strengthening – notably, the strengthening of policy monitoring capacities related to the 2030 Agenda and the provision of support for policy design and implementation, including enhanced analytical and reporting capacities on the Decent Work Agenda and SDG 8. Positive impacts were related to improvements in statistical systems that went beyond the scope of the ILO’s interventions, and the enhanced role of beneficiary countries in the international cooperation system on sustainable development. Several evaluations also referred to the paradigm changes at the country level that were most favourable to job creation, the improvement of labour policies and the eradication of child labour, among other goals. It was found that the involvement of national governments, the strengthening of capacities within the government and beyond, and the establishment of partnerships among ILO constituents were recurring sustainability factors.

While it was found that the assessed interventions faced recurring operational challenges brought about by the pandemic, the overall impact of these challenges on the ILO’s work and on global progress towards the SDGs remained inconclusive.

* A think piece presenting the results of the review will be made available on [EVAL’s website](#).

► **Figure 17. Thematic variety of ILO interventions aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**



▶ Draft decision

95. The Governing Body endorses the recommendations of the annual evaluation report 2020–21 (paragraphs 11 and 92 of document GB.343/PFA/9) for implementation by the ILO.