



**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

Federal Public Service

**Foreign Affairs,  
Foreign Trade and  
Development Cooperation**

## **Evaluation of the institutional actors' policy support**

**Final report  
July 2016**

Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development  
Cooperation

**Special Evaluation Office of the Belgian Development Cooperation**

## **Evaluation of the institutional actors' policy support**



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**Final report**

**July 2016**

The evaluation has been conducted by the consultancy firm DRIS and has benefited from the support of a reference group in Brussels. The Special Evaluation Office ensured that the evaluation complied with the terms of reference.

The opinions expressed in this document represent the authors' points of view and do not necessarily reflect those of the PFS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.

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July 2016

Printed by: Printing Department FPS

Evaluation no. S4/2015/01bis

Legal registration: 0218/2016/022

This document is available in PDF format in Dutch and English on the website [http://diplomatie.belgium.be/nl/Beleid/Ontwikkelingssamenwerking/Onze\\_werkmethode\\_n/Dienst\\_Bijzondere\\_Evaluatie](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/nl/Beleid/Ontwikkelingssamenwerking/Onze_werkmethode_n/Dienst_Bijzondere_Evaluatie), or from the Special Evaluation Office.

The report will be cited as follows:

Special Evaluation Office of the Belgian Development Cooperation/SEO (2016), *Evaluation of the institutional actors' policy support*, Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Brussels.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ACP	Africa Caribbean Pacific
APEFE	Association pour la Promotion de l'Enseignement et de la Formation à l'Etranger [Association for the Promotion of Education and Training Abroad]
ARES	Académie pour la Recherche et l'Enseignement Supérieur [Academy for Research and Higher Education]
BDA	Belgian Development Agency
BELSPO	Belgian public department for programming federal scientific policy
BIO	Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries
BOS	Beleidsondersteunend Onderzoek
BVO	Beleidsvoorbereidend Onderzoek
CBD	Rio Convention on Biological Diversity
CCD	Commission de Coopération au Développement [Development Cooperation Commission]
CEBioS	Capacities for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CGS	Centre for Global Governance Studies
CHM	Clearing House Mechanism
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CIUF	<i>Conférence Interuniversitaire de la Communauté Française</i> [French Community Interuniversity Conference]
CNCD-11.11.11	<i>Centre National de Coopération au Développement</i> [National Centre for Cooperation in Development]
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRED	Centre de Recherche en Economie du Développement [Research Centre for Development Economics]
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
BTC	Coopération Technique Belge [Belgian Technical Cooperation]
CUD	<i>Commission Universitaire pour le Développement</i> [University Commission for Development]
DGD	<i>Direction Générale Développement</i> [General Directorate for Development]
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EDUCAID	Belgium platform for education and training within development cooperation
EU	European Union
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GRAP	<i>Groupes de Recherche en Appui à la Politique</i> [Policy Research Support Groups]
GAP3A	<i>Groupes de Recherche en Appui Alimentation, Agriculture, Afrique</i> [Food, Agriculture, Africa Research Support Groups]
GRAPAX	<i>Groupes de Recherche en appui aux politiques de paix</i> [Peace Policy Research Support Groups]
GRAP-PA	<i>Groupes de Recherche en Appui à la Politique Santé</i> [Health Policy Research Support Groups]
GTI	Global Taxonomy Initiative
HIVA	Research Institute for Work and Society
IMT	<i>Institut de Médecine Tropicale</i> [Institute of Tropical Medicine]
INCAF	International Network on Conflict and Fragility

IOB	Institute of Development Policy and Management
IRSNB	Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique [Belgian Royal National Science Institute]
ITG	Instituut voor Tropische Geneeskunde
KULeuven	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven [Leuven Catholic University]
MASMUT	Plateforme belge Micro Assurance Santé et Mutuelles de santé [Belgian platform for Health Micro Insurance and Health Provident Funds]
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MRAC	Musée Royal pour l’Afrique Centrale [Royal Museum for Central Africa]
NGCA	Non-Governmental Cooperation Actor
NGO	Federatie van de Niet-Governementele Organisaties [Federation of NGOs]
Federatie	
NU	United Nations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
O*-	Onderzoeksplatformen voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking
Platformen	
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PASA	Plateforme belge Agriculture et Sécurité Alimentaire [Belgian Platform for Agriculture and Food Safety]
PCD	Policy Coherence for Development
PFS	<i>Programme formation sud</i> [South Training Programme]
PIC	<i>Programme Indicatif de Coopération</i> [Indicative Cooperation Programme]
RAP	<i>Recherches en Appui à la Politique de coopération</i> [Research to Support Cooperation Policy]
RCN	Réseau des Citoyens – Citizen’s Network
SBCD	Secretariat for the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity
SCA	Shared Contextual Analysis
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
FPS	Federal Public Service
TOR	Terms of Reference
UA	Universiteit Antwerpen
UGent	Universiteit Gent
ULB	Université Libre de Bruxelles [Brussels Free University]
ULG	Université de Liège [University of Liège]
UN	United Nations
UNamur	Notre Dame de Namur University Faculty
UOS	Universitaire Ontwikkelingsamenwerking
UStLouis	Saint Louis University Faculty
VLIR	Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad
VSS	Voluntary Sustainability Standards
VVOB	Vlaamse Vereniging voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Technische Bijstand

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## Executive summary

Since the end of the 1980s, Belgian Development Cooperation financed support and/or scientific advice activities for policy decision-making in development matters. This funding, which, at the start, only concerned universities, has been extended to various scientific institutions (*Institut de Médecine tropicale* (Tropical Medicine Institute) – IMT, *Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique* (Belgian Royal National Science Institute) – IRSNB, *Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale* (Royal Museum for Central Africa) – MRAC), to a Think Tank (European Centre for Policy Development Management – ECPDM), as well as to the specialised staff secondment for the Belgian Directorate for Development Co-operation – DGD.

These activities have, up till now, not been subject to an overall evaluation, even if some of them have been assessed or self-assessed individually. Benefitting from the opportunity presented by the coming into force from 2017 of the new regulations on Non-Governmental Cooperation Actors (NGCAs), the DGD wished to bridge this gap and approached the Special Evaluation Office for it to initiate an evaluation which should "cover all policy support implemented by these various institutional actors and its development since 2003".

The evaluation, entrusted to the consultancy firm DRIS, has developed an overall transversal analysis of all the instruments which have been implemented as part of this policy support programme.

It should be emphasised from the outset that these various policy support instruments do not appear, in the eyes of those involved in cooperation, to be a coherent and well-identified whole. These instruments are indeed the main source of aid to decision-making for the Belgian cooperation and for its administration in particular, but this recourse to decision-making support currently extends to other institutional actors (thematic platforms, consultancy advice, DAC-OECD, etc.). Except for two of them, all of the instruments assessed have appeared to be or have been formalised in the second half of the 1990s in order to respond to different and specific requests; they therefore have very varied contracting and programming procedures. The very definition of policy support is quite variable from one instrument to another and up till now, there is no single joint understanding which is completely shared. Finally, overall visibility of these policy support activities is low, insofar as this instrument is rarely mentioned in strategic documents on Belgian cooperation and is little known by those who are involved.

A more detailed analysis of the eight instruments developed by the various institutional actors highlights the specific characteristics of each of them but also several points of convergence. Therefore, the funding granted by the DGD for implementing this support is devoted mainly to staff costs and makes up a generally very reduced portion of the budget granted to these institutional actors for their various development cooperation operations. However, this modest funding has, over time, enabled forms of support to multiply. If initially it often concerned long-term analyses, delivered solely in the form of publications, support today takes on very varied aspects: various publications; support or participation in international meetings; participation in or organisation of seminars, workshops or working meetings; training courses; project evaluations; responses to technical requests, etc. Despite abandoning procedures which clearly distinguish long-term conceptual support work and the response to random requests from the administration (drawing rights), this diversification of the deliverables submitted to the administration has continued to broaden. In addition, although the main beneficiaries of this support were always, above all, departments from the DGD, the evaluation was able

to report that the scope tends to broaden here as well. Also, Belgian ambassadors in partner countries, the BTC or some of its projects and programmes and other Belgian ministries outside the cooperation are also more regularly beneficiaries of some support. The Policy Cell of the Ministry of Cooperation is more of an indirect beneficiary, formulating requests and gathering responses through the DGD. On the other hand, non-governmental stakeholders appear very rarely to be direct beneficiaries of this support. Finally, the evaluation also notes that, generally speaking, all these instruments meet two of the specific objectives devolved to them particularly well: assistance in preparing the policy within the DGD and support for Belgian cooperation in its participation in international debates. Conversely, reinforcement of this knowledge at the DGD is a less systematically encountered objective as the support essentially was obtained by persons directly in contact with the instruments, more rarely staff in general, and therefore have a lesser impact on the reinforcement of the institution's knowledge as a whole. And the objective which was the least attained at this stage was undoubtedly the knowledge strengthening of other stakeholders in Belgian cooperation; collaborations and operations of most of the instruments with these stakeholders remain limited and random.

In conclusion, the evaluation notes that the long-term partnership which has been implemented as part of this policy support by institutional actors, whose reputation and quality are often acknowledged internationally, has led to a collaborative relationship which combines flexibility and sustainability in an original way.

In addition, the theory of change which underpins the policy support presumes that, in response to requests formulated by cooperation decision-makers, these institutional actors supply tools or instruments to these which allow them to prepare, (re)direct or implement the most suitable development strategies, based on substantiated analyses. The evaluation was able to report that the overall level of satisfaction with the programme, both with the support producers as well as with the beneficiaries, is very closely dependent on the accuracy of the requests. Even if, over time, these requests have become more accurate and often more directly defined by the administration, they currently remain uneven. And the use made of the product deliverables by the institutional actors is, in general, relatively limited to the departments or people who requested it. A lack of a generalised and organised strategy hinders a wider, more systematic use.

Apart from these general conclusions which apply to all the instruments, there are grounds for underlining a certain distinction between policy support by the universities and policy support by the other institutional actors. The first type of support, which is older, is distinguished by the fact that it is managed by platforms (ARES-CCD and VLIR-UOS) which are an intermediary stakeholder between teams of researchers and donors, which is not found for other types of support. In addition, this is the only type of support that, as well as responding to requests from the DGD, aims to also develop the skills of the researchers themselves in order to lead to academic output. This dual objective has not, up till now, succeeded in finding a suitable balance, which causes a certain reciprocal dissatisfaction: some beneficiaries in the administration and in the Minister's Policy Cell deem that the output from these university support resources remains too academic on the one hand, and representatives from platforms and some researchers claim that it is relevant to develop some academic output on the other hand.

Finally, the evaluation also concludes that this policy support programme makes a sizeable contribution to the research capacity of institutional actors, and it is sometimes a lever to mobilise additional research funding. This dimension should not be overlooked in a country where budgets allocated to research are relatively low and in these times of austerity, are subject to downward pressure.

Based on these conclusions, the evaluation makes some general recommendations followed by recommendations addressed to the institutional actors on the one hand and to Belgian cooperation decision-makers on the other hand.

In general, it is recommended to:

- preserve the added value made up by the diversity and variety of the institutional actors and their ways of implementing this policy support;
- promote synergy and networking with other potential policy support sources which have not been assessed here;
- take into account the evolution of the Belgian development cooperation context with the conversion of the BTC to the BDA (Belgian Development Agency): policy support will no doubt have to respond differently and separately, in the future, on the one hand to the DGD and on the other hand to the BDA;
- provide for a more regular evaluation of policy support programmes;
- acquire better visibility for these programmes;
- consider a "South-driven" approach, allowing for the use, at least partially, of policy support formulated by or with university institutions or experts located in southern countries;
- consider not pursuing the third objective of this program (knowledge strengthening of other actors) which appears as too ambitious.

It is recommended to the institutional actors to:

- look for possible collaboration and synergy with the other institutional actors of the programme in order to increase the opportunities for joint discussion on the specific methodological features of research for policy support;
- better take into account the expectations of other cooperation stakeholders in terms of policy support;
- stimulate greater interaction between policy support activities and the other programmes and forms of support of the institutional actors in order to strengthen field contributions in analyses and research;
- register, once this support has been formulated, a strategy for communication and ownership of the research outcomes, with specific uptake indicators;
- keep the DGD and the Policy Cell regularly informed about new skills, new issues and new initiatives which emerge from the research work and which may be useful in terms of policy support.

It is recommended to Belgian cooperation decision-makers to:

- draw up a comprehensive strategy of policy support use, placing this within a results based planning process;
- put in place a systematic process of internal ownership of the outcomes of policy support;
- develop a strategy for uptake of research outcomes which could be manifested practically in two types of measures: i) define an uptake strategy as early as the planning stage of policy support and ii) produce practical tools aimed at institutions and researchers concerning the communication and publication of research outcomes in a format that is suitable for decision-makers;
- predefine a genuine strategy for dissemination of policy support outcomes: consistency of dissemination, harmonisation of publication formats; harmonisation of internal distribution procedures (seminars, training); systematic use of the DGD's website;
- better involve, as of now, the BTC in the proceedings of policy support so that it correctly identifies its added value and procedures and can thus better prepare the reorientation of policy support based on the future reform framework that will create the BDA;
- promote the function of the focal point of support within the DGD: internal recognition, sufficient dedicated working time, explicit involvement and responsibility in the implementation of support outcomes, etc.;
- ensure the efficiency of secondments by maintaining this mechanism for a minimum period of two years and considering potential mechanisms for reintegrating secondments within support programmes in order to enhance the acquired skills and experience;

## Executive summary

- consider and use the "drawing rights" tool in a flexible manner: by ensuring, where support committees exist, that they fully play their roles, particularly in identifying and programming requests. Using drawing rights therefore only appears to be necessary if such consultation mechanisms do not exist or do not work.

# 1. Introduction

Since the end of the 1980s, *Coopération belge au Développement* (Belgian Development Cooperation) financed support and/or scientific advice activities for policy decision-making in development matters. This funding, which, at the start, only concerned universities, has been extended to various scientific institutions (*Institut de Médecine tropicale* (Tropical Medicine Instrument) – IMT, *Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique* (Belgian Royal National Science Institute) - IRSNB, Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale (Royal Museum for Central Africa) - MRAC), to a Think Tank (European Centre for Policy Development Management-ECPDM), as well as to the specialised staff secondment for the *Direction Générale de Coopération au Développement* (Belgian Directorate for Development Co-operation) - DGD.

These operations are now part of the programmes of the above-mentioned institutional actors<sup>1</sup> and are used to prepare and/or support policy-making relating to development cooperation of the Belgian federal government.

These activities have, up till now, not been subjected to an overall evaluation, even if some of them have been assessed or self-assessed individually. Benefiting from the opportunity presented by the coming into force from 2017 of the new regulations on NGCAs, the DGD wished to bridge this gap and approached the *Service de l'Évaluation Spéciale* (Special Evaluation Office) for it to initiate an evaluation which must "*cover all policy support and its development since 2003*".

The terms of reference of the call for tenders launched to carry out this evaluation define three specific expectations to be checked:

- *"the relevance of this tool for policy support, both in terms of the objectives assigned to it but also in relation to the rapid changes in the regulatory landscape of Belgian cooperation and issues in terms of cooperation on an international scale;*
- *learning drawn from the past operation of this tool in order to have a good knowledge of the performance of current devices and to prepare the vision and future strategy which complies with the new regulatory context,... to determine potential valid alternatives;*
- *... determine how this support constructs a real partnership or complementary relationship between university expertise and that of other institutional actors on the one hand and cooperation stakeholders on the other hand".*

The evaluation has therefore developed a cross-disciplinary analysis over a long period of more than 25 years (even if the focus of the evaluation is concentrated on instruments currently existing, the oldest of these instruments will be studied as experience and lessons learned from the past which have led to the creation of the current support mechanisms<sup>2</sup>). Furthermore, the analysis will therefore focus on a set of instruments broken down in various ways through several dozen operations in multiple sectors and which produced very diversified deliverables.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to remain consistent with the terms of reference, as part of this evaluation, by "institutional actors" we mean all of the institutions concerned by policy support which we have been asked to analyse. These terms therefore cover here a wider set of stakeholders than those concerned by the Royal Decree of 25 April 2014 on subsidising non-governmental cooperation stakeholders.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, for some of this support which started at the end of 2014, the evaluation will concern the first 15 months of their operation but will be relocated in the more general context of the historical evolution of the instrument.

The final evaluation report presents the outcomes of this work according to the following structure: after a summarised introduction to the methodology, a significant section is devoted to the various findings, general findings on the one hand and findings grouped according to evaluation criteria on the other hand. In the following section, the report summarises the main conclusions of this analysis and finally, in the last part, formulates the recommendations which emerge from the evaluation.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology used within the context of this evaluation has essentially been qualitative, as the subject of the evaluation displays few quantitative indicators that would allow a reliable comparison between the various policy support instruments. This more qualitative approach has given a better understanding of the perceptions and behaviours of the various stakeholders of these support programmes, to examine their practices critically and formulate assumptions.

The evaluation has based its analysis essentially **on five main data sources** collected during the data collection phase:

- A **voluminous collection of documents** comprising simultaneously i) very general texts like strategy notes, policy notes, OECD peer reviews, etc.; ii) regulatory texts governing this support such as agreements, framework agreements, protocols, calls for proposals, responses to calls, etc. ; iii) the very numerous outputs of these policy support programmes such as publications, working papers, policy notes, policy briefs, etc.; iv) the management documents for these programmes, such as reports from support committees, monitoring committees, activity and financial reports, etc.; v) evaluations and various appraisals concerning individual programmes.
  - A most exhaustive statement of the documents consulted is given in Appendix A of this report. This documentation was initially analysed prior to interviews in order to formulate assumptions and to refine the questions and a second time after the main data gathering through interviews in order to confirm or consolidate the explanatory elements collected during meetings with the stakeholders of these programmes.
- **Significant information gathering**, done collectively or individually, mainly face-to-face, and in addition by telephone or email, with the various people affected by these programmes, namely: current and former directors, focal points and members of DGD staff; representatives from the Minister's Policy Cell; the managers, researchers and staff of the various institutional actors supplying these policy supports; diplomats in charge of cooperation in Belgian embassies affected by the support; the beneficiaries of this support other than the DGD, such as the BTC and NGOs; representatives from foreign cooperation bodies by way of comparison; etc.
  - The complete list of individuals met appears in Appendix B of this report. The interviews were carried out based on grids of questions constructed from the evaluation questions, in two separate phases: firstly, interviews were conducted with those involved in this support (directors and focal points at the DGD, the Minister's Policy Cell and the research of the representatives of the institutional actors supplying the support) and secondly, mainly the beneficiaries were interviewed (officials from the DGD, Policy Cell, BTC, NGOs, diplomats in embassies).
- An **external assessment formulated by researchers at Oxford Policy Management** (OPM)<sup>3</sup> on an illustrative output of each of the policy support

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<sup>3</sup> OPM ([www.opml.co.uk](http://www.opml.co.uk)) is a British consultancy and analysis firm which has 30 years of experience in development cooperation.

instruments<sup>4</sup> which was selected as follows. The diversity of the types of tools produced but also the number sometimes restricts deliverables of this type, the variety of their purposes and their recipients in particular means that there was not a sufficiently homogeneous range of this output to be able to consider it to be a representative sample with sufficient methodological guarantees. The idea chosen was therefore to highlight deliverables that were illustrative of what is produced by these instruments. The evaluation's principle was to research, for this selection, deliverables i) which represents a significant part of the work carried out by the instrument; ii) which combine, if possible, a high number of the researchers involved and iii) which affect, as far as possible, a variety of beneficiaries. These are therefore example cases within the meaning of "completed, finalised model" and not within the meaning of "strictly representative". From each of these example cases, a publication has been selected and subjected to assessment by the researchers based on three criteria: their relevance for development, their structure and scientific consistency and finally the quality of the recommendations in terms of policy support<sup>5</sup>. The presentation of all these assessments is given in Appendix C of this report.

- An **assessment of the reach of scientific outputs** based on a sample of scientific outputs from the various institutional actors supplying policy support<sup>6</sup> during the years 2014-2016. In absolute terms, such an approach should take into account all publications, namely articles in scientific journals, books, chapters of books, communication/posters at international conferences and outreach/promotional work. Nevertheless, as part of this evaluation, and in order to obtain a rapid assessment, we have decided to only use articles published in scientific journals in our analysis. For each entity, 6 publications by different authors and published in different journals were selected, except 3 for the MRAC, i.e. 33 articles in total. Three elements have been taken into account to perform this evaluation: i) the scientific quality of the journal (reading committee and part of journal codes and standards), ii) the reach of the journal in terms of impact factor, through an indirect estimate based on the average number of quotations of each article published in this journal; and iii) the reach of the article selected by means of the number of quotations that have been made of this article. A detailed presentation of the calculation of this reach assessment is given in Appendix D of this report.
- A **comparative analysis** (benchmarking) of existing cooperation policy support procedures in some neighbouring European countries in order to draw lessons from other experience and institutional practice. We have chosen to study the case of France, which has no formal policy support instrument, because of its close geographical proximity to Belgium and possible comparison points between operations within the *Agence Française du Développement* (AFD – French Development Agency) and the future Belgian Development Agency (BDA). We also examined the United Kingdom and Denmark, two European countries that have solid policy support instruments as part of their research programs for development, which they have evaluated and refocussed in order to increase their effectiveness.

The evaluation was conducted from 16 December 2015 to mid-July 2016, according to the following schedule:

- 16 December 2015: award of the contract;
- 19 January 2016: evaluation kick-off meeting;

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<sup>4</sup> The publications which were submitted to OPM's assessment are highlighted in grey in the bibliography which can be found in Appendix A of this report.

<sup>5</sup> No publication was submitted to OPM for MRAC insofar as the main document produced as part of the chosen example case has not been published by MRAC with the support of the DGD but by the Congolese government.

<sup>6</sup> Only ECDPM has not been included in this analysis, since this institution does not undertake scientific research and therefore does not publish scientific articles validated during the peer-review process.

- First document analysis, interviews with the first stakeholders in this support programme: directors and a few focal points from the DGD in a focus group, and managers from the ARES-CCD, VLIR-UOS, ISRN and MRAC programmes. Based on this initial collection of data, a final methodology note was formulated and presented at an initial evaluation support committee meeting on 18 March 2016. This methodology note is given in Appendix F of this report;
- Field analysis with a wider gathering of data through interviews with other focal points and officials at the DGD, at the Minister's Policy Cell, with researchers and staff from the various institutional actors in order to formulate a field report containing a monograph of the eight policy support instruments that are the subject of this evaluation. This field report was presented for the first time to a second support committee meeting on 4 May 2016. Additional work to deepen this field analysis has been continued through additional interviews with the beneficiaries of support (Policy Cells, DGD officials, embassy diplomats, BTC, NGOs) and a second more in-depth analysis of the documentation available. The finalised field report was presented at the third support committee meeting on 2 June 2016 and it appears in Appendix G of this report.
- The evaluation team has completed the final gathering of data (assessment of outputs by OPM, evaluation of the output reach and comparative analysis of policy support programs in neighbouring countries), has carried out a complete triangulation of all of the data and drafted the final report, a provisional version of which was presented at the fourth support committee meeting on 28 June 2016.
- Based on the remarks and comments from this committee, the final report has been corrected, completed and adapted. It has been presented in its final version at the fifth support committee meeting on 12 July 2016.

### **Limits and constraints of the evaluation**

The evaluation team has been able to benefit from access to unlimited document and information sources and has been able to gather information from practically all the stakeholders in this programme. It also wishes to give a very sincere thanks to all of the people who have given it access to the sources and/or have responded to its requests for information.

However, it is important to highlight three major constraints the evaluators were faced with:

- The variety of sources, forms and objectives of the policy support instruments, which appears in the pages that follow, has made the comparison random at times and has forced conclusions to be drawn for the overall programme, that do not necessarily apply in the same way to all these instruments.
- The scope of the historical field for this study has led to unequal access to sources: for some periods of some instruments, the information was fragmented.
- This evaluation took place when some policy support forms had only been in existence for a little over a year (such as the different Acropolis which started late at the end of 2014 and, in particular the one which is not the continuation of a previous university support programme). This was not without effect on the reduced volume of products which it was possible to examine for some instruments.

The evaluation has, however, endeavoured to reduce as far as possible the impact of these limits and constraints on the outcomes of its analyses.



## 3. Findings and analyses

### 3.1. General findings

#### 3.1.1. A restricted field of analysis for support that can be much wider

The terms of reference of this evaluation clearly restricted its field of analysis to the policy support instruments that are funded by the Belgian cooperation explicitly for this purpose. This concerns the following stakeholders: the universities grouped together within ARES-CCD and VLIR-UOS, the IMT, IRNSB, MRAC, as well as ECDPM.

It is, however, important to clarify that both the administration (DGD) and the development cooperation Minister's Policy Cell consider that the scope of skills they can use to support the preparation or development of their strategy is much broader. They feel that, beyond the institutions assessed here, there are also several other sources from which they currently draw some elements of support. Some benefit from funding from the DGD, and others do not, but in any case, this funding, when it exists, is not intended explicitly to supply policy support to the Belgian cooperation. Among these additional support sources, we can therefore firstly quote the various platforms which combine academic researchers and a variety of cooperation stakeholders (Be-Cause Health, Be.troplive, EDUCAID, *Entreprendre pour le développement* [Undertake for Development], MASMUT and PASA, in particular). There are also the various advisory councils (policy coherence, sustainable development, gender) whose opinions may provide food for thought when it comes to making policy or strategy choices. The Minister's Policy Cell also mentions the search for skills in several federal Public Services in their specific areas of competence (Finance and interior SFP, for example).

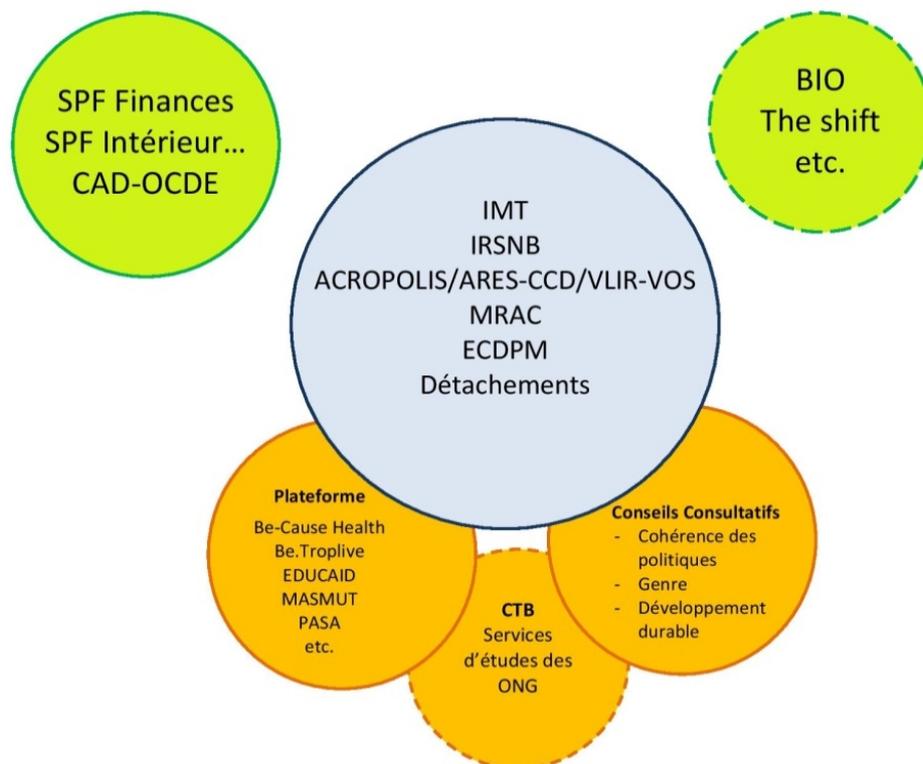
In addition, several Corporation stakeholders (BTC, some NGOs) are developing their skills by strengthening their thematic department or their research department and are becoming potential contributors of support for the Policy Cell, as indeed are BIO or networks more external to the development cooperation sector, such as The Shift<sup>7</sup>.

If the institutions and their instruments which are the subject of this evaluation are clearly the "historical stakeholders" and the current heart of Belgian cooperation policy support, they must be placed within the nebula of support which surrounds them and which the administration and the Minister's Policy Cell are currently already calling upon or have the intention to do so in the near future.

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<sup>7</sup> The Shift: Belgian sustainable development network which brings together banks, research and consultancy firms, private and public enterprises, brand managers, environmental NGOs, development NGOs and agencies, etc.

Schematically, the scope of this evaluation can therefore be delimited according to the graphic below:



*Figure 1: Policy support evaluation field*

Platforms and advisory boards are instruments which are already used (circles with a continuous line around them) and in which some of the assessed instruments on the one hand and the NGOs and BTC on the other hand are involved (hence the intersections). Some SPS, the DAC of the OECD<sup>8</sup>, BIO and the new networks are more external and independent sources of support that are already effective (continuous line) or potential (dashed line).

It should be noted that several of the institutional actors assessed are developing activities as part of their wider programme which may prove to be relevant as policy support but which do not fall directly within their policy support budget, for example because these activities are implemented in southern countries.

### 3.1.2. Historical development and contract variety

If only the instruments from the sole institutional actors which are part of the field of analysis defined by this evaluation are examined, the findings highlight a historical past that is relatively consistent but with varied contractual terms and conditions.

The policy support of the universities grouped within the ARES-CCD and VLIR-UOS platforms is almost 30 years old:

- allocation of an additional grant to Flemish universities in 1989 and to French-speaking universities in 1991 to conduct general research on development issues;
- in 1995 the Belgian State signs a general convention with the Flemish and French-speaking universities: research in policy support fits within the overall funding that the Belgian cooperation grants to universities;

<sup>8</sup> In particular, through analyses of Belgian Cooperation conducted regularly by peers (Peer Review) and through ongoing monitoring of the work of the various DAC committees by the diplomat based in Paris representing Belgium at the OECD.

- addendum to this general agreement in 1997 to repeal the specific agreement relating to research for policy support which had existed since 1994 and to specify that this policy support would be included in the "Northern Actions" of the University;
- signing of the specific Northern Action agreements in 1997, modified in 2002, which are currently still the legal basis for university policy support activities.

This contractual context has allowed three successive tools to be developed on the French-speaking side: research for policy support – RAP [Recherches en Appui], policy support research groups - GRAP [Groupes de Recherche en Appui aux Politiques] (2004-13) and since then, the Acropolis, jointly with the VLIR-UOS. In the Dutch-speaking community, policy support has developed in four forms: the BeleidsVoorbereidend Onderzoek – BVO (1991-2003); the BeleidsOndersteunend Onderzoek-BOS (2003-2009); the O\*-Platformen (2009-2013) and since then, the Acropolis, jointly with ARES-CCD.

For the IMT, it is since 1998 that policy support activities have been supported by the DGD through 3 successive five-year framework agreements; they constitute a specific outcome in each three-year programme which covers all cooperation activities for this institution.

With the IRSNB, the cooperation administration first signed two specific funding agreements for its general activity, which included the policy supports supplied by this institution (2003-2007 and 2008-2012). Since 2014, a Collaboration Protocol between the Scientific Policy and Cooperation Ministries lays down the terms of collaboration and support of the federal scientific institutions, including the IRSNB, for the benefit of Development Corporation. Three five-year programmes, based on these agreement terms, enable the funding of the activities of the IRSNB in terms of cooperation to be defined, including policy support.

Although the relationships and collaboration between MRAC and the Belgian cooperation date back more than 40 years, it was in 1998 that a specific agreement regarding the funding of MRAC's development cooperation activities was concluded and served as the basis for implementing multiannual programmes which each time included a specific policy support outcome. Since 2007, as for the IRSNB, it was a Collaboration Protocol between the Scientific Policy and Cooperation Ministries that became the legal basis for these multiannual programmes.

With ECDPM, annual agreements allowed *ad hoc* funding from 1997 onwards, which continued up to 2004. Since 2005, three-year agreements were signed and allowed contributions to be granted to the overall budget of this institution within which a specific amount would be dedicated annually to Belgian cooperation policy support.

Finally, secondments from the IMT from 2010 and from universities from 2015 would be based on the existing contractual relationships of these institutions: Third framework agreement of 2008 for the IMT and specific Northern Action agreements of 2002 for the two university secondments.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the contractual agreements for university support and for three other institutions (IMT, MRAC and ECDPM) were all formalised during the second half of the 1990s (in 1995 and 1998 respectively) and significantly later for the IRSNB (2003). Conversely, the contractual terms are very varied: specific agreements which may or may not depend on a general agreement, framework agreements, and interministerial protocols. They lead to programming of variable form and duration (specific outcomes and budgets, specific outcomes but budgets incorporated in an overall programme, contributions to the institution's general budget, lasting 3 or 5 years, etc.).

The diagram below gives a summary of the chronological development of contract terms (in green) and the resulting programmes (in yellow) of the various policy supports analysed:



Three specific objectives have till this day been assigned to the Acropolis based on these agreements:

- *"to deepen and develop the existing knowledge of researchers, which must **lead to academic output** (publications, doctorates, courses or training, etc.);*
- *apply this knowledge in response to **specific requests and questions**, in various forms (advice, directives, recommendations etc.), as **defined by the administration**;*
- *share knowledge and expertise between Belgian development cooperation stakeholders (DGD, BTC, NGOs, and other non-governmental stakeholders)."*

For the other stakeholders, the definition of policy support appears to be more operational. For IMT, it is *"to support the DGD in **formulating, implementing and monitoring policies** in the field of international health development"*. For the IRSNB, it is to provide *"policy support **through the provision of scientific services** to the Minister of Development Cooperation and to the DGD or at the request of partner countries"*. In the MRAC documents, scientific research for policy support (North Outcome no.3) is to *"provide **answers to the questions asked** by third parties (political decision-makers, authorities and/or other stakeholders in development cooperation) **about a specific issue** in development concerning sub-Saharan Africa"*. And finally, for ECDPM, it is to provide *"a response to ad hoc requests for information or training on the part of the officials responsible for defining the Belgian position in European or international bodies dealing with cooperation matters"*.

This analysis highlights the very clear distinction in approach and definition between policy support provided by the universities (which is more aimed at finding a balance for research that is more long-term and academic research, that addresses broader issues and aims at benefits within the institutional actors themselves), and that of the other institutional actors which strives to respond to requests in a more operational manner.

With respect to the objectives of this policy support as defined in the initial documents, here too there is a variety of approaches. The general objective can probably be for all of the instruments to *"continue or improve the professionalisation of the Belgian Development Cooperation"*.

But, depending on the various institutional actors, the support must:

- respond to requests from the administration while sharing knowledge with various Belgian cooperation stakeholders and contribute to the international visibility of academic expertise, for the universities;
- support the administration essentially, for the IMT and the ECDPM;
- support the Minister and the DGD, according to the protocol for the IRSNB and the MRAC.

Finally, we find that, therefore, the terms of reference of this evaluation have attempted to formulate a more encompassing definition of policy support by indicating that it is *"the scientific research carried out by various institutional actors (research institutes, universities, scientific institutes, consultancy firms, etc.) which are established in Belgium and which are used to prepare and/or support policy relating to development cooperation of the federal Belgian government (that is, the Minister responsible for Development Cooperation) and the General Development Cooperation Directorate, as well as to increase the scientific knowledge of the initial entities cited in development cooperation or topics related to development"<sup>9</sup>*. However, these TOR do not take into account this final element of the definition when they detail the four objectives assigned to these various forms of policy support, namely:

- *"to prepare the new policy within the DGD;*
- *develop knowledge at DGD level;*

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<sup>9</sup> The TOR have summarised here a definition formulated initially by the VLIR-UOS.

- *develop knowledge at the BTC and among Belgian Development Cooperation stakeholders;*
- *provide a contribution in the international debate."*

The evaluation will therefore not explicitly analyse the specific objective which relates to the support of universities as formulated in the agreement and which aims to deepen and develop the existing knowledge of researchers in order to lead to academic output. This is all the more the case as the DGD, who initiated this evaluation, wished that it would address the issue of policy support from its own point of view and its own concerns.

### **3.1.4. Poor visibility of policy support**

The documentary analysis has also found that the various policy supports do not constitute, in the mind of successive cooperation managers, a clearly identified coherent whole.

Also, the general policy notes presented to Parliament by seven of the cooperation ministers<sup>10</sup> who have taken on this role since 1999 do not contain any explicit reference to this cooperation policy support instrument.

Examination of 20 strategy notes drawn up by the DGD on the various sectors and themes defined by the *Loi de coopération* [Belgian cooperation law] but also concerning humanitarian aid, development education, MDGs, situations of vulnerability, communication strategy, private-sector etc. is also illuminating. From all these notes, only five<sup>11</sup> explicitly mention the work of one or other institutional actor on policy support. Often this is an isolated reference, only the "Fight against HIV/AIDS" and Health and sexual and reproductive rights" notes mention this support several times.

The main legal documents in the field of cooperation (The law on development Corporation, the law regarding creation of the BTC, or more recently the note to the Council of Ministers on the conversion of the BTC into a BDA) do not contain any explicit reference to this policy support programme.

The "Belgium" Common Strategic Framework (CSF) makes more explicit mention of the strengthening of expertise, particularly through policy support activities (principally universities), which is quite logical, as the document was drawn up by the NGCAs, which include institutional actors supplying policy support.

The collection of data through interviews confirmed that policy support, which is the subject of the evaluation, is difficult to perceive or grasp as a programme in itself.

Therefore, the NGO umbrella organisations and federations know very little about this programme: their officials usually quote the University platform as being providers of policy support and some of their programmes (GRAP, O\*Platformen and Acropolis), conversely they hardly ever identify the other institutional actors as providers of support. Furthermore, some individual NGOs have good knowledge of one or other specific support programme because they are directly involved in it (for example, medical NGOs taking part in the Be-Cause Health platform, RCN working on certain projects with Acropolis Aid Effectiveness, or WWF with Acropolis Klimos).

At the BTC, although the EST service which brings together the key expertise of this institution, works with all the institutional actors assessed here (except for the IRSNB), it is not always aware that these stakeholders are funded by the DGD to provide policy support.

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<sup>10</sup> General Policy Brief from Ministers BOUTMANS (2001), Verwilghen (2003), De Decker (2006), Michel (2008), Magnette (2011), Labille (2013), and De Croo (2015).

<sup>11</sup> Note on the international fight against HIV/AIDS (2006); Health and sexual and reproductive rights (2007); the agriculture and food safety sector (2010); situations of vulnerability (2013); trade assistance(-).

At the Minister's Policy Cell, all the institutional actors assessed here are not necessarily identified as being providers of policy support.

The documentary analysis presented above, as well as the gathering of data from development cooperation stakeholders, clearly emphasises that the purpose of the evaluation is very rarely considered to constitute a whole, a program in itself, and is rarely mentioned as an important tool for cooperation, even if the institutional actors who are responsible for it are, for the most part, well-known in the world of cooperation and recognised as being essential players or with whom numerous other collaborations have been established.

However, it is important to emphasise that the OECD's Peer Review regularly highlights the importance of basing cooperation strategy on appropriate use of expertise. In 2010, the Peer Review recommended that *"the administration rely on the existing analytical ability of the NGOs and universities... and to specify the distribution of tasks between the Minister's Policy Cell and the policy support department (the 0.1) of the DG CD, and to define responsibilities relating to the development of strategic guidelines more clearly"*. And in 2015, the following Peer Review emphasised that *"the use of information, knowledge and expertise with which the Belgian development cooperation is equipped could be made more strategic and systematic, if more reinforced efforts are made."*

**In conclusion** from these initial general findings, the evaluation therefore considers that policy support upon which policy decision-makers call or may call is certainly much broader than the scope that has been defined for this evaluation.

The policy support which we have been asked to assess was initiated in a more formalised way for the most part in the second half of the 1990s, even if it sometimes results from collaborations which their institutional actors have had with the administration for much longer.

This support, however, has quite different contractual frameworks and programming arrangements. Defining its purpose is very different for university policy support (which explicitly incorporates an academic dimension) compared to that of the other institutional actors (which is more operational).

This diversity in approach, definition, arrangements, but also the poor visibility of this instrument in general cooperation documents, means that this policy support is not or is hardly perceived as a programme in itself. However, in order to resort to an easier formulation, in this report the generic term "policies support's program" will be used to describe the set of eight instruments that have gradually been developed in support of the Belgian Development Cooperation.

### **3.1.5. The profile of the eight instruments assessed**

In this section, we are going to give a brief introduction to the eight policy support instruments which have been assessed and which are the subject of a more detailed field report which can be found in Appendix 7 of this report.

#### **3.1.5.1. University support: ACROPOLIS**

As part of the specific agreements relating to Northern Actions<sup>12</sup> and continuing with an activity that has been delivered since 1989<sup>13</sup>, the two university platforms implemented, separately, policy support programmes which consisted, during the 2004-2012 period of "Beleidsondersteunend Onderzoek-BOS" and then "O\*Platformen" » for the VLIR-UOS and of "GRAP-policy support research groups" for the CIUF-CUD. An internal evaluation of the GRAPs in 2008 and an external evaluation of the O\*Platformen in 2012 concluded

<sup>12</sup> Signed on 5 December 2002 with the CIUF-CUD and on 18 December of the same year with the VLIR-UOS.

<sup>13</sup> See point 3.1.2 above, Historical Development and Contract Variety.

that the objectives pursued by these programs had been reached overall: support for development policy through research but also for the research capability of the academic institutions. The fact that this support is no longer limited to delivering ad hoc studies<sup>14</sup> will be particularly positively appreciated, as well as the innovative impulses which such research helps to instil in cooperation and the importance of specific focal points which facilitated better interaction between researchers and the administration<sup>15</sup>. The two evaluations point out the lack of dissemination of the results as a common weakness in all these policy support mechanisms.

Given these evaluations and the fact that the GRAP and O\*Platformen ended in December 2013, continuation of this support was envisaged for the period 2014-2016: the "Acropolis" to be implemented jointly by the universities in the ARES-CCD<sup>16</sup> and the VLIR-UOS. Several significant changes were made to the implementation procedures compared to the past. The programme is limited to three themes determined directly by the DGD, whereas previously it was the University platforms who selected themes from a list proposed by the administration. The three research themes are: i) Development funding; ii) Incorporation of environmental themes and climate change in the transition to sustainable development; iii) Aid effectiveness with a focus on fragile contexts. The DGD requires that the three Acropolis are implemented by teams that combine researchers from Dutch- and French-speaking institutions. It wishes to give priority to interdisciplinary, inter-university and intercommunity proposals. The "drawing rights"<sup>17</sup> principle applied in the O\*Platformen has been abandoned in favour of a more explicit formulation of the outcomes to be achieved.

The call for proposals was launched simultaneously for the three Acropolis themes in December 2013, based on specific terms of reference for each of them, formulated by the DGD. ARES-CCD and VLIR-UOS were responsible for disseminating the call, collecting the various proposals, checking their eligibility, checking their academic quality based on a review by international peers and transmitting them to the DGD who only took on the final choice<sup>18</sup>. Seven intercommunity research groups responded to this triple call for proposals, two groups for the two first research themes and three groups for the third.

These various proposals were introduced in February 2014 and the entire selection procedure spread up to mid-July<sup>19</sup> although it was planned that this programme would start at the beginning of May. A convention between the universities coordinating these Acropolis and ARES-CCD/VLIR-UOS was signed on 9 July 2014<sup>20</sup>, with the various universities participating in each of these Acropolis concluding an agreement with each other in order to define internal operating arrangements. Initial funding of this Acropolis program was allocated at the end of 2014 (November) for a three-year performance period held over 2014-2016. Several universities only started the operational activities of this programme from that date onwards, given the uncertainty of the funding, linked in

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<sup>14</sup> In relation to the RAP programme, the predecessor of the GRAPs.

<sup>15</sup> In relation to the BVO and BOS programme, predecessors of the O\*Platformen.

<sup>16</sup> On 1 January 2014, the CIUF-CUD was converted into ARES-CCD following the incorporation of *hautes écoles* [tertiary colleges] into this platform.

<sup>17</sup> A part of the pre-determined budget is devoted to responding to ad hoc requests made by the administration.

<sup>18</sup> In past programmes, all of the selection was made by the CIUF-CUD and VLIR-UOS, generally with the administration being present on the selection committees or with a selection procedure carried out by the administration.

<sup>19</sup> Official notification from the DGD on 15 July 2014.

<sup>20</sup> The start of this programme has experienced a significant delay due partly to the uncertainties which prevailed at the time (financial uncertainties particularly following discussions concerning *compétences usurpées*). Pending the official notification, VLIR-UOS and ARES-CCD sent a letter of assist and organised an information session in order to attempt to reduce this delay. This was a question of giving guarantees to the universities of the effectiveness of the funding, as they were more suspicious and more reluctant to pre-fund this programme than in the past, given the uncertainties relating to *compétences usurpées*.

particular to the debate on *compétences usurpées* [usurped powers: powers devolved from the Belgian federal administration to federated entities as part of State reforms]<sup>21</sup>.

### **A. Acropolis BeFinD**

A group of researchers, coordinated by the University of Namur and bringing together four research centres,<sup>22</sup> has been selected to provide this support to the Belgian cooperation in terms of development funding. This group is not involved as such in the previous GRAP or O\*Platformen programmes. It has been formed from research experience developed jointly in the past by IOB<sup>23</sup> and CRED in this sector to which these two centres have associated HIVA and the KULeuven GCS who had already worked on the subject of private resources for development with the Flemish government and provided their skills, particularly in the field of social protection.

This Acropolis is responsible for providing support for the following research themes: i) local resources for development (taxes, illegal money flows, managing debt); ii) mobilisation of private resources; iii) ODA and link with other development funding flows; and iv) global public assets.

Around 30 researchers and members of staff from the four centres involved contribute to the outputs from this Acropolis BeFinD. The latter has chosen to use the funding available to involve a majority of these researchers, 14 of them have thus been funded up till now, for very variable periods and most often part-time, by the programme (6 from CRED, 1 from the CGS, 5 from HIVA and 2 from the IOB).

Three major groups of deliverables have been produced by the BeFinD Acropolis:

- support which is often more ad hoc in response to a specific request from the DGD: participation with or in place of the DGD in international conferences, ad hoc advice by email and telephone, organisation or participation in seminars or workshops, project follow-up, etc.;
- working papers and guidance notes produced at the request of DGD: this is research developed on subjects discussed with the authorities;
- academic productions, not necessarily discussed but directly linked to BeFinD's themes and which may indirectly provide support for the policies of the DGD.

The budget for this program is €1 million distributed evenly over three years with a slightly more significant concentration on international travel in the second year. This budget devotes on average 79% of its resources to staff costs, 7% to international travel and 3% for operational costs<sup>24</sup>. A detailed account of the implementation of this budget is only planned for the end of the third year but, based on the information available, it can be estimated that up to 69% of the budget has been implemented during the first year.

As it is for the two other Acropolis, the budget for the BeFinD Acropolis represents a little less than 1% of the total funding granted by the DGD to ARES-CCD and to VLIR-UOS for their respective Northern Actions and a little more than 0.5% of the entire funding from the DGD to these two university platforms for the period 2014-2016.

The first beneficiaries of BeFinD Acropolis policy support are managers from the D 2.2 Department of the DGD (inclusive growth), more indirectly the other members of staff of the DGD who received the deliverables from this Acropolis, without it always being possible to determine accurately the size of the staff of the administration which actually benefits from these outputs. In a more indirect and more ad hoc way, the Policy Cell of the Cooperation Minister is also a beneficiary of this support, particularly as part of

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<sup>21</sup> Debate on the level of Belgian authority (federal or community) which should be responsible for the funding of university cooperation.

<sup>22</sup> The Namur CRED, the UA and HIVA IOB and the KULeuven GGS.

<sup>23</sup> IOB had for its part, in the past, participated in another research group responsible for the O\*Platformen Aid Architecture.

<sup>24</sup> With the balance covering administrative and coordination costs.

preparing for international meetings. Beyond this immediate initial circle to which this support is addressed, the activities of BeFinD are gradually affecting other stakeholders: the diplomats responsible for cooperation (Belgian Ambassador in Rwanda), the BTC (particularly for its projects in Benin), officials from international institutions, and researchers from other universities in the North and the South.

The effects of this instrument in terms of preparing policy are certainly noticeable on the part of the services directly concerned by the subject (D2.2 in particular but also D0) but more diffuse at the DGD as a whole and the Minister's Policy Cell with which the researchers say they have had very little contact. Knowledge strengthening that this Acropolis provides to the DGD remains fairly limited to a restricted circle of officials concerned. Among other cooperation stakeholders (except BTC), the contribution of knowledge is also hardly perceptible insofar as the activities of this Acropolis are only directed very indirectly and periodically to non-governmental stakeholders (dissemination of output, workshops). However, the question of development funding is analysed in an ever more in-depth way by some non-governmental stakeholders with whom there could be an opportunity for closer collaboration. With regards to support for Belgium's international visibility, the effect of this Acropolis is quite significant. It was, in addition, widely and systematically expected for practically all the themes and sub themes of this Acropolis, as is highlighted by the TOR of this instrument.

**Example case: The "mobilisation of private resources for development"**

Among the various themes covered by the BeFinD Acropolis, this theme displays several interesting features: : i) it was an innovative question in which the DGD had a major interest; ii) the deliverables would be produced in different forms; this theme addressed an approach to identify and analyse the general findings, but also to examine Belgium's practices in a practical way (BTC project); and iii) the dimension of support for Belgium in its participation in international forums was also present in this theme. In this example case, the BeFinD Acropolis produced summary publications (listing the stakeholders, existing instruments and the agenda for

mobilising private resources for development), analyses more specifically focused on access by small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) to external funding and case studies applying to SMEs from Benin and Burundi.

The work carried out by the BeFinD Acropolis for the example case is very comparable with the research carried out by this policy support mechanism on other themes, it is without doubt more directly linked and concentrated on a new issue for which the interest of the Cooperation Policy Cell is very big while the internal powers of the DGD in this new area are relatively limited.

## **B. KLIMOS Acropolis**

Two research groups have responded to the call for proposals concerning the incorporation of environmental issues and climate change in the transition to sustainable development. The proposal which was chosen was that of the Group which since 2009 had implemented the KLIMOS O\*Platform program, namely the three universities (KULeuven, UGent and VUB) as well as the higher non-University educational institution Katholieke Hogeschool Sint-Lievens<sup>25</sup>. This KLIMOS group, in order to make the bid for Acropolis, worked with three new partners including two French-speaking universities (UA, ULB and UCL).

As specified by the agreement which governs this program, it is planned that this Acropolis provides support for the following research themes: i) sustainable development of natural resources; ii) sustainable energy and infrastructure; iii) covenants for the environment and sustainable development; and iv) environment/sustainable development, monitoring and evaluation.

<sup>25</sup> Today referred to as the "Technologicampus Gent", integrated with KULeuven.

The inter-university network of this KLIMOS Acropolis, coordinated by KULeuven, is made up of eight research teams from the six associated universities and brings together around 30 researchers. Researchers from four of these eight research teams are directly funded by the programme, mainly part-time, for a total of 2.9 FTEs. The individual research is not financed directly by the Acropolis remain involved in this research network which tries to gather other funds to finance them, particularly through carrying out case studies.

The deliverables produced by the KLIMOS Acropolis can be grouped into four major types of products:

- Policy support which is often more ad hoc in response to a specific request from the DGD: participation with or in place of the DGD in international conferences; ad hoc advice; organisation of seminars and workshops for DGD staff; organisation and participation in a workshop on Biodiversity in collaboration with the IRSNB; contributions to the Belgian position at Rio +20, to implementing SDGs, to the indicative programme in Mali; revision of the PAREF project in Rwanda, etc.;
- articles published in scientific journals (with peer reviews): these are products that do not directly meet the DGD's requests as part of policy support funding but the content and outcomes of which can support the Belgian cooperation in defining its strategy;
- working papers: these are products which have not necessarily been discussed with the DGD but which form part of the academic work of the researchers from the network, in connection with the topics to be addressed as part of this Acropolis;
- policy briefs produced at the request of the DGD which, during the O\*Platformen, had commented that the working papers were well read by the focal point of the DGD but not (sufficiently) by the other departments at the DGD. These policy briefs, which are intended to be more accessible, aim to fill this dissemination gap.

The budget for this program is €1 million, evenly distributed over three years. It devotes the very clear majority of its resources to staff costs. A detailed account of the implementation of this budget is only planned for the end of the third year but, based on the information available, it can be estimated that up to 66% of the budget has been implemented during the first year<sup>26</sup>.

The beneficiaries of the support provided by this Acropolis are primarily the officials from the D2 point for Department of the DGD and more generally speaking the other officials who have been able to participate in workshops and training or who receive and use policy briefs. Even if for the environmental manager at the BTC, collaboration is still underdeveloped and its usefulness poorly identified, the KLIMOS Acropolis has been meeting part of the BTC's requests more regularly for some time. For instance, it has been contributing since January 2016 to the BTC's Infocycle training courses, by taking on the "climate change and development" module. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the KLIMOS Acropolis is sharing its research outcomes obtained during the DEFI case study at Kisangani with the BTC manager on site. More indirectly, other cooperation or platform stakeholders (Protos, WWF, Bos+ and Educaid) are benefiting from Acropolis' support by participating in its seminars, using its publications or through collaboration in specific projects. The departments of the universities which are members of the KLIMOS Acropolis are also indirect beneficiaries by obtaining more possibilities for publishing, using research results to feed into training course content, guidance for theses and dissertations, etc.

The effects of the KLIMOS Acropolis appear quite clearly at the level of support for preparing the DGD's policy (contribution to strategy notes or international positions as at

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<sup>26</sup> As for the two other Acropolis, the budget for the KLIMOS Acropolis represents a little less than 1% of the total funding granted by the DGD to ARES-CCD and to VLIR-UOS for their respective Northern Actions and a little more than 0.5% of the entire funding from the DGD to these two university platforms for the period 2014-2016.

COP21). For strengthening knowledge, the effects are acknowledged by the officials directly concerned but less identifiable within the DGD staff in general. For other cooperation stakeholders, this knowledge strengthening is also less obvious: support which is still too ad hoc does not allow a true effect even if the initial contacts developed demonstrate a certain demand in this area, particularly expressed by the BTC. With regard to supporting Belgium's international visibility, the effect of this Acropolis appears clearly: the preparation for COP21 and the publications taken up in international forums are concrete examples of this.

**Example case:** *Analysis of the "Governance for Environment & Sustainable Development" sub theme and the subjects connected to it, "Sustainable land use and resilient livelihoods in the landslide-prone region of Mount Elgon, Uganda".*

The results from these studies give a global view on the concept of governance for the environment with a particular emphasis on voluntary sustainability standards. The standards are often considered to be the first signs of a structured environmental legislation. The more specific study of the case in Uganda allows for more accurate data on the effect of these standards on the environment and the well-being of farmers. This is the first study which analyses the effect of the standards both on the environment and on socio-economic development, which results from the synergy of the researchers in this Acropolis, with ULB providing this additional focus on the social and economic aspects connected to the environment which did not have much of a presence in KLIMOS previously.

As for most of the work of this Acropolis, the example case associates virtually all the universities in the consortium, collaborates with local institutions and develops a variety of deliverables. But what is more distinctive is that for this example case, KLIMOS Acropolis collaborated with CEBIOS from the IRSNB and MRAC, which enabled an interesting combination between fundamental research on voluntary standards and its empirical extension in the field. This example case also highlights closer interaction between the DGD and KLIMOS Acropolis: it is possible to work out support proposals for the DGD from more fundamental research outcomes.

### C. Acropolis Aid Effectiveness

The third theme chosen by the DGD for University policy support, Aid Effectiveness with Focus on Fragile Contexts brought together, in part, areas of research which had been tackled previously in two separate research groups: GRAPAX which dealt with supporting peace particularly in vulnerable states and the O\*Platform Aid Architecture, which focused in particular on the effectiveness of the aid. In response to the call for proposals on this theme, three groups of intercommunity research submitted a bid. The universities that had made up the GRAPAX, after having vainly sought to work up a bid with the universities involved in the O\*Platform Aid Architecture, associated with a research group from UGent, which they were used to working with, to formulate their bid, which was finally chosen by the DGD.

Based on the terms of reference from the call for proposals and after discussion with the DGD and submission of the proposal to the diplomats responsible for cooperation in Belgian Embassies located in the areas experiencing vulnerable situations (Burundi, Mali, Niger, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda) during the diplomatic days in June 2014, six research themes have been selected for this Acropolis:

- development and dissemination of knowledge on fragile contexts;
- Analysis and management of risks in fragile countries – case study as part of the Mali-Niger TST;
- research and support on conditionality, including the Belgian experience with "Incentive Tranches";
- research and support on "State building" through decentralisation – how to strengthen local governance;

- support for participation and strengthening of local civil society;
- use of national systems (NEX – National Execution): this focus area initially proposed by the DGD has finally been abandoned by it.

The team for this Acropolis includes a dozen staff, some of which are funded directly by the program: four part-time researchers from UStLouis, ULB, ULG and UGent and one full-time UCL-ULB researcher. The whole of this team of 5 researchers represents 3.2 FTEs. It is supported by a team of six academic staff from these same five universities.

The "Aid effectiveness with focus on fragile contexts" Acropolis has produced four types of publications: i) policy briefs dealing with a specific issue in layman's terms; ii) policy notes which give a short and operational response to a question directly posed by the DGD; iii) internal notes which also respond directly to a question posed by the DGD but for the internal use of the DGD; and iv) working papers dealing more generally with a research issue and intended for cooperation stakeholders and policy makers. Furthermore, the Acropolis has drafted secondary outputs intended for various stakeholders: preparatory notes to the conference on development funding in Addis Ababa, contribution to the notice delivered by the Advisory Council on the consistency of Belgian policies in favour of development in central Africa, analysis of good practice in the context of fragile states, etc.

Apart from these written products, this instrument has provided several other supports to the DGD which have taken various forms: workshop on the issue of fragility at the Cooperation Conference, process of drawing up a preparatory base note for formulating a cooperation programme within a fragility perspective, organisation of an inter-agency workshop organised by Belgium and the European Union in Kinshasa on the theme of better integration of fragility in cooperation policy; development of a risk management tool suitable for Belgium's situation based on analysis of the Mali case; analysis of the use of incentive tranches; preparation and participation in coordination and support meetings of the DGD at INCAF meetings where Belgium currently co-chairs one of the working groups; etc.

As for the previous Acropolis, the budget for this programme is €1 million, evenly distributed over three years. This budget devotes on average 76% of its resources to staff costs, 10% to international travel and 5 % for operational costs<sup>27</sup>. For this Acropolis, which has drawn up an annual financial report for the first year, following the financial reporting procedures applied formerly for the GRAPs, there is an accurate breakdown of actual expenditure which shows that the overall performance rate for the first year was 91%, despite the late start and operational resources clearly less used than planned but compensated for, in part, by investments not initially foreseen<sup>28</sup>.

Overall, the beneficiaries of this Acropolis are mainly members of the DGD, in particular those from departments D0, D1.3 and D2.5. Furthermore, offices in fragile countries or those located in unstable areas (in particular: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mali, Democratic Republic of, Rwanda) have directly benefited from support. The Cooperation Policy Cell

is not a direct beneficiary of this support, even if contacts have been sought. It is more indirectly, through D0, that the Acropolis responds to the needs of the political authorities. Also in a more ad hoc way, some non-governmental development stakeholders have been able to benefit from special support: CNCD 11.11.11, *Médecins du Monde* and RCN in particular.

With regards to the effects of this Acropolis, the evaluation reports that in terms of preparation of the policy, the effects are gradually intensifying with the taking into account of a fragility approach which is better disseminated within the DGD (risk

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<sup>27</sup> With the balance covering administrative and coordination costs.

<sup>28</sup> As for the two other Acropolis, the budget for the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis represents a little less than 1% of the total funding granted by the DGD to ARES-CCD and to VLIR-UOS for their respective Northern Actions and a little more than 0.5% of the entire funding from the DGD to these two university platforms for the period 2014-2016.

management tool, internal notes, geographic concentration on fragile states, etc.), even if some initiatives have only had a partial impact (support for cooperation programmes in Mali, for example). The strengthening the knowledge of the DGD and other cooperation stakeholders is more difficult to identify: there are obviously exchanges of information and even an intensification of these and the contact development reflects a certain degree of demand in this area, particularly expressed by the BTC which has sometimes wished for closer collaboration. However, these exchanges are still too ad hoc and have too little structure to be able to detect true capacity building. It is at the level of support for Belgium's international visibility that the effect of this Acropolis is most obvious and most concrete. The significant participation of the Belgian cooperation in INCAF is the most explicit example of this, but it should also be remembered that the academic contribution to the Kinshasa workshop has strengthened the credibility and reputation of the Belgian contribution to European discussions in this area.

***Example case: the first line of research, "To develop and disseminate knowledge on fragile contexts"***

A piece of empirical work has led to the emergence of the usefulness and relevance of producing a good practices guide for fragile situations. This deliverable has appeared as a principal tool and unifying instrument of research and this knowledge operationalisation focus on contexts of fragility has become central, with all researchers making their contribution to it. This line of focus initially had different forms of support activities (opinions, strategic analysis, work with the embassies, participation in the INCAF), reflecting during this period a dynamic that was more ad hoc than structural. During the second year, the work to mainstream the fragility approach has continued and has strengthened its consistency by concentrating

on two sectors of focus: agriculture and food security on the one hand and health as a marker for operationalisation of the fragility note on the other hand.

This integration/operationalisation of fragility should also translate into integrating of the goods practice disseminated at OECD DAC level into the Belgian framework. The involvement of the team's researchers in the work around this line of focus and the mainstreaming which gave rise to this approach makes this case an example of the type of contribution proposed by this Acropolis and its encompassing dimension. The other work focus areas are often more targeted and specific.

### **3.1.5.2. IMT-ITG**

The policy support activities of the IMT have been supported by the DGD under three framework agreements concluded between the Belgian Cooperation Administration and the Institute since 1998. The third framework agreement covering the period 2008-2013, entitled "Switching the Poles", has the overall aim of strengthening health care systems and policies as well as their ownership within developing countries in order to improve the state of health of the populations and to contribute to reducing poverty and inequality. This third framework agreement, initially scheduled for the period 2008-2013, and then distributed into multiannual schedules of three years, has, following reforms initiated by the DGD in 2012, been extended for a period of three years and therefore with an additional multiannual schedule of three years (2014-2016). The penultimate of the five components of these multi-annual schedules: "the Belgium Programme: support for cooperation in terms of Belgian and international health" includes both the elements connected to policy support as well as the involvement of the IMT in the network of stakeholders in terms of health and, finally, education and awareness-raising activities regarding development. Through the second three-year programme of 2011-2013, two important changes have been made to the programme. First of all, the outcome relating to research in policy support has been merged with that relating to policy support to become "Research on health and representation policies". Then, from 2010, the pilot initiative to provide staff from IMT within the DGD was initiated, at the request of the

DGD, in view of ongoing technical support connected both to the "Belgian presidency of the EU" and to the preparation for the meeting of the United Nations on MDs in New York (September 2010). An expert from the IMT is also involved part-time in the activities of DGD in Brussels, with a particular emphasis on international health policies. This new type of collaboration was positively evaluated in 2011 and included in the new three-year plan (2014-2016).

The human resources devoted to the implementation of policy support activities revolve around two focal points within the IMT, incorporated into the Public Health Directorate. These focal points are responsible for the relationship with the DGD and more specifically with department D2.3. One focal point particularly deals with policy support and the second with coordination with the various platforms. Since the secondment mechanism has been put in place, the person allocated part-time – who is fully part of the IMT's staff – has been appointed as being the policy support focal point, which has further strengthened contacts and exchanges, allowing a better identification of needs and the responses made by the IMT to requests from the DGD. Furthermore, several members of staff have been mobilised, full- or part-time, within the Public Health Directorate. Over the period 2011-2013, 30 members of staff were dedicated as a priority to policy support issues and, for the period 2012-2014, around 10 members of staff representing 6.25 FTEs were supported by this component.

As part of these policy support activities, there are three main types of deliverables:

- Firstly, this is about providing responses, information and input to technical and policy issues related to international health on the part of decision makers and the DGD. The response to this type of request takes very different forms, like for example i) the organisation of seminars bringing together the various stakeholders; ii) notes, policy notes, technical notes, concept notes, etc. which can take the form of an in-depth analysis of a specific topic, as was the case for trypanosomiasis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; iii) analysis notes relating to strategy documents or multilateral organisation plans; iv) concept notes with a view to drawing up policy notes; and v) evaluations of health programmes proposed by NGOs, etc.
- Secondly, the DGD may ask the IMT to carry out a research project on a specific scientific issue. This applies to the evaluation of the contribution of the Belgian cooperation in terms of sexual and reproductive health in the programmes that it supports.
- The third type of outcome consists of providing scientific support to Belgian representations in international bodies, as is the case, for example, with meetings of the Policy and Coordination Committee of the WHO or by participating on the Board of the Global Fund.

A quick reading of the budgets allocated to policy support shows a constant and significant increase in this programme, between each three-year programme. The current programme represents 226% of the 2008-2010 programme. We should note, however, that it is not possible to compare the 2008 to 2013 budgets with the 2014-2016 budgets in a relevant way. Indeed, during the preceding three-year schedules, policy support activities were part of the same program as platform support activities (Be-Cause Health, Be.troplive & Pharmacie) as well as awareness-raising and seminar holding activities, whereas for the 2014-2016 programme, policy support activities are clearly identified, separately, in the budgets. However, there was a constant increase in policy support budgets which essentially consists of staff costs at more than 90% on average.

Compared to the IMT's overall three-year programme of 2014-2016, i.e. €48 million, the share of policy support represents just 2.5%. This share was 1.4% for the 2008-2010 programme and 2.5% for the years 2011-2013.

Within the DGD, the initial beneficiaries of support from the IMT are the health team within D2.3, in particular, but not only, through the presence of the seconded staff from the IMT in this department. Nevertheless, all departments, and more specifically D3 also benefit from IMT support, as well as its offices, in particular as part of preparation for

cooperation programmes. The Policy Cell of the Cooperation Minister is also a beneficiary of IMT support, particularly as part of preparing for international meetings. Beyond this support targeting the DGD, we would also emphasise the impact on all Belgian stakeholders through the Be-Cause Health platform as well as support to international bodies (WHO, Global Fund) and to partners in the South.

Through its policy support activities, the IMT is responding consistently to the 4 objectives generally assigned to this type of support. It is thus contributing to the preparation of policy and strategy in the health sector by providing support both to the Minister's Policy Cell and to the administration (D2.3) and to diplomats in embassies. This support simultaneously concerns responses or technical analyses on request, drawing up notes or a significant participation in strategy development. With regard to strengthening the knowledge of the DGD, activities focus mainly on specific training aimed at the administration, briefings (which also concerns the Policy Cell), seminars and knowledge-transfer workshops. We should also emphasise the strengthening of the capacities of other cooperation stakeholders, mainly through the Be-Cause Health platform. Finally, the implementation activities have also allowed substantial contributions to the international debate, whether this is in the preparation and participation in international conferences or in the involvement of the IMT in the political and technical dialogue with international institutions such as WHO or the Global Fund

**Example case:** *IMT support as part of the evaluation of the policy note from the DGD of 2008, "The right to health and health care", and in the preparation of the new policy note.*

At the request of the DGD, the IMT carried out the evaluation of the relevance and the impact of this policy note based on a methodology enabling a public policy to be assessed by involving health stakeholders. The recommendations from this evaluation have been taken into account by the DGD during the launch of the process to draw up the new policy note which is overseen by the DGD through the Be-Cause Health platform. The involvement of the IMT is still important here, both since the IMT has taken on the platform's secretariat on the one hand, and is a very active member of it on the other hand.

Within this process, the IMT's contributions are deployed both upstream of the preparation of the note and in the development of some of the technical modules. This case study is an example of the intervention procedures and activities of the IMT in terms of policy support, mobilising numerous human resources of the IMT, at least 6 experts in this case, but also external experts and Belgian health stakeholders. Furthermore, this is not just a case of producing notes and documents, but of putting in place participate or iterative processes for the preparation, approval and dissemination for these products.

### **3.1.5.3. IRSNB – KBIN**

All of the agreements signed between the Belgian Cooperation Administration and the IRSNB, as well as activities implemented as a result of this, are above all focused on a single theme, namely Biodiversity, as part of the international undertakings made by Belgium in this field, in relation to the Rio Convention on Biodiversity of 1992 (CBD) and the setting up of its secretariat in Montréal (SBCD).

Furthermore, these partnerships of the Administration with the IRSNB are also developing as part of the national Belgian strategy for biodiversity 2006-2016, whose 11<sup>th</sup> objective consists of "*Ensuring continued and effective international cooperation for the protection of biodiversity*", as well as in relation to the federal plan for the integration of biodiversity (2009-2013) in key sectors at federal level.

Based on two initial specific agreements signed for five years with the DGD (in 2003 and 2008), the IRSNB received funding to develop two 5-year programmes from 2003 to 2013, particularly to provide its national focal points functions and those representing

Belgium in the various bodies and mechanisms for implementing international agreements in terms of biodiversity (CGTI and CHM in particular). In these programmes, a specific sub-theme with a dedicated budget was devoted to scientific support to policies in the field of biodiversity. Based on a self-evaluation of the second five-year programme, in 2012, the IRSNB and the DGD began as early as 2013 to make approaches to prepare for a third multiannual programme. Parallel to this preparation, a Protocol was concluded between the Development Cooperation and Scientific Policy Ministers, laying down the terms for collaboration and support of federal scientific institutions for the benefit of Development Cooperation. This protocol came into force in 2014 with regard to the IRSNB. Its article 3 specifically provides for "*policy support through the provision of scientific services to the Minister of Development Cooperation and to the DGD or at the request of partner countries*". The third multiannual programme (2014-2018), currently being implemented, therefore has this inter-ministerial collaboration protocol as its legal basis. The fourth specific objective of this programme is specifically dedicated to policy support and department D2.4 of the DGD is a privileged partner of these mainstreaming and support activities, particularly in terms of dissemination of information to the other stakeholders involved in Belgian development cooperation. Two outcomes are expected from these support activities: i) To build and strengthen the expertise of Belgian Development Cooperation in terms of biodiversity; and ii) To incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem services in the activities supported by Belgian Development Corporation.

When reading this programme, it is possible to identify very precise deliverables expected by the Belgian cooperation:

- An offer of trainings aimed at the BTC, NGOs, the DGD and diplomats responsible for cooperation in Belgian embassies as well as manuals for these training courses;
- Publication of a brochure on biodiversity for diplomats responsible for cooperation in Belgian embassies;
- Support for the incorporation of issues connected with biodiversity in the PICs;
- Advice on the implementation of activities related to biodiversity in partner countries and support for projects currently being implemented;
- Participation in the preparation of "mixed committees" on bilateral cooperation;
- Support for following up multilateral agreements;
- Support for the processes of the CBD on themes relating to development cooperation;
- Support for the decision-making and position definition processes in international bodies (UN, EU, OECD, etc.);
- Identification of the resource people, institutions and organisations who are working in the field of biodiversity.

The multiannual programme is therefore implemented by a specific program unit, called CEBioS, "Capacities for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development", which depends on the "Natural Environment" Operational Division of the IRSNB. CEBioS is coordinated and managed by a coordinator with 3 administrative support staff and five scientists, including the CHM and GTI focal points. Furthermore, the program supports a certain number of months of salary of 1 to 2 scientists specialising in marine mathematical models. The team therefore has around 10 people supported by the CEBioS program, representing on average 7 FTEs. This original configuration, with the constitution of a program and specific resources dedicated to the Funding Agreement, enables its specific features to be preserved within the IRSNB, namely capacity strengthening in the south and policy support, while allowing real institutional and operational anchoring within the Institute.

When reading the budget for this programme, one realises that there is a great stability of the resources devoted specifically to policy support which revolve around €50-€60,000 annually, mainly dedicated to staff costs (65% on average over the last three years). It is important to note that a large part of the policy support resources is also included in the support of the GTI and CHM focal points.

Compared to the overall funding of the IRSNB received from the DGD, policy support represented 5.7% in 2014 and a little more than 6% in 2015 and 2016, with a slight ongoing increase.

The specific feature of the IRSNB program is to target the beneficiaries of policy support, both within the DGD and in the Belgian federal institutions responsible for environmental policies with, in addition, significant support to international bodies in the field of biodiversity. Within the DGD, the initial beneficiaries of support from the IRSNB are the environmental team within D2.4. Nevertheless, other departments, and more specifically certain offices where the involvement of the IRSNB is significant for southern programmes (PIC and IRSNB programmes in: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Benin, Vietnam, Rwanda or Burundi for example), also benefit from this support. The impacts on or support to other Belgian stakeholders seem less important, particularly with regard to the BTC. With regard to non-governmental stakeholders, we would emphasise the involvement of the IRSNB in drawing up joint country strategies, through support for mainstreaming aspects related to biodiversity.

Generally speaking, the effect of the IRSNB's policy support activities largely meets the four objectives allocated to these programmes since it contributes simultaneously to the preparation of the policy in the field of biodiversity, to strengthening the knowledge of the DGD and the other stakeholders (essentially at federal minister level), particularly because of its role as a focal point, and, finally, through substantial contributions to the international debate. We would nevertheless emphasise that the effect on non-governmental stakeholders does not yet display the same intensity.

**Example case:** *policy support activities in connection with the IRSNB's focal point role in the "Clearing House Mechanism".*

This support, even if it is only focused on the DGD, has significant national and international scope, involving among others support to the Environmental FPS or to BELSPO at Belgian level and, especially, support to the Secretariat of the CBD and to the SBSTTA, as well as to the European Commission.

Apart from specific support to partners from the south, the IRSNB has designed a specific electronic platform and a website template to manage and make national information relating to biodiversity accessible and to provide follow-up to national strategies, tools used by more than 50 European and southern countries. The CHM focal point also facilitates preparation meetings for COP at Belgian level and participates or represents Belgium at international meetings for the

aspects relating to capacity strengthening of partners in the South. Moreover, as part of the European coordination, the CHM focal point of the IRSNB is acknowledged to be the "lead expert" for Europe, in charge of proposing the European Union's joint positions.

This case is very representative of the multiplier effects related to the involvement of the IRSNB and which makes Belgium's position essential in the preparation and decision process related to follow-up of the CBD in terms of technical and scientific cooperation with the countries of the South. Finally, on average, policy support activities in connection with the role of the focal points represent between 65 and 80% of the IRSNB's policy support expenditure.

### **3.1.5.4. MRAC – KMMA**

In 1998, a "Specific agreement regarding the funding of the MRAC's development cooperation activities" enabled the Museum to be recognised as an indirect stakeholder of the Belgian cooperation and made the Cooperation Administration one of its sources of structural funding. In 2007, this specific agreement was replaced by a "Cooperation protocol concerning the funding of actions in the field of development cooperation of the

Royal Museum of Central Africa", which is still being applied today<sup>29</sup>. The provisions of the protocol are then included, developed and embodied in an "Overall programme for 2008-2012 for MRAC-DGCD Cooperation", then renewed by a new five-year programme of activities (2014-2018) which constitutes the framework for the MRAC's activities in terms of development cooperation. Amongst the Northern activities of this program, the N3 line of focus aims to provide answers to the questions posed by third parties (policy decision-makers, authorities and/or other stakeholders in development cooperation) about a specific issue in development (or its approach) concerning sub-Saharan Africa. Insofar that there is no explicit request on the part of the DGD<sup>30</sup>, it is on the proposal of the MRAC that the activities of this support programme are embodied in the form of study projects: Xyladate<sup>31</sup> in 2014-2015 and GFORCO<sup>32</sup> and 3TG<sup>33</sup> in 2016.

The team of researchers involved in policy support is made up of a developer and a managing researcher for the Xyladate project, and one researcher for the 3TG project. In addition, taking into account the cross-disciplinary interaction of projects within the MRAC, other researchers can collaborate in project activities, as well as postgraduates from Congolese universities. This team of researchers can also count on the support of the coordinator from the Development Cooperation Support Department of the MRAC.

The deliverables for this policy support instrument are diverse in nature. There are three types of products:

- scientific contribution to documents guiding the use of forest resources;
- support of the Belgian team at the CITES<sup>34</sup> and Belgium's representation as part of international meetings;
- contribution to the publication of several scientific articles.

The part of the multi-annual programme budget devoted to focus area N3, policy support to the MRAC's programme, amounts to €260,975 distributed very equally over the three years in the period 2014-2016. For the Xyladate project (2014-2015), 75% of this budget is devoted to staff costs; 8% for on-the-ground assignment costs; and 16% for the costs of the Congolese partners. Furthermore, it can be specified that all of the support research activities (N3) annually represent some 11 to 12% of the total volume of Northern activities of the MRAC.

Insofar as there is no formalisation of the request on the part of the DGD, the beneficiaries of policy support from the MRAC are to be found, beyond development cooperation strictly speaking, among the stakeholders directly concerned by the problems addressed. The beneficiaries have mainly been the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (including the CITES team of the Democratic Republic of the Congo), the Belgian CITES team and the European CITES team. It is also important to stress that the DGD has indirectly benefited from the products of the MRAC, but these concerned a project initiated since 2008 as part of southern activities (28 monograph studies to support decentralisation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo)

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<sup>29</sup> This protocol remains valid as a transitional measure until the date of the end of the current multiannual programme (until 2018). From this date, the "Collaboration protocol relating to development cooperation activities as part of sustainable development and the fight against poverty" enters into force, signed between the Minister of Public Enterprises and of Development Cooperation, responsible for large cities and the Secretary of State for Science Policy 2014-2024, a protocol which also concerns the IRSNB, see section 3.1.5.3 above.

<sup>30</sup> Through the terms of its programme, the MRAC must not respond to specific request from the DGD. It therefore will work in the following manner: it launches "calls for projects" with its researchers to identify the relevant themes to be selected. The themes identified based on this call for projects are then submitted for the approval of the DGD.

<sup>31</sup> Underpinning forest policy and management through research on resilience of semideciduous rainforest of the Congo Basin.

<sup>32</sup> Integrated forest management and reasonable international trade of tropical wood: support for conservation of the multi-used role of Afromorsia settlements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<sup>33</sup> Study concerning the geological context of the mineralisation of critical metals in order to assess the potential of these natural resources in the Great Lakes region.

<sup>34</sup> Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora Belgium signed the Convention in October 1983 and it entered into force in January 1984.

which do not formally come under the policy support instrument, despite its real relevance.

In terms of effect, the support of the MRAC makes a very clear contribution to providing a contribution in the international debate, particularly under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna Threatened with Extinction. With the Xyladate project, the MRAC has inaugurated a new methodological approach by providing a scientific basis to the political mechanisms for regulating trade in threatened species of plants and animals. This instrument has also, but to a lesser extent, had an effect on the preparation of the new policy within the DGD, as is shown by the participation of the developer of the Xyladate project in meetings with a view to the preparation of the DGD's Environmental Strategic Note. Conversely, knowledge strengthening, both of the DGD and the other cooperation stakeholders, does not seem to be met by this policy support.

**Example case:** *research project: "Underpinning Forest Policy and Management Through Research on Resilience of Semi-deciduous Rainforests of the Congo Basin" (Xyladate)*

The Xyladate project aims to characterise the historical and archaeological growth conditions, describe the current population in order to define reasonable management directives with a view to perpetuating forest stands of the species, particularly and potentially the other large heliophilous trees used.

Several field missions have been conducted in order to collect data: anthraco-archaeological excavations, the collection of samples and packaging, training of technical personnel. Then, an inventory of the populations of *P. elata* has been completed.

With the XYLADATE project, MRAC has inaugurated a new methodological approach in

providing a scientific basis for the political mechanisms for regulating trade of species of threatened plants and animals. The non-detriment finding of *P. elata* is a benchmark for policy stakeholders, both at European Union level and member country level. It is also a regulation instrument for Belgium, one of the largest exporters of *P. elata* in Europe.

This project is an example of the research conducted by the MRAC in policy support: it combines several museum researchers, works in collaboration with international and Congolese institutions, and involves Congolese researchers.

### **3.1.5.5. ECDPM**

If the collaboration between ECPDM and the Belgian cooperation dates back more than 20 years, the current contractual framework dates back to 2005, with the signature at that time of three-year collaboration agreements governing Belgium's participation in the "core fund" of this Think and Do Tank. It is overall within the context of this three-year agreement, through the contribution to the general budget of the Centre, that the Belgian Development Cooperation can benefit from the support of the ECDPM, a limited part of this budget being more specifically dedicated to meet the specific requests of the Belgian government in terms of policy support.

This support should allow responses to ad hoc requests for information or training on the part of the officials responsible for defining the Belgian position in European or international bodies on questions relating to development policies (particularly community) and to the Partnership Agreement and the general relations between ACPs and the EU. This support can take the form of formal (regular transmission of information and equipment, training courses, policy briefs, etc.) or informal exchanges. ECDPM also undertakes the invitation of representatives from the Foreign Affairs, Development Corporation and External Trade FPS when any activity is organised by the Centre which is of interest for the Belgian development cooperation.

Given the nature of ECDPM and its relationship with Belgium, it is difficult to cite and list all the researchers concerned by this support mechanism. Depending on subjects, skills and availabilities, these are various experts from ECDPM who have participated directly or indirectly in the implementation of outputs providing targeted responses to DGD requests. By way of an example, about 10 researchers can be identified at least to have contributed to the "*Cohérence des Politiques pour le Développement*" (Policy Coherence for Development) (CPD).

The deliverables for policy support take very varied and ad hoc forms depending on the requests formulated: drafting of policy notes, policy briefs, working papers, reports, discussion papers; preparation, organisation or participation in seminars; organisation of training courses for DGD officials; more specific applied research on a specific question; participation in working groups. In addition, ECDPM disseminates its publications regularly and widely. For example, more than 160 people from the DGD, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the BTC and Belgian embassies receive the weekly newsletter, e-alerts, blog, social media follow-up and other ECDPM electronic outputs. It also sends out hard copies of a certain number of its publications to persons concerned by certain specific topics. Finally, this support also consists of an informal and constant stream of communications between the DGD and the Centre.

For the current three-yearly programme, the overall contribution of Belgium to the general budget of the Centre amounts to €900,000, co-funded with other European funders<sup>35</sup>. This co-funding thus allows Belgium to have and use the general analysis work output by ECDPM globally. The funding, directly reserved for specific support in the form of drawing rights which allow responses to more specific requests from Belgian officials, represents in this overall budget the equivalent of 40 working days, essentially covering staff costs, i.e. in total for the last three-year plan, some 11.7% of the total Belgian contribution to the ECDPM.

The beneficiaries of ECDPM support are essentially officials from all of the DGD's departments as well as other officials from the Foreign Affairs FPS, the Permanent Representation for Belgium at the EU and the Policy Cell of the Minister of Cooperation. This policy support, built on the basis of a request and a very specific relationship between the Centre and the Cooperation Ministry, has caused a more targeted focus on the internal beneficiaries at the Foreign Affairs and Cooperation FPS.

The effect of this ECDPM support is quite uneven in relation to the four objectives generally assigned to policy support. The support contributes very clearly and very noticeably to preparing the new policy within the DGD in the areas relating to European cooperation, the EU-ACP relationship, the EU-Africa relationship, to multi-stakeholder partnerships and to economic partnership agreements. The essential part of the DGD's request is capacity building at the DGD (at its headquarters above all but also for certain offices, such as South Africa). The knowledge strengthening of Belgian development cooperation stakeholders is much less explicitly present under this support. Indirectly and in a very informal manner, the support supplied by the ECDPM has nevertheless had effects on these stakeholders: dissemination of outputs, participation in debates, etc. The contribution to Belgium's visibility at an international level however, is well-known. Support supplied to the DGD and to the Foreign Affairs FPS in terms of analyses, pitches and proposals enables Belgium to operate at a significant level in the European debate.

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<sup>35</sup> Austria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland also contribute to the ECDPM's core budget.

**Example case:** Support for the Belgian government when defining its "Coherence of policies for development" policy.

The importance of the Coherence of Policies for Development (CPD) has been underlined by the Maastricht Treaty and is part of the European "3Cs" approach (complementarity, coordination and coherence). This is to ensure that "the community's development policy objectives are taken into account in the design and implementation of other policies having an impact on developing countries".

Having published a report in 2007 on the measures of the CPD put in place in various EU countries and on the research produced on the coherence or incoherence of policies and continuing its research on this subject, ECDPM has become a key player in the debate, particularly within the OECD.

Based on this evaluation, a gradual harmonisation of points of view and approaches on the CPD is currently being put in place amongst the partner countries of the ECDPM, particularly through a "triangle" guaranteeing the effectiveness of

The CPD system, namely: i) the statements of political intent for the promotion and implementation of the CPD; ii) the institutional and administrative coordination mechanisms for implementing the CPD and iii) research and monitoring abilities.

The partnership between Belgium and ECDPM has consolidated since 2011 in this area, giving rise to a set of presentations on the conceptual definition of the CPD; training courses on this notion of CPD and its application, aimed at DGD officials and officials from other departments of the Foreign Affairs FPS; seminars, etc.

This case is an example of ECDPM support: it combines research, the drafting of notes and reports as well as the training of officials on the subject. This is all done according to a specific procedure: based on analyses and results acquired by the funding of its core budget, ECDPM can provide specific support to Belgian officials, under drawing rights.

### 3.1.5.6. *Secondment and provision*

The first use of the "secondment" tool appeared in 2010: DGD made a request to the IMT with the aim to receive additional and more permanent support as part of the involvement of the DGD in policy preparation, at the time of the Belgian Presidency of the European Union on the one hand and preparing for the United Nation meeting on MDGs on the other hand. An IMT official was thus seconded to D0.1 first during a six-month pilot phase which was positively evaluated and continuously renewed up till now. The IMT had chosen a less academic profile to fulfil this function: he/she was essentially in charge of providing a relay function, by properly collecting the questions raised by the DGD and by adequately relaying them to the ITM scientists specialized in the subject. Subsequently, the DGD reported that there was a decline in technical in-house expertise in other sectors (agriculture, education, etc.) and identified strengthening needs in these sectors. From 2014, the DGD undertook negotiations with VLIR-UOS/ARES-CCD in order to consider the possibility of secondment of staff from universities to the DGD. It drew up specific terms of reference which were submitted to VLIR-UOS for the agricultural and food safety sector on the one hand, and to ARES-CCD for the education sector on the other hand. VLIR-UOS and ARES-CCD each launched a call for applications in their respective university communities. This process of seconding staff from universities has not, in contrast to what has been done with the IMT, been explicitly incorporated into the Northern Actions program formalised in the specific agreements of the ARES-CCD and the VLIR-UOS, as these agreements were not subject to revision at the time the secondments were sought.

The description of the expected content of this support from secondments, whether in exchanges of mail for the IMT or in the TOR for the universities, remains relatively vague and enables support to be adapted according to needs and the profile of the persons selected: *"to provide support in international health policy analysis; provide a contribution of expertise to the process of drawing up an international policy on*

*education or agriculture and food safety; to facilitate the link between the scientific expertise and the DGD; etc."*

As the university's secondments have been recent, the deliverables are still few: we can mention the preparation and/or revision of strategic notes, participation in working and discussion groups, the proposal of training content on "ICT for development", participation in an international organisation meeting, the Global Partnership for Education. Regarding the person seconded by the IMT, the support dates back longer and is more significant: output of notes and notices, contribution to discussions, advice and training. For the three secondments, the continuous part-time presence within the administration promotes an ongoing exchange which gives rise to a practically permanent and ongoing collaboration which is clearly distinguishable from other policy support mechanisms for which the expected deliverables are sometimes more delimited and defined.

The maximum budget for funding a seconded person from the universities is fixed at €75,000 for the period of the assignment at the DGD (August 2015-December 2016), at the rate of 2 to 3 days of service provision per week. These two university secondments therefore represent a little more than 4% of the total funding granted annually by the DGD to ARES-CCD and to VLIR-UOS for their respective Northern Actions and 0.2% of all of the funding granted annually by the DGD to these two university platforms<sup>36</sup>. The IMT's secondment budget is included in the Institute's support activity budget.

Within the DGD, the first beneficiaries of seconded person support are within the D2 department and more particularly in the departments where the secondments are allocated (D2.2 and D2.3). For the moment, the output from the secondments is essentially used within these departments. It can very rarely be said that there are other direct beneficiaries of this program. It is possible to speak of future indirect beneficiaries insofar as policy notes, when they are available, may have a wider impact from which the entire "international cooperation community in Belgium" may benefit. The current secondment also has some benefits within the institution that is sending the person provided to the DGD: access to new or wider information networks; contacts with the administration; scientific or visibility benefits; etc.

In terms of effects, the support of the secondments certainly contributes both to the preparation of policies by constituting strategic notes and to the participation and support of Belgium and the DGD at international meetings. This instrument also contributes, in a way other than the Acropolis do for example, in strengthening the DGD's knowledge: a seconded person is part of the administration, receives more direct information, and can generally establish a stronger relationship of trust. His/her contribution can therefore have more impact on DGD staff through the regularity of its presence. By contrast, only a little knowledge strengthening of the other cooperation stakeholders is obtained through the secondments (a few contacts and exchanges of information and/or deliverables via the platforms).

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<sup>36</sup> As the secondments are an additional request which is not provided for on the part of the DGD, budgeting for them has not been explicitly envisaged in the Northern Action programmes. For VLIR-UOS in particular, this additional expenditure in a programme which is already entirely allocated to other actions has been a problem.

**Example case: the process which will lead to the scholarships strategy note<sup>37</sup>**

The call for secondment concerned a request for general support for the education sector. The drafting of a strategy note on scholarships was not part (explicitly) of the initial terms of reference for this secondment. Nevertheless, from the first day of presence at the DGD, this request to work on this document was explicitly formulated.

In order to successfully carry out her assignment, the researcher received, amongst others, an initial document entitled: "Research Study and Development of a Policy Note for a Future Oriented Scholarships Policy in the Belgian Cooperation. Research provided under the Policy Support Modality at the Institute for Tropical Medicine". Based on this first input, she started a desk study and conducted interviews and working meetings with various departments at the DGD, BTC, VLIR-UOS, ARES-CCD and museums. But she had no contact with the Minister's Policy Cell, nor specifically with VVOB and APEFE on this subject. She produced a first draft which was discussed and was subject to ongoing

feedback with her colleagues from department D2.3.

By being able to use the contribution of a seconded researcher to draw up the scholarship strategy note, the DGD wished to introduce an academic approach in the drawing up of this document. In addition, the DGD wished to have a more external point of view in the formulation of this document, which in itself may raise an issue, as the researcher came from an institution benefiting from these scholarships.

This example case highlights a more overall and general intervention by the secondment as part of drawing up a reference document of the administration, while other secondment interventions are often more specific: give an opinion, respond to questions, formulate ad hoc proposals. In addition, this example case also illustrates the questioning about the risk of substitution caused by secondments: to what extent is the drafting of a strategy note not a main task of an official?

<sup>37</sup> We would emphasise that the expected deliverable is not yet finalised.

### 3.1.5.7. Summary profile of the eight instruments

	Length of service	Actual duration of the programme	Legal framework	Determining content	Team	Financial volume	Beneficiaries
BeFind Acropolis	1989	2014-2016	Northern Actions 2002 specific agreement	Selection based on a call for proposals	Some 30 members of staff including 14 researchers, funded part-time	€1,000,000/3 years	<b>D2.2, DGD, Ambabel Office (RWA), BTC (Benin)</b> , Policy Cell of the Minister, other diplomatic posts, BTC, international institutions, researchers
KLIMOS Acropolis	1989	2014-2016			Some 30 members of staff including 2.9 FTE researchers funded	€1,000,000/3 years	<b>D2.4, DGD</b> , Belgian cooperation stakeholders, BTC, universities involved
Aid Effectiveness Acropolis	1989	2014-2016			Some 10 members of staff including 3.2 FTE researchers funded	€1,000,000/3 years	<b>D0, D2.5, D1.3, Ambabel Office (BKF, BUR, MAL, DRC, RWA)</b> , DGD, Policy Cell, BTC, NGO
IMT	1998	2014-2016	Framework Agreement 2008-2016	Specific objective of a multiannual programme	2 focal points + the whole team from the framework agreement	€1,619,644/3 years	<b>D2.3, D3, DGD, Ambabel Office, Policy Cell, Belgian stakeholders through Be-Cause Health</b> , international institutions and southern partners
ISRN	2003	2014-2018	Collaboration protocol with Belspo 2014-2023	Specific objective of a multiannual programme	CEBioS team + IRSNB researchers	€210,000/3 years + resources from southern project	<b>D2.4, DGD, Ambabel Office (DRC, RWA, BEN, BUR, VIET), Belgian government (Environmental FPS)</b> , NGO (biodiversity mainstreaming)
MRAC	1998	2007-2018		Specific objective of a multiannual programme	3 researchers + MRAC members +3 Congolese postgraduates	€260,975/3 years	<b>DRC government, CITES teams, DGD</b>
ECDPM	1992	2015-2017	General agreement 2015-2017	Overall centre program and drawing right to respond to specific questions	ECDPM researchers depending on the subject (10 for CPD)	€105,000/3 years in core fund of €900,000	<b>DGD, FPS AE,</b>
Secondment	2010	2014-2016 (IMT)	Framework Agreement 2008-2016	Specific objective of a multiannual programme	3 part-time secondments	IMT: in IMT budget Univ.: €75,000/secondment	<b>D2.2, D2.3 University secondment department</b>
		2015-16 (University)	Northern Actions 2002 specific agreement	Selection based on terms of reference			

Table 1 Summary of the main characteristics of the eight instruments



## 3.2. Analysis by criteria

### 3.2.1. Relevance

The evaluation of relevance is based both on the study of needs and on the responses provided in order to meet them, based on an appropriate identification and offering a comparative advantage.

#### ***3.2.1.1. Research and long-term support impact political choices and strategic directions***

This type of support responds essentially to the needs of the DGD at strategy development level and developing assistance in decision-making as part of operational choices, through the production of tools and advice. This is the case, for example, of support in identifying partner countries, the drawing up of strategy notes, support in developing PICs or in support for Belgium's position in international meetings, all aimed at meeting explicit needs of the DGD. These types of long-term support produce and provide the DGD with tools and benchmark skills (e.g. Acropolis, ECDPM, IMT, IRSNB) from which the DGD will be able to draw according to needs.

However, a distinction should be made between "policy choices", which rather fall within the ministerial level and the Policy Cell on the one hand and, on the other hand, "strategy directions", which rather fall within the level of the administration and which are the subject of proven support. Thus, for example, the decision to move from 18 to 14 partner countries is more of a "policy choice", yet the policy support instrument has been little used in this context. By contrast, its use is important in developing "strategy directions", such as the special focus which will be placed on fragile states from the 14 selected countries, when applying this geographic concentration. In this latter case, use of policy support has been implemented and proven. We would emphasise, furthermore, that few explicit requests have emanated from the Minister or the Policy Cell, except in the preparation for the European presidencies or as part of some international meetings (MDG's, COP, etc.) where support from the IMT, ECDPM, IRSNB or some Acropolis could then be mobilised at a more political level.

Generally speaking, the lack of a specific planning and request follow-up mechanism on the part of the DGD is reflected in the match of supply and demand and weakens the relevance of the policy support instrument. In this regard, the current evolution found in the strengthening of the consultative committees, including moments of exchange on priorities and the programming of needs and support, responds in part to this concern and reinforces the relevance of the request.

It is also important to note that this long-term support can also lead to long term research, therefore becoming a force leading to more fundamental shifts in development cooperation. However, the requests may "fluctuate" during the research period which requires some flexibility on the part of stakeholders; a flexibility which is not always internalised by some researchers.

In contrast, none of these instruments directly responds to explicit forms of support benefiting the BTC, which has little presence within this mechanism, relying essentially on its internal expertise, even if it has established relationships with most of the stakeholders of this policy support programme. The BTC is also not invited, as part of these tools, to formulate needs explicitly.

#### ***3.2.1.2. The administrative, institutional and policy mechanisms and changes in these within the Ministry influence the directions of policy support programmes***

Within the specific context with which we are dealing, the quality and clarity of the request depend on the internal expertise within the DGD, which must be capable of

formulating needs adequately, but also on the institutional position of the focal point, as well as the conduct of consultative or steering committees and their involvement in identifying the request.

Administrative and institutional reforms and changes may therefore have a direct impact on the directions given to this support. We would, however, emphasise that changes in policy direction at ministerial level and in the Policy Cell have, without doubt, less impact on these mechanisms, given the limited direct involvement of this level of decision-making on these. By contrast, reforms within the administration have a clear impact on the nature of the activities and on relationships with the policy support mechanisms, as is shown by the following examples:

- The limitation on recruitment in the administration has led it to look for other types of support, in the form of secondments amongst others.
- The SCAs have promoted contacts between policy support and cooperation stakeholders (opinion expressed by the CNCD, 11.11.11, Aid Effectiveness Acropolis, the IMT and the IRSNB).

Administrative changes may also have an influence on the ability of the DGD to formulate a structured and coordinated request, and on the dissemination of the outcomes. Therefore, support on the part of the focal point is variable depending on the person appointed, their position in the administration, on the share of time available to carry out this task in their overall workload, all the more so because there is no reference text on the responsibility and remit of focal points.

Finally, the reforms envisaged around the creation of the BDA are not yet clear enough to be able to identify with all desired precision what their influence might be on this programme. Nevertheless, if the beneficiary of the support becomes the future BDA (formerly BTC), we would draw attention to the fact that on the one hand, it already has internal expertise which has been strengthened in recent years, and on the other hand is obliged to use public procurement contracts, which may limit its intention and ability to pursue partnerships of this type. These elements should be taken into account in prospective discussions on policy support. Furthermore, the note from the Minister to the Council of Ministers on reforming the BTC towards the BDA does not mention policy support programmes, although the potential competition between "centres of knowledge" of the future BDA and the DGD is addressed. Virtually nothing is found on collaboration between the future agency and the various institutional actors who are developing these support programmes, collaborations which do, however, exist, even if they do not sit necessarily and explicitly within their policy support activities. A reform of this type took place in France from 2007, where the *Agence Française de Développement* [French Development Agency] had a remit comparable to that which the future BDA may have. In this context, the AFD has relied on its internal expertise which it has further strengthened, without using the support mechanisms put in place by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>38</sup>.

### ***3.2.1.3. The gradual loss of expertise and experience within the DGD (reforms, ever more significant withdrawal from operational matters) could have an effect on the identification of needs, the relevance of requests and the relevance of support***

Both the various reforms within the DGD and significant budgetary restrictions have resulted in a gradual loss of expertise and experience which could translate into a lack of ability to formulate relevant support requests, which could weaken the relevance and impact of the support. There is almost universal agreement to confirm that this ability to express requests and adopt support by the DGD is essential. In effect, it is up to the DGD to convert this support into a strategy or cooperation action. Because, in principle, it is the administration which is responsible for preparing the strategic directions to be

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix E for a description of policy support in the case of France.

taken for the Minister's Policy Cells, as institutional actors are only supporting this administration. The growing use of the secondment tool on the one hand, or the presence of researchers without a representative from the DGD at some international meetings are symptomatic of this risk. We would, however, underline that all of the people interviewed believed that this risk is still potential and not proven, although it should be taken into account, both as part of the reform of non-governmental stakeholders and in the probable BDA reform.

#### **3.2.1.4. *The DGD does not or hardly links policy support with other types of interventions or programmes***

The lack of overall strategy and vision in terms of policy support within the DGD has meant that these are relatively fragmented and compartmentalised tools, coming under a specific department and a particular focal point. In this context, there is little synergy with the other programmes funded by the DGD. The only case of truly structured reinforcement which has been able to be identified with another initiative concerns the health stakeholder platform, Be-Cause Health, which also benefits from financial support from the DGD and whose operation takes account of and strengthens the IMT's policy support activities, both through involving all health stakeholders and also as a tool for disseminating the deliverables of this support. A few other cases of exchanges between policy support and other interventions have been able to be identified (Acropolis with the ARES-CCD or VLIR-UOS projects, Acropolis participating in the policy consistency platform, for example) but they are much less systematic and are carried out in a more *ad hoc* manner. Apart from these few exceptions, policy support does not really fit within the broader framework of other DGD programmes.

#### **3.2.1.5. *Added value of policy support compared to using external consultants***

##### ***A. Evolutionary process of constructing the request and capitalising on support***

These medium- and long-term general projects allow for better planning and integration of changes in needs and requests, which could not allow it to have simple *ad hoc* contractualisation of the request. Similarly, the involvement of the "South" programmes and the use of the outcomes from these projects in the South enable this support to be reinforced. Of the request, generally speaking within a co-construction dynamic, is a factor in the DGD's ownership of the support and its relevance.

In such an evolutionary process, it is possible to observe a certain flexibility in the arrangements for formulating the request and of the forms and content of the support, which could not be implemented as part of *ad hoc* contractualisation with a consultancy firm, as is shown in the following examples:

- In Aid Effectiveness Acropolis, a six line of focus, "Use of national systems", was added by the DGD just after the programme started and was abandoned a few months later by the same administration based on the findings shared.
- For the "education" secondment, the main activity of drafting the "scholarship" strategy note was not in its terms of reference, even though it is now the main activity.
- For the KLIMOS Acropolis, the IMT or the IRSNB, several issues have evolved as the analysis/study progresses. This has the advantage of flexibility but the disadvantage of complexity for fitting these requests into the academic or research calendar. The institutions have, for the most part, adapted to this flexibility in collaboration with the administration to respond to needs/requests in a more relevant way. Therefore, for the example case of the KLIMOS Acropolis, this flexibility has proved to be an important asset which has enabled very interesting outcomes to be obtained.

## ***B. Mutual institutional knowledge which can facilitate consultation and the quality of the support***

In the long term, mutual knowledge can have a positive impact on policy choices and strategic directions insofar as, even when there is no coordinated and structured request on the part of the DGD, the offering may be relevant just because the partner institution knows the DGD. Also, a long-standing partnership allows consultation mechanisms to retain the necessary flexibility, to structure the request based on medium-term planning (e.g. annually), while retaining the possibility for the DGD to formulate ad hoc and specific requests in the very short term. The elements below reinforce this analysis:

- Several researchers from the current Acropolis are involved in the GRAPs or O\*Platformen: they have previous knowledge of the institution and can establish contact more easily.
- The same is true of the long-term relationships with the ECDPM, IMT, MRAC or IRSNB, which create links facilitating consultation.
- Some instruments take the initiative to offer some support themselves (MRAC) in areas useful for Belgian cooperation or which enable its international reputation to be strengthened.
- Finally, thanks to the secondments, there is strengthening of the mutual knowledge between the seconded person, their institution of origin and the DGD, even if this strengthening is largely limited to the department at the DGD where the seconded person is located.

The evaluation has found that this more long-term arrangement enables a certain flexibility to be combined in a good way with durability, to characteristics which in this case are not conflicting but which are mutually strengthening and which are distinct from a more discontinuous flexibility which enables the use on a case-by-case basis of calls for tenders sent to consultancy firms.

## ***C. Emergence of a relationship of trust and synergy***

This is reflected in a significant manner in the participation in debate and international meetings component, with direct and/or informal contacts which could not be envisaged as part of a purely contractual relationship with a consultancy firm.

This relationship of trust can be identified in the long-term in the preparation and participation in international debates with the BeFinD Acropolis, Aid Effectiveness Acropolis, IMT or IRSNB. The relationship of trust also entails a good knowledge of the policy support instrument by all stakeholders. For example, for the ECPA, the researchers/experts know perfectly well what is expected of them and the secondment mechanism put in place with the IMT is also based on this trust which has been strengthened by this provision of an expert.

## ***D. Added value of the "institutional" status of the stakeholders***

In the case of the ECP, the MRAC, the IRSNB and the IMT, this added value is reflected by Belgium's access to scientific, political or decision-making networks at European and international levels. Therefore, the status of "Belgian focal point (on behalf of the government as a whole)" of the IRSNB in the area of biodiversity strengthens the relevance of the support compared to using a consultancy firm.

## ***E. Lack of flexibility of certain support mechanisms***

Nevertheless, at certain times, a lack of flexibility in this support is found, particularly in the context of ad hoc, urgent or unplanned requests. The flexible nature of the collaboration between the universities and the DGD mentioned in the call for projects is not always considered by members of the administration and by the Minister's Policy Cell as being sufficiently flexible and suited to their more operational needs.

The "loss of drawing rights" in the Acropolis program is also seen by certain interviewees as a loss of flexibility in relation to the O\*Platformen programme.

### **3.2.1.6. Differences between the very variable requests of the DGD and the services rendered**

The programs or TOR relating to support include vague descriptions of the DGD's expectations, all the more so because there are often very large differences between the written and validated expectations on the one hand, and the activities implemented or the outcomes achieved. The Aid Effectiveness Acropolis now consists of a grouping of diverse and specific themes, validated by the annual plan, around a central subject connected to operationalisation of fragility, themes which are separate and compartmentalised at the outset. In the case of the activities of the MRAC, there is therefore a certain confusion or overlap between policy support in the North on the one hand, and the "activities relevant to development" both in the North and in the South. Finally, generally speaking, the secondments carry out activities which are not necessarily explicitly part of the initial terms of reference. This lack of precision in the initial request and the evolutionary nature of it may explain, in part, the difference that is sometimes perceived between expectations and the services provided.

Beyond overall expectations for support, such as those contained in programmes or TOR, there are also large differences in the accuracy of requests, depending on the instruments. The TORs for the three Acropolis contain definitions and objectives which are different from the request, depending certainly on services which were the basis of their development, without reference to an overall strategic framework which is non-existent. Furthermore, there does not seem to be any consultation between the DGD and the Minister's Policy Cell in the formulation of requests which are essentially ad hoc and strongly "individualise", depending on the requesting departments and focal points.

Therefore, compared to previous programmes, requests for themes to be dealt with as part of the Acropolis are, according to the majority of those involved, better defined than in previous programmes, which enables the relevance of the support to be improved. This variability can be very significant, between for example the very specific and ad hoc requests sent to the ECDPM or the IMT and the support proposals from the MRAC which are essentially formulated by the Museum itself, with the agreement of the DGD, which corresponds more to an approach based on the offering rather than on the request.

As already mentioned, several variables affect the clarity of the description of expectations: the institutional position of the DGD manager of the programme, the intensity of the relationships within the steering or consultative bodies, the involvement and centralisation of request by focal points, the existence of regular, more informal contact through the seconded person or by holding working meetings. Finally, the impact of previous relationships and long-term relationships woven with the institution also plays a not inconsiderable role in the clarity of the definition of expectations. The following examples illustrate this variability:

- The Aid Effectiveness Acropolis at the outset experienced difficulties in clarifying expectations because of monitoring through a double focal point (D1 and D2.5). The distribution of the roles of the two focal points in the preparation of meetings in which this Acropolis must participate at the INCAF is sometimes unclear.
- For ECDPM, a certain "competition" has been found between several departments which formulate their request informally without necessarily always passing through a focal point.
- The more administrative monitoring over the entire programme of the MRAC by D3 without, in return, a systemised and sustainable relationship at content level with a D2 department.
- The relationships are "triangular" in the Acropolis, with the presence of the ARES-CCD and the VLIR-UOS as well as the DGD and teams in charge of support.
- The structuring and centralising role of the focal points between the DGD and the IMT, KLIMOS Acropolis and the IRSNB enable good accuracy of the request.

- In the case of secondments, the more direct relationship with DGD departments leads to a more precise request which is often developed jointly.

The gradual strengthening of steering and monitoring committees, taking more and more account of the programming and prioritising of needs and requests aspects means that requests can be better structured and gradually made more consistent.

### **3.2.1.7. *Insufficient account is taken of the expectations of the various stakeholders in Belgian cooperation***

Most of the stakeholders in cooperation, for example at the two umbrella NGOs or at the BTC, hardly know anything about the policy support programme, although this is not the case for interpersonal relationships or in connection with a particular project or activity. Furthermore, this support, rarely identified by the stakeholders as a whole, is often interpreted as being support at general policy and strategy level by these other stakeholders who are ignorant of its aspects related to planning, scientific monitoring or technical support of projects and programmes.

Platforms (Be-Cause Health, Consultative Committee on policy consistency) promote the involvement of an impact on stakeholders. The use of the Be-Cause Health platform in the field of health enables a dissemination of outcomes to all the stakeholders who are all beneficiaries of the support and are aware of its existence. For its part, the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis has been approached to contribute to the formulation of the opinion of the Consultative Committee on policy consistency with regard to the consistency to be developed for central Africa.

Similarly, several initiatives and approaches by researchers aiming to involve new cooperation stakeholders in policy support activities have been reported, such as within the context of Aid Effectiveness Acropolis where the fact of potentially involving NGOs in the wider commission of support of the programme is currently under discussion. The involvement of other stakeholders from Federal government as part of support from the IRSNB and the MRAC (BELSPO, the environmental FPS, etc.) also consists of opening up to other key stakeholders.

Finally, the Northern SCA and CSC approaches constitute new opportunities in involving other development stakeholders. The development of the Northern SCA has helped to raise awareness of the work of the universities and the other institutional actors, which partially includes policy support work. This is a positive development which is recognised both by the support institutions and by NGO umbrella bodies. However, several questions arise on the place of policy support in the northern SCAs: the new law on cooperation does not make explicit reference to this policy support mechanism and the procedures and methods to place this support within the northern SCA are not specified.

We would also indicate the involvement of many of the institutional actors in the preparation of country contexts, in the countries where they deploy the Southern activities. This is the case, for example, for the University umbrella bodies, the IRSNB and the IMT.

### **3.2.1.8. *Evolution towards a greater involvement of the stakeholders from the South***

Generally speaking, a greater involvement of stakeholders from the South as part of all support has been found, with a request for a less strict distinction between Southern and Northern programmes on the part of the DGD, as the following examples illustrate:

- The work of the BeFinD Acropolis in support of a BTC project in Benin, in collaboration with the University of Abomey Calavi; the work of the same Acropolis with the Central Bank of Rwanda, etc.
- The work of the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis with universities and NGOs in the South in fragile countries.

- The work of the KLIMOS Acropolis with a university in Uganda for research into Voluntary Sustainability Standards and the specific study on Mount Elgon.
- For the IMT, MRAC and IRSNB, support to the south is inseparable from policy support which also has benefits for the South with an involvement of the partners in Southern programmes.

Finally, there is an emergence of new forms of support request more directly linked to the implementation, support or evaluation of specific projects or programmes, in the development of country PICs, in the monitoring of BTC projects or in the evaluation of NGO proposals.

### **3.2.2. Effectiveness**

Effectiveness consists of the measurement or assessment of the degree of achievement of outcomes thanks to the implementation of activities

#### **3.2.2.1. *Achievement of the objectives and outcomes identified***

It should be remembered that this support has been developed independently, without recourse to a strategy or an overall vision in the matter. Because of this, there is no single intervention logic with the shared outcomes or objectives to be achieved. On the contrary, each instrument has different specific outcomes, which do not facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of the instrument. The three Acropolis, for example, have very specific results to be achieved, related to the nature of their operations:

- Local resources for development, the mobilisation of private resources, the relationship between APD and other possible funding, global public assets for the BeFinD Acropolis;
- The management of natural resources, sustainable energies, governance for the environment and environmental monitoring/evaluation for the KLIMOS Acropolis.
- The operationalisation of fragility, risk analysis, conditionalities, decentralisation and civil society for the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis.

Conversely, within the context of the framework agreements with the IMT, IRSNB or MRAC, the expected outcomes no longer concern specific themes but the nature of the support:

- Advice to policy decision-makers, support for the Belgian representation at international forums, the establishment of DGD/IMT coordination mechanisms and the implementation of policy support research for the IMT;
- Build and strengthen the expertise of Belgian Cooperation in the field of biodiversity and incorporate biodiversity into the activities of Belgian Cooperation for the IRSNB;
- Improving knowledge, presenting research outcomes, involvement in themes relevant for the development and improvement of reputation in terms of expertise for cooperation stakeholders for the MRAC.

Finally, for ECDPM, in respect of support for the institution's overall activities, there are no specific expected outcomes but a single technical mechanism, drawing rights.

Within the eight "monographs" relating to each instrument<sup>39</sup>, tables can be found per instrument which include the number and nature of the support provided and the deliverables that have been output. These appear to comply with the expected outcomes and the indicators contained in the TORs are annual schedules. This analysis is corroborated both by the assessments within the annual monitoring or evaluation reports or during interviews with the beneficiaries. We would emphasise in this regard that a certain scepticism was encountered on achieving the Acropolis' results which, for some members of the Administration, for close stakeholders and for the Minister's Policy Cell, would be more concentrated on academic research to the detriment of specific and

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<sup>39</sup> A detailed presentation of the instruments is given in the Field report which can be found in Appendix G of this report.

operational responses. In contrast, the assessment is more positive for most of the focal points or direct beneficiaries within the DGD or Embassies. This difference in assessment may in part be explained by the fact, already mentioned, that the support is not very directed at a policy level but rather at a strategic and operational level, with few explicit requests coming from policy. This remoteness may be one of the causes of these less positive assessments. Another cause is without doubt too little knowledge overall of what is produced by the Acropolis, because it is not widely disseminated: thus, for example the support from some Acropolis to embassies is positively assessed because it responds to their precise specific needs, whereas the reverse is true in the recurring criticism that the nature of the Acropolis' contributions is too academic.

In terms of concrete outputs, in achieving these outcomes, we propose to base our analysis on the four overall objectives which have been chosen as the common thread for this evaluation to assess the effect of this policy support. The analysis below of the overall achievement of each of the objectives gives an overall view of the progression of the policy support programme as a whole, beyond the various outcomes obtained by each instrument.

### **A. Policy preparation**

It should be remembered that this policy support is more oriented towards strategic and operational aspects than towards support for policy choices per se.

In the analysis of deliverables, first of all a tendency towards a greater variety of support tools than previously could be observed, not limited to notes and publications/reports. Beyond tools formally provided for in the TORs and programs, we can cite the creation of websites accessible to all, the dissemination of newsletters, toolboxes, publications, seminars, conferences, training courses, peer reviews of strategy notes, etc. the part of these, it is the continuity and sustainability of the relationships between these institutional actors providing support and the DGD which, in an evolutionary process of co-construction, enables the tools produced to be diversified and developed into forms that are more suitable for needs. This variety of tools and deliverables should be put into perspective with the long-term relationship which has been built and which should continue to evolve towards better understanding of the needs and relevant forms of support to be delivered. This flexibility in the production of the offering is based on this sustainable relationship and the mutual knowledge of the partners.

Concrete examples of the implementation of the policy support instrument in "strategic directions" are given below:

- Aid Effectiveness Acropolis enabled the Minister to consolidate the choice of partner countries by having tools that are more suited to a majority of them, the fragile countries.
- The VLIR-UOS, ARES-CDD and IMT secondments are responsible for supporting the drafting of the "Agriculture and Food Safety", "Scholarships" and "Health" strategy notes.
- The KLIMOS Acropolis has developed a paper on eco-tax reform which has been used by the focal point to develop a strategy in this area, the constitution of the "Governance" subgroup with a set of studies relating to Voluntary Sustainability Standards or support within the context of the Belgian position on Rio+2.
- The IMT, IRSNB, MRAC, ECDPM, BefinD Acropolis and Aid Effectiveness Acropolis are involved in the Belgian positioning at international meetings (WHO, Global Fund, CITES, MDG/UN, COP, Nagoya Protocol, CHM, GTI, INCAF, etc.).
- The IRSNB is involved in mainstreaming activities at federal level (DGD, BELSPO, Environment FPS).
- ECDPM has played a very significant role in the policy choices connected to the process for adopting the Development Policy Consistency Law and during the presidencies of the EU by Belgium.

## ***B. Knowledge strengthening within the DGD***

There is clearly some knowledge strengthening within the DGD which can be based on the support processes developed over time and on the multiplication of media, even if this strengthening is not yet systematic and global, particularly at embassy level. This appears particularly through the growing number of requests for information on the part of offices and corporation diplomats, for example for the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis, the IMT or IRSNB. These also include the IRSNB's mainstreaming activities which have led to a knowledge strengthening in the field of biodiversity or the knowledge strengthening of all of the health stakeholders through the Be-Cause Health platform. This knowledge strengthening can also be done through formal and informal exchanges, as is particularly the case for the ECDPM.

Although for some of this strengthening, the evaluation can see an effect on the institution as a whole (as, for example, greater retention and progressively more consistent perception in terms of the fragility situation with A Effectiveness Acropolis, or in the field of biodiversity with the IRSNB or climate change with the KLIMOS Acropolis), it must be acknowledged that for still too many cases, strengthening is limited firstly to departments and sometimes to a few people in these departments who are directly concerned by the support. The effectiveness in terms of strengthening the institution's capabilities as a whole therefore remains limited and the risk of significant loss insofar as strengthening can sometimes involve a more limited number of people, especially if the latter are or risk being moved.

## ***C. Knowledge strengthening of the others stakeholders in development cooperation***

With the exception of the IMT via the Be-Cause Health platform and the IRSNB with regard to federal institutions like the Environment FPS, the strengthening of other cooperation stakeholders is isolated, connected to specific opportunities but not subject to systematic implementation. We would emphasise that the institutional framework of the support does not favour this type of outcome because it seldom is a case of an outcome that is explicitly specified in funding agreements.

This is all the more so in practice: for example, the possibility of the BTC participating in support committees for some of these instruments, as provided for in the text, was not applied. For a little more than a year, a greater openness at the BTC is gradually allowing a more structured involvement.

The efforts of the SCAs and CSCs has stimulated the involvement of policy support stakeholders in the preparation of country contexts, in countries where they deploy Southern activities.

## ***D. International visibility***

The descriptions of the achievement of the outcomes of the ECDPM during the Belgian Presidencies or within the framework of European policies, of the IMT in international health policies (EU, WHO, Global Fund), of the MRAC as part of CITES, of the IRSNB and the KLIMOS Acropolis in the preparation of COPs or of the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis as part of INCAF demonstrate that this support has fulfilled its objectives in terms of the involvement and visibility of Belgium on the international stage, with substantial contributions to the international debate.

### ***3.2.2.2. Dissemination of results***

It is appropriate to differentiate between the dissemination of deliverables within each instrument and the overall dissemination of the results by the DGD. All of the support stakeholders have put in place tools to disseminate their output, through the use of websites which are generalised, and often through the publication of newsletters or Briefing Notes, for the attention of a wider audience including civil society in Belgium and

the Southern stakeholders. Furthermore, the research carried out is systematically the subject of scientific publications. Thus, over the period 2012-2014, the publication of at least 265 scientific outputs (articles, chapters of books and books) has been able to be counted. The assessment of the academic reach<sup>40</sup> has highlighted that this is very good scientific output, published in high-quality or even renowned scientific journals, with a proven international reach, all referenced in scientific databases and in evaluation standards and with a clear scientific impact. All the stakeholders analysed have thus been published in journals listed in the Top 15 or even the Top 5 of the journals in their disciplines.

By contrast, the more overall use of the deliverables which depends on the DGD is less evident. The spread of the institutional anchoring of the focal points and the lack of specified and systematic procedures for dissemination leads to a low audience for the support, both within the DGD and amongst other Belgian cooperation stakeholders. The following elements should be taken into account in the analysis of this lack of systematic dissemination mechanisms:

- Lack of a central point of coordination for the dissemination of support outputs within the DGD (at D.0 as in the past, for example).
- No specific and systematic dissemination mechanism for output from this support (no joint newsletter, in an easily identifiable and common format) and therefore unequal access to the various dissemination arrangements which exist (specific website, own newsletter, time of meetings and communication, etc.).
- Dissemination activities are often not planned and provided for in the support.
- There is no "set of specifications" or another document defining a role or a clear and systematic responsibility of the focal points in terms of dissemination.

We would emphasise that the thematic or sectoral platform tool is very relevant to impact in terms of dissemination.

### **3.2.2.3. Very variable implementation and management procedures**

First of all, different procedures have been observed in the contracting of policy support and this is so right from **identification of the themes**, which simply correspond to the areas of expertise of the stakeholders in the case of scientific institutions and ECDPM, but which are the subject of a call for projects in the case of university support. Within this context, we have noted an everclearer trend towards the choice of themes being carried out by the Minister and the DGD, which seems quite relevant in view of the purpose of this support and the importance of having a good expression of needs, as mentioned in the section on relevance. These diverse procedures respond to the varied nature and identity of the stakeholders and lead to differences in the outcomes. Therefore, in the case of scientific institutions, there is a great continuity of collaboration on themes that have been consistent and stable for many years, allowing for the immediate achievement of outcomes, while in the case of University support, the choice of new thematic areas involves a longer start-up time in order to respond in a relevant manner to the requests of the DGD. There is, however, within university teams, a certain continuity of themes between the various calls and even a certain constancy of teams, even during changes of themes between the GRAPs and O\*Platformen on the one hand and the Acropolis on the other hand.

Another difference concerns **contracting procedures**, which are performed directly with the stakeholders in the case of scientific institutions and ECDPM, with the establishment of multiannual programmes including all the Northern and Southern activities, while in the case of the University stakeholders, agreements are drawn up through the University umbrella bodies and this support is subject to specific agreements and monitoring which exclusively concerns policy support. This configuration causes a difference in size: the University stakeholders have to mobilise researchers within the

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<sup>40</sup> A more detailed analysis of the scientific reach of the publications of a majority of the policy support instruments is given in Appendix D of this report.

very heart of the instrument and implement academic research to feed into policy support, while institutional actors and ECDPM base themselves on the research and analyses done by the institution as part of their usual activities to feed into policy support which therefore focuses only on support activities, disconnected from research. This difference has led to a series of questions on the research/support balance with regards to university stakeholders while all of the 8 stakeholders base their support on the outcomes from research, even if these are subject to different contracting and funding procedures.

Thirdly, the **institutional anchoring** within the DGD and the identification of focal points are very variable. As a general rule, there is a difference between administrative anchoring on the one hand, and content elements on the other hand, where the focal point is found. When there is no specific content anchoring, as is the case for example for the MRAC, there is a lesser demand for support and a lesser direct relevance of the responses for the DGD. Furthermore, as there are no harmonised mechanisms identifying the roles and remits of the focal points, there is a great variability in the quality of the relationships and support which essentially depend on the motivation of the focal point, its institutional position within the administration, and the quality of the interpersonal relationship (human factor).

	Administrative management	Content Management
BeFind Acropolis	D3	D2.2
KLIMOS Acropolis	D3	D2.4
Aid Effectiveness Acropolis	D3	D1.3
IMT	D3	D2
IRSNB	D2	D2.4
MRAC	D3	D3
ECDPM	D2	D2.3

*Table 2: Institutional anchorage for policy support instrument focal points*

There are still calls to indicate the differences in monitoring and dialogue on programming with the **support or steering committees** whose remits and structure vary depending on the stakeholders. However, a gradual harmonisation of this type of structure is in progress, identical for the three Acropolis and currently being made consistent for the IRSNB and the MRAC. With the exception of ECDPM, this support is twofold, with an annual strategic component taking care of programming requests and in the quality/relevance of responses and a more technical committee responsible for administrative programming and reporting aspects. We would also emphasise the gradual opening up of the strategy committees to other stakeholders: BTC, NGO or BELSPO, for example.

	Consultation
BeFind	Annual Policy Commission <sup>41</sup> , coordination team (twice a year), regular focal point contacts
Klimos	Annual Policy Commission, monitoring committee, regular focal point contacts
Aid Effectiveness	Annual Policy Commission, respected/enlarged support committee, regular focal point contacts
IMT	Steering committee, technical committee, cluster meetings and weekly meeting.
IRSNB	Strategy committee, steering committee and technical meetings
MRAC	Consultative committee to monitor cooperation protocol 2014-2023, and gradual transition to the same procedures as the IRSNB
ECDPM	Annual structured dialogue with the ECDPM AC

*Table 3: Consultation procedures for policy support instruments*

Finally, the "Drawing rights" tool has itself also been subject to variable use but seems less and less mobilised within partnerships. Although these drawing rights exist more formally with the IMT, IRSNB and ECDPM, it is only truly implemented in the case of the latter, as it is not subject to monitoring in the other two agreements. It is certain that strengthening the roles of the support committees on the one hand, and the relationships established in the long-term are of a nature to promote development in this direction.

Therefore, the variability of the implementation and management procedures respond simultaneously to the specific nature of the identity of the stakeholders and to the nature of the support requested by the DGD but do not have an influence as such on the achievement, form or quality of the outcomes. On the contrary, harmonisation of these procedures without taking account of the specific features of the partnerships could be detrimental to the achievement of the outcomes. Finally, a real correlation is observed between the level of accuracy of the request and the level of satisfaction expressed by the beneficiaries and the stakeholders of this support. This applies, for example, to the preparation of and participation in international meetings, responses to ad hoc questions, analyses of documents and specific opinions, generally much appreciated. In contrast, more general publications, some themes addressed in a more recurrent way, for which the request is less well-defined, are often also those that are the least appreciated.

#### **3.2.2.4. A search for complementarity**

The evaluation notes a certain mobilisation of knowledge acquired from other projects conducted in the South or in the North, for all of the stakeholders involved, whether within the ARES-CDD (with the PIC-PRD-PFS in Burundi, for example), within the VLIR-UOS, through institutional support or the DEFI project, or through the synergy between the "Southern" and "Northern" programmes within the IRSNB, IMT and MRAC framework agreements. The quality and relevance of the support are in part due to their involvement in the Southern activities of these institutions. However, it is more often the case that the institutional actors take the initiative to make the approach rather than an explicit request with a systematic approach on the part of the DGD.

<sup>41</sup> The Policy Commission is common to the three Acropolis and brings them all together at least once a year.

In addition, we would emphasise that there is little consideration given to the practices and experiences of the BTC in these areas, which could be better capitalised, except in terms of health where use of the Be-Cause Health platform promotes the involvement of all partners.

Beyond synergies between the Northern and Southern programs, there are also sharing related to research, and to development activities and programs for most of the support. Thus, for example:

- The Aid Effectiveness or BeFinD Acropolis researchers are involved in the PFS and PRD projects and/or institutional support of the ARES-CCD.
- The IRSNB is a partner in the KLIMOS Acropolis in the development of the talk it on the environment and a partner/co-promoter in VLIR-UOS projects.
- The KLIMOS Acropolis and IMT receive funds from other funders, thus capitalising on the agreements with the DGD, which increases the reputation of the institutions concerned. The funds received and the research performed for the DGD are, from time to time, a lever to obtain funds from other institutions and to increase the reputation of the research institutions concerned.

Nevertheless, this dynamic is essentially based on personal initiatives, on the part of the DGD focal points or some of the support stakeholders but it does not involve all the institutions concerned by the instrument. There are programmes in related areas but which have been developed in a separate way: as is the case with the KLIMOS Acropolis and IRSNB, for example. The same applies between the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis and a secondment who worked for several months in a related field without knowing it explicitly.

There is no proven strategy to search for synergy between the different supports on the part of the DGD, except for the use of the Be-Cause Health platform in the field of health. This lack of a search for synergy comes from the fact that there is no shared overview, objectives or definitions within the support activities. Each type of support is subject to Terms of Reference and specific action plans without reference to a joint approach or strategy.

### **Achieving the four cross-cutting objectives**

In conclusion, if the evaluation has observed a proven achievement of the outcomes specific to each stakeholder and an overall achievement of the four cross-cutting objectives described above, it should be noted that there is an uneven achievement of these objectives by the stakeholders, as described in the monographs per stakeholder and summarised in the table below:

	Preparation of the policy	Strengthening of DGD knowledge	Strengthening of other stakeholder knowledge	International visibility
Acropolis BeFinD	+	+	+/-	+
KLIMOS Acropolis	+	+	+	+
Aid Effectiveness Acropolis	+	+	+/-	+
IMT	+	+	+	+
ISRNB	+	+	+/-	+
MRAC	-	-	+	+
ECDPM	+	+	-	+
Secondments	+	+/-	-	+

*Table 4 Degree of achievement of the objectives by the eight policy support instruments*

These differences and variability, as already described, reflect the diversity of the instruments and stakeholders and depend on the following elements:

- The absence of a vision and a single definition of the policy support.
- The formulation or otherwise of an explicit request from the DGD for outputs that meet one or other of the objectives.
- The explicit listing of these four objectives in the programmes of the institutions concerned.
- The great disparity of the institutions concerned by policy support.

### **3.2.3. Efficiency**

This is a case of assessing the extent to which resources have been mobilised within the required time and at the best cost. In other terms, we will analyse if the stakeholders have adequate human and financial resources to achieve the outcomes and objectives.

#### **3.2.3.1. *Variable budgetary and financial arrangements***

The financial and regulatory arrangements are very varied and make it difficult to make comparisons between programmes and instruments. Within University umbrella bodies, the support is the subject of specific projects within the Northern programs, with budget lines specific to policy support. Policy support also has specific lines for IMT, MRAC and IRSNB but given the fact that these are incorporated within an overall programme including Southern and Northern activities, a part of the budgetary resources (team salaries for example) are taken over the programme as a whole and not specifically on the policy support lines which only sometimes group very specific costs together. Furthermore, the mobilisation of internal experts at these institutions is often supported by their own budgets or the institutions' general budgets. The case of ECDPM is even more specific, with a financial contribution to the overall budget of the institution and separate drawing rights. Finally, the funding of the secondments from the VLIR-UOS and ARES-CCD has required additional resources to be released that were not originally provided for<sup>42</sup>, while that of the IMT is explicitly included in the overall framework agreement. This variability responds, above all, to the specific features of each of the partnerships. It is also explained in part by the fact that some support has been created or adapted in response to specific, ad hoc and varied issues.

#### ***A. A less frequent and less clear application of drawing rights***

With the exception of ECDPM whose funding arrangements are very specific, there is a lesser application of drawing rights, even where these are explicitly specified, as in the case of the IRSNB, for example. Conversely, the definition of the expected outcomes is more precise, falling under a management that is more "results-based". There is thus a formal abandoning of drawing rights in the Acropolis, while they were applied in the O\*Platformen. The IRSNB<sup>43</sup>, IMT and Acropolis do not use drawing rights. Most of the researchers confirmed that they remain flexible to respond to "ad hoc" requests on the part of the environment focal point of the DGD.

We would finally emphasise that if this mechanism is still applied at ECDPM, the system is generally underused, with all of the available days not always being used, through a lack of specific requests.

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<sup>42</sup> VLIR-UOS had to fund this additional activity within a closed budget granted by the DGD: it was initially envisaged that the interest produced by past funding would be used and then finally it was through a balance from the Northern Actions programme budgets that the secondment was funded.

<sup>43</sup> Even though CEBioS reminds embassies that they can ask for scientific opinions on projects and programmes.

## ***B. A significant volume of part-time staff***

In most of the instruments, the evaluation was able to note that the budget is, in the great majority of cases (more than 70% in general), devoted to funding staff and most often researchers. But what is even more remarkable is that most often, this is support for part-time human resources, which stimulates the interaction between the institutions and the DGD: the experts and researchers are both rooted in their respective institutions whilst being in support of the DGD. The case of secondments is an example in this regard: they are all provided to the DGD part-time, and work part-time at their institutions of origin, which improves synergy and bridges between the two institutions.

### ***3.2.3.2. Consolidated monitoring and consultation mechanisms with a variable regulatory framework depending on the support***

It was observed that the monitoring and steering mechanisms for the devices is strengthening, taking into account both the conceptual aspects and operational and strategic monitoring, even if they are sometimes used in a very variable way (difference in the functioning of the support committees of the three Acropolis). We would emphasise, in contrast, the regular and joint meetings of the monitoring committees for the three Acropolis programmes (one joint Policy Commission) organised by the University platforms which enable the outcomes and state of progress of the various programmes to be compared. At the level of the federal scientific institutions, in addition to the conventional steering committees, leaning towards scheduling and annual reporting, a Collaboration Protocol has been established with BELSPO, covering the strategic level of the MRAC and IRSNB programs and even providing for external evaluations at mid-term and the end.

Beyond this gradual convergence of the monitoring and consultation mechanisms, organisational arrangements vary according to the stakeholders, their specific organisational features and the support. This approach is relevant because it takes account of the institutional positioning of the various stakeholders and the means of drawing benefit from their added value.

### ***3.2.3.3. Secondments: effectiveness, but sustainability and substitution?***

Once more, this is a question for which it is difficult to offer a definitive answer. The VLIR-UOS and ARES-CCD secondments are an initial experience, and we do not know for the moment if they will be extended beyond 31 December 2016. For IMT, we cannot really speak of a secondment but rather more a partial location of a focal point from the IMT within the DGD with relevant results, as analysed previously. Nevertheless, we can already conclude that if the DGD had the skills internally, it would probably not use these secondment or provision mechanisms, whose statutory and legal aspects would merit specific study. Furthermore, despite a desire that is often expressed to only entrust secondments with tasks and responsibilities for which officials are not responsible, the evaluation notes that the distinction is very tenuous and artificial, which, despite everything, gives rise to a risk of gradual shift towards substitution.

The secondments currently in place are proving their added value and are doing important work in the drafting of strategy notes. However, there is a risk of losing all this knowledge built during the drafting of the strategy notes, including the scientific methodology, if no other mechanism is put in place for internal ownership in the DGD, in the event that the secondment mechanisms are not extended.

### ***3.2.3.4. More efficient alternatives?***

The analysis of the various instruments has, within the evaluation team, provoked questioning on the type of possible alternatives to the current model. Several ways forward are given below which engender the reality or weaknesses encountered during

the analysis of existing instruments which are supplemented by a comparative examination of existing policy support in a few European countries.

### **A. Investment in internal human resources within the DGD**

This alternative does not seem possible for the moment, because of budgetary constraints. Nevertheless, this alternative must be taken into consideration as one of the potential contingencies, because it is relevant and effective to retain essential internal skills, albeit just to maintain an ability to formulate requests and analyse the outputs produced by the research centres.

Furthermore, investment in capacity building for the existing human resources is quite conceivable and even desirable.

### **B. Use of the thematic expertise of the BTC**

BTC expertise exists and is strengthened by its effective and growing involvement in the preparation, identification and evaluation of projects. However, it was up till now hardly associated with policy support as a contributor or beneficiary. The probable change in the framework of the BDA reform and the new remits assigned to the BTC could nevertheless boost the power of this expertise as part of strategy support. The BTC expresses its availability in this area and the Minister's Policy Cell expresses its intention to use it more systematically. These two types of expertise, which are complementary and which may provide a certain added value for all stakeholders, should therefore be linked.

### **C. Taking account of the research capabilities of the non-governmental sector**

The development of the NGO sector has given rise to the emergence of more and more research services which are broader in scope and with more in-house experience. Furthermore, the sector is resorting more and more to using networks of European or international NGOs where acknowledged expertise can be accessed. These skills are (too) little or not used by the DGD or policy support researchers if this is not in ad hoc or specific cases. Conversely, the Be-Cause Health or EducAid platforms can be effective catalysts for the pulling of all this expertise, whether they come from university or scientific institutions, NGOs or the BTC.

We would further emphasise the low mobilisation and use of international networks and skills outputs coming from international institutions or research centres and European or international Think Tanks, with the notable exception of the use of ECDPM, of course.

#### **3.2.3.5. Lessons drawn from foreign models**

Three different examples have been able to be identified and highlighted the comparative purposes: France, the United Kingdom and Denmark<sup>44</sup>. In France, there are no explicit support or policy support research mechanisms. However, headings can be found (budget programs 100 & 209) among the budget lines of the *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Développement international* (MAEDI – French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development) which are closer to research in policy support.

The United Kingdom and Denmark, for their part, have made policy support a central element of their most recent strategies to support research for development. The two countries have devoted specific and significant funding, which is particularly the case in the United Kingdom, where policy support has been incorporated into general objectives, specific objectives and the work focus of the said strategies.

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<sup>44</sup> Other countries have been examined, such as the Netherlands or Canada, but in the end were not used in the report, either because their model was close to one of the three presented here, or because the mechanism had lost its relevance, or because there was insufficient reliable information available.

In both cases, the relevance of policy support is defined by the fact that support the research for development is guided by priority themes for development cooperation.

### **A. Northern and Southern dimension of policy support**

In the three cases analysed, policy support is included in a dual dimension: it is expected that the outcomes of the research will guide policy decision-makers and other development stakeholders both in the North and in the partner countries in the South. In the United Kingdom, both dimensions are incorporated within the framework of a decentralised management which links up the bodies responsible for research within the DFID with bodies established at regional level (Regional Research Hubs) and at national level (Country Office). To a lesser extent, Denmark also uses a decentralised approach, since on the one hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs relies on several bodies to identify the scientific needs and the policy priorities which guide the funding process, and on the other hand the embassies play a very important role in monitoring researchers and the dissemination of research results to national decision-makers. In France, policy support activities concern all stakeholders in the North and South, both bilateral and multilateral, and do not target the specific needs of the Ministry.

### **B. Institutional aspects**

In France, MAEDI has undertaken a process of reform which aims to enhance the legibility and effectiveness of diplomacy where there is a French influence. In this context, the role of the MAEDI consists of developing and monitoring policies in the area of international development and in the coordination of all development activities, through the *Direction Générale de la Mondialisation, du Développement et des Partenariats* – DGM [General Directorate for Globalisation, Development and Partnerships]. In contrast, all of the implementation of policies has been entrusted to an operator, the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD) [French Development Agency], based on performance contracts and contracts to supply resources.<sup>45</sup> Even though the AFD's remit does not explicitly include responsibility for conducting policy support activities, the agency has significant internal expertise responsible for the development and monitoring of the strategies and programmes that it implements. In this context, the AFD plays a role in the production of knowledge which meets a dual objective: to improve the content of programmes and make proposals regarding the fight against poverty and regarding sustainable development. The AFD also participates in policy support in all aspects of aid and all its areas of competence. Through this, the Agency also contributes to the international debate and to defining French development policies. Furthermore and in parallel, the MAEDI mobilises a network of research centres within a partnership framework, including the *Institut de recherche et de développement* (IRD) [Research and Development Institute] and the *Centre International de recherche agricole pour le développement* (CIRAD) [International Centre for Agricultural Research for Development] which receive specific resources for policy support. This specific positioning of the AFD is interesting because it could augur well for the configuration of the future BDA reform where the BTC would be entrusted with a remit very close to that of the AFD, with a policy support mobilising both internal expertise on the one hand, and the use of research institutions on the other hand.

In the United Kingdom, the implementation of the DFI's research strategy in 2008 is supported by measures to strengthen institutional capacities in terms of research, research and promotion management and research communication, with the creation of a specific Department: the Research and Evidence Division (RED). This department is responsible for ensuring that research has an actual impact on policy by using its results in order to generate information intended for decision-makers. Within the RED, the Evidence into Action team ensures that use of research results is increased by decision makers.

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<sup>45</sup> There are six main public operators in France in international development: the AFD, *Canal France International* (CFI), *Expertise France*, *France Volontaires*, CIRAD and the IRD.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark also has a specific department, Technical Advisory Services, responsible for preparing grants, monitoring programmes and regarding general issues to do with development Corporation, and it relies on the expertise of an external body, the Council for Development Policy.

### ***C. Procedures for delivery of the research***

Both in the United Kingdom and in Denmark, the cooperation demonstrates great flexibility with regard to the procedures for delivering research. These procedures include for the United Kingdom: the funding of research programmes generated directly by the Ministry, the setting up of programmes of national (several ministries) and international funders, groupings of academic and other partners (Research Programme Consortia and Research Councils), the funding of specific projects, and support for think tanks, etc. Denmark, through its part, uses funding for research projects programmes at the initiative of researchers from the North and the South; the funding of regional and international research institutions, co-funding of European Union programmes, funding of think tanks and funding of projects whose aim is to strengthen internal capacities. In France, the MAEDI funds two research institutions, combining fundamental research and policy support both in the North and in the South, namely the IRD and the CIRAD.

### ***D. Uptake***

Both DFID and DANIDA's underlining importance of activities that facilitate and contribute to the use of research results by decision-makers. This absorption of research (or Uptake) involves aspects such as communication, dissemination and the use of research results. These aspects are, on the other hand, not very present in the case of France.

In the United Kingdom, it is expected of research projects that they define a usage strategy and that they dedicate 10% of their funding to communicating the results. Uptake is subject to monitoring and evaluation in the same way as other aspects of the research programme and a range of tools have been developed in order to strengthen the capacity of the partners in this area.

In Denmark, all the research projects funded must produce key recommendations for the attention of decision-makers, the research results are used in evaluating cooperation programmes, the research priorities of the countries in the South are part of the political dialogue between partners, the embassies are responsible for maintaining close links with researchers and organising seminars to present research results to national decision-makers, etc.

Both agencies stress the importance of publishing research results in summary formats and in a language that is appropriate for decision-makers.

In both countries, the adoption of a logical framework approach is encouraged, in which objectives, results and specific indicators are defined for policy support and more specifically for the uptake and use of the research. In France, by contrast, there are delegations to public research operators who are more autonomous in their programming. Also in France, the configuration of a MAEDI mobilising research operators and an AFD essentially based on its internal expertise and the use of ad hoc external support could foreshadow the configuration of the future BDA for which it would, however, be advisable to draw from the other two examples.

### **3.2.4. The effects**

This part concerns understanding the contribution of achieving the results to the specific objective.

#### **3.2.4.1. *Effects on beneficiaries***

The analysis of achieving the four cross-cutting objectives helps to determine the impact of policy support and how it varies according to beneficiaries. More specifically, there is a significant impact on the DGD and international bodies, and an impact which is strengthening in other Belgian stakeholders.

##### ***A. Proven impacts at European and international level or at Belgian policy direction level***

The descriptions of the achievement of the outcomes of the ECDPM during the Belgian Presidencies or within the framework of European policies, of the IMT in international health policies (EU, WHO, Global Fund), of the MRAC as part of CITES, of the IRSNB, the KLIMOS Acropolis in the preparation of COPs, the BeFinD Acropolis in APD's accounting to the DAC or of the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis as part of INCAF demonstrate a proven impact on Belgium's involvement at international conferences. This is also the case for drawing up some strategies at national level, as part of the health and agriculture strategies or those linked to grants or in the processes for preparing some cooperation programmes (PIC).

##### ***B. An impact on other cooperation stakeholders being questioned***

With the exception of the IMT via the Be-Cause Health platform and the IRSNB with regard to federal institutions like the Environment FPS, the impact on other cooperation stakeholders is isolated, connected to specific opportunities but not subject to systematic implementation. The institutional framework of support does not, moreover, promote these impacts. In effect the TORs or programmes do not make specific reference to the systematisation of such activities and these stakeholders are only represented exceptionally on support or steering committees. Finally, within the DGD, there is no structured strategy or mechanism supporting this dissemination of impact to the other stakeholders.

##### ***C. An impact mitigated by the institutional changes and reforms of the DGD***

As already highlighted, long-term support and density of contacts with focal points are measures of the quality and impact of these support mechanisms. For example, the 2012 reform of the DGD made changes to the guidance (focal point) of several types of support, including the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis and ECDPM, with proven effects both on requests and on the relevance of the support. The frequent changes in policy priorities increases the number of analysis areas and searches for immediate responses, which can spread the contributions of this support. The use of secondments is symptomatic of the situation.

#### **3.2.4.2. *A limited dissemination of results***

A good balance between visions and long-term support and ad hoc requests is essential to strengthen impact. However, support teams are generally hardly involved in dissemination and in the overall understanding of issues, except at IMT. The information is all too often isolated, and limited to particular projects. There is rarely any policy or overall strategic dialogue between the DGD and its partners on the use of support. Immediate use made by the direct partner is documented, but rarely the more general use of deliverables. Numerous researchers concerned by the instrument (Acropolis,

MRAC, etc.) confirmed that they have little vision on the way in which output is used and disseminated to the DGD. Apart from dissemination directly organised and controlled by the researchers, either independently or because this dissemination is a goal in itself of the programme, as for the IRSNB for example, these researchers often have difficulty in identifying the final effect, within the administration, of what they produce.

The spread of the institutional anchorage of focal points and the lack of specified procedures and systematisation of activities and dissemination mechanisms have an influence on the impact of the support. We would emphasise that the thematic or sectoral platform tool is very relevant to impact in terms of dissemination.

### **3.2.4.3. Support rather than change mechanisms**

The support evaluated Israel at the initiative of the latest policy changes in terms of cooperation. Their contribution is more at the level of the support of new directions which have been taken and reinforcing the strategies, as already analysed within the point relating to relevance.

Increasingly frequent use of policy support to participate in international meetings or of secondment mechanisms lead to a proven risk of weakening or even outsourcing the remits and responsibilities of the DGD. The same is true of the presence of researchers and experts who travel or have travelled only to certain international meetings (BeFinD Acropolis, Aid Effectiveness Acropolis, IMT). This is not the case for the IRSNB, whose role as national focal point gives it an explicit representation remit.

On the other hand, the same is true for the secondment mechanism which can be considered as a form of outsourcing of the administration's functions. In effect, if the secondment contracts are not extended, it is highly likely that their knowledge will disappear for the most part, without having been able to make a transfer of knowledge to the DGD's officials. Apart from the recent secondment mechanism, we are witnessing the emergence of new support tools, in the form of mainstreaming tools, tool boxes or risk analysis tools. For example:

- The creation of the Risk Management tool with the support of the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis.
- The KLIMOS Acropolis, with the support of the IRSNB with regard to biodiversity, has created the "KLIMOS toolkit" as an instrument for analysing the environmental impact of new projects. It should be noted that this "KLIMOS toolkit" will evolve over time towards a "sustainability toolkit", to be developed as part of the Acropolis programme.
- The health strategy evaluation tool by IMT.

### **3.2.4.4. High-quality support and deliverables**

The external analysis by OPM researchers of six publications produced by the instruments assessed allows us to conclude that these deliverables meet overall the three assessment criteria taken into account: relevance, scientific consistency and quality of recommendations, notwithstanding the fact that there are significant variations between publications and criteria.

#### **A. Relevance for development cooperation**

All the publications analysed are qualified as "relevant for development" by the OPM analysts; they all get a rating of between 5 and 6 on a scale of 1 to 7. The most relevant publications pose appropriate questions and responses provided or proposed are useful in order to be able to define a development policy in the area concerned. What this positive assessment justifies the most is that these publications i) address issues relating to subjects currently being debated; ii) describe a sufficiently complete status of the issue dealt with; iii) make an appropriate link between the situation in the South and in the North; and/or iv) establish a clear relationship between the issue being addressed and its impact on development.

A more negative point is connected to the fact that some publications deal with issues that are relevant but so "wide" that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the way in which the answers provided to these questions can be used.

### ***B. Scientific structuring and consistency***

For this criterion, the assessment is more mixed: for half the publications, scientific structuring and consistency is proven (rating of 5-6), for the others it is clearly less so (rating of less than 4).

For the publications that are positively assessed, what is mainly highlighted are the following elements: clarity of structure, conciseness of the discussion and consistency of the conclusions on the one hand, and the balance between the descriptive and analytical aspects on the other hand. However, the stringency in the way of deducing the results upon the body of the analysis could sometimes be strengthened.

For three publications, scientific consistency is assessed much lower: these are publications which, for the OPM researchers, do have their own consistency but above all constitutes statements either of recommendations, or of content of scientific literature. The scientific consistency of the statements would have gained in quality if the summarised recommendations had been compared to the wide literature that exists on the subject and if the scientific literature listed had been more systematically analysed.

### ***C. Quality recommendations in terms of policy support***

For two publications, the recommendations are particularly highly rated (rating of 6-7). And this is mainly because they are understandable, clear and in line with the analysis made in the text and relevant because they are anchored to reality on the ground. These recommendations are practical, policy-oriented and reasonable.

For the four other publications, the assessment of the quality of the recommendations is neutral (rating of 4). This is neither good nor bad evaluation is especially justified by the fact that relevant recommendations exist in these publications but they lack precision, explanation or any arguments. This has an impact on their quality. Also sometimes, the level of their practicability is too uneven.

### ***D. Number of recommendations relevant to development cooperation***

The number of recommendations, per publication analysed, varies between 8 and 31, except for one of them, where the authors do not want to produce recommendations. They prefer to procure information and lessons learned, which decision-makers can interpret at the time they develop their policy.

Subject to the assessment of their quality given in point c) above, these recommendations are rated highly because they are practical, oriented towards policy choices, reasonable and usable. What is particularly highly rated is that some are designed both for the international community and for Belgium. Some, finally, are especially interesting for agencies working on the ground.

## ***3.2.4.5. An impact on the scientific quality of the stakeholders***

### ***A. Access to information and to expanded data sources***

Policy support, in the opinion of all the institutions, is an opportunity to access information and sources as well as resources persons who are not always accessible to scientific institutions and universities. The same goes for facilitated access to major bodies and international meetings. These opportunities thus have an impact both on

policy support outputs but also on scientific outputs, or even the reputation of the institutions and researchers which come out of this enhanced. However, the Aid Effectiveness Acropolis emphasises the persistent difficulty of obtaining structured and permanent access to some sources of information.

### ***B. An opportunity to better understand the realities and constraints related to public decisions***

This policy support is an opportunity to better approach and better understand the constraints and limitations of public procedures, the diplomatic constraints and the multi-player approach of cooperation. This also means, for the IMT, ECDPM and the IRSNB, for example, enhancing methodologies and support procedures specific to policy support activities which will have an impact on other activities and remits of these institutions.

### ***C. A variable tension between academic research and operational support***

This point essentially concerns universities and scientific institutions that have in general taken the option to make a clear difference between their scientific research on the one hand and policy support activities on the other hand.

This tension between on the one hand academic research – be it fundamental or applied – and on the other hand operational support remains present. It is discussed in consultative bodies within Acropolis and the researchers believe that the flexibility of the instrument gives opportunities to find solutions. For some staff, the principle of "drawing rights" in the O\*Platformen organised in a more clear way the difference between academic research and operational support. On the whole, we have the impression of witnessing a gradual decline in this tension which seems to be more present than in previous programmes.

### ***D. International reach***

Appended to this evaluation is an analysis of the international audience of a sample of scientific outputs from policy support. Overall, all of the stakeholders analysed have very good scientific output, published in high-quality or even renowned scientific journals, all referenced in scientific databases and in evaluation standards and with a clear scientific impact. All the stakeholders analysed have thus been published in journals listed in the Top 15 or even the Top 5 of the journals in their discipline.

	<b>Acropolis BeFinD</b>	<b>KLIMOS Acropolis</b>	<b>Aid Effectiveness Acropolis</b>	<b>MRAC</b>	<b>IMT</b>	<b>IRSNB</b>
<b>Number of articles 2012-2014<sup>46</sup></b>	14	15	11	4	59	62
<b>Journals referred to at the reading committee<sup>47</sup></b>	All	All	All	All	All	All
<b>Impact factors</b>	Four: from 1.46 to 1.73	Five: 0.94 to 6.27	Two: from 0.90 to 2.03	All, from 1.45 to 5.52	All, from 0.18 to 5.09	All, from 0.45 to 2.28
<b>Number of quotations from the articles</b>	9	103 <sup>48</sup>	11	22	41	10

*Table 5: Overall figures for assessing the international publications reach*

With regard to quotations from the scientific articles analysed, the table above also notes that there is a very good rate for each of the instruments (between 9 and 103 quotations). A more detailed statement of the number of quotations for each article analysed can be found in Appendix D.

In conclusion, this analysis is very positive and strengthens our assessment according to which, at content level, the policy support teams have a very good reach among their peers at international level.

### **3.2.5. Sustainability**

The sustainability criterion tries to understand the conditions and possibilities for extending the effects after the end of funding or operations. In respect of the "Northern" actions, connected to public service activities, this is more a case of assessing the degree of ownership by those involved, beneficiaries and stakeholders, rather than to consider the "continuation" of activities beyond funding.

Beyond ad hoc support, this means identifying from policy support types those which have the most strategic impact and whose long-term effect is the most guaranteed. In this context, the capacity building objectives of the DGD and Belgian international cooperation stakeholders occupy an important place, although, as we have seen in the section relating to effectiveness, it is without doubt the two cross-cutting objectives whose achievement is still questioned.

<sup>46</sup> This number of articles corresponds to the selected bibliographies which have been supplied to us by the stakeholders themselves. This is a case of identifying scientific articles which have been produced with a direct or indirect link to policy support activities. This is therefore not all the scientific output of the stakeholders, all the more so since the books, book chapters, communications and posters have not been taken into account.

<sup>47</sup> These analyses concern samples of the 6 articles selected. The impact factors are specific to each scientific field and cannot be the subject of comparisons between disciplines. The node in the appendix gives more in-depth detail on these limitations of the exercise.

<sup>48</sup> Including 59 quotations for the same article.

Stakeholder platforms, should also be considered both as the preferred tools for dissemination and to guarantee the strengthening of sustainability. Finally, the medium-term contributions, such as support for developing a strategy note, are also elements of sustainability.

### **3.2.5.1. Sustainability factors**

#### ***A. The long-term framework agreements and the strengthening of the monitoring, steering and consultative bodies***

The formalisation of this support in medium- and long-term framework agreements with all of the stakeholders in this support is a guarantee of stability and sustainability which is not found, however, in the case of the secondment mechanisms.

Furthermore, the regular operation of the various monitoring and steering committees for these programmes, as already discussed previously, enhances the sustainability of these partnerships. This is good practice which is widespread and enables evaluations of support to be drawn up and to plan the support to come, to the extent possible. For the secondment mechanisms, we would emphasise their frequent participation in department meetings and, as a result, the guarantee of regular and ongoing monitoring.

#### ***B. The institutional and organisational soundness of the stakeholders***

In all cases, this support is concluded with long-standing institutions in general, public or academic, and which have several funding sources, all elements which guarantee sustainability. For Acropolis, these are research centres involved for a long time in areas of research covered by the programmes: CRED in Namur, IOB in Anvers, Fragile States in UStLouis for example. The same is true for ECDPM, IMT, MRAC and IRSNB, who support agreements in this area anchored in time, with institutions that have capitalised on the synergies between scientific research and policy support. Several of these centres and institutions are internationally renowned in their fields.

The universities and research centres which collaborate in Acropolis as well as the scientific institutions have extensive experience of policy support studies, and not just for the DGD. The subsidies from the DGD are sometimes used as "seed money" to attract other funding and vice versa. This is real added value for these institutions and this reinforces their research, their international positioning and their ability to find alternative funding sources.

#### ***C. The presence of skills-building components in several types of support***

Besides responses to questions, requests to draft notes or to prepare for international meetings, more and more we are seeing the organisation of skills-building or knowledge-accumulation activities, three training courses aimed at the head office or outreach offices (IRSNB and KLIMOS acropolis), the organisation of seminars for exchanges and discussions involving members of the DGD (Aid Effectiveness, ECDPM, IMT). These activities supplement and enhance impact on the one hand and contribute to the sustainability of the support on the other hand.

#### ***D. Multidisciplinary and the constitution of networks***

The multidisciplinary of the Umbrella bodies, including members from several universities of the North and the South of the country, strengthens long-term collaborations and synergies, particularly through the development of intercommunity initiatives like Acropolis. Similarly, the establishment of networks, through thematic or sector-based platforms, most often intra-community as well, is one of the factors in the sustainability of this support.

### **3.2.5.2. Factors restricting sustainability**

The following elements can be listed as constituting the limitations to this sustainability. As all of these elements have already been addressed in the previous parts and documented, we propose here to simply list them:

- the mobility of DGD staff due to regular rotation of personnel (Field-head office and between departments at the head office) undermines the development of a systematic institutional memory;
- the mobility of young researchers and short-term contracts of university secondments inevitably lead researchers to worry about their professional future while they are still involved in these programs, and this all the more because the prospects for renewal or extension are often only formalised with a lot of delay;
- the absence of systematic processes for dissemination makes it very uneven, depending largely on the dynamic which researchers have or on their research centre or on the scientific interest of the subject analysed (and not necessarily because of its interest for development);
- the frequent renewal of political directions leads to a multiplication of new areas for analysis for which the skills are not necessarily in place in current support programmes;
- the implications of the BDA reform and the current implication of the expertise of the BTC could cause a significant reorientation of the approach in terms of policies;
- the collaboration with the other cooperation stakeholders is in progress but is still often very ad hoc, not very systematic or is institutionalised.



## 4. Conclusion

At the end of this evaluation, we are able to draw the following main conclusions.

1. The scope previously determined for this evaluation covers policy support supplied by a set of institutional actors wider than that defined by the latest legislation on the funding of non-governmental stakeholders, but does not yet cover all the stakeholders and tools which the administration and the Minister's Policy Cell already thinking of using when they seek to prepare, develop or underpin their strategies. These other stakeholders (Platforms, consultative councils, BTC, NGOs, Bio, etc.), funded or otherwise through Belgian cooperation but which do not have funding specifically dedicated to policy support, are also often cooperation stakeholders and will probably be approached more regularly in the future.
2. The eight instruments, which have been analysed in this study, have gradually appeared, responding to successive and distinct needs, based on the specific nature of each of the institutional actors approached, without reference to a general and overall policy support strategy. The funding procedures, the objectives, the formulation of needs and the procedures for monitoring these eight instruments are relatively different. Furthermore, even the definition of what policy support is varies according to the instruments and focuses on different priority elements. Finally, the reference to policy support in general or to the instruments which make it up is practically non-existent in most of the main Belgian cooperation documents (policy notes, strategy notes, etc.). As a result, this set of instruments does not appear in the eyes of most Belgian cooperation stakeholders to be a joint policy support programme and its visibility is relatively low.
3. The theory of change which underpins policy support presumes that, in response to requests formulated by cooperation decision-makers, these institutional actors supply tools or instruments to these which allow them to prepare, (re)direct or implement the most suitable development strategies, based on substantiated analyses. This approach must enable strategic choices to be objectified, and make them more relevant. That success of this process of change depends at the same time on the quality of the request, the quality of production of deliverables and the intensity of use made of them.

The evaluation was firstly able to report that the overall level of satisfaction with the programme, both with the support producers as well as with the beneficiaries, is very closely dependent on the accuracy of the request. Even if over time this request has become more precise and often more directly defined by the administration, it currently is still not very consistent (difference between DGD and Policy Cell, more or less precise in terms of requestors, more theoretical or operational in accordance to both requestors and suppliers of deliverables) and is not coordinated overall. It is dependent on both overall strategic issues (MDGs, climate, biodiversity, development funding, etc.) and on organisational and administrative constraints (lack of human resources, reforms, governmental changes).

The evaluation then notes that with a modest budget<sup>49</sup>, the quality of the deliverables produced is generally positively rated (opinion of focal points and direct beneficiaries, assessment of publications by external experts at OPM, or the reach of the scientific publications produced). Furthermore, over time, these deliverables have diversified, respond more often to more ad hoc or operational requests and this despite (or because) the use of drawing rights which has been largely abandoned.

The use made of these deliverables output by the institutional actors is, in general, relatively limited to the departments or people who request it. A lack of a generalised and organised strategy hinders a wider, more systematic use. When such a wider dissemination of output is found (it is only systematic for a minority of instruments), it is often initiated by the researchers themselves (through platforms, website, newsletter etc.).

4. The long-term partnership which is established as part of this policy support with institutional actors, whose reputation and quality are often internationally acknowledged, has led to a collaborative relationship which combines flexibility and sustainability in an original way: change and adaptation of requests during execution is possible with stakeholders who know each other and institutions which have resources that are not limited to researchers and other experts involved directly in this support. Even if this positive aspect must be tempered by some constraints (consistency of the stakeholders involved in some university programs despite the change in procedures, choice of research focus areas for multi-year periods, etc.), policy support offered by these institutional actors is original and a number of alternatives which exist remain limited, as is highlighted by the benchmarking analysis.
5. The relationship between the institutional actors and public decision-makers is closely dependent on the human factor: the personality, position within the institution, involvement and availability of the person acting as the focal point, have a crucial impact on the development of the programme. Strengthening a certain inequality in the assessment of the achievements of the various instruments.
6. Still considering the eight instruments as a whole, the evaluation notes that it is certainly the first of the four objectives defined in the terms of reference which is the best and most met, namely to help prepare policy within the DGD. The evaluation specifies, however, that this is not so much to prepare for policy choices, which are often made directly upstream by the Minister, but to prepare the operationalisation or direction of these new policy choices. The second objective that is most met is without doubt to support Belgian cooperation in its participation in international debates, either by preparing contributions, or by playing a "back seat" role, or in place of the administration at international forums. Less systematically, the knowledge strengthening at the DGD is an objective partially met by this support. This reinforcement essentially affects persons directly in contact with the instruments, more rarely staff in general, and therefore has a lesser impact on the reinforcement of the institution's knowledge as a whole. Finally, the objective which is undoubtedly the least attained at this stage is the knowledge strengthening of other stakeholders in Belgian cooperation; collaborations and operations of most of the instruments with these stakeholders remains limited and random.
7. Overall still, most of these institutional actors are developing projects in the South, which helps feed into and support their research. However, this link

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<sup>49</sup> All of the policy support that is the subject of this evaluation represents between 0.15 and 0.25 of the budget of the DGD. These are estimates which vary between a minimum which only takes account of the soul budgets directly and clearly allocated to the support and a maximum if the contributions to the support which come from human or material resources, funded by other parts of the programs of these institutional actors, are also taken into account.

between research in the North and projects in the South, for which a distinction has often been maintained administratively in the past, could be exploited in a much broader way.

- 8.** Apart from these general conditions which apply to all the instruments, there are grounds for underlining a certain distinction between support for universities and support for other institutional actors. The first ones, which are older, are often identified by cooperation stakeholders as being the only existing support types. They are distinguished by the fact that they are managed by platforms (ARES-CCD and VLIR-UOS) which are intermediary stakeholders between teams of researchers and the donors, which is not the case for other support. In addition, these are the only support resources for which one of the objectives is to also develop the skills of the researchers themselves in order to lead to academic output. This dual objective, which has appeared explicitly in agreements since 1997, has not, up till now, succeeded in finding a suitable balance, which causes a certain reciprocal dissatisfaction: some beneficiaries in the administration and in the Minister's Policy Cell deem that the output from these university support resources remain too academic and not too operational on the one hand, and that representatives from platforms and some researchers claim that it is relevant to develop some academic output on the other hand.
- 9.** This policy support programme makes a sizeable contribution to the research capacity of institutional actors, enabling additional research funding to be mobilised. This dimension should not be overlooked in a country where budgets allocated to research are relatively low and which, in these times of austerity, are subject to downward pressure.



## 5. Recommendations

Taking into account all the elements analysed and based on the general conclusions of this evaluation, the following recommendations have been formulated for the policy support programme as a whole. These recommendations concern the tool in its entirety, even if some of them can sometimes be of more direct and more specific interest to one or other of these instruments. They have been formulated according to a descending order of priority.

### 5.1. General recommendations

- 1. Preserve diversity.** The variety and the specific nature of the implementation procedures and the institutional actors which constitute added value of a nature to respond to the diversity of the support which is expected both by the DGD and the Minister's Policy Cell. It is therefore recommended to keep this variety, because it allows an effective and efficient mechanism to be designed with each of the stakeholders involved and to give even more specific direction, if necessary, to requests according to the profile and the potentiality of these various stakeholders.
- 2. Foster complementarity and networking.** Take account of other potential policy support sources, such as the Thematic and Sectoral Department of the BTC, NGO research and publications departments, output from platforms, etc. Analyse possible collaborations, and the arrangements for information exchange. Put in place mechanisms which allow lasting ties to be woven, depending on opportunities, between this policies support's program and the existing platforms and consultative councils, in Belgium but also in partner countries, in order to develop network logic and to reduce isolated expertise as far as possible.
- 3. Take account of the context.** Take into account of the need to direct this policies support's program, in the light of the upcoming transformation of the BTC in BDA. The future BDA will, most probably, be responsible more explicitly for identifying where bilateral Belgian cooperation can be involved. It will look for, without doubt, consistently and complementarily to the internal expertise that it possesses and is currently developing, for more operational deliverables from the institutional actors evaluated here. On the other hand, the DGD will need support more directly focused on the preparation and choice of corporation policies. It is recommended to benefit from the specific nature and diversity of policy support evaluated here to better respond to these two more specific future requests: support in order to better determine the policy choices for the DGD and more operational support in order to implement the strategic directions chosen for the BDA.
- 4. Evaluate.** Provide for regular evaluation of the policies support's program in its entirety, particularly with light evaluation mechanisms mid-term or follow-up evaluation enabling changes or flexible redirection of the programs, as is provided for elsewhere partially for the IRMS be and MRAC by the DGD/BELSPO protocol signed in 2014.
- 5. Open up.** It is recommended to open up and to get a better visibility on this policies support's program by highlighting all of its contributions in their entirety,

including references to it in strategy and policy documents, and by sharing the results with other ministries, depending on their relevance.

6. **Contribution of the stakeholders from the South.** More than ever, development issues are involving stakeholders from the South: in the face of the decline of the ODA, the international community is betting more than ever on local funding of development; local governance appears more than ever to be an essential factor in development, etc. The implementation of development strategies but also the policies that underpinned them must therefore be defined in partnership with the stakeholders from the South. A policy of local taxation or managing illegal flows cannot continue to define itself only with the support from researchers of the North, even if they work closely with their colleagues in the South. It is recommended to discuss the opportunity of using policy support formulated by or with university institutions or skills located in partner countries. Starting from experiences like that of MRAC<sup>50</sup>, it is recommended to consider a "self-driven" approach, at the initiative of researchers and institutions in the countries of the South, potentially initially in close collaboration with the actual institutional actors. It is recommended to include this "self-driven" approach on an experimental basis in the next few programmes of one or another of the institutional actors assessed here (for example in at least one Acropolis programme).
7. **Consider not pursuing** the third objective of this program (knowledge strengthening of other actors) which appears as too ambitious. Policy support does not seem able to strengthen the knowledge of other development stakeholders. For this audience, it is recommended to potentially restrict oneself to one objective aiming at high-quality dissemination of the results and knowledge acquired thanks to policy support.

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<sup>50</sup> It would be unfortunate if ongoing reforms such as CSF (strongly focused on a country logic and who separate the interventions of a same actor in different frames whenever they take place in Belgium or in partner countries) make the "south-driven" approach more difficult to enforce.

## 5.2. Recommendations aimed at institutional actors

1. Based on collaborations that already exist and with the extension of initiatives from some support institutions, it is recommended to seek possible **collaborations and synergies** with the other institutional actors of the program through networking and a better exchange of information. This does not mean subscribing to a current method of seeking synergy at any price, but of multiplying the possibilities to think together about the specific methodological nature of the research that is conducted in policy support. The various programs should be able to reserve a limited part of their budget in order, for example, to participate in an annual methodology seminar, organised in turn by one of the institutional actors involved in this programme.
2. It is recommended to take better account of the expectations of **other cooperation stakeholders** in terms of policy support. To do this, there are grounds to systematise collaboration arrangements with other development cooperation stakeholders.
3. It is recommended that greater interaction is stimulated between the activities of this policies support's program and **the other programmes and support of the institutional actors** in order to strengthen the contribution made by land in analyses and research;
4. In the face of the weakness of internal dissemination at the DGD of policy support outcomes, measures should be considered both among the beneficiaries of the support and the suppliers of it. It is therefore recommended to involve a **strategy of communication and ownership** of research results, with precise uptake indicators, in the calls for tenders (for Acropolis) and/or in programme proposals (for the other stakeholders).
5. Given the volatility of demand, particularly following changes in policy managers at the cooperation Department, it is recommended to keep the DGD and the Policy Cell informed of **new skills**, new issues, and new initiatives which emerge from the research work and which may be useful in terms of policy support.

### 5.3. Recommendations aimed at Belgian cooperation decision-makers

Several findings made during this evaluation, such as the relatively low involvement of the Policy Cell of the Minister in the program monitoring as well as the uncertainties related to the ongoing transformation of the BTC in a BDA, encourage us to make a third group of recommendations addressed to policy makers of Belgian cooperation in general. Even if these recommendations might sometimes be related more specifically to one of them, we believe that they should be considered in a coordinated manner. They should be the object of an intelligent dialogue involving, with the same intensity, the Policy Cell of the Minister, the DGD strategic committee and the BTC management committee.

1. Given the fact that this policy support lacks overall coherence, it is recommended that **an overall strategy to use policy support** is drawn up, and that this is included in a planning process focused on outcomes. In order to do this, there are grounds to formulate a definition and a common core of coherent objectives, with determined indicators, grouped together in a single reference document; to distinguish the support for political choices for the DGD and more operational support for implementing strategic directions for the BDA; to establish a precise set of specifications describing the responsibilities, functions and competences of the focal point as well as for the stakeholders and their potential platform; to identify a department to coordinate all support which, with flexible management, shall develop a coherent strategy with all focal points. Modelled on what has been done in the United Kingdom with the "Evidence into Action" team, this coordination would aim to increase the use of research results by decision-makers. In order to do this, it would collectively, on the one hand, ensure that the knowledge produced is understandable and synthetic and on the other hand support decision-makers so that they can access and use this output.
2. It is recommended to put in place **a systematic process for internal ownership of the results** of policy support: establishment of an annual training programme aimed at all officials and based on a systematic review of the various outcomes and associates, using appropriate procedures, diplomats in the field concerned with this ownership process (diplomatic days could be devoted to an annual review of the support produced). Furthermore, better involvement of the officials concerned (in particular diplomats based in the countries concerned) in the formulation of requests for support would consolidate this ownership process.
3. In the face of the (still) too low use of the results of this support, it is recommended **to develop an absorption or "uptake" strategy of the results** of research which could be practically embodied in two types of measures:
  - Define an uptake strategy from the policy support planning stage. Within the DGD, this could be done by identifying the results to be achieved in terms of uptake and specific indicators in the general policy support document. At institutional level, by providing for a specific discussion on the key results that they deem essential to be taken into account by decision-makers and on the manner in which to use them in consultation spaces.
  - The production of practical tools for the attention of institutions and researchers concerning communication and the publication of research results in a format suitable for decision-makers. These tools can include checklists, practical guides, etc. and they should reflect the objectives and priorities defined in the planning process.
4. It would be relevant for **the dissemination to be the subject of a predefined strategy**, in line with a request relaying the priorities of the DGD and which thus allows dissemination needs and mechanisms to be targeted. Put in place a real strategy for disseminating the results of policy support with: i) regular dissemination, in the form of a newsletter to all the DGD officials, including

diplomats in the field, of the announcement of policy support outputs; ii) by harmonising the formats of support publications to make it easier to identify them visually; iii) by harmonising the arrangements for their oral dissemination internally (regular seminars on fixed dates, etc.); and iv) by dedicating a part of the DGD's website to systematic and up-to-date presentation of publications of this support in matching formats.

5. In order to prepare for the future development of federal cooperation, it is recommended to better **involve, as of now, BTC** in rolling out policy support (in the choice and monitoring process) so that it correctly identifies its added value and terms. Secondly, it is recommended to **prepare for the reorientation of policy support** according to the framework of future reform, by devising a two-pillar system. On the one hand, expertise that will support the development of strategic directions of Belgian cooperation development, based both on the internal expertise of the CTV and on a part of the support from the stakeholders who have been assessed here. On the other hand, expertise which will allow the DGD to assume, more than it has in the past, its function to support the preparation of general policy choices, in support of policy managers.
6. As the **human factor** has a significant impact on the definition of needs, the intensity of partnership and the quality of output dissemination, it is recommended to promote the function of the focal point: internal recognition, sufficient dedicated working time, explicit involvement and responsibility in the implementation of support results, etc. Avoid within the DGD a loss of expertise and experience which could be manifested in a lack of ability to formulate relevant support requests. In order to do this, limit as far as possible staff mobility and modifications to administration structures which affect the focal points or, at the very least, ensure that there is an implementation of a "knowledge management" minimum, so that rotation of staff does not automatically cause a loss of knowledge. For example: capture all the knowledge built up during the drafting of strategy notes by secondments, including the scientific methodology for the drafting of strategy notes, so that this knowledge is not lost, in cases where the secondment would not be extended.
7. Given the current precarious nature of several **secondments**, it is recommended to **guarantee their efficiency** by ensuring that this mechanism is maintained for a minimum period of two years and plan for potential mechanisms to re-integrate secondments within support programs in order to enhance the skills and experience acquired in view of strengthening support mechanisms (along the lines of the example of what has been done with IMT).
8. Based on the recent development, it is recommended to consider and **to use the "Drawing rights" tool in a flexible manner**. Where support committees exist at both a strategic and operational level, there are grounds to ensure that they fully play their roles, particularly in the identification and programming of requests and that there are no grounds to use drawing rights, the balance between more general analyses and responses to these ad hoc requests being managed within these committees. Using drawing rights only appears to be necessary if such consultation mechanisms do not exist or do not work.



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Appendix C: Assessment of example cases by OPM

Appendix D: Assessment of the reach of scientific outputs

Appendix E: Benchmarking: France, United Kingdom and Denmark

Appendix F: Final methodological note

Appendix G: Field Report by instrument

Appendix H: Terms of reference of the evaluation



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Dépôt légal n° 0218/2016/022