

S Y S
P O N S

ACODEV, NGO-FEDERATIE, FIABEL
Evaluation Report
02.06.2022

FINAL EVALUATION OF BELGIAN FEDERATIONS OF OSC/IA

|

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1 Abbreviations

BoD	Board of Directors
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DGD	Direction générale Coopération au développement et Aide humanitaire
IA	Institutional Actor
JSF	Joint Strategic Framework
RD	Royal Decree
SO	Specific Objective
TFF	Technical and Financial File
TO	Transversal Objective
ToC	Theory of Change

2 Executive Summary

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

Syspons GmbH was commissioned by the Belgian Federations of Development Cooperation ACODEV, Ngo-Federatie and Fiabel to carry out the final evaluation of their activities and efforts to implement the Joint Technical and Financial File (TFF) 2017–2021.

A mid-term evaluation was previously carried out in February 2019,¹ which focused specifically on the advances of the federations towards fulfilling their role as advocates and defenders of the interests of their members. This final evaluation takes into account the results of the mid-term evaluation and more globally assesses all of the roles of the federations as specified in the TFF. The final evaluation has a strategic importance for the federations as it is conducted upon the conclusion of the 2017–2021 TFF. This joint programme was the first of its kind among the three federations, which was developed after the adoption of the legal reform (Royal Decree) of 2016. This final evaluation therefore also represents the first occasion to assess the advances of the federations after the creation of the joint TFF.

The evaluation serves two purposes. First, the evaluation is intended to render accountability to the funding bodies about the effectiveness of the federations' work with respect to specific objectives formulated in their TFF. To this end, the evaluation includes an analysis with regards to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the federations' work between 2017 and 2021. Second, the evaluation aims at learning about factors of success and failure regarding the federations' engagement to enact the vision expressed in the TFF, namely, to adequately represent their members before political-administrative authorities, to act as capacity builders and, finally, to provide services for their members in support of their administration, governance and information sharing and management. The results of the evaluation will contribute to improving and, if necessary, re-focussing the federations' approach in the development sector through the formulation of recommendations

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND PROCESS OF THE EVALUATION

In order to meet both **summative (accountability) and formative (learning) objectives** of the final evaluation, the evaluation team adopted a **theory-based approach** for this evaluation, based on an existing **theory of change** for the intervention in question. In order to understand the effectiveness and impact of the TFF 2017–2021, the evaluation team used a **contribution analysis** (Mayne, 2001) to assess the extent to which the changes targeted by the TFF (e.g., representation aiming at a conducive legal and regulatory framework; enhanced credibility; synergy and complementarity; professionalisation; and efficient governance structure) have been achieved. To complement this design, the evaluation team used an adapted version of the **Most Significant Change approach (MSC)** to identify less visible impacts.

The evaluation answers the **evaluation questions** provided in the ToRs, along the Specific Objectives (Outcomes). They represent the federations' specific interest with regard to the evaluation. The evaluation focused on certain aspects of the Specific Objectives rather than conducting an assessment of all of the results obtained in the period from 2017 to 2021. The evaluation questions are also contributing to answer the **OECD-DAC criteria** of relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and efficiency². The focus of this evaluation is on questions of relevance, effectiveness, and impact. While sustainability and efficiency are also covered by the evaluation, they are not the central focus of the assignment. Given the organisational dimension of this evaluation, in particular the Transversal Objective on Steering Structures, the evaluation approach is complemented by the **Capacity WORKS**³ model developed by GIZ for this assessment. This model is used by the evaluation team to assess which were the mechanisms that made the federations successful (or not) in reaching these objectives (or not) with regards to their governance structures.

The **evaluation was structured in three phases: inception** (January–February 2022), **data collection** (February–March 2022) and **reporting** (April 2022). The results of the evaluation are based on a document review, exploratory interviews (5) and the development of the **analytical grid** for the evaluation. The grid presents the list of evaluation questions from the ToRs and the indicators/descriptors that guided the data and information needed to collect to answer to those questions. The grid also presents which OECD-DAC criteria are covered by which evaluation question, as well as the dimensions of Capacity WORKS. Ultimately, the grid presents the data collection instruments that was

¹ C-lever.org & DRIS (February 2020). Evaluation à mi-parcours du programme conjoint des 3 fédérations ACODEV, Ngo-federatie et Fiabel

² OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 'Better Criteria for Better Evaluation Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use' (OECD, November 2019), <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>.

³ * GIZ GmbH. La Gestion des Coopérations dans la Pratique : Façonner le Changement Social avec Capacity WORKS. Janvier 2015. ISBN : 978-3-658-07891-1. GIZ GmbH, Eschborn, Allemagne

used to collect the relevant data for each indicator for every evaluation question. During the data collection phase, both quantitative and qualitative data that were collected through in-depth review of available documents, in-depth interviews (20 interviews were conducted with 10 member organisations; 1 Couple organisation; 3 interviews with DGD representatives; 3 interviews with the federations' directors; 3 interviews with federations staff), a focus group discussion, an online survey, as well as a meta-evaluation.

A total of 47 directors responded to the survey (N=47), which is a response rate of 41,2 % across all federations. The survey reached 53 civil society organisations and 7 institutional actors. 31 respondents answered for ACODEV (response rate 41,9%), 22 answered for NGO Federatie (response rate 38,3%) and 7 for Fiabel (response rate 77,8%).

KEY FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

By analysing the data collected against the different evaluation questions, the Syspons team present these results in this section, from which it will be possible to learn for the future implementation of the instrument.

The three federations have fulfilled their role as advocates and representatives of their members (SO1), to a certain extent. The federations' activities are effective in identifying the interest of their members. With regards to the efficiency of the processes underlying the consultation structures, the data shows that the structures in place are not entirely efficient. The federations have contributed to good relationships between the member organisations and the DGD. The federations were, to some extent, effective, efficient and adequate representation of the members' needs before the political and administrative authorities. A series of external factors influence the work of the federations, but there are also **internal factors which are under the control of the federations.**

The federations have contributed to the strengthening of credibility of the members (SO2). The federations have succeeded in **supporting their members to comply with the integrity requirement of the Belgian government**, though their capacity building activities and the provision of preparatory work. There is a steady increase in the number of members that have adopted an integrity policy since 2017, and report on cases of fraud during the period 2017-2021. In addition, the federations have contributed to consolidating some practices initiated by the members in integrity.

Example of success story

For some organisations, the integrity policy that was developed with the support of the federations was also shared with their partners in the countries where their actions are implemented. Through their privileged partnerships, the member organisation can contribute to raising awareness at the level of the partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation. This is a successful example of the extent to which the federations can use their unique position with actor of the Belgian development cooperation to pursue objectives sought by the development cooperation sector as a whole.

In addition, **the federations have contributed to stimulate more reflection among some of their members on their own identity and the future of the sector.** The greatest contribution of CSO federations was the launch of the **Vision 2030 process** which was started by NGO Federatie in 2019, partly in response to the "crisis of credibility" the CSOs were facing, as well as a general sentiment among members and the public that the sector lacked an integrated vision and long-term strategy. While for some, the work of the federations was useful to initiate reflections internally and at the sector level, others do not perceive it as a priority, particularly for smaller organisations who have less resources available to participate.

The federations have **contributed to increasing the transparency practices of their members through the development of their own tools (ONG Livre Ouvert and X-Bank) and have continued to engage in their efforts towards increasing transparency at the level of the whole sector, in accordance with the government regulations (IATI).** The results of the evaluation suggest that the effect of the strengthening of the members credibility was more significant towards the political authorities than towards the general public.

The federations have contributed, to a certain extent to facilitating collective learning and synergies (SO3). More precisely, the federations have **supported the members in facilitating the conditions for the creation of synergies and complementarities in supporting the transition to the JSF.** The federations have a substantial value in terms of providing guides and information, facilitating meetings, and capacity building.

The federations have also **created the conditions for synergies to be created beyond the JSF**, through creating favorable conditions for the members to know each other, inside their respective federations, as well as between federations. The informal contacts during the trainings organised by the federations (i.e., during breaks or once the training is concluded) was considered particularly important to approach other members. These opportunities of exchange and collaborations spark collaborations among members outside of JSFs.

In addition, the **realization of synergies and complementarities in the context of the JSFs has improved for member organisations, although the results show this increase is not systematically linked to the work of the federations**. The results point to the possibility that a large unexploited potential for the federations in the future seems to lie in creation of synergies with actors from different sectors (for instance with the private sector).

The results obtained in terms of synergies are **affected by an external factor**, namely **the political context** in which the federations evolve and its historical evolution (one of the main goals of the reform 2016 was to tackle this presumed fragmentation and motivate actors of development cooperation to create more synergy, complementarity, and collaboration among each other).

There are also **factors internal to the federations that affect the contribution of the federations to the facilitation of synergies**. In particular, the **processes** established by the federations to increase trust and collaboration, especially between the CSO federations and the IA federation affects the understanding of the diversity of the members across the federations could still be improved. As a result, members seem less aware of the diversity of the field, and as such, more critical towards their own federation when it comes to creating synergies and establishing common positions towards DGD.

Example of success story of synergy: JSF Haiti 2017–2021

Although the views on JSF questions their relevance to lead to concrete synergies at the level of formulation of the common programme (strategic level), there are examples of synergies created at the operational level. This was the case in the context of the Haiti JSF where a successful collaboration took place between a CSO and an IA in a programme on professional training targeting the youth. While the interview partner recognized the partnership was slightly unbalanced in terms of resources between the IA and the CSO, they nevertheless took advantage of their respective added values to conduct the common activities. The IA were able to focus on supporting the training center, the CSO brought the sectorial expertise on youth engagement in vocational training. In addition, the experience of the CSO in Haiti in other sectors in cooperation development also benefits the image of the IA in the country, comparable to an endorsement of the actions of IA.

This example also sheds light on the opportunities to replicate the successful collaboration between the same actors in other contexts. This is the case for these two actors who are also involved in the JSF in Benin. Based on their previous experience in Haiti and in based on their strategic objectives, they have found another opportunity to collaborate.

The federations have contributed to increase the capacities of their members (SO4). As such, the capacity building activities conducted by the federations are relevant and tailored to their needs and are generally attended by a good part of the members. The perceptions are especially positive when the capacity building activities concern recently introduced or modified regulations from DGD and M&E. The capacity building activities of the federations have strengthened their capacities, to a certain extent.

The federations also contribute to the **greater professionalization by sharing information and tools** with their members (e.g., newsletter, websites of ACODEV and NGO-Federatie, or helpdesk) the federations use to support their members in understanding and complying with DGD regulations. As a result, member organisations are better informed and more familiar with the regulations and more professional as a result of the work of the federations.

The training of the federations is perceived as useful especially for members who are smaller. The target formulation may be more ambitious than can be achieved with the means the federations have at their disposal, as several interview partners emphasized that their organisation carries out many professionalization activities independently of the federations, which contributes to the professionalization.

The three federations have put in place some high-performing steering structure for the collective implementation of the objectives of the TFF 2017–2021 (Transversal Objective – TO). The federations have consolidated some practices and mechanism for collaboration which contributed to achieving some of objectives defined in the TFF (for instance for SO2 on the reinforcement of the credibility and SO4 on the development of capacities). In that context, the most significant change has been the consolidation of the M&E structure common to all three federations. Nevertheless, **other processes** among three federations are **more informal and less visible**. This was more clearly identified in relation to processes underlying the achievement of SO1 (representation of interests).

In the context of this SO1, the collaborative processes, some formal and others informal, are implemented at **various steps of the logical chain of results** underlying the work of the federations, although these appear to be more harmonized at the operational level of the federations. **The collaborative processes are clear when it comes to the common work of the secretariat of the three federations** (i.e., the positioning notes are developed in common as much as possible). **At the level of the Directors / Board of Directors** of the three federations, the Directors of the three federations regularly meet while also maintaining informal contacts. **However, the contacts between the three**

federations at decision-making level remain between the directors but not between the Boards of Directors of the respective federations. With regards to the collective representation of the sector, some processes systematic, while others are punctual and organized on a needs-basis. For instance, the directors of ACODEV and NGO Federatie conduct joint strategic meetings with the DGD on budget-related aspects while FIABEL conducts these separately. Punctually, the federations also collectively engage. Some interview partners indicate that the three federations successfully collaborated to develop a common note accompanying the negotiation of the 30 JSF, resulting from the organisation of the ad-hoc consultative meeting. Nevertheless, other interviewees do not share the perspective that this process was successful as it required extensive consultations to reach this result. In addition, the heightened sense of competition between IA and CSO during the negotiation with the DGD on the budgets for the new five-year programme 2022-2026; as well as by the COVID-19 pandemic affected the frequency of the contacts between the directors of the CSO federations and the IA federation..

Example of promising practice at representation level: the ad-hoc consultative committee

The ad hoc consultative committee consisting of secretariat staff, directors and mandated members of the Boards of Directors / Steering Committee was developed with the objective to be to build trust and mutual understanding.

Upon the first meeting of the committee, a note was prepared to the attention of the DGD to accompany the process of redefinition of the 30 JSF.

This common communication from the three federations on one of the core processes of the administrative authorities is a good opportunity to bring together various level of hierarchy within the federations that are involved in the development of positioning notes. This also contributes to bringing closer the members of the three Boards of Directors / Steering Committee, by offering the possibility to jointly reflect on the strong and weak points for their respective members. This in turn, contributes to a greater understanding of the realities of the entire sector.

Example of successful collaborative process: the M&E cell

The reinforcement of the joint M&E cell is a successful example of a solid framework to contribute to the objectives of the federations and create a atmosphere of trust. Below are the elements that contribute to its success

- The M&E cell is composed of a trinome, representing each of the federations.
- The cell benefits from concerted tools and approaches to use them and the sources of information
- The cell is equipped with a strategy that clearly identifies the responsible persons, the key persons to be informed and the regularity of their meetings. The strategy also clearly identifies the use of the results emerging from the common cell.

A series of factors have facilitated the creation of high-performing steering structures, including the clear communication channels for the members to contact their federations. This is also closely related to the high satisfaction of the members of the helpdesk function of the federations. The evaluation also highlights that another important factor which contributes to good internal governance is inclusiveness (i.e., perception of openness to opinions), which was also found to be a strength of the federations.

Nonetheless, other factors have hindered the creation of high-performing steering structures, including the diversity in the sector, which makes the harmonization of processes complicated among the federations and affects the capability to establish a long-term impact-oriented vision of the sector. In addition, each of the federations has its own functioning. This also affects the capacity of the three federations to establish a clear division of labor between themselves, thereby also affecting the level of trust they have towards each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a forward-looking strategy common to all federations and their member organisations. Thereby, define the unique contribution of CSO and IA in development cooperation. Involve members in this process to develop a shared mission and vision. Based on this, (re-)define common development needs for smaller and larger member organisations.

Fiabel, ACODEV, NGO Federatie

To do so, we recommend conducting:

1.1. Strategic sector analysis at the level of the three federations together: to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and priorities of the CSO and IA in the development cooperation sector and have a clear panorama of the environment in which they evolve.

1.2. Participatory SWOT analysis at the level of the member CSO and IA: to identify in which domains the members play a key role, where they bring added value, which aspects are consistently weaker as well as where opportunities lay for the future and the external risks that the actors face to reach their objectives.

1.3 Identification of unique contributions of the CSO and IA: Based on the sector analysis and the SWOT analysis, the federations can identify the key areas of contributions of the member organisations as well as the gaps in the sector analysis that are covered or potentially covered by the federations.

1.4 Strategic reflection to refine the forward-looking vision and mission of the federations at the level of the federation: Based on the steps described, the federations should refine the logical links between the SWOT points and sector analysis to further define their forward-looking mission and vision, the “forward-looking strategy”. The federations will be able to reinforce the links between their activities and the priorities and they wish to put forward (outcomes and impact defined for the 22–26 DTF) into a forward-oriented vision.

2. Consolidate their internal processes on the defense of interest

ACODEV and NGO Federatie (and Fiabel to a certain extent in the reinforcement of the links with the forward-looking vision)

The greater understanding of the processes followed by the federations would contribute to the clarification of the priorities included in the positioning notes, which would in turn contribute to reinforcing the links with the forward-looking vision of the federations (Recommendation 1). This would also strengthen the internal coherence of the activities conducted by the federations to gather the interests of their members and how they contribute to the ultimate impact of the federations to make the cooperation development actors more effective, efficient and legitimate actors. This could also contribute to greater engagement of the members in these activities. As presented in section 4, 5.1 and 5.4, one of the findings of the evaluation is the varying participation of the members to the different activities. Greater connection to advancing the whole into the greater cooperation sector could encourage participation. This would strengthen the strategic added value of the federations to the development cooperation both at the level of the members and the authorities. We recommend to:

2.1. Communicate more clearly on their processes: When clarifying their processes, the federations should communicate to their members what are the mechanisms most used by the federations to consolidate their positioning notes and how the information is used to define positioning notes (recommendation 2).

2.2. Tailor working groups to the joint forward-looking vision for the Federations vision: Based on the identification of the key priorities of the forward-looking vision of the federations (Recommendation 1), additional working groups should be established along the key priorities of the federations. This will contribute to obtaining targeted information from the members to the federations.

2.3. Notes of past discussions with the DGD: A historical view on these evolutions would contribute to greater transparency, understanding on the process led by the federations to defend the interests of their members and reach a consensus on the expectations of the members.

3. Centralize all communication towards their members in the newsletter

ACODEV and NGO Federatie

We recommend that the federations further centralize all communications on all aspects related to their work. For instance, based on the helpdesk service from each federation, the federations should create an FAQ of all the topics that are being addressed to them and share them in the newsletter to share these with the whole sector, going beyond bilateral communication. This could be done on a periodic basis on the whole range of topics that are addressed to the federation through the helpdesk. This would ensure all members are aware of the topics discussed by every member and draw advantage of the answers given by the federations. The FAQs formats was considered a useful format by the members to know about the key questions asked for the JSF for instance. This same format could be used again.

4. Representation of smaller member organisations in the BoD of the federation on a rotation basis

ACODEV

The difference in the size of the organisations is especially important to consider when defining common stances to be defended towards the administrative authorities. One aspect underlined by the results of the evaluation is the difficulty for the smaller organisations to be involved at the level of the Board of Directors due to the limited resources they possess while at the same time indicating that they wish the results of the defense process would reflect their needs better.

The federations should initiate a reflection and propose a framework for the smaller organisations to take turns in being represented at the Board of Directors. This would alleviate the burden on one single organisation.

3 Introduction

Syspons GmbH was commissioned by the Belgian Federations of Development Cooperation ACODEV, Ngo-Federatie and Fiabel to carry out the final evaluation of their activities and efforts to implement the Joint Technical and Financial File (TFF) 2017-2021.

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The evaluation report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 3 contains the understanding of the evaluation subject (federations of OSC/AI, especially in the period 2017-2021), including the theory of change refined by the evaluation team together with the federations.
- Chapter 4 presents the methodological approach adopted by the evaluation, in particular the use of a theory-based approach; and the evaluation focus using the OECD-DAC criteria and the Capacity WORKS model;
- Chapter 5 presents the results of the evaluation along the evaluation questions
- Chapter 6 presents the results of the evaluation along the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria
- Chapter 7 contains the recommendations of the evaluation
- Chapter 8 provides the time and work plan for the individual phases of the evaluation and resources
- The Annex includes the Terms of Reference, the analytical grid framing the evaluation, outlining the evaluation questions, indicators and appropriate data collection techniques, the guides for the in-depth interviews with member organisation and with the DGD, the survey questions as well as the list of people met and the bibliography.

⁴ C-lever.org & DRIS (February 2020). Evaluation à mi-parcours du programme conjoint des 3 fédérations ACODEV, Ngo-federatie et Fiabel

4 Context of the evaluation: the Belgian federations of OSC / IA at a glance

4.1 Institutional background

This chapter describes the institutional and organisational background of the federations by providing an overview of the key contextual aspects and development in the Belgian development cooperation landscape as well as the organisational structure of the federations. Furthermore, we outline the TFF 2017–2021 to embed the key objectives of the federations in the Belgian development cooperation.

The two federations of Belgian Organisations of the Civil Society (OSC), namely ACODEV and NGO Federatie, and the federation of Institutional Actors (IA), Fiabel, are the object under evaluation, in particular the results they achieved in the framework of their 2017–2021 Joint Programme (TFF). The federations of OSC are a long-standing tradition in the Belgian landscape. Since their creation in the 1960s which emerged with the goal of representing the deployment of humanitarian expats, they have been for the past 20 years, part of the third pillar of Belgian cooperation. Among the four pillars of cooperation, the first covers bilateral cooperation; the second focuses on international cooperation, while the third refers to indirect cooperation (mostly through NGOS, this is where the federations position themselves) and the fourth covers civil society initiatives (i.e., such as scouts). Being part of the indirect cooperation, the federations serve the purpose of finding a clear position that translates the opinions of their member organisations towards the donors of the sector and to steer the discourse towards the upcoming subject of importance for the community of actors they represent. The federations are funded by the Belgian Directorate-general Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD).

While, historically, the core role of the federation has been centered on advocacy and representation of their member organisations' interests, the growing demand from the donors and the public towards greater quality, complementarity and the search for synergies has called for an evolution of the way the actors in the Belgian landscape operate in the development cooperation sector. This development was articulated in the reform introduced by minister de Croo (2016 Royal Decree), which established a new regulatory framework for the federations and their member organisations, with a clear aim for more complementarity, more targeted efforts and, more concentration of funds through simplified administrative procedures. While the way to achieve this objective was originally based on a call for proposal approach, negotiations with the federations of OSC highlighted the worry that this approach would create a system based on competition among the actors for the funds which would be detrimental to the vision of greater complementarity and exchange. The framework subsequently introduced one significant change, the Joint Strategic Frameworks (*Cadre Stratégique Commun*, CSC, in French). The JSF model introduces the concept of concentrated funds on a selected number of countries and topics; and the collaboration of all the actors situated in the selected countries and / or thematic areas. For the period 2017–2021, there were 33 CSC introduced, 14 geographic JSF implemented in 14 partner countries: 17 other countries, 1 JSF in Belgium, and 1 thematic JSF. In this context, article 24 of the RD lists the roles and responsibilities of the federations and the umbrella organisations in line with the spirit of the general objective of the new Royal Decree reform. Following the adoption of this new regulatory framework, the federation of IA, Fiabel, was created in 2017.

For this group of actors, Art. 24 of the RD lists their new responsibilities around three key roles:

- **Defending the interests and representing** the member organisations
- **Strengthening their professional capacities**, through the organisation of exchanges, knowledge sharing, the creation and facilitation of working groups and
- **Providing services** to their members.

These attributions apply to the federations of OSC, IA and umbrella organisations such as CNCD 11.11.11 and 11.11.11, although they have distinct ways of working and visions. The first level of differentiation concerns the federations and the umbrella organisations. While the federations mostly focus on the defense of their members and their interests, the umbrella organisations put a stronger emphasis on the defense of all the actors of the sector, therefore taking a more political and thematic stance (i.e. signing a political charter to access the membership). This, however, does not prevent members of the federation to also be members of the umbrella organisations. For the umbrella organisations, the advocacy role is therefore more central to their activities. The second important differentiation is between the OSC and the IA. While the OSC are independent from government ties, the IA have a closer relationship with the authorities, for instance, the board of directors of certain IAs may include members of local or national parliaments, IAs more often

work on capacity development within the public sector of partner countries and thereby connect more closely on bilateral development cooperation and, finally, they receive 100% of their funding from the government.

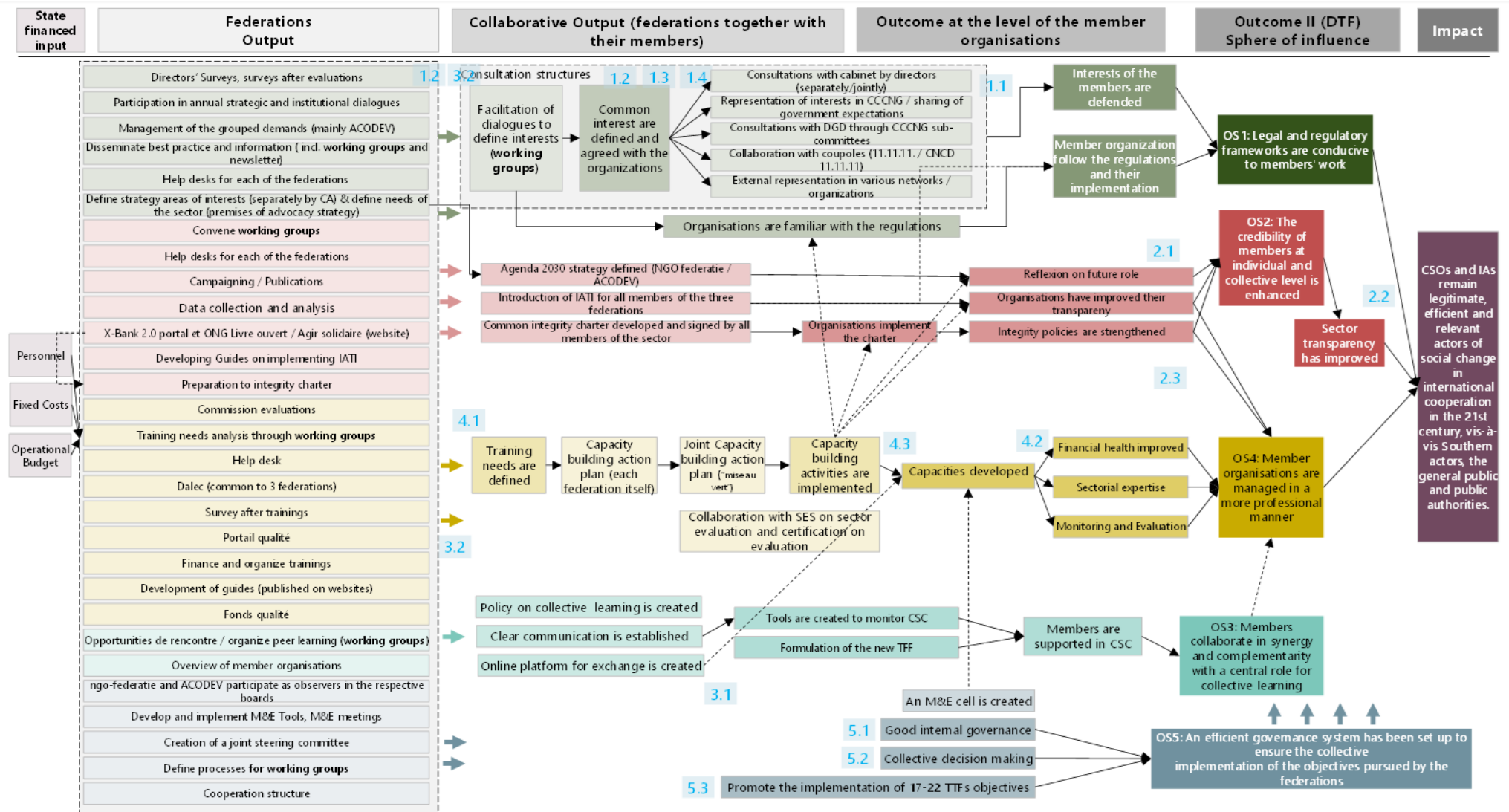
At the level of exchanges with the political-administrative authorities, it is important to specify that the RD 2016 also introduced a consultation platform, the Conseil Consultatif de la Coopération Non-Gouvernementale (CCCNG). It is subdivided into various sub-committees dealing with specific regulatory areas (moral reporting, financial justification, transparency (IATI), JSFs and institutional dialogues).

Following the adoption of the new framework, the federations introduced together in 2016, for the first time, a joint programme for the period from 2017 to 2021. The TFF covers the activities of the three federations, ACODEV, NGO FEDERATIE and FIABEL, that together count 114 member organisations (74, 56 and 9 respectively, 25 of which are common members from NGO FEDERATIE and ACODEV). While ACODEV and NGO FEDERATIE count 105 OSC (French and German speaking for ACODEV and Flemish speaking for NGO FEDERATIE), FIABEL covers nine IA, although it should be noted that the federations of OSC already had collaborated before the preparation and the adoption of the TFF.

4.2 Theory of Change

To understand and visualise the objectives of the TFF 2017-2021 and how they are expected to be achieved, a Theory of Change (ToC) was developed by the federations. This ToC was refined by the evaluation team and discussed with the federations' focal points during the first phase of the evaluation (see Chapter 4.1 for more details). The refined ToC presented in figure 1 below, visualises the intended impacts and outcomes of the federations roles and shows the underlying impact hypotheses by connecting the impacts and outcomes to outputs, activities, and inputs.

Figure 1: Theory of Change of the Technical and Financial File of the federations



Source: Syspons, February 2022 (based on TFF 2017)

S Y S P O N S

The **overall intended impact** of the federations is to facilitate for their members to be legitimate, efficient and relevant members of international development cooperation. To achieve this overarching goal, the federations work towards providing greater complementarity, synergy, administrative simplification for their member organisations.

These goals, in turn, are reflected in four specific objectives (SO) formulated in the TFF. Through the achievement of the four SO (**outcomes**), it is understood that the federations aimed to contribute to the impact mentioned above.

1. SO1 refers to the legal and regulatory frameworks that are beneficial to the work of the members (Outcome 1)
2. SO2 refers to strengthening of the individual and collective credibility of the members (Outcome 2)
3. SO3 refers to the members working together in synergy and complementarity with a central role for collective learning. (Outcome 3)
4. SO4 refers to the member organisations being managed in a more professional manner (Outcome 4)

In order to achieve these outcomes, the federations expected to realize a series of milestones (**outputs**) along the four fields of actions presented above (Outcomes). Among others, the federations assumed they would defend the interests of their members; support them with new regulations; stimulate reflection among the members over their future role; stimulate transparency in the sector; impulse greater integrity; support with the common strategic frameworks; support collective learning; consolidate a programme for capacity development; conduct evaluations; support healthy financial behaviour and develop a policy for trainings.

The federations conduct a series of activities (**inputs**) and develop a collective context where their respective efforts contribute to achieving the outcomes and impact for all of the federations and their members. Among others, the federations collaborate with the umbrella organisations; define clear strategies; rely on the Agenda 2030; lead the efforts on greater transparency for the sector; lead the efforts on the improvement of integrity; create opportunities of dialogue; establish requirements regarding common work areas and organize evaluation and learning.

5 Methodological approach

The evaluation serves both summative and formative objectives. With regards to the summative objectives, the evaluation first provides accountability towards the donor, the Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGD), as to whether the objectives of the federations for the period 2017–2021 were achieved (or not). Secondly, the evaluation aims at learning about factors of success and failure regarding the federations' engagement to enact the vision expressed in the TFF. In order to meet both formative and summative objectives of the final evaluation, the evaluation team adopted a theory-based approach for this evaluation, which seeks to answer the question: How did the intervention achieve the intended observed results and outcomes? What is it in the intervention that made it (not) work, to achieve the intended observed outcomes?) Our approach relies on identifying the “causal mechanisms” that generate the desired results. With the aim of using this approach, the existence of one example with good quality data sources is sufficient. The approach is based on an existing theory of change for the intervention in question, which allows the evaluators to understand the factors that cause the observed effect. As a result, this approach permits an in-depth understanding of the example and its context, providing a detailed explanation of both. Nevertheless, this approach contains a larger risk of bias on behalf of the researcher, since the estimation of the effect and its causality depend in a greater manner on qualitative considerations, rather than quantitative data. The theory-based approach is most suitable to be employed as a research design for this evaluation for the following reasons: Firstly, it requires only one example with good quality data sources. Secondly, it answers the guiding questions of this evaluation on the why and how of the observed impacts, which are also a specific interest of the federations in drawing lessons learned from the knowledge of the TFF experiences.

To implement this design and understand the effectiveness and impact of the TFF 2017–2021, the evaluation team will use a contribution analysis. This is a concrete analytical approach that assesses whether realized effects can be ascribed to an intervention and which factors acted as drivers or inhibitors to realize the observed effects (Mayne, 2001). The contribution analysis aims to assess the extent to which the changes targeted by the TFF (e.g. representation aiming at a conducive legal and regulatory framework; enhanced credibility; synergy and complementarity; professionalization; and efficient governance structure) have been achieved. This approach is based on the Theory of Change refined by the evaluation team for the TFF 2017–2021 presented in chapter 2.2, together with the federations of OSC/IA during a Theory of Change workshop (February 2022).

To complement this design, the evaluation team will use an adapted version of the Most Significant Change approach (MSC). This qualitative evaluation method makes use of storytelling and assumes that certain less visible impacts and unintended results can best be identified through key events or changes experienced by the main stakeholders (e.g., the member organisations, DGD; among others). The MSC approach will be used for several questions in the evaluation dimensions effectiveness and impact, because in these areas MSC has the most potential to reveal hidden and to classify results. This approach is also included in the design for this evaluation considering the high number of stakeholders involved in the TFF 2017–2021's expected results. We will use the MSC approach as an indicator of the most crucial effects and impact identified by the stakeholders.

The evaluation answers the evaluation questions provided in the ToRs (annex 1), along the Specific Objectives (Outcomes) described in Chapter 3.2 above. They represent the federations' specific interest with regard to the evaluation and serve to capture the aspect of the evaluation in more detail.

- EQ 1: To what extent the federations are fulfilling their role as advocates and representatives of their members as described in their TFF and as they are currently being put into practice?
- EQ 2: To what extent have the federations contributed to strengthening the credibility of their members?
- EQ 3: To what extent have federations contributed to facilitating the collective learning process and cooperation in synergy and complementarity with the members?
- EQ 4: To what extent are the federations fulfilling their role as capacity builders of the members, based on their needs?
- EQ 5: To what extent is a high-performing steering system in place between the three federations to ensure the collective implementation of the pursued objectives?

For each evaluation question, there are three to five sub-questions that orient the evaluation team towards the core areas of interest of the end user of this evaluation, namely the federations of CSO and IA. As such, the evaluation focuses on certain aspects of the Specific Objectives rather than conduct an assessment of all of the results obtained in the period from 2017 to 2021. A more detailed presentation of the aspects analysed for each evaluation question of the ToRs is proposed in the analysis grid in the annex 2. The grid presents the list of evaluation questions from the ToRs and the indicators/descriptors that will guide the data and information we need to collect to answer those questions.

As specified in the ToRs, the second level of analysis used is the OECD-DAC criteria. They orientate the evaluation questions along the criteria effectiveness, impact, efficiency, sustainability, relevance. The grid also presents which OECD-DAC criteria are covered by which evaluation question. In our evaluations, we routinely use these criteria and we have adopted the revised criteria since the start of 2020⁵. These criteria are also standard in DGD evaluations. The focus of this evaluation is on questions of relevance, effectiveness, and impact. While sustainability and efficiency are also covered by the evaluation, they are not the central focus of the assignment.

OECD-DAC

Relevance: the extent to which the intervention is in line with the priorities of the target group, partner organisation or donor (with a stronger focus on member organisations). In our evaluation, this relates to the adequacy of the federations' outputs compared to the planned objectives.

Effectiveness: the extent to which the specific objective (outcome) has been achieved as planned by the end of the programme. This criterion is connected to the results obtained on the outputs and outcomes.

Impact: the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. This is reflected in the plausibility to obtain the expected impact described in the TFF 2017-2021.

Sustainability: the degree of probability of sustaining the benefits of the programme in the long term (after completion of the TFF 2017-2021).

Efficiency: the extent to which the resources of the intervention (funds, expertise, time, etc.) have been converted into outputs in an efficient manner and within the set timeframe. The criterion of efficiency is connected to the federations' work and the involvement of the member organisations.

In addition to focusing on the results of the TFF, given the organisational dimension of this evaluation, in particular the Transversal Objective on Steering Structures (see chapter 3.2 above), our approach is complemented by the Capacity WORKS⁶ model developed by GIZ for this assessment of the evaluation questions related to this transversal objective. This model is used by the evaluation team to assess which were the mechanisms that made the federations successful (or not) in reaching these objectives (or not) with regards to their governance structures.

Capacity WORKS

To examine this transversal objective, we will base the assessment on the capacity Works framework, with its five dimensions

Cooperation dimension is used to examine the phenomenon of cooperation between several organisations. Given the federation structure of CSOs/IAs, they have to enter into cooperation with other organisations. The organisations concerned then face the challenge of finding a way to operate successfully in these cooperation systems by finding common goals while maintaining their finding common objectives while maintaining their respective interests.

Strategy dimension: used to examine to what extent and in what way a process of reflection and negotiation process has been set in motion among member organisations. This reflection may touch aspects concerned, in particular with regard to their identity, their vision for the future, the integrity and transparency of their operations.

Steering structure dimension: will be used to assess how and to what extent decisions are made within the cooperation system and the extent to which they are taken in order to guide and coordinate cooperation.

Processes dimension will be adopted to examine the extent to which the processes put in place by the federations were relevant to achieving the intended results (Outcomes). This can for instance be used to assess the extent to which the new consultation structures are organised in an efficient, useful and effective way to define processes for working groups.

⁵ OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 'Better Criteria for Better Evaluation Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use' (OECD, November 2019), <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>.

⁶ * GIZ GmbH. La Gestion des Coopérations dans la Pratique : Façonner le Changement Social avec Capacity WORKS. Janvier 2015. ISBN : 978-3-658-07891-1. GIZ GmbH, Eschborn, Allemagne

Learning and innovation dimension will be used to explore how and whether federations and organisations learn, and how innovations are established for example in the way the federations develop and implement M&E Tools and M&E meetings.

A more detailed presentation of the aspects that the evaluation team will analyse is laid out in the analysis grid in the annex 1. The grid presents the list of evaluation questions from the ToRs and the indicators/descriptors that will guide the data and information needed to collect to answer those questions. The grid also presents which OECD-DAC criteria are covered by which evaluation question, as well as the dimensions of Capacity WORKS. Ultimately, the grid presents the data collection instruments that will be used to collect the relevant data for each indicator for each evaluation question. The identification of documents to assess each of the indicators (as marked by a cross in the grid) is based on the desk research in the preparatory phase. The analysis of the TFF 2017-2021 according to the evaluation criteria will support the formulation of conclusions and recommendations to feed into the implementation of the 2022-2026 TFF.

The evaluation was structured in three phases: inception (January-February 2022), data collection (February-March 2022) and reporting (April 2022).

The objective of the first phase was to get a detailed overview of the work of the federations and the 2017-2021 TFF, and to identify all relevant analytical aspects for the final evaluation. This was done through kick-off meetings, document review and exploratory interviews (5) with directors of the federations, members of the Board and staff members, responsible for learning and quality. During the kick-off meeting, the methodological approach of the evaluation was adjusted to move from the proposed process-focused approach (around the Capacity WORKS model) to an OECD-DAC and theory-based approach, as wished by the federations. The original approach proposed by the evaluation team. On the basis of the desk review and the exploratory interviews, an evaluability assessment was carried out. Based on these findings, the analytical grid for the evaluation was (further) developed. This framework included all analytical aspects and evaluation questions and reflects the perspectives of the relevant stakeholders. The grid presents the list of evaluation questions from the ToRs and the indicators/descriptors that will guide the data and information needed to collect to answer those questions. The grid also presents which OECD-DAC criteria are covered by which evaluation question, as well as the dimensions of Capacity WORKS. Ultimately, the grid presents the data collection instruments that will be used to collect the relevant data for each indicator for each evaluation question. The identification of documents to assess each of the indicators (as marked by a cross in the grid) is based on the desk research in the preparatory phase. The analysis of the TFF 2017-2021 according to the evaluation criteria supports the formulation of recommendations to feed into the implementation of the 2022-2026 TFF.

The evaluation team refined the ToC for the 2017-2021 TFF. The theory of change also forms the basis for the contribution analysis, in a joint Theory of Change workshop with the federations' focal points on 10 February 2022. The initial phase concluded with the methodological note which presented our evaluation design and methodology to answer the evaluation questions, including adjustments to the approach anticipated in our proposal, as well as analytical grid and data collection instruments (interview guides, draft online survey).

The objective of the data collection phase was to collect a valid and comprehensive data set to answer the evaluation questions. This entailed both quantitative and qualitative data that were collected through in-depth review of available documents (annex 7), in-depth interviews (annex 4 & 5), focus group discussion, an online survey (annex 5), as well as a meta-evaluation.

An online survey was conducted from February 11th to March 9th. The federations already conduct an annual survey targeting the directors of member organisations since 2017. This is part of the federations' monitoring and evaluation process and, thus, already contains questions covering aspects that are also under the scope of this final evaluation. As can be seen in the analysis grid, we used some of the questions from this survey to measure several indicators for this evaluation. This approach also allows us to analyse the changes over time. The survey enables us to systematically collect data on results and explanatory factors (see analysis grid). Finally, by adding this quantitative component, our approach becomes a mixed-methods approach, which is generally considered to have a higher validity than either qualitative or quantitative approaches alone. In order to lower the burden on the respondents to the survey and encourage a higher response rate, Syspons and the federation have agreed to conduct a joint survey. Syspons prepared additional questions relevant to answer the evaluation questions to be included in the annual survey conducted by the federation, directed at the directors of their member organisations. The list of questions relevant to the evaluation were jointly finalised with the federations' focal points during the Theory of Change workshop (10.02.2022) during the initial phase and are presented in Annex 4. The implementation of the survey will be led by the federations.

Interpretation of survey results since Syspons developed the additional survey questions on the basis of the already existing annual directors' survey developed by the federations, the same scale has been used: a scale from 1 to 10 (1 being the lowest – 10 being the highest).

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Description of survey sample: A total of 47 directors responded to the survey (N=47), which is a response rate of 41,2 % across all federations. The survey reached 53 civil society organisations and 7 institutional actors. 31 respondents answered for ACODEV (response rate 41,9%), 22 answered for NGO Federatie (response rate 38,3%) and 7 for Fiabel (response rate 77,8%).

A desk review was then conducted to help us draw a complete picture of the work of the federations and the extent to which the objectives planned in the TFF 2017-2021 we achieved (or not). Hand in hand with the desk review, the evaluation team conducted a meta-evaluation of existing evaluations.

Further, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with the following actors:

- 10 members
- 1 Coupole
- 3 interviews DGD
- 3 interviews with the federations' directors
- 3 interviews with federations staff

In addition, a focus group discussion (FGD) was organized on March 22nd. The FGD provided the evaluation team a detailed account on the inner workings of the federations. The FGD focused on collecting more detailed data on the main challenges faced by the federations in carrying out their work and to discuss potential areas of improvement. The FGD was geared towards co-construction and collective reflections for the way forward for the work of the federations. The 13 participants to this FGD were: the M&E focal points from each federation, staff members of the federations, and members of the board of directors of the three federations.

At the end of this phase, we reflected on the results of the data collection phase in an internal synthesis workshop with the experts of the Syspons team. This form of researcher triangulation can increase the reliability of the data evaluation, and, in addition, provide an opportunity to identify initial fields of action along the relevant areas of analysis.

The objective of the reporting phase is to systematically analyse the data in order to synthesize it into consolidated findings. Having triangulated our findings, we present the results in the section 5 and 6 below and formulated recommendations in section 7 on how to improve the key success areas and aspects for the implementation of the follow-up TFF 22-26. Before drafting the draft evaluation report, we have presented the preliminary findings of the evaluation report to the Steering Committee in a restitution session on the 11th of April.

On this basis, we have drafted the final report with the objective to synthesize and systematize all evaluation findings in a clear and concise report. The report clearly describes the findings regarding the evaluation questions and introduces the reader to the methodology used for the evaluation and includes an Executive Summary of findings and recommendations.

6 Evaluation Results

This section presents the results of the evaluation. Following the structure of the Terms of Reference, the evaluation results are presented along the five evaluation questions. A summary of the results along the OECD-DAC criteria is presented in Section 6 below.

6.1 Evaluation question 1: To what extent the federations are fulfilling their role as advocates and representatives of their members as described in their TFF and as they are currently being put into practice?

The extent to which the federations were able to defend the interests and needs of their members can be analysed under two different aspects. Firstly, we evaluate whether the federations identify the interest of their members correctly and whether the process of representation is adequate, efficient and effective. Secondly, the question concerns whether the members have established a relation of trust with DGD, and whether the positions of the members are manifested in concrete regulation results through the work of the federations. In other words, if the work of the federations leads to a more conducive legal and regulatory framework for the members' work (SO 1) as presented in the revised ToC in Section 3.2.

In the first dimension analysed for the evaluation of this question, the data show that **the federations' activities are effective in identifying the interest of their members**. A precondition for correctly representing the interests and needs of the federations' members is an accurate identification of these interests. The results of the online survey show that the federations have succeeded in capturing their members' interests, with 78.8% of respondents giving the federations a score of 7 or higher on a scale from 1 to 10 to the question whether they feel the federations have understood their interests well (N=47). The highest score is achieved by Fiabel with 85.7 %, (N=9) the lowest score is achieved by ACODEV with 70% (N=31), NGO Federatie taking a position between these points. The qualitative data is consistent with this result, and also reveals the variety of mechanisms the federations have used when it comes to gathering the interests of their members. Besides the yearly survey of directors, the federations stay tuned with their members' needs via the working groups, information sessions, institutional dialogues, and follow up meetings to institutional dialogues. The federations also launch internal studies on key topics (for instance on administrative simplification). In addition, the qualitative data indicates that the most used mechanism by the member organisation are the helpdesk and other direct bilateral communications with the federations staff and directors, as well as the working groups.

With regards to the efficiency of the processes underlying the consultation structures, the data shows that the structures in place are not entirely efficient. The qualitative data reveals that after having identified the needs and the interests of their members, the responsible focal points for the respective areas of work (M&E; advocacy, CSC, quality) of the federations consolidated them into positions paper that will serve as the basis for the directors of the respective federations to consult their Boards of Directors / Steering Committees. While there are some differences between the federations in these processes, certain aspects are common: historical knowledge of the personnel at the secretariat regarding the evolutions of the sector and history of decisions of the DGD, reliance on some sources more than an other (WG, annual survey) and the thematic surveys, considerations for diversity of members in size. The consolidated positioning notes are then brought forward to the directors, who will bring them to their respective BoD. Once attributed a mandate to define all or some of the aspects, the directors will use formal and informal consultation structures to engage with the political and administrative authorities (direct consultations with the cabinet; meetings of the CCCNG and sub-committees, coupoles and external organisations). The data collected points to a discrepancy as to the perception of the members of these processes. These results from the interviews seem to contradict the results from the survey 2021, in which the majority of respondents report understanding how the federations work, view the work of the federations as transparent, and know how they can advance their interests for the federations to defend them (with scores of 72,34 % , 70,21,7% and 68,08%, respectively (N=43)). At the same time, a considerable number of the respondents (ACODEV: 25%, N=28, NGO Federatie 20%, N=21 and Fiabel 34%, N=6) indicate that they do NOT know how the federations work, which is arguably much. The qualitative data points to greater uncertainty and little comprehension of the representation processes perceived by the members compared to the survey results. Several interview partners report not knowing how the federations consolidate the various forms of input they receive from their members into a clear position towards DGD, and how this consolidated position is ultimately manifested in

the concrete negotiation results the members read in the newsletter reports (“exactly *where* does representation of interests take place?”).

In a similar vein, the interview partners (especially from the CSO federations) appear to question the procedures for mandating the secretariats to speak before DGD. They equally wonder which conditions need to be met so that the board members can be in a position to speak for all members of a federation. Some members (especially from CSO federations) express doubts about the extent to which the current process for appointing Board members ensures enough objectivity and insight for adequate representation. Moreover, small organisations may not have equal resources to participate in the Board.

Secondly, with regards to the strategies adopted by the federations to ensure the representation of the members, **the data demonstrates that the federations have contributed to good relationships between the member organisations and the DGD.** A precondition for effective representation of interests and needs vis a vis the administrative and political administration is the extent to which the federations have good relationships with DGD and/or possess some leverage to negotiate in favor of the interests of their members. The establishment of good relationships between the members and the DGD is also an important element for the sustainability of the results. The online survey results from 2017 until 2021 show that members have a generally positive view on the relationship towards DGD. Across all federations, the view on relationship with relationship towards increases tendentially, with a peak in 2020 at around 95%. There is a slight decrease in 2021 to 76,6% (N=46), which can, however, still be considered a good value. The highest values are scored by NGO Federatie and Fiabel, with 90,4% (N=21) and 85,7% (N=7), respectively. ACODEV achieves a score of 73,3 % (N=30). Moreover, the survey results in 2021 revealed that 76,6% (N=46) of respondents feel that their federations contributed to the good relationships with DGD, with no significant differences between the federations. A mixed picture emerges from the interviews. The interview partners confirm an improved relationship with DGD and see a stronger relationship of trust between the federations, which is attributed to better communication lines and stronger exchange between the secretariats in recent years. That said, the baseline of good relationships is generally higher with Fiabel members, because of their traditionally stronger ties with the administration. Thus, the question of improved relationship carries more weight for the CSO federations. It should be noted that these results can also be explained by the fact that the CSO federations have been in existence for longer, which is also translated in a rich and sometimes tense history between the federations and the authorities. Furthermore, the lower scores of ACODEV, can also be explained by the greater number of actors and their diversity. The qualitative data also indicates an improvement of the quality of the relationship between the DGD and the federations, by the DGD. In this regard, the interview partners further underline that the ways of communication are also important element to consider in the communication between the federations and the authorities. This is particularly referring to adopting constructive ways of communication, which can be particularly important in the settings of negotiations and when situations of opposition occur. On the other hand, some interview partners also see potential for improvement when it comes to creating a strong negotiating position towards DGD. This refers to, for instance, to the extent at which the federations use the public arena to frame the political discourse and make their agenda publicly known, which would contribute to increasing visibility of the federations and their positions, thereby increasing their negotiation power towards DGD.

Thirdly, **the results are mixed when it comes to** concrete regulation results through the work of the federations. On the one hand, the survey shows that the assessment of the administrative simplification has improved over the period from 2017–2021. The meta-analysis of the mid-term evaluation confirms this picture, in that it points to good examples of administrative simplification by the federations, including the rejection of the audit guide and reporting formats. Concerning the question about the extent to which their interests were represented towards the DGD, 72,34%(N=45) feel that interests have been well represented across 5 years (score 7 or higher out of 10). Thus, even though the results of the federations’ advocacy work are perceived increasingly positively over the last years, there is still room for further improvement. The survey also shows that only 40,43% (N=46) of members feel that the current regulatory framework of Belgian international solidarity is adapted to the realities of their work. The percentage is similar between CSO federations, while it lies 12 points lower for Fiabel (28,57, N=7). The interview partners uniformly report a still high administrative burden, which is especially felt among small organisations (however not exclusively). Specifically, the mid-term evaluation included as one of its central findings and recommendations the need for a more systematic mapping of the interests of the member organisations. The mid-term evaluation concluded that, while the federations have diverse opportunities to identify their members’ needs, there is no systematic knowledge management of these needs. In other words, the picture that emerges from the qualitative data is that the federations have not yet succeeded in following through with the mid-term recommendation, insofar as a common mapping of needs was intended by the mid-term to be a first step towards developing a consolidated and integrated (and stronger) positioning of the federations towards DGD. This has been partially solved by ACODEV upon creating a mapping of its members’ interests, following the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation. Nevertheless, the interviews and focus group discussion still see a lack of a consensual vision towards advocacy as a central weak point of the work of the federations, in the sense of a clear common strategy on which topics the federations can/intend to speak with one voice. This also illustrates the need to further reinforce the use of the mapping of needs fueling a clear strategy

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contributing to the achievement of SO1. Beyond the independent actions taken by ACODEV, the data also indicates the need to extend adopt this approach (i.e., mapping and use to build a long-term strategy) for the three federations, and not only of ACODEV. This additionally links back to the observation of the mid-term that the federations lack a strategy that looks further into the future, which would include topics such as communalities and differences of the federations and how they can best use their different strengths to their advantage, the roles and added value of the federations in the context of other actors within development cooperation, and the development of impact oriented strategies for selected topics that are currently a particular pressure point of the federations (such as negotiating different models of financing before DGD). The idea being that any vision would start from a good analysis (“mapping”) of the interests of the actors involved.

A series of factors external to the control of the federations, that certainly makes a consolidation of positions and the development of a vision a challenging task for the federations is the great diversity among the members, not only between members of different CSO/IA – status, but also between small and large organisations, between organisations operating nationwide and those operating on the level of provinces, and last, but not least, the differences in their dominant language and culture. The review of the mid-term recommendations and reports of some interview partners suggest that the members do not seem fully aware of the diversity of the sector and the added complexity this diversity lends to the negotiation processes. As a result, the members might be particularly (and maybe unwarrantedly) critical towards the federations when it comes to representing their opinion (see also section 5.3).

That being said, there are also **internal factors that have an effect on the representation of the needs of the actors represented by the federations**. The strong differences in the internal governance processes and procedures to reach a decision may contribute, among other factors, to the difficulties entailed in developing a common advocacy position. For instance, NGO Federatie and Fiabel appear to have less formalized procedures for decisions making, with quick communication lines between the federations and their members (“a lot of decisions seem to be made via quick phone calls”), while ACODEV and Fiabel employ a “bottom-up” decision making process, involving many members, in many decisions. This also applies to the process behind the consolidation of the interests into positioning papers by the secretariats, which varies from one federation to the other in terms of sources of information and channels of communication. This may contribute to difficulties in developing a common advocacy position.

Lastly, the interview partners’ description of the role of the federations vis a vis the role of the umbrella organisation is not always congruent with each other, which is not surprising insofar as the mid-term evaluation already pointed towards the negative impact of the fragmentation of the sector on the efficiency and adequacy of the advocacy process.

In conclusion, the three federations have fulfilled their role as advocates and representatives of their members, to a certain extent. The federations’ activities are effective in identifying the interest of their members. **With regards to the efficiency of the processes underlying the consultation structures, the data shows that the structures in place are not entirely efficient**. The federations have contributed to good relationships between the member organisations and the DGD. The federations were, to some extent, effective, efficient and adequate representation of the members’ needs before the political and administrative authorities. A series of external factors influence the work of the federations, but there are also **internal factors which are under the control of the federations**.

6.2 Evaluation question 2: To what extent have the federations contributed to strengthening the credibility of their members?

The federations expected that the “pathways to credibility” they supported would contribute to the credibility of their members in three main ways: (1) by supporting the members in complying with the integrity requirement from the government; (2) by supporting the members in increasing transparency in their organisations and, more largely in the sector, and (3) by supporting the sector’s vision for the future.

The reinforcement of the credibility for the sector is at the core of the 2016 reform. At the time of the reform, the sector, particularly the CSOs, were confronted with a mistrust towards and questioning of the role of CSOs in the general population as well as within a government composed of parties generally less favorable towards CSOs. The predominant sentiments at the time challenged the very right of existence of NGOs. Questions of credibility, integrity and transparency of the sector moved to the forefront of the federations’ work. Note that this “credibility crisis” concerned particularly CSO organisations, so that for Fiabel, the issue of credibility carries less weight than for the federations of CSOs ACODEV and NGO Federatie.

Against this background, the results first show that **the federations have succeeded in supporting their members to comply with the integrity requirement of the Belgian government.** The survey shows a steady increase in the number of members that have adopted an integrity policy since 2017, and report on cases of fraud during the period 2017–2021. In 2021, 100% (N=47) of the members who have responded to the survey report using an integrity policy, compared to 50% (across all federations) in 2017. In 2017, around 20% of respondents on average systematically reported integrity incidents, while in 2021 the figure has raised to 36,9% (N=47) across all federations. According to the qualitative data, the federations have especially supported the members with complying to regulations through capacity building activities and the provision of preparatory work. For instance, the working group on integrity was considered to have mostly supported the members that participated in the working group. The greatest contribution of the federations consists in formalizing integrity practices among the members' organisations. This is explained by the fact that integrity practices were already an important topic to the member organisations (general awareness inside the organisations), even before the government issued specific requirements for the sector. However, for some, this general awareness did not materialize into formal standards. With the support of the federations and in compliance with the government's requirements, the member organisations have now systematically developed an integrity policy for their organisation.

Example of success story

For some organisations, the integrity policy that was developed with the support of the federations was also shared with their partners in the countries where their actions are implemented. Through their privileged partnerships, the member organisation can contribute to raising awareness at the level of the partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation. This is a successful example of the extent to which the federations can use their unique position with actor of the Belgian development cooperation to pursue objectives sought by the development cooperation sector as a whole.

Secondly, the data shows that **the federations have contributed to stimulate more reflection among their members on their own identity and the future of the sector.** The greatest contribution of CSO federations was the launch of the Vision 2030 process which was started by NGO Federatie in 2019, partly in response to the "crisis of credibility" the CSOs were facing, as well as a general sentiment among members and the public that the sector lacked an integrated vision and long-term strategy. The mid-term evaluation in the beginning of 2019 confirmed this sentiment, in as much as one of its four key recommendations for the federations is to develop a common vision for their four specific objectives. ACODEV members developed their own process in 2020, while Fiabel did not formally participate in this initiative (although members are free to join the dialogues). The responses on the survey data show mixed results. 56,5 % of respondents report participating in the vision 2030 dialogues, across both CSO federations. At the same time, only 38,3% (N=46) think that their organisations' credibility benefited from this reflection process (46,3% when only considering the CSO federations, N=51). For ACODEV, this number is at 30% (N=30), for NGO Federatie it is 66,6% (N=21). In the interviews, a generally positive view was brought forward on the Vision 2030 process, from the members as well as from the administrative authorities who recognize the value of the work initiated by the federations in this field. Two members noted during the interviews, however, that participation could be higher. In more general terms, the insights from the interview and focus group suggest that while for some, the work of the federations was useful to initiate reflections internally and at the sector level, others do not perceive it as a priority. The feeling is that particularly small organisations are more likely to deprioritize the participation to such general reflection processes as the Vision 2030, as they may have to exhaust most of their capacities on fulfilling their other obligations towards the administrative authorities.

Thirdly, the data shows that **the federations have contributed to increasing the transparency practices of their members through the development of their own tools and have continued to engage in their efforts towards increasing transparency at the level of the whole sector.** On the one hand, a portion of the federations' work goes into supporting their members in the implementation of IATI-conform reporting and publishing. Looking at the survey responses, the proportion of members reporting conforming to the IATI standards⁷ has steadily increased from 0 to almost 45 % across all federations in 2020. In 2021, 78,6% (N=46) of members give the federations a score of 7 or higher (out of 10) on the extent their federations have supported them in complying with the IATI regulations. According to the interview partners, the support of the federations towards the compliance with IATI was most significant through their helpdesk services to accompany the members in encoding the necessary data onto the IATI platform as well as through the development of a user guide. The federations also provide a forum to discuss transparency matters through the working group on Data and on Transparency, although these were less consistently cited as the most useful support by the members.

Nevertheless, a large majority of members don't use the IATI data outside of the formal requirement and do not consider it contributes to advancing transparency on its own. These results are in line with the opinions expressed during interviews. There seems to be a notion that for transparency to take effect to increase the credibility among the

⁷ Note that this refers to the extent to which the IATI reports conform to DGD standards. This quality index was calculated based on 12 attributes.

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general public, the member organisations do much work themselves in the context of public relations and communications. Several interview partners report that the IATI standards have caused a large administrative burden among the members, which reportedly is disproportionately high compared to the effect they are perceived to have on credibility of the sector. Moreover, the federations are not seen as having a large impact on transparency above and beyond their support in adhering to government regulations (which itself is perceived as useful). One interview partner describes a dilemma of credibility: “The IATI reporting has become a “ticking the boxes” exercise which does not contribute to increasing credibility of the sector as the reporting happens outside the public arena. However, as soon as a media scandal arises regarding the budget reports of a single member, the credibility of the whole sector is decreased in the public eye.”

The interview data nevertheless raises **the importance of the efforts made by the federations to increase the transparency of the sector, through their own tools**, beyond the correct adherence to the IATI standard. According to the interview partners, the tools ONG Livre Ouvert and X-Bank are perceived as useful tools to contribute to transparency efforts and at being more legible to visualize the data for the entire sector. With regards to X-bank, ACODEV and NGO Federatie make the database available to their members. This is a database containing a whole range of information about and from Belgian CSOs, including the profile of the organisation, its finances, its staff. ONG-Livreouvert (NGO OPENBOOK) was developed by ACODEV and NGO Federatie, as an interactive and user-friendly search engine that allows visitors to explore data on organisations, their human resources, financial information and projects by NGO, country or sector, using filters and an interactive map. Data published by members in IATI and X-bank are published on www.ong-livreouvert.be.

Lastly, the data also sheds light on the importance to **differentiate the results presented above with regards to the audience at which the efforts to increase credibility are directed**. The “crisis of credibility” before the reform concerned both a sentiment in the general population as well as specific positions taken by government officials and policy makers that took up and represented these sentiments in the institutional and medial political discourse. The results of the evaluation suggest that the federations have contributed to increase the credibility towards DGD, while the results on the credibility towards the public are less positive from the member’s point of view. The survey data give insights into the members’ opinion on the contributions of the federations to credibility towards DGD. For instance, the percentage of members who feel that the federations have contributed to good relationships with DGD have steadily increased for CSO federations since 2017. The interviews confirm this picture. The majority of interview partners feel that the initiatives of professionalization of federations and the facilitation the federations directly contributed to the members’ credibility towards DGD. In addition, the support provided by the federations in formalizing integrity and transparency requirements was also recognized by the authorities. The perception is that by organizing opportunities for the members to work together and join efforts, the federations have contributed to the ability of the members to increase their network and attract more funding/funding from different donors. The increased collaboration in the context of the CSC (and beyond) and the resulting increase in synergy had had, according to the interview partners, a positive influence on the credibility towards DGD.

This stands somewhat in contrast to the perception of the members on the credibility of the sector among the general public. The impression here is that the members themselves do most of the campaigning that is needed to communicate to the public about efforts to improve transparency, synchronized visions and integrity, thereby increasing the members’ credibility. This is also supported by the results on the survey question on the representation of the members’ interests towards the public. Here, the federations receive an average score of 6 out of 10 (with 38,3%, N=45, of members who give the federations a score of 7 or higher). The data from the interviews indicates this is a point of interest of the interview partners considering the importance of the societal basis of the CSOs.

In conclusion, with regards to the contribution of the federations to the strengthening of credibility of the members, this objective is mostly achieved. The results show that the federations have consolidated some practices initiated by the members in integrity. The results are mixed on the reflections on the future roles of the members. The results show that during the period 2017–2021, the federations have supported the members in complying with the transparency regulation from the government, in addition to their already existing efforts to increase transparency for the whole sector.

6.3 Evaluation question 3: To what extent have federations contributed to facilitating the collective learning process and cooperation in synergy and complementarity with the members?

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As per the ToC presented in section 3.2, the federations are expected to contribute facilitating the cooperation synergy. The analysis of this question therefore focuses on the one hand, on the extent to which the federations succeed in supporting their members during the development of the JSFs, with special funds, preparatory work, the organisation of exchange opportunities and facilitating the development of sectoral standards through trainings and collective learning. On the hand, the analysis also concerns the extent to which synergies and complementarities have been effectively created. Findings on these two aspects are presented below.

Firstly, **the federations have supported the member organisations to comply with the JSFs**. The percentage of members who give a score of 7 or higher to the support of the federations in developing the JSFs fluctuates across the years between 2017 and 2020 within a range between 40% (Fiabel members) and 63,2% (NGO-Federatie members). Note that for Fiabel it was the first year giving support to the members in developing the JSFs for 2022-2026, as Fiabel did not exist during the JSF round of 2017-2021. In 2021, across all federations, 65,96 % (N=46) of respondents assess the support of the federations during the JSF process as positive (70,3 % appreciate the information provided by the federations during the JSF process, 59,57 % perceive the financial support as positive). Only 44,7% (N=46) of respondents feel that the federations have supported their members in advocacy towards DGD in the context of the JSFs. These findings are consistent with the reports of interview partners. Members feel that the federations have a substantial value in terms of providing guides and information, facilitating meetings, and capacity building. They answer the members' need for information and support from the federations to comply with JSF-regulations. Moreover, the perception is that the federations have been able to create opportunities for exchange through information sessions, trainings and working groups, which have resulted in more collaboration between members in general. This seems especially true for Fiabel members, who have had more opportunities to collaborate with CSOs. Nevertheless, the relevance of the JSF's purpose to create synergies receives mixed results from interview partners. Some members perceive the JSF are causing a disproportionately high workload compared to the effect they have on synergy and complementarity of the sector, others acknowledge.

Secondly, **federations have also contributed to supporting synergies through increasing contacts between different members**. On the one hand, several interview partners maintain that the initiatives started from members independently from the JSF process has been at least as much influential to create synergies as the JSF. In this regard, the qualitative data indicates that the federations have contributed to creating favorable conditions for the members to know each other, inside their respective federations, as well as between federations. These opportunities of exchange and collaborations spark collaborations among members outside of JSFs. Such collaborations are viewed as more effective and sustainable, as they grow "organically", and in a bottom-up manner. For instance, the common trainings between two or more federations brings members organisations together that wouldn't normally work together (either due to their respective areas of work or working in different JSF). The interview partner particularly highlighted the importance of the informal contacts during these trainings (i.e. during breaks or once the training is concluded) to approach other members. In some cases, this has led to establishing a bilateral channel of communication between members to continue exchanging on their respective activities. It should be noted that the opportunities for these informal encounters have been affected by the COVID-19 since the trainings were organized remotely. This stands in contrast to the synergy that is perceived as being "imposed" by the JSF, with their specific requirements. However, the perception is that not all members are equally reached with such activities for exchange, as many, especially small, organisations reportedly do not have the resources to participate, while large organisations tend to prioritize activities within their (mother) organisation.

Thirdly, **the data shows that the realization of synergies and complementarities has improved for member organisations**. The extent to which members feel that there is a significant positive evolution in terms of synergies and complementarities in the sector has increased. Between the years 2017 and 2020, we can see a general positive trend in the members' opinion on the increase of synergies in the context of JSFs, with numbers around 50% for CSO-federations in 2017 (18% for Fiabel), to around 65,96% (N=46) on average in 2021 (with substantially larger variance across members of different federations in 2020 than 2017). Moreover, in 2021, 61,7 % (N=45) of respondents state that their organisation has created synergies with other organisations in recent years. The interviews point to the possibility that a large unexploited potential for the federations in the future seems to lie in creation of synergies with actors from different sectors, for instance, unions or the private sector. Only 31,92% (N=46) of respondents to the 2021 survey are positive about the support of the federations on creating synergies to other external stakeholders in the context of the JSFs. Moreover, only 12,76 % (N=46) of members are satisfied with the federations' networking activities with the private sector. This potential has been recognized and introduced into the federations' multiyear programme of 2022-2026. At the same time, in 2021, less than 30% of members think that at least part of this effect is attributable to the work of the federations. Specifically, only 27,66 % (N=45) of respondents feel that the work of the federations has been useful in general in creating synergy and complementarity. This is in line with the qualitative findings described above, in that the sector has undergone considerable change in terms of synergy.

Example of success story of synergy: JSF Haiti 2017-2021

Although the views on JSF question their relevance to lead to concrete synergies at the level of formulation of the common programme (strategic level), there are examples of synergies created at the operational level. This was the case in the context of the Haiti JSF, where a successful collaboration took place between a CSO and an IA in a programme on professional training targeting the youth. While the interview partner recognized the partnership was slightly unbalanced in terms of resources between the IA and the CSO, they nevertheless took advantage of their respective added values to conduct the common activities. The IA were able to focus on supporting the training center, the CSO brought the sectorial expertise on youth engagement in vocational training. In addition, the experience of the CSO in Haiti in other sectors in cooperation development also benefits the image of the IA in the country, comparable to an endorsement of the actions of IA.

This example also sheds light on the opportunities to replicate the successful collaboration between the same actors in other contexts. This is the case for these two actors who are also involved in the JSF in Benin. Based on their previous experience in Haiti and in based on their strategic objectives, they have found another opportunity to collaborate.

These results are affected by external and internal factors that can hinder or facilitate their achievement. **Externally**, in order to understand the role of the federations in light of the mixed quantitative and qualitative data above, it is important to recall the historical context in which the federations operate when it comes to creating synergies. As stated before, the political discourse at the time of the reform was characterized by unfavorable opinions surrounding the future relevance of CSOs in development cooperation. The discourse partly picked up on publications showing a fragmentation and diversity of the Belgium development cooperation landscape (for instance through the review of DAC members regularly carried out by OECD). In this political atmosphere, one of the main goals of the reform 2016 was to tackle this presumed fragmentation and motivate actors of development cooperation to create more synergy, complementarity and collaboration among each other. The JSFs, which were introduced as a compromise solution between representatives of CSOs and the commission of the minister, required that CSOs and IAs should base their work on common goals defined every five years within a joint framework (mostly by country, but also thematically), and attached a large portion of governmental funds to these common multiyear plans. When the JSFs were introduced, the hypothesis of the government was that the exercise of developing JSFs every five years would not only lead to greater rationalisation of governmental funds but also on greater impact and sustainability of the work of the development cooperation actors. However, as the mid-term evaluation of 2019 already pointed out, the JSFs were seen by the members as a cumbersome exercise; an imposed administrative burden that was seen as diminishing the member's independence and traditional right of initiative. This context puts the federations in a difficult position. At the same time, the disappointment over the (actual or presumed) "missed chance" during JSF-negotiations for strengthening the positions of the CSOs, the (actual or presumed) threat they represent for smaller organisations, are still present among the members, and linked to the whole concept of "synergy and complementarity", giving it a negative connotation.

Internally, when it comes to the new processes the federations have established among themselves, several interview members confirm a greater complementarity and synergy in some regard. This is especially attributed to the high level of trust and good communication on the level of the secretariats. However, whether this greater synergy translates to the level of the boards, or the even level of member organisations, is questioned. According to some interview partners, the level of understanding (and empathy) among the members for their diversity, leaves something to be wished for, even after 5 years working under the reform. This is especially – however not exclusively – true when it comes to complementarity between Fiabel and the CSO-federations, who do not have processes of partaking in each other's Board meetings. As a result, members seem less aware of the diversity of the field, and as such, more critical towards their own federation when it comes to creating synergies and establishing common positions towards DGD.

Example

"Now that I see your diagram [on the various actors of the Belgian development cooperation landscape and their relationships] your graph I realize that there are more federations beyond [mine] and the other ones also shape the negotiations with DGD. It is easy to forget that."

The mid-term evaluation may have already pointed to this situation (translated from Dutch, p.46):

It is important to recognize that the diversity (and sometimes contradiction) of opinions also lies within the member organisations. Where possible, it is useful for each member organisation to take a position and – where appropriate – to organize an internal debate on the various issues raised. Although the opinions of key people within the organisations will no doubt continue to be expressed in the future and will give a sense of the diversity of views existing in the sector, the setting up of the mapping would provide a solid common core of reference for the priority positions to be defended by the federations.

The desk review and interviews did not provide conclusive answers as to whether this observation has been picked up by the federations in the meantime.

With regards to the extent to which the federations have enhanced collective learning, the qualitative data indicates that this has been the case to some extent. In particular, the qualitative data indicates that this happens in diverse ways. First, the interview partners underline that the JSFs represent an opportunity for collective learning in some cases. Whether the JSFs provide the right opportunity or not is affected by the type of proactivity adopted by the leader of the JSF in that sense. While some leaders are active in creating common resources to benefiting all the actors, others are more passive. However, the data does not clearly indicate to what extent the federations have contributed this achievement. Second, the interview partners recognize that the opportunities for encounter created by the federations (around trainings, workings group) contribute to members exchanging their practices and learning from each other. This was especially important during the COVID-19, during which the members had less opportunities to meet.

In conclusion, the results are mixed as to extent to which the federations have contributed to facilitating collective learning and synergies. On the one hand, the data demonstrates that the federations have supported the members in facilitating the conditions for the creation of synergies and complementarities in supporting the transition to the JSF with financial and informational resources. On the other hand, the data is mixed as to extent to which synergies and complementarities were created as a result of the federations' work, although the federations have strengthened the conditions for the synergies to be created, beyond the JSF.

6.4 Evaluation question 4: To what extent are the federations fulfilling their role as capacity builders of the members, based on their needs?

In order to reinforce the capacities of the member organisations, the federations are first expected to identify the relevant need of their members, to propose an offer that answers their needs in three fields, namely: M&E, financial aspects and specific sectorial expertise (for instance gender). The analysis for this question also looks the extent to which the activities conducted by the federations have effectively reinforced the capacities of the members (see section 3.2 for further details).

First, **the data shows that the members perceive that the capacity building activities conducted by the federations are relevant and tailored to their needs.** As already discussed in section 5.1, and 5.2 the members perceive their needs are understood by the federations: 78,72% (N=45) of respondents give a score higher or equal 7 in 2021 to this question in the directors' survey. The process of assessing the needs of the federations is perceived as transparent and exhaustive (members are being asked after training, in the survey etc.). The members also perceive that the federations *respond well* to their needs for capacity building. This is supported by the results of the survey which reveal that the attendance of members in the capacity building increases across the years, for all federations. Attendance to at least one of the capacity building activities increases from just over 60% in 2017 to nearly 100% in 2020. Especially the course on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) appears to attract an increasing number of members across the years. This is confirmed by the qualitative data which also indicates that the members across the three federations were particularly satisfied with M&E capacity building activities.

The 2021 survey finally reveals that the helpdesk, the guides (on IATI, performance, etc.) and the trainings conducted are perceived as most useful to capacity development (with percentages lying between 85,1 % and 80,85%, N=44), while the evaluations and quality fund were rated the lowest in the contribution to developing the capacities of the members. The largest differences between federations are seen in the assessment of the website, the quality fund and the support in financial management, in that Fiabel members give much lower scores than CSO members (28.57%, 57.14% and 57.14%, compared to numbers for the CSO federations that do not go lower than 57,14%). Note, however, that IA are encouraged by Fiabel to consult the website of the CSO federations, which also display information relevant both to CSO and IA. When it comes to the lower scores on the quality fund, this may be explained by the diversity between the members of Fiabel and the CSO federations. Therefore, the common trainings financed by the quality fund may be more optimally targeted to the needs of the CSO organisations than the needs of the IA organisations, as some interview partners indicated. This would also explain the lower scores on the capacity building activities around financial management, since, presumably, this may be a topic in which large organisations may be particularly more. The interviews confirm this picture. Moreover, the members feel that the federations generally communicate on time on upcoming capacity building activities, although two interview members maintain that the timing of the announcement/activities could be better linked with the timing of governmental regulations (two example mentioned

here are the publishing of the Theory of Change videos, as well as the exchange meeting on the moral reports towards DGD).

Secondly, the data shows that the capacity building activities of the federations have strengthened their capacities, to a certain extent. Across all federations in 2021, 82,98% (N=45) of respondents indicate that the capacity building activities have contributed to improvements in their organisations (scores varying from 80,95% for NGO Federatie (N=21) to 100% for Fiabel (N=7)) The most significant change in capacities is in M&E with 72,3 % of members who indicate that the

The interviews confirm this picture and further indicate that the training of the federations is perceived as useful especially for members who are smaller. Larger/internationally operating members tend to orientate themselves towards the activities organized by their own mother company. Other interview partners also consider that they already have the sectorial skills as they already focus on a specific sector in their core business, therefore relying less on the federations. At the same time, smaller companies do not always have the capacities to prioritize these training activities. The most often mentioned trainings in the interviews are the M&E trainings, which is perceived very useful.

Interestingly, while most interview partners are very positive towards the capacity building activities their federations offer, they are surprised by the strong formulation of specific objective four. Members emphasize in particular the quality of informational support when it comes to adhering to the screening standards set by the administration. and point out that the motivation to participate in capacity building activities often (though not always) come from government requirements. Beyond the requirements-related initiatives, the federations are perceived to *contribute* to the professionalization of their members but are not perceived to be the *sole cause* of their professionalization, as the formulation of the objective seems to suggest to them. Moreover, the federations feel that the way professionalization is defined by DGD does not always reflect the realities of the member's work.

Generally, **the members are very positive about the quality of information and tools** (e.g., newsletter, websites of ACODEV and NGO-Federatie, or helpdesk) the federations use to support their members in understanding and complying with DGD regulations. Also interview partners report using the websites of ACODEV and NGO Federatie frequently, participating in information sessions and reading the newsletter for this purpose. Across all specific objectives, the most coherently positive picture emerges for specific objectives. Data from the survey show that 93,61 % (N=47) of members are happy with the general support of their federation. The interviews and the desk review further underline that the federations contributed to helping the member organisations gain better knowledge of the government requirements.

In conclusion, the capacity building activities of the federations are adapted to the members' needs. Participation in the capacity building activities is acceptable, tending towards good, in that perceptions are especially positive when the capacity building activities concern recently introduced or modified regulations from DGD. Member organisations are better informed and more familiar with the regulations and more professional as a result of the work of the federations. Target formulation may be more ambitious than can be achieved with the means the federations have at their disposal, as several interview partners emphasized that their organisation carries out many professionalization activities independently of the federations, which contributes to the professionalization

6.5 Evaluation question 5: To what extent is a high-performing steering system in place between the three federations to ensure the collective implementation of the pursued objectives?

The objective to establish high-steering steering structures was defined as a transversal outcome (TO) of the TFF 2017-2021. As such it was expected that the federations would consolidate practices and mechanisms to (1) facilitate collaborative decision-making; to (2) support the achievement of the other four outcomes targeted by the 2017-2021 TFF and (3) to strengthen good internal governance.

Firstly, the data shows that the **federations have consolidated processes and mechanisms that support the collective decision-making among the three federations** (see also sections 5.1 to 5.4). In that context, the most significant change has been the consolidation of the M&E structure common to all three federations. As presented in section 3.2, the federations work collectively towards the achievement of the four specific objectives of their TFF 2017-2021. Their achievement relies on a chain of logical changes leading from activities to outputs to outcomes. These logical links are supported by the ability of the federations to function separately and jointly when needed, through collaborative

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processes. The qualitative data sheds light on collaborative processes, some formal and others informal, that are implemented at **various steps of the logical chain of results** underlying the work of the federations; although these appear to be more harmonized at the operational level of the federations (i.e., activities and outputs).

At the level of activities of the federations with member organisations, the data points towards two clear examples of collaborative processes implemented by the federations. For instance, approximately 51% of the trainings conducted in 2021 by the federations were conducted jointly by the three federations.⁸ In addition, the federations have also jointly developed common tools to support their members in the preparation and development of the CSC (see section 5.4).

At the level of outputs of the federations, the data shows a growing tendency at the **secretariat of the federations** to systematically work in pairs/trio (consisting of the secretariat from each federation) who will centralize information in the fields of actions of the federations (i.e., quality, CSC, M&E, etc.). Although the focal point for each federation will centralize information separately, the pair/trio will collaborate to develop common positioning notes, to the extent possible. The positioning notes consist of the key points conveyed by the members through a range of mechanisms that will be communicated to the Boards of Directors (see 5.1 for more details). Further, the positioning notes are developed in common as much as possible; however, in case of disagreement or sensitive subjects, the notes are prepared separately. The qualitative interviews indicate that the positioning notes are mostly written by ACODEV and NGO Federatie. It is important here to differentiate the functioning of the three federations considering that with 9 members, FIABEL has the capacity to gauge the interest and concerns of its members more quickly than NGO Federatie and ACODEV. The number of members of FIABEL means that they are able to common position more quickly as well. However, as discussed in section 5.1, the practices and processes applied for the consolidation of the needs and interests could be further clarified and communicated, amongst the staff of the federations and to their members. This would also contribute to manage the expectations of the members as to the priorities that are identified and subsequently defended and why. In addition, the secretariats of the three federations participate in the annual staff seminar (*mise au vert*) during which they discuss key topics for the year concluded and define new areas of focus for the year to come, therefore also contributing to collectively reflect.

At the level of **outputs of the federations**, the qualitative data from the desk review and the interviews indicate that there are various collaborative practices in place at the **decision-making level of the federations (Directors and Boards of Directors / Steering Committee) between ACODEV and NGO Federatie**, while they are less harmonized between the three federations. Contacts between the **directors of ACODEV and NGO Federatie** have naturally happened since before the period 2017–2021. Historically, there was only one federation representing all CSO actors in Belgium, which was subsequently split into two separate federations, one for the Dutch-speaking CSO and one for the French-speaking CSO. Nevertheless, their interests remain close, therefore facilitating contacts. Furthermore, communications are systematically conducted before the Board of Directors (BoD) meetings of the two federations to agree on the key topics to be addressed in the respective BoD Meetings. In addition, according to the qualitative data, the Directors of ACODEV and NGO Federatie are observers in each other's BoD. The BoD of the two CSO federations are also held on the same day to harmonize the federations calendars on decision-making processes. This is expected to contribute to establishing favorable conditions to reinforce the trust between the two federations and to the formulation of common stances. For the first time, a joint **BoD meeting** was conducted in March 2022.

Between ACODEV, NGO Federatie and Fiabel, the qualitative interviews and desk review indicate that the **Directors of the three federations** regularly meet (once a month) for a working session, while they also maintain informal contacts, including when discussing positioning notes or ahead of CCCNG meetings. According to the mid-term evaluation: *"Despite the joint programme, there is no common steering/governance structure at the level of the three federations to facilitate collaboration and strategic synergy in the implementation of the programme"*.⁹ Despite the advances described at the various steps of the logical chains, the collaborative processes appear more harmonized at the operational level, rather than at the strategic/decision-making level, as explained above. This is also confirmed by the qualitative interviews, which also highlight that the contacts between the three federations at decision-making level remain between the directors but not between the Boards of Directors of the respective federations. The mid-term evaluation recommended the creation of strategic steering committee, involving members of the BoD. Following the mid-term evaluation, an ad-hoc consultative committee was held (in 2020) with a clear view discuss the proposition of 30 JSF and thematic ones. The committee was successful in developing an accompanying note to the process to the attention of the political-administrative authorities and in obtaining validation of four out of five proposal introduced by the federations. However, the heightened sense of competition between IA and CSO during the negotiation with the DGD of the budgets for the new five-year programme 2022–2026; as well as by the COVID-19 pandemic affected the frequency of the contacts between the directors of the CSO federations and the IA federation. According to the

⁸ ACODEV, NGOD Federatie, Fiabel. No date. Operationele Planing. Not published.

⁹ C-Lever.org & DRIS bvba. February 2020. *Mid-term evaluation of CSO/IA federations: Mid-term evaluation of the joint programme of the 3 federations ACODEV, Ngo-federatie and Fiabel*. p6

qualitative data, these were also identified as factors that discouraged the organisation of other sessions of the consultative committee. This therefore leaves a vacuum in harmonization at the level of the Boards of Directors of the three federations.

At the level of **outcome of the federations**, the data shows that some collaborative processes are in place between the three federations to support the collective representation of the sector towards the political and administrative authorities. While some processes systematic, others are punctual and organized on a needs-basis. With regards to the systematic collaborative process at representation level, the three federations participate in the CCCNG meetings (taking place four times a year) and its sub-committee meetings, where they address the priorities, they have been mandated to discussed by their respective BoD, on the basis on the positioning notes. To prepare for this, the directors of the three federations meet before the CCCNG. In addition, the directors of ACODEV and NGO Federatie also conduct joint strategic meetings with the DGD on budget-related aspects while FIABEL conducts these separately. Punctually, the federations also collectively engage. As mentioned above, the three federations also successfully collaborated to develop a common note accompanying the negotiation of the 30 JSF, resulting from the ad-hoc consultative meeting.

Example of good practice at representation level: the ad-hoc consultative committee

The ad hoc consultative committee consisting of secretariat staff, directors and mandated members of the Boards of Directors / Steering Committee was developed with the objective to be to build trust and mutual understanding. Upon the first meeting of the committee, a note was prepared to the attention of the DGD to accompany the process of redefinition of the 30 JSF.

This common communication from the three federations on one of the core processes of the administrative authorities is a good opportunity to bring together various level of hierarchy within the federations that are involved in the development of positioning notes. This also contributes to bringing closer the members of the three Boards of Directors / Steering Committee, by offering the possibility to jointly reflect on the strong and weak points for their respective members. This in turn, contributes to a greater understanding of the realities of the entire sector.

Secondly, as presented above, various measures have been implemented to increase collaborations between the federations for the period 2017-2021, although the **most significant change** regarding collaborative measures is in **M&E practices**. This change is particularly important **in terms of collaborative processes** but also for the correct monitoring of advances and results obtained during the TFF 2017-2021. In terms of collaborative processes, the data collected for the final evaluation indicates that the M&E system among the three federations has a solid framework, benefitting from the measures described above, as well as further practices to harmonize the approach across the three federations, such as a common policy and tools. According to the qualitative data, the three federations collaborate on M&E aspects at the level of the secretariat, in conducting common activities (i.e., M&E working group and trainings), developing common positioning notes and maintaining regular communication. In addition, the desk review also shows that the federations have formalized M&E processes with the adoption of the Result-Based Management (*Gestion Axée sur les Résultats – GAR*, in French) policy in 2018¹⁰. The policy provides a clear process for the RBM of the federations for their yearly and five-year planning, regularity of meetings, reporting periods, and identification of responsible parties. The RBM policy also introduces a common tool to the three federation, in the form of a common monitoring excel sheet providing the framework for systematic follow-up of the achievements of the TFF 2017-2021.¹¹ In order to ensure the common use of the tool and the robustness of the follow-up, the federations have also introduced an accompanying procedure note on the common monitoring tool.¹² The procedure note establishes a clear definition of the goals of the tool, assignation of responsibilities for each sub-result of the TFF 2017-2021, timeframe for the responsible persons to fill in the tool and detailed explanations on how to fill in the tool. As a result, the steps taken to strengthen the common M&E practices among the three federations contribute to **promoting the objectives of the TFF 2017-2021**. The 2018 accompanying procedure note on the common monitoring tool states that the goals of the common excel tool are to:

- “Feed into the overall monitoring of the five-year programme
- Check the status of implementation of activities
- Identify activities that are behind schedule
- Identify internal or external reasons for delay
- Identify possible corrective actions
- Provide input for the next annual action plan”¹³

Example of successful collaborative process: the M&E cell

The reinforcement of the joint M&E cell is a successful example of a solid framework to contribute to the objectives of the federations and create a atmosphere of trust. Below at the elements that contribute to its success

¹⁰ ACODEV, NGO Federatie, Fiabel. Aout 2018. „Note de politique ‘Gestion axée sur les résultats’ des fédérations”. Not published.

¹¹ ACODEV, NGOD Federatie, Fiabel. No date. Operationele Planing. Not published.

¹² ACODEV, NGO Federatie, Fiabel. October 2018. Note de procédure pour le remplissage de l’outil de monitoring. Not published.

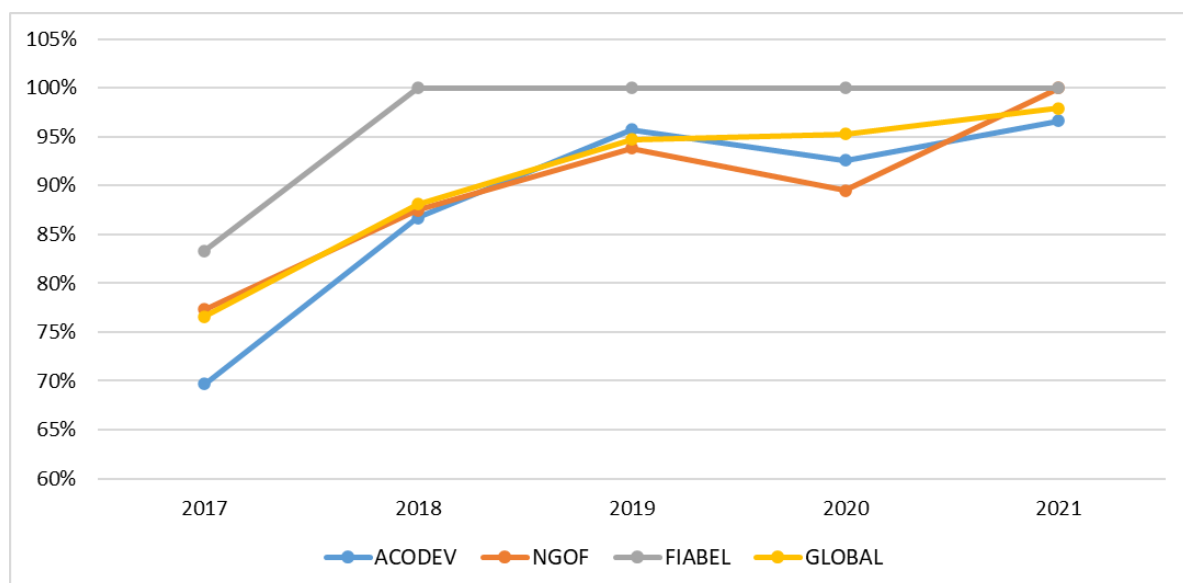
¹³ Ibid.

- The M&E cell is composed of a trinome, representing each of the federations.
- The cell benefits from concerted tools and approaches to use them and the sources of information
- The cell is equipped with a strategy that clearly identifies the responsible persons, the key persons to be informed and the regularity of their meetings. The strategy also clearly identifies the use of the results emerging from the common cell.

Lastly, the data collected for the final evaluation underlines **factors that have facilitated and hindered the achievement of the TO to create high-performing steering structures**. On the one hand, regarding the elements contributing to high-performing steering structures, the evaluation used the online survey to capture the perceptions of the members on the key aspects contributing to good internal governance, as defined by the Capacity WORKS model of GIZ.¹⁴ As such, the online survey was used to assess the perception of the members on the following aspects of their federations' way of working: transparency; efficiency; effectiveness; mediation; inclusiveness; understanding; contact with their federations; timeliness (see annex 5, Question 7 for more details).

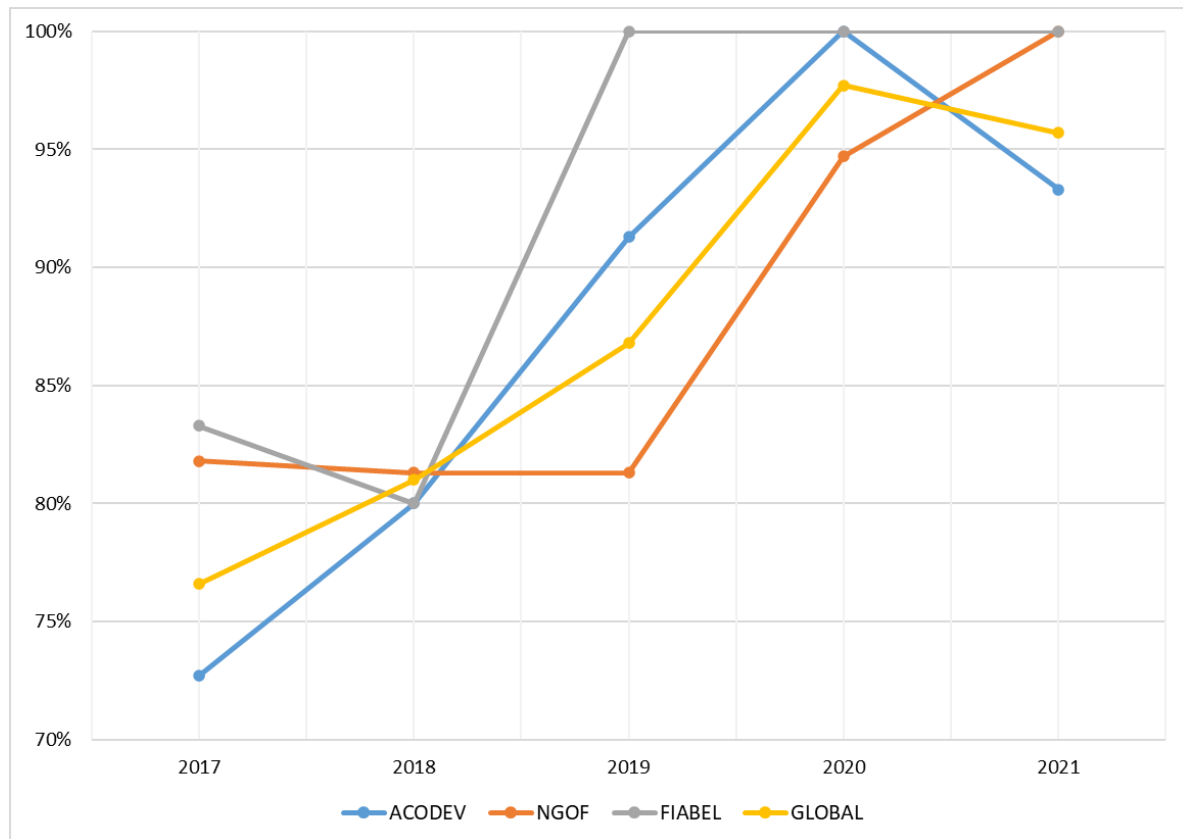
According to the survey data, the federations establish clear communication channels for the members to contact them, with the members rating most highly the statement "*I know when and how I can call on federations*" (89, 36% (N=43) of the respondents to the survey rated this item 7 and above on a scale from 1 to 10). This was also confirmed by the qualitative data, which highlighted that the focal points within the staff of the federations are clearly identified by the member organisations. As explained above, clear communication of specific questions, needs and interests constitute a pre-condition for the defense work of the federations. For example, interview data indicate that members can clearly identify who to contact for financial-related matters at the federations level. This result is also closely related to survey results showing the high satisfaction of the helpdesk function of the federations. The figure below shows results from the survey on the satisfaction of respondents with the helpdesk. As showed in the figure below, the perception of the quality of the helpdesk is both in quality (97.87 % rated this item 7 and above on a scale from 1 to 10; N=47) and in responsiveness (95.74%, rated this item 7 and above on a scale from 1 to 10; N=47).

Figure 2: Satisfaction with the federations' help desk function in terms of: Quality response



¹⁴ GIZ GmbH. La Gestion des Coopération dans la Pratique : Façonner le Changement Social avec Capacity WORKS. Janvier 2015. ISBN : 978-3-658-07891-1. GIZ GmbH, Eschborn, Allemagne

Figure 3: Satisfaction with the federations' help desk function in terms of: Response speed



Source: Annual directors survey from 2017 to 2021

In addition, according to the Capacity WORKS model of GIZ, another aspect of good internal governance is inclusiveness, by which an organisation is perceived to be open to opinions. This aspect was the second most highly rated by the members in the online survey (76,59% rated this item 7 and above on a scale from 1 to 10; N=43).

On the other hand, the **elements hindering to high-performing steering structures**, were identified both internally and externally. The focus group and interview data points to the diversity in the sector, making the harmonization of processes complicated among the federations and affecting the capability to establish a long-term impact-oriented vision of the sector. As presented along this report, the members organisations represented by the federations have very diverse needs and capabilities depending on their size, their sector of activity, their nature as a CSO or an IA and their context. This diversity affects the works of the federations in finding common stances in their different fields of action (i.e., quality and learning, M&E, advocacy, application of regulations, etc.). In addition, each of the federations has its own functioning due to: the number of members they represent (as mentioned, FIABEL having only 9 members is quicker in interacting with its members while NGO Federatie and ACODEV represent a much larger number of members); its organisational culture (while both CSO federation adopt a participator approach, ACODEV employs a bottom-up approach, engaging its members in multiple initiatives to move upstream; while NGO Federatie adopts a proposition-based approach to its members. This translates into longer processes for ACODEV in comparison to NGO Federatie). In turn, as presented in this report, the federations have yet to define a concerted vision for their work that takes into account the diversity and the unique advantages of their members.

This also affects the capacity of the three federations to establish a clear division of labor between themselves, thereby also affecting the level of trust they have towards each other.

With regards to extent to which the three federations have put in place a high-performing steering structure for the collective implementation of the objectives, the results are mixed. The data shows that the federations have advanced towards this TO by consolidating some practices and mechanism for collaboration (for instance in consultation processes and M&E), which contributed to achieving some of objectives defined in the TFF. Nevertheless, other processes among three federations are more informal and less visible. This was more clearly identified in relation to processes underlying the achievement of SO1 : representation of interests (see also section 5.1).

7 Summary of evaluation results along the OECD-DAC criteria

This section presents a summary of the results of the evaluation along the OECD-DAC criteria. The results presented here reflect the main results presented in the previous sections 5.1 to 5.5. and are based on the analytical grid (annex 2) approved upon the finalization of the methodological note.

Relevance

With regards to the identification of the needs of their members, as stated in the section 5.1, the federations activities are relevant to identify the needs of their members.

Furthermore, as presented in section 5.2, regarding the reinforcement of the credibility of the member organisation, the federations have contributed to more reflection among their members on their identity and the future relevance of their work. The data also indicates that the federations have particularly contributed to their reinforcing their member's credibility towards DGD. Data suggests that this is not equally true for credibility towards the public.

Lastly, the results contained in section 5.4, show that the capacity building activities of the federations are adapted to their members' needs, especially when they aligned with recent regulations introduced DGD. The members are more professional as a result of the work of the federations.

Efficiency

As presented in sections 5.1 to 5.5, the efficiency of the work of the federations is affected by external factors, namely the diversity of members, different internal governance processes of each of the federations, the fragmentation of the sector and unclear role division between federations and umbrella organisations. The evaluation also highlights that internally, the federations could further clarify their internal processes that contribute to their role as interests' defenders. Taken together, these internal and external elements can lead the federations to adopt formal and informal processes which can lead to varying interpretation of processes among members of the secretariat and Board, leading ultimately to inefficiency.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the federations' work was measured by the degree the specific objectives of the TFF 2017-2021 (outcomes) were reached and the extent to which the impact hypotheses held true. The overall assessment is that the federations mostly reached their objectives laid down in the 2017-2021 TFF.

With regards to SO1 which focused on the facilitation of a legal and regulatory framework conducive to the members' work, the results presented in section 5.1 show that the federations have contributed to good relationships to DGD and among each other in recent years, the federations have set the precondition for effective representation before the administrative authorities. In addition, the results of the negotiation processes have become more positive in the perception of the members in recent years. The federations have become more effective in representing the interests of their members.

With regards to SO2 which aims at the reinforcement of the credibility of the members, the results presented in section 5.2 indicate that the federations have succeeded in supporting their members in complying with integrity requirements. The greatest contribution consists in formalizing integrity practices among the member organisations.

With regards to SO3 and the facilitation of the synergies, the results included in section 5.3 show that the federations have provided effective support to their members to transition to the JSF and have provided further opportunities for synergies among members, but the data is inconclusive as to how these conditions consistently lead to creating synergies. Similar results were found with regards to collective learning.

As stated in section 5.4, which focuses on the results obtained with regards to SO4 and the professionalization of the members, the federations have had a most significant effect in the development of skills related to M&E, financial and administrative matters than in sectorial knowledge.

Finally, with regards to TO and the established of high-performing steering structures, the results of presented in section 5.5 show that the federations have somewhat consolidated mechanism that support collective decision making among the three federations, the most significant change in processes being the consolidation of the M&E structure

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that support the objectives of the TFF. The federations have not been entirely successful in clearly and transparently communicate their practices and processes that they used for consolidation of needs and interests and identification of priorities. Concerning the identification of priorities and the communication of summaries of the interactions with DGD the federations could improve their practice. Concerning good practices of the federations' good internal governance, the federations are highly rated in inclusiveness (the needs of the members are heard), and communication of responsibilities (the members know which focal points among the federations they have to contact for different topics).

Impact

The evaluation of the impact of the federations was analysed based in the plausibility of the impact hypothesis. The scope of the evaluation did not allow for an independent impact evaluation (e.g. no impact data of the development work of the organisations could be collected). As stated in sections 5.1 to 5.5, the evaluation confirms the hypotheses that the work of the federations benefits from fostering exchange between CSO and IA, consolidating the view and needs of the organisations and discussing and implementing common standards. The federations facilitate this process and therefore contribute to improvements of the development work. For instance, the federations specific transparency tools and practices have contributed to increasing transparency of the sector. The federations have supported the transition to the JSFs and facilitated ample exchange between members, which were seen as the most significant contribution of the federations to improved synergies and complementarity in the sector. The advocacy and representation processes of the federations could be conducted in a more forward looking, concerted and impact-oriented way.

Sustainability

With regards to sustainability, the results included in section 5.1 demonstrate that the federations have contributed to establishing pre-conditions for sustainable relationships between their member organisations and the DGD as well as between the members of the three federations.

In addition, the advocacy role of the federations is inherently linked to establishing a sustainable legal and regulatory framework by formalizing the interests of their members into laws and regulations.

With regards to strengthening of the professional capacities of the members, the results presented in section 5.4 show that the federations have also contributed to making their members more familiar with regulations and the requirements of the administrative authority, as well as in the M&E related matters.

Lastly, the results presented in section 5.2 show that the efforts of the federations towards reinforcing the transparency of the sector are expected to be sustainable, especially through the tools X-bank and ONG Livre Ouvert.

8 Recommendations

Based on the evaluation results previously presented in section 5, the following recommendations are made to further improve the role of the federations.

1. Develop a forward-looking strategy common to all federations and their member organisations. Thereby, define the unique contribution of CSO and IA in development cooperation. Involve members in this process to develop a shared mission and vision. Based on this, (re-)define common development needs for smaller and larger member organisations.

Fiabel, ACODEV, NGO Federatie

As presented in section 5, the federations are effective in identifying the needs of the CSO and IA actors in the development cooperation sector, deploying a wide variety of mechanisms (working groups, surveys, studies, amongst others). In addition, following the MTE, the three federations have intensified their efforts (at operational staff level and to a certain degree at decision-making level) towards finding a consensual approach to define the needs and interests that will allow their members to fulfil their expected impact. While there are instances of common positioning across the three federations, there is not yet a consolidated and integrated (and stronger) positioning of the federations towards DGD. There are several factors affecting this capacity, some internal, some external. This aspect was also raised in the mid-term evaluation and remains an important aspect to be addressed based on the data of the final evaluation. There is nonetheless a strong potential within the sphere of influence of the federations to find a harmonized impact-oriented vision for the work of the federations to become a motor for the indirect cooperation, integrating into the efforts of the larger landscape of development cooperation in Belgium but also worldwide.

Based on solid analyses, the means at their disposal to engage with the CSO and IA of the development cooperation sector and the practical knowledge of their members' experiences, the federations have the opportunity to further refine the unique advantages of the CSO and IA in development cooperation.

This would especially contribute to reinforcing the hypotheses underlying the achievement of the specific objectives of the TFF,

To do so, we recommend to conduct:

1.1. Strategic sector analysis at the level of the three federations together

Through the comprehensive identification of the strengths, weaknesses, and priorities of the CSO and IA in the development cooperation sector, the federations have a clear panorama of the environment in which they evolve. This analysis should define how the work of the CSO, and IA differs from the work of the technical cooperation and development cooperation by the academic sector. By defining strength and weaknesses, the federations can explore potential and needs for cooperation with other players in Belgian development cooperation.

1.2. Participatory SWOT analysis at the level of the member CSO and IA

Inspired from the 2030 vision trajectory, the federations should conduct a participatory SWOT analysis with their member organisations. They should identify in which domains the members play a key role, where they bring added value, which aspects are consistently weaker as well as where opportunities lay for the future and the external risks that the actors face to reach their objectives.

1.3 Identification of unique contributions of the CSO and IA

Based on the sector analysis and the SWOT analysis, the federations can identify the key areas of contributions of the member organisations as well as the gaps in the sector analysis that are covered or potentially covered by the federations. Especially as it is the ambition to seek cross sector cooperation in the new TFF, knowing ones one strengths and weaknesses is crucial to form partnerships.

1.4 Strategic reflection to refine the forward-looking vision and mission of the federations at the level of the federation

Based on the steps described, the federations should refine the logical links between SWOT points and sector analysis to further define their forward-looking mission and vision, the "Federations' Strategy 2030". On this basis, it is expected that the federations will be able to reinforce the links between their activities and the priorities and they wish to put forward (outcomes and impact defined for the 22-26 DTF) into a forward-oriented vision. In turn, this vision can complement the efforts of the other pillars of development in the Belgian landscape and efforts worldwide (i.e. SDGs aimed at in the 22-26 DTF). The federations will be able to bring forward increasingly relevant, robust and forward-looking stances to the political and administrative authorities, as well as to the wider public in Belgium, thereby

continuing to increase their credibility and legitimacy. They are able to leverage their added value to fulfil their role as defenders of the OSC/IA. Using their practical knowledge of the members to illustrate their arguments listed in the positioning notes, they are able to bring closer the different actors across the table to collectively create the conditions for more effective development cooperation. For instance: what doesn't work in the practical application of the law? Or what are practices that work well but are not captured by the law and could be a way forward?

2. Consolidate their internal processes on the defense of interest

ACODEV and NGO Federatie (and Fiabel to a certain extent in the reinforcement of the links with the forward-looking vision)

The results in Section 5 show there is a continued potential for improvement on the perception of the members on the transparency of the processes followed by the federations to consolidate the interests by the members and the consultation structures used to defend the consolidated positions. In particular, the survey data uncovers that there is a disconnect between the perception of the members that their needs are understood by the federations but that they are not represented in a regulatory framework of Belgian international solidarity is adapted to the realities of their work..

The greater understanding of the processes followed by the federations would contribute to the clarification of the priorities included in the positioning notes, which would in turn contribute to reinforcing the links with the forward-looking vision of the federations (Recommendation 1). This would also strengthen the internal coherence of the activities conducted by the federations to gather the interests of their members and how they contribute to the ultimate impact of the federations to make the cooperation development actors more effective, efficient and legitimate actors. This could also contribute to greater engagement of the members in these activities. As presented in section 4, 5.1 and 5.4, one of the findings of the evaluation is the varying participation of the members to the different activities. Greater connection to advancing the whole into the greater cooperation sector could encourage participation. This would strengthen the strategic added value of the federations to the development cooperation both at the level of the members and the authorities.

This would contribute to reinforcing the links underlying results hypothesis 1, by contributing to greater transparency and understanding of the process in place to ensure the representation of the interests.

We recommend to:

2.1. Communicate more clearly on their processes

The federations use several mechanisms to gauge the interests of their members, however some are more useful than others (i.e., working groups, institutional dialogues, annual survey, helpdesk) to provide targeted and relevant information. When clarifying their processes, the federations should communicate to their members what are the mechanisms most used by the federations to consolidate their positioning notes and how the information is used to define positioning notes (recommendation 2). This will contribute to reinforcing the coherence of the work of the federations towards the members and the link with the greater communication efforts that the federations have put in place (e.g., notes on the negotiations at the CCCNG level and Board of Directors level).

2.2. Tailor working groups to the joint forward-looking vision for the Federations vision

The working groups are a rich source of information for the federations, they are also a point of encounter for the different members of the federations and are a useful tool for the federations to disseminate information. Based on the identification of the key priorities of the forward-looking vision of the federations (Recommendation 1), additional working groups should be established along the key priorities of the federations. This will contribute to obtaining targeted information from the members to the federations.

2.3. Notes of past discussions with the DGD

The federations should centralize notes on the history of the negotiations processes with the political and administrative authorities and the results of these negotiations. There is currently a large amount of institutional memory held by key personnel at the federations that is used at moment of the consolidating positioning notes. However, not all member organisations are aware of these historical developments, which can contribute to unrealistic expectations as which needs and interests are being negotiated (or not) with the administrative authorities. A historical view on these evolutions would contribute to greater transparency, understanding on the process led by the federations to defend their interests and consensus on the expectations of the members.

3. Centralize all communication towards their members in the newsletter

ACODEV and NGO Federatie

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Several measures have been taken by the federations to continuously inform their members on various topics. The newsletter is a central communication tool consistently being cited by the members as a useful tool for them to find information on the upcoming capacity building activities of the federations, on the meetings of the working groups, to find the meetings notes from CCCNG meetings, Board meetings, etc.

We recommend that the federations further centralize all communications on all aspects related to their work. For instance, based on the helpdesk service from each federation, the federations should create an FAQ of all the topics that are being addressed to them and share them in the newsletter to share these with the whole sector, going beyond bilateral communication. This could be done on a periodic basis on the whole range of topics that are addressed to the federation through the helpdesk. This would ensure all members are aware of the topics discussed by every member and draw advantage of the answers given by the federations. The FAQs formats was considered a useful format by the members to know about the key questions asked for the JSF for instance. This same format could be used again.

This would continue to reinforce the added value of the tools deployed by the federations towards their members while also expanding its use to other types of contents. This, in turn, would contribute to the efforts towards greater transparency and continue reinforcing the sense of trust of the members towards the federations.

4. Representation of smaller member organisations in the BoD of the federation on a rotation basis

ACODEV

As presented in the results of the evaluation in section 5, the diversity of the sector, in particular the size of the organisations, is particularly important for the work of the federations. More specifically, the results show that the difference in the size of the organisations is especially important to consider when defining common stances to be defended towards the administrative authorities. One aspect underlined by the results of the evaluation is the difficulty for the smaller organisations to be involved at the level of the Board of Directors due to the limited resources they possess while at the same time indicating that they wish the results of the defense process would reflect their needs better.

The federations should initiate a reflection and propose a framework for the smaller organisations to take turns in being represented at the Board of Directors. This would alleviate the burden on one single organisation.

This would contribute to further increase the representativeness of the smaller organisation into the decision-making organs of the federations. As the diversity of the sector has been mentioned as an influencing factor on several results, including the representation of the interest, this could provide the basis for potential improvement.

9 Timeline of the Evaluation

Phase	Activities	Consultant days	Jan. 22				Feb. 22				Mar. 22				Apr. 22				May. 22					
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Phase 1 - methodological note	Kick-off meetings with the steering committee and responsables at the organisations	1																						
	Review of available documentation (evaluability assessment)	3																						
	6 explorative interviews with board chairs and directors of federations, representatives of OSC/IA and DGD (incl. organization of development of interview guides)	3																						
	Adjustment of evaluation concept and development of the analysis grid	2																						
	Theory of Change Workshop	1																						
	Preparation of the methodological note	3																						
	Revision and incorporation of comments	0.5																						
Phase 2 - data collection	Analysis of documents relevant to the evaluation	3																						
	Meta-evaluation	3																						
	Analysis of results of online survey	4																						
	A maximum of 13 semi-structured in-depth interviews with a sample of member organisations, DGD and couples	5																						
	A maximum of 3 focus group discussions	5																						
	Brief debriefing with federations on key results	1.5																						
	Internal synthesis workshop (triangulation)	4																						
	Meeting with the steering group	1																						
	Phase 3 reporting	Draft evaluation report	5																					
Feedback session																								
Incorporation of comments and presentation of the final evaluation report		3																						
Final feedback																								
Submission of Final Evaluation Report		1																						
Final Steering Committee Meeting		1																						

10 Annexes

Terms of Reference of the Evaluation



October 2021

Reference terms for the final evaluation of the CSO/IA federations

1. Clients

ACODEV, Federation of French- and German speaking NGOs for development cooperation.
Address: Boulevard Léopold II, 184 D, 1080 Brussels, Tel.: 02 / 219.88.55.
Responsible person: Raphaël Maldague, email: rm@acodev.be, Director.

And

Ngo-federatie, Flemish federation of NGOs for development cooperation.
Address: Vlasfabriekstraat 11, 1060 Brussels, Tel: 02 /536.19.20
Responsible person: Arnout Justaert, Director.

and

Fiabel, Federation of Belgian Institutional Actors.
Address: J. Dillensplein 1 box 15A 1060 Brussels, Tel: 02/209.07.99 Responsible person:
Koen Frederix, Director

Contact: Maria Serrenti, email: ms@acodev.be; Iseult Kestelyn,
email: iseult.kestelyn@ngo-federatie.be; Hélène Flaam, email: Helene.Flaam@fiabel.be

2. Institutional and regulatory context.

The actors of non-governmental development cooperation have gone through several and successive legislative and regulatory reforms in recent years. These reforms were aimed, inter alia, to achieve enhanced cooperation and more complementarity and synergy among the actors. The negotiation of Minister De Croo's latest reform has resulted in a new regulatory framework (Royal Decree of 11/08/2016) that, i.a. aims to bring the actors of non-governmental cooperation closer together and simplify the administration. This reform also involves the federations of civil society organisations (CSOs), ACODEV and ngo-federatie, as well as the federation of institutional actors (IAs) Fiabel. These three federations represent different kinds of members. ACODEV is the federation of the French- and German-speaking development cooperation associations. This federation represents 74 members of which 59 are accredited. Among them, 25 are also members of ngo-federatie.

Ngo-federatie is the federation of Flemish development NGOs and represents 56 members, 39 of which are accredited. Finally, Fiabel is the federation of institutional actors and represents 9 members (2 organisations are only present as observers). Fiabel's status is special. This federation was established in 2016 at the request of the government (RD 2016), which has implications for its tasks, its legal form and its operation.

The missions and roles of the three federations are defined on two levels. First, at the level of expectations of the members of each federation. These expectations differ from one federation to another, giving rise to differences in their management and priorities. Second, by the tasks listed in the Royal Decree of 11 September 2016 on non-governmental development cooperation, in particular Article 24. As stipulated in their statutes, vision and mission, the federations aim to (1) represent their members and defend their interests; (2) strengthen their management and professional capacities through exchanges, sharing of knowledge and organisation of working groups; (3) offer their members services for the whole range of tasks described in Article 24 of the RD 2016. For Fiabel, given its recent creation and the specificity of the IAs and the limited size of its secretariat, it is particularly important to focus only on its essential tasks such as advocacy, sharing of information, knowledge and experience.

It is also important to distinguish the role of the federations from that of the umbrella organisations (CNCD –11.11.11 and 11.11.11). For the tasks described in Article 25 of the RD 2016, the umbrella organisations play a strategic and political role for their members, for each individual member and for the sector as a whole. This is i.a. about the exchange and reflection on strategic challenges of development cooperation, the coordination of members and the build-up of expertise of the members regarding the coherence of the development policy, gender, international treaties, human rights, social protection, etc. The division of tasks between federations and umbrella organisations only concerns ngo-federatie and Acodev.

On a policy level, the policy bodies (General Assembly and Board of Directors) of each federation decide on the strategic and political choices to be made and on the actions to be taken by the Secretariat. The secretariats are accountable to them. The federations have 12 (ACODEV), 9 (ngofederatie) and 3 (Fiabel) employees respectively. The involvement of members is further ensured through thematic working groups that prepare the process of reflection and positioning of the federations, while also enabling the exchange of good practices.

In terms of exchange with the government, it is important to note that the RD 2016 has established a consultation platform called: Non-Governmental Cooperation Consultative Committee (NGSOC/CCCNG). This NGSOC/CCCNG can take decisions or clarify certain issues about the new regulations. It is composed of representatives of the federations, of delegates from the Minister's office and of DGD. It is divided into several sub-committees, each dealing with specific areas of regulation: moral accountability and reporting, financial accountability, JSF and institutional dialogues. After they are completed, the NGSOC/CCCNG either or not validates the work of the various sub-committees.

For the CSO and AI members of the three federations, the 2016 RD created or amended many new regulations in various areas such as reporting, Joint Strategic Frameworks, institutional dialogues, etc. The federations first negotiated some provisions and then had the mission to support their members in mastering the new guidelines. Recently, the federations have played that role in the elaboration of the new Joint Strategic Frameworks (JSF 2022-2026) of which the ministerial validation process is now in its final stage. They also supported their members in the preparation of the 2022-2026 programmes.

In 2016, in this context and within these roles, the three federations for the first time submitted a joint technical and financial file (TFF) for a 2017- 2021 programme. This technical and financial file proposes the objectives that the federations want to work towards. The dossier is the result of a reflection by the three federations and is based, i.a. on the Strategic Frameworks 2015-2020 of ACODEV and ngo-federatie. It is the result of planning meetings between the secretariats of the three federations. The joint creation is thus the starting point of the interaction between the

three federations. Each initiative has been taken, as far as possible, with respect for the identity and diversity of the members of each federation. As a result, positions on advocacy may differ, especially between CSOs and IAs. The most important thing is to exchange as much information as possible, to be open to each other and to consult, although there are few official bodies that promote these things.

2.2. Operational context

The ultimate change that the actions of the three federations aim for is described in the 2020 vision paper and in the 2015-2022 Strategic Framework of the CSO federations: that CSOs and IAs remain legitimate, efficient and relevant actors of social change in development cooperation vis-à-vis the actors from the South, the general public and governments.

To contribute to this ultimate goal, they have identified five paths to change: four specific objectives directly linked to the work with and for the members and one transversal objective linked to the internal policy of the federations.

The total budget of this programme is €14,185,803.04 for the period 2017-2021 (for details see TFF in the Annex)¹⁶. The main donor to the federations is the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGD). The specific objectives of the programme are as follows:

- SO1: The legal and regulatory frameworks are beneficial to the work of the members.
- SO2: The individual and collective credibility of the members has been strengthened.
- SO3: The members work together in synergy and complementarity with a central role for collective learning.
- SO4: The organisations are managed in a more professional manner.
- TO: The transversal objective of the federations is to establish a high-performing governance to ensure the implementation of the collective objective for the three federations.

In this programme, the emphasis is on the fact that the federations create the preconditions and provide useful support for the work of the members in the areas of: regulation and access to cofinancing, legitimacy and social embedding as well as synergy and complementarity.

3. Purpose of the evaluation

The overall objective of this evaluation is to assess the 2017-2021 subsidised programme (all outcomes of the three federations) according to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria in order to identify and explain the results achieved. More specifically, this evaluation will:

1. Assess to what extent the federations are fulfilling their role as advocates and representatives of their members as described in their TFF and as they are currently being put into practice. (SO1)
2. Assess to what extent the federations have contributed to strengthening the credibility of their members. (SO2)
3. Assess to what extent the federations have contributed to facilitating the collective learning process and cooperation in synergy and complementarity with the members. (SO3)
4. Assess to what extent the federations are fulfilling their role as capacity builders of the members, based on their needs. (SO4)
5. Assess to what extent a high-performing steering system is in place between the three federations to ensure the collective implementation of the pursued objectives. (TO)
6. Following the previous five points, formulate lessons learned and concrete and feasible recommendations to the federations that will allow them to better fulfil their roles as advocates, capacity builders and service providers to their members.

¹ This is the revised budget after the budget cuts accepted by the federations in 2018 and is about 800,000€ lower than the initial one.

4. Object and scope of the evaluation

The object of the evaluation is the analysis of the role of the federations in supporting their members, in advocacy and in capacity building as per the TFF 2017-2021.

In terms of the TFF, the scope of the evaluation translates into the 4 specific objectives (SOs) and the transversal objective (TO) mentioned above (see 2.2 operational context).

Thus, the scope of the evaluation will include the following elements:

- The political, institutional and regulatory context of non-governmental Belgian cooperation. Examples: RD 2016, budget reductions, global approach, ANGC reporting modalities, financial controls, etc.
- The formal and informal procedures and strategies of the federations.
- The consultation platforms in which the federations participate such as the NGSOC/CCCNG and its sub-committees.
- The partners and donors of the federations and in particular the administration (DGD) and its relations with the federations and their members.
- The functioning of the decision-making bodies of the federations (GA, Board and others): mandates, transparency, communication, etc.
- The working groups of the federations
- The evaluations of the training courses and the needs of the members
- The Joint Strategic Frameworks
- Transparency tools such as IATI, NGO Open Boek, the Agir Solidaire database and the guidance documents and capacity building around the use of these platforms.
- The integrity charter and the guide to reporting complaints
- The programme of capacity building and knowledge sharing tools (Quality Portal, website, help desk, newsletter, etc.)

The scope will be discussed with the consultant and further defined at the start of the evaluation. Throughout the evaluation, it is important to properly distinguish between the secretariat and the management, the Board of Acoddev and ngo-federatie, the steering committee of Fiabel and the GAs of Acoddev and ngo-federatie or the members' meeting of Fiabel.

5. The questions for the evaluation

The evaluation will have to be done based on the DAC criteria; pertinence, sustainability, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The criteria of sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency should be the starting point, but the criteria of impact and pertinence will have to be part of the overall picture of the evaluation¹⁷. To the extent possible and pertinent, gender and environmental aspects will be addressed.

The further questions below serve as examples, but can be discussed with the consultant during the kick-off meeting. The list is therefore neither complete nor mandatory and will have to be adapted by the contractor in function of the DAC criteria.

1. To what extent the federations are fulfilling their role as advocates and representatives of their members as described in their TFF and as they are currently being put into practice? (SO1)
 - To what extent have the federations succeeded in defending the interests of their members during the negotiations on the 2016 RD?
 - Are the strategies and approaches used by the federations effective and efficient in ensuring their role as advocates and representatives of their members?
 - To what extent are the new consultation structures organised efficiently, usefully and effectively for consultation between the federations and the political and administrative authorities?

² See OECD DAC network on development evaluation (EvalNet), Better Criteria for Better Evaluation – Revised Evaluation Criteria – Definitions and Principles for Use, 2019, p. 7.

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- To what extent do the federations succeed in capturing and identifying the interests and needs of their members?
- 2. To what extent have the federations contributed to strengthening the credibility of their members? (SO2)
 - To what extent have the federations been able to stimulate their members' reflection on their identity and their future?
 - To what extent have the federations contributed to improving the transparency of the sector?
 - To what extent have the federations been able to strengthen their members in their integrity policy?
- 3. To what extent have federations contributed to facilitating the collective learning process and cooperation in synergy and complementarity with the members? (SO3)
 - To what extent have the federations succeeded in supporting their members during formulation of the new JSF ?
 - To what extent do the working groups of the federations contribute to their role as advocates and representatives of their members and how do they enrich the capacity of their members?
- 4. To what extent are the federations fulfilling their role as capacity builders of the members, based on their needs? (SO4)
 - To what extent do the federations succeed in capturing and identifying needs of their members?
 - To what extent have the training courses organised by the federations strengthened the capacities of their members?
 - To what extent have the federations responded to the members' needs for capacity building?
- 5. To what extent is a high-performing steering system in place between the three federations to ensure the collective implementation of the pursued objectives? (TO)
 - To what extent have the actions carried out by the federations contributed to good internal governance?
 - Can an improvement be observed in the way collective decisions are taken between the federations?
 - To what extent did the internal governance promote the implementation of the 2017-2022 TFF's objectives?
 - Have the practical and strategic aspects of gender and environment been adequately taken into account in the coordination actions and in the implementation of the objectives pursued by the federations in the TFF 2017-2022?
- 6. As a result of the previous five points, formulate lessons learned and concrete and feasible recommendations to the federations for the whole of the outcomes (SOs) that will allow them to better fulfil their role of advocates, capacity builders and service providers to their members.

6. Approach and course of the evaluation

Each phase of the evaluation will be preceded or followed by a meeting with the steering committee set up by the federations to guide the evaluation. This steering group will consist of the directors and those responsible for monitoring and evaluation and a representative of the members of each federation.

- **Phase 1: note on methodology (January 2021)**

Before starting their work, the evaluators must further refine and document their methodological proposal. To this end, they will complete and update their documentation together with the persons appointed by the federations and the steering committee.

They will also have an initial interview with key people, or those who have been key people in the past, to find out more about the subject of the evaluation. These may be the presidents of the Board and the directors of federations, representatives of the ANGCS and DGD.

To facilitate the task of the evaluators, the documentation will be made available as much as possible at the beginning of the evaluation (see item 8 on documents and available data).

This phase concludes with a methodology note describing the final evaluation questions, a methodological approach for the evaluation as a whole and for each individual dimension.

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This note clarifies the methodology that the evaluators will use to assess the different evaluation questions. It also lays down the organisational procedures for the various aspects of the evaluation; it sets a calendar, the names of the people who will be interviewed and the manuals for interviews and surveys.

- **Phase 2: The desk study and field study (January - March 2021)**

In this phase, the methodology note prepared in phase 1 will be implemented. This phase will consist of at least the following 2 points:

- The realisation of a desk study of the pertinent documents of this evaluation, as determined in phase 1.
- A survey or other method of soliciting DGD opinion, the content of which will be discussed with the federations in phase 1.

The proposal will also have to provide a method of soliciting the opinions of the members of the federations, knowing that every February, members are sent a survey by the same federations. An alternative will have to be proposed to avoid duplication. The duration and content of the evaluation work must allow for triangulation of the findings of the documentary study. On the other hand, the evaluation should result in concrete recommendations to the federations.

- **Phase 3: Presentation of the final report (April 2022)**

The evaluation report will describe the results of all methodological approaches in a coherent and structured manner. The evaluators are free to include or exclude the comments of the steering committee. In any case, they will have to justify their choice in writing. This written justification will be added to the final report in the form of an annex.

It is imperative that the final report is drafted in such a way that the findings and recommendations can be easily distinguished and are **specifically addressed to one of the three federations**.

The detailed structure of the final report will be presented in the course of the evaluation. However, the report will contain the following sections:

- the table of contents,
- a table of abbreviations and acronyms,
- a summary,
- the context of the evaluation
- the methodology and the approaches used
- the answers to the evaluation questions,
- the decisions,
- the recommendations,
- the annexes.

The annexes include:

- the list of people met;
- the list of documents consulted;
- the questions of surveys and for the interviews
- comments made on the draft final report and not retained by the consultants and the reasons justifying this; any other information that served as a basis for the analysis or for the tables.

7. Methodology

The methodological proposal will have to take into account the maximum budget of EUR 50,000 (**VATI**) set for this evaluation. It will have to credibly demonstrate how the evaluators will work to achieve the objectives of the evaluation and how the evaluation will be useful and deliver results that meet the standards of quality evaluation of development cooperation as elaborated by the OECD/DAC.

The proposal of methodology is an essential element for the evaluation of the tenders. That is why the client keeps to what he considers to be the minimum content that the tender should contain.

- **A preliminary evaluability assessment.** This assessment will identify the main conditions and constraints that the evaluation will face in implementing its objectives and seeking answers to the

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questions raised. The consultant should also explain how the problems of evaluability that were found will be solved.

- **The general theoretical and methodological approach** that will guide the evaluation process. The evaluator will link the approach he will use for the evaluation to the time constraints and available resources imposed by these reference terms.
- **A proposal for an analytical framework or evaluation matrix** that identifies the evaluation questions and their further subdivision, the assessment criteria and the sources of information and resources. The matrix is a tool for elaborating the evaluation questions, but does not replace the theoretical-methodological approach that will guide the evaluation.
- A description of the evaluation techniques that will be used to classify, analyse and present necessary data. The techniques must be coherent with the methodological approach and adapted to the nature of the information that is hoped to be available to answer the questions and sub-questions of the evaluation.
- The tender will have to take into account the situation of the **sanitary crisis** and deal with it flexibly.
- The tender will have to justify the contribution, pertinence, complementarity and necessity of each technique in concrete and specific terms. In doing so, tenderers should exclude generic descriptions of the characteristics of these techniques that are well known to the awarding authority from their bids (**interviews, surveys, focus groups, ...**). Among the techniques that the evaluator considers appropriate to propose, he must include a comprehensive review of available documentation, the meta-evaluation of existing evaluations (limited to the 2-3 most recent evaluations of ngo-federatie, Fiabel and ACODEV), interviews and a survey of DGD. The evaluators are free to decide how they will poll the opinion of the members of the federations. But they should know that the same members fill in a survey about this every year in the month of February.

8. Logistics, documents and data already available.

The federations shall make their meeting rooms available in case the evaluators are present in person and in case they meet digitally they must be able to use the Zoom account of the federations. Furthermore, the evaluators can use the necessary contact addresses of the federation (within the legal limits) and their communication channels.

Once the contract has been awarded, they undertake to transfer the following documents.

- Legal and regulatory texts of Belgian development cooperation.
- Reports of the consultation meetings of the NGSOC/CCCNG and the sub-committees.
- Reports from the Boards and GAs of the federations.
- Reports of the meeting of the three management teams of the federations. – Reports of the working groups of the federations – Evaluation reports of the federations.
- Indicators and monitoring data of the TFF of the federations.
- Annual reports.

9. Wanted profile for the evaluator

The consultants will have the following competencies:

- Expertise in evaluation (CV)
- Expertise in the political, institutional and regulatory aspects of Belgian development cooperation.
- Working and evaluation experience with umbrella organisations and representative organisations
- Excellent mastering of written and spoken French OR Dutch. Fluency in the second language will be considered an asset..

Having said that, the tender can be submitted by a consortium of evaluators who divide the tasks among themselves according to their language skills.

10. Composition of the tender

The offer must contain at least the following five elements:

- 1) A description of the methodological approach as stated in these reference terms, proposed according to the deadlines and budget (see item 7).
- 2) A **detailed calendar and the resources man/days used** for the execution of this task (allocation of staff resources).
- 3) A **financial offer** that will clarify the number of man-days foreseen as well as the daily rate, any additional costs (travel, documents, etc.) and the total price VATI.
- 4) **The pertinent experience** and CVs of the nominated experts.
- 5) A guarantee of the **availability** of the evaluators for the period in which the assignment is to be carried out.

11. Procedure

The bid must be submitted by 30 November 2021, 05.00 PM, to Maria Serrenti (Acodev), ms@acodev.be; Iseult Kestelyn (ngo-federatie), iseult.kestelyn@ngo-federatie.be; Hélène Flaam (Fiabel) helene.Flaam@fiabel.be

Interested parties can request additional information by emailing Maria Serrenti (Acodev), ms@acodev.be; Iseult Kestelyn (ngo-federatie), iseult.kestelyn@ngo-federatie.be; Hélène Flaam (Fiabel) helene.Flaam@fiabel.be

For reasons of transparency and equality, all information following questions from contractors will be published anonymously on the following link

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E5S76-hmqnPaO_pOCIDRNv5xlpbVu9rHLBjpfkg1wIU/edit

12. Selection criteria

The tenders received will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

Selection based on cumulative analysis: the financial assessment will count for 30% and the technical assessment will count for 70% of the total score of the assessment.

The maximum budget for the evaluation is fixed at EUR 50,000 (VATI). No tender exceeding this amount will be retained.

Only those candidates who score a minimum of 49 points (70%) on the technical part will also be assessed on their financial offer.

1) Technical selection criteria (maximum 70 points)

The competences of the consultants: 40 points

- Proven expertise in evaluation (15 points).
- Expertise in the political, institutional and regulatory aspects of Belgian development cooperation (15 points).
- Working and evaluation experience with umbrella organisations and representative organisations (10 points).

- Proposed methodology: 30 points

2) Financial selection criteria (30 points)

The price/fees

The following formula will be used to evaluate the financial offer: $p = y (\mu/z)$, or $p =$ points for the financial offer, $y =$ the maximum number of points for the financial offer $\mu =$ the price of the lowest offer, $z =$ the price of the offer under evaluation.

13. Annexes

- Technical and Financial File of the federations of civil society organisations and institutional actors, 2017 – 2021, 55 pages.
- Royal Decree of 11 September 2016 on non-governmental cooperation, FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, 49 p.
- Guide pratique sur l'évaluation externe (Practical guide to external evaluation). *Version updated in April 2021* (COTA), 42 p.

Analytical Grid (Separate Annex)

Interview Guides for in-depth interviews with member organisations

About the role of the federations in defending the interests of member organisations

- Most effective mechanisms used to communicate the most important interests of your organisation to your federation both for short-term and long-term.
- Key interests were well represented (or not) by your federation
- Most important changes in the legal and regulatory framework and contributions of the federations regarding those.
- Key strengths and weaknesses of the federations in assuming their role as interest defenders
- Opportunity for improvement in the future

About the role of the federations in strengthening your and the sector's credibility

- Most important changes in the credibility of your organisation or the sector in general and the federations contribution to this?
- Contribution of the federations to stimulating greater transparency
- Most effective mechanisms to support you in improving the credibility and transparency of your organisation?
- Changes in resources used for strategy development, integrity, transparency

About the role of the federations in creating synergies and complementarity

- Most important change in synergies and complementarities that the federations contributed to.
- Most effective mechanism the federations used to help create synergies and complementarities

About the role of the federations in developing the capacities of member organisations

- Most effective mechanisms deployed by the federations to develop the capacities of the members that led to a greater capacity of your organisation and examples.
- Key strengths and weaknesses of the federations in assuming their role as capacity builders
- Opportunity for improvement in the future

About way the work of the federation is organized

- Perception of the overall coordination between the federations
- Federations have developed good cooperation structures and mechanisms Do you feel that the administrative processes have been simplified? Can you give us some examples?
- Key strengths and weaknesses of the cooperation across federations

In case you have additional information that you would like to share with us, please feel free to do so.

Thank you very much for your time and your support!

Interview guide with DGD

About the role of the federations in defending the interests of member organisations

- Most important changes in the legal and regulatory framework relevant to the federations
- Effectiveness of the consultation structures used by the federations to advocate for and represent their members
- Degree to which the members have improved their application of the new regulations and perception of the federations to these changes.
- Key strengths and weaknesses of the federations in assuming their role as interest defenders
- Opportunity to improve in the future

About the role of the federations in strengthening the members and the sector's credibility

- Most important changes regarding the credibility of the member organisations or/and the sector in general
- Transparency requirements of Belgian development cooperation organisations, and extent to which the organisations addressed these requirements
- Most important changes regarding transparency at the level of the organisations and at the level of sector?
- Key strengths and weaknesses of the federations in strengthening credibility
- Opportunity to improve in the future

About the role of the federations in creating synergies and complementarity

- Most important changes in creating synergies and complementarity among member organisations and contribution of the federations

About the role of the federations in developing the capacities of member organisations

- Improvement of the organisations in:
 - o Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Assurance
 - o Financial management
 - o Sectorial expertise
 - o Other

About way the work of the federation is organized

- Most important changes regarding governance (i.e. steering and collective decision making) of the federations)
- Perception of the cooperation between the three organisations and the steering across the sector
- Key strengths and weaknesses of the cooperation across federations

Closing questions

- Extent to which the dialogues with the IA/NGOs about development impact have improved
- Extent to which IA/NGOs have improved in being legitimate, efficient and relevant actors in international cooperation

In case you have additional information that you would like to share with us, please feel free to do so.

Thank you very much for your time and your support!

Survey Questionnaire

Representation and defense of the interests (Impact hypothesis 1)

1. (Evaluation Question 1.1) On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 very poor – 10 excellent), please assess the following statement:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Very poor									Excellent	I don't know
I feel my federation has understood my interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My federation has well represented my interests over the last 5 years towards DGD and the cabinet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My federation has well represented my interests over the last 5 years towards the wider public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. (Evaluation Question 1.4): On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 not worth it all – 10 very much worth it), please assess the following statement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	not worth it									Very much worth it	I don't know or I did not take part in it
Taking part in the Surveys was worth the effort.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Taking part in the Working groups (GT M&E, Finances etc.) in making my interests understood, was worth my effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking part in the general assemblies was worth the effort.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Credibility (Impact hypothesis 2)

3. (Evaluation Question 2): On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 very poorly – 10 excellent) please assess to what extent the following activities undertaken by the federations were adequate to enhance your credibility

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Not at all									A lot	I don't know or I did not take part in it
My organisation has benefitted from NGO Federatie or ACODEV's future oriented learning activities to reflect on the future role of my organisation (e.g. Agenda 2030 Strategy Development process)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My organisation benefited from the federations' support to comply with the IATI regulation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The federation helped my organisation to implement the integrity charter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Synergy and Complementarity (Impact hypothesis 3)

4. (Evaluation Question 3.2): On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 not at all – 10 a lot) please assess the following statement regarding the CSC

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Not at all									A lot	Don't know
Over the past years my organisation has created new synergies with other organisations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The federations activities were useful to create synergies among my organisation and other organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Capacity Building (Impact hypothesis 4)

5. (Evaluation Question 4): On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 not at all – 10 a lot) please assess to what extent the following mechanisms contributed to the development of the capacities of your organisation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Not at all									A lot	Don't know or didn't take part in it
Portail qualité / Federations websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Development of guides	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fond qualité	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Formal trainings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exchange with other member organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helpdesk	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluations (e.g. mid-term or final)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. (Evaluation Question 4.3): On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 not at all – 10 a lot) please assess to what extent the federation helped developing the professional capacities of my staff

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Not at all									A lot
Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Assurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sectorial expertise (e.g. on gender, ECMS, environment, SDGs, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Steering Systems (Impact hypothesis 5)

7. (Evaluation Question 5.1): On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 not at all – 10 a lot) please assess to what extent you perceive the federations have contributed to the following elements of good internal governance.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Not at all									A lot	Don't know

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The federations work is transparent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The federations get things done efficiently (e.g. fast and with little bureaucracy).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The federations really get things done (effectively).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The federations mediate well between different opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The federations are open for my opinions. (inclusive).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understand the way the federations work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know when and how I can effectively engage with the federations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I want the federations to defend my interests, I know when and how I can bring them forward.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for participating!

Your answers have been saved.

Please click "Finish".

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Focus group discussion – Mural image (separate Annex)

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S Y S P O N S

Eindevaluatie technisch en financieel dossier federaties 2017-2021 Management respons ngo-federatie

Gevalideerd door de raad van bestuur op 29 juni 2022

1. Context eindevaluatie

De eindevaluatie van de federaties evalueert of de federaties de doelstellingen en resultaten hebben behaald die ze voor zichzelf hebben vastgelegd in het technisch en financieel dossier 2017-2021.

SD 1 - De regelgevende kaders zijn aangepast aan het werk van de leden.

- R1.1 - De gemeenschappelijke belangen van de leden zijn verdedigd ten aanzien van de overheden.
- R1.2 - De leden zijn ondersteund in het uitvoeren van de afspraken met / beslissingen van de overheden.

SD 2 - De geloofwaardigheid van de leden op individueel en op collectief niveau is versterkt.

- R2.1 - De leden zijn gestimuleerd in hun reflectie over hun toekomstige rol en identiteit.
- R2.2 - De leden zijn versterkt in hun transparantie.
- R2.3 - De leden zijn versterkt in de operationalisering van een integriteitsbeleid.

SD 3 - De leden werken in synergie en complementariteit met een centrale rol voor collectief leren.

- R3.1 - De leden zijn ondersteund in het uitrollen van gemeenschappelijke strategische kaders.
- R3.2 - Het collectief leren van de leden is gestimuleerd en gefaciliteerd door de federaties.

SD 4 - De lidorganisaties worden op een meer professionele wijze beheerd.

- R4.1 - De federaties voeren een capaciteitsversterkingsprogramma van de leden uit dat beantwoordt aan de noden van de leden.
- R4.2 - De capaciteiten van de leden op het vlak van evaluaties zijn versterkt.
- R4.3 - De capaciteiten van de leden op het vlak van financiële gezondheid zijn versterkt.
- R4.4 - De leden zijn ondersteund in het ontwikkelen van een intern capaciteitsversterkingsbeleid.

TD - Een performante governance die een kwalitatieve uitvoering van de doelen van de federaties garandeert, is geïnstalleerd.

- R5.1 - De strategische collectieve besluitvormingsorganen van de federaties zijn operationeel.
- R5.2 - De operationele samenwerkingsmodaliteiten en co-creatie onder de federaties zijn operationeel.

Conform de regelgeving betreffende de niet-gouvernementele samenwerking is de eindevaluatie gericht op de verantwoording t.a.v. DGD. In het eindrapport zit dan ook geen specifieke focus vervat met het oog op leren.

Het proces om tot deze eindevaluatie te komen was erg moeizaam. De referentietermen moesten drie keer uitgestuurd worden, telkens met een verhoogd budget, alvorens een evaluator gevonden werd, op basis van slechts één offerte. De evaluator is een buitenlandse (Duitse) consultant, waardoor bij aanvang van de opdracht veel tijd en energie ging naar het kaderen van de plaats en de rol van de federaties in de Belgische ontwikkelingssamenwerking en de specificiteit en diversiteit van de niet-gouvernementele samenwerking en de uitdagingen die dit met zich meebrengt voor de federaties.

2. Analyse van de vaststellingen in het evaluatierapport

Het evaluatierapport schetst voor de federatie een positief beeld over het bereiken van de doelstellingen van het programma 2017-2021.

Wat de eerste doelstelling betreft, wordt in het rapport een gemengd resultaat gepresenteerd. De federatie slaagt er in om aan de hand van verschillende mechanismen de belangen van haar leden te identificeren en draagt ook bij aan de goede relaties die er bestaan tussen haar leden en DGD. De resultaten van haar belangenverdediging zijn echter niet steeds doeltreffend noch transparant. De leden beschouwen de regelgevende kaders nog steeds niet voldoende aangepast aan hun werk en de administratieve belasting blijft zwaar. Een verklaring die hiervoor in het evaluatierapport naar voor wordt geschoven is het gebrek aan efficiënte overlegstructuren met de overheid. De belangenverdediging van hun leden doen de federaties zowel via formele als informele kanalen waarbij er niet steeds transparantie is tussen de federaties onderling en t.a.v. hun leden. Het (gebrek aan) vertrouwen tussen de federaties, ook op bestuursniveau, draagt ook niet bij aan efficiënte overlegstructuren met de overheid en maakt de belangenverdediging minder doeltreffend.

De realisatie van de tweede doelstelling van de federatie, het versterken van de geloofwaardigheid van de leden, wordt positief geëvalueerd. Het toekomsttraject2030 dat ngo-federatie opstartte, blijkt een sterk antwoord te zijn op interne en externe uitdagingen van de CMO-sector. Het draagt niet enkel bij aan de creatie van een visie op de langere termijn maar eveneens aan de geloofwaardigheid van de federatie en haar leden t.a.v. de overheid. Er komt naar voor dat het toekomsttraject echter niet rechtstreeks leidt tot het versterken van de geloofwaardigheid van de CMO-sector t.a.v. “het brede publiek”, maar dat was echter niet de eerste doelstelling van het toekomsttraject. Het blijft wel een uitdaging om alle leden van ngo-federatie en de andere federaties in het toekomsttraject te betrekken en om dus een geïntegreerde visie op de langere termijn te creëren.

Ook op het vlak van integriteit en transparantie levert de federatie goed werk: de ondersteuning in integriteit en dan vooral de uitwisseling in *peer groups* stellen de leden in staat om aan de vereisten van de overheid te voldoen. Daarnaast wordt ngo-openboek beschouwd als een eigen waardevol transparantie-instrument van de CMO-sector, in tegenstelling tot IATI, dat niet beschouwd wordt als een transparantie-instrument dat bijdraagt aan de geloofwaardigheid van de sector en waarvoor de administratieve belasting disproportioneel zwaar is.

De derde doelstelling, namelijk synergie, complementariteit en collectief leren stimuleren, krijgt een gemengd resultaat. Er is vanuit de federatie wel een doeltreffende ondersteuning om aan de formele GSK-vereisten te voldoen en de initiatieven dragen voor de leden bij aan het elkaar beter leren kennen en aan het collectief leren, o.a. dankzij het leerfonds. Niet onverwacht is er bij de leden echter een grote twijfel over het nut van de GSK's als strategische oefening en als manier om tot zinvolle synergie en complementariteit te komen. Door de hoge werklast die de GSK's met zich meebrengen, ontstaan er meer en meer dynamieken buiten het formele kader. Voor de federatie is een rol weggelegd om de dynamieken die zich onafhankelijk van de GSK's ontwikkelen, te capteren en collectief leren te stimuleren, ook buiten de CMO-sector.

De leden ondersteunen om zich op een meer professionele wijze te organiseren, de vierde doelstelling van de federaties, krijgt een positief resultaat. Er is een grote tevredenheid over de snelheid en kwaliteit van de helpdesk van de federatie en de initiatieven die genomen worden op het vlak van capaciteitsversterking zijn relevant en op maat van de noden van de leden. Het aanbod van en de ondersteuning door de federatie bevindt zich in eerste instantie op het vlak van de DGD-regelgeving, M&E en financieel beheer. Net zoals bij het collectief leren, is voor de federatie dan ook een rol weggelegd om initiatieven op het vlak van professionalisering die zich buiten het aanbod van de federatie ontwikkelen, te capteren en collectief leren te stimuleren.

De interne werking van de federatie en samenwerking tussen de federaties, tot slot, krijgt opnieuw een gemengde beoordeling in de evaluatie. Er is wel degelijk meer samenwerking tussen de secretariaten van de federaties op operationeel niveau. Waar mogelijk worden activiteiten voor de leden gezamenlijk georganiseerd (vormingen, platformen en beleidsadviesgroepen, enz.). Er is echter een gebrek aan samenwerking op strategisch niveau. Rond punten van gemeenschappelijk belang is er geen gezamenlijke besluitvorming tussen de federaties en ontbreekt het aan een geïntegreerde visie op de langere termijn en vertrouwen tussen de federaties, ook op bestuursniveau (cf. supra). Een belangrijk element daarin is de spanning tussen diversiteit en inclusiviteit. Zowel binnen elke federatie als tussen de federaties is er grote diversiteit wat de leden én wat hun belangen betreft. Hierdoor kunnen niet steeds gezamenlijke standpunten worden ingenomen, maar, zo schetst de evaluatie, dat hoeft niet noodzakelijk een probleem te zijn, vooral dan niet voor de CMO-federaties t.a.v. Fiabel.

3. Aanbevelingen

In het rapport formuleren de evaluatoren vier aanbevelingen:

<p>1. Een overkoepelende strategie 2030 ontwikkelen voor alle federaties en hun leden. Hierbij de unieke bijdrage van CMO's en IA's aan ontwikkelingssamenwerking definiëren. Tevens de leden betrekken bij dit proces om een gedeelde missie en visie te ontwikkelen. Definieer op basis hiervan (opnieuw) gemeenschappelijke ontwikkelingsbehoeften voor kleinere en grotere organisaties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 1.1. Strategische sectoranalyse op het niveau van de federaties ➤ 1.2. Participatieve SWOT-analyse op het niveau van de aangesloten CMO en IA ➤ 1.3 Identificatie van unieke bijdragen van de CMO en IA ➤ 1.4 Strategische reflectie om de toekomstgerichte visie en missie van de 3 federaties te verfijnen: "Strategie van de federaties voor 2030". 	<p>Gericht aan de drie federaties</p>
<p>2. Consolideren van hun interne processen inzake belangenverdediging van hun leden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 2.1. Duidelijker communiceren over deze processen van belangen verdediging ➤ 2.2. Werkgroepen afstemmen op de strategische visie van de Federatie 2030 ➤ 2.3. Verslagen van eerdere onderhandelingen met de DGD samenvatten en centraal beschikbaar stellen voor de leden 	<p>Gericht aan ngo-federatie en ACODEV</p>
<p>3. Centraliseren van alle communicatie naar hun leden in de nieuwsbrief</p>	<p>Gericht aan ngo-federatie en ACODEV</p>
<p>4. Vertegenwoordiging van kleinere leden in de RvB van de federatie op basis van rotatie.</p>	<p>Gericht aan ACODEV</p>

4. Management respons ngo-federatie

In hun rapport schetsen de evaluatoren in het algemeen een positief beeld over de mate waarin de federatie haar doelstellingen voor het programma 2017-2021 bereikt heeft. We zetten onze management respons in een aantal punten uiteen.

4.1. Kloof tussen vaststellingen en aanbevelingen

Op basis van de vaststellingen gepresenteerd in het rapport schetsen de evaluatoren **in het algemeen een positief beeld van het bereiken van de doelstellingen** geformuleerd in het programma 2017-2021 door de federatie.

De aanbevelingen die vervolgens in het rapport naar voor geschoven worden, zijn echter niet nieuw voor de federatie, zijn eerder oppervlakkig en worden in de sub-aanbevelingen technisch geoperationaliseerd. Er wordt in de aanbevelingen ook weinig rekening gehouden met de diversiteit en specificiteit van elke federatie. Een gezamenlijke uitvoering van de aanbevelingen kent door die diversiteit en specificiteit namelijk haar limieten. Dat geldt voor zowel de ontwikkeling van een overkoepelende strategie 2030, voor de interne *governance*-processen voor belangenverdediging als voor de communicatie(stijlen) naar de leden.

Daarnaast bevat het evaluatierapport in de vaststellingen interessante elementen die niet meegenomen worden in de aanbevelingen, zoals het gebrek aan vertrouwen tussen (bestuurs)leden van de federaties, de spanning tussen diversiteit en inclusiviteit en de optimalisatie van overleg(structuren) met de overheid. Ngo-federatie kiest er bewust voor om ook die elementen op te nemen in haar management respons.

4.2. Uitdagende context opmaak technisch en financieel dossier 2017-2021

Ngo-federatie wijst ook op het belang van de context waarbinnen de federaties het technisch en financieel dossier 2017-2021 hebben opgemaakt. Die context van 2015-2016 bestond eruit dat de overheid de niet-gouvernementele samenwerking op verschillende vlakken in vraag stelde.

Het gevolg was een grondige herziening van de regelgeving voor de niet-gouvernementele samenwerking met ook bijkomende opdrachten voor de federaties. Zo was een element van kritiek dat het ngo-landschap te versnipperd was en er meer samenwerking tussen CMO moest komen, waardoor de federaties de GSK's en het collectief leren daarrond moesten gaan faciliteren. Het gemengde resultaat van de doelstelling rond synergie, complementariteit en collectief leren is zo een rechtstreeks gevolg van die context van 2015-2016. De leden hebben immers nog steeds vragen bij het nut van de GSK-oefening, zeker in verhouding tot de werklast die ertegenover staat en de federaties zelf hebben hun rol in de ondersteuning hiervoor gaandeweg moeten zoeken en uitbouwen. Het resultaat is dat er meer en meer dynamieken buiten de GSK's ontstaan en dat is ook niet verwonderlijk. Het is aan de federatie om een goed evenwicht te vinden tussen wat formeel moet gebeuren volgens de GSK-regelgeving en de dynamieken die onafhankelijk daarvan aangemoedigd en ondersteund kunnen worden.

In die context van 2015-2016 stelde de overheid ook de relevantie van ngo's naast nieuwe spelers in ontwikkelingssamenwerking in vraag. Onder meer die kritiek leidde tot de ontwikkeling van het toekomsttraject2030. We wilden daarmee vernieuwing binnen de CMO-sector naar boven brengen, uitwerken, bij alle leden stimuleren én uitdragen, hetgeen in deze eindevaluatie positief beoordeeld wordt (cf. infra punt 4.5.).

4.3. Spanning tussen diversiteit en inclusiviteit

De hoofdaanbeveling in deze eindevaluatie is een overkoepelende strategie 2030 ontwikkelen voor alle drie federaties en hun leden, waarbij de unieke bijdrage van CMO en IA gedefinieerd wordt, en op basis hiervan gemeenschappelijke ontwikkelingsbehoeften identificeren.

Bij de implementatie van deze aanbeveling moet echter rekening worden gehouden met de spanning tussen diversiteit en inclusiviteit. Diversiteit doet zich immers voor op verschillende niveaus: zowel binnen elke federatie afzonderlijk, tussen de twee CMO-federaties, tussen de CMO-federaties en de federatie van de IA, als tussen de drie federaties onderling. Elke federatie vertegenwoordigt haar leden met hun specifieke belangen en diverse ontwikkelingsnoden. Voor die leden en voor het vertrouwen tussen hen en hun federatie, is het belangrijk dat ze zich herkennen in de standpunten die hun federatie inneemt, de initiatieven die ze ontplooit en de wijze waarop ze zich organiseert (interne *governance*).

Ngo-federatie erkent en benadrukt het belang van samenwerking tussen de federaties maar stelt tegelijk dat die moet gebeuren met respect voor de diversiteit en specificiteit van elke structuur. Dit is essentieel om het vertrouwen tussen elke federatie en haar leden te behouden. Wél moet in kaart worden gebracht welke elementen de federaties verbinden en welke elementen ons onderscheiden, waar gezamenlijk optreden vereist is en waar dat niet noodzakelijk is, welke de sterktes zijn van elke federatie en haar leden, en hoe we deze complementair kunnen inzetten. Eerder dan te streven naar een “formele overkoepelende strategie” kan dan vervolgens op basis daarvan een gezamenlijke richting bepaald / vlag gepland worden voor de verschillende werkdomeinen waarin de federaties gezamenlijk actief zijn. Deze zijn dus niet beperkt tot de huidige thema's van het toekomsttraject2030 maar kunnen ook betrekking hebben op M&E, integriteit, synergie en complementariteit, enz. Binnen de gezamenlijke richting moet elke federatie eigen initiatieven kunnen uitrollen en een eigen aanpak hanteren in lijn met de specifieke ontwikkelingsnoden van haar leden.

4.4. Kennis van de leden om hun belangen te kunnen verdedigen

De hierboven geschetste uitdagingen voor de federatie rond diversiteit en inclusiviteit gelden eveneens in de belangenverdediging van haar leden t.a.v. DGD. Die laatste benadert de federaties meestal als een eenheid en houdt daarbij dus onvoldoende rekening met de uitdagingen rond diversiteit en inclusiviteit die op het niveau van elke federatie én tussen de federaties spelen. Het is aan de federatie om dit in haar relatie met DGD systematisch te beklemtonen zodat hier voldoende aandacht voor is. Wanneer er meer begrip en respect is voor de verschillende actoren en hun diverse belangen rond de tafel, kunnen bestaande overlegstructuren met de overheid ook efficiënter benut worden en kan er ook transparanter over gecommuniceerd worden, in eerste instanties tussen de federaties en in tweede instantie naar hun leden.

Daarvoor is het echter belangrijk dat het secretariaat van de federatie zelf ook voldoende kennis heeft van en voeling met de realiteit en diversiteit van haar leden en de impact van te onderhandelen beslissingen op haar leden kan inschatten. Het secretariaat van ngo-federatie kent een groot personeelsverloop en nieuwe medewerkers zijn vaak jong en hebben geen of nauwelijks (werk)ervaring binnen een CMO voor ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Een meer intensief contact met de leden, o.a. door werkbezoeken van secretariaatsmedewerkers bij de leden, kan hiertoe bijdragen. Ook moet het secretariaat de leden meer betrekken in de voorbereiding van dossiers rond belangenbehartiging om de impact van beslissingen op organisaties en hun werking juist te kunnen inschatten, naast de thematische uitwisselingsplatformen en de helpdesk voor de leden die we al organiseren.

Tot slot zouden we er ook goed aan doen de observatie van de institutionele dialogen tussen de leden en DGD opnieuw op te pikken. Uit het verleden leren we dat dit bijdraagt aan een betere kennis van de realiteit van de leden. Daarbij is het belangrijk dat die kennis van de leden en ervaringen / geleerde

lessen op het vlak van belangenverdediging goed geïnternaliseerd, gedocumenteerd en gedeeld worden binnen de federatie.

4.5. Belang van toekomsttraject2030

Uit de evaluatie blijkt duidelijk het belang van het toekomsttraject2030 van ngo-federatie als antwoord op uitdagingen intern en extern aan de CMO-sector. Twee uitdagingen komen uit deze evaluatie naar voor: de betrokkenheid van alle leden van ngo-federatie en de bijdrage aan de versterking van de geloofwaardigheid van de CMO-sector aan “het brede publiek”.

In eerste instantie moet onderzocht worden waarom nog steeds een derde tot bijna de helft van de leden van ngo-federatie niet actief participeert aan (één of meerdere werven van) het toekomsttraject2030. In de vertaling van het voortraject naar de verschillende werven werd er in het najaar van 2019 expliciet gekozen om de werven in kleine groepen met leden op te starten. De bedoeling was om per werf met een beperkt aantal geëngageerde leden snelheid te kunnen maken in de uitwerking van concrete handvaten die aan al de leden ter beschikking worden gesteld. Ondanks de beperkende maatregelen gelinkt aan de COVID-19-pandemie werd er op meerdere werven vooruitgang geboekt en werden in 2021 verschillende rapporten en inspiratiegidsen gepubliceerd. Deze werden systematisch aan alle leden gerestitueerd in inspiratiesessies die, opnieuw, allemaal online georganiseerd moesten worden.

De keuze om te starten in kleine werkgroepen en de beperkende maatregelen als gevolg van COVID-19 hebben voor te weinig uitdijning gezorgd naar al de leden van ngo-federatie. Tegelijk gaven en geven sommige leden aan wel geïnteresseerd te zijn maar niet de tijd en ruimte te hebben om actief te participeren. Voor hen zal ngo-federatie op zoek gaan naar andere manieren om hen te stimuleren en ondersteunen om de toekomstwerven in de praktijk om te zetten.

Voor nationale organisaties speelt ook de taal een rol. De activiteiten van het toekomsttraject2030 worden immers hoofdzakelijk in het Nederlands georganiseerd waardoor het voor nationale organisaties moeilijk is om Franstalige personeelsleden geëngageerd te krijgen in het traject.

Tot slot hindert ook het gebrek aan betrokkenheid en participatie van de andere federaties en hun leden, en dan meer bepaald ACODEV, de vertaling van het toekomsttraject naar een geïntegreerde visie op de lange termijn. Binnen ACODEV zijn (i.s.m. hun leden) andere prioritaire werven naar voor gekomen, zoals wereldburgerschapeducatie en weinig bereikte doelgroepen, fusies en consortia, enz. Wél is er veel animo om rond bepaalde werven meer samen te werken, bijv. rond de private sector.

Daarnaast is het toekomsttraject opgedeeld in verschillende werven waarmee aan de slag gegaan werd. Belangrijke thema's die ook een impact hebben op de geloofwaardigheid t.a.v. “het brede publiek” zijn echter niet als dusdanig onder de noemer van het toekomsttraject2030 geïntegreerd. Het gaat dan om o.a. integriteit, samenwerking, synergie en complementariteit. Het gevolg is dat deze thema's door de leden vaak beschouwd worden als administratieve verplichtingen en er een andere dynamiek rond ontstaat dan rond de “voluntaristische” werven van het toekomsttraject2030. Ook hier kan ngo-federatie dus nog een meer stimulerende rol opnemen t.a.v. haar leden.
