

Ex post evaluation – Macedonia and Albania

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Sector: Biodiversity (CRS code: 4103000)
Project: Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve
 Macedonia: BMZ No. 2001 66 827*
 Albania: BMZ No. 2001 66 785 and 2006 40 466 (increase)
Implementing agency: Macedonia: Galicica National Park management
 Albania: Ministry of the Environment



Ex post evaluation report: 2018

All figures in EUR million	Macedonia (Planned)	Macedonia (Actual)	Albania (Planned)	Albania (Actual)
Investment costs (total)	2.43	2.43	3.81	3.88
Counterpart contribution	0.90	0.90	0.25	0.65
Funding	1.53	1.53	3.56	3.23
of which budget funds (BMZ)	1.53	1.53	3.56	3.23

*) Random sample 2015

Summary: The UNESCO Ohrid-Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve is located between the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania. This region is characterised by unique biodiversity and contains two adjoining national parks (NP): the Macedonian Galicica NP (22,750ha) and the Albanian Prespa NP (27,750ha). The local population in both NPs (2006: 10,800 residents) and the park management in the Galicica NP harvest firewood from the forests and thus threaten the rich biodiversity (core problem). The open FC programme subsidised the Galicica NP from 2008 to 2012 with EUR 1.53 million and the Prespa NP from 2010 to 2015 with EUR 3.23 million. Management plans were developed, zones for different uses were identified, and investments were made in infrastructure and working capital for both parks. Staff in both NPs were trained and equipped with planning and operating instruments to be able to protect the habitats of animals and plants, and to reduce traditional timber harvesting with suitable measures.

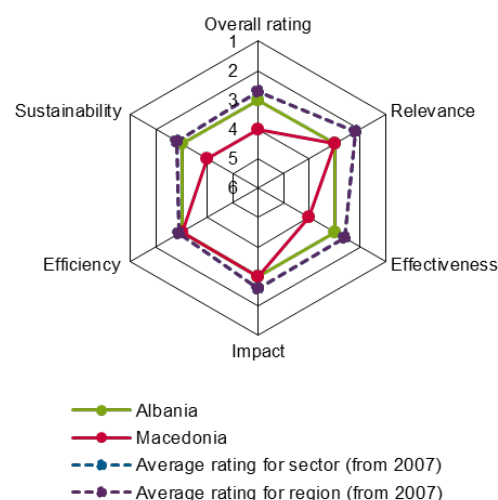
Objectives: The objective at the outcome level was to reduce the impact of use on areas needing protection in the Galicica (Macedonia) and Prespa (Albania) NPs and to create alternative sources of income in Albania. At the impact level, the intention was to maintain biodiversity in the border region of Prespa, to contribute to regional cooperation in the area between Albania, Macedonia and Greece, and to contribute to alleviating poverty in Albania.

Target group: The park authorities and the population in and around the national parks.

Overall rating: 3 (Albania), 4 (Macedonia)

Rationale: Both projects primarily concentrated on building up park management capacities. During the project implementation it was not possible to implement the measures for preserving forest area and biodiversity in the management plans or the measures for developing alternative sources of income due to insufficient funding and staffing at the park level; this is still the case today. Therefore the threat of overutilising the and to biodiversity in both national parks continue to be high; however, this is exacerbated in Macedonia as park authorities finance park management through timber harvesting. Sustainability is thus no longer satisfactory here, even if new funds are being provided through a subsequent FC project that supports the establishment of a financing fund to support the park in the future.

Highlights: Good planning and physical capacities were established in both NPs. These create a basis for future investment measures and cooperation with local actors (including communities, NGOs, scientific institutes and small businesses in the tourism sector).



Rating according to DAC criteria

Overall rating: 3 Albania; 4 Macedonia

Ratings:

	Albania	Macedonia
Relevance	3	3
Effectiveness	3	4
Efficiency	3	3
Impact	3	3
Sustainability	3	4

Overall context and project description

Since 2001, the German Federal Government has been supporting regional cooperation with southeastern European countries in the context of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. In doing so, German development cooperation (DC) also supports regional and bilateral initiatives to protect biodiversity in the border regions between Albania, Macedonia and Greece.

In the open FC programme for protecting the biodiversity of the Ohrid-Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Albania, Macedonia, Greece), two bilateral projects were executed between 2008 and 2015: between 2008 and 2011 in Macedonia (Galicica National Park) and in the period from 2010 to 2015 in Albania (Prespa National Park). The two national parks (NP) border each other, cover an area of around 60 thousand hectares and are part of the UNESCO Ohrid-Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, which was declared in 2014.

Relevance

From today's perspective the projects' objectives are still very relevant. In line with the DC strategy for protecting biodiversity in landscape regions with fauna and flora particularly worthy of protection, both projects were intended to help protect endemic species in the Galicica NP (24,151 ha — Macedonia) and the Prespa NP (27,500 ha — Albania). The regions are part of the UNESCO Ohrid-Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve declared in 2014, which underlines their relevance. The projects are based on the premises of European forest policies and the conservation policies of Natura 2000¹. The extraordinary importance of the forest for providing ecosystem services and sustainable forest management are just as much part of this as reinforcing connected networks of protected areas. Biodiversity protection within the NP is given a key role here. It is important that technically appropriate management plans are available and that the local population is adequately involved in land use planning so that the park authorities can fulfil their role.

In this context, the core problem to be tackled by the projects is that the promoted adjacent NPs each have significant endemic biodiversity and are subject to loss of forest cover and biodiversity within the park areas. Renewable wood is harvested to varying degrees of intensity within the park areas. Lacking economic alternatives in parts of the country with per capita income that is significantly lower than the national average, and due to traditional energy use in the entire area, the local population harvests wood for heating and cooking, uses the landscape for grazing, and uses forest and bush regions for harvesting plant and animal resources (bird eggs, butterflies). These centuries-old forms of agriculture account for the severe consequences of use on forest regions and ecosystems in rural areas of Macedonia and Albania. More settlements in the regions as well as rising numbers of tourists on the banks of Great Prespa Lake and Small Prespa Lake lead to growing environmental pollution (wastewater, solid waste and sewage) which poses an additional threat to biodiversity, particularly on the shores of the lakes. The capacity (planning and infrastructure) available in both Macedonia and Albania to combat the traditionally high

¹ Natura 2000 is an ecological network of protected areas in Europe that was adopted in line with the Habitats Directive in 1992.

overutilisation was insufficient when both projects began in 2008 (Macedonia) and 2010 (Albania) in the respective NPs. Further, there were hardly any strategies in place to create alternative income opportunities to sustainably manage forest resources.

In both projects, the targeted outputs included measures to build up planning and organisational structures (management plans, forest management plans, zoning, strengthening park management) and to improve the park infrastructure (information centres, marked hiking trails). Selective measures for generating income were supported to lessen the utilisation pressure on the park area. In this way, the projects were designed to reduce usage at the outcome level and create alternative income opportunities. At the impact level, they were intended to protect biodiversity across borders, contribute to regional cooperation and also to alleviate poverty in Albania. These objectives and the associated result chain of both projects were only partially coherent in view of pronounced institutional deficits (staffing and funding of the parks and ministries), and a general legal framework which was still in development in both countries. The promoted outputs only have the potential to make a decisive contribution towards the objective achievement if the assumptions of functional institutional structures and suitable legal conditions are fulfilled. As this was not (yet) the case in these countries, the weaknesses in this regard would have had to be addressed simultaneously to achieve the ambitious objectives. However, the institutional foundations did not appear stable enough and the political will in the countries was not strong enough to achieve this on their own. Consequently, the aspiration to realise cross-border and structural impacts was very high, especially given the absence of structures for monitoring and sanctioning, and the conflict between impact of use and alleviating poverty on the one hand, and conservation on the other.

The most achievable within the context of this programme concept was to lay a foundation which could have an impact regarding the set objectives, in the medium term and with appropriate promotion of the environment. Due to these factors, the relevance is rated as satisfactory.

Relevance rating: 3 (Albania and Macedonia)

Effectiveness

The objective at the outcome level was to reduce overutilisation of areas needing protection in the Galicica (Macedonia) and Prespa (Albania) NPs and to create alternative sources of income in Albania.

The following indicators were used to assess achievement of project objectives. Indicator (1) and (2) are output indicators, but they were used as proxy indicators for the outcome. Indicator (3) allows conclusions to be drawn about the functional capabilities of the park authorities, while indicator (4), which stands in closest relation to the outcome level, should support statements about the consequences of overutilisation. The project did not provide a reliable monitoring structure, and the data were not available in an institutionally-prepared form, which is why plausibility considerations had to be made in some cases (also at impact level). Data from multispectral satellite imagery published by Hansen et al.² was used for own calculations of forest cover and deforestation in the project region as a proxy for estimating the development of utilisation pressure.

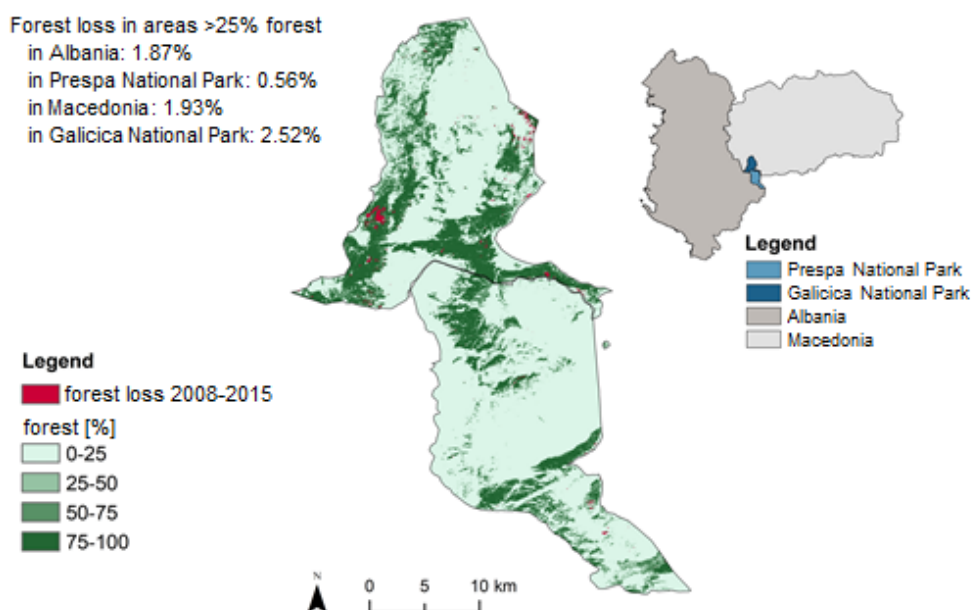
² Hansen, M. C., P. V. Potapov, R. Moore, M. Hancher, S. A. Turubanova, A. Tyukavina, D. Thau, S. V. Stehman, S. J. Goetz, T. R. Loveland, A. Kommareddy, A. Egorov, L. Chini, C. O. Justice, and J. R. G. Townshend. 2013. "High-Resolution Global Maps of 21st-Century Forest Cover Change." *Science* Volume 342, No. 6160 (15 November 2013): 850-53. Data available at: <http://earthenginepartners.appspot.com/science-2013-global-forest>.

Indicator	Status at project appraisal (PA), project objective's value at PA if available	Ex post evaluation
(1) Improved physical infrastructure in the parks	Status at PA: rudimentary park management and hardly any marked hiking trails	<p>Very good park management buildings and, in some cases, good park information infrastructure.</p> <p>Indicator fulfilled</p>
(2) Improved planning structures (management plan, monitoring structure)	Status at PA: no management plan, no monitoring structure	<p>Management plans: satisfactory (FYROM), good (Albania) monitoring structures: rudimentary (Improvements are also documented in the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT))</p> <p>Indicator partially fulfilled</p>
(3) Improved funding and staffing for the NP	Status at PA: deficient funding and staffing	<p>The funding and staffing continues to be deficient relative to the need to implement the management plans.</p> <p>Indicator not fulfilled</p>
(4) Preserving forest areas within the park area and the respective zones (management plans)	Status at PA: unknown objective value: at least the same	<p>Information available about preservation of forest areas on a country-level: Macedonia: park area: unchanged; in the zones defined in the management plan: could not be determined: Albania: park area: unchanged in parts; in the zones defined in the management plan: unchanged in the strict protected zone, could not be determined in other zones</p> <p>According to satellite data, the forest area in both NPs declined between 2008 and 2015. In Macedonia it declined within the park even more significantly than on average in Macedonia, and considerably more than in the Albanian park (see figure 1). See below for an interpretation of these findings.</p> <p>Indicator partially fulfilled at most</p>
(5) Higher level of income for the population living in the park area (when compared to baseline 2010)	No baseline available for villagers or professional groups	<p>Selected isolated measures to create alternative income sources (beekeepers, herb gatherers, fishermen) indicate income increases. On a wider level, the local income alternatives are very limited. Many residents receive transfer payments.</p> <p>Indicator fulfilled in individual cases</p>

The implemented measures primarily tackled overutilisation indirectly. As the degree of utilisation was reduced using controlling and sanctioning measures, incentive systems and economic alternatives, a regional plan first had to be created as a basis. Today, both parks have management plans and an improved institutional status within the respective national administrations. In the process, relevant data about the respective NP were compiled and measures to reduce utilisation pressure were developed. Unfortunately, it was not possible to sustainably include the municipal governments in both countries and thus use the management plans as relevant instruments for the community work. The extent to which the management plans can be implemented as a whole depends on their integration into the regional zoning plans of the communities. Joint work platforms are essentially unavailable at the community level. Civil society actors were only occasionally taken into account as relevant actors for implementing the management plans in the Galicica NP, and were practically ignored in the Prespa NP. These types of actors only get active if funding is provided by an external financier. Although the respective park authorities were strengthened institutionally by the management plans (Macedonia and Albania), yet they were not able to execute the majority of the planned activities due to insufficient staffing and funding.

In general, suitable employment relationships were created for the park management in the two NPs (park infrastructure and planning capacities) to better protect the ecosystems and biodiversity within the park. Spacious facilities were created and means of transport for working in the park were provided. However, the created outputs are insufficient without adequate funding and staffing to counteract the still very high degree of utilisation and to maintain biodiversity (see impact indicators). The park authorities only performed monitoring activities to a limited extent; there are no sanctions for illegal procedures.

Illustration 1: Illustration of forest cover in Prespa and Galicica NPs between 2008–2015



Internal analysis and preparation. Definition of forest cover in the data used here (Hansen et al., 2013): tree heights over 5m and at least 25% tree canopy cover, measured with a spatial resolution of 30m x 30m. Data sources: project and protected areas. UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (2017), Protected Planet: The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) [Online], 06/2017, Cambridge, UK: UNEP-WCMC and IUCN. Available at www.protectedplanet.net Global Forest Change. Hansen/UMD/Google/USGS/NASA [Online]. Available at: <https://earthenginepartners.appspot.com/science-2013-global-forest>

The first instances of organised use for tourism activities were recorded in Macedonia. Natural resources were sustainably used in certain areas in both parks. However, the general trend of overutilizing natural resources could not be stopped. On site information indicates that, lacking alternatives, the population in the parks and the neighbouring villages continues to use more wood for heating and cooking from the NP forests than can naturally grow back. At least in some blocks of NP forest, logging is controlled based on allotted licenses from the respective park authorities. The respective forest management plans are part of the management plans established during the projects.

The evidence of changing forest cover between 2008 and 2015 based on satellite images demonstrates alarming deforestation in the Macedonian national park in particular. However, the extensive deforestation in the southwestern part of the park (see figure 1) indicates that the reason for this is not illegal logging, which usually takes place on a smaller scale. Instead, it suggests that events like large forest fires are responsible. This is corroborated by numerous media reports about severe forest fires during the period examined. But even if forest fires are primarily responsible for the deforestation, the extent of the damage indicates that the capacity available for effectively fighting forest fires was not sufficient. As the national park management in Macedonia is responsible for preventing forest fires in the park and is legally required to ensure reforestation³, the widespread deforestation in the park can be seen as an indication of the still insufficient functionality of the park management, especially since — according to the source on forest fires in Macedonia listed in footnote 3 — it is possible that forest fires are being used to cover up illegal logging. Despite visible positive results, the achievement of the project objective in Macedonia is thus significantly below expectations. The effectiveness can no longer be assessed as satisfactory. Due to the significantly lower level of deforestation in the Albanian Prespa Park, this part of the programme can still be assessed as satisfactory, despite the deficits.

Effectiveness rating: 3 (Albania), 4 (Macedonia)

Efficiency

Based on the low planning and physical capacities in both NPs, a suitable planning basis (zoning drafts and plans, management plan, forest management plans) and physical infrastructure had to be created first and foremost. Over 80% of all staffing and financial resources of the projects were used for this.

The allocation of expenditures for the budgets of both projects provides insight into the production efficiency. In Macedonia, about 60% of the FC funds amounting to EUR 1.53 million were used for consulting and planning services. In the process, comparatively little funding was earmarked for creating a management plan for the Galicica NP (which turned out to be not very valuable from a technical standpoint). High efficiency was achieved by expanding and rehabilitating park information centres in Ohrid and Stenje. Some expenses (programme for increasing environmental awareness, reinforcing structures for community inclusion, diversifying sources of income) affected measures that were no longer pursued by the park management at the time of the ex post evaluation. The project measures were executed within an appropriate timeframe.

In Albania around 25% of the EUR 3.23 million invested was used for physical infrastructure and means of transport, and over 65% was used for consulting and planning services. All the construction measures were cost efficient, but in one case they were implemented in an unsuitable location.⁴ The costs for consulting and planning services seem high, but are put into perspective when the huge efforts for generating the basic data needed to create a technically good management plan are taken into account. There were also additional expenses for measures to create alternative income opportunities. The Prespa NP does not finance these types of measures with its budget.

How the costs relate to the micro- and macroeconomic benefits was assessed to evaluate the allocation efficiency for both projects. Activities financed as part of the consulting services and those that provided the foundation for appropriate funding of the NP were used as a base line. Both NPs today have usable data, which allows making an appropriate estimate of the annual budget required for a professional park management to implement the management plan activities. The management plans led to an institutional strengthening of the park authorities and benefited the status of the NP as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. However, the actually intended project results (reducing the impact of usage, creating alternative income opportunities and maintaining biodiversity) were not fulfilled as hoped. That said, foundations were established which will constitute a solid basis for the park management in the future, while future measures will strengthen this basis and improve the framework conditions for even greater impacts.

Efficiency rating: 3 (Albania and Macedonia)

³ FOREST FIRES COUNTRY STUDY FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA 2015 Produced by the Regional Fire Monitoring Center (Key expert: Nikola Nikolov) http://documents.rec.org/publications/Forest_Fires_FYRMacedonia.pdf.

⁴ An information centre was built near Small Prespa Lake which is not yet furnished, its sanitary facilities were not completed, and it is not used.

Impact

At the impact level, the intention was to maintain biodiversity in the border region of Prespa, to help cooperation in the region between Albania, Macedonia and Greece, and to contribute to alleviating poverty in Albania.

Indicator	Status PA, project objective's value at PA if available	Ex post evaluation
(1) A stable stock of selected terrestrial keystone species in the fifth year after the project began	Status PA: unknown objective: at least the same	Evidence of stable populations of pelicans. Otherwise, no measurable evidence available. Various populations of endemic species are observed in the parks by different NGOs, however, the park authorities did not have this information. Due to low levels of harvesting in strict conservation zones (management plans), it is assumed that at least a stable stock exists. However, the degree of risk is high in park zones designated for forest management. Indicator cannot be assessed.
(2) Preservation of biological connectivity between Prespa and Galicica NPs in the fifth year after the project began	Status PA: unknown objective: at least the same	Both management plans designate a strict protected zone in the border region to preserve biological connectivity. One positive note is the tailored establishment of this protected zone on both sides of the border. Logging takes place in other zones in the border region. This suggests that the indicator was only partially fulfilled.

Creating management plans and other capacities (infrastructure, means of transport and work equipment) contributed to a institutional strengthening in both NPs, which also facilitates the process for creating the biosphere reserve in the natural environment of Prespa between Macedonia, Albania and Greece. The creation of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in turn contributed to a more prominent status for both the Galicica and Prespa NPs. The greatest benefit of the management plans is that professional zoning and associated potential uses were created for the NPs, data was collected and specific measures for protecting the NPs were formulated.

Overall, a basis was created to some extent to contribute to preserving biodiversity. No further findings were made during the evaluation mission about the project's aimed contributions to regional cooperation in the area between Albania, Macedonia and Greece, and impacts on alleviating poverty in Albania. As the existing funding and staffing are concentrated on executing the complex daily tasks at park level in the Galicica and Prespa NPs, joint coordination today between the neighbouring countries for cross-border biosphere conservation still depends almost completely on external resources.

Since the creation of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve not only ensures the protected status of both parks over the long term, but also simultaneously focuses the attentions of the international community on this area, the impact of the project is rated satisfactory.

Impact rating: 3 (Albania and Macedonia)

Sustainability

There is an annual budget for the park management services in both the Galicica and Prespa NPs. While the Galicica NP (Macedonia) is legally permitted to generate and invoice its own revenue, and does not receive funding as part of the national budget, the Prespa NP is funded almost exclusively from budget allocations from the National Agency of Protected Areas in Albania.

The main sources of funding for the Galicica NP are proceeds from the sale of timber in managed forest areas in the NP, a classic instance of conflicting objectives. Biodiversity can only truly be preserved in woodland areas that are not authorised for logging. The higher the budget requirements are for park management, the more deforestation is required to finance the budget. Between 2008 and 2016, the share of proceeds from the sale of timber increased in the overall budget, while the annual budget diminished overall. The park is trying to generate alternative revenue with controversial park entry fees from tourists and road users (cross connection from Great Prespa Lake to Lake Ohrid). Even with this revenue, the Galicica NP is significantly underfinanced with respect to its requirements in the management plan, and depends on external sources for financing. The management is not able to execute the activities in the management plan sustainably. In addition, there is a lack of staff and active (scientific) cooperations (at community level, NGOs, etc.).

The annual budget for the Prespa NP is covered by allocations from the national budget up to nearly 97%. The legal form of the Prespa NP does not allow revenue from other sources. Only allocations from the municipalities are taken into the budget, which receive forest utilisation licence fees from households living within the park area that harvest wood. This amounts to less than EUR 4,000 per year. The Prespa NP also has insufficient funding and staffing available to execute all the tasks contained in the management plan. The annual budget from 2016 was increased by 6% in 2018 (budgeted figure) — which is not enough to fulfil the management tasks, but is at least a positive signal from the government.

In 2016, a fund was structured in a subsequent FC project ("Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust") to cover costing needs and some of the operating costs in the Prespa Biosphere Reserve in the future. This presents an opportunity for setting up sustainable financing structures in the foreseeable future in both parks, provided that financing mechanisms supported at the national level are also designed and executed for both NPs.

Developing and implementing alternative income opportunities for the population and realising the tasks resulting from the management plans are connected with greater staffing needs and additional operating costs. The required funds for this were not available in past years, and alternative revenue from tourism could only be generated in some cases. In the future, investment measures might be able to build upon the good planning and physical foundations in both NPs to develop solutions for alternative income opportunities and reduce the usage pressure in the medium term. However, this is subject to local actors and the respective communities being actively involved in park activities, and internal financing sources must be established (e.g. park charges like a visitors' tax).

In summary, the sustainability of the projects in the Galicica NP in Macedonia are no longer evaluated as satisfactory due to the counterproductive incentive structure of how park management financing is regulated. The projects in Albania are still evaluated as satisfactory given the increasing budget allocations that signal a political support for the park.

Sustainability rating: 3 (Albania), 4 (Macedonia)

Notes on the methods used to evaluate project success (project rating)

Projects are evaluated on a six-point scale, the criteria being **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency** and **overarching developmental impact**. The ratings are also used to arrive at a **final assessment** of a project's overall developmental efficacy. The scale is as follows:

Level 1	Very good result that clearly exceeds expectations
Level 2	Good result, fully in line with expectations and without any significant shortcomings
Level 3	Satisfactory result – project falls short of expectations but the positive results dominate
Level 4	Unsatisfactory result – significantly below expectations, with negative results dominating despite discernible positive results
Level 5	Clearly inadequate result – despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate
Level 6	The project has no impact or the situation has actually deteriorated

Rating levels 1-3 denote a positive assessment or successful project while rating levels 4-6 denote a negative assessment.

Sustainability is evaluated according to the following four-point scale:

Sustainability level 1 (very good sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to continue undiminished or even increase.

Sustainability level 2 (good sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline only minimally but remain positive overall. (This is what can normally be expected).

Sustainability level 3 (satisfactory sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project (positive to date) is very likely to decline significantly but remain positive overall. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability of a project is considered inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation but is very likely to evolve positively so that the project will ultimately achieve positive developmental efficacy.

Sustainability level 4 (inadequate sustainability): The developmental efficacy of the project is inadequate up to the time of the ex post evaluation and is very unlikely to improve. This rating is also assigned if the sustainability that has been positively evaluated to date is very likely to deteriorate severely and no longer meet the level 3 criteria.

The **overall rating** on the six-point scale is compiled from a weighting of all five individual criteria as appropriate to the project in question. Rating levels 1-3 of the overall rating denote a "successful" project while rating levels 4-6 denote an "unsuccessful" project. It should be noted that a project can generally be considered developmentally "successful" only if the achievement of the project objective ("effectiveness"), the impact on the overall objective ("overarching developmental impact") and the sustainability are rated at least "satisfactory" (level 3).