# New OECD DAC evaluation criteria – December 2019

The DAC has adopted at its meeting on 10 December 2019 an **adapted definition and the principles for use of the evaluation criteria**.

## Reasons for changes

The five DAC criteria we all know (Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability) were first laid out in 1991 and then defined in the 2002 Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management. Since then, they have known an enormous success and over time have been adopted well beyond the OECD-DAC members – and not only in the field of Development Cooperation.

The DAC evaluation criteria shaped the way we do evaluation worldwide. Recently, and building from learning gathered over 25 years of their application, the global evaluation community engaged in discussions and public consultations aimed at revisiting the DAC criteria as to make them more coherent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the new development landscape. As DAC writes, “Better criteria will support better evaluation. Better evaluation will contribute to better policies to advance the 2030 Agenda, achieve national contributions to the Paris Agreement, and other goals.[[1]](#footnote-1)”

## What changes?

We invite you to read the full package distributed by the DAC (attached) as the changes made to the criteria are significant and cannot be synthesized in a factsheet; in a nutshell, the most important ones are:

* The addition of a sixth criterion: **Coherence**. Coherence is defined as “The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.” This criterion has both an internal and an external dimension (thus absorbing also elements such as co-ordination and complementarity.) This is good news for us, as - following the Better Regulation initiative[[2]](#footnote-2)- DEVCO already included Coherence as one of the two EU-specific criteria to be assessed by evaluations.
* An improved and more dynamic definition of the five pre-existing criteria:
  + **Relevance**: the “extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.” This new definition stresses the importance of a dynamic analysis of relevance (was the intervention relevant at the time of its design and remained it relevant throughout implementation?)
  + **Effectiveness**: the “extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.” The concept of differential results acknowledges that results can be different for different beneficiary groups; it creates a better link with a gendered-centered approach to evaluation, thus making even more actual the 2018 DEVCO-NEAR-FPI guidance on how to evaluate gender as a Cross-cutting dimension[[3]](#footnote-3).
  + **Efficiency**: the “extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.” The explanatory notes clarify that efficiency should focus on the entire results chain, a dimension that is too often overlooked.
  + **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 improved definition is another good news, as it confirms that our DEVCO approach (impact as the contribution to the Overall Objective of an intervention) is an appropriate one; it also confirms that impact analysis must go beyond the contribution to the Overall Objective to analyse also the unexpected higher-level effects, being them positive or negative.
  + **Sustainability**: the “extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.” The note clarifies the multi-dimension nature of sustainability, which shall look at “financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time.”

## What happens next?

OECD/DAC will develop further guidance, starting from the definitions of the ‘new’ criteria and how to use them for different types of evaluation. The Unit 04 will timely share with Delegations and HQ Units all upcoming guidance and organize early in 2020 a public presentation event in Brussels, which can be followed live via web streaming.

## What impacts on the work of Delegations and HQ Units?

We are assessing our evaluation processes and approaches to understand the repercussions of the new definitions. In terms of processes we don’t expect significant effects; any change will be signaled, rapidly. In terms of approach to evaluation, it is important that everyone be aware of the different implications that these new definitions will have on the way evaluation will be conducted by external consultants and quality assured by evaluation managers.

We just updated the evaluation ToR templates and guidance to reflect these new definitions and they are attached to this factsheet; over the coming days they will be also published on our intranet[[4]](#footnote-4).

## Your contact point for any doubt

The Evaluation and Results Unit is always available for providing specific support and clarify any doubts you may have; in particular, you can contact the ESS helpdesk at [helpdesk@evaluationsupport.eu](mailto:helpdesk@evaluationsupport.eu) for scheduling a chat or the usual review of your Terms of Reference and evaluation reports.

1. OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria: Adapted Definitions and Principles for Use. DCD/DAC(2019)58/FINAL, 10 December 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/better-regulation-guidelines-evaluation-fitness-checks.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/guidance-evaluation-gender-cross-cutting-dimension_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://myintracomm.ec.testa.eu/dg/devco/evaluation-quality-results/evaluation/Pages/project-evaluations.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)