

Evaluation of
The Implementation of Council Regulation 2667/2000 (European Agency for
Reconstruction)

Final Report

Observations and Judgement

1. Quality assessment grid

Concerning these criteria, the evaluation report is:	Unacceptable	Poor	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
1. Meeting needs: Does the evaluation adequately address the information needs of the commissioning body and fit the terms of reference?			x		
2. Relevant scope: Is the rationale of the programme examined and its set of outputs, results and outcomes/impacts examined fully, including both intended and unexpected policy interactions and consequences?				x	
3. Defensible design: Is the evaluation design appropriate and adequate to ensure that the full set of findings, along with methodological limitations, is made accessible for answering the main evaluation questions?			x		
4. Reliable data: To what extent are the primary and secondary data selected adequate? Are they sufficiently reliable for their intended use?				x	
5. Sound analysis: Is quantitative and qualitative information appropriately and systematically analysed according to the state of the art so that evaluation questions are answered in a valid way?			x		

6. Credible findings: Do findings follow logically from, and are they justified by, the data analysis and interpretations based on carefully described assumptions and rationale?			x		
7. Validity of the conclusions: Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results?			x		
8. Usefulness of the recommendations: Are recommendations fair, unbiased by personnel or shareholders' views, and sufficiently detailed to be operationally applicable?			x		
9. Clearly reported: Does the report clearly describe the policy being evaluated, including its context and purpose, together with the procedures and findings of the evaluation, so that information provided can easily be understood?			x		
Taking into account the contextual constraints on the evaluation, the overall quality rating of the report is considered.			x		

2. Appreciation by criteria

Criterion 1 – Meeting Needs: Acceptable

The report, which includes specific volumes on the evolution of the Agency and its functioning under the Regulation, describes fully the activities of the Agency and the policy and programming context in which it operates. It was intended that the report should be read within the context of the simultaneous evaluation of CARDS, but with that assumption accepted it can be said to be self-standing and adequately presented.

Criterion 2 – Relevant Scope – Good

The report (including annexes) shows a full coverage of the activities undertaken by the Agency under its mandate. The consultants have provided the necessary background information on the operational activities and budgetary disbursement of each of the Agency's Operational Centres. A large number of structured interviews and workshops were conducted to improve the consultants' knowledge of the situation of different countries and entities and the viewpoints of stakeholders, including non-state actors, within them.

Criterion 3 – Defensible design: Acceptable

The evaluation was conducted according to plan, although the relationship between the methodological approach (guiding principles and evaluation criteria) and the specific analysis undertaken for each evaluation question was not initially clear and required intensive dialogue between the steering group and the consultants.

Criterion 4 – Reliable data: Good

Sources of statistical and financial data were clearly identified and their reliability was considered high. Data in this evaluation should be judged in the context of complementary material in the CARDS evaluation, which was well-researched and is of a good quality. A considerable effort was made to narrate as accurately as possible the history and evolution of the Agency and its role in a highly complex environment of different donors and actors. This is a valuable achievement for a team of outsiders.

Criterion 5 – Sound Analysis: Acceptable

Although generally well-presented, the quality of analysis is sometimes undermined by the extensive quoting of opinions. It is a weakness of the evaluation that the reader cannot tell on many occasions how many correspondents expressed a given view, so when a conclusion appears like "surveyed respondents felt that.." or "a majority of the personnel of the Agency believe that...", it is hard to judge if it is methodologically valid. A declaration such as "operational staff did not seem overworked" is also questionable, rating as little more than a snap judgement. Reliability is compromised on occasion by the inclusion of un-attributed perceptions ("generally considered to be" etc) which cannot be considered as comprehensive evidence in an evaluation. It should be noted that, within the limited time available (outside the control of the consultants), it would have been difficult to make optimal use of illustrations, for example drawing on monitoring and evaluation results, in order to provide a firmer foundation for some findings.

It should be noted that the criticism here partly reflects the commendable effort made by the consultants to take account of the views of government and local actors as well as the staff of the Agency and the Commission services, and is therefore a by-product of participative evaluative work.

Criterion 6: Credible Findings: Acceptable

Findings are clearly expressed and reflect attention to the main issues raised in the Evaluation Questions (Terms of Reference). It would have been preferable to have seen more illustration of key findings with reference to specific and identifiable cases, such as projects, reports etc.

Criterion 7 - Validity of conclusions¹ : acceptable

Conclusions are in line with the findings in relation to specific evaluation questions. More could have been done to isolate the most important issues for each conclusion – this also helps in making more explicit the link between conclusions and recommendations.

Criterion 8 - Usefulness of recommendations: acceptable

The recommendations follow the conclusions and it is generally clear which actors should take responsibility for follow-up. However, recommendations on the programming process and on the governing arrangements for the Agency did not take account of where responsibility for these aspects lies (including the legally-defined responsibilities of the CARDS Committee) which makes it difficult to foresee their implementation.

Criterion 9 - Clarity of the report² : Acceptable

The report is reasonably clear, although members of the steering group were concerned during drafting by a tendency towards rhetoric and use of jargon, and a considerable effort was required to ensure that legitimate comments, within the realm of quality control, were taken on board. Conclusions are generally clearer in expression than recommendations.

Overall rating: Acceptable report

Overall, the report meets the requirements of the Terms of Reference and provides the basis for discussion not only on the future of the legal base but on the future management and organisation of the Agency. For reasons outside the full control of the team (legal requirement for separate evaluations of the EAR and the CARDS Regulation), it is difficult to come to overall conclusions about the Agency, as one model of devolved implementation of EC assistance, without reading the CARDS report as well. Credit should be given to the consultants for having produced an acceptable report within an unusually tight timescale.

¹ *Validity of the conclusions:* Does the report provide clear conclusions? Are conclusions based on credible results?

² *Clearly reported:* Does the report clearly describe the policy being evaluated, including its context and purpose, together with the procedures and findings of the evaluation, so that information provided can easily be understood?