Meta-Evaluation of interventions undertaken by the Luxembourg Cooperation
in the subsector of professional training in hospitality and tourism.

In 2013, the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Action of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs requested an independent assessment of meta-evaluation of interventions undertaken by the Luxembourg Cooperation in the subsector of professional training for hospitality and tourism. The assessment was conducted by Eurofin Hospitality. The Ministry publishes hereafter an executive summary with the main results from this exercise.

The observations, opinions and recommendations expressed in this report represent the points of view of the evaluators and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In line with the OECD criteria for evaluating development assistance, the following meta-evaluation assesses interventions undertaken by the Luxembourg Cooperation (LC) in the sub-sector of vocational training in hospitality and tourism in four partner countries: Cape Verde, Nicaragua, Lao PDR and Vietnam. It aims at providing an aggregation of findings based on existing documentation, previous evaluations, as well as a field mission conducted in the first quarter of 2014.

The evaluation team has assessed the relevance of the interventions and concluded that the general and specific objectives support the political framework and strategies of both the LC and the partner countries. Projects respond to an evident need of the growing tourism sector and foster the creation of formal employment for young people. They also provide a local qualified workforce to the tourism and hospitality industry. However, focus groups demonstrated that the organisational scheme did not manage to deliver a tailored solution integrating the private sector.

Based on the different expected results stated in the project documents, the interventions did achieve most of the objectives and results by building the capacity of the pedagogical staff to deliver better training, upgrading infrastructure, developing curriculum and books, and ultimately strengthening the employability of the school graduates. However, extensions or the formulation of new projects have been required to achieve the complex objectives.

After considering the planned activities, the related costs and duration, as well as the management procedures, it has been found that the projects struggled to balance infrastructure construction and the activities of training the trainers. Furthermore, the scope of the interventions was revealed to be particularly ambitious in regards to the planned duration and allocated human resources. This, plus the lack of alternatives for each activity, meant that the full potential of the interventions was compromised and the efficiency jeopardised.

Despite these issues, the projects allowed students to benefit from quality training by creating new schools or improving existing institutions, enhancing the capacity of trainers, and developing pedagogical material. Other improvements in the professional and financial situation of some beneficiaries could be observed during the field missions. It is believed that the upgraded capacities of the tourism training resulted in graduates being more employable in the industry. This improved the earning potential of the graduates and was of benefit to their families and communities. However, this could not be confirmed by accurate information as baseline data was missing to properly measure the impact of the interventions on poverty reduction.

Moreover, various internal and external factors particular to each country influenced this impact. Amongst them various documents and interviews revealed that good relationships with governments facilitated the implementation of projects but political decisions at a national level sometimes decreased or delayed the effects of projects.

By examining the institutional, technical and financial sustainability of the projects, research demonstrates that the counterparts have the managerial, technical and financial capacities within their particular country to maintain high quality training. This assertion is nonetheless subject to political changes and to the capacity of the governments to understand the challenges of national tourism development. To ensure the viability of the projects after LC's withdrawal, counterparts will need to guarantee a sufficient budget allocation and reinforce the integration of the private sector.

In addition to the main OECD criteria, facts revealed a lack of coordination at national level in vocational training in hospitality and tourism. Cross feeding learning was often absent and the developed *know-how* seems to have remained local and, unfortunately, each and everyone's experiences were not shared with others. Moreover, the monitoring of the interventions was mainly directed towards operational activities (project management) and less to following up on the expected outcomes. The actual processes translate a clear lack of baseline data to measure and follow the interventions.

To conclude, the evaluation found that the efforts made to reach the objectives have been important and have upgraded the capacity of the partner countries in vocational training in hospitality and tourism. However, some of the issues addressed and the solutions designed did not maximise the inputs. It is believed that the current work to draw the lessons learned from the previous projects will benefit future interventions.

The main recommendations made by the team are therefore:

- increase the time spent at the early stage of project design to identify detailed actions and formulate a comprehensive plan that incorporates an exit strategy and analyses risk as well as impact

- develop a project monitoring structure with a standardised data collection format, key performance indicators associated to each implementation phase, and milestones suggesting the successful conclusion of a phase

- enhance communication among stakeholders particularly by strengthening the private sector participation.

SUMMARY TABLE OF RECOMMANDATIONS

Assessing project requests	The sharing of responsibilities between MFA and LuxDev in the identification and formulation phases is not as clear as it should be. It appears that once a request is received, a thorough assessment, challenging the demand submitted by partner countries, is missing. The assessment should be used during the formulation phase to draft a project framework with a more realistic scale, timeframe, budget and human resources. This preparatory phase should include an in-depth analysis of the sector-wide macro structure. It should identify the different players at all levels and the gaps in the sector — whether technically missing or simply missing the capacity to rightly implement. Consequently, this phase should allow the LC to formulate projects that would act as a bottom-up approach to feed the macro level with industry development needs.
Upgrading the project monitoring activity	The efforts of LuxDev in terms of monitoring are mainly focused on activities. Engaged resources, both human and financial, are monitored on a continuous and regular basis, whereas the effective results of interventions are monitored on an annual basis without a standardised framework. The project monitoring appears to be incomplete. The meta-evaluation team recommends that the operational monitoring of interventions be pursued and that a new monitoring approach to evaluate expected results on a regular basis be established. Monitoring outputs effectively should remain part of the counterpart's responsibilities, but assigned to a focal point. Furthermore, key performance indicators must be well defined at the beginning of the intervention. It must include the frequency of data collection. The objective is to develop the counterpart's capacity to monitor projects effectively through a results-based approach.
Creating a results-based approach	It starts with a standardised process based on results, a structured management team and a standard communication platform to implement and report on project implementation. The meta-evaluation team recommends formulating the project's framework with a results-based approach. It is crucial to write a logical framework with clearly defined objectives and related actions that are linked to results. The successful achievement of results will indicate the success rate of the project and within periods, given that actions should have timeframes allocated accordingly. If one knows that a series of actions within a pre-determined timeframe will lead to a

	specific result, the objective has eventually been achieved.
	The approach must consider the various risks associated to the undertaking of actions and some measures of mitigation identified if the risk presents. In example, if the project has considered an important financial contribution by the local government and this is considered a risk – if the government precipitately decides to withdraw – an alternative action should already be envisaged. In conclusion, one must analyse the potential risk associated to actions that may impede a successful result achievement. Evaluating initial hypotheses and monitoring the highlighted risks could help the project to stay on track and reply correctly to the needs of the beneficiaries, both direct and indirect.
Defining a handover plan	Every project should have a start and an end. The end or simply an exit strategy should be introduced at the start or concept phase when experts are still thinking about how a demand will be addressed by specific actions. Some of these combined actions should lead to milestones. It is important to identify indicators (quantitative as well as qualitative) that will be flagged when a milestone is achieved. Achieving all milestones is when the project has reached its end and therefore can be handed over to the local counterpart for full ownership.
	A transition phase should also be developed from two angles: financial and human resources. The first could easily be cut out once a level of financial sustainability is achieved. Human resources however are rather complicated. It depends on the ability of local counterparts in reaching an acceptable level of development and continuing the project themselves. It could be envisaged as a transitional process that an external adviser is assigned to the project for an extended period.
	In any case, a technical assistance project should not be seen as eternal development work.
Focus on the school's main curriculum	Extended professional education is perceived as a profitable alternative to generate revenue to cover operational and pedagogical costs for the schools. Extended education is a single or set of courses designed to enhance the technical skills of professionals in an activity. These paid courses may last from one day to a few months (i.e. culinary course targeting a specific cooking skill takes one day, whereas a revenue management set of courses could eventually take several months). The implementation of such course curricula must take into account conditions pertaining to potential students such as cost and availability (small hotels cannot finance single employees and hotel chains usually have an internal training program).
	The meta-evaluation team recommends keeping the focus on

	the main school curriculum. The extended education can only be considered an extra source of revenue if professionals recognise the school's capacity to develop new entrants into the existing labour force. An extended education program should therefore be independent and have its own cost estimation covering teachers' salaries, pedagogical material, fixed as well as variable costs. Attendance fees should cover cost and a reasonable profit to develop new programs.
Strengthening private sector contributions	Actors who can contribute to successfully achieving milestones must be identified. In the case of LC, the private sector must play a major role in ensuring sustainability. The private sector is the guarantor of beneficiaries' access to the labour market. One could envisage the implementation of a public-private partnership (PPP).
	According to the OECD, a PPP is "*an arrangement whereby the private sector provides infrastructure assets and services that traditionally have been provided by government, such as hospitals, schools, prisons, roads, railways, bridges, tunnels, as well as water and sanitation plants. While there is no clear agreement on what does or does not constitute a public-private partnership (PPP), they should involve the transfer of risk from the government to the private sector*". In the different projects implemented by the LC in the sub-sector of vocational training for hospitality and tourism, there is no evidence of a division of responsibilities between the public and private sector as described in the OECD definition.
	Having a school privately run (or without government intervention) does not constitute a PPP. If future projects wish to implement PPPs, there must be a stronger link with the private sector, where both public and private entities work towards a common objective. The private sector and the government should be involved in the communication and decision-making processes and the private sector must be an active member of the SC and be consulted as regularly as government.