

EVALUATION REPORT

Programme Evaluation of APPEAR III

Prepared for the Austrian Agency for Education and
Internationalisation (OeAD GmbH) funded by International
Partnerships Austria

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Abbreviations

AAP Advanced Academic Partnership

ADA Austrian Development Agency

ADC Austrian Development Cooperation

AP Academic Partnership

APPEAR Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development

EIP Extended Impact Partnership

FGD Focus Group Discussion

HE Higher education

HEI Higher education institutions

KoBü Koordinationsbüro (*ADA Coordination Office*)

OeAD Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation

PF Preparatory Funding

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

ToC Theory of Change

1. Executive Summary

The present report presents the findings from the **programme evaluation of the third phase of the Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development (APPEAR III)** – a programme financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and implemented by the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD). The overall objective of APPEAR is to strengthen the scientific foundation and institutional capacities in higher education (HE), research, and management in the partner countries through academic partnerships (hereinafter also referred to as “projects”) with Austrian higher education institutions (HEI) (component 1) and scholarships for master’s and PhD studies in Austria (component 2). With the main purpose of the evaluation being to **inform a potential fourth programme phase** of APPEAR, the evaluation was conducted about two years prior to the programme’s end. It covers the relevance, effectiveness, and operational efficiency of both programme components since the launch of APPEAR III in December 2020 until December 2025 when the data collection phase of this evaluation started. The evaluation was conducted in line with ADA’s Guidelines for Programme and Project Evaluations.

Background and Context Analysis

Implemented since 2009, the programme has enabled the implementation of more than 107 projects and the completion of Master’s and PhD studies of more than 183 scholarship holders so far. The design of APPEAR III was informed by the mid-term evaluation of the preceding programme phase. Based on recommendations from this evaluation, the **Extended Impact Partnership (EIP)** instrument was introduced to component 1. The other funding instruments of component 1 were already part of previous implementation phases and comprise the **Preparatory Funding (PF)**, the **Academic Partnership (AP)**, and the **Advanced Academic Partnership (AAP)**. Component 2 consists of **three different scholarship modalities**: embedded Master’s scholarships, embedded PhD scholarships and individual PhD scholarships. While the embedded Master’s and PhD scholarships are linked to an existing APPEAR (AP, AAP, or EIP) project, individual PhD scholarships are not. With an overall budget of EUR 18.7 Mio., 30 partnership projects (APs and AAPs), as well as 32 PhD scholarships and two Master’s scholarships have been newly funded by APPEAR III. Furthermore, 34 preparatory fundings were awarded and, in addition, 33 scholarships were taken over from the second implementation phase of APPEAR.

The partnerships are intended to **improve the general standards in HE, research, and management** through professionals and HEI sharing their knowledge and experience, and designing innovative projects. They are also aimed at **increasing Austrian HEI’s commitment for development cooperation**. The achievement of these objectives is expected to finally contribute to the effective and sustainable reduction of poverty in the partner countries which, in APPEAR III, are **Albania, Kosovo, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda, the Palestinian Territories, and Bhutan**. The same year that this evaluation was kicked off, the Three-Year-Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025 to 2027 was launched and stresses the relevance of scientific cooperation between Austrian HEI and HEI and other research institutions in partner countries of International Partnerships Austria.

Evaluation Design and Approach

The evaluation was based on three pillars: A **theory-based** approach, a **participatory** approach and a **mixed-methods** approach. Furthermore, the evaluation entails **case studies** of six projects implemented in Armenia. Both secondary and primary data constitute a solid foundation for the evaluation: Complementing the analysis of 145 project and programme documents, two online surveys (one for each programme component), 46 interviews, and 19 Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted. For the collection of quantitative data, 153 project team members from APPEAR III, and 137 (former) scholarship holders from all APPEAR phases were invited to participate in an online survey. **Extraordinarily high response rates** (78.4% in the survey on component 1, 59.1% in the survey on component 2) produced a strong quantitative data base. While all qualitative data were subject to a qualitative content analysis, quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

Findings

Relevance

By clearly reflecting objectives and approaches of policy frameworks such as UNESCO's Higher Education 2030 Roadmap and the European strategy for universities, APPEAR III is **strongly aligned** with European and international development strategies in the field of Higher Education. It is equally aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by directly addressing SDG4 (quality education) and SDG17 (partnerships for the goals), and by having thematic areas, to which projects must align, that all clearly relate to the SDGs. For Austrian Development Policy and the ADA portfolio in Higher Education, too, APPEAR III is **highly relevant** as it contributes to the objectives and approaches set out in the Three-Year Programmes on Austrian Development Policy (2022-2024 and 2025-2027), and other country- and sector-specific strategies, combining different thematic priorities set out therein. The programme is widely regarded as International Partnerships Austria's **flagship programme**, which is also reflected in ADA's HE core budget distribution where the largest share is allocated to APPEAR III. Its relevance for Austrian Development Policy further benefits from the research outputs from APPEAR projects, which can be used to inform further development policies.

APPEAR III's programme design also includes mechanisms to ensure alignment with national development priorities and strategies in the partner countries by including corresponding provisions in application guidelines, by application forms requiring a corresponding statement from applicants, and by ADA's Coordination Offices in APPEAR's partner countries reviewing project proposals for contextual fit. For the case study country Armenia, the evaluation shows that the programme design is **highly conducive to project proposals that correspond with national strategies**, given that APPEAR III itself is in line with several of the Armenian government's strategic fields of action. Aiming to improve research, teaching and management capacities, as well as to establish international partnerships between higher education institutions, **APPEAR III furthermore meets several needs of Higher Education Institutions (HEI)** in Armenia. Their internationalisation, to which APPEAR contributes, stands out in particular, as it is a high priority for the strategies of both the HEI and the Armenian national government.

Amid regional political and geopolitical changes affecting APPEAR's partner countries with implications ranging from inflation to violent conflicts and war, higher education and research cooperation as promoted by **APPEAR remains highly relevant**. While in some cases windows of opportunity for such cooperation have narrowed for political or security reasons (e.g., in Georgia, where the political

environment is unfavourable for partnerships with member states of the European Union), in others they have widened. The latter applies, for example, to the case study country Armenia, where geopolitical insecurities and the aftermath of the armed conflict with Azerbaijan mark the political context, but public investment in the higher education (HE) and research sectors has increased and internationalisation towards Europe is being promoted. However, where war has resulted in fatalities and destroyed critical infrastructures including faculty buildings, which is the case for Gaza, needs have shifted completely going now beyond the scope of the APPEAR programme.

The guidelines for APPEAR III applicants contribute to the programme relevance by presenting programme objectives and eligibility criteria in a clear manner, allowing applicants to align their project proposals properly with programme objectives and, thereby, with overarching International Partnerships Austria goals. With programme participants taking up the optional 'added values' in the majority of their projects, their integration into the programme design **effectively promotes the consideration of cross-cutting issues of International Partnerships Austria** and therefore further contributes to the programme's relevance. APPEAR III's 'basic principles' are also highly relevant to the programme's overall objectives: They are logically linked to these objectives, set out quality standards for the activities intended to achieve them, and are **consistent with approaches promoted by International Partnerships Austria**. While their incorporation into the application guidelines **partially lacks conciseness** and overlaps with the 'added values', programme stakeholders stress their importance in terms of the programme's **normative orientation**.

Empirical evidence about programme contribution to network formation and institutional transfer between the partner countries, intercultural competence development, and attitude changes among programme participants, indicates that APPEAR III also **strongly contributes to factors associated with peaceful international relations**.

Effectiveness

Apart from **conceptual inconsistencies in the Extended Impact Partnership (EIP) instrument** which are, among others, related to unclear results pathways, the design of **APPEAR III enables project implementation effectively** which is largely facilitated by the expertise built throughout the different implementation phases as well as by the highly valued customised support provided by the APPEAR Office. However, **strains persist**, especially regarding workload and budget distribution among partners, project teams' financial reporting obligations as well as financial, time-related, and bureaucratic conditions for scholarship holders. APPEAR's clear commitment to the **"Leave no one behind" (LNOB) principle is not yet fully reflected** in these conditions, as scholarship holders are largely dependent on personal savings and female candidates with children feel compelled either not to apply for the scholarship or to literally leave their children behind.

While the current mode of communication between the APPEAR Office and ADA does effectively enable programme implementation, the **limited collaboration with ADA's Coordination Offices** in the partner countries has been identified as its main weakness as it limits optimal programme implementation in terms of call dissemination, support to project implementation, and synergies in the spirit of Austria's Whole-of-Government Approach.

Within its sphere of influence, **programme management has responded flexibly to numerous unforeseen challenges and barriers** during programme and project implementation, leading to high levels of satisfaction and appreciation among the programme participants. This includes partners from the

Armenian case study projects who have expressed high appreciation of the technical guidance, coordination and administrative support provided by the APPEAR Office which **has effectively strengthened their project implementation**.

The programme **objectives are found to be largely achieved**, in particular those regarding capacity development and cooperation-informed HE and research. Shortfalls are mainly related to the **rather ineffective guidance on implementing APPEAR's Gender Strategy**. Comprehensive support provided to programme participants, robust collaboration, the promotion of personal encounters, and intrinsic motivation have been identified to be key factors facilitating the achievement of project and programme objectives, while hindering factors include the limited recognition for APPEAR projects in Austrian academia, geopolitical instabilities, as well as tedious visa and residence permit procedures. The assessment of the achievement of programme objectives is, however, limited by the programme's **monitoring system focused on outputs rather than outcomes**.

The programme has **contributed to raising awareness and increasing the visibility of development-related issues, teaching, and research within the Austrian academic and scientific community** by engaging over four dozen academic staff members from 14 different HEI across 30 APPEAR projects. While the programme is mainly popular among researchers with previous development-related research experience, in particular those with little prior experience report that APPEAR III has had a strong impact on their personal research agenda as well as on teaching content.

With embedded scholarship holders usually playing the central role in their respective (Advanced) Academic Partnership project and further team members supporting the scholarship holders with both administrative and research tasks, **the two APPEAR components are highly effective in supporting each other**.

Efficiency

The introduction of the Extended Impact Partnership instrument, programme participants' expanded needs and requirements, as well as additional tasks of the APPEAR Office have increased the programme's complexity compared to its previous phases. Combined with external factors placing a strain on the APPEAR Office's capacity to fully meet its advisory role and managerial responsibilities, these **changes have constrained to some extent the programme's operational efficiency**. The greatest potentials for simplification have been identified in streamlining internal processes, enhancing support for external challenges, and refining the programme design.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the evaluation shows that APPEAR III is a **highly effective** instrument of HE and research cooperation with **great relevance** to international development and Austria's international standing. Improving certain programme features and management practices could boost its relevance and effectiveness even further. The evaluation team's recommendations are as follows:

Strategic recommendations

SR1 The evaluation findings support **ADA's** consideration of implementing a follow-up phase and suggests that a seamless transition would be beneficial to leverage the programme's established value and support.

SR2 The evidence indicates that the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (**BMEIA**) and **ADA** maintaining engagement in high-risk countries among the eligible target countries of the APPEAR programme may offer significant advantages: The evaluation findings point to the programme's contribution to the maintenance and further development of HE and research institutions even in difficult environments where funding is often scarce, as well as to the programme's promotion of peaceful relations among different actors from the partnering countries.

SR3 The evidence suggests that systematic processing and dissemination of project results could be highly beneficial. This would involve the **APPEAR Office** making newly established networks and results from Master's and PhD projects (e.g., publications) accessible to relevant teams and departments at **ADA**, who could then use these results for revisions or the development of strategies and specific activities for Austrian development cooperation.

SR4 Should **ADA** prefer to keep the EIP instrument as part of APPEAR, findings from this evaluation suggest that the following four measures – involving actions from **ADA** and the **APPEAR Office** – may increase the EIP instrument's practical relevance and strengthen overall programme coherence: (1) define programme outcomes to be achieved by means of the EIP in the programme's Theory of Change (ToC), (2) allow non-academic partner institutions to coordinate EIP projects, (3) launch calls for applications for EIP projects separately from the other funding instruments and share these calls broadly with target groups addressed by the EIP, and (4) allow running projects to apply for unused EIP funds to integrate elements of the EIP instrument during the course of their implementation.

SR5 In order to alleviate programme participants' dependence on personal savings during their studies or short stays in Austria, the evaluation findings suggest that exploring options for adjusting mobility allowances and stipend rates may be necessary if mobility shall be enabled independently from participants' economic status. This would imply coordinated action between **ADA** and the **APPEAR Office**, and may include the exploration of additional in-kind payments (e.g., for public transportation while in Austria) or increased stipend rates despite resulting taxation.

SR6 Should an increase in allowances or in-kind payments not be feasible (or in addition to such measures), the **APPEAR Office** may consider emphasising in their communication with scholarship holders that it is possible to take up a part-time job below the Austrian marginal earnings threshold.

SR7 Taking into account that, in some contexts, Master's scholarships are better suited to reach female applicants, the evaluation's evidence supports that **ADA** keeps this sub-component of the APPEAR programme and furthermore allows for non-embedded Master's studies for female students from partner countries with female underrepresentation.

SR8 To address the multifaceted complexities and risks resulting from programme participation as a parent, the evidence suggests considering a combination of the following measures: Firstly, **ADA** (advised by the **APPEAR Office**) could define the scope of the support that can be provided to parents, including hardship provisions, and draw up clear criteria for their applicability. Secondly, the **APPEAR Office** may proactively communicate challenges, risks, and support possibilities for scholarship holders in charge of childcare duties to scholarship applicants. And thirdly, for qualified scholarship candidates with childcare duties, the provision of family stipends based on previously defined criteria may offer an appropriate approach which would require a corresponding strategic decision by **ADA**.

SR9 In order to close the conceptual gap between project outcomes which are expected to be achieved *gender-sensitively*, and the objective of increased *gender equality* in research, the evaluation team suggests that **ADA** and the **APPEAR Office** could consider strengthening their commitment to a more advanced level along the gender equality continuum, i.e., to prioritise gender-responsive and, in particular, gender-transformative activities over merely gender-sensitive ones.

SR10 In response to misinformation among programme participants from Austrian HEI and in order to increase the attractiveness of the APPEAR programme to Austrian researchers who are under pressure to demonstrate a substantial track record of securing external funding, the **APPEAR Office** may consider informing Austrian HEI more proactively about the possibility to request additional funds from the Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research for their research projects implemented with APPEAR funding.

SR11 To improve programme steering and communication, the evaluation findings indicate that **ADA** could consider revising the programme's intervention logic – or mandate the **APPEAR Office** to do so – in order to make the contribution of its different funding instruments to programme outcomes clearer to all relevant stakeholders and so that it addresses more explicitly all outcome and impact potentials as identified in this programme evaluation.

SR12 Related to SR11 and in light of the many years of programme implementation, the evaluation findings indicate the potential value of separate sustainability and impact evaluations commissioned by **ADA** and the **APPEAR Office** to allow for systematic assessments of the programme's long-term effectiveness, e.g., in terms of lasting institutional partnerships, uptake of APPEAR-funded research, and lasting on-the-ground improvements in the thematic areas covered by APPEAR projects.

SR13 To address delays associated with entry and residence permits as well as to ensure professional and timely treatment at the relevant government offices, the evaluation findings provide a basis for the **BMEIA** to consider engaging with the relevant authorities on measures to improve the processing of APPEAR participants' applications.

SR14 **ADA** could consider whether greater flexibility would be appropriate to adequately reflect actual workload distributions. Also, focusing on allocating the larger share of the *workload* to partner country institutions, rather than the larger share of the budget, may offer an option for strengthening ownership by these institutions.

SR15 In line with the newly introduced LNOB principle, the findings indicate a potential risk of an increasing capacity gap between HE and research institutions in APPEAR's partner countries resulting from repeated programme participation of institutions that are already comparatively stronger. **ADA** could consider how this risk might be addressed in future programme design, e.g., by strengthening institutional partnerships across provinces, as part of the promotion of regional networks.

Operational recommendations

OR1 The evaluation points to the potential value of the **APPEAR Office** enhancing the programme's monitoring system to be able to track progress towards target achievements more systematically. This implies defining specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) indicators for each targeted programme outcome, collecting data for these indicators and on a regular basis, and finally, aggregating these data to be able to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of implemented programme activities.

OR2 Given the highly volatile environment in some of APPEAR's partner countries, the evaluation findings strongly suggest that the **APPEAR Office** strengthen its risk management and security precautions for these countries by involving security experts, e.g., from the respective **ADA** representation, the **BMEIA** or the respective Austrian embassy.

OR3 To ensure the practical relevance of APPEAR's 'basic principles' and 'added values', the evaluation team recommends that the **APPEAR Office** revise definitions, explanations, and indicators provided for each of the principles and values, keeping them as concise and precise as possible. This also includes the alignment of conceptual frameworks and definitions with international practice.

OR4 The **APPEAR Office** may opt to raise programme participants' awareness of information already available on OeAD's website on all relevant issues such as the administrative steps to take, navigating the Austrian healthcare system, and conditions under which additional allowances can be granted.

OR5 The evaluation team recommends the **APPEAR Office** to involve ADA Offices (KoBüs) in APPEAR's partner countries more strongly in terms of information flows, advisory on calls for applications, and participation in orientation webinars for applicants. This increased engagement would need to be assessed by **ADA** against competing demands and available resources prior to mandating its KoBüs with this limited yet crucial involvement in APPEAR activities.

OR6 The evaluation findings indicate that **ADA** and the **APPEAR Office** exploring the possibility to define a threshold above which Austrian partners' auditing obligation applies may offer a twofold benefit: not only could it increase the cost-effectiveness of auditors' fees; it could also keep Austrian HEI attracted to the APPEAR programme by limiting their administrative workload. Undertaking such a revision will need to take ADA's and OeAD's broader accountability and compliance requirements into account.

OR7 To keep Austrian HEI attracted to the APPEAR programme and facilitate smooth project implementation, the evaluation team recommends that the **APPEAR Office** place greater emphasis on ensuring that project teams allocate sufficient resources to coordination tasks. This is to counteract frustrations and delays from unexpectedly time-consuming consultation and review processes within the project consortia.

OR8 The **APPEAR Office** may wish strengthen its efforts to also reach and encourage less-resourced institutions to submit APPEAR applications.

2. Introduction

The present report presents the findings from the **programme evaluation** of the third phase of the **Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development (APPEAR III)**, conducted by CEval GmbH on behalf of the Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD). APPEAR is a programme of International Partnerships Austria conceived, guided, and financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) to implement International Partnerships Austria's strategy for support of Higher Education and Research for Development on an academic institutional level in priority regions. The overall objective of APPEAR is to strengthen the scientific foundation and institutional capacities in higher education (HE), research, and management in the partner countries through academic partnerships (hereinafter also referred to as "projects") with Austrian higher education institutions (HEI) (component 1) and scholarships for master's and PhD studies in Austria (component 2).

With the **main purpose of the evaluation** being to inform a potential fourth programme phase of APPEAR, the evaluation was conducted about two years prior to the programme's end and addresses questions that are of interest to the following institutions responsible for its implementation: The Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria (hereinafter: BMEIA), ADA – responsible for the execution, financing, and management of BMEIA's international development projects –, as well as OeAD, which manages the APPEAR programme on behalf of ADA. The specific unit at OeAD in charge of programme management is referred to as the APPEAR Office. While for the first two institutions the evaluation results are mostly relevant to inform strategic decisions, the latter will use them to improve programme management.

The **objectives of the evaluation** were to assess the programme's relevance, effectiveness, and operational efficiency, as well as to identify lessons learned, provide actionable recommendations based on these results, and outline options for the design and structure of the potential fourth programme phase. Particular needs for knowledge addressed by the evaluation cover potentials for structural programme improvements, consequences of geopolitical changes for programme implementation, as well as the contribution of science and research cooperation to peace work. Furthermore, the evaluation sheds light on the relevance of APPEAR's basic principles with regard to achieving the programme's overall objectives, as well as on the role of APPEAR's 'added values' in the selection process and project implementation. Another key focus of the evaluation was laid on Armenia, one of APPEAR III's eleven partner countries, which, compared to other partner countries, accounts for a larger share of APPEAR III projects, and was selected as case study country by ADA and the APPEAR Office to learn in more depth about the programme's relevance.

The **scope of the evaluation** covers both programme components since the launch of APPEAR III in December 2020 until December 2025 when the data collection phase of this evaluation started. The focus on only three of the OECD DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness and efficiency) is due to limited financial and organisational resources, and aligns with ADA's guiding evaluation principles

that emphasize the need to select evaluation criteria thoughtfully in order to match specific information needs in a particular context.¹

3. Background and Context Analysis

Implemented since 2009, the programme has enabled the implementation of more than 107 projects and it has supported 224 scholarship holders in undertaking Master's and PhD studies at Austrian universities so far. The programme's third phase, APPEAR III, was launched on 1 December 2020 and will conclude in November 2027. Its design was informed by the mid-term evaluation of the preceding programme phase. Recommendations from this evaluation that were adopted include the introduction of the Extended Impact Partnership instrument within component 1, enhanced monitoring processes with a stronger focus on the outcome level, and the revision of APPEAR's Gender Strategy.²

The other funding instruments of component 1 were already part of previous implementation phases and comprise the Preparatory Funding, the Academic Partnership, and the Advanced Academic Partnership. As seed funding with a maximum budget of EUR 15,000 and maximum length of four months per project, the **Preparatory Funding (PF)** supports the development of competitive applications for Academic Partnerships of partners from at least one Austrian HEI and at least one HE or research institution from a target country without any previous collaboration. The **Academic Partnership (AP)** provides successful applicants with funds of up to EUR 130,000 per year for a maximum total duration of four years. It is intended to strengthen HE, research and management capacities in the target countries and is expected to produce results at institutional, educational and scientific level, although projects are not expected to address all three levels equally, as well as impacts on development. Following a successfully completed AP, partner institutions can apply for an **Advanced Academic Partnership (AAP)** which, too, provides funding of up to EUR 130,000 per year, but with only three years of maximum project duration. It is designed to allow AP partners to continue their cooperation, building on previously achieved project results. Eventually, institutions that successfully completed either an AP or an AAP are eligible to apply for an **Extended Impact Partnership (EIP)**, of which until the penultimate (10th) call two types existed: The "Extended Impact Institutional Partnerships" (EIIPs) could last no longer than two years and aimed at "improving organizational and infrastructural systems and processing research, teaching and management of the involved partner institutions (HEI)" (DOC14) based not only on previous AP or AAP results, but also on support from the respective HEIs' "highest possible levels (e.g. faculty, dean's office, rector's office)" (ibid.). "Extended Impact External Partnerships" (EI-EPs), in turn, aimed specifically at involving stakeholders outside the academic institutions themselves and at "improving the living situation of defined target groups" (ibid.). EIP funding – in its form since the 10th call – comprises up to EUR 130,000 per year for three years maximum, is aimed at the

¹ Cf. <https://ada.kontainer.com/folder/1878169/file/21058387#token=SqFXCJNv52av6XqijHVjfpnO6Hq24Nlx&type=shared> (last access: 17 August 2026), p. 9

² Additionally, the following updates were made: stronger emphasis of the application of the "Leave no one behind" (LNOB) principle in APPEAR projects, improved communication among the projects, stronger integration of individual scholarship recipients into the APPEAR community, enhanced public relations at the programme level, increased exploitation of synergy potential with ADA programmes in the respective partner countries, more support for APPEAR alumni, as well as increased promotion of project partners abroad taking on the role as project coordinator (DOC1).

application and uptake of achieved AP or AAP results, and defines non-academic partner institutions as target group in addition to academic partners.

Component 2 consists of three different scholarship modalities which, like the PF, AP, and AAP have also been implemented since previous implementation phases: **embedded Master's scholarships**, **embedded PhD scholarships** and **individual PhD scholarships**. While the embedded Master's and PhD scholarships are linked to an existing APPEAR (AP, AAP, or EIP) project, individual PhD scholarships are not. Embedded scholarships account for 70% of all scholarships according to programme provisions. While Master's scholarships are granted for an average duration of 24 months with monthly stipend rates of EUR 1,000, embedded PhD scholarships are granted for 48 months on average with a monthly stipend rate of EUR 1,100; stipend rates were raised in 2024 to EUR 1,250 and in 2025 to EUR 1,300 for both Master's as well as for PhD scholarships. All scholarships are granted with additional funding for travel costs and further allowances. Men can be awarded the Master's scholarship if they are not older than 30 years, and the PhD scholarship (embedded or individual) if they are 35 years or younger. For women, the respective age limit is five years higher (DOC9, 14, 17, 19).

The selection process for projects and individual scholarships is primarily managed by the Selection Board, which decides on eligibility for funding (DOC1). The Selection Board is chaired by an ADA representative and includes another ADA representative, social and natural scientists with development research expertise, and three representatives from Austrian or European funding or development agencies (DOC34). While the Selection Board makes the final decision, ADA's Coordination Offices in partner countries and the APPEAR Office are involved in reviewing project proposals and scholarship applications to ensure relevance and compliance with formal requirements (ibid.). The Advisory Board, on the other hand, has a consultative role on strategic and substantive issues for ADA and the APPEAR Office, but is not directly involved in the selection process (DOC1, 35). This Board is chaired by a representative of the BMEIA and includes representatives from ADA, the Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research, three representatives from European funding or development agencies, and a representative from a transcontinental/international network or organisation in HE and research (DOC35).

With an overall budget of EUR 18.7 Mio. during its third implementation phase, 30 partnership projects (APs and AAPs), as well as 32 PhD scholarships and two Master's scholarships have been newly funded. Furthermore, 34 preparatory fundings were awarded and, in addition, 33 scholarships were taken over from the second implementation phase of APPEAR.

The partnerships are intended to improve the general standards in HE, research, and management through professionals and HEI sharing their knowledge and experience, and designing innovative projects. It is also their goal to contribute to an increased commitment for development cooperation at Austrian HEI. The achievement of these objectives is expected to finally contribute to the effective and sustainable reduction of poverty in the partner countries which, in APPEAR III, are **Albania, Kosovo, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda, Palestinian Territories, and Bhutan**. The same year that this evaluation was kicked off, the Three-Year-Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025-2027 was launched stressing once more the relevance of scientific cooperation between Austrian HEI and HEI and other research institutions in partner countries of International Partnerships Austria.

By promoting academic partnerships (component 1) and awarding master's and PhD scholarships to students and academics (component 2) as a contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), APPEAR follows a multi-level approach including the individual, institutional, and systemic levels. Furthermore, by aligning the projects with the needs and demands of the participating institutions, with the national/regional strategies of the priority countries, as well as with the overall objectives of International Partnerships Austria, APPEAR also pursues a demand-driven approach. Finally, by including cross-cutting issues such as gender and disability mainstreaming, and aiming at partnerships at eye level, the programme features a multi-thematic approach. The results model depicted on the next page (see Figure 1) visualises the **programme's Theory of Change (ToC)** in detail.

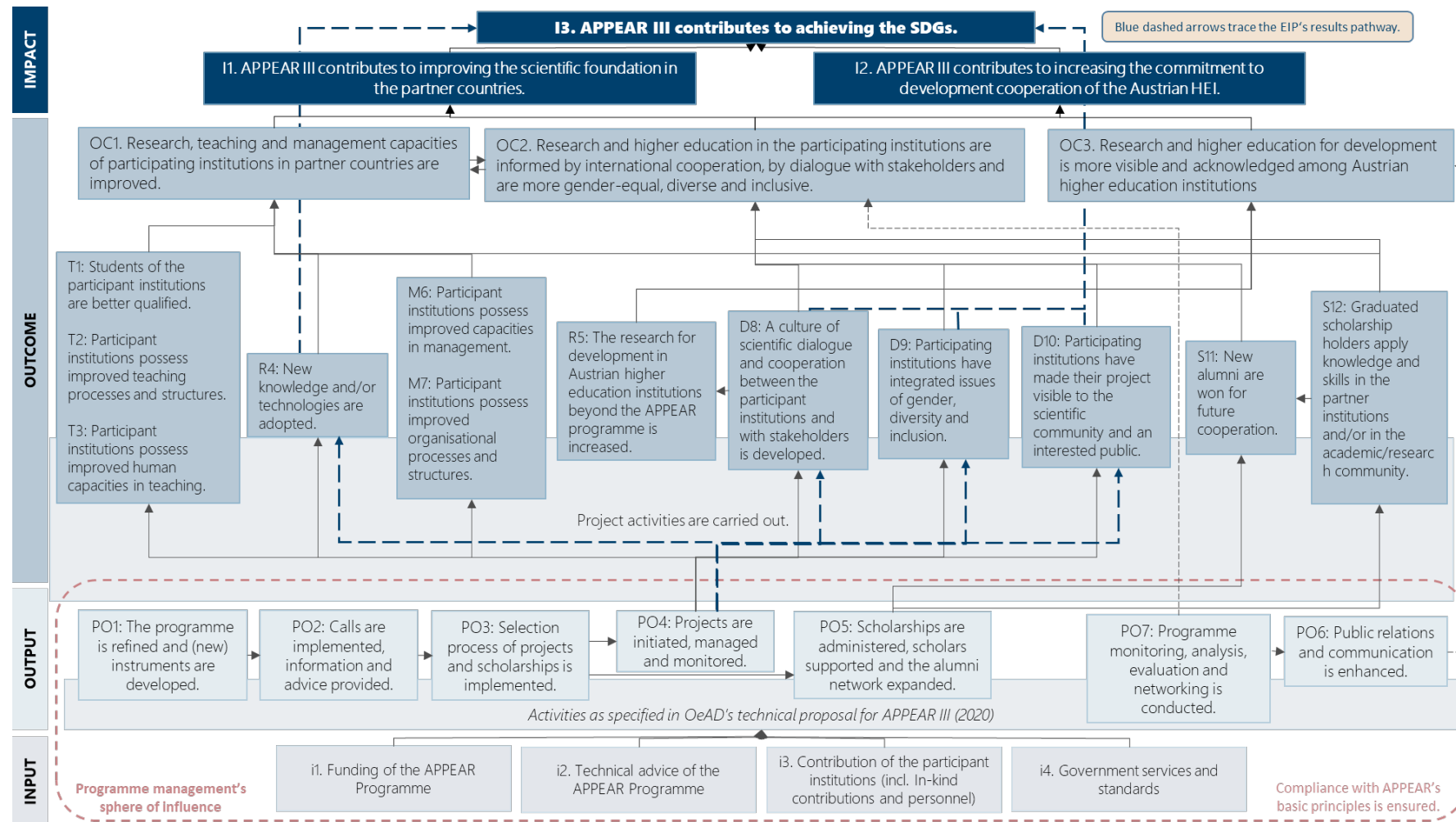
APPEAR III's primary long-term objective – its highest objective at the impact level – is to make a contribution to achieving the SDGs (see Figure 1, I3). This impact is deemed to be achieved through APPEAR III's contribution to both, the improved scientific foundations in the partner countries (I1), and the increased commitment to development cooperation of the Austrian HEI (I2).

According to the programme's ToC, these impacts will be achieved by improved research, teaching and management capacities of participating institutions in partner countries (OC1), cooperation-informed HE and research in the participating institutions (OC2), as well as an increased visibility and acknowledgement of HE and research for development among Austrian HEI (OC3). This set of three major programme outcomes is expected to be achieved mainly through subordinate project outcomes which, in turn, are produced by project activities.

The projects are considered to contribute to OC1 through improving the qualification of students of the participant institutions (T1), improving teaching processes and structures at participant institutions (T2), improving human capacities in teaching (T3), adopting new knowledge and/or technologies (R4), improving management capacities at participant institutions (M6), improving organisational processes and structures (M7), as well as through graduated scholarship holders applying their acquired knowledge and skills in the partner institutions and/or in the academic/research community (S12).

OC2, which contributes to OC1 and is reciprocally influenced by it, is expected to result from the development of "a culture of scientific dialogue and cooperation between the participant institutions and with stakeholders" (D8), the participant institutions' integration of gender, diversity and inclusion issues (D9), the visibilisation of participant institutions' projects to the scientific community and an interested public (D10), and new scholarship alumni that were won for further cooperation (S11). S12, too, contributes to OC2, both directly as well as by facilitating project outcome S11. Projects may produce further outcomes contributing to OC1, OC2, or OC3, which are project-specific and therefore not captured in the results model depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Results model of APPEAR III³



³ The programme's results model was re-constructed based on OeAD's technical proposal of the programme submitted to ADA, the mid-term evaluation report of APPEAR II (DOC39), as well as on the discussion with the programme managing team during the Inception Workshop held on 9 December 2025 at the APPEAR Office in Vienna. During the evaluation phase, the evaluation team slightly modified the model depicted in Figure 1 for it to fully reflect the programme's intervention logic.

Following APPEAR's intervention logic, the mentioned project outcomes result from diverse project activities which, in turn, are enabled by the programme outputs *Projects are initiated, managed and monitored* (PO4) for Component 1 projects, and *Scholarships are administered, scholars supported and the alumni network expanded* (PO5) for Master and PhD scholarships (Component 2). PO4 and PO5 are preceded by the implementation of the selection process of projects and scholarships (PO3). Prior to the selection process and enabling it are the refinement of the programme and the development of (new) funding instruments (PO1), as well as the implementation of calls for proposals and the provision of information and advice on the application process (PO2). Two further programme outputs generated by the managing APPEAR Office are expected to contribute directly to higher programme outcomes: The implementation of programme monitoring, analysis, evaluation and networking (PO7), which – besides its quality assuring purpose – is aimed at OC2, as well as the enhancement of the programme's public relations and communication (PO6), which is expected to directly contribute to OC3. Furthermore, PO7 ensures the availability of materials and information that feed into PO6.

EIP projects are considered to contribute to programme objectives in a different manner, as is traced by the bold dashed arrows in Figure 1: With EIP projects being required to build on outcomes generated by their preceding APs or AAPs, EIP projects themselves bypass OC1-3, contributing through their activities to project outcomes R4 and D8-10, and with them to I3 directly.

Inputs required to produce outputs described above are the funding of the APPEAR Programme (i1) as provided by ADA, technical advice (i2), participant institutions' contributions (i3), as well as government services and standards (i4).

The sphere of direct influence of OeAD's programme managing team on programme effectiveness, including compliance with APPEAR's basic principles, is limited to the outlined input and output levels.

4. Evaluation Design and Approach

4.1 Methodological Approach

To tackle the complexity of the evaluation subject, the **evaluation was based on three pillars**: A theory-based approach, a participatory approach and a mixed-method approach. Furthermore, the evaluation entails case studies of six projects implemented in Armenia.

As part of the **theory-based evaluation approach**, the ToC of the APPEAR III was re-constructed jointly with the APPEAR Office during the inception phase of the evaluation (see Figure 1). In the ToC, envisaged results of APPEAR III are put into causal relationships at output and outcome level. This allowed for empirical testing of the plausibility of results hypotheses by applying a contribution analysis. Doing so, the evaluation team not only looked at whether an activity had an effect, but also at how it unfolded, starting from inputs and activities towards outputs and outcomes. Enabling and constraining factors were given particular attention in the analysis of the underlying results mechanisms to serve the learning interests of OeAD and its partners.

The **participation of relevant stakeholders** through individual and collective consultations and workshops was an integral feature in all stages of the evaluation. Continuous stakeholder engagement ensured that the evaluation meets their interests and needs. During the inception phase, OeAD's programme managing team participated in a kick-off and an inception workshop, providing valuable

information on the programme design and implementation, as well as feedback on preliminary conceptualisations of the evaluation design, including ToC and evaluation matrix (see Annex 8.2). Furthermore, two exploratory interviews were conducted with key knowledge carriers at ADA during the inception phase to develop a more thorough understanding of programme mechanisms and learn about evidence needs from an ADA perspective. Further participation of ADA, APPEAR Office and BMEIA representatives, as well as of programme beneficiaries was ensured through interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and online surveys during the data collection phase to incorporate their respective insights and experiences into the evaluation. During the synthesis and reporting phase, the APPEAR Office and ADA also contributed to validating and discussing findings and conclusions, ensuring tailored recommendations and fostering organisational learning within their institutions.

Finally, the evaluation was based on a **mixed methods approach**, combining the respective strengths of qualitative and quantitative data and techniques. To increase the validity and reliability of findings, every evaluation question was answered based on data obtained by different data collection methods (method triangulation) and from different data sources (data triangulation) whenever possible. Further, the evaluation team applied the “four-eyes-principle” to ensure continuous researcher triangulation. All findings obtained from primary and secondary data were discussed with or reviewed by a second evaluator to minimise potential bias emanating from evaluators’ individual backgrounds and experience.

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis Tools

The evaluation drew on a desk study, virtual interviews and focus group discussions (FGD), semi-standardised online surveys, and on-site case studies in Armenia, the latter of which consisted in the combination of project-specific document analysis, face-to-face interviews and FGDs, as well as on-site observations to generate in-depth insights into programme effectiveness and relevance from a project perspective. Please refer to Annex 8.3 for a full list of **secondary data** that the evaluation team reviewed and analysed for the desk study. **Primary data** collection consisted in the following interviews and FGDs conducted with the stakeholder groups specified below; the number of conducted interviews and FGDs with the respective group are indicated in parentheses:

INTERVIEWS (MAX. 2 PARTICIPANTS PER INTERVIEW) – 15 IN TOTAL

- ✓ BMEIA (1)
- ✓ APPEAR Office (3)
- ✓ ADA unit “Themes and Quality” (3)
- ✓ ADA unit “Countries and Regions” (1)
- ✓ Local ADA Offices in the APPEAR partner countries (short interviews) (8)

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS – 7 IN TOTAL

- ✓ Partner country-based project coordinators (2)
- ✓ Austria-based project coordinators (2)
- ✓ Embedded scholarship holders (1)
- ✓ Individual scholarship holders (1)
- ✓ Supervisors of scholarship holders, embedded and individual (1)

CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS (MAX. 2 PARTICIPANTS PER INTERVIEW) – 31 IN TOTAL

- ✓ Representative of the Armenian **Ministry of Education** (1)
- ✓ Armenia-based **project coordinators** (2)
- ✓ Armenia-based **institutional coordinators** (3)
- ✓ Armenia-based non-academic **project partners** (1)
- ✓ Armenia-based project **team members** (2)
- ✓ **Austria-based** project coordinators, virtual (3)
- ✓ **Austria-based** institutional coordinators, virtual (5)
- ✓ **Non-priority country-based** institutional coordinators, virtual (1)
- ✓ **Managing staff** at Armenian partner institutions (incl. faculty directors, deans, and representatives of international offices) (5)
- ✓ **Scholarship alumni** (2)
- ✓ Other stakeholders (incl. representatives of civil society organisations, government bodies associated to the projects, and direct project beneficiaries) (6)

CASE STUDY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS – 12 IN TOTAL

- ✓ Local **ADA Office** in Armenia (2)
- ✓ Armenia-based **project teams** (7)
- ✓ **Managing staff** at Armenian partner institutions (incl. faculty directors, deans, and representatives of international offices) (2)
- ✓ Armenian project **team members based abroad**, virtual (1)

2 SEMI-STANDARDISED ONLINE SURVEYS

- ✓ Component 1 survey: project team members (response rate=78.4%; n=120)
- ✓ Component 2 survey: scholarship holders and alumni (response rate=59.1%; n=81)

In total, 46 interviews and 19 FGDs were conducted, half of which were part of the case studies, with the remaining participants representing programme management (i.e., BMEIA, ADA, and OeAD staff) and project teams in partner countries other than Armenia. For the collection of quantitative data, 153 project team members, and 137 (former) scholarship holders from all APPEAR phases (including the 33 from the ongoing third programme phase) were invited to participate in an online survey. A separate survey questionnaire was developed and employed for each of the two programme components (see Annex 8.4.1-8.4.2 to view the questionnaires). Prior to their launch, both the managing team at OeAD and the evaluation team used test links to the online surveys and conducted pre-tests for quality assurance, to counteract dropouts and to ensure high-quality survey data. The evaluation team used the software SoSci Survey to programme and manage the surveys.

Interviews and FGDs were structured by guidelines (see Annex 8.4.3-8.4.7) developed on the basis of the evaluation matrix (see Annex 8.2) to make sure that information retrieved is geared towards the evaluation questions and ensure comparability of interview findings across different evaluators. The interview guidelines were applied flexibly, allowing for adaptation as required during the particular interview situation to facilitate the revelation of individual experiences, rationales, and assessments in relation to the evaluation criteria. Therefore, the evaluation team provided the interviewed stakeholders with sufficient space to make statements, for example, about region- or country-specific framework conditions and their influence on project or programme implementation. Additionally, all interviewees were invited to share their reflections about programme enhancement potentials.

The online surveys were implemented to allow for generalisable statements about programme participants' experiences and the identification of response patterns. In contrast to interview and FGD guidelines, the **survey questionnaires** were semi-standardised, firstly, in order to keep the effort for the respondents to a minimum (and thus to maximise the response rate) and, secondly, to allow for the quantification of individual statements. The extraordinary large response rates, in particular for the component 1 survey (78.4%), are both an early finding in itself – suggesting that the programme has great significance for its participants – as well as an indicator for the technical and logical soundness of the surveys.

All written information such as programme documents and documents of the case study projects, interview transcripts, protocols from on-site visits in Armenia, and qualitative data from the surveys were subject to a **qualitative content analysis**. Following a three-step approach, analytical categories were developed on the basis of the evaluation matrix in the first step (e.g., evidence on increased capacities). Secondly, all documents were analysed for relevant content regarding these categories. Finally, the content of the single categories was summarised, analysed, and assessed with regard to the guiding evaluation question. For efficient data management and analysis, all qualitative data was compiled and coded in MAXQDA. The software's integrated artificial intelligence (AI) tool "AI Assist" was employed for quality assurance. Specifically, the "Chat with documents" feature was used, firstly, to check more efficiently whether documents contain data that further supports or contradicts a specific finding, and secondly, to refine thematic clusters built from free-text survey responses. MAXQDA's AI outputs are based on the documents (e.g., programme documents and interview transcripts) imported to the created project within the software. With each output referring to the specific document section, based on which it was generated, these results were easily verified by the evaluation team.

Quantitative data from the online surveys and programme monitoring data were analysed descriptively providing frequency distributions and, where applicable, mean values. Where relevant and where the number of respondents of specific survey questions or answer items was sufficiently high to so as not to allow any straightforward identification of individuals, survey results presented in this report are furthermore disaggregated by gender, country, preparatory funding status, and/or by the coordinating or non-coordinating role of the respondent's institution.

Findings from all data source and analysis methods were **triangulated** to answer each evaluation question.

4.3 Risks, Limitations and Mitigations Measures

The only risk that materialised during the empirical data collection was poor interview and FGD data quality, resulting from social desirability bias in face-to-face interviews and FGD conducted in Armenia. At first, participants of nearly all interviews and FGD seemed very keen to only share positive views and experiences from their programme participation, even though the evaluation team emphasised its independence from OeAD and ADA. In some cases, this risk of social desirability bias was further enhanced by higher ranking team members who were unwilling to provide the privacy that had been requested for individual or smaller group interviews. According to the evaluators' perception, this unwillingness resulted less from a desire to control what was being said, but rather from a perceived need to actively contribute to the evaluation throughout the evaluators' visit and fulfil their leading role in the project by showing presence and encouraging team members to speak up. The evaluation team mitigated the resulting risk by emphasising not only the team's independence and non-personalised reporting on findings, but also the learning purpose of the evaluation and the consequential

opportunity for interviewees to indirectly influence what APPEAR IV might look like. The evaluators furthermore asked specifically about challenges presented in progress reports to open up space for discussions on critical or challenging moments reported on throughout project implementation. Data from interviews and FGD with limited privacy were handled with care, meaning that findings were interpreted and used cautiously, avoiding overgeneralisation and ensuring triangulation with other data sources.

The major limitation faced by the evaluation team are the focus and format of programme monitoring data which, as further elaborated on in chapters 5.2.4 and 6, are inconvenient for assessing the programme's overall effectiveness, undermining to some extent the quality of this assessment. The evaluation team responded to this limitation basing its assessment on different data sources addressing the achievement of programme objectives, mainly narrative descriptions of programme and project outcomes, as well as on the evaluators' own judgements as to which programme outcome a described result contributes to.

On a positive note, responsiveness was unexpectedly high. Based on the experience of previous APPEAR evaluations and taking into account the partly volatile environments in which projects operate, the evaluation team had anticipated low responsiveness and therefore taken measures to mitigate this risk including adequate timing of data collection, in advance scheduling of survey reminders (addressed to missing respondents only), and keeping communication with interviewees and survey respondents purposeful and concise. The biggest responsiveness challenges emerged in the context of FGDs with scholarship holders, but even here, by enlarging the sample of invited scholarship holders, the evaluation team managed to gather sufficiently high numbers of participants to facilitate the discussion between participants with different points of views and experiences (see chapter 4.2).

5. Findings

The following subchapters present the findings of the programme evaluation of APPEAR III by evaluation criterion and evaluation question. Main findings are labelled with an "F" and the corresponding numbering of the respective finding.

5.1 Relevance

5.1.1 *To what extent is the programme aligned with European and international development strategies in the field of Higher Education?*

With APPEAR III clearly reflecting objectives and approaches of policy frameworks such as UNESCO's Higher Education 2030 Roadmap and the European strategy for universities, the programme is strongly aligned with European and international development strategies in the field of Higher Education (F1).

A comparison of APPEAR III's objectives with those of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) Higher Education 2030 Roadmap, the European strategy for universities, the European Education Area (EEA), the European Research Area (ERA), the European Higher Education Area (EHEA; Bologna Process), and the Global Gateway Initiative show that APPEAR III addresses several of these strategies' and policy frameworks' priorities:

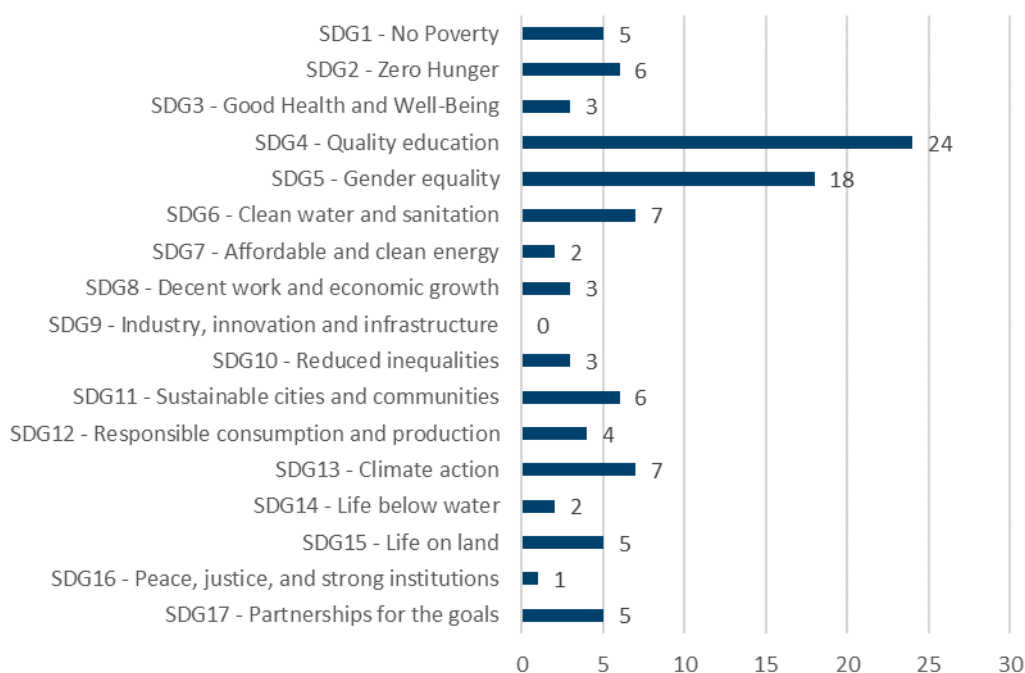
- According to the Higher Education 2030 Roadmap, the three major missions of HE is to produce knowledge through scientific research, to educate people, and to carry out “social outreach actions relevant to the context of each HEI” (UNESCO 2022). In order to fulfil this social responsibility adequately and tackle complex issues, the UNESCO Roadmap endorses transdisciplinary and cooperative approaches based on human rights-compliant institutional practices. APPEAR III aligns with this by fostering academic partnerships that strengthen teaching, applied research, and management in partner countries, with a strong emphasis on development relevance and practical application of research findings to address societal challenges.
- The European strategy for universities aims at enabling and supporting HEI “to adapt to changing conditions, to thrive and to contribute to Europe’s resilience and recovery” (European Commission 2022). It calls on universities to join forces and stresses their role as key players in science diplomacy. As such, universities are seen as crucial for both the generation of evidence informing foreign and security policies as well as the formation of worldwide linkages. APPEAR III supports this by promoting institutional capacity building in partner countries and encouraging Austrian HEI to engage in development cooperation, thereby contributing to global academic networks and science diplomacy.
- Based on the rationale that international partnerships in education foster economic growth, prosperity, and security, the EEA seeks to strengthen the EU’s worldwide cooperation and its role as a global partner in the education sector. The Bologna Process has contributed to this goal, establishing the EHEA to increase the coherence of HE systems across Europe and, thereby, aiming to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of European HE. By including both potential candidates for EU membership as well as other ODA receiving countries, APPEAR III contributes to global HE and research networks while also offering practical assistance to European integration processes.
- Targeting the EU’s research sector, the ERA aims to increase the sector’s effectiveness by aligning the research policies and programmes of European countries. This includes investments and reforms, strengthening the mobility of researchers as well as boosting market uptake. APPEAR III supports this by promoting institutional capacity building in partner countries and encouraging Austrian HEI to engage in development cooperation, thereby contributing to global academic networks and science diplomacy.
- The Global Gateway Initiative addresses education and research as one out of five priority areas. It also “aims to address key global challenges – including climate change [and] health threats [...] – while supporting sustainable development, economic resilience and international stability, fully aligned with the [SDGs]” (European Commission 2021). By expanding infrastructures in its priority areas, the Global Gateway initiative aims to reinforce people to people links and connectivity between Europe and its partners. APPEAR III supports this by promoting institutional capacity building in partner countries and encouraging Austrian HEI to engage in development cooperation, thereby contributing to global academic networks and science diplomacy.

By promoting international HEI partnerships between Austria and ADA’s partner countries, defining its thematic focus along the SDGs, encouraging inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations, and calling for problem-oriented project proposals, APPEAR III is strongly aligned with the above strategies and policy frameworks.

5.1.2 To what extent is the programme aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals?

APPEAR III is strongly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Not only does the programme directly address SDG4 (quality education) and SDG17 (partnerships for the goals), all of the programme's thematic areas relate to the SDGs making project alignment with SDGs a requisite (F2).

Figure 2: Frequency distribution of SDGs targeted by APPEAR projects



To ensure that projects comply with APPEAR III selection requirements – including their contributions to its thematic areas–, applications are assessed in a structured process by multiple reviewers. While the alignment of preparatory funding and scholarship applications with SDGs is ensured by the reviewers, applicants for AP, AAP, and EIP must specify up to three SDGs to which the project is intended to contribute. Figure 2 shows that, besides quality education (named in 24 out of 32 successful partnership applications) and gender equality (named in 18 applications), most project applications are linked to SDG6 (clean water and sanitation) and SDG13 (climate action; each one named in seven project applications), followed by SDG2 (zero hunger) and SDG11 (sustainable cities and communities), which have each been named in six project applications. The only SDG with zero mentions is SDG9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure).

5.1.3 How relevant is the APPEAR programme for Austrian Development Policy and the ADA portfolio in higher education?

APPEAR III is highly relevant for Austrian Development Policy and the ADA portfolio in higher education as it contributes to the objectives and approaches set out in the Three-Year Programmes on Austrian Development Policy (2022-2024 and 2025-2027), and other country- and sector-specific strategies, combining different thematic priorities set out therein (F3). The programme is widely regarded as a flagship programme of International Partnerships Austria, which is also reflected in ADA's HE core budget distribution where the largest share is allocated to APPEAR III (F4). Its relevance for Austrian Development Policy further benefits from the programme-funded research as its results can be used to inform further development policies (F5).

The Three-Year Programme (3YP) on Austrian Development Policy 2025 to 2027 highlights the important role that universities and other academic institutions play for a country's social and economic development. In this vein, the 3YP defines three priority fields of action within its thematic target area "Supporting education, science and research": Education for development, Research for development, and International research cooperation. As one of Austria's bilateral instruments for the fulfilment of the three objectives defined for this target area, APPEAR does in fact integrate all of them in its current programme phase, as its three objectives illustrate:

- Objective 1: Creating and strengthening modern and inclusive national education and vocational training programmes and systems in partner countries⁴ (DOC45)
- Objective 2: Promoting development policy knowledge, access to research and dialogue with the scientific community on development-related topics (ibid.)
- Objective 3: Strengthening international research cooperation (ibid.)

With this focus, the current 3YP widens the strategic framework of International Partnerships Austria in which APPEAR III operates, signalling increased relevance of the APPEAR programme for Austrian Development Policy.⁵ APPEAR III does not only contribute generally to these objectives, but also addresses all specific measures envisaged by the 3YP in HE and research such as the following:

- "Strengthening the quality of and equal access to educational [...] programmes." (DOC45)
- "Supporting the countries of the Danube region and the Western Balkans in their rapprochement with and integration into the European Education, Higher Education and Research Area." (ibid.)
- "University cooperation programmes [...] in each case within the framework of the autonomy of Austrian universities." (ibid.)
- "Strengthening scientific capacities through Master's and PhD scholarships for students from the priority countries, especially in the context of university cooperation in research, teaching and university management, in each case within the framework of the autonomy of Austrian universities." (ibid.)
- "The systematic inclusion of scientific evidence and expertise in policy-making processes and in the identification of best practices in development-related activities of all ministries." (ibid.)
- "Strengthening capacities and incentives for development-related research." (ibid.)
- Specific measures to establish long-term cooperative relationships with less developed countries.

While primarily relevant to the International Partnerships Austria's target area "Supporting education, science and research", APPEAR III's thematic focus (see chapter 3) aligns with the other target areas, too. By funding HE and research in these areas, in accordance with the above-cited Objective 2, APPEAR III addresses priorities across all of International Partnerships Austria's target areas, including by

⁴ This objective is only partially addressed, insofar as APPEAR III focuses on higher education and research, not vocational training.

⁵ While the 3YP for 2022-2024 did also address capacity development in HE, explaining that it could "be achieved, among other things, through partnership-based cooperation projects in research, teaching and in the area of university governance", higher education was only discussed at a lower subchapter level under the focus area "Eliminating poverty – covering basic needs".

funding the production of scientific knowledge that can be used to inform further development activities.⁶

In addition to the thematic alignment, APPEAR III largely adopts the geographical focus of bilateral programmable development cooperation (see 3YP 2025-2027) as well as approaches and basic principles that provide a framework for Austrian Development Policy. These include the programme's participatory approach, practical orientation, gender strategy, bottom-up and demand-driven approach, the "Leave no one behind" principle, the commitment to the SDGs, as well as the programme's promotion of country strategy-alignment, inclusion, regional networks, and ownership (see DOC44, 45, 53, 145). Results-oriented project planning and monitoring has received more attention in APPEAR III compared to previous programme phases, which is also in line with International Partnerships Austria provisions as well as with the development policy principle "Focus on results" of the "Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation" to which the 3YP 2025-2027 refers. The geographical scope of APPEAR III differs from focus countries and regions of International Partnerships Austria insofar that it is limited to countries or territories where ADA maintains Coordination Offices or where these were maintained until recently, which also includes Albania even though the country is not explicitly named as priority country in neither of the two recent 3YP (2022-2024 and 2025-2027; see chapter 3 for the list of APPEAR III partner countries).⁷

International Partnerships Austria's country and regional strategies on APPEAR's priority target countries all refer to APPEAR as a complementing instrument to International Partnerships Austria in these countries.⁸ This mere complementary function is due to the fact that HE and research is no thematic focus in any of these countries, with the single exception of Kosovo. APPEAR is, nonetheless, highly esteemed across all ADA Coordination Offices for the valuable linkages it creates between Austria and the partner countries as well as for the synergies with other fields of action with relevance to International Partnerships Austria.

While APPEAR III is not the only ADA project in the sector of HE and research, it is the most relevant one in ADA's HE portfolio both in terms of volume (accounting for 66 %⁹ of the entire ADA core budget allocated to HE cooperation) and prestige (INT1, 24, 25, 27, 29, 34, 43).

5.1.4 *To what extent do the guidelines and added values contribute to the relevance of the programme?*

The guidelines for APPEAR III applicants contribute to the programme relevance insofar that they present programme objectives and eligibility criteria in a clear manner, allowing applicants to align

⁶ The other four thematic target areas of the 3YP for 2025-2027 are: "Overcoming humanitarian crises – securing livelihoods", "Promoting sustainable economic and social development", "Securing peace, human security, resilience and social cohesion", and "Climate protection and sustainable energy, preservation of the environment and protection of natural resources".

⁷ The ADA Coordination Office in Bhutan was closed due to ADA's termination of bilateral development cooperation in the country, while in Burkina Faso this was the case due to severe security risks.

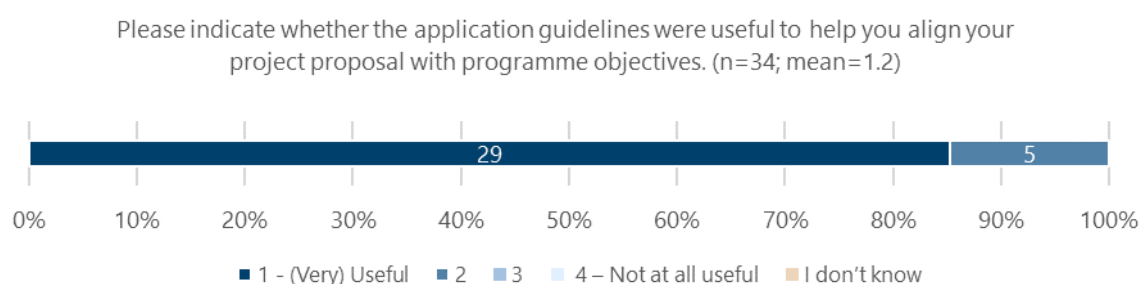
⁸ Except for the Palestinian Territories, International Partnerships Austria strategies are available for all of APPEAR's priority countries. While there are individual country strategies for Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova are covered in the Framework Strategy of the Austrian Development Cooperation with the EU Eastern Partner Countries. Albania and Kosovo are covered by the Regional Strategy of the Austrian Development Cooperation with the Western Balkans.

⁹ This figure was determined based on the overview of projects starting in 2020 as published on the ADA website (see <https://www.entwicklung.at/projekte/alle-projekte>, last access: 9 March 2026; filters used in downloaded Excel file: "Beginn_Laufzeit": all since 2020; "Sektor": "Hochschulausbildung").

their project proposals properly with programme objectives and, thereby, with overarching International Partnerships Austria goals (F6). With programme participants taking up the optional ‘added values’ in the majority of their projects, their integration into the programme design effectively promotes the consideration of cross-cutting issues of International Partnerships Austria and therefore further contributes to the programme’s relevance (F7).

Nine out of ten submitted APPEAR III project applications passed the formal criteria check, which suggests that the application guidelines inform well about programme requirements (DOC5-8). Results from the survey on APPEAR III’s component 1 further corroborate the clarity of the guidelines of which most respondents (85 %) confirm that they were “(very) useful” for the alignment of the project proposal with APPEAR III’s programme objectives, all other respondents finding them “rather useful” in that regard (see Figure 3). This positive feedback was also shared in numerous interviews and FGD conducted with participants from both programme components (INT2, 5, 10, 35, 39; FGD1, 3, 4, 17, 18). In one of the FGD with project coordinators, it was emphasised that guidelines are transparent on the expectations towards applicants and that they are clear enough even for coordinators with limited prior experience in that role (FGD17).

Figure 3: Project coordinators rating the application guidelines (Component 1 survey)



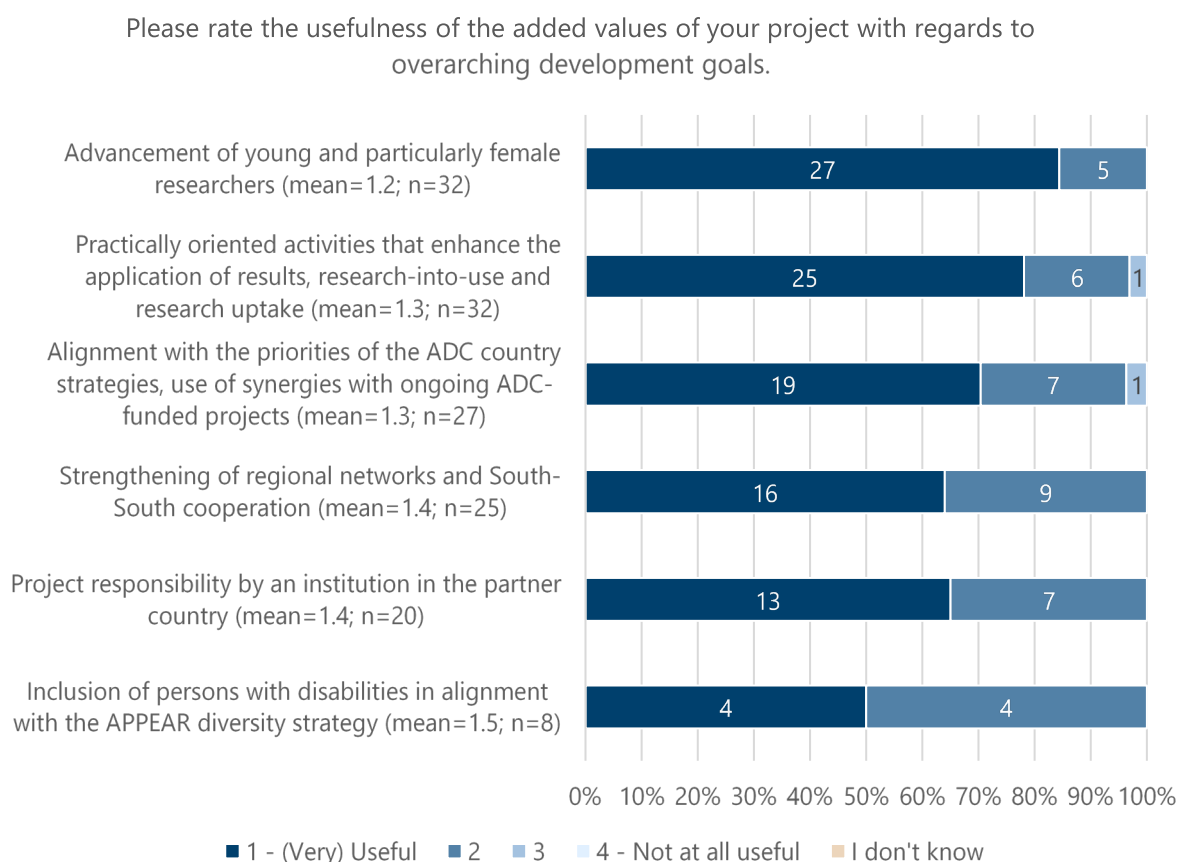
The added values, which the guidelines define and present as optional for APPEAR III project applicants to incorporate into their project designs, all reflect values or principles as stated in the current and past 3YPs, in ADA’s Manual on Capacity Development, as well as in ADA’s Strategy on Higher Education, as Table 1 in Annex 8.5 exemplifies (DOC44, 45, 53, 145).¹⁰ With project teams choosing to which added values they will commit (if any) and this commitment being positively taken into account in proposal reviews, the added values are a programme feature that contributes to the programme’s relevance by promoting several of International Partnerships Austria’s cross-cutting issues and basic principles. It thereby also promotes project coherence with further actions funded by International Partnerships Austria.

Figure 4 visualises project coordinators’ ratings of added values that their respective project incorporates. It shows that all six added values have been addressed in APPEAR III projects, with 32 out of 34 survey-responding coordinators indicating one or more added values as integrated into their project. Five out of the six added values were taken up by most project teams. In combination with project coordinators’ high rating of the added values’ usefulness regarding overarching development goals,

¹⁰ APPEAR’s added values are as follows: Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects; Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy; Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation; Advancement of young and particularly female researchers; Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use and research uptake; Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country.

this finding shows that the added values are very well accepted by programme participants, which is a necessary prerequisite for them to take effect and further underscores their relevance.

Figure 4: Project coordinators on 'added values' (Component 1 survey)



5.1.5 To what extent are the programme's basic principles relevant to its overall objectives?

The basic principles of APPEAR III are highly relevant to the programme's overall objectives: They are logically linked to these objectives, set out quality standards for the activities intended to achieve them, and are consistent with approaches promoted by Austrian Development Cooperation (F8). While their incorporation into the application guidelines partially lacks conciseness (F9) and overlaps with the 'added values', programme stakeholders stress their importance in terms of the programme's normative orientation (F10).

By means of the **participatory approach** principle, APPEAR III is intended to promote partnerships that do not only exist on paper but actually materialise through joint elaboration of project designs and their implementation. Such an approach fosters trust among the partnering institutions which, in turn, is the basis for lasting partnerships and mutual learning, which is directly related to the programme's intended outcome OC2 (see Figure 1). The **concept of culturally open-minded knowledge** is closely related to the participatory approach in that both are aimed at trustful relations and bidirectional knowledge transfer.

APPEAR III's **practically- and empirically-oriented approach** directs projects towards the development of solutions to real-world development challenges in the partner countries. This basic principle is highly relevant because, in conjunction with the programme's thematic requirements, it represents the

programme's main lever for contributing to the achievement of the SDGs – APPEAR III's highest objective at the impact level (I3; see Figure 1). The practical orientation goes hand in hand with the programme's **bottom-up and demand-driven approach**, according to which APPEAR III projects shall address an existing demand as defined by the partners themselves.

Gender sensitivity: As exemplified in the preceding section on the 'added values', gender equality and women's empowerment are highly relevant objectives of International Partnerships Austria which are to be addressed cross-sectionally. In this light, gender sensitivity – as the middle stage along the gender equality continuum, where gender inequalities are *considered* in all activities¹¹ – is an indispensable approach of APPEAR III. However, the evaluation team has identified some weaknesses related to the definition or framing of gender sensitivity as one of APPEAR III's basic principles with implications for both the programme's relevance as well as its effectiveness (for the latter, see chapter 5.2.4). In fact, the guidelines for programme applicants lack a definition of the basic principle 'gender sensitivity', providing instead information on gender mainstreaming in general, International Partnerships Austria's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as some requirements and 'nice-to-haves' – more in the spirit of 'added values' than mandatory basic principles – of which it remains vague how they relate to the basic principle of gender sensitivity.¹² Even though the separate Gender Strategy does include a sentence defining gender sensitivity as analysing and considering "the social and cultural factors that can lead to gender discrimination" (DOC43), the overall framing of this basic principle suffers from conceptual conflations and provides poor orientation on one of International Partnerships Austria's essential principles, compromising the basic principle's practical relevance. Furthermore, the relevance of this basic principle to the programme's overall objectives is limited by not going farther along the gender equality continuum (see footnote 11): Challenging project teams to act *gender-responsively* would orient projects more strongly towards the programme's OC2 objective on more gender-equal research and HE (see Figure 1). In other words: By making only the *consideration* of gender inequalities a mandatory requirement, the conceptual gap between project outcomes and OC2 (specifically the part on increased gender equality) currently remains rather large.

The **leave no one behind** (LNOB) principle is closely linked to the basic principle 'gender sensitivity' as well as to the added value 'Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy' (see chapter 5.1.4). Aimed at the prevention of discrimination against or the neglect of people from marginalised or underrepresented groups, LNOB is one of the six guiding principles of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in support for achieving the SDGs. In this sense, LNOB is not only highly relevant to APPEAR III's programme objectives, but it also strengthens the programme's coherence with international development frameworks. Similar to the gender sensitivity principle though, the detailed explanation of various related concepts in the application guidelines, and in particular the fact that secondary concepts are covered in greater detail than LNOB itself,

¹¹ The gender equality continuum is an established tool in the realm of international development that helps think about transformative change and identify the kind of impact a development intervention may have with regards to gender equality (OECD 2022). It categorises corresponding objectives and impacts as follows: *Gender "negative" or "exploitative"*: causes harm, implies a risk; *Gender "blind", "neutral" or "accommodating"*: ignores and works around existing gender inequalities, but in the process, possibly perpetuates them; *Gender "sensitive" or "aware"*: considers gender inequalities; *Gender "responsive" or "positive"*: strengthens gender equality; *Gender "transformative"*: changes gender norms and power relations. Definitions of gender sensitivity and gender transformative approaches provided in APPEAR's own Gender Strategy from 2021 correspond with these definitions although the OECD's Gender Equality Continuum was introduced a year later.

¹² For example, it remains unclear what is meant by "gender-specific" analyses, measures, and activities, which the guidelines highlight as "crucial" (DOC9, 14, 17, 19).

undermines the precision of the guidelines, jeopardises a correct understanding of the programme requirements regarding LNOB, and thus the principle's practical relevance.

With the logic of the basic principle **Open Access – Open data** being that scientific publications resulting from APPEAR III projects be made accessible to the wide public, permanently and at no cost, this principle is also highly relevant to the programme objectives: Open access facilitates research dissemination which is directly linked to APPEAR III's objective of increasing the visibility of development research among Austrian HEI while also benefiting HEI elsewhere. It also facilitates research uptake and further studies of scientific findings, especially in contexts where financial resources for conventional subscription journals are scarce.

Mechanisms to ensure adherence to the basic principles are in place to the extent that they are to be reported on in projects' applications and progress reports, in particular "Gender, Diversity and Inclusion perspectives" (DOC102 and other progress reports). The extent to which this mechanism is effective is, in part, limited due to the conceptual imprecisions presented above. While APPEAR III's programme management is aware of existing overlaps between the basic principles and added values, both programme management and project stakeholders find them useful because they provide a general normative framework to APPEAR III and projects funded therein (INT14, 15, 30, 39, 41, 45; FGD11).

5.1.6 How relevant is the programme design in the context of regional political and geopolitical changes?

Amid regional political and geopolitical changes affecting APPEAR's partner countries with implications ranging from inflation to violent conflicts and war, higher education and research cooperation as promoted by APPEAR remains highly relevant (F11). While in some cases windows of opportunity for such cooperation have narrowed for political or security reasons, in others they have widened. However, where war has resulted in fatalities and destroyed critical infrastructures including faculty buildings, needs have shifted completely going now beyond the scope of the APPEAR programme (F12).

As has been documented by the APPEAR Office in progress reports, several of APPEAR III's partner countries have been affected by significant pressures on society or the economy, or by large-scale violence (DOC20-32), as is also reflected in survey responses. Nearly half of the surveyed Austria-based project partners confirm that the country of their respective project partner(s) has experienced such pressures or conflicts while implementing their APPEAR project (see Figure 5). Survey respondents from eight out of the eleven partner countries as well as respondents from non-priority countries confirm that such pressures or conflicts – mostly of political kind and violent conflict or war – had been present (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Experience of societal pressures or conflicts in partner country (Component 1 survey)

Has your country or that of a project partner experienced any significant societal pressures or conflicts during the implementation period of the project? (n=120)

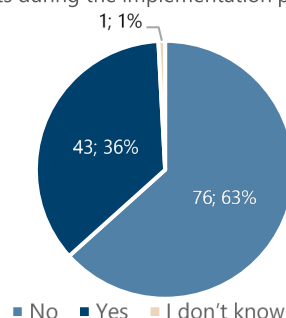
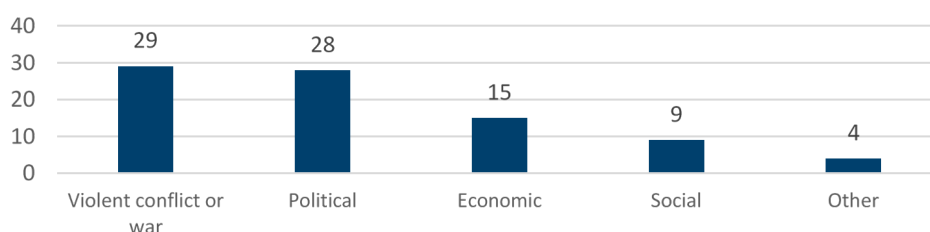


Figure 6: Specification of the societal pressures or conflicts experienced (Component 1 survey)

Please specify the kind of pressure or conflict. (n=43)



Survey respondents from component 2 (scholarship holders and alumni) from Ethiopia, Uganda, Armenia, Palestinian Territories, Burkina Faso, as well as from non-priority countries, confirm the component 1 participants' responses (see Figure 7 and Figure 8).

Figure 7: Experience of societal pressures or conflicts in home country (Component 2 survey)

Is or was your (institutional) home country affected by any major pressures or conflicts at the societal level (i.e., political/economic/social pressures or conflicts, or violent conflict or war) while you were pursuing your Master's/PhD studies? (n=81)

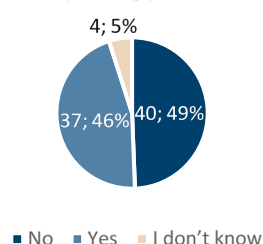
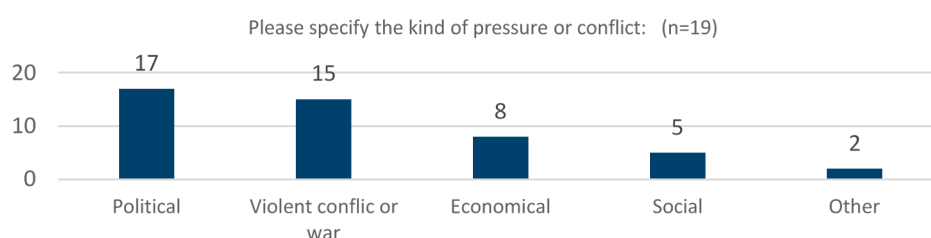
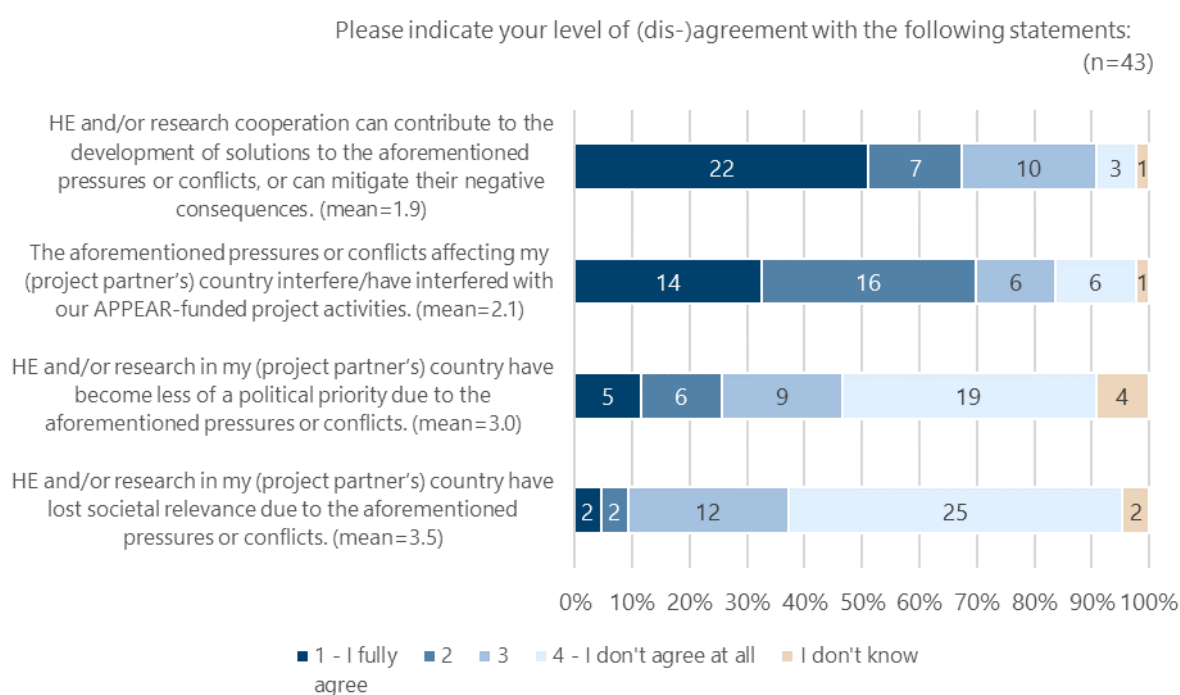


Figure 8: Specification of the societal pressures or conflicts experienced (Component 2 survey)



Among those confirming the presence of such phenomena, 70% report that they have interfered with their APPEAR-funded project (see Figure 9). Interviews and FGDs with participants from both programme components revealed that interference consisted, for example, in security risks in field study areas leading to time-costly re-definitions of research topics or approaches, long-lasting internet disruptions causing forced communication pauses and hurdles in meeting time-critical deliverables or submissions (e.g., for journal publications), restricted freedom of expression conveying the feeling of becoming a political target, and the physical destruction of university infrastructure forcing the discontinuity of entire projects (FGD17-19). In several cases, these conflicts or their implications for project implementation place a psychological strain on project participants and scholarship holders from or with family in the affected regions. For the case of Ethiopia, it was furthermore reported that universities are having trouble to fill their lecture halls as violent conflicts and economic pressures led to high emigration rates and low university enrolment, exemplifying how conflicts and other pressures hamper human capital development and potentially erode the basis for future collaborative projects (INT1). At the same time, many of the experienced challenges caused by (geo-)political changes give rise to new needs for research and HE along APPEAR III's thematic focus areas in the affected countries.

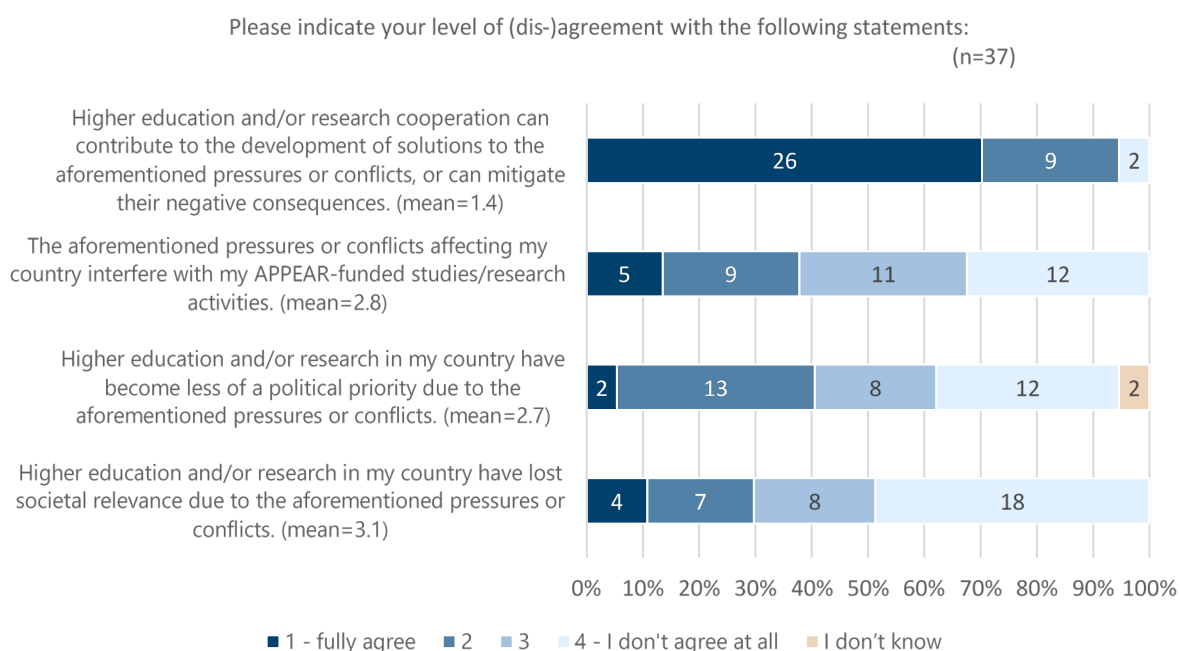
Figure 9: Agreement with statements on the HE and research amid pressures or conflicts (Component 1 survey)



In this vein, eight out of ten survey respondents state that the interferences they have experienced do not go hand in hand with a decline of the relevance of HE and research activities (see Figure 9). 60% of

the respondents are even convinced that HE and/or research cooperation can contribute to the development of solutions to the pressures or violence affecting the partner countries (ibid.). Scholarship holders and alumni are more optimistic in this regard, with more than nine out of ten of the respondents thinking this high of HE/research cooperation (see Figure 10). The survey results further suggest that the political environment in APPEAR partner countries remains generally favourable for the programme, with almost two thirds expressing that the HE and research sector in general has (rather) not lost its political priority.

Figure 10: Agreement with statements on the HE and research amid pressures or conflicts (Component 2 survey)



While the total number of project applications across all funding instruments (excluding Master's applications) has decreased between 2021 and 2023 by a good quarter, the number of submitted applications has constantly surpassed the amount of funding available for each call: Throughout the four calls of APPEAR III, between 64% and 79% of all submitted applications had to be rejected.¹³ These numbers show that the demand for HE and research cooperation among the target countries has remained high despite regional political and geopolitical changes, which is in line with the survey and interview findings presented above.

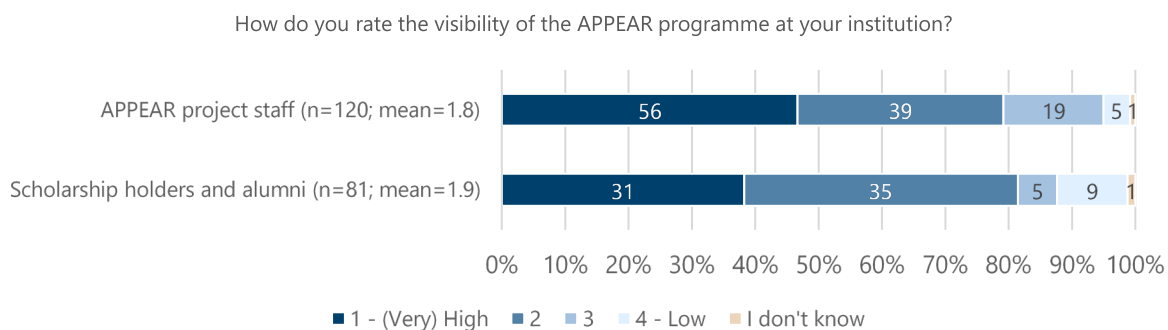
5.1.7 To what extent is the programme an instrument of science and research cooperation that promotes a culture of peace?

Based on substantial evidence of programme contribution to network formation and institutional transfer between the partner countries, intercultural competence development, and attitude changes among programme participants, the evaluation team views APPEAR III as strongly contributing to factors associated with peaceful international relations (F13).

¹³ Among all submitted project applications (excl. those for Master's scholarships), these were the shares of successful applications: 28% in the 8th APPEAR call (1st call in APPEAR III), 36% in the 9th APPEAR call, and 21% in the 10th APPEAR call. In the last APPEAR call (the 11th), only Academic Partnerships could be applied for. Here, 25% of all submitted applications were successful.

Within the participating HE and research institutions as well as in Austria's diplomatic missions in the APPEAR partner countries to which ADA's coordination offices belong, the APPEAR programme has medium to high visibility (INT1, 12, 16, 24, 27, 29, 35, 38, 43, 48; see Figure 11). According to literature on international mobility and exchange, such visibility further promotes peaceful relations as it signals Austria's willingness to strengthen friendly ties with its partner countries.¹⁴ The fact that APPEAR has been active for more than a decade adds even more weight to this signal as it proves sustained commitment of the Austrian government, which interviewees from partner countries, including higher-level management at HE and research institutions, have recognised (INT2, 16, 20, 26, 30, 36, 41, 46; FGD5). Signalling also becomes an applicable criterion given that APPEAR projects are encouraged to bridge the gap between research and practice by involving government authorities and/or policymakers, which has been done in several projects throughout APPEAR III. Furthermore, interviewees have reported that there are APPEAR alumni who nowadays work in high-ranking government positions in some of the programme's partner countries, which further leverages APPEAR's potential to promote a culture of peace.

Figure 11: Rating of APPEAR's visibility (both surveys)



In terms of intercultural competence, between 80% and 99% of the survey respondents state having acquired more comfort and new skills in intercultural work settings (e.g., more than 80% of component 1 survey respondents indicate that they fully agree with the statement "My participation in the APPEAR programme has inspired me to pursue new ideas and directions in my field of research."; see Figure 12-Figure 14).

¹⁴ Wilson, Iain (2015). Exchanges and Peacemaking: Counterfactuals and Unexplored Possibilities, in *All Azimuth* V4, N2, Jul. 2015, 5-18, <https://www.allazimuth.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1-Wilson-All-Azimuth-Jul-2015.pdf> (last access: 14 April 2026).

Figure 12: Agreement with statements on APPEAR's personal and intercultural impact (Component 1 survey)

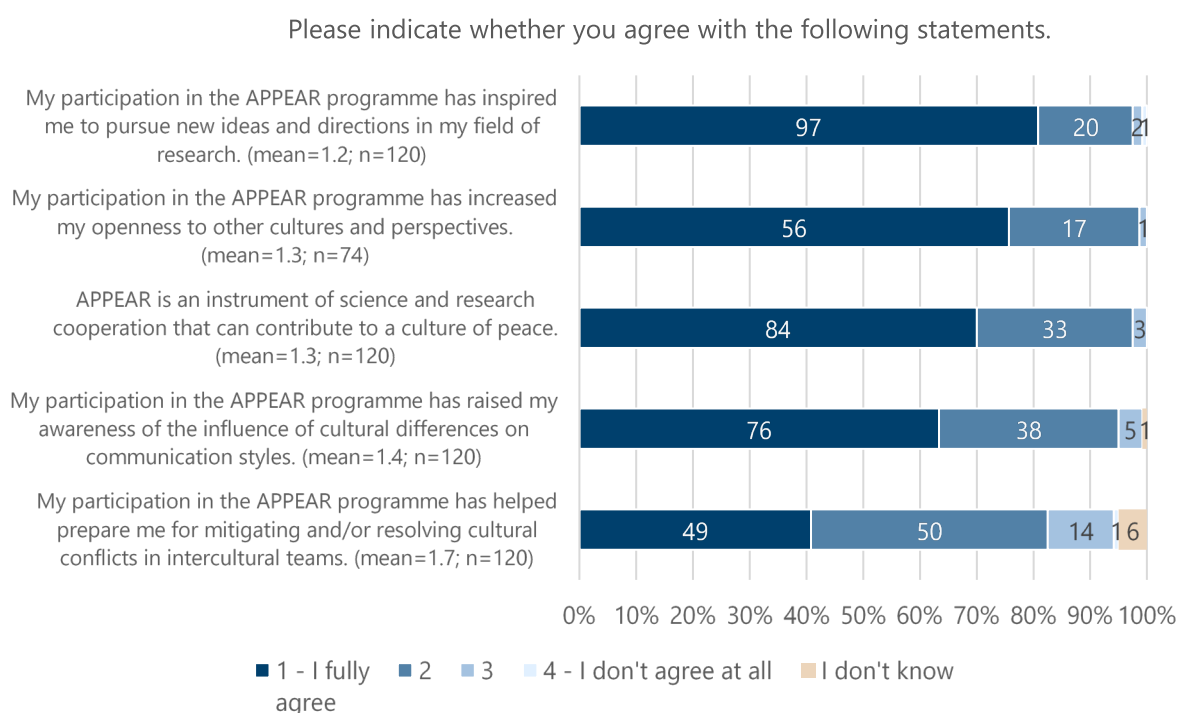


Figure 13: Agreement with statements on APPEAR's personal and intercultural impact (Component 2 survey)

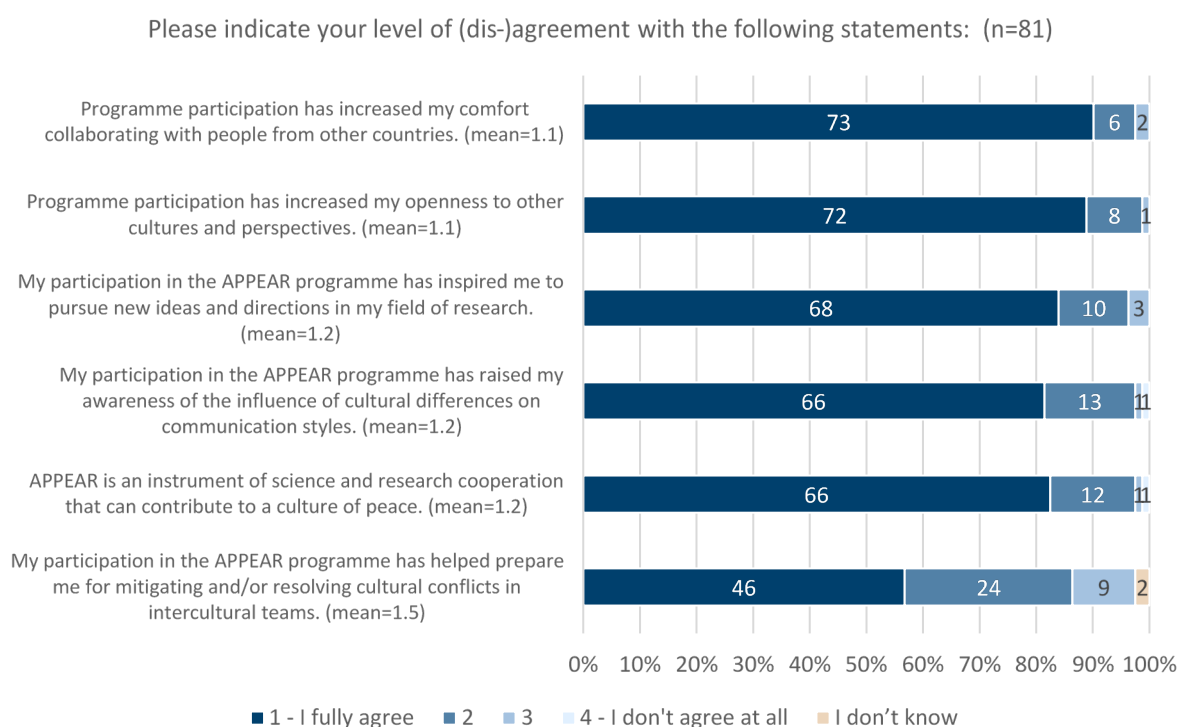
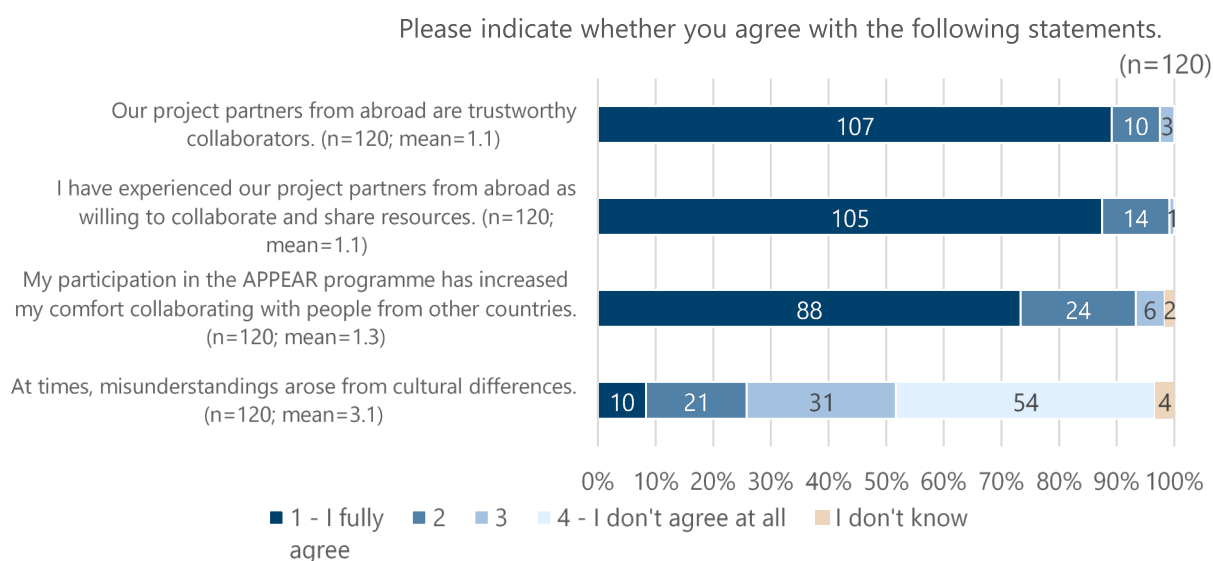


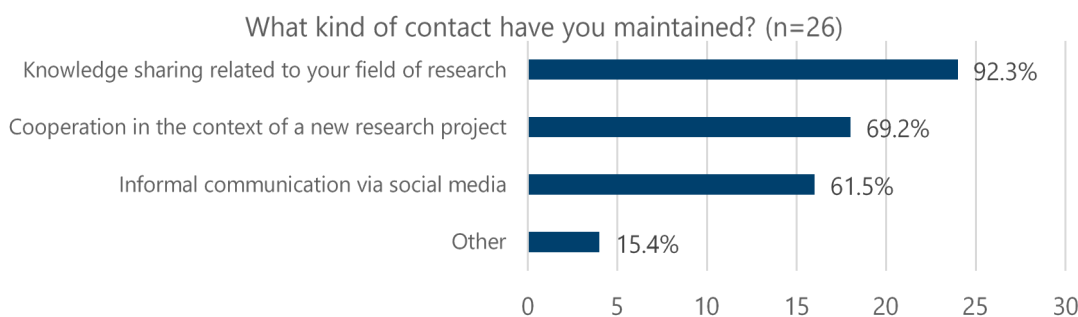
Figure 14 further shows that participants' intercultural experience with their APPEAR partners has been very positive overall. All respondents of the component 1 survey (project teams) furthermore indicated, without exception, that they have maintained some sort of contact with their project partners after their project ended, or that they expect doing so if their project is still ongoing.

Figure 14: Agreement with statements on international work experience (Component 1 survey)



While many interviewees emphasised the deep friendships that resulted from their APPEAR project collaborations with partners from abroad (FGD5, 7; INT2, 8, 9, 21, 32, 37, 45), Figure 15 shows that institutional partnerships and research strongly benefit from that: Among the survey respondents whose project has already ended, nearly 70% have already engaged with their project partners in the context of a new research project. Meanwhile, more than nine out of ten confirm that they are in touch with their partners to share knowledge related to their field of research.

Figure 15: Quality of contact since project completion (Component 1 survey)



Among scholarship alumni, too, almost nine out of ten have maintained contact with academic staff from their Austrian host institution (see Figure 16). Among those maintaining contact with either academic staff or fellow students from their host institution, 66% specify that such contact is related to a new research project. Overall, these findings highlight APPEAR III's potential to build trust and friendships, and shape long-lasting international cooperation between Austria and its partner countries.

Figure 16: Scholarship holders' network after their studies in Austria (Component 2 survey)

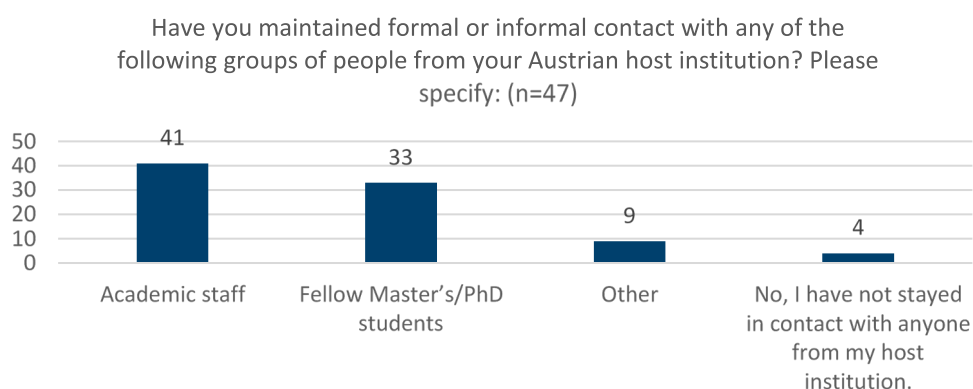


Figure 17: Quality of contact after study completion (Component 2 survey)



With more than 80% among project team members and 90% among the scholarship holders and alumni indicating that APPEAR III has helped them reflect on how their institution might evolve, and more than 90% stating that it has sharpened their sense of what they value at their home institution, the survey results also suggest that APPEAR has potential to enhance institutional transfer, i.e., to promote learnings that inform institutional change both in Austria as well as in its partner countries (see Figure 18 and Figure 19; see Wilson 2015).

Figure 18: Agreement with statements on institutional transfer (Component 1 survey)

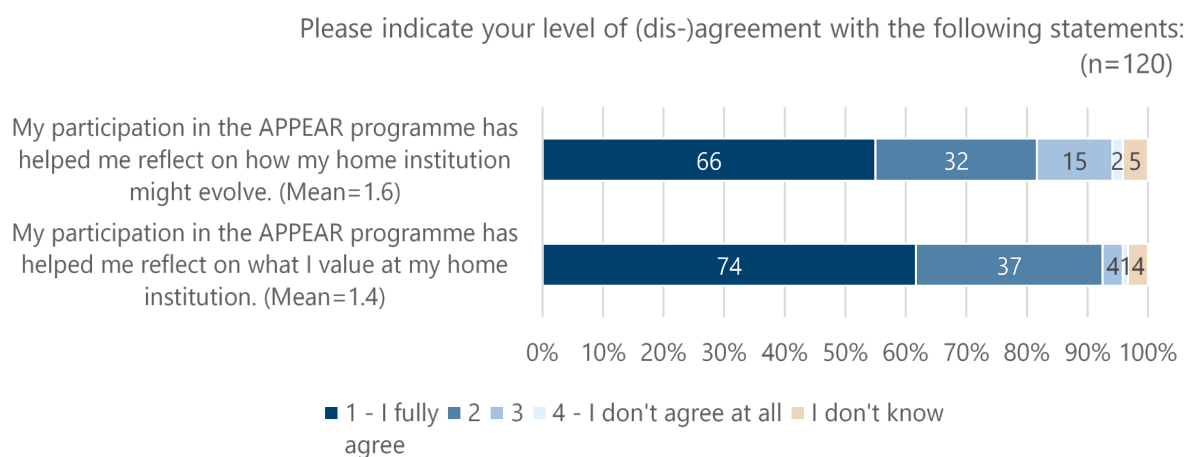
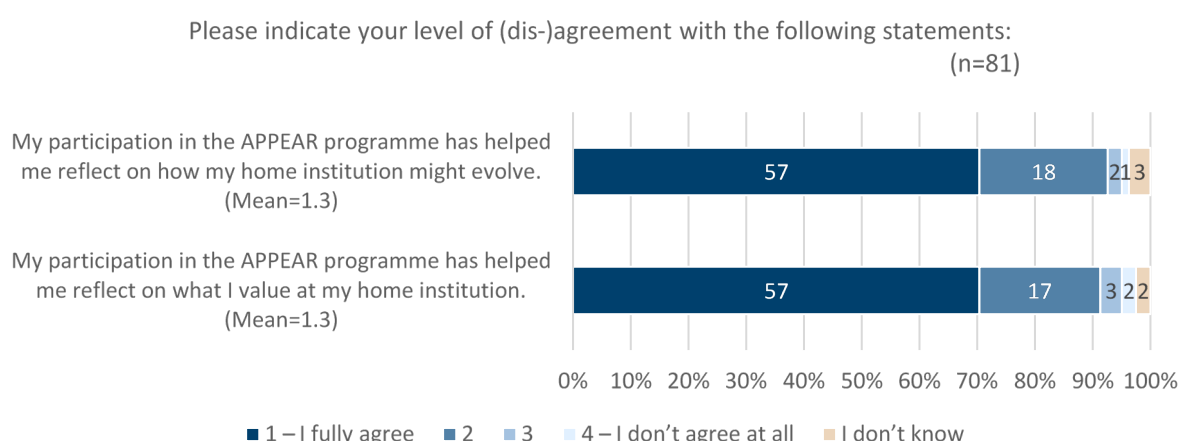


Figure 19: Agreement with statements on institutional transfer (Component 2 survey)



5.1.8 To what extent is the programme design conducive to the development of project proposals that align with the national development and education strategies in Armenia?

With the application guidelines demanding project alignment with national development priorities or strategies, the application form requiring a corresponding statement from applicants, and ADA's Coordination Offices in APPEAR's partner countries reviewing project proposals for contextual fit, APPEAR III's programme design includes mechanisms to ensure such alignment. Given furthermore that APPEAR III itself is in line with several of the Armenian government's strategic fields of action, the programme design is highly conducive to project proposals that correspond with national strategies in Armenia (F14).

National strategies referenced in project proposals include the Armenian Development Strategy for 2014-2025, the Armenian roadmap towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Strategy of the Main Directions Ensuring Economic Development in Agricultural Sector of the Republic of Armenia¹⁵, the Armenian government's "approval of the concept of the establishment of innovative financial-economical mechanisms in the field of environment"¹⁶ (DOC82; DOC60, 68). Beyond these, the Armenia's National Action Plan on Housing, Urban Development and Land Management from 2017¹⁷ as well as the biodiversity conservation priorities of the current Armenian government are also reflected in project proposals (DOC97, 104). As APPEAR III's thematic focus is entirely reflected in the Action Plan of the Armenian Government 2021-2026 already, project proposals complying with APPEAR's provisions are plausibly contributing to objectives as pursued by Armenian national strategies. Exemplary objectives to which APPEAR projects are clearly related are "Conservation, restoration, reproduction, normal development and reasonable use of the ecosystem balance and biodiversity of Lake Sevan" (DOC114), contributed to by the EcoServ project by developing an ecosystem service framework for Armenian wetlands, "Implementing actions for adaptability to and mitigation of the

¹⁵ See "Summary of the Strategy of Strategy of the Main Directions Ensuring Economic Development in Agricultural Sector of the Republic of Armenia", https://mineconomy.am/media/10033/Razmavarutyun_Hamarotagir_Angleren.pdf (last access: 14 April 2026)

¹⁶ See "Roadmap: Armenia – Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/natc/armnc3.pdf> (last access: 14 April 2026).

¹⁷ See Armenia's National Action Plan on Housing, Urban Development and Land Management, https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/projects/UNDA-9th_tranche/Documents/Armenia/Armenia_Country_Profile_Action_Plan_DRAFT_ENG_final.pdf (last access: 14 April 2026).

consequences of the climate change” (ibid.), contributed to by the ArmBioClimate project by investigating transmission of diseases between wildlife and humans under climate change conditions, or “Establishing grounds required for implementation of a state policy on urban development at the territorial level” (ibid.) to which the ReCITY project contributes to by developing tailored policy recommendations for sustainable urban futures in former industrial cities of Armenia. Targeting the enhancement of education, applied research, and outreach in organic agriculture, as well as support for sustainable farming systems and agri-food value chains, the SOAA project is aligned with the focus on sustainable farming, organic agriculture, and value-chain development set out in the Summary of the Strategy of Strategy of the Main Directions Ensuring Economic Development in Agricultural Sector of the Republic of Armenia. It is also aligned with the goal of the RA Government Programme 2021–2026 to promote “the production of highly valuable plants, organic agriculture” and “to provide assistance to scientific-educational institutions in the agrarian sector in order to prepare and train specialists in compliance with the requirements of the market”¹⁸

The APPEAR III projects are also well aligned with Armenian national strategies in the education sector, as their focus on the modernisation and internationalisation of higher education institutions directly corresponds to priorities set out in the State Programme of Education Development until 2030.

5.1.9 *To what extent does the programme meet the needs of higher education institutions in Armenia?*

Aiming to improve research, teaching and management capacities, as well as to establish international partnerships between higher education institutions, APPEAR III meets several needs of higher education institutions in Armenia. Their internationalisation to which APPEAR contributes stands out in particular, as it is a high priority for the strategies of both the HEI and the national government (F15).

According to State Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Armenia until 2030, the most relevant needs of Armenian HEI are the modernisation of curricula and teaching methods, internationalisation to facilitate academic mobility, global integration and competitiveness, enhanced governance structures and management capacities, a younger academic workforce, strengthened research capacities, and infrastructure. As described in detail in Chapter 3, APPEAR III addresses all of these aspects with each project team being able to set its own priorities according to its specific needs.¹⁹

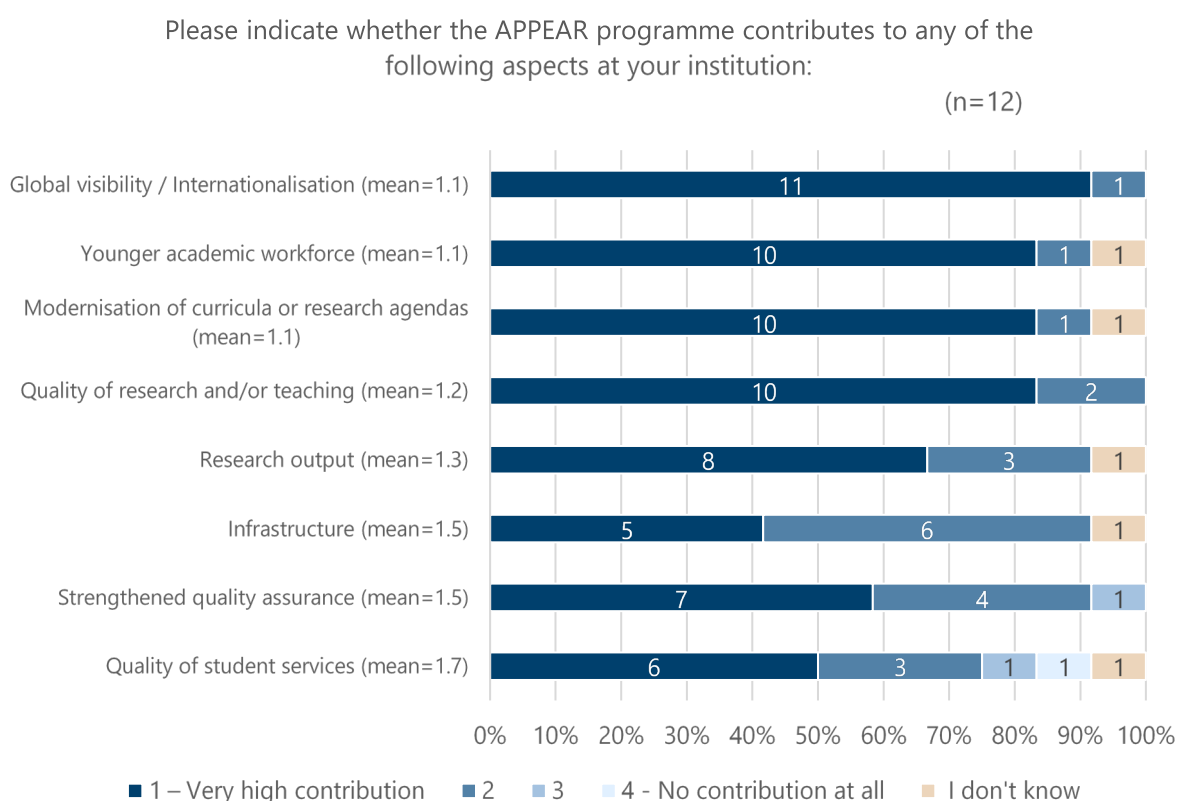
Following ‘global visibility / internationalisation’, to which the APPEAR programme clearly contributes to by definition, according to the responses from the 12 survey participants from Armenia, the aspects it contributes to most are the rejuvenation of the academic workforce, the modernisation of curricula or research agendas, and the quality of research and/or teaching (see Figure 20). As regards the latter two aspects, interviewees provided examples such as the integration of more practical, labour-market relevant elements in Master programme curricula, Austrian partners presenting teaching methods to make lectures more engaging, and the knowledge transfer of specific research techniques (INT5, 14, 32, 35, 39, 40, 47; FGD2, 7). But also the financial and overall management of the APPEAR projects by

¹⁸ Republic of Armenia Government Programme 2021–2026, pp. 44; 46. <https://www.gov.am/files/docs/4737.pdf> (last access: 1 May 2026).

¹⁹ ¹⁹ Law of Republic of Armenia on "State Program for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030". http://www.parliament.am/law_docs_8/13122022HO441_Havelvats.pdf (in Armenian; last access: 1 May 2026).

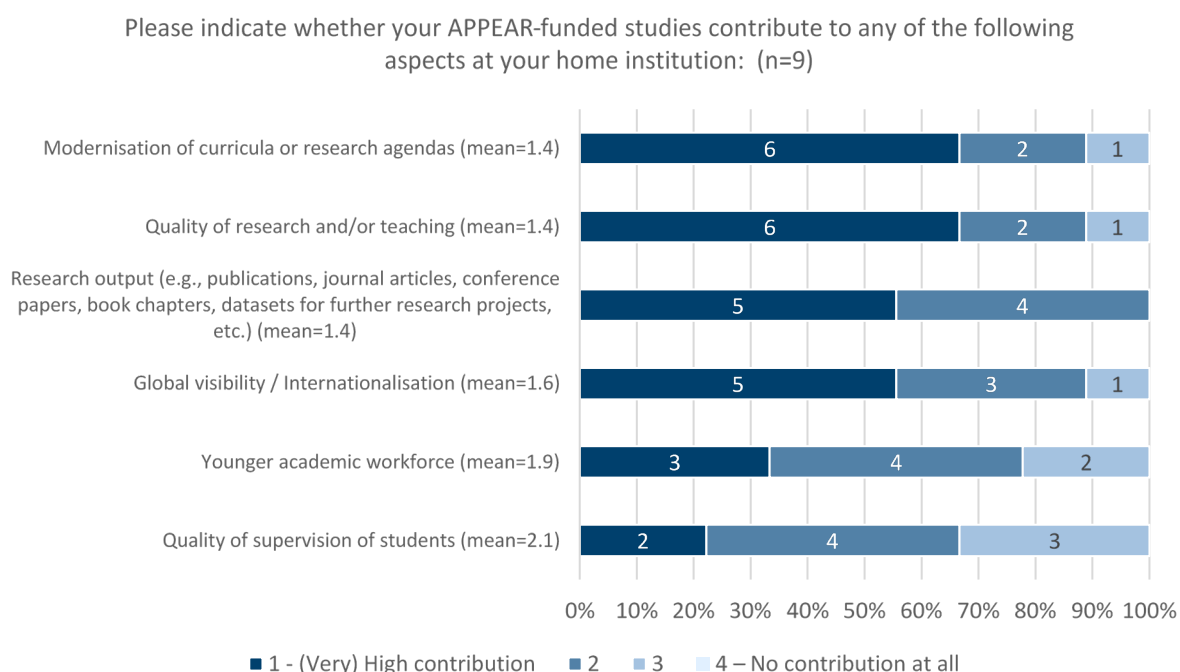
coordinating Armenian institutions has represented an important contribution to management capacity development at the individual and institutional levels, with learning about the Theory of Change concept being a specific example of this (INT2, 10, 35). Additionally, more than 90% of the respondents rate APPEAR's contribution to research output, infrastructure, and strengthened quality assurance as high or very high (see Figure 20). Armenian interviewees have also stressed APPEAR's multiplier effect: By acquiring APPEAR funds, coordinators obtain higher visibility, gain reputation, and thereby attract further (financial) support for their agendas (INT2, 40, 45; FGD8). Another reported multiplier effect concerns the contribution to the development of international cooperation projects funded both by the Armenian Government through Higher Education and Science Committee (HESC) research grants and by European programmes, such as Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in Higher Education and KA1 mobility for higher education staff and students.

Figure 20: Armenian project team members on institutional needs met by APPEAR III (Component 1 survey)



While Armenian APPEAR scholarship holders and alumni represent the (future) young academic workforce promoted by APPEAR III, they themselves do not rank APPEAR's contribution to this aspect as high as APPEAR project team members do (see Figure 20 and Figure 21). In their view, the programme's contribution to curricula modernisation, the quality of research and/or teaching, and research output at their home institution weighs more.

Figure 21: Armenian scholarship holders and alumni on institutional needs met by APPEAR III (Component 2 survey)



5.1.10 To what extent did the programme remain relevant in the context of political developments in Armenia?

In the context of political developments in Armenia, marked by geopolitical insecurities and the aftermath of the armed conflict with Azerbaijan, but also by increased public investment in the higher education and research sectors, APPEAR remains highly relevant (F16).

While team members of APPEAR projects in Armenia report little implications of (geo-)political changes or any kind of societal pressures for their project activities (INT2, 5, 6, 11, 20, 32, 35, 37, 44), many acknowledge that in recent years, the psychological and economic pressures resulting from international conflicts have been high, also affecting HE enrolment rates – especially among male applicants – and staff retention in HE and research institutions (INT6, 17, 35; FGD7, 9, 16). In response to the country's brain drain and economic needs, the Armenian government has increased its investment in science by 79% between 2018 and 2024²⁰ (FGD9, 16). It has furthermore encouraged HE and research institutions to intensify partnerships with the EU in response to breaches of trust in relations with Russia (INT13, 21, 43).

Among the Armenian survey respondents, three out of nine confirmed that pressures or conflicts at the national level were existent during project implementation but that these – mostly of economic and social kind, apart from violent conflict or war – have rather not interfered with project implementation. The survey responses are furthermore confirmative of the maintained relevance of HE and research amid these conflicts.

Part of the government plans in the HE and science sector is the creation of the “Academic City” – an ambitious and controversial project estimated to cost about US\$3 billion, offering students, researchers, and professionals from all over the world “cutting-edge facilities and strong international

²⁰ See <https://www.openaire.eu/os-armenia?lang=en> (last access: 27 March 2026).

partnerships, [...] world-class education and hands-on experience in emerging industries” with the overall mission to “drive Armenia’s socio-economic development”²¹. The project involves a merger of Armenia’s public HEI and research institutions; however, the exact consequences of this project for the staff and the institutions that have been involved in APPEAR are yet unknown. While some do not anticipate any changes beyond purely formal mergers, others report a sense of uncertainty within the institutions concerned (INT9, 35; FGD16). A high-ranking representative of the Higher Education and Science Committee (HESC) within the Armenian Ministry of Education emphasised that interest in partnerships such as those promoted by APPEAR remains unchanged and expressed the HESC’s support for the programme. At the time of writing this report, a revised concept for the development of the Academic City was approved by the Armenian government. While the financial feasibility, viability, and investment opportunities are still being analysed and highly questioned by critics, preparatory construction work has already begun as have negotiations with political, academic, and private partners of this government endeavor.²²

Overall, the government’s strengthened support for the HE and research sector, its call for HEI to expand internationalisation, the increasing orientation towards Europe on the one hand and the persistent challenges to development – including those related to the forced displacements of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh – on the other, underscore the continuing relevance of the APPEAR programme for Armenian HE and research institutions. Interviewees further argued that, amid the geopolitical insecurities, the programme helps Armenia developing capacities that will lower the country’s dependence on external factors, while raising the attractiveness of Armenian HEI to young academic workforce as well as to national and international students (INT5, 13, 17, 21, 23). With half of the APPEAR III projects in Armenia addressing the country’s biodiversity, another factor rendering APPEAR highly relevant in the current political environment in Armenia is the fact that the government will be hosting the 17th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17), taking place in Yerevan in October 2026. This event provides momentum for APPEAR-funded projects with this thematic focus.

5.2 Effectiveness

5.2.1 *To what extent does the programme design – its procedures and instruments – enable effective project implementation?*

Apart from conceptual inconsistencies in the Extended Impact Partnership instrument, the design of APPEAR III enables project implementation effectively which is largely facilitated by the expertise built throughout the different implementation phases as well as by the highly valued customised support provided by the APPEAR Office (F17). However, strains persist, especially regarding workload and budget distribution among partners, project teams’ financial reporting obligations as well as financial, time-related, and bureaucratic conditions for scholarship holders (F18). APPEAR’s clear commitment to the “Leave no one behind” (LNOB) principle is not yet fully reflected in these conditions, as scholarship holders are largely dependent on personal savings and as female candidates

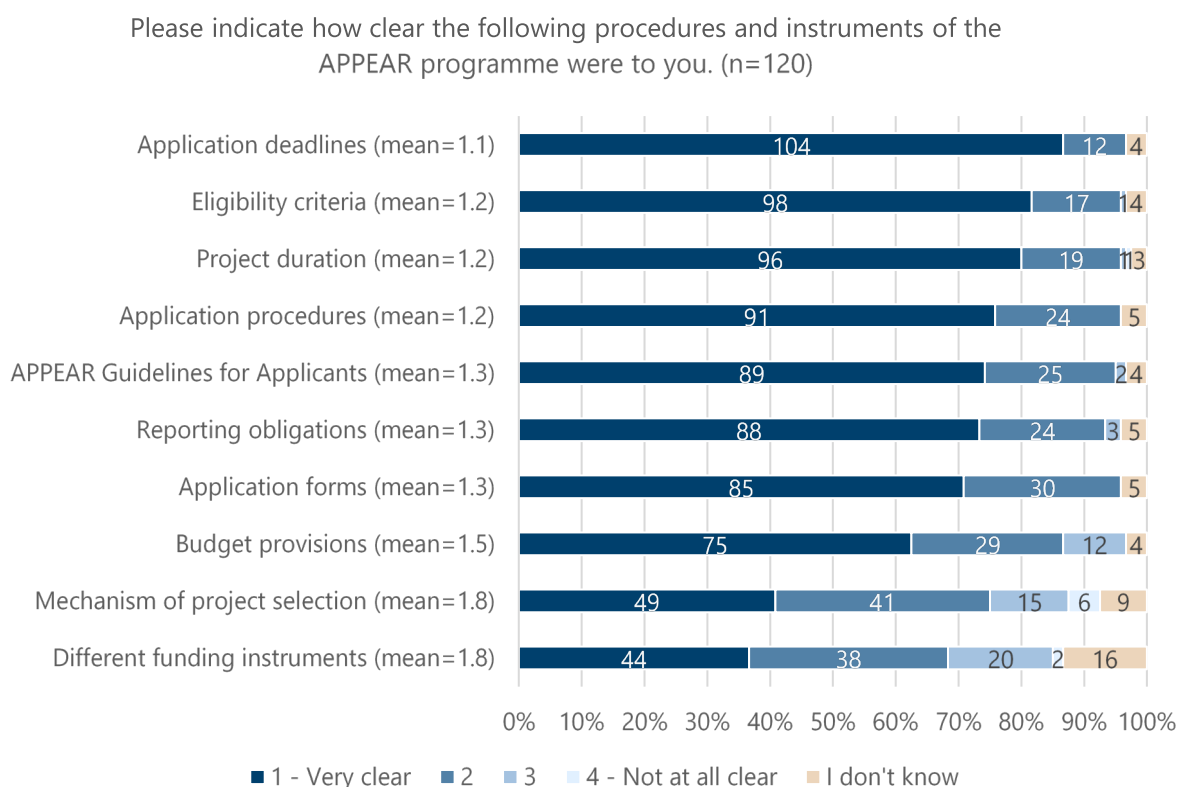
²¹ See <https://acarmenia.am/en/about> (last access: 27 March 2026)

²² <https://www.gmp.de/en/projects/17500/academic-city-yerevan> (last access: 19 May 2026).
<https://www.hesc.am/en/2026/05/06/academic-and-research-cooperation-among-key-areas-of-the-armenia-france-strategic-partnership/> (last access: 19 May 2026).
<https://civilnet.am/en/news/945682> (last access: 19 May 2026).
<https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2026/02/26/Academic-City/3152912> (last access: 19 May 2026).

with children feel compelled either not to apply for the scholarship or to literally leave their children behind (F19).

Since its launch in 2009, APPEAR has regularly been subject to internal and external evaluations as well as to discussions among experts who constitute the Advisory and Selection Boards of the programme. Informed by these structured assessments of and reflections on the programme implementation, APPEAR has been shaped into its current form attracting about twice as many applicants as it can fund. Satisfied with the support granted by APPEAR to conduct their Master's or PhD studies, or to implement their partnership project, several of the programme participants have benefitted from it multiple times, thereby furthering partnerships over the years. An aspect favouring such repeated engagement is the fact that APPEAR's main target countries are relatively stable, corresponding with those prioritised by ADA. This allows for more coherent projects within the programme and synergies in the course of the years – an aspect that has also been raised by programme participants. With regard to APPEAR's target countries, it must be pointed out, though, that Moldova was the only target country not represented by any project, as the only two Moldovan applications had been rejected.

Figure 22: Clarity of APPEAR III procedures and instruments (Component 1 survey)



Across both components, APPEAR participants praise the programme for its clear procedures (see Figure 22 and Figure 23) and, in particular, for the support provided by the programme managing APPEAR Office. In combination with the programme's inherent flexibility, their solution-oriented and pragmatic handling of participants' questions and individual challenges, has been mentioned by a large share of survey respondents as an important facilitating factor for successful project implementation (see chapter 0; INT30, 35). Flexibility is appreciated, for example, with regard to budget reallocations and project extensions, allowing teams to adapt to unforeseen circumstances and optimise resource utilisation. However, participants from both components also raise critical issues such as the funding timeline. For scholarship holders, this critique primarily relates to time-intensive visa and residence bureaucratic

procedures, which cause significant delays and stress, with hindering implications including for projects reliant on the work of project-embedded scholarship holders. Project teams, on the other hand, advocate for longer funding periods, convinced that this would increase their impact and foster more sustainable partnerships (see Figure 24; INT15; email from project team member #2; free-text field survey responses).

Figure 23: Scholarship holders and alumni on the clarity of procedures (Component 2 survey)

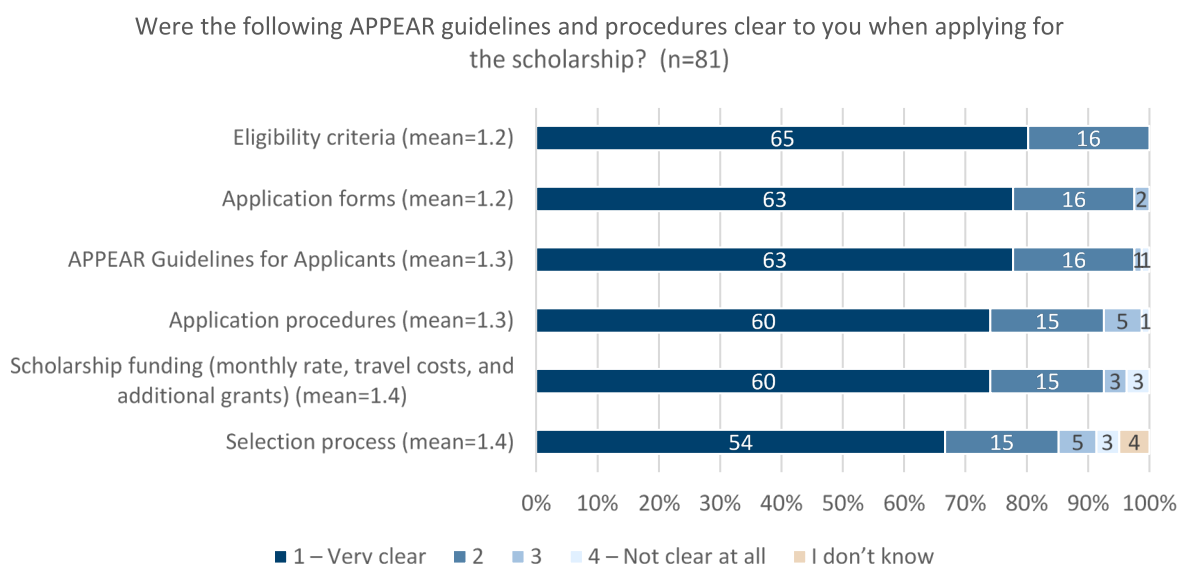
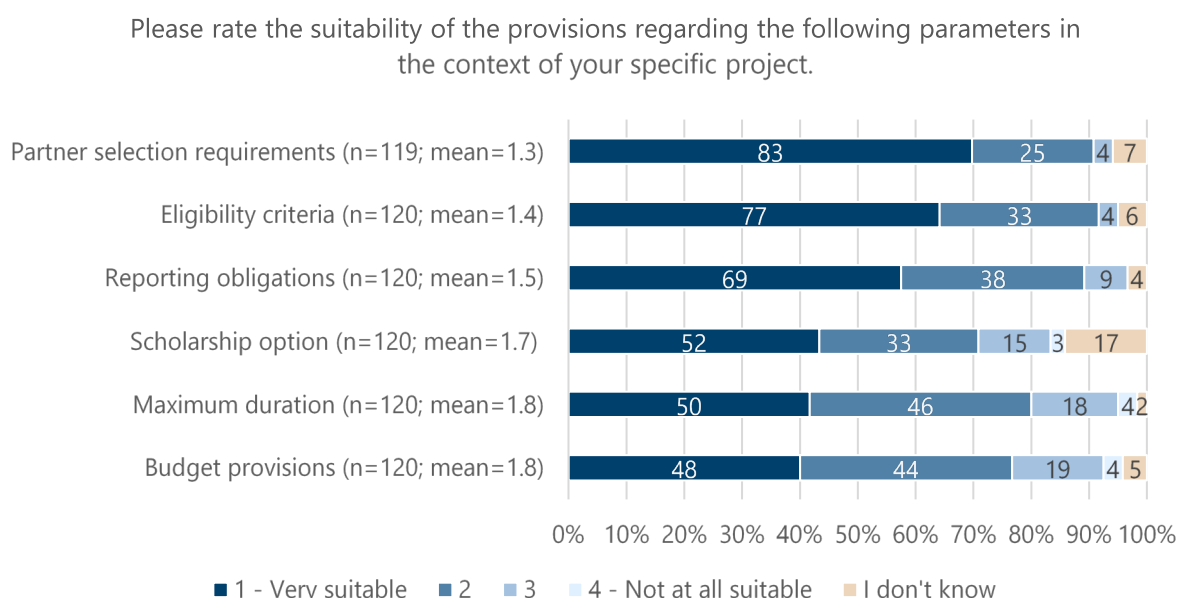


Figure 24: Project staff on the suitability of programme provisions (Component 1 survey)



Most survey participants rate the funding provisions for academic partnerships as (very) suitable in the context of their respective project (see Figure 24). The suitability of APPEAR's budget provisions for academic partnerships is – along with the maximum duration mentioned above – rated the lowest, although its average rating is still "suitable" (ibid.). The most prominently raised challenge regarding funding provisions is the yearly auditing process which has been mandatory for partners abroad since

previous programme phases and has become mandatory for Austrian partners, too, with APPEAR III. The latter is met with a lack of understanding, with internal controlling of Austrian HEI named by some interviewees not only as more cost-effective, but also as more accurate than the external audits required by APPEAR (INT14, 19, 38). For institutions in the partner countries, the auditing is reported to be even more challenging: Finding an appropriate and affordable auditor regularly poses challenges, leading to delays in financial reporting towards the APPEAR Office with hampering implications for budget disbursements and overall project implementation (DOC24, 25, 32, 40; INT14, 37; FGD9). Furthermore, internal university regulations in partner countries can impose additional obstacles, such as obliging project teams to put every yearly required audit out to tender, rather than allowing for a framework agreement for the entire project phase (FGD7, 9). Despite these hurdles, several interviewees and survey participants have voiced their appreciation for the auditing provisions, arguing that it is a relevant measure to ensure that means are spent and project staff are paid as they should be. Some also esteem that annual auditing is easier to manage than a single, comprehensive audit at the end of the project, as it helps keep required financial records well-organised and up to date (INT10, 32, 45; FGD18).

While there is general acceptance for allocating the majority of funding to partner countries, a recurring point of concern among interviewees and survey participants from Austrian HEI is the uncompensated workload they undertake in support of their partners. Many stress that a considerable amount of their time and effort, often involving significant administrative and advisory tasks, is not adequately covered by APPEAR funding. Several point out that the current budget requirements, in combination with lower daily rates and overhead costs in partner countries compared to Austria, lead to the theoretical expectation towards these partners to contribute around ten times more work to the project than their Austrian counterparts. However, this does not correspond with the reality of project implementation, where Austrian partners often provide constant input and advisory which remains largely uncompensated (see chapter 0 for further elaboration on this finding). Project partners from partner countries have themselves also brought up this imbalance, perceiving it as unfair or even contrary to the programme's partnership-based approach (INT45; FGD9).

Sporadically mentioned aspects that project teams miss include practical guidance on how to effectively engage with partners in partner countries and how to deal with logistical difficulties such as shipping project materials. Regarding reporting obligations, which are rated quite positively overall (see Figure 24), some respondents pledge for further simplification, e.g., by replacing the narrative half-year reports by survey-based progress reporting similar to the German Academic Exchange Service's Monitoring-Tool.²³

Despite the above-mentioned concerns, APPEAR is highly appreciated as a unique programme of its kind with interviewees and survey participants often comparing it favourably to other funding schemes. For instance, programmes like Horizon Europe require larger consortia and pre-existing partnerships (or a substantial level of trust established in advance), which can be challenging to establish or may, at times, not suit the underlying needs. Other comparable programmes, such as Scientific & Technological Cooperation, only fund travel expenses and material costs, excluding staff costs, and tend to be less flexible (INT30, 35). Some participants also stress that APPEAR was the first funding programme demanding the elaboration of a project ToC which they experienced as challenging at first

²³ Results-oriented monitoring (RoM) at DAAD, <https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/who-we-are/results-oriented-monitoring/> (last access: 31 March 2026).

but really useful later on for steering purposes (within APPEAR and beyond), as well as for the common understanding of the project among the team members.

Regarding the programme's much-appreciated gradual approach to funding partnerships, the fact that several partnerships have built on previous ones corroborates its effectiveness in enabling project implementation and forging lasting international partnerships between the participating institutions. As seed funding, the PF is particularly important among the different instruments, and has proven effective in helping staff from different HE or research institutions to set up a project with a low level of resource investment required, while building trust and familiarising themselves with each other's (work) cultures prior to making a larger commitment (INT30, 37, 38, 45; FGD16). While the complete lack of successful applications for the EIP instrument has raised notable concern among programme responsible staff at both ADA and the APPEAR Office, the existing demand for such an instrument was evidenced by four applications throughout APPEAR III and suggestions from survey participants to link APPEAR partnerships stronger with non-academic projects of International Partnerships Austria. The latter aligns with the EIP's objective of "implementing promising research results from previous partnerships in the social reality, with science accompanying the project and ensuring quality with the long-term goal to improve the living conditions of defined target groups" (DOC19). Programme stakeholders explain the weakness of the applications submitted so far by the fact that the EIP requirements surpass the traditional competencies and expertise of academics, which highlights a fundamental challenge in bridging the gap between academic research and development work. This gap is also evident in the programme's ToC which does currently not reflect the results pathway expected from EIP projects (see Figure 1). With no programme outcome really fitting expected EIP results, this instrument is currently inconsistent with the overall programme logic.²⁴

Furthermore, the option to embed funded Master's or PhD studies within projects is highly valued among project team members, many of which used survey free-text fields to call for an increase in these scholarships. Chapter 5.2.6 further elaborates on the mutual support of the two programme components.

The scholarship component, while benefiting from the highly appreciated support of the APPEAR Office in providing information and assistance with settling in Austria, faces several interconnected strains. A primary concern is the financial inadequacy of the stipends, which scholarship holders themselves as well as their supervisors report as insufficient to cover basic living costs, housing, insurance, and research expenses (INT4; FGD9; free-text field survey responses). This forces many of them to rely on personal savings or to work remotely for their home institutions, limiting their ability to fully integrate into the Austrian academic environment and engage with APPEAR-organised activities. Scholarship holders co-working with PhD candidates who receive a regular Austrian PhD salary furthermore report that the income discrepancy impairs working at eye level. This issue is further exacerbated in cases where scholarship holders are not permitted to use offices and other university facilities, despite other PhD colleagues being entitled to do so (FGD3; free-text field survey responses).

The justification for currently low stipend rates is that higher rates would be subject to taxation, which would imply a significantly higher cost of the programme component or a significant reduction of the

²⁴ Based on the EIP description in the guideline of APPEAR III's last call for applications, EIP projects are expected to generate outcomes D8-10 and, most importantly, R4, which then contribute not to the programme's outcomes OC1-OC3 or intended impacts I1-I2, but rather to the highest intended impact (I3), namely, "APPEAR III contributes to achieving the SDGs" (see the programme's ToC as visualised in chapter 3).

number of scholarships offered. Through separate cost transfers and handling flight bookings and payments for scholarship holders, the APPEAR Office attempts to mitigate the challenges stemming from current rates. However, these mitigation efforts are reportedly insufficient to fully ease the financial pressure on scholarship holders. While the APPEAR Office claims that it is possible for scholarship holders to work below the Austrian marginal earnings threshold, several scholarship holders and supervisors called for this possibility in interviews and online surveys, unaware that it is already permitted.

Female scholarships holders with children are particularly affected by this financial pressure, which undermines compliance with the LNOB principle as well as the programme's specific emphasis of the "advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (DOC8, 14, 17, 19). While mothers taking their children to Austria are challenged not only by their research activities and the financial pressure, but also by care duties, mothers who leave their children in their home countries, do also experience severe emotional distress, as well as their children. To address this complexity and acknowledging that without support to mothers, gender parity among scholarship holders would be even more difficult to achieve across all partner countries, the APPEAR Office has dealt with the double burden of the PhD studies combined with motherhood in pragmatic ways, for example, providing some additional financial support within narrow financial constraints, helping mothers seek kindergarten places, and seeking the extension of field study phases. While the introduction of scholarships with more comprehensive family benefits have been discussed, they have eventually been discarded, again for taxation reasons, which, in practice, means that both scholarship holders with children and the APPEAR Office find themselves having to come up with a more or less satisfactory individual solution in each case.

Even though it is outside of the programme management's immediate sphere of influence, another factor contributing to scholarship holders' mental burden, which also directly affects their ability to successfully pursue their studies, are the visa application and annual residence permit renewal procedures. Scholarship holders report that these procedures are a major source of persistent stress and disruption, besides being costly, time-consuming, and frustrating experiences – at times due to language barriers and unfriendly treatment at government offices. Additionally, scholarship holders expressed missing specific guidance in English on daily private issues, for example, to properly navigate the healthcare system. However, OeAD's website does already offer a wide range of information in this regard, including a search tool for English-speaking doctors. In this context, therefore, the weakness lies less in the availability of information than in a lack of awareness among scholarship holders. In several interviews, FGDs and free-text responses in the online questionnaire, it was raised that it would have been helpful to receive more guidance in advance on admission requirements to avoid frustrations from being rejected by an Austrian university after the scholarship application had been successful (see chapter 5.2.3 for OeAD's response to this issue).

The challenges outlined above are persistent, add up and facilitate severe mental burdens and even burnout despite the support provided by the APPEAR Office, which has been positively described by all scholarship holders interviewed.

See chapter 5.2.6 for findings on the mutual support of both programme components.

5.2.2 In what way does the mode of communication (frequency, quality, formality) between the APPEAR Office and ADA influence an effective implementation of the programme?

While the current mode of communication between the APPEAR Office and ADA does effectively enable programme implementation, the limited collaboration with ADA's Coordination Offices in

the partner countries has been identified as its main weakness as it limits optimal programme implementation in terms of call dissemination, support to project implementation, and synergies in the spirit of Austria's Whole-of-Government Approach (F20).

Given that the APPEAR programme has been managed by the OeAD team since its first implementation phase, the overall structure of communication between OeAD's APPEAR Office and ADA is well-established. This structure includes clear roles, concertation milestones (e.g., Advisory and Selection Board meetings), and established communication channels with all relevant ADA departments – mainly the Department Themes & Quality, particularly the Education Officer, the finance department, ADA's gender team, as well as the Coordination Offices abroad –, effectively enabling programme implementation. Apart from staff turnovers and temporary vacancies on ADA's behalf, which have reportedly led to delays in management tasks, effective programme implementation has been limited only insofar that demands to further engage ADA's Coordination Offices (*Koordinationsbüros*, KoBüs) have remained largely unmet.

While it has previously been envisioned to systematically expand information flows between APPEAR projects and KoBüs, the latter have formally only been engaged in reviewing project proposals for their adequacy in the respective country context (DOC4; INT1, 3, 12, 24, 27, 29). According to all seven KoBü-representing interviewees, this level of involvement falls short in exploiting highly relevant synergy potentials. Viewing APPEAR as ADA's flagship project and considering that KoBüs are part of Austrian embassies, several of these interviewees shared that they miss progress updates on implemented APPEAR projects which could inform diplomatic activities and the development of new country strategies, while also facilitating targeted networking. Regardless of whether (higher) education is a focus topic in the respective country or region, the interviewees expressed strong interest and willingness to contribute more actively to the monitoring, advisory, and visibility of APPEAR projects, and to provide further support to the best of their ability. For the case of Moldova, where two projects were proposed but rejected, it was suggested that the small number of applications is in large part due to poor dissemination of the programme which, in turn, is due to currently narrow information flows towards and little involvement of the KoBü in Chisinau.

In several cases KoBüs have actively supported programme implementation beyond the proposal assessment by disseminating calls for applications, attending projects' public events, providing logistical support, connecting stakeholders, or mediating in communication difficulties between project partners. However, the level to which this support has been sought and provided is strongly dependent on personal commitment of both KoBü staff and project teams.

5.2.3 To what extent is programme management able to respond flexibly to unforeseen challenges and barriers during programme and project implementation?

Within its sphere of influence, programme management has responded flexibly to numerous unforeseen challenges and barriers during programme and project implementation, leading to high levels of satisfaction and appreciation among the programme participants (F21).

About one third of project team members and nearly half of APPEAR III's scholarship holders report having faced unforeseen challenges or barriers, which have risked or even interrupted smooth project implementation (see Figure 25 and Figure 26). Among those most frequently named by project teams are (geo-)political instabilities, including armed conflicts, terrorism, and governmental changes, bureaucratic hurdles, including slow institutional procedures, import regulations, staff turnover, as well

as financial issues related to inflation, cost increases, and funding delays (free-text field survey responses).

Figure 25: Emergence of unforeseen challenges or barriers in projects (Component 1 survey)

Did any unforeseen challenges or barriers emerge which have risked or even temporarily interrupted the smooth implementation of your project? (n=120)

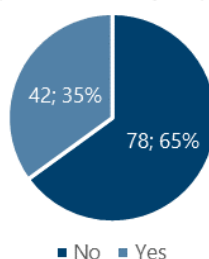
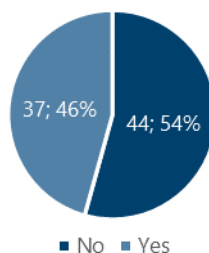


Figure 26: Emergence of unforeseen challenges or barriers in APPEAR-funded Master's/PhD studies (Component 2 survey)

Did any unforeseen challenges or barriers emerge which have posed challenges to or even temporarily interrupted the smooth continuation of your Master's/PhD studies? (n=81)



Besides political instability and conflicts in their home countries, scholarship holders have mostly been faced with health and family issues, including illness, pregnancy and childbirth, the COVID-19 pandemic, financial and bureaucratic difficulties, including insufficient funding and bureaucratic difficulties, as well as academic and institutional challenges, including supervisor issues, limited access to institutional facilities, and publication delays (free-text field survey responses). As raised in chapter 5.2.1 already, some applicants have furthermore experienced immense frustration stemming from surprising admission rejections from universities after previous acceptance for the APPEAR scholarship by the programme office. According to APPEAR III's progress reports, these events resulted from federal administration suggesting universities to apply stricter admission criteria (DOC28).

The APPEAR Office, in conjunction with ADA and/or the programme's two oversight bodies, responded to these diverse challenges and barriers with a combination of adaptive measures and continuous monitoring, as further specified below:

- Geopolitical instability and conflict:** While activities in Gaza were suspended and the entire target territory excluded from the list of eligible countries, for Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, risk analyses were required from applicants in which they had to outline how planned activities could be carried out under given conditions and which exit strategies they would employ in case of a worsening security situation. These analyses were reviewed and had to be approved by both the APPEAR Office and ADA. Furthermore, the APPEAR Office continuously monitored the security situation in affected areas based on information provided by project partners, media and reports from local experts. Findings were discussed in weekly meetings, which

helped to anticipate necessary project adaptations consisting, for example, in conducting project activities remotely. Furthermore, in one case the Selection Board specifically chose a project proposal designed to support teaching staff and students in a traumatic post-conflict situation in Ethiopia (DOC27, 28, 30).

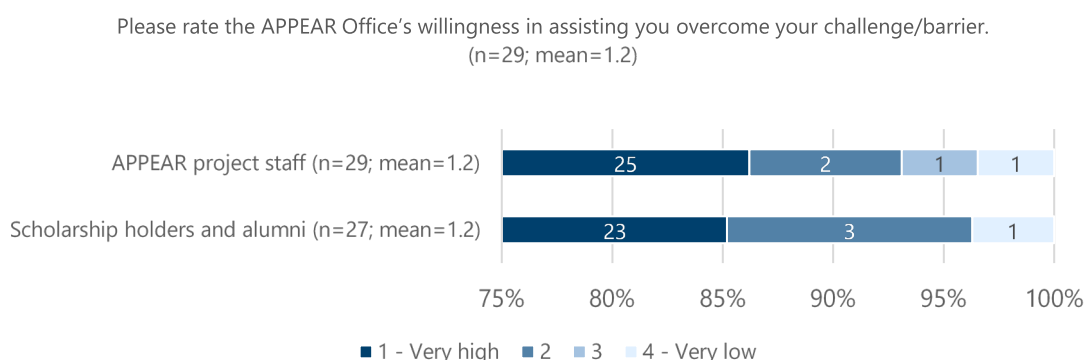
- **Administrative and bureaucratic hurdles:** In cases where personal circumstances led to delays in Master's or PhD studies, individual solutions were found, such as extending scholarships. In the case of a scholarship holder facing delays due to conflicts in its home country, family members were brought to Austria with support of OeAD's legal department. In response to several scholarship durations exceeding APPEAR III's programme duration, the APPEAR Office proposed to either extend the programme duration for component 2 or to sign a separate contract with ADA to manage ongoing scholarships, as has been done in previous programme phases. At the time of writing this evaluation report, an agreement on this matter was still pending (DOC27, 28, 30; INT15, 26).

To streamline admission processes, particularly at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU University), the APPEAR Office agreed with BOKU in early 2024 to conduct preliminary equivalence checks of study documents to reduce effort for applicants. Further discussions were held to improve communication and processes. Financial reporting and auditing were also closely managed, with the APPEAR Office reviewing annual and financial reports, consulting with the OeAD finance department, and requesting revisions where necessary (DOC27, 28, 30, 31). For delays in audit reports, the APPEAR Office actively followed up and ensured that funds were disbursed once reports were received (DOC32). In one particular case, the APPEAR Office resorted to engaging ADA's coordination office in Mozambique and conducted a visit to discuss solutions to administrative hurdles within the institution that had been causing significant delays in project implementation; a full resolution was, however, not achieved (DOC30, 32).

- **Economic factors:** In response to high inflation, increased costs for travel, equipment, and living expenses, negatively affecting project budgets and the financial well-being of scholarship holders, ADA approved project budget increases of up to 15% in 2023; the monthly scholarship rate was increased by nearly 14% in 2024 (in line with adjustments of Austria's Federal Ministry of Education). Additional grants for visa and residence permit costs were introduced, utilising a lump sum payment approach, and support for scholarship holders with small children was increased with a monthly family allowance of EUR 200. Budget reallocations were also made at programme level, to address increased costs for external reviewers and Selection Board meetings (DOC27, 28, 30, 31).
- **Programme design and communication:** Guidelines, reviewer documents, and application forms were regularly adapted and optimised. Furthermore, in reaction to the poor response from the target group regarding the Extended Impact Partnership instrument, its two strands (Extended Impact *Institutional* Partnership vs. Extended Impact *External* Partnership) were joined together in an attempt to decrease the complexity of the guidelines (DOC9, 14, 17, 19, 27, 28).

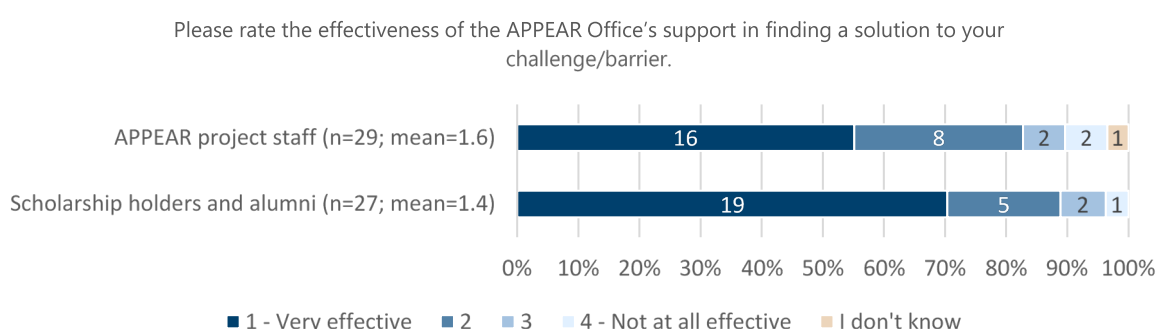
These efforts of the APPEAR Office to tackle emerging challenges are positively reflected in the survey results: Among the respondents reporting unforeseen challenges or barriers, around two thirds have reached out to the APPEAR Office of which more than 90% found the staff highly willing to assist (see Figure 27 and Figure 28).

Figure 27: Rating of the APPEAR Office's willingness to assist (both survey components)



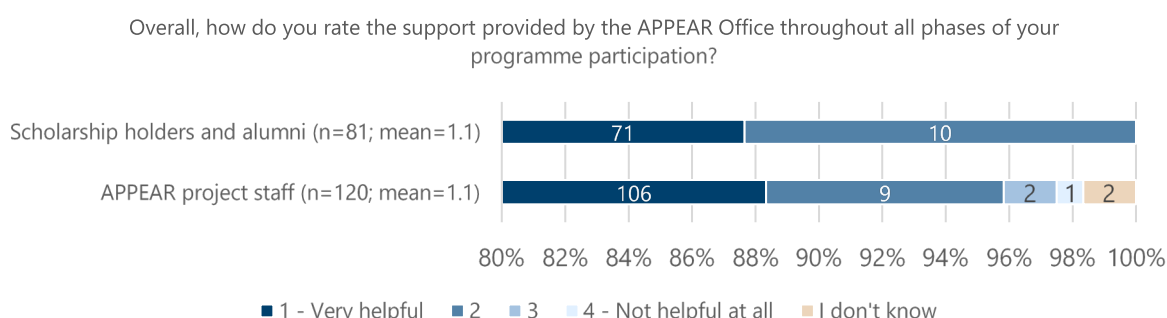
In more than 80%, their help proved to be effective or even highly effective (see Figure 28). Interview results confirm these findings. Some interviewees highlighted the flexibility and the good cooperation with the APPEAR Office, which stood out positively compared to similar funding programmes (INT6, 30, 35, 39, 42, 45; FGD5).

Figure 28: Rating of APPEAR Office's effectiveness to assist (both survey components)



Survey results visualised in Figure 29 reflect this generally high esteem of the APPEAR Office's support.

Figure 29: Rating of APPEAR Office's overall support (both survey components)



5.2.4 To what extent has the programme achieved the objectives, as outlined in the APPEAR tender documents? What facilitating and hindering factors can be identified?

The programme objectives are found to be largely achieved, in particular those regarding capacity development and cooperation-informed research and HE (F22). Shortfalls are mainly related to the rather ineffective guidance on implementing APPEAR's Gender Strategy (F23). Comprehensive support provided to programme participants, robust collaboration, the promotion of personal

encounters, and intrinsic motivation have been identified to be key factors facilitating the achievement of project and programme objectives, while hindering factors include the limited recognition for APPEAR projects in Austrian academia, geopolitical instabilities, as well as tedious visa and residence permit procedures (F24). The quality of the assessment of target achievement is limited by the programme's monitoring system focusing on outputs rather than outcomes (F25).

OeAD's system for monitoring programme implementation and results achievement comprises definitions of targeted outputs and outcomes (see chapter 3, in particular Figure 1), as well as suggestions for project output indicators and the following programme outcome indicators:

- **Indicator for OC1 – Research, teaching and management capacities of participating institutions in partner countries are improved:** “The outcomes of completed APPEAR projects and scholarships on capacity building within institutions in partner countries in the areas of teaching, research, management, scholarship programmes, and in terms of dialogue and visibility.”²⁵ (DOC4)
- **Indicator for OC2 – Research and higher education in the participating institutions are informed by international cooperation, by dialogue with stakeholders and are more gender-equal, diverse and inclusive:** “The extent of local, regional and international networking among participating institutions on SDG-related topics.” (ibid.)
- **Indicator for OC3 – Research and higher education for development is more visible and acknowledged among Austrian higher education institutions:** “The visibility of APPEAR and SDG-relevant development research at Austrian universities.” (ibid.)

Although not being tracked systematically, it is assumed that the project outcomes represent the operationalisation of these programme outcomes. Indicators for outputs and outcomes expected to result from APPEAR Office activities (e.g., public relations and communication activities) are defined but not equipped with target values, and systematic monitoring of advances in that regard is limited to qualitative descriptions of outputs in APPEAR III's progress reports. Therefore, the following assessment is based on survey and interview results, narrative descriptions of outcomes from programme and project documents, as well as on the evaluation team's judgement as to which programme outcome a particular project outcome, or an outcome generated by the APPEAR Office, contributes to.

OC1 – Research, teaching and management capacities of participating institutions in partner countries are improved.

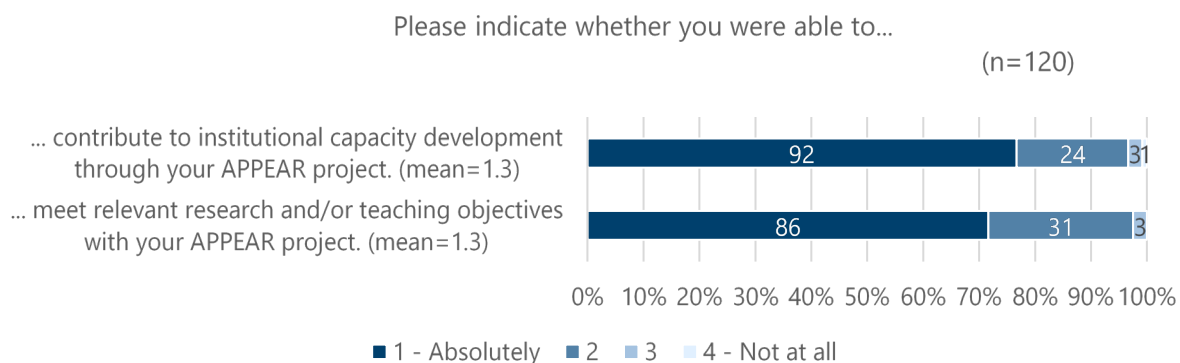
APPEAR projects and scholarships have effectively improved capacities in the areas of teaching, research, management, scholarship programmes, and in terms of dialogue and visibility across the participating institutions in APPEAR's partner countries. Therefore, OC1 can be deemed to have been achieved – with a few reservations resulting only from the fact that several projects and Master's and PhD studies have not yet been completed as the programme was still ongoing at the time of data collection, and that one project had to be suspended due to external impeding factors.

With APPEAR projects having led to the **development, revision, and accreditation of new curricula and courses** in line with international standards and addressing local needs, curriculum development and enhancement is one of the mechanisms through which APPEAR projects have developed teaching capacity. A among the many examples are for instance the “ECSDevelop” project revising and

²⁵ The indicators are originally formulated in German and were translated by the evaluation team.

standardising curricula for Analytical Chemistry and Sustainable Chemical Processing, which is in its final stage of accreditation, the development of a Master's curriculum for sustainable tourism in Mozambique, and the "Edu4GEO2" project developing a Master's curriculum in Geomatics in Ethiopia, integrating modern teaching methods and digital materials (DOC30, 32). Teaching capacity has furthermore been developed by **improving teaching methodologies and staff skills** through training in various areas, such as green pedagogy and transformative learning concepts (DOC32; free-text responses in online survey). One of the case study projects, the "DEvision" project, focused on integrating online and blended learning modules into geospatial Bachelor's and Master's curricula, training task force members and teachers in Learning Management Systems (LMS) and blended teaching (DOC32; FGD4). Projects have furthermore strengthened teaching capacities by **providing teaching materials, laboratory equipment, and technologies** for hybrid teaching methods, improving the overall learning environment (DOC32; free-text responses in online survey).

Figure 30: Project staff on capacity building (Component 1 survey)



Equipment and facility provision have also strengthened partners' research capacities. Establishing, for example, an agroecological demonstration farm as part of the "SOAA" project in Armenia facilitates application-oriented teaching. The "ArmBioClimate" project for its part enabled local research by procuring a sequencing analysis device, previously unavailable in Armenia, and laboratory equipment for analysing samples of fungi within the "BioBarFungArm" project. Furthermore, students and staff **gained hands-on research experience** through the research informed by partners' different expertise and applying new scientific approaches and methods. Thereby, **methodological training**, e.g., in participatory research, digital extension, and transdisciplinary research approaches, has been a key focus. **Increased research output**, resulting in scientific progress and new technologies, constitutes another aspect of research capacity development to which APPEAR projects and scholarships have contributed substantially. As depicted in Figure 31 and Figure 32, programme participants rate APPEAR's contribution to institutional needs and capacities as high to very high across multiple dimensions, with "Global visibility / Internationalisation" being rated the highest in both surveys.

Figure 31: Project coordinators on programme contributions to aspects of capacity building and other institutional needs (Component 1 survey)

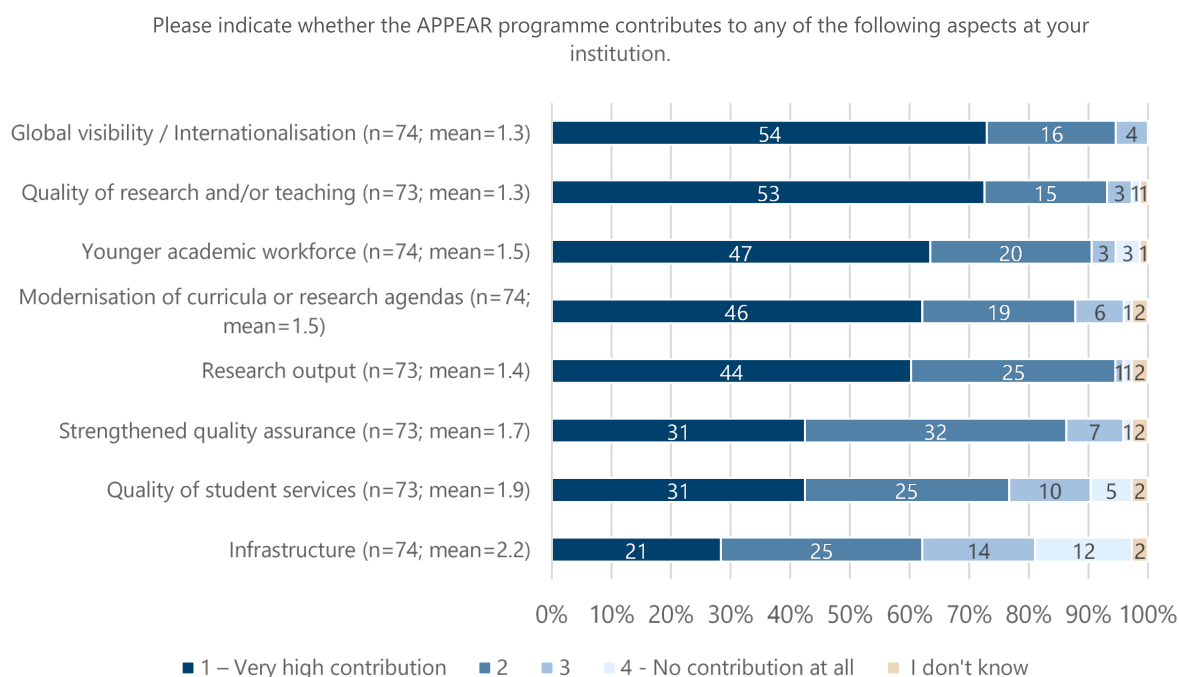
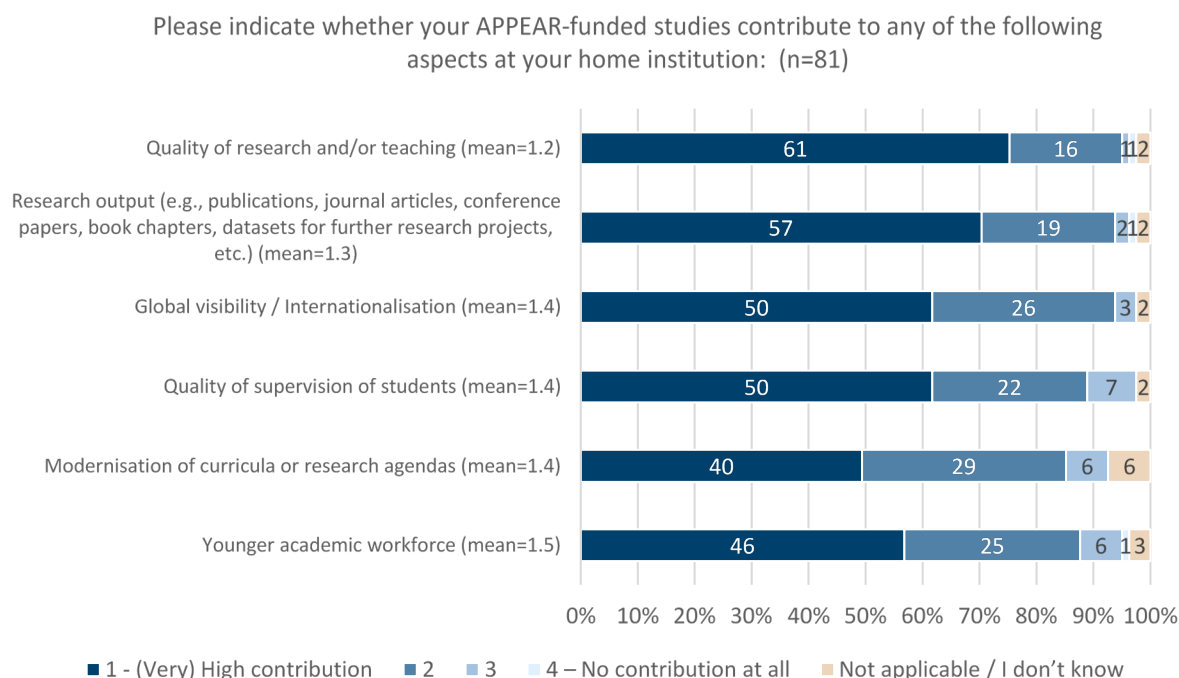


Figure 32: Scholarship holders and alumni on programme contributions to aspects of capacity building and other institutional needs (Component 2 survey)

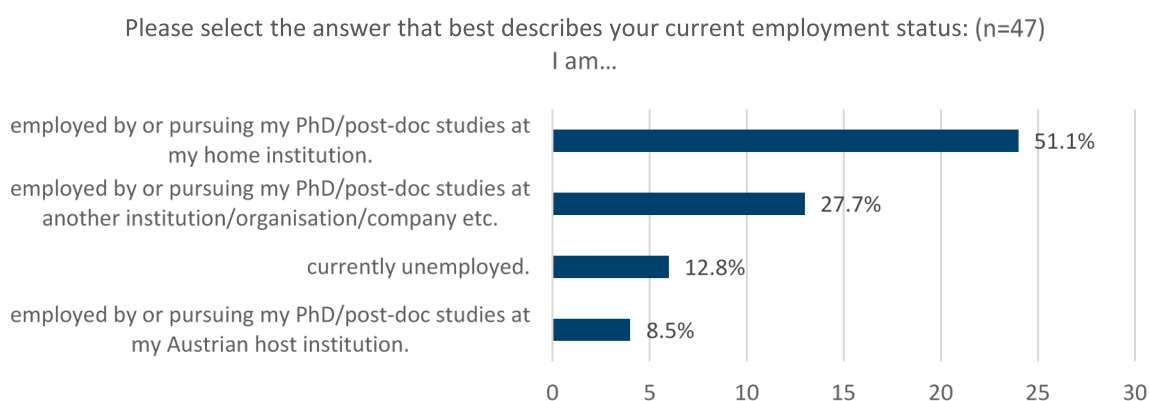


Management capacities have been developed in **project management**, **financial administration**, and **institutional planning**. Encouraging that projects are coordinated by young, and in particular female staff, APPEAR has enabled them to acquire advanced project management and implementation competencies. At institutional level, some projects have provided training for finance departments on donor funding management practices, addressing challenges in handling international funding schemes,

strengthening institutional capacities relevant to institutional partnerships within APPEAR and beyond. As part of several projects, support was furthermore provided to developing strategic plans and quality assurance standards, thereby improving institutional processes (INT10, 35, 38, 39, 45, 37; FGD9, 13).

Through its scholarship component, APPEAR directly contributed to individual and institutional capacities by **qualifying personnel**. Not only have scholarship holders gained advanced knowledge and skills in their areas of specialisation, they have also developed transversal skills like systems thinking, trans-disciplinary action research, and critical thinking. By applying these skills after to their home countries, they directly contribute to improved teaching, research, and management in their institutions. Figure 33 shows that more than half of the survey participants from the scholarship component with completed scholarship status are returning to their home institutions, suggesting that the programme contributes effectively to institutional capacity building through this component. Moreover, through their international exposure and mentorship by Austrian university professors, scholarship holders have built international academic networks, which enables them to transfer knowledge between their home and host institutions (as “knowledge ambassadors”), and to contribute to further university collaborations (INT20, 28, 29, 31; FGD2, 9).

Figure 33: Scholarship alumni's employment status (Component 2 survey)



Dialogue and visibility outcomes produced by APPEAR projects include the establishment or strengthening of long-term partnerships which ensure **visibility** towards Austrian institutions and beyond, increase **institutional reputation**, and formalise **international academic dialogue**. Further outcomes reported are **broken down barriers between academia and (rural) communities** resulting from participatory research approaches such as citizen science which, in turn, have resulted in raised public awareness on development-related issues, such as natural resource governance (DOC32, 40; INT2, 9, 17, 23, 40; FGD11, 16, 17).

OC2 – Research and higher education in the participating institutions are informed by international cooperation, by dialogue with stakeholders and are more gender-equal, diverse and inclusive.

Based on the indicator defined for OC2, i.e., “The extent of local, regional and international networking among participating institutions on SDG-related topics”, it can be stated that OC2 has also been achieved given that APPEAR projects imply – pursuant to the programme requirements – (the establishment of) a network consisting of at least one Austrian institution and one institution in a partner country. They also work on SDG-related topics per APPEAR requirement. However, four out of the 31 funded academic partnership projects include institutional partners from third countries within the partner countries’ respective regions, including the non-priority countries Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, and

South Africa. Three projects have been implemented by consortia involving several HE or research institutions within the same partner country. Both approaches have led to the creation and strengthening of national, regional, and international networks on SDG-related topics. With nearly half of the projects furthermore involving communities and other non-academic stakeholders from their project environment, networks have also been developed at the local level, which fosters the dialogue among various stakeholders on issues relevant to SDG achievement (DOC32).

As previously reported, most programme participants have already engaged in collaborative work with their project partners or study colleagues from abroad beyond their APPEAR-funded commitment, or – if their APPEAR-funded project is still ongoing – are highly confident that they will do so in the future (see chapter 5.1.7, Figure 15). This finding corroborates the programme’s **effectiveness in terms of cooperation-informed research and HE**.

While the programme management’s indicator for measuring OC2 achievement does not specifically address the OC2 aspects ‘gender equality’, ‘diversity’, and ‘inclusiveness’, the evaluation team found evidence that these aspects are also dealt with effectively. While evidence for diversity- and inclusiveness-related effectiveness was identified at the output level only,²⁶ **strong evidence for female empowerment** was also found at the level of outcomes, which contributes to the programme’s objective of improving gender equality in research and HE. Through both of its components, the APPEAR programme has directly supported female students and staff in advancing their academic careers. For instance, one scholarship recipient responding to the online survey highlighted being the first woman to pursue a PhD in her college through APPEAR funding, inspiring others to follow suit and leading to her becoming the first female vice president for five consecutive years at her university. Furthermore, one project team member noted an increase in female capacity in a ‘hard science’ Master’s programme with four out of 13 students being female, which was described as unattainable without the APPEAR-funded project (free-text survey response). Others reported that APPEAR’s programme management effectively encouraged project teams to revise their distribution of roles among assigned team members, allowing young female members to gain project management expertise. Women who have benefited from this encouragement shared with the evaluation team that it has significantly increased not only their self-confidence, but also their standing within their respective HEI (INT8, 10, 21, 37, 33, 18, 19, 38; FGD10, 11, 13-15).

However, the evaluation team also identified **limitations of APPEAR’s influence on gender equality** in research and HE, misinterpretations of APPEAR’s Gender Strategy as well as attitudes among project team members that reflect a certain level of gender blindness among programme participants. While APPEAR can ensure gender-balanced team compositions – at least on paper –, the evaluation found anecdotal evidence of artificial manoeuvres done by project teams only to comply with formal requirements with few practical consequences during project implementation. For example, for an institution with predominantly male staff, it was reported that a female staff member, already entrusted with

²⁶ For example, the project “Strengthening Capacity of Higher Engineering Education for Sustainable Buildings” (HEESeB) developed two courses “related to gender, equity and diversity sensitive science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)” and conducted “[training of trainers] on gender, equity and diversity sensitive STEM teaching”, and the project “Inter- and transdisciplinary approach to revitalizing former small industrial cities in Armenia to enhance their transformative potential towards sustainability” (ReCITY) adopted an “inter-sectional approach, integrating age, gender and other demographic factors into all phases of the project” (DOC32). Furthermore, the project “Strengthening of Higher Education, Research and Science Communication in Agroecology in the Rwenzori Region in Western Uganda-Phase II” (AER-Phase II) conducted a “diversity inclusion workshop aimed at increasing the participation of differently abled person [sic] in higher education” (DOC32).

other responsibilities and moreover not being the best technical fit for the project, had been included in an APPEAR project team just to meet (perceived) programme expectations about gender-balanced team composition. This represents an example of measures that stem from misunderstandings around APPEAR's gender-specific provisions and fail to address gender inequalities in an effective manner. Team members from another project reported that, while female staff were strongly involved in leadership roles within the project, structural barriers within their institutions limited their ability to act, as project-relevant decisions frequently had to go through higher institutional, mostly male dominated, management levels towards which women continue to have a weaker bargaining position. Gender blindness was observed in several project team members who claimed that gender inequalities were no issue at their institution. It was argued as evidence that women made up the majority of team members or of the participants of specific activities. In fact, however, in the case of Armenia, interviews conducted as part of the case studies revealed that HE and research are traditionally strong in terms of female representation, with some disciplines even more notably than others, as a legacy of socialist policies combined with low salaries in the HE and research sector which men, socially expected to provide for their families, oftentimes "cannot afford" (INT19, 21, 33; FGD9, 14).

These findings show how different the institutional and cultural contexts of APPEAR projects is in terms of gender equality, underscoring the relevance of "[a] gender-specific analysis of the context in which the research and/or the project takes place [...] to understand social structures and institutions of the project and research environment" (DOC9) as foreseen by the APPEAR application guidelines and as advocated for by OECD DAC's Guidance for Development Partners on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls.²⁷ However, as already pointed out in the project evaluation conducted in 2025, such analyses are largely missing. Overall, the findings show that the intended **effects of APPEAR's Gender Strategy have not yet fully unfolded**.

OC3 – Research and higher education for development is more visible and acknowledged among Austrian higher education institutions.

For the findings on OC3 achievement, please refer to the following chapter (5.2.5).

The following factors have been identified as facilitating the achievement of outcomes OC1-OC3:

- **Comprehensive support provided by APPEAR funding and programme management:** The sustained implementation of the APPEAR programme over time has consolidated programme management expertise and built trust among applicants (DOC39). This continuity has enabled cumulative results, especially through APPEAR-funded follow-up projects, ranging from preparatory funding to advanced partnerships such as the SOAA project in Armenia. This programmatic approach has allowed for the development of APPEAR-specific expertise within partnering institutions, as seen in the Armenian HEI with dedicated advisory on APPEAR applications. Timely disbursement of funds, clear guidelines, and continued assistance from the APPEAR Office are consistently cited as crucial for smooth project implementation, along with the programme's flexibility and adaptability. Effective communication, public relations, and

²⁷ "For maximum human rights and sustainable development impact, it is important to recognise that achieving meaningful and transformative results for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls requires addressing root causes, including unequal power dynamics, harmful social norms and systemic barriers." (OECD 2022. Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: DAC Guidance for Development Partners, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/0bddfa8f-en>.)

networking events organised by the APPEAR Office have further contributed to project success and the overall achievement of programme goals.

- **Robust collaboration and partnership dynamics:** Effective collaboration, characterised by trust-based relationships, is a cornerstone for achieving positive outcomes in APPEAR projects. **Preparatory funding** plays a crucial role in fostering this, allowing partners to build trust, understand each other's working styles, and design projects jointly prior to full implementation. This initial phase helps partners to assess the viability of their partnerships in the longer term and ensures that project proposals are demand-driven and grounded in local needs. Optimal team composition, bringing together diverse expertise and experience levels, further enhances collaboration and knowledge transfer. Clear and constant communication, primarily among partners but also with the APPEAR Office, is consistently highlighted as a facilitating factor, reducing misunderstandings and aligning expectations. The concept of culturally open-minded knowledge and the ethos of **equal partnership**, ensuring respect for "different epistemological and cultural systems" (DOC9), as well as mutual benefits and shared responsibility, are further key features of APPEAR III, allowing cooperation on a level playing field and empowering partner institutions.
- **Supportive human element and mobility:** The APPEAR programme's human element is vital for its target achievement, with supportive services from the APPEAR Office being a significant facilitating factor. This includes the Office's adept and personalised management of unexpected challenges, flexible project amendments, and project visits of the programme managing team to witness project implementation on site as part of the APPEAR Office's monitoring activities. Funded mobilities for project team members and scholarship holders allow for personal encounters that **strengthen commitment, mutual trust, and enhanced cultural understanding**. These personal connections are particularly important in the complex and often conflict-ridden contexts where APPEAR projects are implemented and help to counterbalance difficulties arising from cultural and institutional differences.
- **Intrinsic motivation and contextual understanding:** The intrinsic interest of partners in the project topic and the broader development context is a facilitating factor, driving their commitment and willingness to engage deeply. For certain outcomes, such as OC3, previous work experience in development contexts or corresponding support from the APPEAR Office helps in managing expectations towards HE and research cooperation in developing contexts, and understanding the practical implications of research. This contextual understanding, fostered especially by APPEAR-funded mobilities, has been a proven driver of commitment among Austrian partners, and it ensures that projects are relevant and applicable to the real-world problems in partner countries.

In addition to the weaknesses and challenges described in previous chapters (in particular chapters 5.2.1 and 5.2.3), the following factors have been identified as hindering the achievement of outcomes:

- **Limited recognition for APPEAR projects in Austrian academia:** Despite the International Partnerships Austria's strategy to strengthen capacities and incentives for development-related research, APPEAR projects are not as highly regarded as other funding sources within Austrian HEIs. Some Austrian researchers report that these projects do not contribute to their performance records to the same extent as other third-party research funding due to applicable

regulations at their HEI,²⁸ which can disincentivise broader participation and limit the pool of engaged researchers to those who already built up seniority and face less pressure to secure as much external funding as possible, or to those with strong enough intrinsic motivation. Combined with the reportedly high workload for Austrian partners which is not reflected in budget distributions, the evaluation findings suggest that the full integration and recognition of development research within the academic landscape in Austria is constrained, potentially limiting the long-term impact and sustainability of APPEAR initiatives.

- **Lack of clarity and consistency in Gender Strategy implementation:** Despite a 12-page Gender Strategy, its complexity and fuzziness of terminology hinder effective implementation and outcome achievement. The strategy's purpose is to "provide the foundation for a common understanding of gender equality" (DOC43). Yet, key concepts are used without clear definitions or explanations of their practical implications for projects, or are used in a manner that is inconsistent with international understanding. With this lack of clarity extending to application documents, the lack of clear guidance has made it difficult for project teams to understand and address gender issues beyond simple numerical parity aligning more with a 'women in development' approach, than the intended 'gender and development' approach²⁹ that tackles structural causes of inequality (DOC43). As reported by staff from the APPEAR Office, project activities addressing gender equality more ambitiously are frequently put on hold or entirely sacrificed under time pressure to be able to complete other project activities that the respective project team considers more relevant for the achievement of its main objectives. This experience highlights once more how the gender-strategic ambitions (on the part of APPEAR and the project teams themselves) and their actual implementation diverge.
- **Geopolitical instability and its gendered impact on human capital:** Geopolitical events previously described in this report have significantly hampered the overall achievement of APPEAR's programme objectives. While most projects in conflict-affected environments were either not immediately concerned or were able to be continued following project adaptations, war and violent conflicts in partner countries counteract programme objectives by destroying HE and research infrastructure, causing brain drain, disrupting research activities, and leading to administrative challenges including delayed funding disbursement. Programme participants from one of the Armenian projects furthermore pointed out to the gendered impact of war, with men of a certain age having either left the country, died in war, being mentally too distracted for an academic career, or focusing on immediate survival and family income, making it difficult to engage young men in academic projects (FGD9).
- **Disparities in institutional capacity:** Projects face challenges due to varying institutional regulations and capacities, particularly concerning administrative and financial management. This is reflected, among other things, in project delays caused by internal auditing, which is reported to be even more complex and time-consuming than the external audit required by APPEAR. Not only does this **counteract the programme's reported flexibility** to a certain extent, it also leads to a situation where capacities tend to be developed further where they are already better in comparison to less resourced institutions. This can lead to an **increase of the**

²⁸ Contrary to the assumptions of individual interviewees, an enquiry from the evaluation team to the Austrian Research Ministry revealed that APPEAR-funded research can be declared as third-party funded research towards the Ministry but that HEI themselves may refuse doing so.

²⁹ See European Commission (2015), *Evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Partner Countries*. <https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/toolkits/derec/evaluation-reports/de-rec/ec/Evaluation-cooperation-ec-gender-en.pdf> (last access: 20 may 2026).

capacity gap between institutions. In this vein, interviewees from Armenia have pointed out the fact that participating Armenian institutions are based in Yerevan only. Whereas these institutions have gained much experience with APPEAR already, HE and research institutions located outside of the capital city have been reported to lag behind in terms of capacity. Given their more pronounced capacity needs, they are, on the one hand, a relevant target group for APPEAR, but on the other hand, their scarce resources hinder them from preparing a competitive project proposal.³⁰

- **Tedious visa and residence permit procedures:** These procedures, whose difficulties are elaborated on in more detail in chapter 5.2.1 already, account for much frustration among programme participants as well as for delays in project implementation. Not only does this slow down research activities, capacity development, the growth of long-term relationships, and the achievement of further programme objectives, it also risks deterring desirable candidates from applying for an APPEAR (or other Austrian) project or scholarship, with implications for the excellency of programme-funded research outputs and Austria's standing in science cooperation, especially in countries where comparable funding programmes are being offered, e.g., by British, German, or Russian donors.

5.2.5 *What has been the programme's contribution to raising awareness and increasing the visibility of development-related issues, teaching, and research within the Austrian academic and scientific community?*

The programme has contributed to raising awareness and increasing the visibility of development-related issues, teaching, and research within the Austrian academic and scientific community by engaging over four dozen academic staff members from 14 different HEI across 30 APPEAR projects. While the programme is mainly popular among researchers with previous development-related research experience, in particular those with little prior experience report that APPEAR III has had a strong impact on their personal research agenda as well as on teaching content (F26).

While there is no exhaustive overview of scientific publications resulting from APPEAR funded activities, the progress reports at project and programme level indicate several peer-reviewed journal articles with Austrian researchers' contribution resulting from APPEAR projects, which adds to the visibility of development-related research in the Austrian academic and science community. While some interviewees from Austrian HEI reportedly made discouraging experiences with their project partner abroad – oftentimes due to unexpected administrative hurdles and larger than expected capacity disparities between the Austrian and partner institutions –, most interviewees and survey participants emphasised the huge benefit that they see in the APPEAR-funded partnerships. In their view, these partnerships are a crucial strategic advantage for Austrian HEI, offering them considerable international visibility and access to global networks. It furthermore equips them with the specialised knowledge needed to manage complex development projects and collaboratively create innovative solutions for real-world challenges. More specifically, survey respondents frequently named the following learnings:

³⁰ OECD (2025) elaborates on this phenomenon, explaining that “HEIs require strong internal capacity to engage in deep transnational collaboration, as it requires sustained institutional support and places extensive demands on governance, project and financial management, and different internal stakeholders. There are worries that transnational activities increase the workload for existing staff, meaning that policy needs to consider the additional demands” (DOC54).

- **Cultural and contextual adaptation:** Effective solutions to development challenges require an understanding of local cultures, infrastructure, and societal realities, to which project planning and methods have to be tailored, embracing decolonial approaches and local epistemologies. This also comprises social and ethical considerations including gender sensitivity and misogyny, inclusion of vulnerable groups, staff motivation, as well as integrity issues.
- **Project management challenges:** Project environments are differently shaped by the issues mentioned above, but also by different bureaucratic regulations, hierarchies, different levels of participation, and infrastructural limitations. Project management needs to be flexible and adaptive to be able to respond to these challenges.
- **Bi-directional capacity development:** Successful capacity building is a long-term strategy that requires equitable partnerships, mutual learning, and strong local ownership, emphasising communication on the same level where all partners contribute and learn.
- **Research and academic development:** Cultivating critical thinking and data analysis skills are crucial for the academic development of young researchers. While APPEAR projects have already contributed to the development of these skills and even though low-tech equipment has proven adequate for high-level research, programme participants observe that publishing research from southern partner institutions remain challenging, for example, due to prejudices held by reviewers against their ability to conduct high quality research.

Asked about the specific impact of their APPEAR participation on their research, Austria-based HEI staff named enhanced research skills and competencies (e.g., transdisciplinary research, or Citizen Science), expansion of research networks and collaboration, development of new research areas and directions, including an increased awareness of social and gender dimensions, academic visibility and career advancement, but also challenges and difficulties related to significantly increased working time and stress. Figure 34 shows that survey participants from Austrian home institutions have experienced their programme participation as rather or even highly impactful in terms of influencing their own research agenda, research interest, awareness raising, as well as in terms of providing impetus for increased development-related teaching content, which also applies to participants with little previous exposure to or interest in development-related research (see Figure 35-Figure 37). These findings also correspond with the programme management's observation that development-related research within the Austrian academic and scientific community has grown significantly over the past decades as has the programme's visibility in recent years within this community.

Figure 34: Rating of APPEAR's impact on development-related research at Austrian HEI (Component 1 survey)

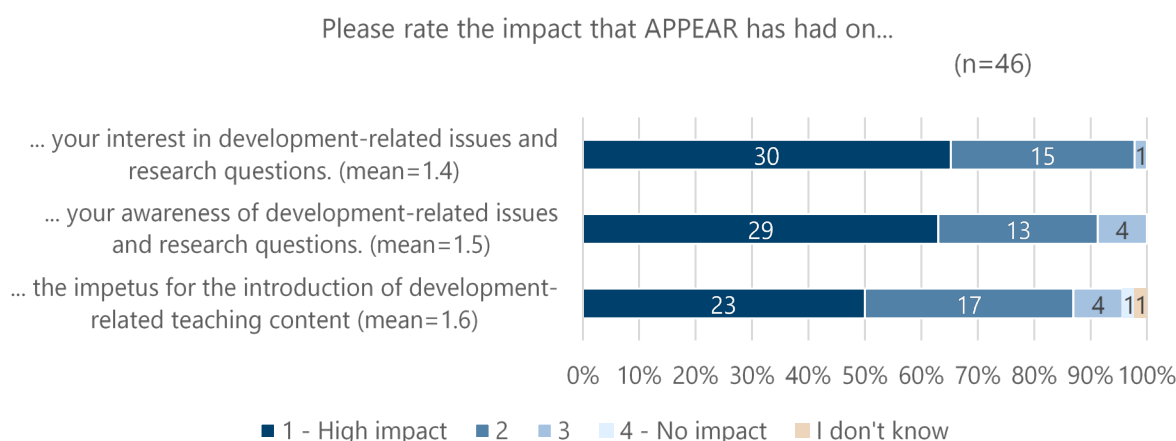


Figure 35: Impact on those with little previous awareness of development-related issues and research questions (Component 1 survey)

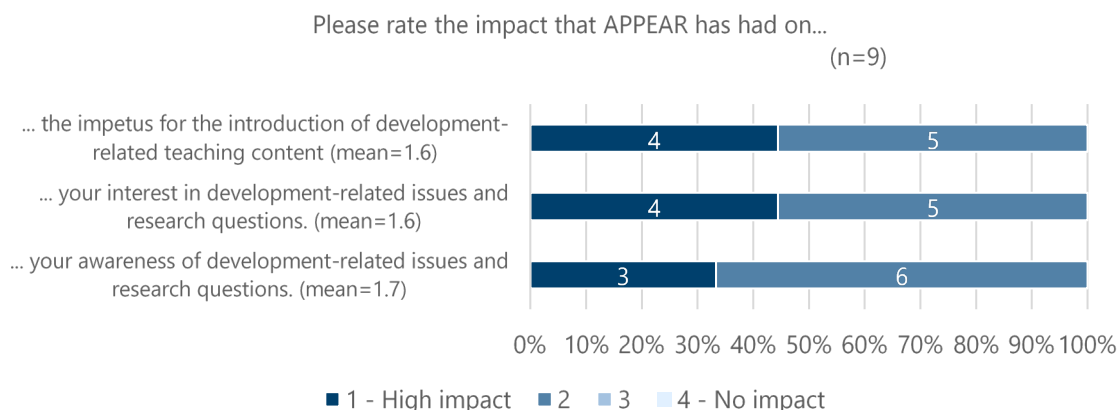


Figure 36: Impact on those with little previous interest in development-related issues and research questions (Component 1 survey)

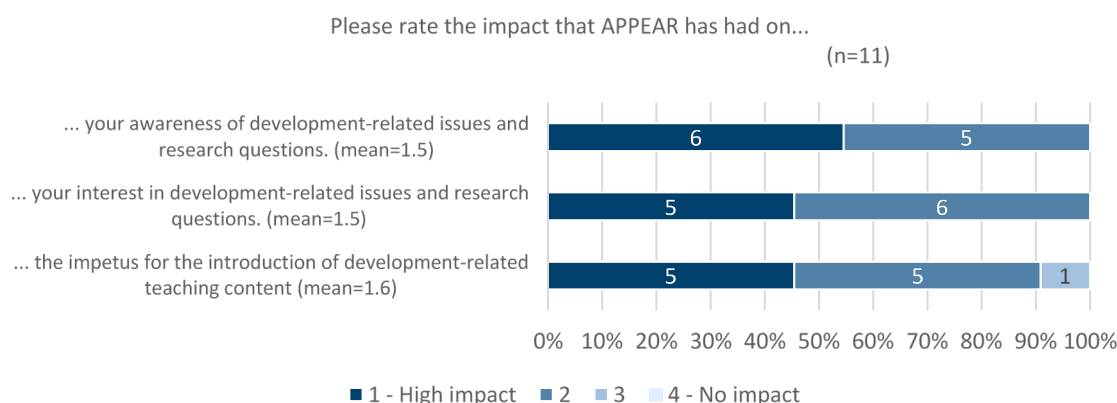
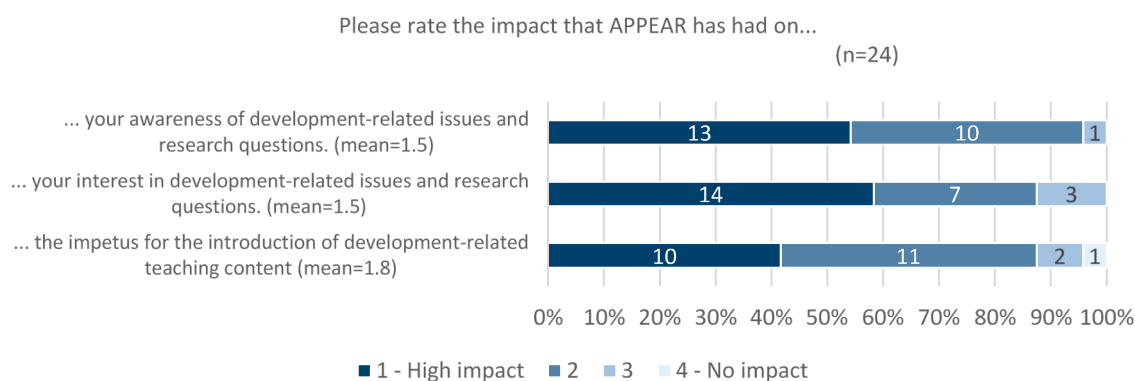


Figure 37: Impact on those from institutions with little development-related teaching content (Component 1 survey)



5.2.6 How effectively does component 2 (embedded PhD and Master's scholarships) support component 1 (Academic Partnerships) – and vice versa?

With embedded scholarship holders usually playing the central role of their respective (Advanced) Academic Partnership project and further team members supporting the scholarship holders with both administrative and research tasks, the two APPEAR components are highly effective in supporting each other (F27).

Figure 38: Project staff on the usefulness of embedded scholarships (Component 1 survey)

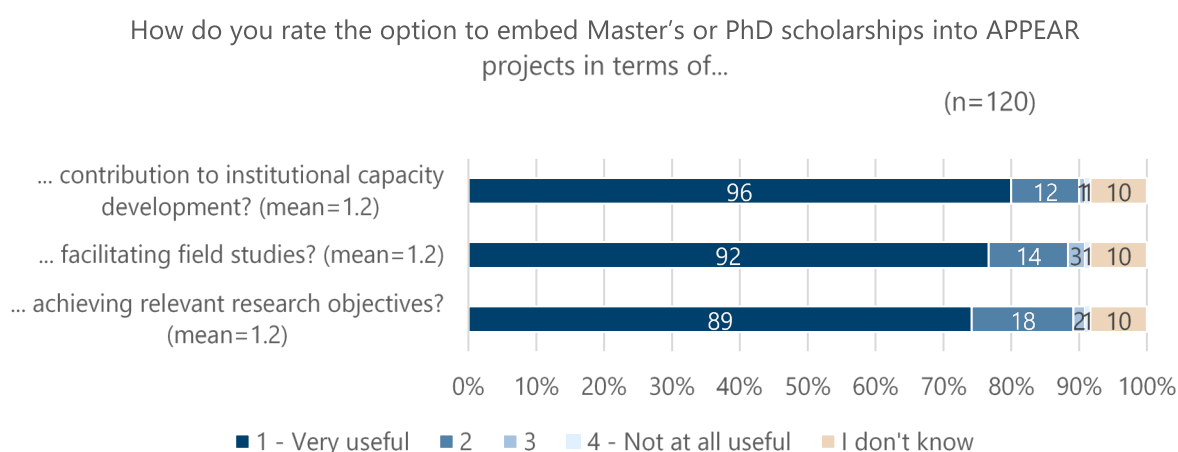
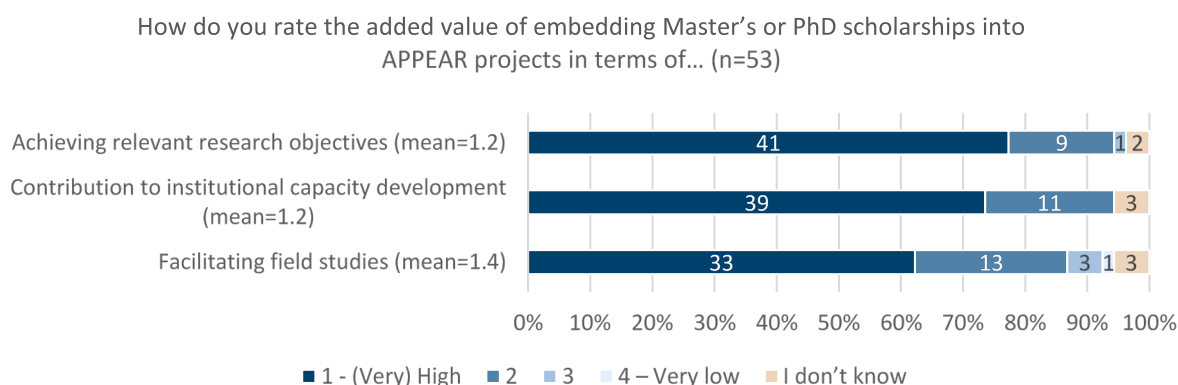


Figure 39: Scholarship holders and alumni on the added value of embedded scholarships for research and institutional capacity development (Component 2 survey)



Interviewees and survey participants alike consistently describe embedded scholarship holders as highly motivated and qualified individuals who are invaluable members of the project team. As such, they facilitate scientific and cultural exchange between the partnering institutions and act as multipliers for partner institutions by influencing and training their staff. Furthermore, they often serve as a consistent linkage not only between the partnering institutions but also between the project team and further stakeholders involved in the projects (e.g., local communities), thereby building trust required for transformative approaches. Benefits highlighted by interviewed programme stakeholders can be summarised as follows:

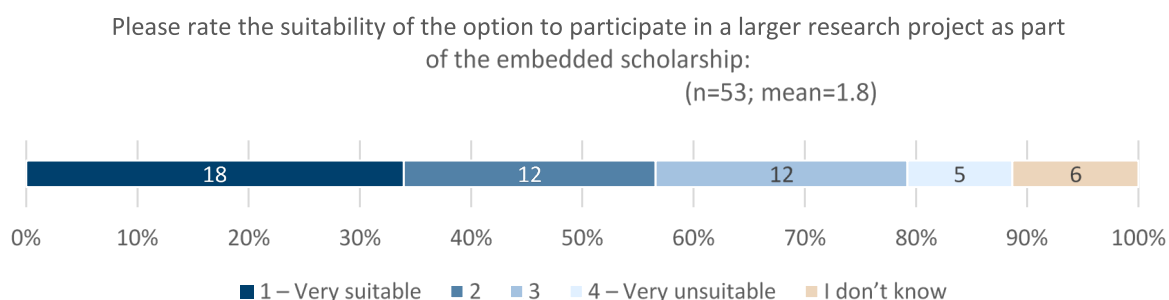
- **Capacity building and skill development:** Embedded scholarships enhance local capacity by supporting early-career researchers, strengthening their academic skills, improving teaching

quality, and fostering future research leadership. Furthermore, the developed skills directly contribute to project activities, i.e., to application-oriented research.

- **Knowledge transfer and exchange:** Scholarship holders facilitate knowledge transfer, bringing newly acquired skills and international experience back to their home institutions. They also promote cultural exchange and technology transfer.
- **Strengthening networking:** These scholarships foster long-term collaboration between partner institutions, strengthen inter-institutional cooperation, and build durable bridges for continuous knowledge exchange beyond the project duration. They also expand the APPEAR network and impact through alumni interactions.
- **Research quality and productivity:** Embedded scholarship holders contribute to achieving specific project objectives, carry out core research, and support field studies. They apply newly acquired advanced methods, raising the rigor and relevance of research outputs, and increase academic productivity and publication rates.
- **Addressing disparities and promoting inclusivity:** The scholarships help address structural disparities in access to doctoral training and international research networks, and can support gender and inclusion objectives by providing opportunities to underrepresented groups.

While most scholarship holders rate the added value of the embedded scholarship members similarly high as regular project team members with regard to capacity development, the achievement of relevant research objectives, and the facilitation of field studies (see Figure 38 and Figure 39), about one third is somewhat sceptical about the overall suitability of the option to participate in a larger research project as part of the embedded scholarship (see Figure 40). A potential explanation for this finding is that scholarship holders' project progress largely depends on coordination and consultation processes implying not only the respective supervisor, but the entire project consortium (FGD3).

Figure 40: Scholarship holders and alumni on embedded scholarships (Component 2 survey)



5.2.7 How effectively does the APPEAR Office support and strengthen project implementation in Armenia – for example, through technical guidance, coordination, administrative support?

Overall, Armenian partners are highly appreciative of the technical guidance, coordination and administrative support provided by the APPEAR Office which has effectively supported and strengthened their project implementation (F28).

This positive rating has been expressed both in survey responses as well as throughout the in-person interviews and FGD conducted in Armenia as part of this programme evaluation. According to programme management, support needs on behalf of Armenian HE and research institutions were generally no different from those in other APPEAR target countries. Although they cannot be claimed to be

statistically significant, survey responses even suggest that the experience of Armenian project teams with APPEAR Office support was even smoother than elsewhere – a finding resulting from data collected in the surveys, interviews and FGD. Results from Armenian scholarship holders (programme component 2) correspond in this respect with those from project team members (programme component 1).

In fact, Armenian HEI have built strong expertise in managing APPEAR applications as well as the resulting projects, which particularly applies to Yerevan State University which is the Armenian HEI where most Armenian APPEAR projects were implemented and which is the largest and most central higher education institution in the country, enrolling approximately 17%³¹ of Armenia's higher education students. Here, institutional arrangements are in place to ensure that APPEAR candidates are properly supported by internal staff in preparing APPEAR applications based on programme experience from previous years. The APPEAR Office complemented these internal institutional efforts, e.g., by holding the Armenian-Austrian University Cooperation Meeting which promoted networking and peer-to-peer support across Armenian APPEAR projects.³²

5.3 Efficiency

5.3.1 *To what extent has increased programme complexity constrained operational efficiency, and where are the greatest potentials for simplification?*

The introduction of the Extended Impact Partnership instrument, programme participants' expanded needs and requirements, as well as additional tasks of the APPEAR Office have increased the programme's complexity compared to its previous phases (F29). Combined with external factors placing a strain on the APPEAR Office's capacity to fully meet its advisory role and managerial responsibilities, these changes have constrained to some extent the programme's operational efficiency (F30). The greatest potential for simplification has been identified in streamlining internal processes, enhancing support for external challenges, and refining the programme design.

Numerous recommendations from the programme evaluation in 2019 have been adopted in APPEAR's third phase of implementation. While this has benefited the programme's relevance and effectiveness, these updates resulted in a higher workload for the APPEAR Office, as more managerial tasks need to be coordinated and carried out. This includes the integration of the EIP into the APPEAR funding portfolio with the corresponding tasks of designing and communicating this new instrument, the addition of the LNOB principle, increased networking among the APPEAR community and enhanced public relations, improved monitoring including the new emphasis on project ToCs, the enhanced takeover of project coordination by partners in the target countries, as well as the strengthening of synergies with ADA activities in the partner countries. Furthermore, the introduction of mandatory auditing for Austrian HEI, a requirement previously only applicable to institutions in partner countries and not envisioned in OeAD's technical offer for APPEAR III, has added to this burden. Project stakeholders report that this new auditing requirement is frequently not cost-effective or even necessary, given the reliable and detailed controlling systems already in place at these HEIs (DOC1; INT15, 36). This view is also reflected in programme participants' overall rating of the appropriateness of the administrative

³¹ Statistical Yearbook of Armenia 2025. <https://armstat.am/file/doc/99563653.pdf> (last access: 2 Mai 2026).

³² See OeAD's documentation of the event here: <https://oead.at/de/kooperationen/internationale-hochschulkoperationen/austrian-partnership-programme-in-higher-education-research-for-development-appear/news/article/2025/10/armenian-austrian-university-cooperation-meeting> (last access: 25 March 2026).

workload, with respondents from Austrian institutions providing a less positive rating (see Figure 41-Figure 43).

Figure 41: Project staff rating the administrative workload (Component 1 survey)

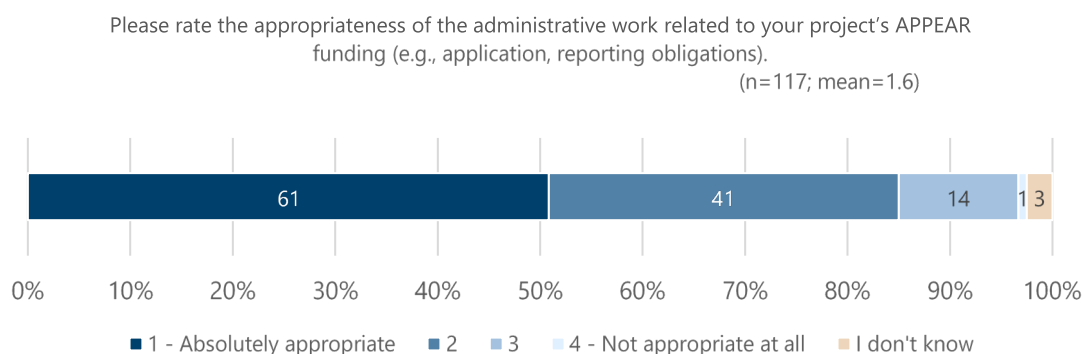


Figure 42: Austrian respondents rating the administrative workload (Component 1 survey)

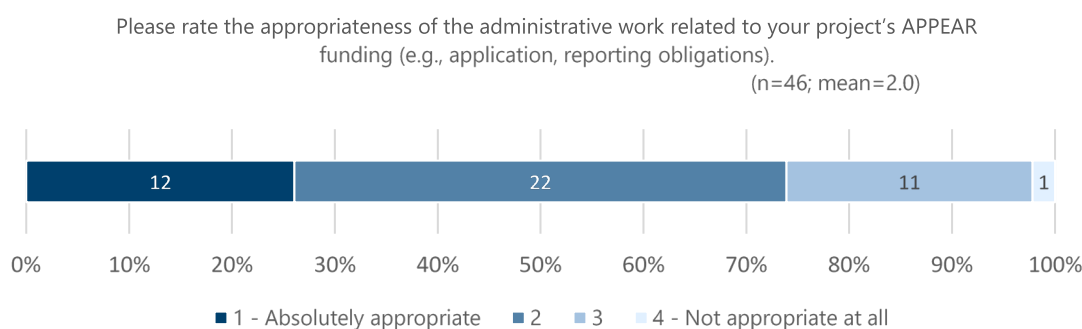
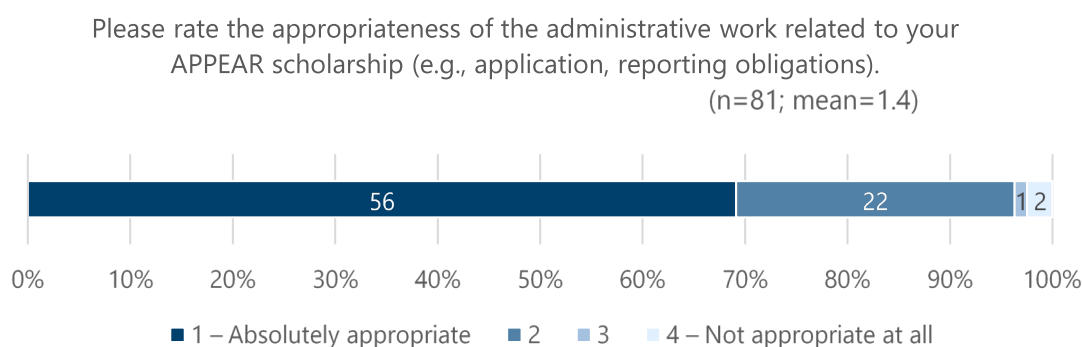


Figure 43: Scholarship holders rating the administrative workload (Component 2 survey)



Interviews conducted with stakeholders from programme management and advisory bodies suggest that changes described above contribute to inefficiencies but are not their main cause. Rather external factors appear to affect operation at both the project and programme levels significantly. The need for APPEAR Office support rises due to more frequent conflicts and crises in partner countries, as well as increased difficulties for partner country nationals in obtaining Austrian visa and residence permits with their respective knock-on effects elaborated on further in previous chapters. With APPEAR III's enhanced attention to gender equality including the programme's improved support to scholarship holders with children, related challenges have significantly added to the demands placed on the APPEAR Office. While the APPEAR Office experiences increased complexity, representatives of the

Advisory and Selection Boards interviewed for this programme evaluation have not reported feeling this increased complexity in their roles. The issue for Selection Board members is not so much the increased complexity, but rather the consistently high number of project applications they need to review.

In these circumstances, programme management – described by several interviewees (from OeAD and beyond) as operating at its limits already – faces a major challenge to properly allocate time and staff resources to address all formal tasks, while also being able to respond flexibly to unforeseen needs for support of programme participants. While resulting quality losses as such have not been reported by programme stakeholders, the evaluation team ascertains that some of the programme features have not been implemented to their full extent, particularly those related to programme monitoring and synergies with ADA activities (see chapter 0). These limitations are likely due to operational inefficiencies, as evidenced by high capacity utilisation in other areas of responsibility.

The evaluation team sees most remedy potential in simplifying reporting requirements, increased proactive guidance on navigating external challenges, as well as in adjusting programme conditions to better reflect programme participants' needs to which programme management currently responds to on a case-by-case basis (for further details, see chapter 0 on recommendations).

6. Conclusions

Overall, the evaluation shows that APPEAR III is a highly effective instrument of HE and research cooperation with great relevance to international development and Austria's international standing. Improving certain programme features and management practices could boost its relevance and effectiveness even further.

Relevance

C1 Given that the objectives and the approach of APPEAR III is greatly aligned with Austrian priorities, national priorities in APPEAR's partner countries, and also well-integrated into broader development agendas at the European and international levels, the evaluation team concludes that the programme is highly relevant for International Partnerships Austria (see F1-3, 6, 7, 8, 14-16).

C2 Whether political and geopolitical challenges affecting APPEAR's partner countries constrain programme relevance largely depends on the extent to which the integrity of basic HE and research infrastructure remains intact, and on the extent to which the political environment allows for cooperation between Austrian institutions and those in partner countries. However, rather than losing relevance, the programme loses ground in terms of scope for action or feasibility in these difficult environments (i.e., Burkina Faso, Gaza, Georgia) (see F12).

C3 The fact that great esteem of the APPEAR programme has been expressed by all interviewees from ADA and the BMEIA, and that this high regard is furthermore reflected in the share of ADA's HE budget allocated to APPEAR, indicate that the programme's relevance is also strongly perceived internally, which is vital for its smooth implementation (see F4).

C4 The fact that APPEAR funding is used not only to establish academic partnerships but also to generate scientific findings on existent and emerging development challenges as well as to develop viable solutions for them, increases the programme's strategic relevance for International Partnerships

Austria: Results from APPEAR projects, including newly established networks, can be used to improve strategies and specific activities of International Partnerships Austria, which makes APPEAR an instrument that goes beyond mere HEI cooperation (see F5).

C5 Apart from being a programme that benefits International Partnerships Austria by generating strategically relevant development findings, APPEAR also proves relevant to Austrian foreign policy by promoting peaceful international relations and intercultural competence. With APPEAR reaching a large number of final beneficiaries including scholarship alumni that end up in high-ranking government positions in the programme's partner countries, this lever is all the more significant (see F13). The outlook of scholarship alumni potentially shaping Austria's international relations with APPEAR's partner countries furthermore underscores the relevance of the scholarship component.

C6 While providing normative orientation to some extent, the practical relevance of APPEAR III's 'basic principles' and 'added values' is compromised by lacking conciseness of some of their definitions. Overly complex and, in some cases, misleading explanations hinder a correct understanding of intended messages, put the acceptance of normative programme features at stake, and risk turning them into criteria without practical meaning (see F9-10).

C7 The programme's unique design further contributes to its relevance as it fills a gap in the Austrian funding landscape. It is a proven instrument to establish institutional partnerships at a low threshold, allowing them to mature along the tiered programme structure (see F22).

Effectiveness

C8 Based on rich evidence, the evaluation team concludes that APPEAR III is well designed to fully achieve most of its objectives. Full achievement of all programme objectives, including cross-cutting themes to be complied with, would require targeted measures to embed the EIP instrument, the LNOB principle, APPEAR's Gender Strategy, as well as to increase the programme's attractiveness for Austrian HE and research institutions (see F17-19, 22-24, 26-28).

C9 Potentials from synergies with other International Partnerships Austria activities remain under-exploited, as has been discussed in previous APPEAR evaluations. However, linking APPEAR projects stronger with existing International Partnerships Austria structures and activities promises to further the programme's effectiveness in the future (see F20).

C10 The programme's weak monitoring system, which lacks indicators for target achievement and therefore cannot systematically capture the progress towards programme objectives, represents a major hindrance to the reliable assessment of APPEAR's effectiveness and needs to be revised if more systematic assessments are required in the future (see F25).

C11 Despite a consistently high number of submitted applications, this metric alone may not adequately reflect APPEAR III's attractiveness, especially when aiming to attract top talent from Austrian and partner country institutions. This is because programme participants are aware of alternative funding opportunities that reportedly offer more generous mobility allowances and involve less tedious entry and residence permit processes than those required for Austria (see F18, 19, 24).

Operational efficiency

C12 Current resources and operations do not appear to match the needs stemming from newly introduced programme features paired with unforeseeable external factors requiring flexible management responses. In this light, adjustments are necessary to fully exploit the potentials of these programme updates (see F29-30).

7. Recommendations

To facilitate their uptake, the following recommendations are organised according to their strategic and operational focus:

Strategic recommendations

SR1 Given the relevance of the APPEAR programme, the strong backing from ADA and BMEIA staff, as well as to ensure continuity in the maturing process of new academic partnerships, supports **ADA's** consideration of a follow-up phase for the programme. Furthermore, available evidence suggests that a seamless transition would be beneficial to implement a follow-up phase with consideration of the following recommendations to leverage the programme's established value and support (see **C1, 3-5, 7**).

SR2 While continuous risk monitoring may determine that specific project activities or partnerships cannot be continued any longer due to severe risks, the evidence indicates that **BMEIA** and **ADA** maintaining engagement in high-risk countries within the APPEAR programme's eligible target countries may offer significant advantages. This approach is supported by the programme's unique contribution to sustaining and developing HE and research institutions even in challenging environments where funding is often scarce, as well as to promote peaceful relations among different actors both in the target country itself and with Austrian institutions (see **C2, 5**).

SR3 To fully exploit the programme's potential for Austria's development cooperation beyond HE and research cooperation, the evidence suggests that systematic processing and dissemination of project results could be highly beneficial. This would involve the **APPEAR Office** making newly established networks and results from Master's and PhD projects (e.g., publications) accessible to relevant teams and departments at **ADA**, who could then use these results for revisions or the development of strategies and specific activities for Austrian development cooperation (see **C4, 5**).

SR4 The evidence presented in this report suggests that a set up in which the EIP instrument is implemented separate from APPEAR may leverage its potential. Should **ADA** prefer to keep the EIP instrument as part of APPEAR, findings from this evaluation suggest that the following four measures – involving actions from **ADA** and the **APPEAR Office** – may increase the EIP instrument's practical relevance and strengthen overall programme coherence: Firstly, define programme outcomes to be achieved by means of the EIP in the programme's ToC to facilitate a common understanding of its purpose and better be able to communicate accordingly. Secondly, allow non-academic partner institutions (e.g., NGOs, think tanks, development cooperation organisations, ministries, or local public authorities) to coordinate EIP projects. Thirdly, launch calls for applications for EIP projects separately from the other funding instruments and share these calls broadly with target groups addressed by the EIP (i.e., institutions involved in preceding academic partnership projects, HEI management, those specified in parathesis above, and others as deemed relevant). Fourthly, allow running academic

partnership projects to apply for unused EIP funds due to a lack of successful EIP applications and if it makes sense for these projects to integrate elements of the EIP during the course of their implementation (see C8).

SR5 In order to alleviate programme participants' dependence on personal savings during their studies or short stays in Austria, the evaluation findings suggest that exploring options for adjusting mobility allowances and stipend rates may be necessary if mobility shall be enabled independently from participants' economic status. This would imply coordinated action between **ADA** and the **APPEAR Office**, and may include the exploration of additional in-kind payments (e.g., for public transportation while in Austria) or increased stipend rates despite resulting taxation. Not only can an increased financial support be expected to contribute to a smoother project implementation and academic development of scholarship holders; lifting the dependence on personal savings would also strengthen APPEAR's alignment with the LNOB principle (see C11).

SR6 Should an increase in allowances or in-kind payments not be feasible (or additionally), the **APPEAR Office** may consider emphasising in their communication with scholarship holders that it is possible to take up a part-time job below the Austrian marginal earnings threshold. Encouraging them and their supervisors to explore such possibilities, either at their host university or another research institution within a thematic field that is related to their studies, might allow to bridge financial gaps but also create more scope for international work experience and institutional transfer compared to the current situation where scholarship holders frequently continue working remotely as lecturers at their home institution (see C11).

SR7 Taking into account that, in some contexts, Master's scholarships are better suited to reach female applicants, the evaluation's evidence supports that **ADA** keeps this sub-component of the APPEAR programme and furthermore allows for non-embedded Master's studies for female students from partner countries with female underrepresentation (see C8).

SR8 To address the multifaceted complexities and risks resulting from programme participation as a parent, the evidence suggests considering a combination of the following measures: Firstly, **ADA** (advised by the **APPEAR Office**) could define the scope of the support that can be provided to parents, including hardship provisions, and draw up clear criteria for their applicability. Secondly, the **APPEAR Office** may proactively communicate challenges, risks, and support possibilities for scholarship holders in charge of childcare duties to scholarship applicants. And thirdly, for qualified scholarship candidates with childcare duties, the provision of family stipends based on previously defined criteria (e.g., number and age of children, availability of childcare services, employment prospects for the accompanying spouse) may offer an appropriate approach which would require a corresponding strategic decision by **ADA** (see C8).

SR9 In order to close the conceptual gap between project outcomes which are expected to be achieved *gender-sensitively*, and the objective of increased *gender equality* in research, the evaluation team suggests that **ADA** and the **APPEAR Office** could consider strengthening their commitment to a more advanced level along the gender equality continuum. In practice, this could involve encouraging projects – e.g., by reformulated basic principles and/or added values – to move beyond a merely sensitive approach towards more responsive or, where appropriate, transformative action (see C8).

SR10 In response to misinformation among programme participants from Austrian HEI and in order to increase the attractiveness of the APPEAR programme to Austrian researchers who are under pressure

to demonstrate a substantial track record of securing external funding, the **APPEAR Office** may consider informing Austrian HEI more proactively about the possibility to request additional funds from the Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research for their research projects implemented with APPEAR funding (see **C8**).

SR11 To improve programme steering and communication, the evaluation findings indicate that **ADA** could consider revising the programme's intervention logic – or mandate the **APPEAR Office** to do so – so that the contribution of its different funding instruments to programme outcomes becomes clearer to its participants, to those in charge of selecting the participants, as well as to those in charge of programme monitoring. In this revision, the evaluation team furthermore suggests addressing the outcome and impact potentials as identified in this programme evaluation more explicitly to increase the visibility of the programme's relevance for the international science community in general, as well as for Austria's foreign affairs and international cooperation (see **C5, 10**).

SR12 Related to SR11 and in light of the many years of programme implementation, the evaluation findings indicate the potential value of separate sustainability and impact evaluations commissioned by **ADA** and the **APPEAR Office** to allow for systematic assessments of the programme's long-term effectiveness, e.g., in terms of lasting institutional partnerships, uptake of APPEAR-funded research, and lasting on-the-ground improvements in the thematic areas covered by APPEAR projects (see **C8**).

SR13 To address delays associated with entry and residence permits as well as to ensure professional and timely treatment at the relevant government offices, the evaluation findings provide a basis for the **BMEIA** to consider engaging with the relevant authorities on measures to improve the processing of APPEAR participants' applications in line with the EU Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research and studies (Directive (EU) 2016/801)³³ (see **C11**).

SR14 Given the differing salary rates between staff members from Austrian HEI and those from partner country institutions, allocating the larger share of budget to partner country institutions hinders reasonable budget expenditures. This finding highlights the potential value of greater flexibility in the distribution of the budget between Austrian and partner institutions in maintaining the APPEAR programme's attractiveness to Austrian HEI and supporting partnerships at eye level. In this context, **ADA** could consider whether greater flexibility would be appropriate to adequately reflect actual workload distributions. Also, focusing on allocating the larger share of the *workload* to these institutions, rather than the larger share of the budget, may offer an option for strengthening ownership by partner country institutions (see **C8**).

SR15 In the context of the newly introduced LNOB principle, the findings indicate a potential risk of an increasing capacity gap between HE and research institutions in APPEAR's partner countries resulting from repeated programme participation of institutions that are already comparatively stronger. **ADA** could consider how this risk might be addressed in future programme design, e.g., by strengthening institutional partnerships across provinces, as part of the promotion of regional networks (see **C8**).

³³ This directive stresses the important role of third-country students and researchers "in forming the Union's key asset, human capital, and in ensuring smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" (ibid.) and which provides for timely admission procedures.

Operational recommendations

OR1 The evaluation points to the potential value of the **APPEAR Office** enhancing the programme's monitoring system to be able to track progress towards target achievements more systematically. This would imply defining specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) indicators for each targeted programme outcome, collecting data for these indicators on a regular basis, and finally, aggregating these data to be able to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of implemented programme activities. Given that programme outcomes are currently understood as the sum of project outcomes, the evaluation team recommends that, firstly, it is made clear to which outcome at the programme level a particular project outcome is intended to contribute and, secondly, that same indicators are applied to same project outcomes. To ensure consistency, the APPEAR Office may wish to define these indicators on programme level (see **C10**).

OR2 Given the highly volatile environments in some of APPEAR's partner countries, the evaluation findings strongly suggest that the **APPEAR Office** strengthens its risk management and security precautions for these countries by involving security experts, e.g., from the respective **ADA** representation, the **BMEIA** or the respective Austrian embassy, who can provide the APPEAR Office with real-time updates whenever necessary (see **C2**).

OR3 To ensure the practical relevance of APPEAR's 'basic principles' and 'added values', the evaluation team recommends that the **APPEAR Office** revise definitions, explanations, and indicators provided for each of the principles and values, keeping them as concise and precise as possible to facilitate comprehensive reading and, above all, to facilitate the correct understanding of action-relevant content. This also includes the alignment of conceptual frameworks and definitions with international practice to ensure coherence and facilitate, again, correct understanding. In particular for elaborations on gender, diversity, and inclusion, the evaluation team recommends to significantly reduce text on background information and larger policy frameworks, thereby avoiding overload or "Too long; didn't read" ("TL;DR") effects³⁴ for the benefit of purposeful information. To allow the less experienced (or particularly ambitious) applicants to inform themselves further, the evaluation indicates that it would like be sufficient to reference to documents or websites providing more in-depth information. This recommendation applies to the application guidelines and other relevant materials provided to programme participants (see **C6, 8, 12**).

OR4 To relieve the APPEAR Office from the workload related to most frequently experienced challenges, to facilitate participants' compliance with programme requirements, their preparation of their activities, and – in the case of scholarship holders – to better navigate life in Austria, the **APPEAR Office** may opt to raise programme participants' awareness of information already available on OeAD's website on all relevant issues such as the administrative steps to take, navigating the Austrian healthcare system, and conditions under which additional allowances can be granted (see **C6, 8, 12**).

OR5 The evaluation team recommends the **APPEAR Office** to involve ADA Offices (KoBüs) in APPEAR's partner countries more strongly, yet with consideration of their already high workload. Specifically, KoBüs should be kept continuously informed about ongoing APPEAR activities in their country (e.g., by sharing project's progress reports) and be asked about country-specific aspects to be considered in

³⁴ See Todd Rogers and Lauren Brodsky (2023) on "How to keep "TLDR" syndrome from killing your policy proposal" (<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/how-keep-tldr-syndrome-killing-your-policy-proposal>; last access: 19 March, 2026).

calls for applications. Furthermore, the evaluation team recommends that KoBüs be provided with general information on research and study opportunities in Austria or with Austrian partners, thereby enabling the offices to better understand the context in which APPEAR operates, which facilitates spreading information on the APPEAR programme and disseminating the respective calls. The APPEAR Office may also conduct orientation webinars during each application phase, with breakout rooms for country- or region-specific questions, to which KoBü representatives are invited. Here, general applicants' questions could be addressed, the respective KoBü's availability for project support clarified, synergy potentials with other ADA networks or activities in the partner country discussed, and the groundwork for good communication between APPEAR project teams and KoBüs be laid. This increased engagement would require ADA to assess this option against competing demands and available resources prior to mandating its KoBüs with this limited yet crucial involvement in APPEAR activities (see C3, 4, 9).

OR6 The evaluation findings indicate that ADA and the APPEAR Office exploring the possibility to define a threshold above which Austrian partners' auditing obligation applies may offer a twofold benefit: not only could it increase the cost-effectiveness of auditors' fees; it could also keep Austrian HEI attracted to the APPEAR programme by limiting their administrative workload. Undertaking such a revision will need to take ADA's and OeAD's broader accountability and compliance requirements into account (see C11).

OR7 To keep Austrian HEI attracted to the APPEAR programme and facilitate smooth project implementation, the evaluation team recommends that the APPEAR Office place greater emphasis on ensuring that project teams allocate sufficient resources to coordination tasks (e.g., by specifying a recommended share of the budget allocated to such tasks) as this would counteract frustrations and delays from unexpectedly time-consuming consultation and review processes within the project consortia (see C8, 11).

OR8 Complementing SR15, the APPEAR Office may wish strengthen its efforts to also reach and encourage less-resourced HE and research institutions to submit APPEAR applications – especially for the preparatory funding – in line with the LNOB principle. This may, for example, include enhancing communication activities in the partner countries and inviting as many HE and research institutions as possible to information sessions on APPEAR (see C8).

8. Annexes

8.1 Results Assessment Form

Submitted as separate annex.

8.2 Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation question	Indicators	Sources	Data collection methods
Relevance			
R1. To what extent is the programme aligned with European and international development strategies in the field of Higher Education?	“High” if the programme objectives clearly reflect objectives as targeted by the following strategies and policy frameworks: - Global Education 2030 Agenda - European strategy for universities - European Education Area - Global Gateway Initiative “Medium” if the programme objectives are partially consistent with the objectives as targeted by the strategies and policy frameworks as listed above. “Low” if the programme objectives are inconsistent with the objectives as targeted by the strategies and policy frameworks as listed above.	- OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: - APPEAR III.</i> - European Commission (2021). Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) - European Commission (2021). The Global Gateway. - UNESCO (2022). Beyond limits: new ways to reinvent higher education. - European Commission (2022). European strategy for universities. - OECD (2025), Education Policy Outlook 2025: Nurturing Engaged and Resilient Lifelong Learners in a World of Digital Transformation - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - ADA representatives - Selection Board representatives - BMEIA representative - Advisory Board representatives - Global Gateway Initiative	Desk research; interviews
R2. To what extent is the programme aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals?	“High” if the programme objectives clearly reflect the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and mechanisms are in place to ensure that selected projects contribute to the SDGs. “Medium” if the programme objectives reflect the SDGs but mechanisms to ensure project contributions to the SDGs are ineffective. “Low”: programme objectives may reflect the SDGs but no mechanisms to ensure project contributions to the SDGs are in place. <i>Overview of SDGs targeted by APPEAR projects.</i>	- OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: - APPEAR III.</i> - D’Elloy et al. (2025). APPEAR III Project Evaluation: Evaluation Report - Application guidelines - For case study projects: project applications; project reviews and assessments; project reports - Selection Board ToR - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - ADA representatives - Selection Board representatives - BMEIA representative - Advisory Board representatives	Desk research; interviews

R3. How relevant is the APPEAR programme for Austrian Development Policy and the ADA portfolio in higher education?	<u>Austrian Development Policy:</u> “High” if the programme objectives clearly reflect prioritised objectives of Austrian Development Policy as stated in - the BMEIA’s Three-Year Programmes, - ADA’s country strategies, and - other strategy documents, in terms of themes, countries, and approaches. “Medium” if the programme objectives reflect secondary rather than priority objectives of the Austrian Development Policy as stated in the documents listed above. “Low” if the programme objectives are not covered or are inconsistent with the Austrian Development Policy as stated in the documents listed above. <u>ADA portfolio:</u> “High” if APPEAR III is coherent with ADA’s objectives in higher education and research cooperation and complements other higher education initiatives funded by ADA. “Medium” if APPEAR III is coherent with ADA’s objectives in higher education and research cooperation but produces overlaps with other higher education initiatives funded by ADA. “Low” if APPEAR III is incoherent with ADA’s objectives in higher education and research cooperation. <i>Description of added value of APPEAR to the ADA portfolio in higher education according to programme stakeholders.</i>	- OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: - APPEAR III.</i> - BMEIA’s Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025-2027 - BMEIA’s Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2022-2024 - ADA’s “Hochschulbildung und Wissenschaftskooperation: Strategie“ (2009) - Framework Strategy of the Austrian Development Cooperation with the EU Eastern Partner Countries - ADA’s Country Strategies for Bhutan Transition (2010-2023), Burkina Faso (2019-2025), Ethiopia (2019-2025), Mozambique (2019-2024, extended until 2025), Uganda (2019-2025) - Regional Strategy of Austrian Development Cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa 2020-2030 - Regional Strategy of the Austrian Development Cooperation with the Western Balkans 2025-2027 - Data set listing all ADA projects (https://www.entwicklung.at/en/projects/all-projects; Date of last update: 30.10.2025) - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - ADA representatives - Selection Board representatives - BMEIA representative - Advisory Board representatives	Desk research; interviews
R4. To what extent do the guidelines and added values contribute to the relevance of the programme?	<u>Guidelines:</u> “High” if programme stakeholders confirm that project proposals complying with the guidelines are highly relevant to the programme. Project coordinators, for their part, confirm that the guidelines have helped them align their proposal with programme objectives. “Medium” if stakeholder assessments are ambivalent or if the guidelines’ contribution to the programme’s relevance is viewed as moderate.	- BMEIA’s Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025-2027 - BMEIA’s Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2022-2024 - ADA’s “Hochschulbildung und Wissenschaftskooperation: Strategie“ (2009) - Framework Strategy of the Austrian Development Cooperation with the EU Eastern Partner Countries - ADA’s Country Strategies for Bhutan Transition (2010-2023), Burkina Faso (2019-2025),	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey

	“Low” if programme stakeholders broadly do not view the guidelines as contributing to the programme’s relevance. <u>Added values:</u> “High” if the added values reflect relevant values or principles as stated in ADC strategies. Mechanisms to promote the integration of added values into projects are in place and effective, i.e., project teams can prove that added values are integrated into their projects or can justify why they are not. “Medium” if the added values reflect relevant values or principles as stated in ADC strategies but mechanisms to promote the integration of added values into projects remain ineffective. “Low” if the added values do not reflect any relevant values or principles as stated in ADC strategies.. <i>Overview of added values integrated in funded projects.</i> <i>The added values:</i> - Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects - Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy - Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation - Advancement of young and particularly female researchers - Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use and research uptake - Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country	Ethiopia (2019-2025), Mozambique (2019-2024, extended until 2025), Uganda (2019-2025) - Regional Strategy of Austrian Development Co-operation in Sub-Saharan Africa 2020-2030 - Regional Strategy of the Austrian Development Cooperation with the Western Balkans 2025-2027 - OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: APPEAR III.</i> - D’Elloy et al. (2025). APPEAR III Project Evaluation: Evaluation Report - Rojas, C. (2019). Midterm Evaluation of APPEAR II. - Selection Board ToR - APPEAR III Progress Reports - Application guidelines - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - ADA representatives - Selection Board representatives - BMEIA representative - Advisory Board representatives - Project coordinators	
R5. To what extent are the programme’s basic principles relevant to its overall objectives?	“High” if the definitions of the basic principles are logically linked to APPEAR’s overall objectives. Programme stakeholders are able to explain the relevance of the basic principles with regards to APPEAR’s overall objectives. Furthermore, mechanisms to ensure adherence to the basic principles are in place and effective. “Medium” if the definitions of the basic principles are logically linked to APPEAR’s overall objectives. Furthermore, programme stakeholders confirm the relevance of the basic principles with regards to APPEAR’s overall objectives. However, mechanisms to ensure adherence to the basic principles remain ineffective.	- OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: APPEAR III.</i> - D’Elloy et al. (2025). APPEAR III Project Evaluation: Evaluation Report - Rojas, C. (2019). Midterm Evaluation of APPEAR II. - Selection Board ToR - APPEAR III Progress Reports - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - ADA representatives - Selection Board representatives	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey

	“Low” if there is no logical link between the definitions of the basic principles and APPEAR’s overall objectives. Programme stakeholders do not find the basic principles relevant with regards to the programme objectives or cannot provide a logical explanation. <i>The basic principles:</i> - Participatory approach - A concept of culturally open-minded knowledge - Practically and empirically oriented approach - Bottom-up and demand-driven approach - Gender sensitivity - Leave no one behind - Open Access – Open data	- BMEIA representative - Advisory Board representatives - National coordinators - Project team members - Managing staff of partnering HEI (e.g., deans, managing representatives of international offices, or other)	
R6. How relevant is the programme design in the context of regional political and geopolitical changes?	“High” if, considering the context of regional political and geopolitical changes in which projects operate, programme stakeholders confirm the continuing relevance of the following aspects, substantiating their confirmation with a clear rationale: - thematic focus of APPEAR; - APPEAR target countries; - higher education cooperation. Research findings (e.g., from the APPEAR III Project Evaluation and other research on higher education cooperation) and current policy priorities in the partnering countries, too, clearly indicate continued relevance of APPEAR’s programme design. Programme management monitors regional and geopolitical changes, conducts risk analyses, and, where necessary, has adapted programme provisions to ensure continuous programme relevance in view of these changes. “Medium” if there is ambivalence in stakeholder assessments and related research findings regarding the aspects listed above. Monitoring of regional and geopolitical changes may be in place and risk analyses may be conducted but translating these measures into necessary conceptual adaptations to the programme – in response to the identified changes – has been limited or slow. “Low” if stakeholder assessments and research findings indicate that the programme design is outdated due to regional political and geopolitical changes. Conceptual adaptations to the programme in response to these changes were <u>not</u> undertaken or were inadequate.	- OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: APPEAR III</i>. - D’Elloy et al. (2025). APPEAR III Project Evaluation: Evaluation Report. - APPEAR III Progress Reports - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - ADA representatives/Selection Board representative - BMEIA representative - Advisory Board representatives - National coordinators - Project team members - Representatives of ADC offices in APPEAR partner countries - Managing staff of partnering HEI (e.g., deans, managing representatives of international offices, or other) - Scholarship holders - Scholarship holder’s supervisors	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey

	Monitoring of regional and geopolitical changes or risk analyses, if conducted, are ineffective. <i>Overview of relevant political and geopolitical changes (political, economic and social pressures or conflicts, as well as violent conflicts or wars) as described by interviewees and in programme documents.</i>		
R7. To what extent is the programme an instrument of science and research co-operation that promotes a culture of peace? <i>(Additional question to fully address OeAD's knowledge interests)</i>	"High" if the following criteria are met: - Programme stakeholders assess the programme's relevance to peace work as high. <u>Signaling³⁵:</u> - The programme is explicitly supported by governmental institutions. - Managing programme staff as well as students and staff from partnering faculties confirm that the programme has high visibility. - Evidence shows sustained commitment of the funding agency. <u>Attitude change:</u> - Programme beneficiaries confirm that programme participation has increased their openness to other cultures and perspectives. - Programme beneficiaries confirm that programme participation promotes non-judgmental attitudes, critical reflexivity, and peace-relevant values. - Programme beneficiaries report that they view partner institutions and their staff as trustworthy collaborators. - Programme beneficiaries report that they experienced partner institutions and their staff as willing to collaborate and share resources. <u>Intercultural competence:</u> - Programme beneficiaries confirm that programme participation has increased their feeling of comfort dealing with nationals of their host country/partner country/-ies. - Programme beneficiaries report that programme participation has raised their awareness for the influence of cultural differences on communication styles.	- OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: APPEAR III.</i> - APPEAR III Progress Reports - Reports from case study projects - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - ADA representatives - Selection Board representatives - BMEIA representative - Advisory Board representatives - National coordinators - Project coordinators - Institutional coordinators - Project team members - Scholarship holders - Scholarship holder's supervisors	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey

³⁵ The theoretical frame for using these criteria (signaling, attitude change, intercultural competence, and network formation) relies on Iain Wilson's findings presented in his article "Exchanges and Peacemaking: Counterfactuals and Unexplored Possibilities" from 2015. He assesses evidence on signaling, attitude change, network formation and institutional transfer as mechanisms for peaceful relations and finds them plausible while also acknowledging that large evidence gaps remain regarding the mechanism of international mobility or exchange for the promotion of peaceful relations.

	- Programme beneficiaries confirm that programme participation has successfully trained them in mitigating and/or resolving cultural conflicts in intercultural teams. <u>Network formation:</u> - Programme beneficiaries confirm that they (expect to) maintain relationships with people from partner countries beyond the duration programme participation, e.g., in the context of new formal cooperation, exchanging favours or information, or maintaining informal communication. <u>Institutional transfer:</u> - Programme beneficiaries confirm that programme participation has shaped their preferences regarding institutional arrangements concerning higher education, research, and/or a topic related to their research project/studies. - Programme beneficiaries confirm that programme participation has inspired them to pursue institutional change based on these preferences. “Medium” if the criteria above are partially met. “Low” if the criteria above remain largely unmet.		
R8. To what extent is the programme design conducive to the development of project proposals that align with the national development and education strategies in Armenia?	“High” if application guidelines demand the alignment of project proposals with national development and education strategies. Consequently, only projects are selected that clearly reflect objectives and courses of action as stated in - the Action Plan of the Armenian Government 2021-2026, and - the Armenian State Program of Education Development until 2030. “Medium” if Armenian project applications align with these strategies, but application guidelines do not make this alignment an eligibility requirement. “Low” if application guidelines do not make the alignment with national development and education strategies an eligibility requirement, and project applications only sporadically reflect elements of these strategies, if at all.	- OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: APPEAR III.</i> - Application guidelines - Action Plan of the Armenian Government 2021-2026 - Armenian State Program of Education Development until 2030 - Project applications of case study projects - Team members of case study projects - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - Representative of the ADC Office in Armenia	Desk research; interviews; FGD
R9. To what extent does the programme meet the needs of higher education institutions in Armenia?	“High” if programme and project documents, as well as programme stakeholders indicate coverage of the following needs, as stated in the Armenian State Program of Education Development until 2030,	- OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: APPEAR III.</i> - Project applications	Desk research; interviews; FGD

	and other needs as expressed by interviewed programme stakeholders: - Stronger international competitiveness through: ▪ Quality improvement ▪ Increase in research output ▪ Global visibility - Modernisation of management standards - Modernisation of curricula in line with public and economic needs, as well as labour-market requirements - Younger academic workforce - Internationalisation - Improved infrastructure and student services - Strengthened quality assurance “Medium” if programme and project documents, as well as programme stakeholders indicate partial coverage of these needs. “Low” if programme and project documents, as well as programme stakeholders indicate sporadic coverage of these needs only.	- Managing staff of partnering HEI (e.g., deans, managing representatives of international offices, or other) - Team members of case study projects - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - ADA representatives - Selection Board representatives - ADC representative in Armenia - Scholarship holders from Armenia - Supervisors of Armenian scholarship holders	
R10. To what extent did the programme remain relevant in the context of political developments in Armenia?	“High” if, considering the context of political developments in Armenia, programme stakeholders confirm the continuing relevance of the following aspects, substantiating their confirmation with a clear rationale: - thematic focus of APPEAR; - higher education cooperation. Research findings (e.g., from the APPEAR III Project Evaluation and other research on higher education cooperation) and current policy priorities in Armenia, too, clearly indicate continued relevance of APPEAR’s programme design. Where necessary, programme provisions were quickly adapted to ensure continuous programme relevance in view of political developments in Armenia. “Medium” if there is ambivalence in stakeholder assessments and related research findings regarding the aspects listed above. Where necessary, conceptual adaptations to the programme – in response to political developments in Armenia – have been slow and may not yet have been implemented. “Low” if stakeholder assessments and research findings indicate that the programme design is outdated due to political developments in	- Annual project reports of Armenian projects - APPEAR III Progress Reports - Managing staff of Armenian HEI (e.g., deans, managing representatives of international offices, or other) - Armenian project/institutional coordinators - Team members of case study projects - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - ADC representative in Armenia - Scholarship holders from Armenia - Supervisors of Armenian scholarship holders	Desk research; interviews; FGD

	Armenia. Conceptual adaptations to the programme in response to these changes were <u>not</u> undertaken or were inadequate. <i>Context analysis, including interviewee descriptions of the political developments in Armenia that are most significant for the programme's relevance.</i>		
Effectiveness			
E1. To what extent does the programme design – its procedures and instruments – enable effective project implementation?	“High” if the following criteria are met: - Programme stakeholders confirm that procedures (selection mechanism, application procedures, application deadlines, funding timelines, communication between project staff and the APPEAR Office, guidelines, application forms, report templates) as well as instruments (i.e., types of APPEAR partnerships and scholarships, including their respective eligibility criteria and provisions regarding budget and project partners) were clear. - Programme stakeholders confirm that the procedures and instruments facilitated project implementation. - Programme stakeholders confirm that procedures and instrument provisions put no major strains onto project implementation. Minor strains were adapted to quickly, facilitating project implementation. - Recommendations from previous APPEAR evaluations on procedures and instruments at the programme level were addressed by a management response; where necessary, adjustments were realised ensuring improved procedures and instruments. - Monitoring arrangements are in place that generate relevant and timely information for implementation oversight and corrective action. - Stakeholders from component 1 confirm that the parameters of the funding instruments (i.e., max. duration, budget provisions, partner selection provision, reporting obligations, and selection criteria) are suitable for preparing strong project proposals, meeting relevant research and/or teaching objectives, and in contributing to institutional capacity development. - Stakeholders from component 2 confirm that the parameters of the scholarships (i.e., max. duration, budget provisions, and selection criteria) effectively support scholarship holders' academic development.	- Rojas, C. (2019). Midterm Evaluation of APPEAR II. - D'Elloy et al. (2025). APPEAR III Project Evaluation: Evaluation Report. - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - Managing project staff (project coordinators and contact persons of partner institutions)ADA representatives - Selection Board representatives - BMEIA representative - Advisory Board representatives - Scholarship holders - Scholarship holders' supervisors - <i>Findings for E4</i>	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey

	- Funding recipients confirm that information regarding funding parameters was easily available. “Medium” if the criteria above are partially met. “Low” if the criteria above remain largely unmet. <i>Strengths and weaknesses of the individual funding modalities as stated by interviewees and in programme documents.</i>		
E2. In what way does the mode of communication (frequency, quality, formality) between the APPEAR Office and ADA influence an effective implementation of the programme?	- Frequency, - Quality (in terms of communication medium, communication outcomes, and common understanding), and - Formality (in terms of clear roles and communication procedures) of communication between the APPEAR Office and ADA - Programme stakeholders’ perceptions of the extent to which these aspects have influenced effective programme implementation in the past	- Meeting protocols - Formal agreements - ADA representatives - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office)	Desk research; interviews; FGD
E3. To what extent is programme management able to respond flexibly to unforeseen challenges and barriers during programme and project implementation?	“High” if programme stakeholders confirm that programme management was able to respond adequately to unforeseen challenges and barriers during programme and project implementation. “Medium” if there is ambivalence in stakeholder assessments regarding programme management’s ability to respond adequately to such challenges or barriers. “Low” if programme stakeholders broadly agree that programme management was not able to respond adequately to such challenges or barriers. <i>Basis: Description of unforeseen challenges and barriers during programme and project implementation as reported in programme and project documentation and by interviewees.</i>	- APPEAR III Progress Reports - D’Elloy et al. (2025). APPEAR III Project Evaluation: Evaluation Report. - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - National coordinators - Project coordinators - Project team members - Reports from case study projects - Scholarship holders - Scholarship holder’s supervisors	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey
E4. To what extent has the programme achieved the objectives, as outlined in the APPEAR tender documents? What facilitating and hindering factors can be identified?	“High” if the causal assumptions as specified in the programme’s Theory of Change hold true. “Medium” if the causal assumptions as specified in the programme’s ToC hold true only partially. “Low” if the causal assumptions as specified in the programme’s ToC do not hold true.	- OeAD (2020). <i>Technischer Teil des Angebots: - APPEAR III.</i> - APPEAR III Progress Reports, incl. monitoring data - Reports from case study projects - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - National coordinators - Project coordinators - Team members of the case study projects	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey

	<i>Description of facilitating and hindering factors of outcome achievement as named by interviewees and indicated in programme documents and documents from the case study projects.</i>	- Scholarship holders - Scholarship holder's supervisors	
E5. What has been the programme's contribution to raising awareness and increasing the visibility of development-related issues, teaching, and research within the Austrian academic and scientific community?	- Number of APPEAR III projects - Number of Austrian academic and scientific staff involved in APPEAR III projects - Number of scientific publications resulting from APPEAR III projects - Share of survey respondents from the Austrian academic and scientific community confirming that their awareness of development-related issues and research questions was raised through programme participation. - Share of survey respondents from the Austrian academic and scientific community confirming that their interest in development-related issues and research questions rose as a result of their experience with APPEAR III. - Share of survey respondents from the Austrian academic and scientific community confirming that APPEAR III provides impetus for the introduction of development-related teaching content. Extent to which participants provide concrete, experience-based examples of development-related learning resulting from their APPEAR involvement. <i>Interviewees and survey respondents from the Austrian academic and scientific community provide specific examples of development-related learnings and of the consequences that their APPEAR participation has had for their academic and/or scientific work.</i>	- APPEAR III Progress Reports, incl. monitoring data - Austrian project team members - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - Managing staff of partnering HEI (e.g., deans, managing representatives of international offices, or other)	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey
E6. How effectively does component 2 (embedded PhD and Master's scholarships) support component 1 (Academic Partnerships) – and vice versa?	"High" if managing programme staff as well as managing project staff confirm that embedded scholarships effectively supports component 1 in terms of - meeting relevant research and/or teaching objectives, and - contribution to institutional capacity development. Stakeholders from component 2, in turn, confirm that component 1 effectively supports scholarship holders' academic development. "Medium" if there is ambivalence in stakeholder assessments or if there is strong evidence for only one reinforcing direction of support. "Low" if stakeholder assessments indicate that component 1 and embedded scholarships function independently of each other.	- Managing project staff (project and institutional coordinators) - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - Scholarship holders - Scholarship holders' supervisors - D'Elloy et al. (2025). APPEAR III Project Evaluation: Evaluation Report.	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey

E7. How effectively does the APPEAR Office support and strengthen project implementation in Armenia – for example, through technical guidance, coordination, administrative support?	“High” if Armenian project stakeholders confirm that the APPEAR Office supported and strengthened project implementation through - technical guidance, - coordination, and - administrative support. Managing programme staff shares this perspective. “Medium” if there is ambivalence in Armenian project stakeholder assessments regarding these aspects or if these stakeholders broadly confirm that APPEAR Office support has had moderate effects on project implementation. “Low” if Armenian project stakeholders express that support by the APPEAR Office remained ineffective.	- Project coordinators of case study projects - Team members of case study projects - Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office)	Desk research; interviews; FGD
Efficiency			
OE1. To what extent has increased programme complexity constrained operational efficiency, and where are the greatest potentials for simplification? <i>(Additional question to fully address OeAD’s knowledge interests)</i>	“High” if due to new added values, basic principles, partner countries, funding instruments, global strategies, or other aspects... - Project coordinators have experienced qualitative requirements for project submissions as difficult to manage; - the Selection Board and the Advisory Board members, for their part, describe their workload for the project review as hard to manage or have observed inappropriately increased workloads for other programme stakeholders; - compared to previous programme phases, the APPEAR Office perceives increased discontent among these stakeholders with their respective administrative burden; and - the APPEAR Office reports quality losses due to operational inefficiencies. “Medium” if the above holds true in part. “Low” if there is weak or no evidence for constrained operational efficiency due to increased programme complexity. <i>Interviewees propose specific measures to simplify complex procedures.</i>	- Managing programme staff (APPEAR Office) - Project coordinators - ADA representatives - Selection Board representatives - BMEIA representative - Advisory Board representatives	Desk research; interviews; FGD; online survey

8.3 Full list of secondary data

Programme level documents

- DOC1: Anlage_2_LEISTUNGSBESCHREIBUNG (ADA's Terms of Reference on APPEAR III)
- DOC2: 1_Formaler Teil (OeAD's Technical Offer for APPEAR III, part 1)
- DOC3: 2_Finanzieller Teil_LBO (OeAD's Technical Offer for APPEAR III, part 2)
- DOC4: 3_Technischer Teil_LBO (OeAD's Technical Offer for APPEAR III, part 3)

Protocols from Selection Board meetings

- DOC5: APPEAR_16.Auswahlsitzung_Ergebnisprotokoll
- DOC6: 17_APPEAR_Auswahlsitzung_Ergebnisprotokoll
- DOC7: 18_APPEAR_Auswahlsitzung_Protokoll
- DOC8: 19_APPEAR_Auswahlsitzung_Protokoll

Application guidelines

- DOC9: APPEAR_guidelines_Call8_Version_20210301
- DOC10: budget_guidelines_partnership_Call8
- DOC11: budget_guidelines_prep.funding_call8
- DOC12: APPEAR_budget_guidelines_partnership_call9
- DOC13: APPEAR_budget_guidelines_preparatoryfunding_call9
- DOC14: APPEAR_guidelines_call9_final
- DOC15: APPEAR_budget_guidelines_partnership_call10
- DOC16: APPEAR_budget_guidelines_preparatoryfunding_call10
- DOC17: APPEAR_guidelines_call10
- DOC18: APPEAR_budget_guidelines_partnership_call11
- DOC19: APPEAR_guidelines_call11

Progress reports

- DOC20: APPEAR III_2. Zwischenbericht_per 31.12.21
- DOC21: APPEAR III_2. Zwischenbericht_public disclosure_per 31.12.21
- DOC22: APPEAR III_3_Progress_Report_per 30.06.22
- DOC23: APPEAR III_4.Zwischenbericht_public disclosure
- DOC24: APPEAR III_4_Progress_Report
- DOC25: APPEAR III_5. Progress report
- DOC26: APPEAR III_6.Zwischenbericht_public disclosure
- DOC27: APPEAR III_6_Progress_Report
- DOC28: APPEAR III_7_Zwischenbericht_1.1.-30.6.24
- DOC29: APPEAR III_8.Zwischenbericht_Annex9_public disclosure
- DOC30: APPEAR III_8_Progress_Report
- DOC31: APPEAR III_9_Progress_Report
- DOC32: 9_Progress_Report_Projekte_Dashboards_gesamt
- DOC33: APPEAR III_9_Progress Report_Annex3_Übersichtsliste_StipendiatInnen

- DOC34: ToR_SelectionBoard_final_2.3.22
- DOC35: APPEAR_III_Advisory_Board_ToR_final_1.11.21

Evaluation reports

- DOC36: 2013_APPEAR_MidtermEvaluation_Finalreport
- DOC37: 2018_Final Report APPEAR project evaluation_incl Annex
- DOC38: 2018_Summary project evaluation_APPEAR
- DOC39: APPEAR_Evaluation_-_Final_Report
- DOC40: 2025_Project Evaluation APPEAR III_Final Evaluation Report_bf

APPEAR strategies

- DOC41: APPEAR Disability mainstreaming
- DOC42: APPEAR Diversity Strategy from 01.03.21
- DOC43: APPEAR Gender Strategy from 01.03.21

ADA Documents

- DOC44: Three-Year_Programme_on_Austrian_Development_Policy_2022-24
- DOC45: Three_Year_Programme_2025-2027_working_translation
- DOC46: Framework_Strategy_ArmGeoMol
- DOC47: CS_Bhutan_Transition_2019-2023
- DOC48: LS_Burkina_Faso_2019-2025_FR
- DOC49: CS_Ethiopia_2019-2025
- DOC50: Mozambique_Country_Strategy_2019-2024_Extension_2025
- DOC51: CS_Uganda_2019-2025
- DOC52: Regionalstrategie_Westbalkan_2025-2027
- DOC53: Manual_Capacity_Development
- DOC145: Strategie_Hochschulbildung_DE

European and international policy documents

- DOC54: OECD (2025), "Policies for transnational collaboration in higher education", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No.121, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e07d8c0f-en>.
- DOC55: UNESCO (2022). Beyond limits: new ways to reinvent higher education.
- DOC56: OECD (2025), Education Policy Outlook 2025: Nurturing Engaged and Resilient Lifelong Learners in a World of Digital Transformation
- DOC57: European Commission (2022). European strategy for universities.
- DOC58: European Commission (2021). The Global Gateway. CELEX_52021JC0030_EN_TXT
- DOC59: European Commission (2021). Resolution on a strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030). CELEX_32021G0226(01)_EN_TXT

Case study project documents

Project252

- DOC60: DEvision _APPEAR_AcademicPartnership

- DOC61: Projekt252_DEvision-Budget_sheet_AcademicPartnership_Call8_final_0202
- DOC62: Project252_assesement_form_annual_report_clean
- DOC63: project252_review 1_korr
- DOC64: project252_review 2
- DOC65: DEvision-1st_annual_report
- DOC66: DEvision-2nd-annual_report_2024
- DOC67: APPEAR_III_Final_Report_DEvision-16July2025

Project267

- DOC68: 01_SOAA_APPEAR_8thCall_Advanced_Academic_Partnership_application
- DOC69: 03_appear__consortium_agreement_SOAA
- DOC70: 04_ANAU_Letter of intent
- DOC71: 05_BOKU_Letter of Intent
- DOC72: 06_Budget_SOAA
- DOC73: project267_review 1
- DOC74: project267_review 2
- DOC75: Project267_annual report_assesement_y2_clean
- DOC76: annual_report_2023
- DOC77: annual_report_2024
- DOC78: APPEAR III_Final_Report_SOAA_Template_20250227
- DOC79: ANNEX 1 Project Framework Matrix
- DOC80: ANNEX 2 List_of_Quantitative_outputs_final_2024-2025
- DOC81: APPEAR_Book_Chapter_SOAA

Project277

- DOC82: Application_9thCall_Academic_Partnership_EcoServ
- DOC83: budget_sheet_partnership_Call9_EcoServ
- DOC84: Timetable
- DOC85: Project277_Review1
- DOC86: Project277_Review2
- DOC87: 1.EcoServ_Annual_report_1st_04.2024
- DOC88: APPEAR_Project277__assesement_form_annual_report_clean
- DOC89: EcoServ_Annual_report_2nd_04.20245
- DOC109: Short about the project tasks

Project278

- DOC90: APPEAR_9thCall_Acad_Part_ArmBioClimate
- DOC91: budget_sheet_partnership_ArmBioClimate
- DOC92: Project278_Review1
- DOC93: Project278_Review2
- DOC94: 1st annual_report_2023
- DOC95: 2nd_annual_report
- DOC96: Project278_External assessment_anonymised

Project338

- DOC97: ReCITY_APPEAR_10thCall_Academic_Partnership_application
- DOC98: ReCITY_APPEAR_10thCall_Academic_Partnership_budget_sheet_RE
- DOC99: ReCITY_APPEAR_10thCall_Academic_Partnership_all_documents
- DOC100: Project338_Review1
- DOC101: Project338_Review2
- DOC102: Annual Report_ReCITY
- DOC103: APPEAR_assesement_form_annual_report_P338

Project373

- DOC104: APPEAR_11thCall_Academic_Partnership_application_BioBarFungArm
- DOC105: budget_sheet_partnership_BioBarFungArm_Project373
- DOC106: 13a_Project373_Review1_85
- DOC107: 13b_Project373_Review2_83
- DOC108: 1_half_year_report
- DOC110: APPEAR presentation Nanagyulyan S. 21.01.2026
- DOC111: Workshop Arsen Aprozan-14.10.2025
- DOC112: Workshop Irmgard Greilhuber 14.10.2025

Armenian national strategies:

- DOC113: Draft for the Armenian State Program of Education Development until 2030
- DOC114: Action Plan of the Armenian Government 2021-2026
- DOC115: Action Plan of the Armenian Government 2021-2026: Rationale
- DOC116: Government Decision on the Approval of the Strategic Program for the Development of the Science Sector of the Republic of Armenia for 2026-2030, the Schedule of Measures for its implementation, and the Priority Directions for the Development of the Science and Technology Sectors in the Republic of Armenia for 2026-2030 (Government Decision)
- DOC117: Government Decision, Annex 1
- DOC118: Government Decision, Annex 2
- DOC119: Government Decision, Annex 3

Project applications (non-Armenian projects):

- DOC120: Project242 application
- DOC121: Project249 application
- DOC122: Project251 application
- DOC123: Project256 application
- DOC124: Project262 application
- DOC125: Project269 application
- DOC126: Project287 application
- DOC127: Project288 application
- DOC128: Project291 application
- DOC129: Project303 application
- DOC130: Project310 application
- DOC131: Project311 application

- DOC132: Project320 application
- DOC133: Project322 application
- DOC134: Project337 application
- DOC135: Project341 application
- DOC136: Project351 application
- DOC137: Project361 application
- DOC138: Project362 application
- DOC139: Project365 application
- DOC140: Project366 application
- DOC141: Project375 application
- DOC142: Project380 application
- DOC143: Project383 application
- DOC144: Project384 application

8.4 Instruments for data collection

8.4.1 Online survey questionnaire: Project team members (Component 1 survey)



APPEAR_III_projects --> base

19.02.2026, 09:20

Page 01

Dear APPEAR project partners,

A001

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey!

The survey is part of the **Programme Evaluation of APPEAR III**, which is currently being conducted on behalf of Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD).

By participating in this survey, you help us gather meaningful feedback on APPEAR III and inform a potential fourth phase of the programme.

The survey will take approximately **15 minutes** to complete.

Please do not use your browser's forward or back buttons while completing the questionnaire. Use only the "Next" and "Back" buttons at the bottom of the questionnaire.

If you experience any difficulties completing the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact Juliane Löw (j.loew@ceval.de), member of the evaluation team at CEval GmbH. If you have any feedback or questions regarding the evaluation, please contact the APPEAR Office (appear@oead.at). We sincerely thank you for your support!

Note on data protection:

A002

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent at any time without giving any reasons. The survey data will be collected in a pseudonymised manner, analysed in aggregated form, and reported in a way that prevents the identification of individual participants. The raw data will be stored by CEval GmbH until the completion of the evaluation in accordance with the legal provisions of the EU Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The raw data will be deleted one month after the completion of the evaluation project (expected in May 2026). You can revoke your agreement at any time. You have the right of access, the right to rectification, erasure, restriction of processing and data portability. This is possible until 9 March 2026. After this date, the pseudonymised data will already have been included in the analysis and can therefore no longer be extracted.

☐ I have taken notice of the data protection note and agree to provide my data for the purposes of this evaluation.

Page 02

What is your gender?

A003

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

In which country is your institution based?

A004

Please select from the dropdown menu below.

3 Active Filter(s)**Filter A004/F1**

If any of the following options is selected: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
Then display question/text B007 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter A004/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
Then display question/text B008 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter A004/F3

If any of the following options is selected: 3
Then hide the items 3 in question B009 (otherwise show these items)

A005

Please indicate which funding instrument applies to your project:

- ☐ Academic Partnership
- ☐ Advanced Academic Partnership
-
- ☐ I don't know

Has your project received Preparatory Funding before?

A006

The Preparatory Funding instrument supports institutions which have not yet established links with each other in elaborating a realistic and effective project proposal for an Academic Partnership.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
-
- ☐ I don't know

Page 03

Please indicate your role in the project:

A007

If you participate/have participated in more than one APPEAR project since 2021, in different roles, please note that you can select multiple answers.

- ☐ Project coordinator: I am responsible for overall project coordination and represent our project toward the APPEAR Office.
- ☐ I am a regular team member belonging to a project coordinating institution (i.e., the same institution as the project coordinator).
- ☐ Institutional coordinator at a partner institution: I coordinate all project activities within my institution and represent my institution toward the project coordinator who is the main representative of our project.
- ☐ I am/was a regular team member belonging to a partner institution.
- ☐ Institutional coordinator at an associate institution: My institution is located in a "non-priority country". Here, I coordinate/coordinated all project activities within my institution and represent it toward the project coordinator (and/or other project partners).
- ☐ APPEAR Scholarship holder working in the project (part of the project team).
- ☐ Other
-

3 Active Filter(s)**Filter A007/F1**

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text B001 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter A007/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text B002 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter A007/F3

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text B003 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

*** Note on "non-priority countries":**

A008

"Non-priority countries" to APPEAR are all countries and territories except Albania, Armenia, Austria, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Mozambique, Palestinian Territories, and Uganda.

Page 04

Please indicate what kind of institution you are associated/have been associated with during your APPEAR project involvement:

A009

- ☐ Higher education institution
- ☐ Research institution
- ☐ Non-governmental organisation (NGO) or other civil society organisation (CSO)
- ☐ Think tank
- ☐ Other
-

Which of the following academic/research fields does your project fall under?

A010

(Multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Humanities
- ☐ Social Sciences
- ☐ Natural Sciences
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Other
-

A011

What is the status of your APPEAR project?

- ☐ Ongoing
- ☐ Completed

4 Active Filter(s)

Filter A011/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 2
Then display question/text B012 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter A011/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 2
Then display question/text B014 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter A011/F3

If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display question/text B013 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter A011/F4

If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display question/text B015 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Page 05

Please indicate whether the application guidelines were useful to help you align your project proposal with programme objectives. B001

APPEAR's programme objectives include: (1) an improved scientific foundation in APPEAR partner countries, (2) increased commitment to development cooperation of Austrian Higher Education Institutions, as well as (3) a contribution to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- ☐ 1 - (Very) Useful ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 - Not at all useful ☐ I don't know

Page 06

Please select the added values you have integrated into your project: B002

Multiple answers possible

- ☐ Alignment with the priorities of the country strategies of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects
- ☐ Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy
- ☐ Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation
- ☐ Advancement of young and particularly female researchers
- ☐ Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use and research uptake
- ☐ Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country
-
- ☐ No added values have been integrated into our project.

8 Active Filter(s)

Filter B002/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Then display question/text B003 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter B002/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display the items 1 in question B003 (otherwise hide these items)

Filter B002/F3

If any of the following options is selected: 2
Then display the items 2 in question B003 (otherwise hide these items)

Filter B002/F4

If any of the following options is selected: 3
Then display the items 3 in question B003 (otherwise hide these items)

Filter B002/F5

If any of the following options is selected: 4

Then display the items 4 in question B003 (otherwise hide these items)

Filter B002/F6

If any of the following options is selected: 5

Then display the items 5 in question B003 (otherwise hide these items)

Filter B002/F7

If any of the following options is selected: 6

Then display the items 6 in question B003 (otherwise hide these items)

Filter B002/F8

If not (all of) the option(s) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, -1 is (are) selected.

Then hide question/text B003 placed later in the questionnaire

Page 07

Please rate the usefulness of the added values of your project with regards to overarching development goals:

B003

	1 - (Very) Useful	2	3	4 - Not at all useful	I don't know
Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Advancement of young and particularly female researchers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use and research uptake	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 08

Has your country or that of a project partner experienced any significant societal pressures or conflicts during the implementation period of the project?

B004

These pressures or conflicts may be of a political, economic, or social nature, or even be violent conflicts or war.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

2 Active Filter(s)

Filter B004/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text B005 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter B004/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text B006 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Page 09

Please specify the kind of pressure or conflict:

Multiple answers possible

- ☐ Political
- ☐ Economic
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Violent conflict or war

☐ Other

☐ Please specify:

Page 10

Please indicate your level of (dis-)agreement with the following statements:

	1 – I fully agree	2	3	4 – I don't agree at all	I don't know
The aforementioned pressures or conflicts affecting my (project partner's) country interfere/have interfered with our APPEAR-funded project activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Higher education and/or research in my (project partner's) country have lost societal relevance due to the aforementioned pressures or conflicts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Higher education and/or research in my (project partner's) country have become less of a political priority due to the aforementioned pressures or conflicts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Higher education and/or research cooperation can contribute to the development of solutions to the aforementioned pressures or conflicts, or can mitigate their negative consequences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 11

Please indicate whether the APPEAR programme contributes to any of the following aspects at your institution:

8007

	1 – Very high contribution	2	3	4 – No contribution at all	I don't know
Quality of research and/or teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Research output	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Global visibility / Internationalisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Modernisation of curricula or research agendas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Younger academic workforce	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Infrastructure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of student services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strengthened quality assurance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Are there any further aspects at your institution that the APPEAR programme contributes or has contributed to?

8008

If so, please specify:

Page 12

Please indicate whether you agree with the following statements:

8009

	1 – I fully agree	2	3	4 – I don't agree at all	I don't know
APPEAR is an instrument of science and research cooperation that can contribute to a culture of peace .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has increased my openness to other cultures and perspectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has raised my awareness of the influence of cultural differences on communication styles .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has helped prepare me for mitigating and/or resolving cultural conflicts in intercultural teams.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has inspired me to pursue new ideas and directions in my field of research.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 13

Have you maintained formal or informal contact with your project partners?

B012

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2 Active Filter(s)**Filter B012/F1**

If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display question/text B014 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter B012/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 2
Then hide the questionnaire page(s) 14B01415 (otherwise display them)

Do you expect to maintain formal or informal contact with your project partners?

B013

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2 Active Filter(s)**Filter B013/F1**

If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display question/text B015 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter B013/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 2
Then hide the questionnaire page(s) 14B01415 (otherwise display them)

Page 14

14B01415

What kind of contact have you maintained?

B014

- ☐ Knowledge sharing related to your field of research
- ☐ Cooperation in the context of a new research project
- ☐ Informal communication via social media
- ☐ Other
- Please specify:

What kind of contact do you expect to maintain?

B015

- ☐ Knowledge sharing related to your field of research
- ☐ Cooperation in the context of a new research project
- ☐ Informal communication via social media
- ☐ Other
- Please specify:

Page 15

Please indicate your level of (dis-)agreement with the following statements:

B016

	1 – I fully agree	2	3	4 – I don't agree at all	I don't know
My participation in the APPEAR programme has helped me reflect on what I value at my home institution .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has helped me reflect on how my home institution might evolve .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How do you rate the visibility of the APPEAR programme at your institution?

B017

1 - (Very) High	2	3	4 - Low	I don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 16

Please indicate whether you agree with the following statements:

B010

	1 – I fully agree	2	3	4 – I don't agree at all	I don't know
Our project partners from abroad are trustworthy collaborators.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have experienced our project partners from abroad as willing to collaborate and share resources.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
At times, misunderstandings arose from cultural differences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has increased my comfort collaborating with people from other countries.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 17

Please indicate how clear the following procedures and instruments of the APPEAR programme were to you:

C001

	1 – Very clear	2	3	4 – Not at all clear	I don't know
APPEAR Guidelines for Applicants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eligibility criteria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Application procedures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Application forms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Application deadlines	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mechanism of project selection	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Budget provisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Project duration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reporting obligations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Different funding instruments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 18

Did any unforeseen challenges or barriers emerge which have risked or even temporarily interrupted the smooth implementation of your project? C003

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4 Active Filter(s)

Filter C003/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text C004 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter C003/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text C005 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter C003/F3

If any of the following options is selected: 2

Then hide question/text C006 placed later in the questionnaire

Filter C003/F4

If any of the following options is selected: 2

Then hide question/text C007 placed later in the questionnaire

Page 19

Please specify the kind of challenge or barrier that you have faced: C004

Page 20

Did you or any other project team member reach out to the APPEAR Office to seek help in overcoming this challenge or barrier? C005

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

2 Active Filter(s)

Filter C005/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text C006 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter C005/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text C007 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Page 21

Please rate the APPEAR Office's willingness in assisting you overcome your challenge/barrier:

C006

☐ 1 – Very high

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4 – Very low

☐ I don't know

Please rate the effectiveness of the APPEAR Office's support in finding a solution to your challenge/barrier:

C007

☐ 1 – Very effective

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4 – Not at all effective

☐ I don't know

Page 22

Overall, how do you rate the support provided by the APPEAR Office throughout all phases of your programme participation:

C019

☐ 1 – Very helpful

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4 – Not helpful at all

☐ I don't know

1 Active Filter(s)

Filter C019/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 3, 4

Then display question/text C020 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Page 23

Please specify briefly how the APPEAR Office could improve its services provided to the project teams:

C020

Page 24

Facilitating factors

C008

Please name up to three factors that contributed to the successful achievement of your project objectives:

Page 25

Hindering factors

C009

Please name up to three factors that hindered the successful achievement of your project objectives:

```

PHP code
if (value('A004') == 3) {
    question('C010');
} else {
    goToPage('28C014');
}

```

question('C010')

C010

Please rate the impact that APPEAR has had on...

	1 - High impact	2	3	4 - No impact	I don't know
... your awareness of development-related issues and research questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... your interest in development-related issues and research questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... the impetus for the introduction of development-related teaching content at your institution.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

```

PHP code
if (value('A004') == 3) {
    question('C011');
} else {
    goToPage('28C014');
}

```

question('C011')

C011

Please indicate to which extent the following statements apply to you:

Prior to our APPEAR-funded project, ...

	1 - I fully agree	2	3	4 - I don't agree at all	I don't know
... I was already aware of development-related issues and research questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... I was already interested in development-related issues and research questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... development-related teaching content was already widely established in my higher education/research environment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 28

PHP code

```
if (in_array(value('C010_01'), [1, 2, 3]) ||
in_array(value('C010_02'), [1, 2, 3]) ||
in_array(value('C010_03'), [1, 2, 3])) {
    question('C012');
}
```

question('C012')

C012

Development-related learnings

Please provide up to three examples of development-related learnings from your participation in the APPEAR programme:

Page 29

PHP code

```
if (in_array(value('C010_01'), [1, 2, 3]) ||
in_array(value('C010_02'), [1, 2, 3]) ||
in_array(value('C010_03'), [1, 2, 3])) {
    question('C013');
}
```

question('C013')

C013

Impact on your academic and/or scientific work

Please share up to three specific consequences that your APPEAR participation has had for your academic and/or scientific work:

Page 30
28C014

Please indicate whether you were able to...

C014

	1 – Absolutely	2	3	4 – Not at all	I don't know
... meet relevant research and/or teaching objectives with your APPEAR project.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... contribute to institutional capacity development through your APPEAR project.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 31

Please rate the suitability of the provisions regarding the following parameters in the context of your specific project:

C015

	1 – Very suitable	2	3	4 – Not at all suitable	I don't know
Maximum duration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Budget provisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Partner selection requirements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reporting obligations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eligibility criteria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scholarship option	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 32

PHP code

```

if (
in_array(value('C015_01'), [2,3,4]) ||
in_array(value('C015_02'), [3,4]) ||
in_array(value('C015_03'), [3,4]) ||
in_array(value('C015_04'), [3,4]) ||
in_array(value('C015_05'), [3,4]) ||
in_array(value('C015_06'), [3,4])) {
    question('C016');
}

```

question('C016')

C016

Please specify briefly what could be done differently in terms of the programme design of APPEAR to better address your project needs:

Page 33
31C017

How do you rate the option to embed Master's or PhD scholarships into APPEAR projects in terms of...

C017

	1 - Very useful	2	3	4 - Not at all useful	I don't know
... achieving relevant research objectives?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... contribution to institutional capacity development?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... facilitating field studies?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 34

Please specify if you think there are other benefits for the project resulting from embedded scholarships:

C018

Page 35

Please rate the appropriateness of the administrative work related to your project's APPEAR funding (e.g., application, reporting obligations).

D001

☐ 1 - Absolutely appropriate
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4 - Not appropriate at all
 ☐ I don't know

Page 36

Do you have any further comments or suggestions on how the APPEAR programme could be improved?

E001

If so, please specify:

Last Page

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

We would like to thank you very much for helping us.

Your answers were submitted, you may close the browser window or tab now.

8.4.2 Online survey questionnaire: Scholarship holders and alumni (Component 2 survey)



APPEAR_III_scholarships -- base

19.02.2026, 09:23

Page 01

Dear APPEAR scholarship holders and alumni,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey!

The survey is part of the **Programme Evaluation of APPEAR III**, which is currently being conducted on behalf of Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD).

By participating in this survey, you are helping us to gather meaningful feedback on APPEAR III and inform a potential fourth phase of the programme.

The survey will take approximately **10 minutes** to complete.

Please do not use your browser's forward or back buttons while completing the questionnaire. Use only the "Next" and "Back" buttons at the bottom of the questionnaire.

If you experience any difficulties completing the questionnaire, please do not hesitate to contact Juliane Löw (j.loew@ceval.de), member of the evaluation team at CEval GmbH. If you have any feedback or questions regarding the evaluation, please contact the APPEAR Office (appear@oead.at). We sincerely thank you for your support!

Note on data protection:

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent at any time without giving any reasons. The survey data will be collected in a pseudonymised manner, analysed in aggregated form, and reported in a way that prevents the identification of individual participants. The raw data will be stored by CEval GmbH until the completion of the evaluation in accordance with the legal provisions of the EU Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The raw data will be deleted one month after the completion of the evaluation project (expected in May 2026). You can revoke your agreement at any time. You have the right of access, the right to rectification, erasure, restriction of processing and data portability. This is possible until 9 March 2026. After this date, the pseudonymised data will already have been included in the analysis and can therefore no longer be extracted.

☐ I have taken notice of the data protection note and agree to provide my data for the purposes of this evaluation.

Page 02

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Institutional home country: In which country is your home institution based?

Please select from the dropdown menu below. By "home institution" we mean the university or research institution in your home country to which you are/were affiliated during your APPEAR-funded studies.

[Please choose] ▼

Please indicate which scholarship you are receiving or have received:

- ☐ Master's scholarship – embedded in an APPEAR partnership project
- ☐ PhD scholarship – embedded in an APPEAR partnership project
- ☐ PhD scholarship – individual (i.e., not embedded in an APPEAR partnership project)

3 Active Filter(s)**Filter A006/F1**

If any of the following options is selected: 1, 2
Then display question/text C015 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter A006/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 1, 2
Then display the items 4 in question C013 (otherwise hide these items)

Filter A006/F3

If any of the following options is selected: 3
Then hide the items 4 in question C013 (otherwise show these items)

Page 03

Home institution: While pursuing your Master's/PhD studies in Austria, which type of institution in your home country were you affiliated with? A009

☐ Higher education institution

☐ Research institution

☐ Other

☐ Please specify:

Which discipline do your APPEAR-funded Master's/PhD studies belong to? A010

☐ Humanities

☐ Social Sciences

☐ Natural Sciences

☐ Engineering

☐ Agricultural Sciences

☐ Veterinary Medicine

☐ Other

☐ Please specify:

A011

Please indicate in which programme phase your APPEAR scholarship was granted:

☐ APPEAR I (2009-2014)

☐ APPEAR II (2015-2020)

☐ APPEAR III (2021-2027)

What is the status of your Master's/PhD studies? A012

☐ Ongoing

☐ Completed

14 Active Filter(s)**Filter A012/F1**

If any of the following options is selected: 3
Then display question/text A013 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter A012/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 3
Then hide question/text C002 placed later in the questionnaire

Filter A012/F3

If any of the following options is selected: 3
Then hide question/text C003 placed later in the questionnaire

Filter A012/F4

If any of the following options is selected: 3
Then hide question/text C004 placed later in the questionnaire

Filter A012/F5

If any of the following options is selected: 3
Then hide question/text C005 placed later in the questionnaire

Filter A012/F6

If any of the following options is selected: 3
Then hide question/text C006 placed later in the questionnaire

Filter A012/F7

If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display question/text **A015** placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)
Filter A012/F8
If any of the following options is selected: 2
Then display question/text **B010** placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)
Filter A012/F9
If any of the following options is selected: 2
Then display question/text **B015** placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)
Filter A012/F10
If any of the following options is selected: 2
Then display question/text **B016** placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)
Filter A012/F11
If any of the following options is selected: 2
Then display question/text **B012** placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)
Filter A012/F12
If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display question/text **B011** placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)
Filter A012/F13
If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display question/text **B013** placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)
Filter A012/F14
If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then hide the questionnaire page(s) **15B01716** (otherwise display them)

Page 04

Are you still receiving your APPEAR scholarship?

A015

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Page 05

Is or was your (institutional) home country affected by any major pressures or conflicts at the societal level (i.e., political/economic/social pressures or conflicts, or violent conflict or war) while you were pursuing your Master's/PhD studies?

B002

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

- ☐ I don't know

2 Active Filter(s)

Filter B002/F1
If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display question/text **B003** placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)
Filter B002/F2
If any of the following options is selected: 1
Then display question/text **B004** placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Page 06

Please specify the kind of pressure or conflict:

B003

Multiple answers possible

- ☐ Political
- ☐ Economic
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Violent conflict or war
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Please specify:

Page 07

Please indicate your level of (dis-)agreement with the following statements:

B004

	1 – I fully agree	2	3	4 – I don't agree at all	I don't know
The aforementioned pressures or conflicts affecting my country interfere with my APPEAR-funded studies/research activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Higher education and/or research in my country have lost societal relevance due to the aforementioned pressures or conflicts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Higher education and/or research in my country have become less of a political priority due to the aforementioned pressures or conflicts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Higher education and/or research cooperation can contribute to the development of solutions to the aforementioned pressures or conflicts, or can mitigate their negative consequences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 08

Please indicate your level of (dis-)agreement with the following statements:

B005

	1 – I fully agree	2	3	4 – I don't agree at all	I don't know
APPEAR is an instrument of science and research cooperation that can contribute to a culture of peace.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Programme participation has increased my openness to other cultures and perspectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Programme participation has increased my comfort collaborating with people from other countries.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has raised my awareness of the influence of cultural differences on communication styles.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has helped prepare me for mitigating and/or resolving cultural conflicts in intercultural teams.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has inspired me to pursue new ideas and directions in my field of research.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

PHP code

```
if (value('A012') == 2) {  
    question('B010');  
}
```

question('B010')

B010

Have you maintained formal or informal contact with any of the following groups of people from your Austrian host institution?**Please specify:**

Multiple answers possible

☐ Fellow Master's/PhD students☐ Academic staff☐ Other☐ Please specify:☐☐ No, I have not stayed in contact with anyone from my host institution.

PHP code

```
if (value('A012') == 1) {  
    question('B011');  
}
```

question('B011')

B011

Do you expect to maintain formal or informal contact with any of the following groups of people from your Austrian host institution? Please specify:

Multiple answers possible

☐ Fellow Master's/PhD students☐ Academic staff☐ Other☐ Please specify:☐ No, I do not expect to stay in contact with anyone from my host institution.

PHP code

```
if (
    in_array(value('B010'), [1, 2, 3])
) {
    question('B012');
}
```

question('B012')

B012

What kind of contact have you maintained?

Multiple answers possible

- ☐ Knowledge sharing related to your field of research
- ☐ Cooperation in the context of a new research project
- ☐ Informal communication via social media
- ☐ Other
- Please specify:

PHP code

```
if (
    in_array(value('B011'), [1, 2, 3])
) {
    question('B013');
}
```

question('B013')

B013

What kind of contact do you expect to maintain?

Multiple answers possible

- ☐ Knowledge sharing related to your field of research
- ☐ Cooperation in the context of a new research project
- ☐ Informal communication via social media
- ☐ Other
- Please specify:

Please indicate your level of (dis-)agreement with the following statements:

B009

	1 – I fully agree	2	3	4 – I don't agree at all	I don't know
My participation in the APPEAR programme has helped me reflect on what I value at my home institution .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My participation in the APPEAR programme has helped me reflect on how my home institution might evolve .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How do you rate the visibility of the APPEAR programme at your home institution?

B014

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1 – (Very) High	2	3	4 – Low	I don't know

Page 12

Please indicate whether your APPEAR-funded studies contribute to any of the following aspects at your home institution.

B007

	1 - (Very) High contribution	2	3	4 - No contribution at all	Not applicable / I don't know
Quality of research and/or teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Research output (e.g., publications, journal articles, conference papers, book chapters, datasets for further research projects, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Global visibility / Internationalisation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Modernisation of curricula or research agendas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Younger academic workforce	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Quality of supervision of students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 13

Are there any further aspects at your home institution that your APPEAR-funded studies contribute or have contributed to?

B008

If so, please specify:

Page 14

Have you started or completed any further academic qualifications (PhD/post-doc) after your APPEAR-funded degree?

B015

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please select the answer that best describes your current employment status:

B016

I am...

- ☐ ... employed by or pursuing my PhD/post-doc studies **at my home institution**.
- ☐ ... employed by or pursuing my PhD/post-doc studies **at my Austrian host institution**.
- ☐ ... employed by or pursuing my PhD/post-doc studies **at another institution/organisation/company etc.**
- ☐ ... currently unemployed.

1 Active Filter(s)

Filter B016/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 3

Then display the questionnaire page(s) 15B01718 (otherwise hide them)

Page 15
15B01716

Please specify what kind of institution you are currently working at:

B017

Multiple answers possible

- ☐ Higher education institution
- ☐ Research institution
- ☐ International organisation
- ☐ Civil society organisation
- ☐ Private sector
- ☐ Other

Please specify:

Please specify where you are currently working:

B018

- ☐ Home country
- ☐ Austria
- ☐ Other country

Page 16
16C001

Were the following APPEAR guidelines and procedures clear to you when applying for the scholarship?

C001

	1 - Very clear	2	3	4 - Not clear at all	I don't know
APPEAR Guidelines for Applicants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eligibility criteria	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Application procedures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Application forms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Selection process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scholarship funding (monthly rate, travel costs, and additional grants)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 17

Do you have any further feedback or recommendations regarding the clarity of the APPEAR scholarship guidelines and procedures?

C018

If so, please specify:

Page 18

Did any unforeseen challenges or barriers emerge which have posed challenges to or even temporarily interrupted the smooth continuation of your Master's/PhD studies? C002

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4 Active Filter(s)

Filter C002/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text C003 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter C002/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text C004 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter C002/F3

If any of the following options is selected: 2

Then hide question/text C005 placed later in the questionnaire

Filter C002/F4

If any of the following options is selected: 2

Then hide question/text C006 placed later in the questionnaire

Page 19

Please describe the kind of challenge or barrier you have faced: C003

Page 20

Did you reach out to the APPEAR Office to seek help in overcoming this challenge or barrier? C004

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2 Active Filter(s)

Filter C004/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text C005 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Filter C004/F2

If any of the following options is selected: 1

Then display question/text C006 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Page 21

Please rate the APPEAR Office's willingness in assisting you overcome your challenge/barrier:

C005

☐ 1 – Very high
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4 – Very low
 ☐ I don't know

Please rate the effectiveness of the APPEAR Office's support in finding a solution to your challenge/barrier:

C006

☐ 1 – Very effective
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4 – Not effective at all
 ☐ I don't know

Page 22

Overall, how do you rate the support provided by the APPEAR Office throughout all phases of your scholarship?

C007

☐ 1 – Very helpful
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4 – Not helpful at all
 ☐ I don't know

1 Active Filter(s)

Filter C007/F1

If any of the following options is selected: 3, 4

Then display question/text C016 placed later in the questionnaire (otherwise hide)

Page 23

Please specify briefly how the APPEAR Office could improve its services provided to scholarship holders:

C016

Page 24

Facilitating factors:

C008

Please name up to three factors that contributed to the successful achievement of your study objectives.

Page 25

Hindering factors:

C009

Please name up to three factors that hindered successful achievement of your study objectives.

Page 26

Please rate the suitability of the following scholarship characteristics for your specific studies:

C013

	1 – Very suitable	2	3	4 – Very unsuitable	I don't know
Maximum scholarship duration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Financing of travel costs and additional grants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Monthly scholarship amount	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Option to participate in a larger research project as part of the embedded scholarship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 27
25C012

PHP code

```
if (
    in_array(value('C013_01'), [3, 4]) ||
    in_array(value('C013_02'), [3, 4]) ||
    in_array(value('C013_03'), [3, 4]) ||
    in_array(value('C013_04'), [3, 4])
) {
    question('C012');
} else {
    goToPage('26C015');
}
```

question('C012')

C012

Please specify briefly what could be done differently in terms of APPEAR scholarship provisions to better address your academic needs:

Page 28
26C015

How do you rate the added value of embedding Master's or PhD scholarships into APPEAR projects in terms of... C015

	1 - (Very) High	2	3	4 - Very low	I don't know
Achieving relevant research objectives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Contribution to institutional capacity development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Facilitating field studies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 29
27D901

Please rate the appropriateness of the administrative work related to your APPEAR scholarship (e.g., application, reporting obligations). D001

☐ 1 - Absolutely appropriate
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4 - Not appropriate at all
 ☐ I don't know

Page 30

Do you have any further comments or suggestions for the improvement of APPEAR scholarships? E001

If so, please specify:

Last Page

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

We would like to thank you very much for helping us.

Your answers were submitted, you may close the browser window or tab now.

Juliane Löw - 2026

8.4.3 Interview guide: BMEIA, ADA, and OeAD stakeholders

Introduction

- Short introduction of the interviewer and CEval
- Background, objectives, and purpose of the evaluation
- Information on data protection, confidentiality, informed consent
- Overview of the interview

Information about the interviewee

1. Please briefly introduce yourself.
 - a. Name, institution, role, gender
2. Please describe your responsibilities/tasks in that role.

Relevance

3. What are the key objectives of the APPEAR III programme in the field of Higher Education? What role did/do European and international development strategies play during the design of the programme, and the selection of projects and scholarship recipients?
4. OeAD only: To what Sustainable Development Goals does the programme/do the projects contribute to? Can you name examples?
 - a. Which mechanisms are in place to ensure project contributions to the SDGs?
5. ADA/BMEIA only: How relevant is the APPEAR programme for Austrian Development Policy?
2. More specifically, how relevant is the APPEAR programme for the ADA portfolio in higher education? OeAD only: What feedback do you get from the applicants on the guidelines? Do you have any indication that the guidelines have helped applicants develop project proposals in line with programme objectives? If so, why, how?
 - a. Are there any parts of the guidelines that, from your point of view, are particularly important to enhance the relevance of submitted applications?
 - b. Are there any parts of the guidelines that, in your opinion, are less important to enhance the relevance of submitted applications and which, in consequence, should be reviewed?
6. OeAD only: In your experience, how do applicants respond to the *added values* which the guidelines present as optional (i.e., alignment with ADC priorities, inclusion, South-South co-operation, gender, practical orientation, and ownership)?
7. [Optional introduction: Guidelines provided to APPEAR applicants invite them to integrate so-called added values into their project proposals which comprise *alignment with ADC priorities, inclusion, South-South cooperation, gender, practical orientation, and ownership*. Integrating these added values into project proposals is optional.] Do you think this approach can enhance the relevance of the APPEAR programme?
 - a. How relevant do you consider these added values to be in the context of ADC in general?
 - a. Are there any mechanisms in place to promote the integration of added values into projects, e.g., incentives, consideration of added values in the selection process, or other?
 - b. Do you think that a greater emphasis should be placed on the integration of added values? If so, at which stage of programme implementation, how, and why?
8. To what extent do the programme's mandatory *basic principles* (i.e., *participatory approach, a concept of culturally open-minded knowledge, practically and empirically oriented approach, bottom-up and demand-driven approach, gender sensitivity, leave no one behind, and open access – open data*) contribute to the relevance of the APPEAR programme?
 - a. Are there any mechanisms in place to ensure adherence to the basic principles?
 - i. To what extent have they proven to be effective for achieving the programme's overall objectives (i.e., improved scientific foundation in the

partner countries, increased commitment to development cooperation of Austrian HEI, contribution to achieving the SDGs)?

9. Please briefly outline the programme design and the rationale behind it. How relevant do you deem the programme design in the context of regional political and geopolitical changes, i.e., political/economic/social pressures or conflicts, or violent conflicts or wars affecting APPEAR's partner countries?
 - a. To what extent do thematic focus, APPEAR's target countries, and the higher education and research sector remain relevant amid current regional political and geopolitical changes?
 - b. Is the programme concept regularly revised in response to these changes and currently up to date?
 - c. Do you have any indication that the programme can promote a culture of peace? If so, how, why, through which actions/services etc.? Can you provide examples (*refer to projects*)?
Keywords: explicit governmental support, visibility, attitude change, intercultural competence, network formation, institutional transfer
10. *OeAD only*: Can you briefly outline the projects in Armenia? What are their goals, measures, partners, differences, and similarities?
11. *OeAD and ADC staff in Armenia only*: What are the national development and education strategies in Armenia? Are there any similarities to the Austrian Development Cooperation strategies or any interesting disparities? What role do they play/how are they reflected in the projects (project proposals)?
12. To what extent does the programme design foster the alignment of projects with national strategies of APPEAR's partner countries?
 - d. *Ask for specific examples/elements of national strategies reflected in APPEAR III.*
13. *OeAD and ADC staff in Armenia only*: What are the key needs of higher education institutions in Armenia? To what extent does the programme meet these needs?
Note to the interviewer: Needs as identified by the Armenian government include international competitiveness, modernization of management and curricula, younger academia, internationalization, infrastructure, quality assurance.
14. *OeAD and ADC staff in Armenia only*: Have any relevant political developments occurred in Armenia during programme implementation? (*Ask for specific examples.*)
 - a. If so, have these developments affected project implementation? Please provide specific examples.
 - b. Have these developments affected the relevance of the APPEAR programme to Armenian partners? If so, how?
15. *OeAD and ADC staff in Armenia only*: Is there something that can or should be done to maintain or increase the programme's relevance to Armenian HEI and research institutions?

Effectiveness

16. Please outline the main procedures of the programme, such as the application procedures, the selection mechanism, funding timelines, communication between the APPEAR Office and applicants/scholarship-holders/project staff, etc.
 - a. To what extent have these procedures of the programme enabled effective project implementation? Please specify enabling but also hindering factors.

- b. Have informational material and administrative tools such as guidelines, application forms, report templates, etc. proven useful? Please specify if there are any aspects that you consider particularly useful or need to be improved.
17. Please outline the different funding instruments (*i.e., types of APPEAR partnerships and scholarships*). Which are the respective strengths and weaknesses of these instruments?
 - a. Did the eligibility criteria and provisions regarding budget and project partners lead to high quality project proposals? Were there any notable differences in this regard among the different instruments?
 - b. Did these criteria and provisions enable smooth project implementation? Were there any notable differences in this regard among the different instruments?
18. *OeAD only*: Have recommendations on procedures and funding instruments from previous evaluations been addressed by management responses or adjustments to the programme? If so, please elaborate providing specific examples.
19. *OeAD and ADA only*: How would you describe the mode of communication between the APPEAR Office and ADA in terms of frequency, quality, and formality?
 - a. Are there any aspects that you would highlight as facilitating effective programme implementation? If so, please specify. (*Ask for specific examples.*)
 - b. Are there any aspects that you would highlight as hindering effective programme implementation? If so, please specify. (*Ask for specific examples.*)

Quality (in terms of communication medium, communication outcomes, and common understanding)

Formality (in terms of clear roles and communication procedures) of communication between the APPEAR Office and ADA
20. *OeAD only*: Have there been any unforeseen challenges or barriers during programme and project implementation that you had to deal with? If so, please provide a specific example or two, and describe how you responded.
21. One of the programme objectives is to raise awareness and increase the visibility of development-related issues, teaching, and research within the Austrian academic and scientific community. Do you think this objective has been or is being achieved? How has the programme resonated within the Austrian participating institutions?
22. Have the funded projects in Component 1 met your expectations in terms of quality of the proposals, achievement of project objectives, and contribution to institutional capacity building?
 - a. What role did the parameters of the instruments play in this regard? (*max. duration, budget, partner selection, reporting obligations, selection criteria, ...*)
23. *OeAD only*: To what extent have the funded scholars in Component 2 met your expectations in terms of academic development?
 - a. What role did the parameters of the scholarship instruments play in this regard? (*max. duration, budget, eligibility criteria, ...*)
24. How does Component 2 (embedded PhD and Master's scholarships) support Component 1 (Academic Partnerships) – and vice versa?
 - a. Do you think that embedded scholarships effectively support Component 1 in meeting relevant research and/or teaching objectives?
 - b. Do you think that embedded scholarships effectively contribute to institutional capacity development? If so, how, why?

25. *OeAD only*: Please describe how you have supported Armenian APPEAR projects during application and implementation phases.
 - a. Which kind of support was needed the most (e.g., technical guidance, coordination, administrative support)?
 - b. Would you say that the support that you and your colleagues provided to the Armenian projects effectively strengthened their implementation? If so, how? (*Ask for specific examples.*)
26. From your point of view, which facilitating factors allowed APPEAR III to achieve its objectives? Which factors hindered APPEAR III from achieving (some of) its objectives?

Efficiency

27. The evaluation is expected to provide recommendations for simplifying the programme complexity. What are the main aspects that make the programme complex, in your view?
Ask for new added values, basic principles, countries, instruments, global strategies / cross-cutting issues.
 - a. In your experience, what are the main challenges stemming from the programme's complexity?
 - b. Has the programme complexity, or the challenges stemming from it, increased compared to previous programme phases? If so, to what extent?
 - c. Do you think (increased) programme complexity affects the operational efficiency of the APPEAR programme? If so, how?
 - d. *Find out whether there has been increased discontent among these stakeholders with their respective administrative burden.*
28. Where do you see the greatest potentials for simplification of this programme complexity?

Closure

29. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience with the APPEAR III implementation?

8.4.4 Interview/FGD guide: Project and institutional coordinators

Introduction

- Short introduction of the interviewer and CEval
- Background, objectives, and purpose of the evaluation
- Information on data protection, confidentiality, informed consent
- Overview of the interview

Information about the interviewee

1. Please briefly introduce yourself/yourselfs.
 - a. *Name, institution, role, gender*
2. Please describe your responsibilities/tasks in that role.
3. Please describe how your institution's participation in the APPEAR programme was initiated and which funding instrument your project belongs to.

Relevance

4. Please describe what you understand to be the main objectives of the APPEAR programme.
 - a. How does your project align with these objectives?
5. Please recall the application process that you went through for your project and the guidelines that the APPEAR Office provided to assist you with the development of your project proposal.
 - a. To what extent did you find these guidelines helpful?
 - b. How easy or difficult was it for you to align your proposal with programme objectives? Did the guidelines help you in this regard? If so, how?
 - c. Were all project partners actively involved in the administrative procedures and the application process?
6. How relevant is the APPEAR funding to your scientific work? Would you have been able to implement your project without funding from the APPEAR programme? Were there any alternative funding sources available when you applied for the APPEAR programme?
 - a. Have you participated in comparable funding programmes before? If so, what do you think are APPEAR's comparative strengths/advantages? What are APPEAR's comparative weaknesses?
7. The programme guidelines invite applicants to incorporate so-called 'added values' into their project proposals. These added values include *alignment with priorities of the Austrian development cooperation, inclusion, South-South cooperation, gender, practical orientation, and ownership*. Have you incorporated any of these added values to your project proposal?
 - a. If so, please explain which and how these added values were relevant to your project.
8. In contrast to the added values, APPEAR's basic principles are mandatory. Were you able to incorporate and comply with all of them? Are there any basic principles that you found more difficult to comply with than others? Which of them were rather easy, which of them rather difficult, and why?
Basic principles: participatory approach, a concept of culturally open-minded knowledge, practically and empirically oriented approach, bottom-up and demand-driven approach, gender sensitivity, leave no one behind, and open access – open data.
9. OeAD's programme reports stress that several of its partner countries are affected by regional political and geopolitical changes. Have you experienced any changes of this kind that have not only affected your country but also have had implications for your work or the higher education and research sector in general? If so, please elaborate on these changes and their implications.
E.g., political/economic/social pressures or conflicts, or violent conflict or war
 - a. Do you think that these changes affect the relevance of the APPEAR programme? If so, do you consider these changes to make the programme less or more relevant? Why?
 - b. The programme focusses on strengthening institutional capacities in higher education and research for development related to eradicating poverty and meeting basic infrastructural needs, human rights, sustainable economic development, environmental protection, as well as humanitarian aid, peace, and conflict prevention. Does this thematic focus remain relevant amid the changes that you are experiencing/have experienced in your country [countries]?
 - c. To what extent does the higher education and research sector in general remain relevant amid these changes?

10. *Relevance to peace work – attitude change/intercultural competence*: What was it like for you to work with people with a different cultural background?
 - a. Do you think that the programme has contributed to your team members' and your own intercultural competence? If so, how?
11. *Relevance to peace work – network formation*: Do you expect to stay in contact with project partners after the finalisation of your project? If so, please specify whether you plan to stay in contact in the context of formal settings or rather informally.
12. *Relevance to peace work – institutional transfer*: Is there anything that particularly impressed you about your partners' institutions and that you would like to see at your own institution, e.g., in terms of research or teaching methods, workflows, habits, or even administrative procedures? If so, please provide specific examples. (FGD: max. 1-2 examples per participant)
 - a. Or quite the opposite: Is there anything that you learned appreciate more about your own institution? If so, please provide specific examples. (FGD: max. 1-2 examples per participant)
 - b. Do you think your project partners have also learned from you? If so, what is it?

Effectiveness

13. How did you experience the administrative procedures of both the application phase and the implementation phase of the APPEAR programme? Were these procedures – incl. deadlines, timelines, forms, and templates, etc. – clear to you, allowing you to effectively implement your project?
Procedures such as selection mechanism, application procedures, application deadlines, funding timelines, communication between project staff and the APPEAR Office, guidelines, application forms, report templates.
 - a. Were there any major difficulties or hurdles that impeded you from implementing your project smoothly? If so, which and how did you overcome them?
Examples for difficulties/hurdles: audits, finance reports, questions regarding application process
 - b. What was your communication with the APPEAR Office like? Did the APPEAR Office assist you effectively overcome those hurdles? (Ask for communication topics, cooperativeness, and usefulness.)
 - c. Based on your experience, can you think of anything that the APPEAR Office could do to improve these administrative procedures?
14. Have the funding provisions – such as eligibility criteria, budget requirements, and provisions regarding partner selection – enabled effective project implementation? Please explain to what extent this was or wasn't the case, and specify your specific funding instrument (i.e., Preparatory Funding, (Advanced) Academic Partnership, or Extended Impact Partnership).
 - a. Was information regarding these provisions easily available? Where?
15. Have you faced any unforeseen challenges or barriers during project implementation?
 - a. *If yes*: Please specify and describe how you dealt with them and to what extent the APPEAR Office assisted you in overcoming those challenges.
 - b. *Ask for workload division and performance among project partners, in particular the overall project coordination.*
16. How satisfied are you with your project implementation overall? Have you achieved all of your project objectives or, if your project is ongoing, is it likely that you are going to achieve them?

- a. Which factors have facilitated/are facilitating the achievement of these objectives?
Which factors have hindered/are hindering your project from achieving (some of) its objectives?
- 17. Did the parameters of your funding instrument, such as the maximum duration, budget, partner selection, reporting obligations, and selection criteria allow you to achieve relevant research or teaching objectives?
- 18. *Austrian coordinators only:* Do you think that the APPEAR programme is effective in raising awareness of development-related issues and research questions among the Austrian academic and scientific community? If so, what makes you think that? (E.g., development-related research has increased)
 - a. If so, has this led to any changes at the faculty level, such as new teaching content, thematic shifts, new partnerships, or other?
 - b. Could you name one or two specific examples of your development-related learnings from your APPEAR project?
 - c. Does/Did your participation in the APPEAR programme have any consequences for your individual activities in the research community or for your career path?
- 19. Do you think the funding has been successful in contributing to capacity building/capacity development in your partners' HEI/research institution? If so, how? (*Ask for improved research, teaching, and management capacities. → OC1*)
- 20. Did any of your team members hold an APPEAR scholarship that was embedded in your project? If so:
 - a. Do you think it is mutually supportive to combine APPEAR projects with APPEAR scholarships? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this combination? (*Ask for specific examples (1) of how embedded scholarships support the projects in meeting relevant research and/or teaching objectives, and (2) of how they contribute to institutional capacity development.*)
 - b. Do you think the scholarship conditions, such as the maximum duration, budget, and eligibility criteria, were appropriate? If not, why?
 - c. Has the funded scholar met your expectations in terms of academic development? If so, how? If not, why not?
- 21. *For project coordinators having previously submitted an APPEAR project proposal that was rejected:* How did you experience the rejection of your previous project proposal? What did you think about the reviewers' comments? What was different in your approved project proposal?

Efficiency

- 22. Were you able to meet all application and further administrative requirements with reasonable effort? If not, please explain.
 - a. Do you have any suggestions on how administrative requirements and procedures could be simplified?

Closure

- 23. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience with the APPEAR programme or would you like to make any suggestions on improving the programme?

Closing remarks and appreciation for the interviewee's time.

8.4.5 FGD guide: Regular project team members and further beneficiaries (Armenia)

Introduction

- Short introduction of the interviewer and CEval
- Background, objectives, and purpose of the evaluation
- Information on data protection, confidentiality, informed consent
- Overview of the interview

Information about the interviewee

1. Please briefly introduce yourself/yourselves.
 - a. *Name, institution, role, gender*
2. Please describe your responsibilities/tasks in that role.

Relevance

3. How relevant is the APPEAR funding to your [scientific] work/academic development? What would have been different without the funding?
4. OeAD's programme reports stress that several of its partner countries are affected by regional political and geopolitical changes. Have you experienced any changes of this kind that have not only affected your country but also have had implications for your work or the higher education and research sector in general? If so, please elaborate on these changes and their implications.

E.g., political/economic/social pressures or conflicts, or violent conflict or war

 - a. Do you think that these changes affect the relevance of the APPEAR programme? If so, do you consider these changes to make the programme less or more relevant? Why?
 - b. The programme focusses on strengthening institutional capacities in higher education and research for development related to eradicating poverty and meeting basic infrastructural needs, human rights, sustainable economic development, environmental protection, as well as humanitarian aid, peace, and conflict prevention. Does this thematic focus remain relevant amid the changes that you are experiencing/have experienced in your country [countries]?
 - c. To what extent does the higher education and research sector in general remain relevant amid these changes?
5. *Relevance to peace work – attitude change/intercultural competence*: What was it like for you to work with people with a different cultural background?
 - a. Do you think that the programme has contributed to your team members' and your own intercultural competence? If so, how?
6. *Relevance to peace work – network formation*: Do you expect to stay in contact with project partners after the finalisation of your project? If so, please specify whether you plan to stay in contact in the context of formal settings or rather informally.
7. *Relevance to peace work – institutional transfer*: Is there anything that particularly impressed you about your partners' institutions and that you would like to see at your own institution, e.g., in terms of research or teaching methods, workflows, habits, or even administrative procedures? If so, please provide specific examples. *(Max. 1-2 examples per participant)*

- c. Or quite the opposite: Is there anything that you learned appreciate more about your own institution? If so, please provide specific examples. *(FGD: max. 1-2 examples per participant)*
- d. Do you think your project partners have also learned from you? If so, what is it?

Effectiveness

8. Have you faced any unforeseen challenges or barriers during project implementation?
 - a. *If yes:* Please specify and describe how you dealt with them and to what extent the APPEAR Office assisted you in overcoming those challenges.
9. How satisfied are you with your project implementation overall? Have you achieved all of your objectives or, if your project is ongoing, is it likely that you are going to achieve them?
 - a. Which factors have facilitated/are facilitating the achievement of these objectives? Which factors have hindered/are hindering your project from achieving (some of) its objectives?
10. Do you think the funding has been successful in contributing to capacity building/capacity development in your partners' HEI/research institution? If so, how? *(Ask for improved research, teaching, and management capacities. → OC1)*
11. Did any of your team members hold an APPEAR scholarship that was embedded in your project? If so:
 - a. Do you think it is mutually supportive to combine APPEAR projects with APPEAR scholarships? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this combination? *(Ask for specific examples (1) of how embedded scholarships support the projects in meeting relevant research and/or teaching objectives, and (2) of how they contribute to institutional capacity development.)*
 - b. Do you think the scholarship conditions, such as the maximum duration, budget, and eligibility criteria, were appropriate? If not, why?
 - c. Has the funded scholar met your expectations in terms of academic development? If so, how? If not, why not?

Closure

12. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience with the APPEAR programme or would you like to make any suggestions on improving the programme?

Closing remarks and appreciation for the interviewee's time.

8.4.6 Interview guide: Managing staff at partner institutions (Armenia)

Introduction

- Short introduction of the interviewer and CEval
- Background, objectives, and purpose of the evaluation
- Information on data protection, confidentiality, informed consent
- Overview of the interview

Information about the interviewee

1. Please briefly introduce yourself.

- a. *Name, institution, role, gender*
2. Please describe your responsibilities/tasks in that role.
3. Please describe your faculty's international cooperation activities and how your institution's participation in the APPEAR programme was initiated.

Relevance

4. How relevant is the APPEAR programme for your faculty's research or internationalisation agenda?
 - a. *If involved in other funding programmes of international cooperation:* What do you think are APPEAR's comparative strengths/advantages? What are APPEAR's comparative weaknesses?
 5. APPEAR requires its participating project teams to comply with the following basic principles: participatory approach, a concept of culturally open-minded knowledge, practically and empirically oriented approach, bottom-up and demand-driven approach, gender sensitivity, leave no one behind, and open access – open data. How relevant do you think these principles are in the context of international research cooperation and sustainable development?
 6. OeAD's programme reports stress that several of APPEAR's partner countries are affected by regional political and geopolitical changes. Have you experienced any changes of this kind that have not only affected your country but also have had implications for your faculty or the higher education and research sector in general? If so, please elaborate on these changes and their implications. You may also refer to political or geopolitical changes in one of your partner countries if they have had implications for your faculty.
 - a. Do you think that these changes affect the relevance of the APPEAR programme or research cooperation programmes in general? If so, do you think that these changes have made such programmes less or more relevant? Why?
 - b. The programme focusses on strengthening institutional capacities in higher education and research for development related to eradicating poverty and meeting basic infrastructural needs, human rights, sustainable economic development, environmental protection, as well as humanitarian aid, peace, and conflict prevention. Does this thematic focus remain relevant amid the changes that you are experiencing/have experienced in your country [FGD: countries]?
 - c. To what extent does the higher education and research sector in general remain relevant amid these changes?
 7. *Relevance to peace work – attitude change/intercultural competence:* Do you think that the programme contributes to the intercultural competence of its participants? If so, how?
 8. *Relevance to peace work – network formation:* In your experience, do project teams stay in contact with their international project partners after finalising their project? If so, please elaborate. Does this contact translate into repeated cooperation?
 9. *Relevance to peace work – institutional transfer:* Do you think faculties can learn from each other through programmes like APPEAR, e.g., in terms of research or teaching methods, workflows, habits, or even administrative procedures? If so, can you think of a specific example that you have witnessed yourself? (FGD: max. 1-2 examples per participant)
 10. What are the key needs of higher education institutions in Armenia? To what extent does APPEAR /can programmes like APPEAR contribute to meeting those needs?
- Note to the interviewer: Needs as identified by the Armenian government include*

international competitiveness, modernization of management and curricula, younger academia, internationalization, infrastructure, quality assurance.

11. Is there anything that can or should be done to maintain or increase the programme's relevance to Armenian higher education institutions?

Effectiveness

12. To what extent do you consider the APPEAR programme as successful in contributing to capacity building/capacity development within your HEI/research institution? If so, how? (*Ask for improved research, teaching, and management capacities. → OC1*)

Closure

13. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your view on the APPEAR programme or would you like to make any suggestions on improving it?

8.4.7 FGD guide: Scholarship holders and their academic supervisors

Introduction

- Short introduction of the interviewer and CEval
- Background, objectives, and purpose of the evaluation
- Information on data protection, confidentiality, informed consent
- Overview of the interview

Information about the interviewee

1. Please briefly introduce yourselves.
 - a. *Name, institution, role, gender*

Relevance

2. Please describe what you understand to be the main objectives of the APPEAR programme.
 - a. How does your project align with these objectives?
3. OeAD's programme reports stress that several of its partner countries are affected by regional political and geopolitical changes. Have you experienced any changes of this kind that have not only affected your country but also have had implications for your work or the higher education and research sector in general? If so, please elaborate on these changes and their implications.

E.g., political/economic/social pressures or conflicts, or violent conflict or war

 - a. Do you think that these changes affect the relevance of the APPEAR programme? If so, do you consider these changes to make the programme less or more relevant? Why?
 - b. The programme focusses on strengthening institutional capacities in higher education and research for development related to eradicating poverty and meeting basic infrastructural needs, human rights, sustainable economic development, environmental protection, as well as humanitarian aid, peace, and conflict prevention. Does this thematic focus remain relevant amid the changes that you are experiencing/have experienced in your country [countries]?

- c. To what extent does the higher education and research sector in general remain relevant amid these changes?
- 4. *Relevance to peace work – attitude change/intercultural competence*: What was it like for you to work with people with a different cultural background?
 - a. Do you think that the programme has contributed to your team members' and your own intercultural competence? If so, how?
- 5. *Relevance to peace work – network formation*: Do you expect to stay in contact with project partners after the finalisation of your project? If so, please specify whether you plan to stay in contact in the context of formal settings or rather informally.
- 6. *Relevance to peace work – institutional transfer*: Is there anything that particularly impressed you about your partners' institutions and that you would like to see at your own institution, e.g., in terms of research or teaching methods, workflows, habits, or even administrative procedures? If so, please provide specific examples. (FGD: max. 1-2 examples per participant)
 - e. Or quite the opposite: Is there anything that you learned appreciate more about your own institution? If so, please provide specific examples. (FGD: max. 1-2 examples per participant)
 - f. Do you think your project partners have also learned from you? If so, what is it?

Effectiveness

- 7. How did you experience the administrative procedures of both the application phase and the implementation phase of the APPEAR programme?
Procedures such as selection mechanism, application procedures, application deadlines, funding timelines, communication between scholarship holders and the APPEAR Office, guidelines, application forms, report templates.
 - a. Were you well informed about application procedures, eligibility criteria, the amount of the scholarship as well as living expenses etc.?
 - i. Which information at which step of your application or stay in Austria did you miss?
 - b. Were there any meetings or events for scholarship holders?
 - c. Were there any major difficulties or hurdles that impeded you from pursuing your studies smoothly? If so, which and how did you overcome them?
 - d. What was your communication with the APPEAR Office like? Did the APPEAR Office assist you effectively overcome those hurdles? (Ask for communication topics, cooperativeness, and usefulness.)
 - e. Based on your experience, can you think of anything that the APPEAR Office could do to improve these administrative procedures?
- 8. Have you faced any unforeseen challenges or barriers during project implementation?
 - a. If yes: Please specify and describe how you dealt with them and to what extent the APPEAR Office assisted you in overcoming those challenges.
- 9. How satisfied are you with your studies in Austria overall? Have you achieved all of your study objectives or, if your project is ongoing, is it likely that you are going to achieve them?
 - a. Which factors have facilitated/are facilitating the achievement of these objectives? Which factors have hindered/are hindering your project from achieving (some of) its objectives?

10. *Embedded scholarship holders/their supervisors only:* Do you think it is mutually supportive to combine APPEAR projects with APPEAR scholarships? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this combination? *(Ask for specific examples (1) of how embedded scholarships support the projects in meeting relevant research and/or teaching objectives, and (2) of how they contribute to institutional capacity development.)*
11. Do you think the scholarship conditions, such as the maximum duration, budget, and eligibility criteria, were appropriate? If not, why?

Efficiency

12. Were you able to meet all application and further administrative requirements with reasonable effort? If not, please explain.
 - a. Do you have any suggestions on how the APPEAR Office could simplify administrative requirements and procedures or assist you better in fulfilling them?

Closure

13. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience with the APPEAR programme or would you like to make any suggestions on improving the programme?

Closing remarks and appreciation for the interviewees' time.

8.5 Table on the relevance of the ‘added values’ for International Partnerships Austria

Table 1: ‘Added values’ and their correspondences from International Partnerships Austria strategies.

Added value:	Corresponding excerpts from International Partnerships Austria strategies: ³⁶
<i>Alignment with the priorities of the International Partnerships Austria country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing projects funded by International Partnerships Austria</i>	“In line with the constitutional principles of economy, efficiency and expediency, ensuring coherence and complementarity of bilateral and multilateral programming of Austrian development cooperation funded by Austrian taxpayers’ money is of fundamental importance and is taken into account throughout this Three-Year Programme.” (3YP 2025-2027) “Political coherence in the interest of sustainable development is one of the leading principles of the Development Cooperation Act (EZA-Gesetz). [...] In this framework, strategically coordinating the federal ministries and their subordinate entities is an essential element. All actors are to act in a complementary way to others with the instruments and means at their disposal.” (3YP 2022-2024)
<i>Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy</i>	“Austrian development policy is guided above all by the principles of ownership by the governments and populations with regard to their development path, the integration of measures into the social environment, gender equality and consideration of the needs of children and people with disabilities.” (3YP 2025-2027) “Austrian development cooperation implements the human rights principles of participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination in all programmes, projects and through political dialogue. It is particularly committed to the rights of children, older people, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people, particularly disadvantaged groups, minorities and people who are subject to multiple discrimination.” (3YP 2025-2027) “Measures to promote inclusion at all levels (disability mainstreaming) are intended to address and promote specific needs and the contribution to society of various vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. Attention is paid not only to the provision of access to education, healthcare and work, for example, but also to the creation of a social environment that recognises and protects diversity and actively includes vulnerable population groups.” (3YP 2025-2027) “The inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups in development cooperation, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding programmes is crucial, as these groups are often the most affected by social exclusion and disadvantage. [...] Special consideration must be given to the overlapping of several forms of discrimination, which particularly affects groups of people in vulnerable situations such as children, older people, people with disabilities, people affected by poverty and minorities.” (3YP 2025-2027) “As a member of the EU, Austria contributes its share to combating poverty, promoting sustainable growth, defending human rights and democracy, promoting gender equality, the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the elderly as well as tackling the challenges in the fields of the environment and climate.” (3YP 2022-2024) “[E]ducation is also a catalyst for development in other sectors: for the empowerment of women and girls as well as persons with disabilities, in the area of peace and security as well as in matters of environmental and climate protection.” (3YP 2022-2024) “The new measures of the ADC are intended to directly or indirectly serve the goal of implementing inclusion and equal rights for persons with disabilities.” (3YP 2022-2024)
<i>Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation</i>	“Austrian development policy promotes South-South cooperation and the establishment of networks between universities in Austria and its partner countries.” (3YP 2025-2027) “Similarly, South-South cooperation is seen as an important instrument in the partner countries in order to learn from experiences made but also from mistakes.” (DOC53) “Nord-Süd- und Süd-Süd-Kooperationen sowie Wissensnetzwerke dienen dem systematischen wissenschaftlichen Austausch auf regionaler und internationaler Ebene und stellen ein wichtiges Instrument der institutionellen Kapazitätsentwicklung dar.” (DOC145)
<i>Advancement of young and particularly female researchers</i>	“In Austrian development policy, gender equality is promoted both as an objective in itself and as a prerequisite for long-term democratic, equitable and sustainable global development in all interventions of Austrian development policy, including humanitarian aid and cooperation with the private sector.” (3YP 2025-2027) “Austrian development cooperation implements the human rights principles of participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination in all programmes, projects and through political

³⁶ Bold text in citations has been added by the evaluation team and does not appear in the original texts.

	dialogue. It is particularly committed to the rights of children, older people, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people, particularly disadvantaged groups, minorities and people who are subject to multiple discrimination. In addition, the promotion of gender equality, the rights of women and girls, the recognition and promotion of their political power, the end of violence against women and girls as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights is an essential dimension." (3YP 2025-2027) "For the first time in 25 years, Austria is once again part of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the main global political institution solely dedicated to gender equality and female empowerment. Against this background, the long-standing commitment of the Austrian development cooperation to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will be further strengthened." (3YP 2022-2024) "Austria pursues the following measures: – strengthening social, political and economic participation and self-determination [of women and girls], e.g. by means of improved access to education and training options and by enshrining political education in the education systems – collecting gender and age specific data to better analyse the situation and needs of women and girls – gender mainstreaming in the framework of bilateral development cooperation" (3YP 2022-2024) "Gender Mainstreaming zielt auf die Umsetzung von Geschlechtergleichstellung und Empowerment von Frauen ab [...]. Gender Mainstreaming wird im gesamten Programm- und Projektzyklus systematisch und durchgängig angewandt; d. h., dass neben der Frauenquote insbesondere auch auf geschlechtersensible Curriculum-Entwicklung sowie auf gleichstellungsrelevante Forschungsprogramme Wert gelegt wird." (DOC145) "Frauen, Minderheiten und benachteiligte Gruppen werden bevorzugt gefördert." (DOC145)
Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use and research uptake	"Science-based approaches and the active promotion of research and innovation can help to find solutions to complex challenges and support sustainable change processes. Close dialogue between science, politics and practice is essential." (3YP 2025-2027) "To be effective, capacity building measures must be based on the articulated demand of the end-users and meet their needs, priorities and interests. Their specific expectations and requirements must be taken into account just as the direct practical application of knowledge and skills learnt within their respective professional and everyday life." (DOC53) "Weiterentwicklung von Curricula: Lehrpläne sollen anwendungsorientiert sein, aus lokalen Bedürfnissen entstehen und dementsprechend gestaltet werden sowie innovative Inhalte und Methoden einschließen." (DOC145) "Die Schaffung von Synergien und der Ausbau von Kompetenzen sowohl in angewandter Forschung als auch in Grundlagenforschung, die Ausbildung von wissenschaftlich qualifiziertem Nachwuchs und die Begleitung der Praxis von Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und Entwicklungspolitik stehen im Mittelpunkt des Interesses." (DOC145)
Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country	"Austrian development policy is guided above all by the principles of ownership by the governments and populations with regard to their development path [...]." (3YP 2025-2027) "Partnership, responsibility and results-orientation – Austria maintains partnerships characterised by fairness and respect, following the core principles of efficient development cooperation: preserving the partner country's internal responsibility, cooperating with local partner organisations, ownership, results-orientation in the provision of aid, inclusive partnerships as well as accountability and transparency in the implementation of measures." (3YP 2022-2024) "Die Zusammenarbeit erfolgt gemäß klaren Partnerschaftsprinzipien, die gemeinsam festgelegt werden. Ownership kann erhöht werden, indem den Partnern die Verantwortung übertragen wird, ihren Bedarf zu identifizieren und zu begründen, Programme und Projekte zu planen, zu formulieren und selbst durchzuführen." (DOC145)

8.6 Evaluation ToR

Submitted as separate annex.