

# External evaluation

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Digital Transformation in Accreditation in Asia Pacific (ADAPT)

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Lead executing agency: PTB – National Metrology Institute of Germany  
Executing agency: Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC)

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This evaluation is an independent assessment. Its contents reflect the assessor's opinion which is not necessarily equivalent to PTB's view.

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**List of abbreviations**

|       |                                                                                          |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AB    | Accreditation Body                                                                       |
| AI    | Artificial Intelligence                                                                  |
| ADAPT | Digital Transformation in Accreditation in Asia Pacific                                  |
| APAC  | Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation                                                   |
| APLAC | Asia-Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation                                        |
| APMP  | Asia Pacific Metrology Programme                                                         |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations                                                   |
| BMZ   | Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung                     |
| CW    | Capacity WORKS                                                                           |
| DMP   | Digital Management Platform                                                              |
| DXFG  | Digital Transformation Focus Group                                                       |
| HCD   | Human Capacity Development                                                               |
| IKZE  | Internationale/r Kurzzeitexperte/in / international short term/intermittent expert       |
| IT    | Information Technology                                                                   |
| OECD  | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee |
| PAC   | Pacific Accreditation Cooperation                                                        |
| PN    | Project Number                                                                           |
| PSC   | Project Steering Committee                                                               |
| PTB   | Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt                                                    |

|                |                                                         |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| QI             | Quality Infrastructure                                  |
| SAM            | Self-Assessment Matrix                                  |
| SDGs           | Sustainable Development Goals                           |
| SMART criteria | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound |

## 1. Summary

Subject of this evaluation is the project Digital Transformation in Accreditation in the Asia Pacific Region (ADAPT), implemented by PTB's development cooperation department Q.3 in cooperation with the Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC). It covers the entire Asia-Pacific region. Its volume is 1,090,000 Euro. The project period is May 2022 – April 2026. The evaluation was conducted in 2026 through 25 online interviews and document review.

APAC provides the regional mechanism for international acceptance of accreditation in Asia-Pacific. The Corona pandemic has led to rapid digital change that has shown there are potential benefits and limitations in the digitalisation of accreditation services, and great differences between economies. Digitalisation is an important objective for APAC and many national accreditation bodies (AB) in Asia-Pacific.

The core problem tackled by the project is that there are inefficiencies, information and capacity gaps regarding digitalisation in accreditation bodies in Asia-Pacific developing economies which slow down the expansion of accreditation and recognised conformity assessment services, which in turn perpetuates trade barriers in the region.

The project's results logic is based on the hypothesis that APAC and its members from developing economies need to build knowledge and capacity in digitalisation in order to make processes and services more effective. Through these improvements, more internationally recognised accreditation services are to be offered and easily accessible. The intent was that APAC and accreditation bodies in developing economies develop the capacity to increasingly digitalise or to improve through new digital solutions. The actors were to learn from each other through exchange within the APAC network and develop solutions together.

The project has the objective: "APAC and its developing economy members have expanded their digital services and processes." This divides into three sections, 1. APAC's digitalisation itself, 2. the usefulness of APAC's digitalised procedures for developing economy members, and 3. digital services by developing economy members. All outputs were to contribute to all three sections of the project. Instruments are two PTB long-term staff for project management, one intermittent international consultant and funding for technical infrastructure like a digital management platform (DMP).

### Assessment according to the OECD DAC criteria

| Criterion                | Evaluation of the criterion |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Relevance             | 1                           |
| 2. Coherence             | 1                           |
| 3. Effectiveness         | 1.5                         |
| 4. Efficiency            | 2                           |
| 5. Impact                | 1.5                         |
| 6. Sustainability        | 1.3                         |
| <b>Global assessment</b> | <b>1.4</b>                  |

- ☐ Since effectiveness, impact or sustainability were rated "4" or worse, the global assessment is downgraded to "4" although the mean would actually be better than "4".

☒ No downgrading of the global assessment.

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relevance      | <p>The project is in line with the priorities of APAC and many of its members, and compatible with the BMZ's Asia and digitalisation strategies. The context is well considered in the design. Project target groups are APAC and its members from developing economies, particularly least developed countries. The intervention assists ABs to provide digitally more efficient access to accreditation. It also meets the needs and capacities of APAC and many ABs from developing economies. The combination of awareness building, capacity building and implementation of selected digitalisation projects was technically, organisationally and financially realistic. Not all initial plans could be implemented as planned. The project response to changes was highly appropriate.</p> <p>Mark: 1</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Coherence      | <p>Opportunities for cooperation occurred mainly with other PTB projects. They were used well, leading to increased effects and synergies. After sensitising APAC and members, the project intensively supported the partner's own efforts.</p> <p>Mark: 1</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Effectiveness  | <p>The project has achieved far more than 100% of its module indicators at outcome level. APAC has institutionalised more approaches than planned. Usefulness for members has been confirmed. Implementation of digitalisation projects by member ABs is much higher than expected.</p> <p>The inputs were delivered as planned. The outputs were achieved, overachieved or in case of the planned APAC digital management platform sufficient progress was achieved to allow for continuation. The project has thus contributed substantially to achieving the objective. Target groups benefited significantly.</p> <p>The project has been well steered and implemented according to Capacity Works criteria. An unintended positive effect was that staff members of digitally more-developed ABs have developed a better understanding of the challenges that ABs from developing economies may confront when attempting to digitalise their accreditation systems. No negative effects were identified.</p> <p>Mark: 1.5</p> |
| Efficiency     | <p>There are no indications that outputs or outcomes could have been delivered using fewer resources or that more or better outputs could have been achieved had the funds been spent differently. Rather, the project was in some ways very cost-efficient in involving the competencies of partners.</p> <p>Mark: 2</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Impact         | <p>The project contributed to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 8 and 9. As the process of digitalisation gained traction during the 4-year project period, more ABs than expected embarked on digitalisation projects.</p> <p>Mark: 1.5</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Sustainability | <p>APAC has the institutional, human and financial resources and willingness to ensure that the positive results are continued. Amongst ABs, there are those with</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>good business, enough financial resources and human capacity to sustain the digital structures, and there are others with less business and less income. APAC and large ABs have substantial capacity to continue, more than smaller ones. The ADAPT project contributed crucially through sensitisation capacity building and facilitating positive examples to the capacity for continuation. The resources developed are also available to the weaker ABs. It can be expected that many results will remain for a long time.</p> <p>Mark: 1.3</p> |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## 2. Introduction

### Subject of the evaluation

Subject of this evaluation is the project Digital Transformation in Accreditation in the Asia Pacific Region (ADAPT), implemented by PTB's development cooperation department Q.3 in cooperation with the Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC). It covers the entire Asia-Pacific region. The project period is May 2022 – April 2026. It was extended by one year. There was no predecessor project, but prior to ADAPT, PTB had a multi-phase cooperation with APAC and its predecessor organizations, the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) and the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC). ADAPT was thus built on the results, relations and experiences of a long-term regional cooperation on accreditation. No follow-up project is planned.

The evaluation was conducted entirely through online interviews and document review. The key evaluator was not joined by a technical or local expert.

The evaluation serves as a quality assurance tool for PTB, to provide accountability to the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), to support internal learning processes and to improve the quality of the project in terms of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee's (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Development Policy Effectiveness (Impact) and Sustainability. The DeGEval evaluation standards Utility, Feasibility, Propriety and Accuracy were adhered to.

Project specific questions to be addressed are (1) how can, in the face of the ending of the PTB-APAC cooperation, it be assured that the cooperation results can be sustained, and (2) what can be learned for the implementation of digital projects, a PTB internal question.

### Subject of the evaluation

|                   |                                                                                                             |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project title     | Digital Transformation in Accreditation in Asia Pacific (ADAPT)                                             |
| Programme         | The project is not part of a BMZ development programme, but part of the BMZ theme "digitalisation and data" |
| Project objective | "APAC and its developing economy members have expanded their digital services and processes."               |
| Term              | 01. May 2022 – 30. April 2026                                                                               |
| Volume            | 1,090,000 Euro                                                                                              |
| Evaluation period | February to June 2026                                                                                       |

## 3. Context and strategic approach of the project

### 3.1. Context

APAC provides the regional mechanism for international acceptance of accreditation in Asia-Pacific and contributes thus to the reduction of technical barriers to trade. Through mutual recognition of accreditation and its results, actors can save costs and administrative efforts because multiple testing, certification and inspection become superfluous. During the project period, the numbers of APAC full and associated members and the number of accredited services has significantly increased which confirms APAC's relevance.

The Corona pandemic has led to a rapid digital change that has shown that there is significant potential, but also severe limitations in the digitalisation of accreditation services in Asia-Pacific, both on national and regional levels, and that there are great differences between economies. APAC in its 2023 – 2026 strategic plan has confirmed that digitalisation is a priority. Digitalisation is also an important objective for many national accreditation bodies in Asia-Pacific.

Digitalisation can reduce costs and facilitate easier access, and new digitalised accreditation services can be developed. APAC and its members therefore need to realise the chances of digitalisation and increasingly use these opportunities. Also worldwide, new opportunities need to be developed. APAC wants to participate in this process.

But digitalisation also contains the risk that less developed economies and institutions are further left behind if they do not go with digital trends in time. This became particularly apparent during the Corona pandemic when physical meetings and in-situ assessments were no longer possible. Not all APAC members could fully participate in the digital alternatives. This assessment was confirmed during the project period. At the same time, there was willingness by digitally more experienced members to support members that were interested in building up their digital services. It also became clear to APAC and its members from more developed economies that there were obstacles. Particularly, members from developing economies had challenges with human capacity, finance, infrastructure and administrative limitations, particularly if they were state institutions.

During the project period, international awareness on the potentials (and risks) of machine learning (artificial intelligence, AI), particularly on large language models, has increased. It was found that by 2025, only four APAC members used AI to support their accreditation processes. This provided an opportunity to engage with further members of APAC and cooperate with two other PTB projects.

### **3.2. Strategic approach of the intervention**

The results logic is based on the hypothesis that APAC and its members from developing economies need to build knowledge and capacity in digitalisation in order to make processes and services more effective. Through these improvements, internationally recognised accreditation services are increasingly to be offered and are to be more easily accessible, so that the accreditation of conformity assessment services can be promoted. The intent was that APAC and accreditation bodies in developing economies develop the capacity to increasingly digitalise or to improve through implementing new digital solutions. The different stages of development in APAC and in accreditation bodies in developing economies were considered. The actors were to learn from each other through exchange within the APAC network and develop solutions together.

The core problem tackled by the project is that there are inefficiencies, information and capacity gaps regarding digitalisation in accreditation bodies in Asia-Pacific developing economies which slow down the expansion of accreditation and recognised conformity assessment services, which in turn perpetuates trade barriers in the region. The capacity of APAC members in Asia-Pacific is heterogeneous.

To change this, the project has the objective (outcome level): “APAC and its developing economy members have expanded their digital services and processes.” (See the intervention logic in annex 9.1). This divides into three sections (defined through “module indicators”).

1. On the level of APAC itself: “Three decisions on approaches to be taken by APAC and its members to address topics or challenges related to digitalisation are documented.”
2. On the level of the usefulness of APAC’s digitalised procedures for developing economy members: “15 of 22 developing economy accreditation bodies confirm the added value of APAC’s improved digital procedures and services with concrete examples.”

3. On the level of digitalised services provided by developing economy members: “Five developing economy accreditation bodies offer a new digital and/or hybrid service for conformity assessment bodies each.”

This is to be achieved by three general outputs:

1. Regarding information and capacity: “APAC and its developing economy members are able to take informed decisions on digitalisation-related matters.”
2. Regarding the digital capacity of the APAC secretariat and network itself: “APAC increasingly develops digital formats to improve services and to collaborate with its members.”
3. Regarding the digital capacity of APAC members from developing economies: “The capacities of developing economy accreditation bodies for providing digital services are strengthened.”

The idea is that all outputs contribute to all three sections of the project. The success of the outputs is to be measured by two indicators each (see section effectiveness, 5.1.3). The evaluation findings do not lead to an adaptation of the intervention logic.

Target beneficiaries are (a) clients of APAC members, e. g. conformity assessment bodies such as testing and calibration laboratories, certification bodies, medical laboratories and inspection bodies, particularly in developing economies and (b) the regional network APAC. Users of accredited services of the quality infrastructure (QI) in the region, e. g. customers of conformity assessment bodies, regulators, and businesses, are indirect beneficiaries. Measures are targeted at the accreditation bodies as members and the APAC network itself.

Instruments are two PTB long-term staff for project management, one intermittent international consultant and funding for technical infrastructure like a digital management platform.

## **4. Evaluation methodology**

### **4.1. Evaluation design**

The evaluation approach comprises the analysis of documents and data available at PTB and online interviews with partners (APAC and members), PTB staff and consultants. Overall, 25 interviews were conducted, not counting preparatory meetings with PTB staff. Ordinary participants of Human Capacity Development (HCD) events were not on the interview list, but many interview partners had taken part in webinars, network meetings or the on-site training course.

According to available documentation, there has been no cooperation with other bilateral or multilateral donors, so no interviews with donors were conducted. No evaluations of project partners or other international donors were known so no synergies could be created. Financial cooperation with two other PTB projects (Mexico and Ecuador, see section coherence, 5.1.2, dimension 1) took place. Representatives of these collaborations have been interviewed.

The methodology allows within a limited timeframe to gather a wide variety of different perspectives from stakeholders. Interview partner views were triangulated.

The methodology was chosen because within limited time, core information can be gathered that should allow drawing relevant conclusions and recommendations, and because for other aspects, particularly those that relate to relevance, documentation by PTB is available. A limitation is that information about wider sections of society that should benefit from the intervention in the long run cannot be included. Another limitation was no on-site group discussions and interviews were possible; such on-site interviews often bring out deeper levels of meaning and further, often indirect aspects of the project.

Project specific questions to be addressed are

- (1) How can it, in the face of the ending of the PTB-APAC cooperation, be assured that the cooperation results can be further utilised? This will be addressed under sustainability (section sustainability, 5.1.6) and again under 6.
- (2) After PTB had difficulties implementing the digital management platform (output indicator 2.1), what can be learned for the implementation of digital projects? This will be addressed in chapter 6, specific questions.

## 4.2. Data sources; data quality

The evaluation process started with an analysis of all available documents and the monitoring data. First interviews were conducted with core PTB staff and the international intermittent expert. These provided a good base for interviews with partners and other PTB staff. Interview partners showed great willingness to share experiences, discuss also difficulties, and an interest in the evaluation.

The documents and the interviews give a good idea of the project processes and results. They are also sufficient for triangulation, with the exception of the project specific evaluation question on the procurement of an online platform (see chapter 6, specific questions). Further limitations on information particularly regarding unexpected and far-reaching effects are described in section evaluation design, 4.1.

The evaluator was not provided with the products of digitalisation efforts (specification of the APAC platform, digitalisation results of partners, etc). As this evaluation is not conducted in a team with a digitalisation expert, the provision of such documents would possibly not have helped much. But it means that the quality of the digitalisation products cannot be assessed in this evaluation report.

The indicators fulfil the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) Module indicator 2 is measurable by project end, but not on a yearly basis, but no realistic alternative can be suggested. Data collection was done in an appropriate manner and the systems were adequate. Thus, the results-based monitoring system was suited to assess the project progress.

## 5. Evaluation results

### 5.1 Status of the transformation process (OECD/DAC)

The OECD DAC evaluation criteria form the conceptual basis for assessing the success of German bilateral development cooperation interventions. They therefore represent a binding framework for the evaluation of PTB interventions (modules). The report template is based on the BMZ orientation guidelines concerning the OECD-DAC criteria dated August 2021. The evaluation of each criterion is based on the assessment of several evaluation dimensions. The criteria are to be assessed based on the following scale:

#### Marking scale for the evaluation of the OECD/DAC criteria

| Evaluation                     | Grade | Description                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| very successful                | 1     | very good result, far above expectations                          |
| successful                     | 2     | good result, entirely meets expectations                          |
| successful to a limited extent | 3     | satisfactory; results are below expectations, but mainly positive |

|                       |   |                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| rather unsuccessful   | 4 | unsatisfactory result; below expectations; negative results prevail despite several positive results |
| mainly unsuccessful   | 5 | negative results clearly prevail despite several positive partial results                            |
| entirely unsuccessful | 6 | the project has failed completely; situation has rather deteriorated                                 |

### 5.1.1 Relevance

#### **Dimension 1: To what extent is the intervention's design geared to country-specific, regional, and global policies and priorities of the partners and the BMZ?**

The project is in line with APAC's strategic plan and meets its priorities. It is also in line with priorities of many APAC members.

The project design reflects the need for digitalisation on the level of APAC itself in cooperation with its members, and on the level of member organisations, described in section context, 3.1. It also reflects the mounting discrepancy in digitalisation between ABs in high-income, middle-income and low-income countries. It sets a priority in its design on APAC members from developing economies and involves the resources of digitally more advanced members through voluntary cooperation. Indirectly, it is also relevant to national needs for development and industrialisation by improving one service essential for these processes. The context is well considered in the project design.

The project is not part of a BMZ development programme, but part of the BMZ theme "digitalisation and data" and compatible with the BMZ's Asia and digitalisation strategies. It is thus well in line with BMZ policies.

Overall, the project is highly integrated in policies and context and rated very successful in dimension 1.

#### **Dimension 2: To what extent is the intervention's design geared to the needs and capacities of the target groups?**

Target groups of the project are APAC and its members: ABs in the Asia-Pacific region. The project thus addresses organisations. Members from developing economies, and particularly least developed countries, are considered disadvantaged and vulnerable for the purpose of this evaluation. Persons with disabilities are considered as vulnerable clients as a very indirect target group.

The accreditation community and their clients, and APAC and its members, have the capacity required to achieve the intervention's objective: strengthening the digitalisation of accreditation in the Asia-Pacific region which includes assisting ABs to provide digitally more efficient access to accreditation or information about accreditation. The objectives were flexible enough to respond to the different capacities of APAC members.

The intervention's objectives and design are also geared to the needs and capacities of ABs from developing economies, addressing them in the objectives and providing special incentives and offers for them. There was no indication that partners adopted an approach of handicapped accessible websites – relevant for persons with disabilities, but as the service is not for consumers but for organisations, this seems of limited relevance. And there was a training input on user-friendly websites.

Overall, the project is very well geared to needs and capacities and rated very successful in dimension 2.

**Dimension 3: To what extent is the intervention's design appropriately, realistically and plausibly geared towards achieving the intervention's objective?**

The combination of awareness building, capacity building and implementation of selected digitalisation projects was technically, organisationally and financially realistic with three exceptions:

- (1) It was not realistic to plan and implement APAC's digital management platform (DMP) within the project's time-frame, even with the extension by one year (output indicator 2.1). Such processes take more time even if they are not delayed as was the case in this project.
- (2) The initial plan to create a generic platform that could be used by many ABs as a starting point to build their own digital management platforms did not succeed, and it is very likely that it was not realistic from the onset (output indicator 3.1). As a consequence, the approach was changed and ABs introduced individual digital solutions of various kinds.
- (3) On-site training or exposure at an earlier stage, in addition to the webinars, might have facilitated more implementation of digitalisation projects particularly by ABs from least developed economies (output indicator 1.1).

The indicators at objective, that is outcome level have been overachieved (see section effectiveness, 5.1.3, dimension 1). They are suitable to quantify the level of achievement according to the SMART (specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic and time bound) criteria, although possibly under-ambitious. They meet all the SMART criteria, and were possibly realistic at the time of planning. Even though at output level, not all indicators could be achieved, they can also show that the project overall has achieved more than could be expected. Module indicator 2 is measurable by project end, but not on a yearly basis. Output indicator 2.1 ("APAC has introduced a (1) digital management platform that has enabled it to transfer three (3) processes that relate to the provision of data by developing economy accreditation bodies to APAC into a digitalized form.") was either not sufficiently specific or not realistic. There was different understanding what "introduce" mean, when elsewhere the module proposal speaks of the "development of a digital management platform". Having the platform programmed and implemented, as the indicator can be read, was not realistic. On the other hand, on the partner side it was quickly clear that only the development of specifications was realistic. This evaluation assesses the project effectiveness against the objective of having the platform programmed.

The project addressed sustainable development in the sense of an interaction of social, environmental and economic sustainable development only indirectly. It addressed institutional and administrative issues of accreditation. Well-functioning accreditation is a base for sound sustainable development, and insofar this project contributes to the sustainable development goals.

Overall, the project has a very appropriate design and is rated very successful in dimension 3.

**Dimension 4: To what extent has the intervention's design responded to changes in the environment and adapted to the needs?**

The intervention has increased the number of webinars, compared to its plans, based on initiatives of partners. It has realised that it could not and that it did not make sense to fulfil the desire of poorer partners to provide them with software, and that it was not realistic to build a generic platform that many APAC members could use. Instead, it introduced the mentoring concept that became useful for a number of partners, and it involved five other PTB projects for exchange on digitalisation and two (Mexico and Ecuador) in the introduction of AI tools. After realising that PTB could not manage to procure the APAC digital management platform, it changed the concept. APAC took over the procure-

ment so that at least the specifications could be finalised by project end, financed through reimbursements. The project also got approval for an extension of the project for one year to be able to achieve the planned indicators. Overall, the project's response to changes was highly appropriate and is rated very successful in dimension 4.

### Summarized evaluation

| Criterion                          | Evaluation dimension                                                                                                              | Weighting | Appraisal |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Relevance                          | The intervention's design is geared to country-specific, regional and global policies and priorities of the partners and the BMZ. | 25 %      | 1         |
|                                    | The intervention's design is geared towards the needs and capacities of the target groups                                         | 25 %      | 1         |
|                                    | The intervention's design is realistically and plausibly geared towards achieving the intervention's objective                    | 25 %      | 1         |
|                                    | The intervention's design has responded to changes in the environment and adapted to the needs.                                   | 25 %      | 1         |
| Global assessment of the relevance |                                                                                                                                   |           | 1         |

### 5.1.2 Coherence

**Dimension 1: Internal coherence: Within German development cooperation, to what extent was the intervention designed and implemented in a complementary manner, based on a division of tasks?**

The project is not part of a development programme. It is a regional project and part of the BMZ theme "digitalisation and data". Opportunities occurred mainly for cooperation with other PTB projects. These opportunities were used well. The project cooperated with PTB projects on Promotion of regional cooperation in measurement in Asia-Pacific (PN 2020.2234.1), Improvement of quality infrastructure in ASEAN (PN 2018.2055.4), Strengthening quality infrastructure in Cambodia (PN 2021.2117.6), Strengthening quality infrastructure for sustainable rural value chains in Ecuador (PN 2022.2114.1) and Quality infrastructure for sustainable development in Mexico (PN 2019.2168.3). This led to considerable synergies, e. g. the Cambodian AB intended to use the ADAPT created Self-Assessment Matrix (SAM), the ASEAN project used experiences of the ADAPT baseline survey and there is an exchange with the Asia-Pacific Metrology Programme (APMP) Focus Group on Digitalisation in Metrology (DXFG). While the project had focused initially on Asia-Pacific ABs, it discovered opportunities to expand the scope to introducing artificial intelligence (AI) in two Latin American ABs (both of which are APAC members) in cooperation with projects working in Mexico and Ecuador. Separately, PTB developed an online training tool on Moodle about creating specifications for digitalisation projects. It was not used in the ADAPT project because the APAC DMP specification came earlier, but it has also not

been made available for ABs that had their own digitalisation efforts. It is not clear if that training module will be available for APAC members for future digitalisation efforts.

The project was in line with international and national norms and standards to which Germany is committed. The intervention is directly linked to the BMZ's reform concept BMZ 2030 which prioritises the support of digital change and other BMZ documents. It supports a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, see section 5.1.1, dimension 1). No potential contradictions were detected.

Overall, the project has used the limited potential for complementary work very well and is rated very successful in dimension 1.

### **Dimension 2: External coherence: To what extent does the intervention's design and implementation complement the partner's own efforts and is coordinated with other donors' activities?**

After sensitising APAC and members through first activities with APAC, the project intensively supported the partner's own efforts. It initiated the project digitalisation working group in which partners largely self-organised webinars on digitalisation. It initiated the APAC Digitalisation Network in which APAC members exchange experience and that has quickly become entirely self-organised within APAC. It initiated mentoring in which some partners cooperated autonomously while others were encouraged by the project, and only some small additional funding for projects was provided.

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) had a strong say in decisions over the project. Initially, the DMP was to be procured by PTB. After that did not work, but some ground-work had been done by PTB with APAC, APAC took over and PTB supported them largely financially for defining the specifications for the platform.

There was no opportunity to coordinate with other donors, but training in cooperation with the Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC) was conducted.

Central to ADAPT operation were the visits to the APAC annual meetings. The project was supported by the APAC Executive Committee and secretariat and its Capacity Building committee as long as it existed. The project also cooperated intensively with the APAC members. All relevant information was shared with APAC and a space on APAC's web-based platform for members was created on which all relevant documents were stored, accessible to all members and available for learning and accountability. There was no opportunity to use common systems with other donors.

Overall, the project had complemented the partners' own efforts and cooperated with their structures very well. It is rated very successful in dimension 2.

### **Summarized evaluation**

| Criterion        | Evaluation dimension                                                                                                                                                | Weighting | Appraisal |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Coherence</b> | Internal coherence: Within German development cooperation, the intervention was designed and implemented in a complementary manner, based on the division of tasks. | 50 %      | 1         |

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                          |      |   |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|---|
|                                    | External coherence: The intervention's design and implementation complement the partner's own efforts and are coordinated with other donors' activities. | 50 % | 1 |
| Global assessment of the coherence |                                                                                                                                                          |      | 1 |

### 5.1.3 Effectiveness

#### Dimension 1: To what extent has the intervention achieved its objective (at outcome level) according to the indicators agreed upon?

The project has achieved far more than 100% of its module indicators at outcome level. APAC has institutionalised more approaches than planned. Usefulness for members has been confirmed. Implementation of digitalisation projects by member ABs is much higher than expected. The project is rated very successful in dimension 1.

| Outcome indicator                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Degree of fulfilment (in %) | Appraisal (A-C)* | Justification                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. Three (3) decisions on approaches to be taken by APAC and its members to address topics or challenges related to digitalisation are documented.</p> <p>Initial value: 0</p> <p>Target value: 3</p> <p>Current value (month/year) or estimated value at the end of the project: 4</p> | 133%                        | A                | <p>Instead of the targeted 3, 4 approaches have been institutionalised in APAC to address digitalisation:</p> <p>1. Establishment of the APAC Digitalisation Network. 2. Nomination of a Digitalisation Champion. 3. Recruitment of a Project Manager for the DMP. 4. Establishment of an ICT Platform Steering Committee</p> |
| <p>2. 15 of 22 developing economic accreditation bodies confirm the added value of APAC's improved digital procedures and services with concrete examples.</p> <p>Initial value: No survey</p> <p>Target value: 15</p>                                                                     | 100%                        | A                | <p>There are four APAC services that members could consider useful. In a survey in 2026, 15 ABs from developing economies confirmed that they found at least one service useful.</p>                                                                                                                                          |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |      |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Current value (month/year) or estimated value at the end of the project: 15                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |      |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 3. Five (5) developing economy accreditation bodies offer a new digital and / or hybrid service for conformity assessment bodies each.<br><br>Initial value: 13 existing services<br>Target value: 5 new services<br><br>Current value (month/year) or estimated value at the end of the project: 11 new services | 220% | A | At project start, ABs from developing economies reported 13 digital services. Until 2026, 11 new services were offered, more than double than targeted. Amongst these are accreditation portals for application, planning, implementation and reporting of accreditation processes. There were also cases of improved document management, improved data integrity and security systems, virtual evaluation and digital personnel management. |

\*: Appraisal: A = adequate indicator; B = slight objections; C = poor indicator, to be revised if applicable

## Dimension 2: To what extent have the intervention's activities, inputs and outputs considerably contributed to achieving the intervention's objective (at outcome level)?

The inputs were delivered as planned. The respective outputs were achieved: 6 webinars in the first two years as planned and then another 7 in the following years, plus one on-site training, not planned. The APAC Digitalisation Network was instituted with many more meetings than planned (25 instead of 4). Three guidelines or information material were produced and are available for members. 18 instead of the planned 10 developing economy ABs started implementing at least one digitalisation activity each. 100% of respondents agreed that the provided training was useful. As described above, the planned DMP was not achieved for reasons discussed in chapter 6, specific questions. Instead, APAC itself contracted a company to write the specifications for such a platform, which has been largely completed by project end. As described below, this fell on fertile ground. The project has thus contributed substantially to achieving the objective, or, where digitalisation processes were ongoing anyway, to an improved result, or to ensuring that the digitalisation succeeded.

The target groups have been defined in section coherence, 5.1.2, dimension 2. APAC members could access the webinars, and they can still access the materials and network meetings. When the DMP is completed, it will be usable for all members. Many ABs from least developed countries are digitally less advanced and the infrastructure is often less reliable, but extra efforts have been made to give them access.

Core factors that contributed to the achievement of the objective were that the need and the potential for digitalisation have become much clearer during the Corona pandemic, and a sense of urgency developed in the accreditation community. Many APAC members and the APAC leadership were very

interested, so the project could start with creating awareness of what steps had to be taken. The good reputation of PTB with APAC was also a strong furthering factor.

Overall, the project has strongly contributed to the achievement of the objective. It is rated very successful in dimension 2.

### **Dimension 3: To what extent has the quality of the intervention's implementation considerably contributed to achieving the intervention's objective (at outcome level)?**

The evaluation of project steering and project implementation is based on the Capacity WORKS (CW) management model. It operates with five success factors and guiding questions to these factors. (1) The **strategy** was developed and implemented jointly with the partner. (2) The project showed strong **cooperation**. (3) The project had a strong, transparent and cooperative **steering structure**. (4) Partner and project **processes** were well integrated and appropriate adjustments made. (5) **Learning and innovation** were the project purpose, it was jointly decided and results were well disseminated.

Overall, the project has been well steered and implemented according to CW criteria. Some of the CW documents were used, including Stakeholder Analysis, Process Landscape and results monitoring, but no results model. Apparently, no CW self-assessment was conducted. The project is rated successful in dimension 3.

#### **CW – Strategy factor**

The project strategy has been discussed in a joint process with APAC and there is a common understanding of the intended results and the theory of change, also created through discussions with the Project Steering Committee (PSC). Changes in strategy were discussed jointly. The project has a strong capacity development element with a clear strategy. Implementation was done jointly between PTB and partners.

#### **CW – Cooperation factor**

As described in section coherence, 5.1.2, PTB and partners cooperated well to implement the project, with partners taking a strong role and contributing much knowledge in the process, e. g. for the webinars, the materials and guidelines, and the definition of specification for the DMP. Partners are aware of their roles and make strong contributions to achieve the project's results, defining what is required and what they prioritise. ADAPT has had a clear strategy to shape the communication and cooperation through initial sensitisation and through agreeing with APAC on structures like the PSC, the APAC Digitalisation Network and the working group on digitalisation in which partners can contribute to and have strong influence on the project.

#### **CW - Steering structure factor**

As described in section coherence, 5.1.2, dimension 2, ADAPT has a strong steering structure with the PSC with effective exchange that led the project forward. The PSC had relevant strategic discussions, regular reflection on results-based monitoring data and exchange of project experience. It provided very relevant impulses, ensured the institutional backing for the project and helped to change course in order to achieve results, see section coherence, 5.1.2, dimension 2.

### CW – Processes factor

The links between the project and the partner organization's processes were clearly understood and considered. The project integrated well in the partner's processes and could use them to achieve the objectives. Appropriate processes of cooperation, learning, supporting etc. were established within the project. The project and the partners made relevant organisational and institutional adjustments, see section coherence, 5.1.2, dimension 2.

### CW – Learning and Innovation Factor

The ADAPT project's purpose was to promote mainly technical and, where required, also institutional innovations within the partner system. Learning objectives and corresponding changes in the partner system were defined and agreed with partner leadership and other stakeholders. Learning experiences were developed and discussed with the relevant stakeholders, documented and disseminated so that they are accessible to all APAC members.

### Dimension 4: To what extent has the intervention leveraged potentials of unintended positive results and reacted to risks and/or the occurrence of (unintended) negative results?

Some unintended positive effects have been identified. Interviews have shown that staff members of digitally more-developed ABs have developed a better understanding of the challenges that ABs from developing economies may confront when attempting to digitalise their accreditation systems. A better understanding has developed how these members can be supported. And members of the APAC leadership, too, have developed a better understanding of the needs of these members. It can be assumed that during the webinars and network meetings a similar understanding developed.

No negative effects were identified. As described in section coherence, 5.1.2, dimension 2, positive direct results were monitored and promoted.

Overall, the project had positive unintended results and is rated successful in dimension 4.

### Summarized evaluation

| Criterion            | Evaluation dimension                                                                                                                        | Weighting | Appraisal |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Effectiveness</b> | The intervention has achieved its objective (at outcome level) according to the indicators agreed upon.                                     | 25 %      | 1         |
|                      | The intervention's activities, inputs and outputs have considerably contributed to achieving the project's objective (at outcome level).    | 25 %      | 1         |
|                      | The quality of the intervention's implementation has considerably contributed to achieving the intervention's objective (at outcome level). | 25 %      | 2         |
|                      | The intervention has leveraged potentials of unintended positive results and reacted to                                                     | 25 %      | 2         |

|                                        |                                                               |  |     |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--|-----|
|                                        | risks and/or the occurrence of (unintended) negative results. |  |     |
| Global assessment of the effectiveness |                                                               |  | 1.5 |

#### 5.1.4 Efficiency

##### Description of inputs

The project budget is 1.09 mill Euro. Of these, considering the actual costs and the commitments as of 5.3.2026, 97.000 Euro are spent for output 1 (APAC and members take informed decisions, 11%, Plan: 167.000 Euro), 159.000 Euro for output 2 (APAC develops digital formats, 18%, Plan: 294.000 Euro) and 396.000 for output 3 (Capacity of developing economy ABs, 45%, Plan: 313.000 Euro). 225.000 Euro are for general costs (26%, Plan: 226.000 Euro). 212.000 Euro were not yet committed (Plan: 90.000 Euro not committed). It seems probable that not all costs had been entered into the financial accounts yet. All the costs can be attributed to the digitalisation of accreditation.

##### Obligo-Berechnung

| Nr.    | Output                          | Plan<br>Vorschlag | Plan<br>dynamisch | Ist       | Obligo    | Δ Plan<br>vs. Ist | Δ Plan vs.<br>Ist+Obligo |
|--------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.     | Output 1 - APAC und Mitglieder  | 167.125 €         | 167.125 €         | 90.883 €  | 5.973 €   | 76.242 €          | 70.269 €                 |
| 2.     | Output 2 - APAC entwickelt digi | 294.200 €         | 294.200 €         | 104.145 € | 55.273 €  | 190.055 €         | 134.782 €                |
| 3.     | Output 3 - Kapazitäten der ABs  | 312.715 €         | 312.715 €         | 162.304 € | 233.890 € | 150.411 €         | -83.479 €                |
| 4.     |                                 |                   |                   | 0 €       | 0 €       |                   |                          |
| 5.     |                                 |                   |                   | 0 €       | 0 €       |                   |                          |
| 6.     | Übergreifende Kosten            | 225.960 €         | 225.960 €         | 210.847 € | 14.455 €  | 15.113 €          | 658 €                    |
|        | Nicht zugeordnet                |                   |                   |           |           |                   |                          |
| Gesamt |                                 | 1.000.000 €       | 1.000.000 €       | 568.180 € | 309.591 € | 431.820 €         | 122.229 €                |

#### Dimension 1: To what extent can the use of resources by the intervention be deemed reasonable with regard to the outputs achieved (production efficiency)?

The analysis of financial data and of inputs does not lead to conclusions that outputs could have been delivered using fewer resources. There are also no indications that more or better outputs could have been achieved had the funds been spent differently. Rather, the project was in some ways very cost-efficient in involving the competencies of partners for training, the production of materials and the development of specifications for the DMP. The recommendations on what could have been done differently (chapter 8) all involve higher costs.

Many of the outputs were achieved on time and within the expected time-frame, like webinars and the Digitalisation Network meetings. Equally, some APAC decisions (indicators on outcome level) came early. The guidelines and information material were produced only in 2025, that is partly in the extended time-frame. The implementation of AB digitalisation activities also started late, but within the extended time-frame, and APAC's DMP was very delayed, but the specifications are largely completed within the time-frame.

Overall, the project was efficient on output level and is rated successful in dimension 1.

### Dimension 2: To what extent can the use of resources by the intervention be deemed reasonable regarding the achievement of the intervention's objective/outcome (allocation efficiency)?

There are no findings that outcomes on project objective level could have been achieved using fewer resources. There are also no indications that more or better outcomes could have been achieved had the funds been spent differently. The project is efficient on outcome level and rated successful in dimension 2.

#### Summarized evaluation

| Criterion                           | Evaluation dimension                                                                                                                           | Weighting | Appraisal |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Efficiency                          | The use of resources by the intervention is deemed reasonable with regard to the outputs achieved (production efficiency).                     | 50 %      | 2         |
|                                     | The use of resources by the intervention is deemed reasonable with regard to the achievement of the objective/outcome (allocation efficiency). | 50 %      | 2         |
| Global assessment of the efficiency |                                                                                                                                                |           | 2         |

#### 5.1.5 Impact (Higher-level development results)

### Dimension 1: To what extent have the intended higher-level development changes taken place or are expected to take place in the near future?

The project expects to contribute particularly to the following higher-level developmental changes: fair digital work and economy (BMZ paper 2, 2021: "Digitalisation as Driver of Innovation in Development Cooperation"); improved and more efficient accreditation as part of an improved quality infrastructure that contributes to easier access to markets and increases consumer trust (various BMZ papers). Also, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 8 (economic growth, full employment, decent work) and 9 (infrastructure, industrialisation, innovation) refer. It cannot be investigated in this evaluation but is assumed here that successful digitalisation does actually lead to the described effects at least over time if the process gains momentum and the results do not remain singular projects. As the process of digitalisation did gain traction during the 4-year project period, more ABs than expected did embark on digitalisation projects, and also high-income economy ABs made use of the webinars and particularly the Digitalisation Network meetings, it can be concluded that the project did make a relevant contribution to the process of digitalisation. To a smaller extent, the reduced use of paper may have an environmental effect. In addition, the increased awareness of AB staff in high income economies about challenges in developing economies, described in section effectiveness, 5.1.3, dimension 4, is considered an impact.

The increased efficiency and the likely reduced use of paper (digitalisation leads often but not always to reduced use of paper – to what extent it happens here, cannot be investigated in this evaluation) can be seen at APAC and AB level, the intended beneficiaries. It is likely that AB clients also experience the increased efficiency.

Regarding positive interactions or trade-offs between social, economic and environmental changes, the increased efficiency, an economic benefit, is likely to lead to less use of paper, an environmental benefit. At the same time, it is likely to lead to more use of electricity. Whether electricity is produced without fossil sources, that is climate neutral, is considered largely outside the control of partners. If the increased use of electricity leads to an increased use of fossil energy, that would be considered a trade-off, possible even a negative effect; but that, too, cannot be investigated here. This is true for the ABs from least developed economies, considered particularly disadvantaged, too.

Overall, the project is likely to lead to substantial positive impact and is rated successful in dimension 1.

### **Dimension 2: To what extent have the results achieved by the intervention (at outcome level) contributed to the intended or implemented higher-level changes.**

The expected impact described above hinges entirely on the implemented digitalisation of processes, and the ADAPT project has contributed substantially to these processes, or helped to make them more successful if they were already ongoing. This applies both to results at ABs and at APAC. It is therefore concluded that the project contributed considerably to the expected impact.

The project has served as a model for some other PTB projects like ASEAN and Cambodia, see section coherence, 5.1.2, dimension 1. Within the ADAPT project, many more APAC members introduced digitalisation projects than expected, see section effectiveness, 5.1.3, dimension 1. This can be interpreted as a broad-based impact, and with the existing structures, the produced materials, and the recommendation to continue with webinars (see chapter 8), a further spreading can be expected.

Overall, the project has strongly contributed to the expected impact and rated very successful in dimension 2.

### **Dimension 3: To what extent has the intervention contributed to positive and not to negative unintended higher-level development changes?**

The higher awareness of AB staff in high-income economies about the situation in developing economies can also be considered a positive unintended impact, especially if it spreads beyond the few who took part in mentoring processes. No other unintended impact was identified.

No negative unintended impact could be identified.

Overall, little unintended positive and no identifiable negative effects were detected. The project is rated successful in dimension 3.

### **Summarized evaluation**

| Criterion                               | Evaluation dimension                                                                          | Weighting | Appraisal |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Higher-level development results</b> | The intended higher-level development results have taken place or are expected to take place. | 25 %      | 2         |
|                                         | The results achieved by the intervention (at outcome level) have contributed to the           | 50 %      | 1         |

|                                                          |                                                                                                               |      |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|
|                                                          | intended or implemented higher-level results.                                                                 |      |     |
|                                                          | The intervention has contributed to positive and not to negative unintended higher-level development changes. | 25 % | 2   |
| Total assessment of the higher-level development results |                                                                                                               |      | 1.5 |

### 5.1.6 Sustainability

#### **Dimension 1: To what extent do the partners, target groups and organizations involved have the capacities required to ensure that positive results are continued?**

APAC has the institutional, human and financial resources to ensure that the positive results are continued, and the leadership has also confirmed that it is willing to invest further so that the DMP will be implemented. There is also clear willingness to continue with the exchange in the Digitalisation Network. It is less clear with the ABs. There are those with good business, enough financial resources and human capacity to sustain the digital structures, and there are others with less business and less income. There are also state institutions that depend on government budgeting. The first group is likely to have the capacity to overcome risks. For the second and third group it depends more on the character of risk and support they get whether or how quickly they can continue the digitalisation. Another question is if the process of digitalisation, that is digitalising more services, will continue. Here again, APAC and large ABs have more capacity to continue than smaller ones. There are substantial capacities for a continuation. The project is rated successful in dimension 1.

#### **Dimension 2: To what extent has the intervention considerably contributed to the capacity of partners, target groups and other organizations involved to continue the positive results?**

The ADAPT project contributed through sensitisation and capacity building, and by facilitating positive examples, to the willingness and capacity for continuation. It has particularly helped to strengthen the capacity of APAC in this field. There had also been much capacity amongst the digitally more advanced APAC members. The project organised and focussed this capacity. It facilitated that capacity was shared amongst members and particularly with members from developing economies. The project has, for example, conducted training on cyber security. It is therefore concluded that the project has played a crucial role in building this capacity for continuation.

With building the capacity to continue the project, the project has also helped to build resilience. Understanding the importance of digitalisation is certainly one basis for this resilience. Having experienced the building of a digital service will also help to build it up again. And the establishment of the Digitalisation Network, and some mentoring relationships, will further help. These resources are also available to the ABs in least developed economies and to the smaller ABs, and the project has particularly focused on developing economies including the least developed ones.

Overall, the project has made a strong contribution to the necessary resources and resilience and is rated very successful in dimension 2.

### Dimension 3: To what extent are the results of the intervention durable?

Given the capacities described above, and the interest and willingness of APAC and many partners to continue with the digitalisation, it can be expected that many results will remain for a long time, and that many of the partners will also continue further digitalising services. Risks are multiple. Technology develops fast, APAC and ABs need to keep up which requires investment and personnel. Regulations can change, leadership priorities can change too, and particularly weaker and governmental ABs can lack the necessary finance. On the other hand, there are important potentials. A rising expectation of clients that services are digitalised, a rising educational level in developing economies, competition amongst ABs and the network in APAC will help to overcome those challenges. The evaluation has not identified shortcomings in the ADAPT project addressing these challenges. Overall, the project results are expected to be very durable. The project is rated very successful in dimension 3.

### Summarized evaluation

| Criterion                              | Evaluation dimension                                                                                                                                        | Weighting | Appraisal |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Sustainability                         | The partners, target groups and organizations involved have the capacities required to ensure that positive results are continued.                          | 33.33 %   | 2         |
|                                        | The intervention has considerably contributed to the capacity of partners, target groups and other organizations involved to continue the positive results. | 33.33 %   | 1         |
|                                        | The results of the intervention are durable.                                                                                                                | 33.33 %   | 1         |
| Total assessment of the sustainability |                                                                                                                                                             |           | 1.3       |

### 5.1.7 Summary of the intervention's contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The project is also assessed against its contribution to the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is a summarized consideration of the previous findings and conclusions.

#### Universality, shared responsibility and accountability

The project contributed mainly to SDGs 8 (economic growth, full employment, decent work) and 9 (infrastructure, industrialisation, innovation) through the improvement of accreditation processes. It furthers particularly the process of trade and the consumer trust, see section impact, 5.1.5, dimension 1. The project built heavily on partner structures and contributions for its implementation and for decisions, and it helped integrated results into partner structures. There was little potential for collaboration with other donors, but cooperation with other PTB projects, and another regional accreditation network became involved. Joint system for monitoring, learning and accountability were used mainly with the implementation partner APAC, see section coherence, 5.1.2, dimension 2.

### **Interplay of economic, environmental and social development**

The project addressed sustainable development in the sense of an interaction of social, environmental and economic sustainable development only indirectly. It addressed institutional and administrative issues of accreditation. Well-functioning accreditation is a base for sound sustainable development, and insofar this project contributes to the sustainable development goals, see section relevance, 5.1.1, dimension 3. The reduced use of paper in digitalised processes may have an environmental effect which is unintended but the project will have contributed to it, see section impact, 5.1.7, dimension 1.

### **Inclusiveness/Leave no one behind**

Target group of the project are ABs from developing economies. A focus has been laid on least developed economies. Given the digital divide, these are considered particularly disadvantaged, see section relevance, 5.1.1, dimension 2.

For the project results, only ABs from developing economies have been considered. Many of them confirm that they found they have improved their capacity, and many were from least developed economies. Many have started with the digitalisation of their processes, and much of that can be attributed to project activities, see section effectiveness, 5.1.3, dimension 2. It is concluded that the impact resulting from these outcomes will also benefit the ABs from least developed economies, see section impact, 5.1.5, dimension 1. Resilience was not a specific focus of this evaluation, but with the increased capacity of ABs from least developed economies it seems likely that resilience also increased. Whether digitalisation also increased dependence was not investigated.

## **6. Assessment of specific evaluation questions**

Specific evaluation questions of PTB for this project are:

1. How can, in the face of the ending PTB-APAC cooperation in this project, it be assured that the results, instruments, lessons learned, etc. of the cooperation be secured, continued and utilised? Which role should APAC, other bilateral PTB projects and the exchange with other regional accreditation bodies have?

In section sustainability, 5.1.6, the chances for durability and the systems that are in place for sustainability have been discussed. The evaluator has no answer to the question how other PTB projects could support sustainability of the results. APAC, according to interviews conducted, is determined to maintain what was achieved. Structures are there to continue the process of digitalisation of members. Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 refer to this. In exchange with other regional accreditation bodies, APAC might gain further ideas on how to promote particularly the ABs that are less digitally developed, and APAC could facilitate exchange. And it might acquire funding from other donors to support this process which needs external support for developing economy ABs that either depend on government funding or have too little business to finance digitalisation from their own income.

2. PTB attempted to develop an online platform for APAC through its own processes. What can be learned from these experiences for the implementation of digital projects?

The plan to develop an operable online platform for APAC within a project period of three years was too ambitious. That requires more time, no matter whether the platform is to be purchased by PTB or by the partner. In this project, further delays occurred. These can be explained by a number of factors.

- (1) The decision not to have a digital expert as part of the appraisal mission led to unrealistic plans.
- (2) PTB did not organise its own client capability (Auftraggeberfähigkeit). PTB does have the capability

to manage IT and digitalisation projects, but these staff members lack the time to also manage IT projects of the development cooperation department Q.3. The project would have needed an international intermittent expert (iKZE) specialised on digitalisation. The reasons why none was contracted cannot fully be reconstructed.

(3) The delays led to the decision that APAC commissioned the specifications for the DMP and PTB reimbursed APAC. This sped up the process so that at least the specifications could be finalised.

(4) In this project, communication between units and departments of PTB was delayed by factors that cannot be reconstructed, which in turn delayed decisions.

## 7. Lessons learned

The mentoring process showed that some APAC members from developing economies have severe difficulties implementing digitalisation projects. One reason was that some had little idea of what was to be achieved. While the SAM was helpful, an interview partner requested a manual on digitalisation that would be important for “junior ABs in digitalisation” that goes beyond self-assessment and gives a guideline what to consider when starting to digitalise processes, see chapter 8, recommendation 1.

Mentoring, where it found resonance amongst the mentees who actually implemented a digitalisation process, could mean a complex accompaniment. The mentors needed to bring together multiple competencies from their own organisation. While the mentors had volunteered to mentor, other staff members of their organisation had not. One interview partner, who managed such a process in the mentoring role, said it might have been easier for them had there been some incentives, see chapter 8, recommendation 7. He was not specific in what incentives he meant, and he might have meant financial incentives. But non-financial incentives like the involvement in training or contribution to courses could also be explored.

Of those mentees who have implemented digitalisation during their time of mentoring, some had their own funds or acquired external funding through other sources for the digitalisation project. Other mentoring processes brought little results, partly because of a lack of funding. Funding that PTB could provide was limited. If an organisation had not started the digitalisation process already, mentoring could help to clarify needs, but it would be difficult to contribute to the implementation of a digitalisation project, see chapter 8, recommendation 8.

The project shows that in a field where there is dynamism in the sector, a sense of urgency and where small steps are possible, a regional project can further cooperation (regional structures are essential for the international QI) and get a broad spread with limited investment, see chapter 8, recommendation 9.

To say what knowledge gained could be transferred to other PTB projects might be a bit preposterous – for an evaluator who has limited knowledge of these other projects. Certainly, very successful for a regional project was the concept to create three committees: the PSC, the project-related digitalisation working group (that served for reflection, but also largely organised webinars) and the Digitalisation Network as a structure within APAC that can last beyond project end.

Capacity building in ADAPT happened largely through online webinars and meetings, and also mentoring was mostly online, with few exceptions, the most important of which was the training course in Bangkok in March 2026. Feedback from interview partners was that more encounter and exposure would have been helpful, particularly for those who have not yet had much experience in digitalising their accreditation processes, see chapter 8, recommendation 6.

PTB's difficulties with obtaining the DMP for APAC contain lessons learned. See chapter 6, specific questions, question 2. This could justify further exchange in PTB. Recommendation 5 refers to this issue.

## 8. Recommendations

Recommendations are made to partners, the project team and to the PTB International Cooperation Department.

### Recommendations to partners

Recommendations go only to APAC. The evaluation has not looked intensively enough into APAC members, so that no recommendations to them can be made.

- 1 The mentoring process showed that some APAC members from developing economies had severe difficulties implementing digitalisation projects. It is recommended that APAC consider developing a manual on digitalisation. Reference: Chapter 7, lessons learned.
- 2 When APAC has implemented its own DMP, it obviously will need to train members in using it. It seems meaningful to make an extra effort in training members that are less digitally advanced. It is recommended that APAC consider using this process of DMP induction to also sensitise member and associated ABs for the potential of such platforms for their own processes. Reference: Section impact, 5.1.5, dimension 1 and chapter 6.
- 3 The webinars got good response and feedback, and they were largely organised with APAC members' own resources. That indicates that there is a capacity and a need for this kind of training, in addition to the Digitalisation Network meetings. It is therefore recommended that APAC consider encouraging (and, if necessary, expanding the terms of reference) the Digitalisation Network or the Capacity Building Committee, or both in cooperation, to also conduct or facilitate a broader webinar series. Reference: Section impact, 5.1.5, dimension 2.

### Recommendations to the project team

The ADAPT project has ended and there will be no follow-on project. Therefore, recommendations to the project team are limited here to remaining follow-on activities. Other recommendations, relating to lessons learned from the project, are addressed to group Q.3.

- 4 Some partners and former staff members of partners were genuinely interested in the evaluation results. The evaluation report will likely only go to APAC leadership and the current PSC. It is recommended that the project team consider sending the link to the evaluation report to all interview partners as soon as it is published on the PTB website. Reference: Section data sources, 4.2.

### Recommendations to the International Cooperation Department (Group Q.3)

- 5 After the ADAPT project had been started, PTB has developed a digital strategy. This strategy builds on the experience of more digitalisation projects and should be followed in future projects. Digital experts should be involved to ensure client capability for digital projects within PTB Q.3 and within the partner organisation(s). Reference: Chapter 6, specific questions, question 2.
- 6 Some interview partners felt that more encounter and exposure would have been helpful, particularly for those who have not yet had much experience in digitalising their accreditation processes. It is recommended that PTB consider in future regional projects more exposure and on-site encounter. Reference: Chapter 7, lessons learned.
- 7 Mentoring could mean a complex accompaniment. The mentors might need to bring together multiple competencies from their own organisation. It is recommended that PTB consider for future

mentoring programmes to offer incentives that are not necessarily financial. Reference: Chapter 7, lessons learned.

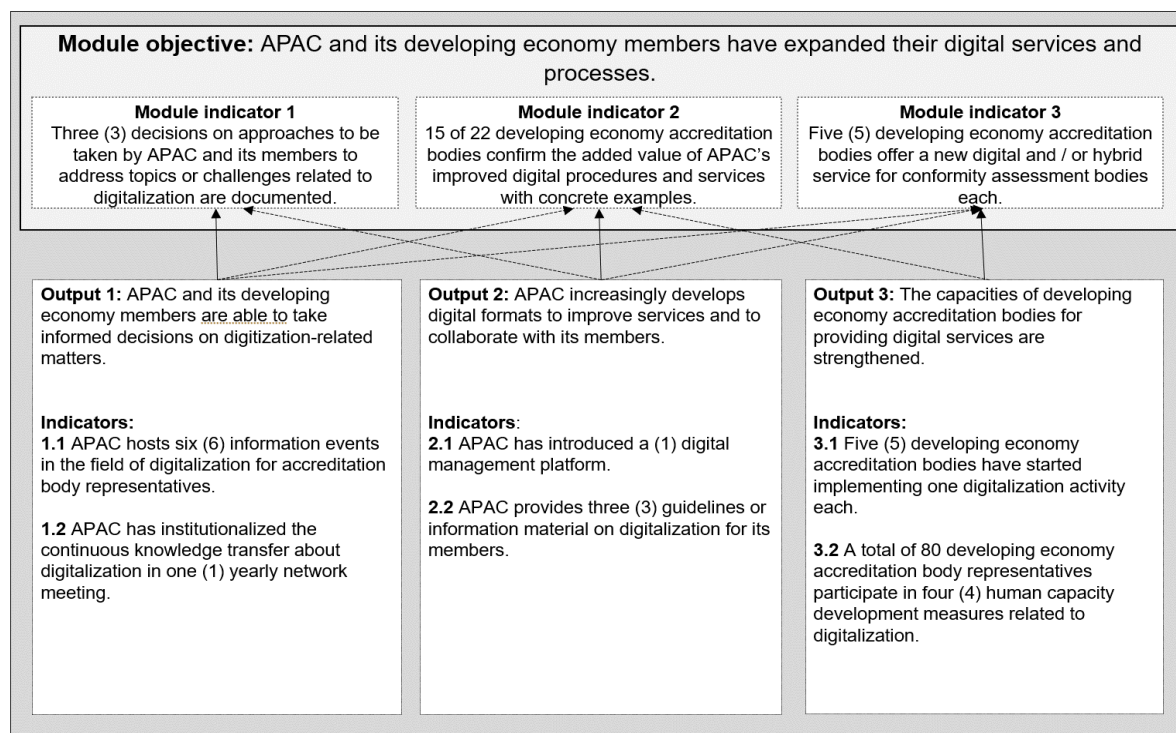
- 8 If an organisation has not started the digitalisation process already, mentoring can help to clarify needs, but it will be difficult to contribute to the implementation of a digitalisation project. It is recommended to consider this in future projects. Reference: Chapter 7, lessons learned.
- 9 Regional projects have strong points in certain contexts, e. g. when there is a general understanding that change needs to come and first steps are not too difficult. For such cases, PTB should continue suggesting regional projects to BMZ. Reference: Chapter 7, lessons learned.

#### Recommendations to the evaluation unit of Working Group Q.01.

- 10 The context chapter, 3.1, is headed “framework conditions” in the template to this report. That is a direct translation from the German word “Rahmenbedingungen”. It does not exist in English. It is therefore recommended to use the heading “context” (which essentially, but not fully carries the meaning of the term) or another English translation and describe what is meant with “Rahmenbedingungen”.

## 9. Annexes to the evaluation report

### 1. Intervention logic (from the module proposal)



### 2. “Wirkungsmodell” Capacity WORKS tool 7 (if available)

It is not documented that the project used a results model.

### 3. Evaluation schedule

|                  |                                                         |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 12.09.2025       | Kick-off meeting for the evaluation                     |
| 11.02.2026       | Delivery of the draft inception report                  |
| 13.02.2026       | PTB Team and EVA comments                               |
| 18.02.2026       | Submission of revised Inception Report                  |
| 23-27.02.2026    | Comments by partners                                    |
| 06.03.2026       | Submission final Inception Report                       |
| 01.03.2026       | Provision of the remaining project documents            |
| 20.03.2026       | Provision of all relevant financial and monitoring data |
| 30.03.2026       | Start of data collection phase                          |
| 17.04.2026       | End of data collection phase                            |
| 04.05.2026       | 1st Draft of Report                                     |
| 15.05.2026       | Comments by PTB                                         |
| 22.05.2026       | Revision of Report                                      |
| Until 05.06.2026 | comments by partners                                    |
| 30.06.26         | Submission final documents                              |
| June/July        | Presentation of results in Working Group Q.3            |

### 4. Schedule of the data acquisition, and list of contact persons (anonymised)

| Date       | Organisa-<br>tion | Role in the project                                        | Country            |
|------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 31.03.2026 | PTB               | PTB Project Assistant                                      | Germany            |
| 31.03.2026 | APAC /<br>NABL    | ADAPT Digitalisation Working Group Chair /<br>PSC          | India              |
| 01.04.2026 | PTB               | former PTB project assistant                               | Germany            |
| 01.04.2026 | PTB               | PTB Project Coordinator ADAPT                              | Germany            |
| 02.04.2026 | PTB               | PTB iKZE                                                   | UK                 |
| 02.04.2026 | NAC               | Accreditation Officer / NAC                                | USA (Florida)      |
| 03.04.2026 | APAC              | APAC Secretary / PSC                                       | Australia (Sydney) |
| 07.04.2026 | APAC / IAS        | APAC Executive Committee/PSC                               | USA (Los Angeles)  |
| 08.04.2026 | APAC              | former APAC Digitalisation Network Chair and<br>PSC member | New Zealand        |

|            |               |                                            |                    |
|------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 09.04.2026 | APAC / CBSBC  | APAC Digitalisation Network Chair / PSC    | Canada (Vancouver) |
| 09.04.2026 | PTB           | Project Coordinator Mexico                 | Germany            |
| 13.04.2026 | QAI           | Director                                   | India              |
| 14.04.2026 | APAC          | New APAC Project Manager / PSC             | India              |
| 15.04.2026 | FDAS          | Director                                   | India              |
| 16.04.2026 | SAE           | Director                                   | Ecuador            |
| 16.04.2026 | APAC / AERSSC | former ADAPT PSC member / AERSSC Director  | Nepal              |
| 17.04.2026 | PTB           | Former PTB Project Coordinator             | Germany            |
| 17.04.2026 | EMA           | Director / Technical Director              | Mexico             |
| 20.04.2026 | PTB           | Project Coordinator Ecuador                | Germany            |
| 20.04.2026 | PTB           | Head of section                            | Germany            |
| 20.04.2026 | MNAS          | Senior officer and three colleagues        | Mongolia           |
| 23.04.2026 | PTB           | PTB zentrale Beschaffung                   | Germany            |
| 23.04.2026 | PNGLAS        | Executive Manager                          | Papua New Guinea   |
| 30.04.2026 | PTB           | Verfahrensexperte Digitalisierung, Q.3     | Germany            |
| 01.05.2026 | SCC           | Manager Compliance and Assessment Services | Canada (Ottawa)    |

Three interview requests were not responded to or could not be realised before finalising the draft report (former PTB digitalisation expert, APAC PSC member India, CANC-GDAC Cambodia)

## 5. Interview guideline

Initial information: Interviews will be kept confidential. We will not quote and not inform PTB about what individual interview partners have said.

Questions will be adapted to the respective interviewee. Evaluators will list specific questions, potential suggestions and preliminary conclusions that the interviewee should be asked about. Each question below can be followed up by more specific questions. The order of questions is tentative. Questions will address all DAC criteria.

- What are you doing now? Project activities. In terms of PTB project and digitalisation.
- What has changed since 2022 in digitalisation in APAC? Or since you got involved?
- What are highlights?
- What are particular challenges?
- What did you achieve (outputs)?
- What do people do with it? What changes on the ground? (Utilisation of outputs)
- What are risks? And how do you manage them?

- What would be possible in digitalisation in the accreditation sector in Asia-Pacific / in your country now? What are new opportunities? And limitations? Did PTB address what is needed, or should it address something else?
- And at the end, check all the evaluator's questions or initial ideas (potential suggestions, conclusions): ask what interview partners think about them.

## **6. Literature**

In addition to the project documents, the following documents were used:

28.4.2026      Michael Brinkschröder, Digital Strategy – Status and Framework. Workshop presentation (internal PPTX)

## **7. Survey Question (if applicable)**

No survey was conducted for this evaluation.