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Independent evaluation of the ILO – Flanders Trust Fund (2020-25)

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Contents

List of Acronyms and abbreviations	5
Executive Summary	6
1. Description of the ILO-Flanders Trust Fund.....	11
1.1. ILO-Flanders Trust Fund.....	11
1.2. Trust Fund interventions	12
1.3. Recommendations from the 2020 evaluation	12
2. Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation.....	15
3. Evaluation criteria and questions.....	16
4. Methodology and limitations	17
4.1. Evaluation Framework	17
4.2. Data collection	18
4.2.1. Desk Research.....	18
4.2.2. Interviews	18
4.2.3. Case study on South Africa	19
4.2.3. Policy Delphi	19
4.2.4. Stakeholder validation workshop	19
4.3. Analysis and reporting	19
4.4. Limitations	20
4.5. Ethical standards	20
5. Evaluation Findings	21
5.1. Relevance.....	21
5.1.1. Relevance of the Trust Fund modality for the mandates and priorities of Flanders and ILO	21
5.1.2. Relevance of the Portfolio to national and local needs, particularly of women and youth	24
5.2. Coherence	25
5.2.1. Alignment of the Trust Fund with development cooperation and foreign policy ambitions of Flanders and the ILO	25
5.2.2. Alignment of the Portfolio with Country Programme Outcomes	27
5.3. Effectiveness	27
5.3.1. Progress towards the objectives of the Trust Fund as modality	27
5.3.2. Progress towards the objectives of the portfolio	29
5.4. Efficiency	31
5.4.1. Efficiency of the Trust Fund modality.....	31
5.4.2. Efficiency within the portfolio	32
5.5. Impact.....	33
5.6. Sustainability	35
6. Forward-looking reflections	37
7. Conclusions	42
8. Lessons Learned and Good Practices.....	43
Lessons learned	43

Good practices	43
9. Recommendations	44
Annex 1. South Africa case study.....	48
Alignment with Flanders and ILO priorities.....	48
Alignment with stakeholder and country needs	49
Visibility of Flanders and engagement with donors and stakeholders	49
Individual, institutional, and national policy outcomes and TF added value	50
Efficiency of the South Africa portfolio	51
Impact and sustainability	51
Annex 2. Terms of Reference (ToR).....	53
Annex 3. Evaluation matrix.....	3
Annex 4. Evaluation schedule	10
Annex 5. Documents reviewed	11
Annex 6. List of interview respondents	13
Annex 7. Questionnaires	14
1. High-level Trust Fund stakeholders	14
2. Project-level stakeholders.....	15
Annex 8. Lessons learned and good practices	17
4.1. Lessons learned	17
4.2. Good practices.....	18

List of Tables

Table 1. Projects funded under the Cooperation Agreement	12
Table 2. Recommendations from the 2020 TF evaluation	12
Table 3. Relevance	3
Table 4. Coherence.....	4
Table 5. Effectiveness.....	5
Table 6. Efficiency.....	6
Table 7. Impact	8
Table 8. Sustainability	9
Table 9. Timeline of the evaluation.....	10
Table 10. Flanders interviews.....	13
Table 11. ILO staff interviews	13
Table 12. Stakeholder interviews	13

List of Figures

Figure 1. Logic of the TF as development cooperation modality*	17
Figure 2. Intervention Logic of the TF project portfolio	18
Figure 3. TF focus on women, youth, and social dialogue	25
Figure 4. Policy Delphi responses regarding priority topics	40
Figure 5. PD responses on new forms of collaboration.....	41

List of Acronyms and abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full meaning
ADULT	Apprenticeships Development for Universal lifelong Learning and Training
CDOS	Centre for Development of Stones
CPO	Country Programme Outcome(s)
DG	Directorate General
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoF	Government of Flanders
GPSL3	Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning
HQ	Headquarters
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILS	International Labour Standards
IMPLEMENT	Trade and investment arrangements: Implementation and stakeholder engagement for promoting decent work
IPEC+	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour
ITCILO	International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization
LLL	Lifelong Learning
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OSH	Occupational Health and Safety
P&B	Programme & Budget
PD	Policy Delphi
ProDoc	Project Document
RBSA	Regular Budget Supplementary Account
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSTC	South-South Triangular Cooperation
SUPPORT	Inclusive Trade and Decent Work: Supportive Domestic Policies for Better Social, Labour Market and Sustainable Enterprise Outcomes
TF	Trust Fund
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

Background of the Trust Fund and its objectives

The **Cooperation Agreement** between ILO and the Government of Flanders, as signed in 2016, has three overarching objectives:

- To progressively realise the objectives of the ILO, within the competences of Flanders, in free discussions with workers' and employers' representatives with a view to the promotion of the common welfare;
- To support the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at the advancement of the Decent Work Agenda through the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work, employment, social protection, and social dialogue in partner countries;
- To contribute to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Cooperation Agreement provides the arrangements of the **Trust Fund** established by Flanders and the ILO. The ILO-Flanders Trust Fund aims to support activities of ILO in the field of promoting Decent Work, with particular focus on women and youth, social dialogue, and on Southern Africa. Specific priorities are discussed on a yearly basis, based on Flanders' policy priorities.

Since 2016, 19 projects have been implemented (or are in progress), which are covered by the Cooperation Agreements. Within the scope of this evaluation (2020-2025), eight projects are ongoing or completed. Common objectives and approaches among the projects include the focus on skills gaps and employability; lifelong learning; and job creation and decent work. The projects focus in this regard on institutional capacity-building (e.g. Training of Trainers in VET institutions); piloting new training programmes and curricula; work-based learning; as well as multi-stakeholder engagement and social dialogue. Some of the proposals explicitly mention women and youth as their target groups

Purpose, objectives, and scope of the evaluation

The evaluation focused on two specific and interconnected components, allowing a review of the overall functioning of the Agreement and Trust Fund as modality for development support and collaboration, as well as a review of the achievements of the activities towards the goals of the Agreement listed above:

1. Review the performance of the Trust Fund supported projects under the current agreement from August 2020 to December 2025.
2. Review the Trust Fund's modality, with particular attention to its mechanisms for delivering expected results

The main stakeholders of the evaluation are the Government of Flanders and the relevant ILO staff in charge of the Trust Fund and Cooperation overall as well as project and programme staff responsible for activities funded by the Trust Fund. Secondary stakeholders include constituents and other stakeholders.

Evaluation criteria and questions

Below are the main questions for the evaluation as presented in the ToR, as well as small adjustments proposed by the evaluator during the Inception Stage.

Relevance: Are the modality and its portfolio doing the right things?

- ▶ How relevant were the projects to local and national contexts and needs, including that of the beneficiaries?
- ▶ How relevant are the projects to the mandate and priorities of the ILO and the Government of Flanders?
- ▶ To what extent is the Trust Fund aligned with Flemish and ILO policy priorities and needs?
- ▶ *Forward-looking view: How can the alignment between Flemish priorities and the ILO's areas of work be strengthened during the identification phase of new projects?*

Coherence: how well does the modality and its portfolio fit?

- ▶ How do the projects that the Trust Fund supports link to ILO Country Programme Outcomes? Are they implemented in a coherent manner?

- ▶ To what extent was the pooled funding mechanism aligned with the broader ambitions of the ILO and the Flemish Government?

Effectiveness: Are the modality and its portfolio achieving its objectives?

- ▶ To what extent have the projects achieved their desired results?
- ▶ To what extent has the Trust Fund achieved its objectives as a modality?
- ▶ To what extent does the Trust Fund encourage the mainstreaming of gender equality and inclusion into its activities? Did the projects' design and implementation successfully mainstream gender and inclusion?
- ▶ To what extent have the recommendations from the 2020 independent evaluation been implemented?
- ▶ To what extent did the Trust Fund and its activities contribute to improved visibility of its projects and make a lasting impact the lives of beneficiaries?

Efficiency: how well are resources being used?

- ▶ To what extent were the projects implemented in a cost-efficient and timely manner?
- ▶ How efficient is the Trust administrative procedures, fund disbursements and use of resources?
- ▶ Is the Trust Fund's governance structure appropriate and relevant to deliver on its desired results? *(The evaluator proposed to move this to the efficiency section, instead of the relevance section)*
- ▶ How efficient are the governance, coordination and management structures of the projects under review? *(The evaluator proposed to move this to the efficiency section, instead of the effectiveness section)*
- ▶ Does the Trust Fund offer flexibility in its approach and are stakeholders engaged in a meaningful manner?
- ▶ *Forward-looking view: Are there opportunities to make the mechanisms of the Trust Fund more efficient?*
- ▶ *Is there an alternative model that would better fit the cooperation?*
- ▶ *What is the potential (or lack thereof) for financing through pooled funding mechanisms?*

Emerging impact: what difference does the modality and its portfolio make?

- ▶ What is the added value of cooperation between the Government of Flanders and the ILO?
- ▶ What impact has the Trust Fund had at the local and/or systemic levels?

Sustainability: will the benefits last?

- ▶ What strategies have been put in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Trust Fund's results (e.g., capacity building, policy alignment, local ownership)?
- ▶ How sustainable is the Trust Fund's approach and its ability to foster long-term collaboration?

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation relied on desk research, interviews, a case study on South Africa, and a Policy Delphi survey to collect data from different sources and methods.

In total, 30 people were interviewed for the evaluation, namely:

- 23 ILO staff (13 female, ten male)
- 4 Flanders staff (Three female, one male)
- 4 constituents from South Africa (two female, two male)

The recipients of the PD survey were 12 key Flanders staff and key ILO staff who are engaged in the Trust Fund on a more comprehensive manner (not just as staff of one project). However, only seven people replied to the survey.

Upon completion of the data collection activities, and analysis of the gathered data, an online stakeholder validation workshop with key staff of ILO and Flanders was organised on 9 December 2025.

This evaluation was be guided by the main international ethical considerations applicable to evaluations (e.g., the evaluation will comply with the [ILO EVAL Code of Conduct](#), United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) [Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#), UNEG [Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#), UNEG [Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system](#) UNEG [Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#)). These considerations were integrated into the design, data collection, and reporting.

Key findings

Relevance

The projects funded by the TF during 2020-2025 focused explicitly on ILO priorities described in the P&Bs, focusing on skills and lifelong learning, trade, labour standards, and gender. The TF priorities and portfolio during 2020-2025 aligned largely with the 2019-2024 political priorities for foreign and domestic policies of Flanders.

Stakeholders were actively consulted in project design and implementation, ensuring responsiveness to their needs. Gender was integrated in some of the projects, but not all and not always explicitly.

Coherence

The TF modality contributes to ILO and Flanders' priorities and ambitions for development cooperation, foreign policy, and funding modalities. For ILO, the TF aligned with its Development Cooperation Strategy 2022-2025 focused on Services to constituents; Partnerships for policy coherence; Partnerships for funding, and; Efficiency, decent work results and transparency. For Flanders, the TF aligned with its Multilateral Cooperation guidelines focused on selectivity (focus), added value, predictability (being a reliable and recognizable donor), efficiency and effectiveness.

There is sufficient evidence demonstrating that the TF portfolio projects align with the respective project countries' Country Programme Objectives.

Effectiveness

The TF modality was effective towards its objectives. The modality contributed to efficient project management, predictability and long-term planning of ILO, while maintaining responsiveness to emerging issues. The TF modality also contributed to the visibility of Flanders, through the engagement of Flemish experts in projects and forums, and through dissemination of project results with Flanders' logo. Some opportunities for networking with other donors were created, though engagement with the EU was limited.

The TF project portfolio created results at individual, institutional and policy-level. Several results, such as global tools and methods have the potential to create results across the three dimensions.

Efficiency

The Trust Fund modality created visible efficiency gains for the ILO, particularly at HQ level. The modality reduces administrative processes, and its flexibility allows for smooth adjustment of project processes.

The projects were implemented in an efficient manner, with the efficient and effective creation and reallocation of savings. Various challenges occurred that caused delays in project implementation.

Impact

The difference made by the TF is largely about the TF providing opportunities to try-and-test new approaches which are subsequently taken up by other donors, and through the TF's support for underfunded areas. The most visible impact of the TF over the past five years is the adoption of ILO Recommendation 208 on Quality Apprenticeships.

Sustainability

Most results established by the portfolio are sustainable, particularly the tools and research products. Several new partnerships are also continuing beyond project timelines. Additional project phases are needed in some cases to take some results forward.

Forward-looking reflections

There is no need to change the overall model of cooperation. The way forward for the Trust Fund includes a more coherent and targeted approach to the selection of projects. If the future portfolio becomes more internally coherent the reporting and coordination meetings can also be strengthened by discussing the combined impact of the portfolio towards the objectives.

The way forward for the Trust Fund portfolio is to maintain a balance between global projects and country-level projects. In case of South Africa in particular, the ILO and Flanders should explore how the TF can function as mechanism to support Flanders – South Africa economic cooperation (rather than development cooperation-type interventions).

Considering the nature of ILO and Flanders' priorities, there is potential to address global challenges together through broader cooperation beyond the more standard development project.

Conclusions

The 2020-2025 ILO-Flanders Trust Fund successfully aligned with both parties' strategic priorities through a flexible, lightly earmarked funding model. This partnership improved operational efficiency and enabled the ILO to address underfunded areas, leading to significant results like the adoption of ILO Recommendation 208 and the creation of sustainable research tools.

However, the TF's broad scope and annual planning resulted in a "scattered" portfolio that lacked overall coherence and collective impact. While individual projects were successful and sustainable, the portfolio as a whole did not create a unified strategic change. Moving forward, the TF remains highly valuable but requires better long-term planning and a more focused strategy to maximise its impact.

Lessons learned

- Many decisions on project design in South Africa were made between Geneva and Brussels, with limited opportunities for the Flanders representation in Pretoria and the ILO South Africa office to collaborate on, and influence, the portfolio in the country.
- ILO can encourage, but not control, the participation of other donors. Therefore, if this interaction is a core priority for Flanders, it could consider joining pooled funds that already have other donors.

Good practices

- The adjustment of the payment progress for ITCILO significantly reduces the administrative burden identified in the ITCILO Digital Skills project.
- The modality as a whole enhanced efficiency for ILO and Flanders in terms of administrative workload and trust.
- The Trust Fund supported interventions that are often underfunded or low on donors' priority lists.

Recommendations

- ▶ **Recommendation 1: Apply a more focused and longer-term approach to the selection of projects, aligned with Flanders' foreign policy objectives and ILO's Strategic Plan.**
 - Recommendation 1.1.: Agree on two or three strategic, narrower priorities or objectives that the Trust Fund should achieve over the next five years.
 - Recommendation 1.2.: Select one or two global challenges related to these priorities for which a joint ILO-Flanders approach can create solutions.
 - Recommendation 1.3.: If possible - identify or establish one Global Programme of ILO that aligns with the strategic priorities and has a multi-donor funding mechanism and advisory board comprising all donors, to which Flanders can contribute.
 - Recommendation 1.4.: Maintain the current balance of projects targeting South Africa, as it remains a priority of Flanders.
 - Recommendation 1.5.: Align the Trust Fund management approach with the above recommendations.

Addressed to:	Timeline:	Resources:
Flanders, ILO PARTNERSHIPS	As soon as possible – early 2026.	This should not affect the resource allocation.

- ▶ **Recommendation 2: Pay closer attention to the integration of key crosscutting concerns of the TF in the portfolio, namely women, youth, and social dialogue, but also ILS and environmental sustainability as key priority of both Flanders and ILO.**

Addressed to:	Timeline:	Resources:
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Flanders, ILO PARTNERSHIPS	To be used on forthcoming projects	It might slightly increase the time needed for project design.
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- ▶ **Recommendation 3: Explore alternative cooperation mechanisms for the implementation of the Trust Fund, beyond the more traditional project structure.**

Addressed to:	Timeline:	Resources:
Flanders, ILO PARTNERSHIPS	From now on, in the design of new initiatives	No impact. Interventions are designed based on the TF budget

- ▶ **Recommendation 4: Identify concrete areas where ILO, Flanders and the Trust Fund can create unique added value.**

Addressed to:	Timeline:	Resources:
Flanders, ILO PARTNERSHIPS	From now on, in the design of new initiatives	No impact.

1. Description of the ILO-Flanders Trust Fund

1.1. ILO-Flanders Trust Fund

The **Cooperation Agreement** between ILO and the Government of Flanders, as signed in 2016, has three overarching objectives:

- To progressively realise the objectives of the ILO, within the competences of Flanders, in free discussions with workers' and employers' representatives with a view to the promotion of the common welfare;
- To support the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at the advancement of the Decent Work Agenda through the promotion of fundamental principles and rights at work, employment, social protection, and social dialogue in partner countries;
- To contribute to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Cooperation Agreement provides the arrangements of the **Trust Fund** established by Flanders and the ILO. The ILO-Flanders Trust Fund aims to support activities of ILO in the field of promoting Decent Work, with particular focus on women and youth, social dialogue, and on Southern Africa. Specific priorities are discussed on a yearly basis, based on Flanders' policy priorities. The Trust Fund also prioritises activities which include an Advisory Committee and those that support linkages among ILO – Flanders – EU Institutions. Interviews furthermore elaborated that the Trust Fund serves the purpose of enhancing the visibility of Flanders as trusted development partner and enhance Flanders' ability to cooperate with other (European) donors.

In terms of financial support, the Cooperation Agreement indicates the following opportunities:

- The Trust Fund can provide seed money
- The Trust Fund can provide funding for specific topical needs and opportunities
- 15% of the biannual contribution of the fund is managed by ILO-Brussels. Unspent budget will be transferred back to the Trust Fund at the end of the two years.
- *Flanders can also provide finance for additional activities outside the Trust Fund, but towards the same objectives and under governance of the Cooperation Agreement.*

Activities that can be funded by the Trust Fund include:

- Projects and programmes of ILO
- Secondment of officials
- Topical needs and opportunities
- A periodic review of the ILO-Flanders cooperation.
- The ITCILO may be involved in the implementation of activities

Interview data showed that the Trust Fund was only used for projects and programmes during the evaluation period.

The Agreement describes all provisions regarding financial management, project/programme terminations, no-cost extensions, reallocation of budget within projects/programmes, procurement regulations and audits.

The Cooperation Agreement also provides for **modalities for cooperation** between the ILO and the Government of Flanders. These include:

- A yearly cooperation review meeting
- Multi-donor consultations, where relevant

Specific meetings are held on an as-needed basis, for example to discuss opportunities and priorities for new projects.

Additionally, ILO is expected to submit annual progress and financial reports to Flanders on the projects and programmes funded under the Cooperation Agreement and Trust Fund. In all communications regarding the individual projects and programmes, ILO is expected to take sufficient measures to communicate that the project/programme is funded by the Government of Flanders.

1.2. Trust Fund interventions

Since 2016, 19 projects have been implemented (or are in progress), which are covered by the Cooperation Agreements. Within the scope of this evaluation (2020-2025), eight projects are ongoing or completed.

Table 1. Projects funded under the Cooperation Agreement

Project title	Code	Location	Timeline	Budget (USD)	Remarks
<i>Inclusive Trade and Decent Work: Supportive Domestic Policies for Better Social, Labour Market and Sustainable Enterprise Outcomes (SUPPORT).</i>	GLO/20/23/FLA	Global	01/09/2020 - 31/12/2023	510,859	Fully covered by the current evaluation.
<i>Apprenticeships Development for Universal lifelong Learning and Training (ADULT)</i>	GLO/20/02/FLA	Global	01/08/2020 - 31/08/2023	700,000	Fully covered by the current evaluation.
<i>Trade and investment arrangements: Implementation and stakeholder engagement for promoting decent work (IMPLEMENT)</i>	GLO/24/12/FLA	Global	14/06/2024 - 13/06/2026	425,877	Partially covered by the current evaluation
<i>Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation</i>	ZAF/19/01/FLA	Global	01/12/2019 - 30/11/2021	87,010	Self-evaluation to inform the current evaluation
<i>Paving the way for a sustainable natural stone industry in India</i>	IND/18/51/FLA	India	07/08/2018 - 31/12/2022	400,661	Partially covered by the current evaluation
<i>Promoting Decent Work through Productivity and Workplace Cooperation interventions in South Africa's clothing manufacturing sector</i>	ZAF/23/01/FLA	South-Africa	02/05/2023 - 01/05/2025	396,039	Self-evaluation to inform the current evaluation
<i>Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning (GPSL3)*</i>	GLO/21/29/MUL	Global	11/01/2022 - 31/12/2024	1,111,821	Fully covered by the current evaluation.
<i>ITC-ILO project: Digital Skills development for youth NEET in South Africa</i>	N/a	South-Africa	1/06/2023 - 1/06/2024	333,376	Fully covered by the current evaluation.

*GPSL3 is a global programme on skills and lifelong learning, providing system-level support through global public goods, policy guidance and selective country-level technical assistance, adapted to national contexts and demands.

Common objectives and approaches among the projects include the focus on skills gaps and employability; lifelong learning; and job creation and decent work. The projects focus in this regard on institutional capacity-building (e.g. Training of Trainers in VET institutions); piloting new training programmes and curricula; work-based learning; as well as multi-stakeholder engagement and social dialogue. Some of the proposals explicitly mention women and youth as their target groups.¹

1.3 Recommendations from the 2020 evaluation

The [2020 independent evaluation](#) covered the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement between 2016-2020. Based on its findings, the following recommendations were presented to the ILO and Flanders, with comments on their implementation based on the current evaluation results:

Table 2. Recommendations from the 2020 TF evaluation

Type of recommendation	Recommendations
Recommendations for TF projects and programmes	1. Increase the involvement of key stakeholders at all stages of the project including in the writing of the project document, and this includes in particular the country representatives of GoF and ILO and the tripartite constituents (even in global projects since there are various regional employers and workers' organizations). <i>The current evaluation noted no issues regarding stakeholder involvement.</i> 2. Maintain a high level of attention for issues related to Gender Equality and make sure they are included in all the M&E tools, such as Log Frame, Theory of Change and Risk Analysis. <i>The current evaluation noted some integration of gender perspectives.</i> In future projects pay attention to the disability inclusion component and to non-discrimination. <i>This evaluation found no evidence that disability was mainstreamed in project design.</i> 3. Move as much as possible to projects with a larger average size in terms of budget, and make sure that each project employs dedicated staff for the duration of the

¹ Review of the PRODOCs for the eight projects.

	project (e.g. a national project officer). ILO staff still prefers even larger projects with more HR, but many projects were sufficiently staffed (some were not). 4. Stimulate to conduct in every project regular meetings of the Project Steering/Advisory Committee, monitor the quality of technical reporting, and use outcome-based budgeting (IRIS) as much as possible for financial reporting. All projects had advisory committees and Flanders was satisfied with reporting. 5. Maintain in each project those activities that can enhance the impact of the project and the ownership among tripartite constituents, such as capacity building, awareness raising and advocacy campaigns, and make clear plans for the sustainability of the project by developing an exit strategy in each project. Projects had some sustainability mechanisms, but no exit strategies. 6. Intensify cooperation with the Netherlands-Flanders Covenant entitled the 'TruStone Initiative' by the project in India (that will still run for another year). Close cooperation under TruStone took place.
Recommendations for the Trust Fund modality and the portfolio more broadly	1. Continue with the Trust Fund modality because it has shown to have a significant relevance not only for the local and national contexts and needs in project countries and for global issues, but also for the achievement of the goals of the two partners of the cooperation, the Government of Flanders and ILO. The TF was continued 2. Enhance timely coordination on the organization of major events especially those where landmark reports and other achievements are to be launched and disseminated (use draft reports for the preparation when the published versions are not yet available). Largely achieved, although in South Africa it could still improve a bit regarding the Flemish Representation in Pretoria. 3. Organize a Programme Review Meeting (PRM) in the last quarter of 2020 and decide on the present review's recommendations as well as discuss a new project to be funded; ILO should thereby make sure that key project staff will attend the PRM in person or online. Yearly PRMs were held. 4. Focus on the latest priorities of the GoF when selecting new projects and based on that quickly approve a new project which should be tightly aligned to ILO's ongoing programmes and related to specific CPOs/DWCPs and to specific Policy Outcomes whereby the financing needs of PARDEV can be taken into account. - o A project on migration in the North or East African country selected by GoF (possibly combined with skills development and possibly aligned to IPEC+); This was not done - o Fund part of a broader programme, in particular one of the five Flagship programmes of the ILO, and evaluate immediately what impact this has on GoF's preferences for visibility and control over the funds in terms of adherence to its policy goals. This was done, and achieved in terms of visibility, but slightly less in terms of communication with other donors. - o Small projects can be used for flexible interventions following current events or new priorities. Some new projects were designed, while others still followed prior projects - o Reconsider possible second phases of recently completed projects, such as the Malawi project (Collective Bargaining Agreement guidance and capacity building) and the Care project (Women at Work and Future of Work initiatives); however, the fact that the projects have by now been closed may not make it easy to 'follow-through' in practice. While not building on the project mentioned here, the GPSL3 activities built on ADULT, and the trade research projects had two phases as well. 5. Make clear contingency plans to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of preparing partners for online meetings, involving national project staff and coping with inevitable delays. Some examples of COVID-19 delays were found but adaptations were made to mitigated them. 6. Include a clear and detailed visibility and communication plan, including plans for an updated project website, in each project document; this can be adhered to only in the larger projects. The evaluation did not see a Visibility and Communication plan, but no complaints were voiced about Flanders' visibility at project level.

At the time of the current evaluation, limited staff were still available who were involved in the (projects covered by the) 2020 evaluation and could therefore comment on the implementation of the recommendations and how they were perceived at the time. Therefore, the assessment of implementation of recommendations is limited to the above table.

2. Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

In line with the mandate and role of the ILO Evaluation Office as outlined in the 2017 Evaluation Policy², the purpose of an independent evaluation is to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and emerging impact of the activities funded. The ILO-Flanders Cooperation Agreement specifies that evaluations under the Agreement shall be implemented in accordance with ILO's evaluation policy.³ The evaluation also integrated the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards⁴ and ethical guidelines⁵ and followed the ILO's Guidance note on the clustered evaluation approach (Guidance Note 3.3).⁶

This evaluation examined process-oriented elements of the Cooperation Agreement and Trust Fund such as the key strengths, weaknesses, lessons learned, and good practices related to the Fund's modality and delivery mechanisms as the most important dimension of the evaluation. The evaluation provides forward looking recommendations regarding the future use of the Trust Fund in order to enhance collaboration between Flanders and the ILO, in support of their mutual mandates and priorities.

The evaluation focused on two specific and interconnected components, allowing a review of the overall functioning of the Agreement and Trust Fund as modality for development support and collaboration, as well as a review of the achievements of the activities towards the goals of the Agreement listed above:

1. Review the performance of the Trust Fund supported projects under the current agreement from August 2020 to December 2025.
2. Review the Trust Fund's modality, with particular attention to its mechanisms for delivering expected results

The predominant thematic focus of the projects under evaluation includes employment and enterprise-related outcomes—specifically in the areas of skills development, employment policy support, and enterprise productivity and sustainability.

The evaluation will also integrate a review of the ILO's cross-cutting concerns, namely gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusion of persons with disabilities, environmental sustainability, social dialogue, international labour standards, and capacity building.

The **main stakeholders** of the evaluation are the Government of Flanders and the relevant ILO staff in charge of the Trust Fund and Cooperation overall (e.g. PARTNERSHIPS) as well as project and programme staff responsible for activities funded by the Trust Fund. Other stakeholders include the ILO constituents at global and national levels, including governments, employer representatives and workers' representatives. The evaluation's lessons learned, good practices, and recommendations can also be of use for other donors interested in setting up a Trust Fund modality.

² https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_mas/%40eval/documents/policy/wcms_603265.pdf

³ ILO – Government of Flanders Cooperation Framework 2016, article 19.

⁴ https://www.unevaluation.org/uneq_publications/uneq-norms-and-standards-evaluation-un-system

⁵ https://www.unevaluation.org/uneg_publications/uneg-ethical-guidelines-evaluation

⁶ <https://www.ilo.org/publications/guidance-note-33-strategic-clustered-evaluations-gather-evaluative>

3. Evaluation criteria and questions

This evaluation was framed by the six OECD/DAC criteria on relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, emerging impact and sustainability. The full evaluation matrix for each criterion is presented in Annex 3.

Below are the main questions for the evaluation as presented in the ToR, as well as small adjustments proposed by the evaluator during the Inception Stage.

Relevance: Are the modality and its portfolio doing the right things?

- ▶ How relevant were the projects to local and national contexts and needs, including that of the beneficiaries?
- ▶ How relevant are the projects to the mandate and priorities of the ILO and the Government of Flanders?
- ▶ To what extent is the Trust Fund aligned with Flemish and ILO policy priorities and needs?
- ▶ *Forward-looking view: How can the alignment between Flemish priorities and the ILO's areas of work be strengthened during the identification phase of new projects?*

Coherence: how well does the modality and its portfolio fit?

- ▶ How do the projects that the Trust Fund supports link to ILO Country Programme Outcomes? Are they implemented in a coherent manner?
- ▶ To what extent was the pooled funding mechanism aligned with the broader ambitions of the ILO and the Flemish Government?

Effectiveness: Are the modality and its portfolio achieving its objectives?

- ▶ To what extent have the projects achieved their desired results?
- ▶ To what extent has the Trust Fund achieved its objectives as a modality?
- ▶ To what extent does the Trust Fund encourage the mainstreaming of gender equality and inclusion into its activities? Did the projects' design and implementation successfully mainstream gender and inclusion?
- ▶ To what extent have the recommendations from the 2020 independent evaluation been implemented?
- ▶ To what extent did the Trust Fund and its activities contribute to improved visibility of its projects and make a lasting impact the lives of beneficiaries?

Efficiency: how well are resources being used?

- ▶ To what extent were the projects implemented in a cost-efficient and timely manner?
- ▶ How efficient is the Trust administrative procedures, fund disbursements and use of resources?
- ▶ Is the Trust Fund's governance structure appropriate and relevant to deliver on its desired results? *(The evaluator proposed to move this to the efficiency section, instead of the relevance section)*
- ▶ How efficient are the governance, coordination and management structures of the projects under review? *(The evaluator proposed to move this to the efficiency section, instead of the effectiveness section)*
- ▶ Does the Trust Fund offer flexibility in its approach and are stakeholders engaged in a meaningful manner?
- ▶ *Forward-looking view: Are there opportunities to make the mechanisms of the Trust Fund more efficient?*
- ▶ *Is there an alternative model that would better fit the cooperation?*
- ▶ *What is the potential (or lack thereof) for financing through pooled funding mechanisms?*

Emerging impact: what difference does the modality and its portfolio make?

- ▶ What is the added value of cooperation between the Government of Flanders and the ILO?
- ▶ What impact has the Trust Fund had at the local and/or systemic levels?

Sustainability: will the benefits last?

- ▶ What strategies have been put in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Trust Fund's results (e.g., capacity building, policy alignment, local ownership)?
- ▶ How sustainable is the Trust Fund's approach and its ability to foster long-term collaboration?

Cross-cutting concerns of ILO, namely gender and non-discrimination, inclusion of persons with disabilities, environmental sustainability, social dialogue, international labour standards, and capacity building will be mainstreaming across the evaluation criteria and questions. Disaggregated data will be provided where possible and relevant

4. Methodology and limitations

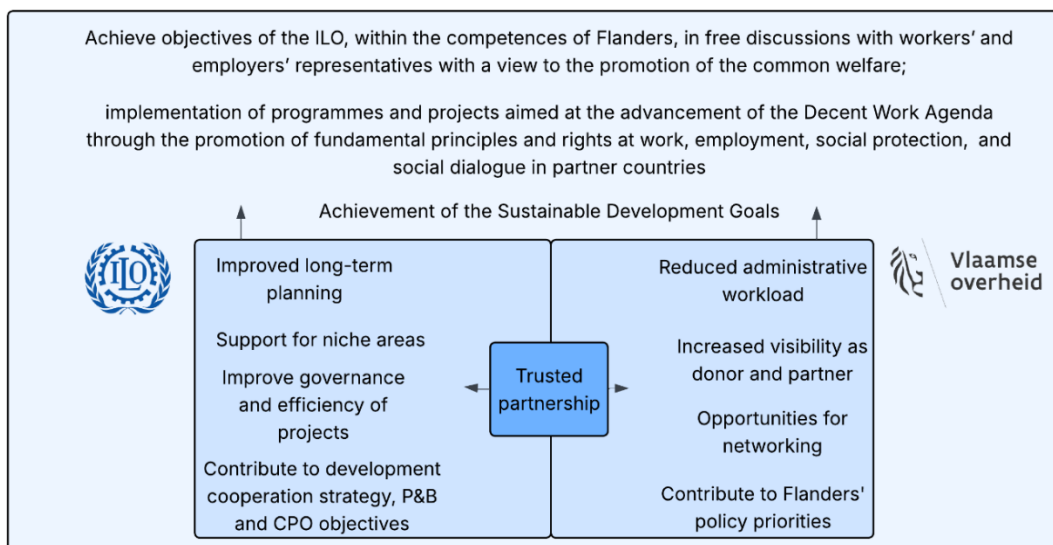
4.1. Evaluation Framework

The current evaluation aims to provide a holistic overview of the implementation and results of the Trust Fund and the projects and programmes under the Trust Fund, focusing on two dimensions: 1) **The Trust Fund as modality and mechanism for cooperation**, and 2) the **results of projects under the Trust Fund** and their impact for beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Regarding the first dimension, the hypothesis behind the **Trust Fund as modality** is that the use of the Trust Fund simplifies project procedures such as approval, management, administration and fund disbursement, while at the same time provides opportunities for longer-term planning and improved coherence. The TF is also expected to enhance the visibility of Flanders as development partner and enhance opportunities for Flanders to participate in broader development cooperation discussions with other donors. At the same time, it improves ILO's ability to address specific (underfunded) policy priorities based on its identified needs (within the scope of Flanders' identified priorities and in consultation with Flanders), and contributes to its Development Cooperation Strategy in terms of long-term collaboration, expansion of non-earmarked funding, and planning.

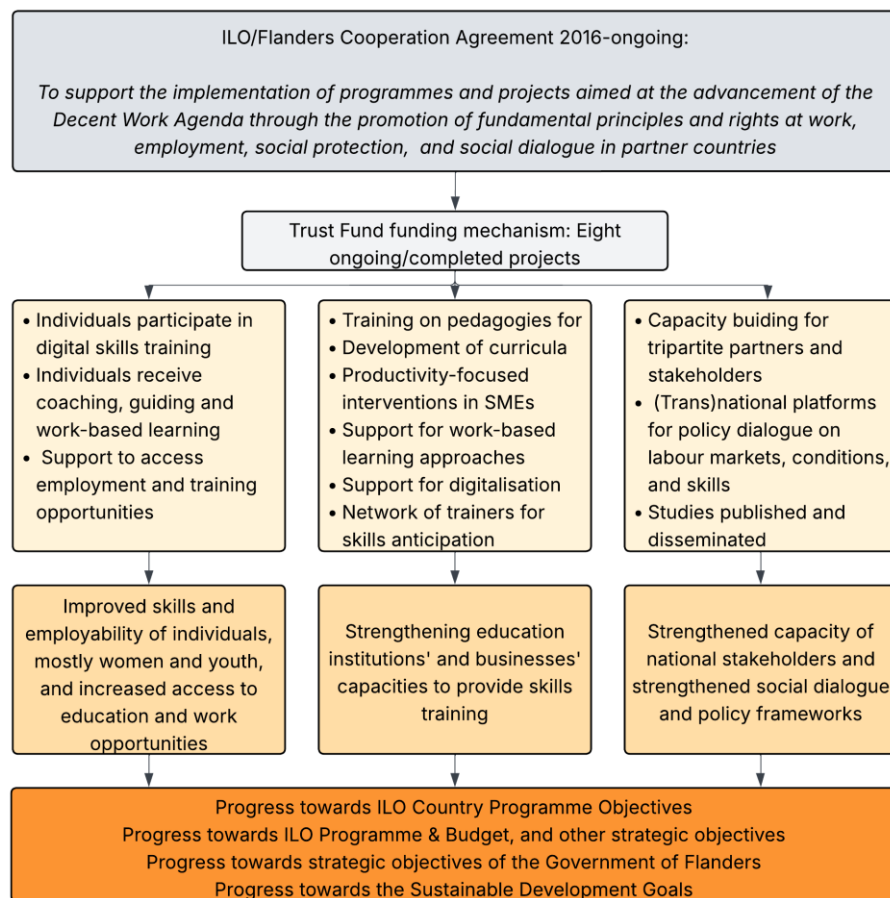
The following image presents the logic of the Trust Fund modality, which has its foundation in the shared ILO-Flanders objective to create a trusted partnership. Subsequently, the Trust Fund contributes to/is used for the unique objectives and strategies of both ILO and Flanders separately (sphere of control of both ILO and Flanders). As ultimate result on the longer term, the Trust Fund is expected to contribute to common, strategic goals of ILO and Flanders as it relates to the Decent Work Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (outside direct control).

Figure 1. Logic of the TF as development cooperation modality*



To evaluate the project portfolio's effectiveness, the evaluation applied a **clustered, theory-based approach**, based on an all-encompassing Theory of Change under which the eight projects were integrated. The purpose was not to evaluate each project individually but review the aggregated results, focusing on trends, good practices and lessons learned. The following Intervention Logic has been created to group the projects and programmes as to evaluate their results and impact per thematic area.

Figure 2. Intervention Logic of the TF project portfolio



In addition to the two analytical dimensions of the evaluation, the evaluation process relied on a **participatory approach**, through extensive consultations with ILO and Flanders staff and with stakeholders. Particularly in relation to the lessons learned, good practices, and recommendations, the evaluation focused on co-creation of the recommendations and way forward with the key ILO and Flanders staff.

4.2. Data collection

The evaluation relied on desk research, interviews, a case study, and a Policy Delphi survey to collect data from different sources and methods.

4.2.1. Desk Research

The first step of data collection is desk research, which includes a review of all available documentation on the interventions. The desk research will be carried out in two broad stages:

- **Initial desk research** was carried out during the inception stage and before the start of the interviews. This facilitated the understanding of the logic and mechanics of the Cooperation Agreement overall and the Trust Fund as mechanism for activity funding. Next, the initial review supported the design of the intervention logic and the evaluation framework overall. Lastly, it informed the development of the interview questionnaires, to maximise the relevance of the questions.
- **Additional desk research** was conducted during the data collection stage to contextualise the data collected through interviews, as well as triangulate the data found. Particular attention was paid to the results of the individual projects, to show the outcomes and impact of the results.

4.2.2. Interviews

Interviews with ILO staff, Government of Flanders staff and stakeholders were carried out at country and global level. The interview programme was implemented in two stages:

- **Inception meetings** were conducted with ILO staff and the Government of Flanders during the Inception Stage to better understand Flanders' and ILO's expectations regarding the evaluation, and to gather initial insights on the areas of interest.
- **In-depth interviews** for data collection were conducted during the data collection stage and focused on specific evaluation questions. The main respondents included staff of the Government of Flanders, ILO staff at HQ and country-level, and selected stakeholders to the extent they can comment on the TF or on several projects funded by the TF.

In total, 30 people were consulted for the evaluation, namely:

- 23 ILO staff (13 female, ten male)
- 4 Flanders staff (Three female, one male)
- 4 constituents from South Africa (two female, two male)

The specific positions and organizations are presented in Annex 6.

4.2.3. Case study on South Africa

The evaluation includes a case study on the functioning of the Trust Fund modality/portfolio in South Africa, given that this was a priority region for Flanders and given that several projects were implemented in the country during the evaluation period. The case study did not assess the individual projects, but rather the South Africa portfolio as a whole and the added value that the Trust Fund approach could generate.

The case study was developed based on the above-mentioned desk research and interview results. The full case study can be found in Annex 1.

4.2.3. Policy Delphi

Given that this evaluation is an important foundation for the continuation/revision/amendment/etc. of the ILO-Flanders Cooperation through the Trust Fund, the evaluator included an additional layer of data collection during the analysis stage, namely the Policy Delphi methodology. The purpose of the PD is to explore areas of consensus and develop policy options that are feasible and attractive for both ILO and Flanders.

The recipients of the PD survey were 12 key Flanders staff and key ILO staff who are engaged in the Trust Fund on a more comprehensive manner (not just as staff of one project). However, only seven people replied to the survey.

4.2.4. Stakeholder validation workshop

Upon completion of the data collection activities, and analysis of the gathered data, an online stakeholder validation workshop with key staff of ILO and Flanders was organised on 9 December 2025, where the results of the Policy Delphi will also be presented and discussed, particularly in terms of the policy options and their feasibility for both ILO and Flanders. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss those policy options, and further co-create the policy option that is favourable to the majority of respondents, e.g. expanding or limiting some of the ideas, and integrating feedback from those who do not fully agree.

4.3. Analysis and reporting

Qualitative data was collected from desk research, and interviews. Interviews will be summarised in writing and anonymised. **Quantitative information** was collected through desk research (programme statistical data) and the Policy Delphi (to some extent). **All data collected was triangulated**, meaning that data from different sources were analysed together and will be used to answer an evaluation question. This enhanced validity and reliability of the findings.

As this concerns a **cluster evaluation**, the data was analysed holistically across countries and interventions, to draw conclusions on the functioning of the portfolio as a whole. Country and intervention-level examples will be provided, as well as factors influencing non-achievement of results in certain countries. Contribution analysis served to understand whether and how the different intervention activities led to measured outcomes and aims to connect as much as possible the results to the TF interventions (attribution), while also exploring whether results could have been achieved through other factors that interacted with or complemented the TF interventions.

In the **Final Evaluation Report**, the evaluator provided an analysis of the (triangulated) findings by evaluation criteria, and subsequently provided conclusions and recommendations more holistically across the intervention countries and evaluation criteria.

4.4. Limitations

This evaluation methodology was designed to maximise the methodological and analytical quality of the assignment. However, the evaluation faced some limitations to be taken into consideration.

- ▶ Some staff members have left their positions have become unavailable, and new staff members do not have the institutional memory to reflect on the Trust Fund since 2020, or on the recommendations of the previous evaluation. To the extent possible, the evaluator traced the staff members to their new positions. Additionally, questions were rephrased to avoid referring to the recommendation itself, but rather explore whether the action recommended was indeed implemented.
- ▶ The evaluator shared the Policy Delphi with 12 Flanders and ILO respondents but, after three reminders across November, only seven people completed it.

4.5. Ethical standards

This evaluation was be guided by the main international ethical considerations applicable to evaluations (e.g., the evaluation will comply with the [ILO EVAL Code of Conduct](#), United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) [Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#), [UNEG Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#), [UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system](#) [UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#)). These considerations were integrated into the design, data collection, and reporting.

Considering the specificities of this evaluation, the main ethical approaches include the guarantee of anonymity of consultations and the protection of personal data of respondents. All approaches to data collection and storage were aligned with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, given that the evaluator is based in the European Union.

5. Evaluation Findings

5.1. Relevance

5.1.1. Relevance of the Trust Fund modality for the mandates and priorities of Flanders and ILO

The Cooperation Agreement does not specify specific thematic objectives for cooperation but mentions that the TF should contribute to ILO's objectives, its Decent Work Agenda, and ultimately to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Specific cross-cutting concerns include women and youth, social dialogue, and Southern Africa.

The **priorities of the ILO** are laid down in the Programme & Budget established on a biennial basis. The Trust Fund evaluation period covers the P&Bs for 2021-21, 2022-23 and 2024-25. During the evaluation period, the project portfolio of the Trust Fund focused particularly on skills and lifelong learning, digital skills in particular, decent work and child labour, and trade. Some of the projects explicitly refer to women and youth. About half of the portfolio was implemented in South Africa.

The projects funded by the TF focused explicitly on ILO priorities described in the P&Bs, focusing on skills and lifelong learning, trade, labour standards, and gender.

Overall, the Cooperation Agreement describes that the TF portfolio should contribute to the achievement of ILO's objectives. Therefore, **the Agreement and the TF overall are fully aligned with the mandate and priorities of the ILO.**

Skills and lifelong learning are a core priority of ILO, formulated in each of the P&Bs during the evaluation period. From 2020 – 2023, the P&Bs had a dedicated policy outcome on *"Skills and lifelong learning to facilitate access to and transitions in the labour market"*. In fact, the 2022-23 P&B explicitly refers to the Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning (funded by Flanders) as key vehicle to achieve this Outcome.

In view of the increased demand from constituents for heightened ILO action on skills and lifelong learning, a new *"Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning"*⁷ will provide operational support for expanding ILO technical assistance to Member States, mobilizing resources, leveraging and forging partnerships, promoting knowledge-sharing and fostering policy innovations.⁸

Digital skills are also referenced in the 2020-2023 P&Bs, indicating, for example, that *"lifelong learning systems should integrate work-based learning as well as core and digital skills"*.⁹ Similarly, output 5.3 in both the 2020-21 and 2022-23 P&Bs aim to achieve *"Increased capacity of the ILO constituents to design and deliver innovative, flexible and inclusive learning options, encompassing work-based learning and quality apprenticeships"*.

The 2024-25 P&B includes Outcome 3 on *"full and productive employment for just transitions"* within which output 3.2 focuses on the *"Increased capacity of Member States to develop inclusive, sustainable and resilient skills and lifelong learning systems"*. Innovative apprenticeships are referenced as tool to achieve the output, as well as to achieve other outputs within Outcome 3.

While digital skills are not explicitly referenced, the concept of digitalization of employment is reflected throughout the P&B. In this regard, the Digital Skills for NEETs project funded by Flanders in South Africa links directly to the expected role of the ITC-ILO in the 2024-25 P&B.

Building on its consolidated capacity development service portfolio and its role as a digital innovation hub, the Turin Centre will continue to pilot and implement digitally enhanced learning and collaboration applications and tools, including online platforms.¹⁰

A second group of TF projects focused on **improving labour market outcomes in relation to trade**, namely the SUPPORT¹¹ and IMPLEMENT¹² projects. These projects include the promotion of International Labour Standards in trade agreements, which is a core priority for ILO (see P&Bs 2020-21 and 2022-23, Outcome 2: *International labour standards*

⁷ GLO-21-29-MUL

⁸ ILO Programme and budget for the biennium 2022-23

⁹ ILO Programme and budget for the biennium 2022-23

¹⁰ ILO Programme and budget for the biennium of 2024-25

¹¹ GLO-20-23-FLA

¹² GLO-24-12-FLA

and authoritative and effective supervision). The promotion of ILS also contributes to various other outcomes more broadly. Lastly, the mainstreaming of ILS in projects is a key Strategic Objective of the ILO's Strategic Plan 2022-2025.¹³

The SUPPORT project aligns directly with the 2020-21 and 2022-23 P&Bs:

- Outcome 1 of SUPPORT: *Increased capacity of member states to facilitate the implementation and follow up of international labour standards, including labour provisions, within the context of trade*
- Output 2.2. of the P&B: *Increased capacity of Member States to apply international labour standards*

The natural stone project¹⁴ in India aimed to develop a strategy or policy framework to pave the way for a globally **competitive and sustainable natural stone industry** in India, with a pilot in Rajasthan. The project was designed to contribute directly to Outcome 5 of the 2018-19 P&B and subsequently to the 2020-21 P&B Outcome 3: *Economic, social and environmental transitions for full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all*.

In particular, as also formulated in the previous Outcome 5, the project contributed to Output 3.2. of the 2020-21 P&B: *Increased capacity of Member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating decent work in the rural economy*. Namely, the project aimed to improve working conditions in the natural stones industry, particularly for women and youth. Addressing health and safety at work was also a key priority of the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan of ILO.

¹⁵

Lastly, the research project on "Assessing social capabilities for **new technologies, innovation and job creation** in South Africa"¹⁶ aimed to support Outcome 1 of the 2018-19 P&B. In the 2020-21, this translates to Outcome 4: *Sustainable enterprises as generators of employment and promoters of innovation and decent work*. Under this Outcome, the research contributed to Output 4.2. *Strengthened capacity of enterprises to adopt new business models, technology and techniques to enhance productivity and sustainability*.

Women and youth are priorities of the ILO across the different P&B outcomes, while gender equality is also a distinct outcome in all three P&B iterations covered by the evaluation. The 2024-25 P&B includes one Output specifically on youth, namely Output 3.5. *Increased capacity of Member States to promote decent employment for youth*. In fact, women and youth are often mentioned across the Outputs and Outcomes as priority target groups for the interventions. The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan of ILO also refers to "achieving gender equality at work" and "protecting and empowering disadvantaged groups".¹⁷ Therefore, the overall focus of the Cooperation Agreement on both target groups is linked with ILO's core priorities. However, not all TF projects focus explicitly on either target group.

The priorities of Flanders during the evaluation period (2020-2025) can be analysed through two lenses, namely firstly the priorities of the foreign policy department through which the ILO-Flanders Trust Fund is funded and managed, and secondly, the broader domestic priorities of Flanders, which also influenced its priorities for collaboration with ILO.

The TF priorities and portfolio during 2020-2025 aligned largely with the 2019-2024 political priorities for foreign and domestic policies of Flanders.

The overall Cooperation Agreement and Trust Fund include various provisions that align with the priorities and needs of Flanders. Firstly, the Agreements refers explicitly to the need to explore opportunities for TF projects to reinforce the **partnership between the ILO – Flanders and the EU institutions**. The 2019-2024 Policy Note for Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation notes that the connection with the EU (and topics of interest for the EU) are of great importance to Flanders.¹⁸

Most of the portfolio projects did not have a direct connection with the European Union and therefore limited opportunities for Flanders to engage in direct dialogue with EU representatives. Among the seven Policy Delphi respondents, three neither agreed nor disagreed that the TF integrated cooperation with the EU, one disagreed, and three did not know.

However, some projects in the TF portfolio supported this objective (indirectly), namely the SUPPORT and IMPLEMENT projects. Flanders has a clear interest in the **trade agreements** being negotiated by the EU, and their respect for International Labour Standards. The two projects focused on researching the role of trade policies to ensure decent work, including through implementation of ILS.

¹³ The ILO's Strategic Plan for 2022–25. Governing Body 340th Session, Geneva, October–November 2020

¹⁴ IND-18-51-FLA

¹⁵ The ILO's Strategic Plan for 2022–25. Governing Body 340th Session, Geneva, October–November 2020

¹⁶ ZAF-19-01-FLA

¹⁷ The ILO's Strategic Plan for 2022–25. Governing Body 340th Session, Geneva, October–November 2020

¹⁸ 2019-2024 Policy Note for Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/view-file/32213>

The EU Regulation on Corporate Social Due Diligence governs the EU's trade agreements and include the requirement to “*effectively implement international labour conventions and environmental agreements, including respect of core principles of the International Labour Organization (ILO)*”.¹⁹

Under Belgian EU-presidency in 2024, an OECD skills summit was organized with participation of the ILO, which linked with the TF's GPSL3 and ADULT projects.

The 2019-2024 Policy Note also mentions that trade is an important area within the EU-Flanders cooperation and underlines the need for Flanders to follow, take part in, and influence EU policymaking in the field of trade. The Policy Note includes dedicated sections on the importance of free trade agreements, which are also reflected in the 2024-2029 Governing Agreement of Flanders.²⁰ Similarly, interviewees indicate that (sustainable) trade agreements have also been an internal priority of the Government of Flanders over the past five years.²¹

Beside the EU, the Policy Note also refers to Flanders' priority to create and maintain strong ties with its neighbours (e.g. the **Netherlands**) and with **Northern European countries**. The TF provided some opportunities for interaction with Norway and Germany through panel discussions and with the Netherlands through the TruStone project.²²

Interviewees furthermore indicated that **education** is a key internal priority of Flanders.²³ This is also reflected in the 2024-2029 Government Agreement, which refers to education as core priority, but also as topic of importance across other priorities.²⁴ Digitalisation and lifelong learning are also referenced explicitly in the context of education priorities, and by interviewees.²⁵ The case study on South Africa (Annex 1) demonstrates that this priority applied also to Flanders – South Africa cooperation. The TF projects addressing education and (digital) skills in South Africa are therefore well-aligned with Flanders' priorities in its foreign and domestic policies.

In 1994, Flanders and South Africa signed a “Declaration of Intent” to augment bilateral relations and establish the widest possible cooperation. The Declaration refers explicitly to cooperation in the fields of education and training, small and medium businesses, and social development.²⁶ This was followed by an agreement in 1996 to cooperate in the fields of education, culture, science, technology and sports.²⁷ At the time of the evaluation, the Government of Flanders still maintains similar priorities and competences in the country.²⁸ The 2022 work plan for the 1996 Agreement explicitly refers to collaboration in the field of higher education, science and innovation; human rights; youth; and trade and investment.²⁹

The 2019-2024 Foreign Policy Note as well as the 2024-2029 Governing Agreement both refer to Flanders' priorities on **innovation**, including in the context of addressing global challenges and “leave no-one behind”.³⁰ The Governing Agreement refers to innovation as key Flemish priority as well, with particular attention to innovation in rural areas.³¹ The innovation challenge organised by ILO and ITCILO, targeting digital skills of vulnerable people, fit into the priority of Flanders to create innovative solutions to support vulnerable people (leaving no-one behind).

In India, for example, one of the innovation challenge projects was implemented in a very rural area, and mountainous area in India. The project implemented skills training for local women in those local communities using the digital technology. More specifically, they basically put a big screen on a community centre in very remote area to connect with an expert in another big city in India, to provide a detailed technical reason for like sticking or embroidery.³²

The Natural Stone project in India focused on decent work in the natural stone industry, with a focus on youth and women. The Flanders Foreign Policy Note also focuses on **corporate social responsibility** in international trade and

¹⁹ https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/development-and-sustainability/sustainable-development/sustainable-development-eu-trade-agreements_en and Directive (EU) 2024/1760 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on corporate sustainability due diligence.

²⁰ 2019-2024 Policy Note for Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation

²¹ Interviews with Flanders staff

²² Interviews with Flanders and ILO staff

²³ Interviews with Flanders staff

²⁴ Vlaamse Regering 2024-2029. Regeerakkoord.

²⁵ Interview with Flanders staff.

²⁶ Declaration of Intent between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of Flanders. 1994.

²⁷ Verdrag tussen de Vlaamse regering en de regering van de Republiek Zuid-Afrika inzake samenwerking op het gebied van onderwijs, kunst, cultuur, wetenschap, technologie en sport. 1996.

²⁸ <https://www.flanders.org.za/About>

²⁹ Joint Communiqué of the Seventh Flanders - South Africa Joint Committee. 24 March 2022

³⁰ 2019-2024 Policy Note for Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation

³¹ Vlaamse Regering 2024-2029. Regeerakkoord

³² Internal evaluation of the Flanders Contribution to the GPSL3.

mentions that “*decent work in international production and distribution chains is an important point of attention in this regard*”.³³

Geographically, the Foreign Policy Note still refers to **South Africa** as priority area, but explicitly mentions that the “*cooperation should focus away from development cooperation and reorient towards a strong and broad political, economic, and diplomatic cooperation*”.³⁴ Although the projects were aligned with the thematic approaches jointly established between Gof and SA in the bilateral cooperation, the 2020-2025 TF projects themselves have still been project based and largely focused on vulnerable persons (e.g. digital skills for NEET, decent work in clothing factories), rather than more national-level cooperation. The seven Policy Delphi respondents were largely in agreement that the TF portfolio sufficiently focused on Southern Africa.

The Foreign Policy Note, as well as the Governing Agreement of 2024-2029 refer to **India** as potential strategic geographic area to elaborate partnerships in the future. Both documents refer to the development of a Strategic Plan for India. Furthermore, recent policy reports from Flanders show that both Flanders and the EU are focused on increasing ties with India. The Natural Stone project therefore quite aligns with the trade interests of Flanders with India.

5.1.2. Relevance of the Portfolio to national and local needs, particularly of women and youth

Many of the projects in the TF portfolio worked at national level and directly engaged stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Stakeholders were actively consulted in project design and implementation, ensuring responsiveness to their needs. Gender was integrated in some of the projects, but not all and not always explicitly.

Many ILO project staff indicated that projects were co-designed between ILO and Flanders, with ILO taking the lead in developing the project proposals and Flanders providing feedback. ILO staff noted that Flanders was flexible and trusting during this process, which allowed ILO staff to **consult stakeholders and take their insights into account**.³⁵ One interviewed stakeholder confirmed that they actively participated in conceiving the activities.³⁶

The review of progress reports also found multiple references to stakeholder consultations, both during project design and during its implementation.

The “Assessing Social Capabilities” project document explicitly refers to an “*inception workshop with local research collaborators, international experts, and constituents to validate research framework, methodology and gain endorsement from the stakeholders*”.³⁷

The final report of the Natural Stones project in India informed that “*the project organised a series of bilateral consultative workshops with the state representatives of central trade unions, employers and business membership organizations, and state government officials to secure their buy-in for a coherent tripartite strategy for the sustainable development of the natural stone industry and capture their perspectives on the opportunities and constraints in the state*”.³⁸

For some projects, less focus on initial needs assessments and consultations was placed as the projects were a continuation of a previous project. For example, ILO staff indicated that the SCORE project³⁹ in the South African clothing industry was built on pre-existing collaborations and efforts and therefore functioned as a follow-up. At the same time, the existence of those collaborations allowed stakeholders to take a leading role in the project implementation.⁴⁰

Some of the project documents refer explicitly to the needs of **women and youth** in the project design and needs assessments. The GPSL3 proposal includes statistics on women in VET and employment and reflected on gender stereotypes affecting VET. The SCORE project’s focus on the clothing industry meant an automatic overrepresentation of women as beneficiaries, but the project also focused on addressing gender stereotypes in the workplace.⁴¹

The ProDoc for the project on digital skills for NEETs describes the project’s focus on young women.

³³ 2019-2024 Policy Note for Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation

³⁴ 2019-2024 Policy Note for Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation

³⁵ Interviews with ILO staff

³⁶ Interview with a stakeholder

³⁷ Project Document GLO/18/39/FLA Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation.

³⁸ Paving the way for a sustainable natural stone industry in India Project Code (IND/18/51/FLA). Final Progress Report 2018-22.

³⁹ ZAF-23-01-FLA

⁴⁰ Interview with ILO staff

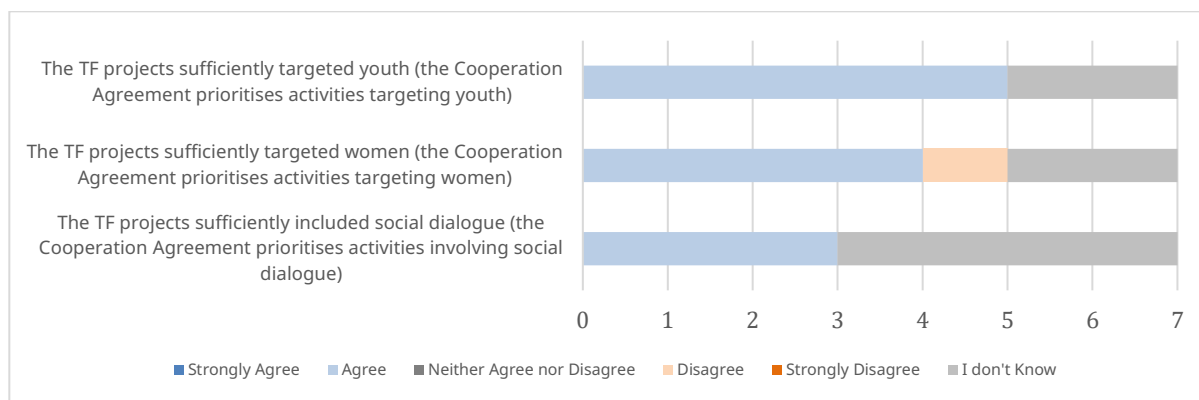
⁴¹ Interview with ILO staff

The digital skills for NEET ProDoc includes background research on gender and youth. *“From an equality and distribution perspective, youth, women and the rural population experience more challenges when competing for employment positions and when trying to make a decent living. In terms of gender, 53% of youth NEET are women and 47% are men. The gender disparity is often attributed to gender discrimination and the labour market favouring men. Caregiving may also be a contributing factor, as young women are more likely to take care of children and people in need.”*⁴²

The SUPPORT project proposal notes in the gender marker annex that it *“does not include gender equality as an outcome, but some outputs and/or activities specifically address gender issues.”*⁴³

However, gender was not always an explicit priority, considering that other project proposals did not reflect on women’s needs and engagement explicitly. Flanders also did not actively push for the inclusion of gender perspectives.⁴⁴ Among the seven Policy Delphi respondents, five agreed that the TF portfolio sufficiently targeted youth, and four believed that the TF sufficiently targeted women (although one respondent disagreed).

Figure 3. TF focus on women, youth, and social dialogue



Source: Policy Delphi survey (n=7). To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Trust Fund over the period 2020-2025?

However, many respondents did not know whether the TF sufficiently addressed social dialogue.

5.2. Coherence

5.2.1. Alignment of the Trust Fund with development cooperation and foreign policy ambitions of Flanders and the ILO

The development cooperation ambitions of the ILO are reflected in its Development Cooperation Strategy 2020-2025. For Flanders, they are presented in the Foreign Policy Note 2019-2024 and the Guiding Framework for Multilateral Cooperation (2016). This section will present the alignment of the TF as (funding) modality with development cooperation objectives, as the thematic areas of the TF have been presented above.

The TF modality contributes to ILO and Flanders’ priorities and ambitions for development cooperation, foreign policy, and funding modalities.

The **ILO Development Cooperation Strategy for 2020-2025** had four objectives: Services to constituents; Partnerships for policy coherence; Partnerships for funding, and; Efficiency, decent work results and transparency. Particularly, under *partnerships for funding*, the Strategy emphasizes the importance of voluntary funding and unearmarked contributions.⁴⁵

Voluntary funding provides the Office with valuable means to respond to constituents’ needs and to do so strategically and with agility. The Office will seek to deepen, expand and diversify its funding

⁴² Digital skills development for youth NEET in South Africa. 9 February 2023.

⁴³ PRODOC. SUPPORT: Inclusive trade and decent work: supportive domestic policies for better social, labour market and sustainable enterprise outcomes

⁴⁴ Interviews with ILO staff.

⁴⁵ ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25, adopted by the GB 340th Session, Geneva, October–November 2020

partnerships and to secure longer-term, more predictable funding, including through lightly earmarked and unearmarked voluntary contributions.⁴⁶

The Trust Fund as lightly earmarked funding partnership therefore contributes directly to the Development Cooperation Strategy of ILO. Interviewed ILO staff confirmed that the organization actively seeks similar partnerships that allow for better planning and anticipation of resources. The TF is mentioned as great example of such funding partnerships that are built on a high level of trust and that provide flexibility as well as a certain reliability on a continuation of available funds.⁴⁷

The TF also contributes to other elements of the Strategy. Namely, the priority on *services to constituents* includes a strong focus on social dialogue. The Cooperation Agreement also explicitly refers to social dialogue as TF priority. During 2020-2025 the project portfolio has taken into account the priority of social dialogue, although to different extents. The 'services to constituents' priority also refers to the provision of evidence to constituents. With TF funding, the ILO was able to generate valuable research, for example in the fields of trade, capacity for innovation, and VET financing, which have already been used by stakeholders. The TF is of particular value in this regard since donors are not always interested in funding research.⁴⁸

For **Flanders**, the TF is an instrument for achieving its objectives regarding multilateral cooperation and foreign policy.

Since 2016, Flanders maintains a *"coordinated, focused, and coherent policy toward a number of relevant multilateral organizations, based on Flemish competences and strengths"*.⁴⁹ Multilateral cooperation is important to the Flemish government as it allows Flanders to contribute to the multilateral management system (which it values); to implement Flemish policy objectives through multilateral cooperation and fora; and to create opportunities for Flemish actors in creating and accessing expertise and technology.⁵⁰ The main principles for multilateral cooperation are described in the *Guiding Principles for Multilateral Cooperation* and include selectivity (focus), added value, predictability (being a reliable and recognizable donor), efficiency and effectiveness.

The Trust Fund provides opportunities for Flanders in relation to several of its objectives. In terms of *added value*, the Principles indicate various ways for Flanders to support the work of multilateral organizations, such as participation in administrative bodies, the positioning of Flemish people in organizations, or by encouraging greater involvement of Flemish social partners or knowledge institutions.⁵¹ An interviewee also explicitly confirmed that the engagement of Flemish actors in multilateral cooperation is a key priority.⁵² Some of the TF projects have indeed relied on Flemish expertise, for example the ITCILO collaboration with D-TEACH (initiated by ILO under the GPSL3) and the reliance on Flemish experts in the trade research projects.⁵³ While secondment is a possibility under the TF, it was not used during the 2020-2025 period.

Interviews have shown that Flanders is particularly a highly trusted and *predictable partner* for the ILO as a result of the TF, but also before the current Cooperation Agreement. At the same time, several interviewees noted that the continuous funding for projects in South Africa have also enhanced the visibility of Flanders as donor among the constituents.⁵⁴

To ensure the principle of *selectivity*, the Guiding Principles include various criteria for the selection of multilateral organizations with whom framework agreements or trust funds can be established. A review of the selectivity criteria of the Guiding Principles for Multilateral Cooperation shows that the Trust Fund still meets the vast majority of the criteria and therefore aligns with Flanders' objectives for multilateral cooperation.

For example, as presented in the relevance section, the 2020-2025 portfolio largely aligned with domestic priorities and with the mandate of Flanders' government. The TF also focuses on the achievement of SDGs as core objective and integrates gender as transversal objective. The TF has no end date and is therefore a long-term and predictable commitment to ILO, with opportunities for Flanders' visibility as donor. Lastly, TF project evaluations and interviews show that the ILO is efficient with resources use.

To ensure *efficiency and effectiveness*, multilateral cooperation can include seed money for projects that may later engage other donors. Various examples are visible of this approach, for example, a TF project in India has been taken

⁴⁶ ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25, adopted by the GB 340th Session, Geneva, October–November 2020

⁴⁷ Interviews with ILO staff

⁴⁸ Interviews with ILO staff

⁴⁹ Richtinggevend Kader voor Multilaterale Samenwerking: tendenzen en verdere uitrol. 2016.

⁵⁰ Richtinggevend kader voor de multilaterale samenwerking: Een doeltreffende samenwerking met multilaterale organisaties (MO's)

⁵¹ Richtinggevend kader voor de multilaterale samenwerking: Een doeltreffende samenwerking met multilaterale organisaties (MO's)

⁵² Interview with Flanders staff.

⁵³ Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff.

⁵⁴ Interviews with ILO staff

over by another donor and the GPSL3 also attracted additional donors. Interestingly, the TF modality as such is also mentioned in the Guiding Principles as approach to effectiveness and efficiency.

We are committed to (light) earmarking that contributes to the realisation of Flemish policy objectives, provided that it is predictable, long-term and in line with the mandate and core tasks of the multilateral organization and with international agreements.⁵⁵

Looking at the criteria for multilateral cooperation, as listed in the Guiding Principles, a few topics were not explicitly realized during the evaluation period, such as opportunities to strengthen Flanders' diplomatic position, or integration of climate concerns.

5.2.2. Alignment of the Portfolio with Country Programme Outcomes

At national level, the ILO has Country Programme Objectives meant to guide the overall national-level portfolio of the organization. Therefore, new projects are expected to contribute to the achievement of the CPOs.

There is sufficient evidence demonstrating that the TF portfolio projects align with the respective countries' Country Programme Objectives.

The **Cooperation Agreement** states that the objective of the Trust Fund is to contribute to the achievement of ILO's priorities, including to support the implementation of programmes and projects aimed at the advancement of the Decent Work Agenda. At country-level, the Decent Work Agenda is reflected in the Decent Work Country Programme and the CPOs. Therefore, the TF itself promotes alignment with the CPOs.

In practice, there are various examples of alignment of the **portfolio projects** with the CPOs and ILO staff confirmed that the TF modality was flexible enough to ensure such alignment.⁵⁶

The project Promoting Productivity and Decent Work in South Africa's Clothing Sector is linked to Country Programme Outcome ZAF101, which focuses on: *"Enterprise development support for SMEs and Cooperatives on their transition to formality with a focus on improving productivity, working conditions and environmental sustainability"*.

The ADULT project⁵⁷ is linked to the South-Africa CPO ZAF103, which focuses on: *"Increased capacity of constituents to create decent and productive employment in the rural economy"*. The project contributed to capacity building and social dialogue enabling stakeholders to promote quality apprenticeships. It also contributes to India's CPO IND 102: *"By 2022: States have adopted multi-pronged skill development strategies and have improved quality and coverage of skill and employment services."* The project in India aimed to provide good practices on apprenticeships, that would inform broader government strategies on the topic.

Similarly, the Digital Skills development for youth NEET project aimed to decrease the digital skills gap and enhance the employability of youth, including in more rural areas, and therefore equally contributed to ZAF103.

The Natural Stones project in India was aligned with IND 101: *"By 2022, national and state government have adopted job-rich growth strategies guided by labour market information (LMI), relevant ILS, and future of work drivers (FoW)." The project focused on improving working conditions in the stone mining industry as well as bring stakeholders together to develop strategies for decent work in the Rajasthan region.*

5.3. Effectiveness

5.3.1. Progress towards the objectives of the Trust Fund as modality

The overall objectives of the Trust Fund were presented in the TF intervention logic in section 4.1. Built on the foundation of trust between ILO and Flanders, the TF aims to contribute to internal objectives of ILO and Flanders, and subsequently create impact towards the ILO P&B and the SDGs.

⁵⁵ Richtinggevend kader voor de multilaterale samenwerking: Een doeltreffende samenwerking met multilaterale organisaties (MO's)

⁵⁶ Interviews with ILO staff

⁵⁷ GLO-20-02-FLA

For ILO, the objectives include contribution to the CPOs, improved efficiency and long-term planning, and increased flexibility to address emerging needs and adjust projects and portfolio accordingly.

The Trust Fund modality contributed to efficient project management, predictability and long-term planning of ILO, while maintaining responsiveness to emerging issues.

The Trust Fund modality provided significant added value in terms of **predictability and long-term planning**, also linked to trust. Several ILO interviewees indicated that the guaranteed funding allows them to look further ahead and plan accordingly. *"The Trust Fund mechanism offers flexibility, allowing for funds to be used even three or four months later, making the process less "artificial" than other funding arrangements."*⁵⁸ The guarantee that the same amount is transferred annually at the same date provides predictability for the ILO. One ILO respondent compared the TF with RBSA funding and highlighted that the TF provides flexibility, like RBSA, but the close ILO-Flanders relationship would not exist under the RBSA.⁵⁹

The long-term planning is also reflected in the portfolio, as several of the projects are based on continuous projects and support. For example, Flanders has been a continuous supporter of work in the area of trade and global supply chains.⁶⁰ *"This is the third project that we have with the Flanders Trust Fund. The first one we had, I believe, was in 2016 and that one started on trade, and they've been supportive of our work ever since."*⁶¹ Although it was not a project continuation, the GPSL3 Skills Innovation Challenge Call in India ensured synergies and built on the ADULT project focusing on upgrading apprenticeships in the informal economy with the use of digital technology, thereby continuing and strengthening Flanders work on apprenticeships.⁶²

The only downside is that there is no contract or guarantee that the TF will stay in place for a certain amount of time. Therefore, ILO staff feel comfortable planning about two years ahead, there is the risk that the TF may be cancelled at any moment.⁶³

The mechanism has also contributed to **efficient project management** from ILO's side (which is elaborated in section 5.4.). A key benefit mentioned is that the money is transferred to the ILO's bank account in advance and is available to use for projects. Additionally, the TF reduces administrative complexity because the money is transferred to a dedicated TF account in advance, eliminating the need to create a separate account for each project. This certainly helps with the "efficient kick-start of projects."⁶⁴

The flexibility of Flanders within the TF modality is often praised by ILO staff as it allows ILO to **identify emerging issues** and use the TF funds to design responsive interventions. ILO staff considers that Flanders maintains a significant level of trust in ILO staff and expertise. While Flanders reviews the project proposals, they do not deeply scrutinize each minor detail in each project proposal. Even during the project implementation, there is flexibility and trust from Flanders' side to enable adjustments if contexts and needs change.

*"We really liked the TF as a modality in the sense that it offered a bit of flexibility in in the way we prioritise what we want as knowledge products. We had discussions about the main themes of cooperation, but then they would give us quite a lot of room for innovation in the typology of products that we wanted to deliver. It also allowed us the flexibility to adjust on the go and to take decisions that were more appropriate for the moment."*⁶⁵

In fact, a few respondents mentioned particularly that the Trust Fund facilitated niche area projects that are not traditionally funded by other donors. Therefore, the results of those projects (e.g. SUPPORT and IMPLEMENT) would not be possible without the TF. The same applies to the results in South Africa, which has become a less popular geographic area in the current donor landscape. Therefore, the TF has accounted for some gaps in funding and coverage.

For **Flanders**, the TF objectives include the objectives listed in relevance and coherence (e.g. networking and visibility, contribution with domestic priorities), as well as the reduced administrative workload created through the TF modality.

⁵⁸ Interview with ILO staff

⁵⁹ Interview with ILO staff

⁶⁰ Interviews with ILO staff

⁶¹ Interview with ILO staff

⁶² Interview with ILO staff

⁶³ Interviews with ILO staff

⁶⁴ Interviews with ILO staff

⁶⁵ Interview with ILO staff

The TF modality contributed to the visibility of Flanders, through the engagement of Flemish experts in projects and forums, and through dissemination of project results with Flanders' logo. Some opportunities for networking with other donors were created, though engagement with the EU was limited.

Firstly, all TF projects ensured the **visibility of Flanders** as donor by including the Flanders logo in all project outputs. A communications workshop was organized jointly by ILO Brussels, ILO PARTNERSHIPS, and the Flemish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labour to establish a solid communication plan.⁶⁶ Interviewed stakeholders from South Africa were all aware that the project they participated in was funded by Flanders. One stakeholder remembered that, in the beginning of the project, *"the ILO gave a comprehensive introduction to Flanders and why Flanders was involved in projects in South Africa"*.⁶⁷

Another opportunity for visibility of Flanders was provided by the different project's workshops, panels and other events. For example, some interviewed stakeholders from South Africa remember seeing Flanders' representatives at events.⁶⁸ Both ILO and Flanders staff confirmed that Flanders staff was invited to speak at various events (although in some cases the invitation was a bit late).

However, invitations for events and workshops occurred frequently and Flanders did not always have staff available to participate.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the technical specialists of different Flemish ministries and departments generally prioritise their domestic agenda and did not make themselves available for such international events.⁷⁰

Efforts were made to ensure connections and **engagements between Flanders and other donors** within the TF portfolio. The results were, however, mixed. Several achievements were noted of projects with panels and fora that enabled interaction between Flanders and other donors or UN agencies.

*"There would be someone from the Flanders government as well as Flemish researchers on the advisory committee, as well as the European Commission, the US government and the Canadians."*⁷¹

*"We made a big event with Flanders and Norad (Norway) on costing and financing of Skills, the main donors of the Global Skills Programme. There was also the Global Skills Forum in Geneva in April 2024. The Flanders representative actually spoke as one of the panellists alongside ILO's major donors on skills and lifelong learning."*⁷²

*"We had several EU-India dialogues in which ILO and Flanders participated as well (and the TruStone partners) and discussed the natural stone project results."*⁷³

Some other opportunities included engagement with the World Trade Organization through panel discussions.

At the same time, GPSL3 was designed as a pooled funding mechanism intended to bring together multiple donors. During the period of Flanders' contribution to the pooled fund, no additional donors joined the pooled funding mechanism; instead, other donors participated through parallel, lightly earmarked funding arrangements, despite the ILO's efforts to promote pooled contributions. These efforts eventually yielded results, but only after the conclusion of Flanders' pooled contribution, when Norway decided to join the pooled funding mechanism.⁷⁴ The 2020-2025 TF portfolio also provided limited opportunities for engagement with the EU. However, ongoing discussions about a project in the Port of Durban include the plan to connect the project with Team Europe and the Global Gateway initiative.⁷⁵

Lastly, Flanders' respondents confirmed that the TF is also a beneficial modality for them in terms of **efficiency**, as it reduces the administrative workload and the yearly contribution is already established.⁷⁶

5.3.2. Progress towards the objectives of the portfolio

⁶⁶ Interviews with ILO staff

⁶⁷ Interview with a stakeholder

⁶⁸ Interviews with stakeholders

⁶⁹ Interviews with ILO and Flanders.

⁷⁰ Interview with Flanders staff

⁷¹ Interview with ILO staff

⁷² Interview with ILO staff

⁷³ Interview with ILO staff

⁷⁴ Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff

⁷⁵ Interview with ILO staff

⁷⁶ Interviews with Flanders staff.

The objectives of the portfolio can be measured according to three categories, namely 1) the results for individual beneficiaries, particularly women and youth, 2) institutional results for VET schools, factories, companies and other organizations, and 3) results at national and policy level, including policy dialogue.

The portfolio created results at individual, institutional and policy-level. Several results, such as global tools and methods have the potential to create results across the three dimensions.

Activities targeting **beneficiaries** related to the development of digital skills and creation of internship opportunities, as well as to the productivity of workers and the improvement of their working conditions. According to the self-evaluations, the projects were largely successful in creating the intended outcomes for the targeted beneficiaries, in relation to skills development and awareness-raising.

The GPSL3 provided digital skills training for 128 youth NEET in South Africa and registered 2,211 beneficiaries (including 2,091 youth and 911 women and girls) in India for skills training and apprenticeships. 607 candidates secured apprenticeships, 316 candidates secured placement. The continued implementation and upscaling of the piloted materials, combined with the results of the capacity-building, are expected to benefit vastly more youth in the future

Training of returnee migrant workers engaged in the stone industry included entrepreneurship development for alternate livelihoods; business development training for micro and small processing units including guidance to them on enterprise registration for formalisation; development of the OSH flipbook; and awareness building among workers and employers on practises for a safe and healthy workplace, with particular focus on women.⁷⁷

The project on productivity in the clothing sector in South Africa used the SCORE methodology to train workers and managers in clothing factories. Interviewed ILO staff and stakeholders noted that the project supported working conditions in the factories. As workers are mostly women, the project created important results for them.⁷⁸

Other project results will benefit (or have already started to benefit) individuals as well. For example, the ADULT project did not engage youth directly but created the frameworks and supporting tools necessary for them to benefit from quality apprenticeships in the future.⁷⁹

At **institutional** level, the projects aimed to enhance capacity of stakeholders related to skills, job creation, innovation and similar topics. Across the portfolio, many examples of increased capacity were found for participating organizations. Factories and private sector companies improved their internal functioning and workplace OSH.

An OSH (Occupational Safety and Health) training programme was organized for employers and workers from mining and processing units, under the Natural Stones project.⁸⁰

Thirteen clothing manufacturing firms benefitted from SCORE trainings and continue to demonstrate increased productivity and adherence to SCORE principles.⁸¹

For (T)VET institutions and education stakeholders, the main achievements of the portfolio included the improvement of curricula, skills training, and innovative solutions.

In South Africa, TVET institutions and TVET educators received capacity-building to digitalise training services and to develop digital courses themselves. The ILO GPSL3 developed four pre-entry level digital skills programmes and trained TVET trainers to deliver digital skills trainings at their institutions.⁸²

Particularly the innovation lab provided by the ITCILO during the ILO Digital Skills Challenge Call supported the winning VET institutions to enhance the quality of their ideas.⁸³

⁷⁷ Natural Stone project final progress report and internal evaluation.

⁷⁸ Interviews with ILO staff and stakeholders

⁷⁹ Final progress report for the ADULT project.

⁸⁰ Natural Stone project final progress report and internal evaluation.

⁸¹ Final progress report of the project Promoting Decent Work through Productivity and Workplace Cooperation interventions in South Africa's clothing manufacturing sector

⁸² ProDoc of the ITC-ILO Digital Skills project, and interviews with ILO staff

⁸³ Internal evaluation of Flanders' contribution to the GPSL3

Besides activities directly targeting organizations, the project also created results to support TVET institutions and employers in the future. Namely, the ADULT project created guidelines and frameworks for promoting good practices on quality apprenticeships and supporting enterprises on how they can implement quality apprenticeships.⁸⁴

At the **policy or national level**, the projects aimed to support evidence-based policymaking on topics related to skills, employability, innovation and trade. The project portfolio created the most results at the national or evidence-level, with research or policy results found in almost each project. Firstly, the project generated evidence and findings on topics that are under-researched and provided ideas for policymaking and improvement.

The SUPPORT project strengthened the knowledge and capacity of relevant actors (including governments and social partners) to utilize its research publications and web portal resources. It produced evidence-based policy options for governments and social partners through its high-quality research volumes on trade and labour markets.⁸⁵

The project "Assessing social capabilities..." produced findings based on five case studies that offer a valuable framework and policy recommendations for understanding and promoting the role of collective capabilities for innovation in organizations.⁸⁶

The ADULT project generated new knowledge and ideas for apprenticeships and provided a staged research approach to support apprenticeship system development globally.⁸⁷

For the validation and dissemination of the research findings, most of the projects organised high-level policy dialogues, often with involvement of constituents.

The SUPPORT project organized a high-level seminar *on Integrating Trade and Decent Work: What Works and Why?* which had over 100 participants attending both online and in person, and presented the main findings of the two key publications. It featured a distinguished panel of representatives, including ILO tripartite representatives, and senior officials from ILO, UNCTAD, and the WTO.⁸⁸

The ADULT project supported the High-level policy dialogue and Capacity building workshop held in Pretoria, South Africa under the ILO's South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) project "Promoting Quality Apprenticeships in India, South Africa, China, Ethiopia, and Switzerland". More than 30 senior officials from the tripartite constituents from India, South Africa, China, and Ethiopia gathered to share good practices and lessons learned on apprenticeships.⁸⁹

The Natural Stone project led to the development and adoption of the Rajasthan Natural Stone Strategy 2021-2025 by the state government, employers, and workers. This success catalyzed the adoption of a government notification to establish a sectoral committee, ensuring follow-up action on the strategy.⁹⁰

The portfolio also developed a few global tools which are already being used in other contexts and projects.

The SUPPORT project developed an online tool, the *ILO Labour Provisions in Trade Agreements Hub* to enhance accessibility to labour provisions in trade agreements. Since its launch the tool has emerged as the premiere data source on labour provisions and is commonly used by ILO staff, academics, governments and international organizations.⁹¹

Under the GPSL3, ILO developed a *tool on how to accurately cost education and training activities*, whether formal or non-formal in public and private contexts.⁹² Interviewees mentioned that this methodology is already being implemented in other countries and contexts.⁹³

5.4. Efficiency

5.4.1. Efficiency of the Trust Fund modality

⁸⁴ Final progress report for the ADULT project.

⁸⁵ Final progress report of the SUPPORT project.

⁸⁶ Final progress report of the project Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation

⁸⁷ Final progress report for the ADULT project.

⁸⁸ Final progress report of the SUPPORT project.

⁸⁹ Final progress report for the ADULT project.

⁹⁰ Natural Stone project final progress report and internal evaluation.

⁹¹ Final progress report of the SUPPORT project.

⁹² GPSL3 final progress report and internal evaluation.

⁹³ Interviews with ILO staff.

The modality of the Trust Fund was expected to enhance efficiency of both financial and administrative processes.

The Trust Fund modality created visible efficiency gains for the ILO, particularly at HQ level. The modality reduces administrative processes, and its flexibility allows for smooth adjustment of project processes.

Perspectives on the contribution of the modality to efficiency gains were twofold. Firstly, the modality was considered to be **vastly more efficient** for both Flanders and ILO as compared to one-off projects. The absence of individual contracts for each project reduced the administrative burden for both parties and ILO staff perceived that the modality was also lighter on donor reporting requirements as compared to other donor projects.⁹⁴

Given the absence of complex contracts and given that the funding is already in the ILO's bank account, the TF allows ILO to respond quickly to emerging needs (within the original scope of objectives).⁹⁵ Several ILO staff noted that the procedures for adjustments, or even for no-cost extensions, are smoother than other donor projects, which include *"a lot of paperwork and formality"*.⁹⁶ Flanders accepts the quality assurance and adjustment procedures of ILO as sufficient and does not impose additional procedures. This is not only a consequence of the Trust Fund modality, but also of the trust between ILO and Flanders.

The flexibility of the TF modality influenced the ability of ILO to engage with other projects and actors where needed and enabled cost-sharing or co-funding. The TF financial flexibility also allows research projects to align with research cycles.⁹⁷

*"In South-Africa, the GIZ co-funded some elements of the Digital Skills project of the TF. I don't know if in a bilateral project or standard project situation, I could have attracted GIZ. The TF included the flexibility to attract co-funding and expand the scope of the project."*⁹⁸

ILO project staff reported that Flanders was flexible and collaborative regarding the project monitoring and evaluation requirements. The reporting requirements were perceived as *"very reasonable"*, and no complaints were voiced from Flanders' side either. This is also linked to the flexibility of the portfolio and the absence of highly rigid logframes requiring detailed reporting against each indicator.⁹⁹

At the same time, secondly, some ILO staff on the ground did not directly experience increased efficiency as their work is mostly influenced by ILO's procedures. Namely, within ILO, project teams still need to **report against ILO's standards** and follow ILO procedures. Therefore, while the donor-to-ILO procedures are simplified under the TF modality, ILO's internal procedures maintain the same at country-level.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, issues with efficient **budget allocation to ITCILO** also linked more to the internal ILO procedures. Trust Fund activities implemented by ITCILO required ILO HQ to create a specific project and send purchase orders to Turin. ITCILO subsequently had to report back to ILO HQ on their spending. Interviewees reported that a one-time solution was found, namely through an agreement with Flanders that funding for ITCILO can be transferred to their account directly and be managed by them directly instead of by ILO HQ. According to both ILO HQ and ITCILO staff, this is an important agreement that would prevent administrative hurdles in future projects.¹⁰¹

5.4.2. Efficiency within the portfolio

This section presents whether the projects themselves were implemented in an efficient and timely manner.

The projects were implemented in an efficient manner, with the efficient and effective creation and reallocation of savings. Various challenges occurred that caused delays in project implementation.

The review of self-evaluations of the projects indicates that projects were generally implemented in a **financially efficient** manner, occasionally even creating savings.

The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, although a constraint on implementation, had positive implications on the budget, leading to cost savings in designing and other activities.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ Interviews with Flanders and ILO staff

⁹⁵ Interview with ILO staff

⁹⁶ Interviews with ILO staff

⁹⁷ Interviews with ILO staff

⁹⁸ Interview with ILO staff

⁹⁹ Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff.

¹⁰⁰ Interviews with ILO staff. This should, of course, not be seen as point of criticism since quality assurance is of great importance.

¹⁰¹ Interviews with ILO staff.

¹⁰² Final progress report of ADULT

In South Africa, the innovation challenge was held with financial input from GIZ as well, to mobilise the cash prizes for the winners. The Flanders contribution was subsequently fully used for the capacity building process and to offer additional services.¹⁰³

The 2% reduction in the SUPPORT project's spending in 2023 was achieved through cost savings from collaborating with three other partners for the Tripartite Regional Training in Asia.¹⁰⁴

The SUPPORT project's final report also noted that the project was efficient as it maximized the input of **ILO colleagues** across departments.¹⁰⁵ The SCORE project leveraged existing SCORE trainers in South Africa to enhance the efficient project implementation as well.¹⁰⁶

Overall, the cost-savings and cost-sharing activities were used to maximise the project results.

The Natural Stone project leveraged upon resources available with UNV and CDOS to impart trainings and awareness building on OSH, and entrepreneurship. It also redeployed the resources saved to engage an international expert to support the constituents in building their understanding of international market trends and buyers expectations, especially in the backdrop of COVID-19, and economic slowdown, which helped to reinforce the project's advocacy efforts for a tripartite strategy.¹⁰⁷

While for most projects the budget seemed sufficient, the ADULT final report noted that the "the budget for disseminating the research publications was insufficient." This was, however, resolved through the use of savings made on other activities.¹⁰⁸

Several of the projects faced **delays** in their implementation and required no-cost extensions for their finalization. In three cases, the delays were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which required revisions in the methodology (e.g. for the project "Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation"), and overall delayed implementation activities due to lockdowns (e.g. for the Natural Stone project and the ADULT project).¹⁰⁹

Other projects faced delays due to challenges with subcontractors. For example, the SUPPORT project was delayed due to the poor quality of some of the commissioned research inputs. The SCORE project was delayed due to lengthy contracting procedures.¹¹⁰ The GPSL3 project also faced delays for similar reasons, as the assignment to forecast future TVET financing needs comprised a complex methodology for which it was challenging to find a suitable contractor. The project also faced delays with the innovation challenge.¹¹¹

Flanders suggested on various occasions to introduce longer timelines during project development, but these suggestions were not always followed.

5.5. Impact

This section describes the added value and impact created through the Flanders-ILO Trust Fund and related cooperation. According to the Cooperation Agreement, the ultimate expected impact is the achievement of ILO's objectives, within the mandate of Flanders.

The difference made by the TF is largely about the TF providing opportunities to try-and-test new approaches which are subsequently taken up by other donors, and through the TF's support for underfunded areas. The most visible impact of the TF over the past five years is the adoption of ILO Recommendation 208 on Quality Apprenticeships.

The overall objectives of the ILO are presented in the biannual Programme & Budgets, and as presented in section 5.1.1., the portfolio activities aligned closely with the P&B objectives. As demonstrated in section 5.3.2., the activities were largely effective in creating results and therefore contributing towards the P&B objectives.

A key long-term impact of the portfolio is the **ILO Recommendation 208 on Quality Apprenticeships**, which was adopted in 2023. The Trust Fund supported analytical and research inputs that contributed to the evidence base

¹⁰³ Interview with ILO

¹⁰⁴ Final progress report of the SUPPORT project.

¹⁰⁵ Final progress report of the SUPPORT project.

¹⁰⁶ Final progress report of the project Promoting Decent Work through Productivity and Workplace Cooperation interventions in South Africa's clothing manufacturing sector

¹⁰⁷ Final progress report of the project Paving the way for a sustainable natural stone industry in India.

¹⁰⁸ Final progress report of ADULT

¹⁰⁹ Review of final progress reports of all TF funded projects.

¹¹⁰ Review of final progress reports of all TF funded projects.

¹¹¹ Internal evaluation of Flanders' contribution to the GPSL3.

informing the development and adoption of ILO Recommendation No. 208, in line with ILO's normative processes. According to interviewed ILO staff, the Recommendation followed the findings and recommendations from research reports produced under the ADULT project, with inputs from Flemish experts.¹¹²

*"The ADULT project was designed just before we were going to discuss a new International Apprenticeship Standard in the International Labour Conference. A lot of research papers were developed in the ADULT project and a number of them were actually used as background papers for the discussions at the International Labour Conference."*¹¹³

*"I never seen such a thing in the ILC. We usually don't get Recommendations adopted so easily, especially with all the tripartism parts. Also during the Global Skills Forum, after the adoption of the Recommendation 209, the panel discussions topics were largely inspired by the thematic reports of the ADULT projects."*¹¹⁴

Impact is also achieved through follow-up activities. In some cases, Flanders' funding provided a **starting point for further work**.

*"We managed to secure some additional budget from the ILO office in New Delhi to conduct a study of that initiative to really extract the key lessons learned. And with that, we are going to take it to the Ministry again to make a policy recommendation to help them upgrade apprenticeships in informal sector. So, it was not just a one-off initiative, I would say, but it really has a lasting impact."*¹¹⁵

*"We used the resources from the trust fund to support an activity that was also supported by the Japanese government and I think the Canadian government had some resources in RBSA. And now we have resources coming from the European Commission. It has become this blueprint for which we would find additional donors who appreciate the model and then we would continue to fund that going forward."*¹¹⁶

*"First of all, why we brought this child labour project to Rajasthan is that under the Flanders project we already established the working relationship with local government but also, very importantly, the trust relationship with the enterprises, but also with the workers and for the workers organizations working relationship. So, it's not starting from scratch."*¹¹⁷

*"We were also getting another project with DFID which also had plans to go to the same state and work in the same mining sector, but more on the child labour. So, for us it was like a foundation already laid and the office could leverage upon those and sustain the efforts."*¹¹⁸

For other forms of impact, e.g. on policy reform, more time is needed for such results to materialise. Multiple steps still need to be taken to transform increased capacity and use of guidelines into policy change. This evaluation is too early for many of the projects to already demonstrate such impact.

Overall, there are various ways in which the Trust Fund has created **added value** for the ILO and for its constituents and beneficiaries. The most commonly listed way the TF is unique and important for ILO is that it provides funding for otherwise underfunded areas and activities.

*"A lot of a lot of what donors are doing right now is almost 100% focused on field work. There is a certain gap in investment in creating background tools and developing innovative approaches and you can't really do that only through field work."*¹¹⁹

*"Their contribution in this area, the value added in terms of this topic at the ILO is, is really immeasurable."*¹²⁰

*"The focus on specific areas, such as South Africa, is considered very important, as the ILO would likely less prioritize a middle-income country like South Africa under a general, flexible funding mechanism like the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA)."*¹²¹

¹¹² Interviews with ILO staff

¹¹³ Interview with ILO staff.

¹¹⁴ Interview with ILO staff.

¹¹⁵ Interview with ILO staff.

¹¹⁶ Interview with ILO staff.

¹¹⁷ Interview with ILO staff.

¹¹⁸ Interview with ILO staff.

¹¹⁹ Interview with ILO staff.

¹²⁰ Interview with ILO staff.

¹²¹ Interview with ILO staff.

The Trust Fund arrangement also allows for the active contribution of Flemish expertise which is highly valued by ILO project staff and helps deepen the cooperation beyond a purely financial relationship. This funding structure facilitates a personal relationship between the ILO and the Flanders team, which, for example, would not be present under an RBSA funding approach.¹²² For example, multiple high-level meetings between Flemish Ministers and ILO DGs took place, thanks to the strong Flemish-ILO relationship, which would not have existed without the TF.

5.6. Sustainability

The TF mechanism does not include specific requirements for sustainability but rather relies on the overall approach of ILO to ensuring sustainability. Of particular interest of this evaluation is the sustainability of new partnerships established under the portfolio.

Most results established by the portfolio are sustainable, particularly the tools and research products. Several new partnerships are also continuing beyond project timelines. Additional project phases are needed in some cases to take some of the results forward.

The portfolio has resulted in a few **lasting relationships between Flemish actors and ILO staff**. For example, the Flemish expert involved in the trade-related studies continues to invite ILO staff to participate in online courses and ILO still invites him to join research trainings.¹²³ Most visibly, the ILO GPSL3 in South Africa included a cooperation with the Flemish D-Teach institution. At the end of the Digital Skills Challenge Call in South Africa, a need from VET institutions emerged noted that the country lacks a national digital skills capacity building tool for teachers. Although the Challenge Call ended, ILO GPSL3 and ITCILO and D-Teach continued working together on the interactive competency-based e-learning modules.¹²⁴

Some **other collaborations** established under the projects continue as well. The trade projects gave a push to ILO and WTO to strengthen their collaboration and exchange, which would not have naturally occurred without the TF projects.¹²⁵ The Natural Stone project also created new coordination mechanisms that continued under the follow-up projects.

In terms of **sustainability of project results**, some examples can be found as well. Although there is currently no funding available to continue SCORE trainings in South Africa, ILO staff reported that they witnessed some individual initiatives from the score trainers themselves.¹²⁶ *"The bargaining council and the South African clothing textile workers, they reach out to me almost every week, you know, wanting to do more with us."*¹²⁷ Stakeholders and ILO themselves also reported that, after several months, they still see *"sustained increase in productivity in many of these firms that participated."*¹²⁸

The practical results created by the projects, in terms of tools, guidelines, and research are sustainable in their essence. They will remain available for stakeholders and ILO staff to use as long as they are available online. For example, the Centre for Development of Stones (CDOS) expressed its commitment to continue the OSH flipbook, developed under the Natural Stone project.¹²⁹ The Labour Provisions in Trade Agreements Hub (LP Hub) provides a comprehensive compilation of labour provisions in over 100 trade agreements and is continuously used by governments, academics, and international organizations.¹³⁰

The reliance on donor funding to sustain results or continue activities is a common **barrier to sustainability** across the portfolio. One final progress report explicitly notes that *"a follow-up phase will be necessary for institutionalisation and sustainability."*¹³¹ The targeted VET institutions in South Africa also depend heavily on external funding and the SCORE trainers cannot continue their work if there is no funding for them.¹³² The projects have delivered various research products – with interest of stakeholders to use them – but to create results, there is a need to maintain and raise awareness of these products.

¹²² Interview with ILO staff.

¹²³ Interview with ILO staff

¹²⁴ Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff

¹²⁵ Interview with ILO staff

¹²⁶ Interview with ILO staff.

¹²⁷ Interview with ILO staff.

¹²⁸ Interview with ILO staff and a stakeholder

¹²⁹ Natural Stone project final progress report and internal evaluation

¹³⁰ Final progress report of the SUPPORT project.

¹³¹ Natural Stone project final progress report and internal evaluation

¹³² Interview with ILO staff.

6. Forward-looking reflections

This chapter presents the evaluation findings for the forward-looking evaluation questions that also form the basis for the recommendations on how to improve the TF functioning and align it with current political trends and needs.

The **policy priorities of the ILO** for the upcoming years are reflected in the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan of ILO. The Strategic Plan for 2026–29 continues to pursue the ILO's mandate to advance social justice through decent work with a human-centred approach. However, it aims to strengthen its focus on particular fields.

The **ILO's Strategic Plan for 2026–2029 – Delivering social justice through decent work in times of uncertainty** – has four interconnected priority areas:

1. *Inclusive and effective governance of work*: Focus on fundamental principles and rights at work; social dialogue; ILS; labour administration
2. *Full and productive employment and sustainable enterprises for decent work*: Economic and social infrastructures; enabling environments for sustainable enterprises; access to skills development, apprenticeships and LLL.
3. *Equality and protection at work*: Gender equality; supporting vulnerable people; quality jobs and labour protection; universal social protection.
4. *Policy coherence for fair transitions*: Supporting the transition to formality; transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies; ensuring technical advances and inclusive progress.

In 2024, **Flanders also adopted a new Governing agreement and a Policy Note for its foreign policy**. Current political trends in Flanders, including the significant reduction in development cooperation spending, signal that the use of the Trust Fund should be tailored as much as possible to the Flanders' foreign policy objectives (not development cooperation objectives) and align with domestic priorities where possible, to avoid the risk that the TF also become subject to budget cuts, and enhance its role as a tool for Flanders to achieve its foreign policy objectives. However, this does not necessarily constitute a limitation for the ILO as the priorities of Flanders still align largely with those of ILO.

The **2024-2029 Governing Agreement of Flanders** notes various key priorities for Flanders in terms of its domestic and foreign policies for the upcoming years. The following points are highlighted due to their potential connection with multilateral cooperation.

Firstly, the **foreign policy of Flanders** is focused on various key points, among others: Strong relations with its neighbours and EU member states; A strong vision on EU policies; Strategic relations globally (referring to South Africa and India among others); multilateral collaboration for global solutions; and international trade and investments.

Domestic policies prioritise economic development, science and innovation, with sustainable growth and climate transition as cross-cutting concern, as well as competitiveness. The Governing Agreement highlights the importance for Flanders to keep up with technological developments across different sectors (work, transport, agriculture, etc.) and invest in lifelong learning and quality education. Employment and social policy priorities include decent and inclusive work, and labour migration to attract talent.

The Governing Agreement also refers to **climate** as core standalone sector, namely, to contribute to the Paris Agreement and EU objectives. The government approved a dedicated programme, namely the Programme note 2026-2030: 'Climate leap for industry - Transition programme for a low-carbon and competitive energy-intensive industry by 2050'.

Flanders also adopted a new **Policy Note 2024-2029: Support for the Flemish Government, Disaster Damage, Foreign Policy, Development Cooperation, and International Business** that guides Flemish foreign policy in the upcoming years.

This Policy Note also strongly highlights the **importance of the EU for Flanders**, listing a strong EU-Flanders policy as first Strategic Objective of the policy note. As 33% of jobs in Flanders are related to export and 40% is connected to foreign companies, the **focus on (free) trade (agreements)**, the Flemish global image and its participation in global events, and its competitiveness (**innovation**) are important as well. In case of the latter, Flanders wishes to connect more closely with global leaders of innovation.

At the same time, **sustainable business and human rights** remain important. The Note recognises that the EU must promote free and fair trade and lead the multilateral trade system and Flanders

envisages EU trade policy to be the driver of sustainable development and emphasizes that Flanders has expertise to contribute to this. Promoting compliance with human rights conventions is a priority as well. Lastly, Flanders wants to continue using multilateral cooperation with selected international organizations as tool to achieve its vision.

Lastly, the fifth Strategic Objective of the Policy Note is for Flanders to purposefully contribute to **addressing global challenges** and achievement of SDGs. Priority areas include innovative agriculture and food security; the right to (sexual and reproductive) health; vulnerable populations in North and East Africa; and support for economic development, and humanitarian aid. As mentioned above, **climate change** is also recognised as core priority in Flanders' foreign policy.

Across the different priorities, Flanders aims for the next five years to present a strong and coherent profile and image of Flanders, by ensuring its **visibility**.

An analysis of both ILO and Flanders' strategic plans and policies shows the continuous overlap of priorities and therefore opportunities for collaboration. The following paragraphs present the results of the Policy Delphi, while reflecting Flanders' and ILO's policy priorities, suggesting relevant ways forward.

The vast majority of respondents were highly satisfied with the ILO-Flanders cooperation and with the functioning of the Trust Fund. Furthermore, many project staff have a limited view of the TF as a whole, as they are aware only of their specific project. Therefore, interviewees generally did not have substantial recommendations for how the TF mechanism could be improved, beyond minor tweaks and **there is no need to change the overall model of cooperation. The ideas for improvement that were voiced would not require a change in the mechanism itself or in the Cooperation Agreement text.**

Contrarily, many interviewees strongly praised the flexibility of Flanders and the Trust Fund modality, highlighting that this mechanism should not change at project level, in terms of budget allocations, amendments, reporting, etc. Any gaps in efficiency were more often linked to the necessary internal ILO procedures than to the Trust Fund.

The TF modality also created trust and strong relations between ILO and Flanders staff, which are considered a strong added value of this modality as compared to other mechanisms. While the RBSA modality may be even more efficient for ILO, it would not align with the needs of Flanders and is therefore not a feasible option. Of course, ILO staff would also like the TF funding size to be larger, but considering recent budget cuts in Flanders, this may not be an option at this time either.

While the projects were fully aligned with the Flemish and ILO priorities covering 2020-2025, Interviewees with a broader view of the TF noted that the portfolio over the five years was somewhat sporadic, building on past projects but without **coherence** among the projects. One reason for this is the incredibly broad scope covered by the TF, namely the ILO mandate as a whole, but with a focus on the priorities of Flanders. A review of Flanders' policy documents covering 2020-2025 demonstrate that its domestic and foreign policy priorities also covered a wide thematic scope. This allowed the portfolio to be less coherent and address a multitude of topics.

The Policy Delphi shows that most key TF staff are aware of this lack of coherence (which some interviewees perceived as an added value) and acknowledge the need to *"narrow the overall objectives somewhat, but otherwise maintain flexibility"*. At the same time, the Policy Delphi shows that the TF should not expand its portfolio diversity but either maintain status quo or move closer towards *"setting one or two key priorities in selected geographical areas and focus all efforts there, ensuring long-term collaboration and deeper impact"*.

In this regard, the Policy Delphi also shows that there is interest from both sides in using more of the Trust Fund resources for ILO's global programmes with pooled funds, which would address several priorities of both ILO and Flanders, such as:

- ▶ Having a dedicated objective (e.g. aligned with Flanders' policies) while maintaining flexibility for ILO.
- ▶ Pooling funds to create deeper impact in a dedicated area.
- ▶ Creating opportunities for networking through programme advisory committees with participation of all donors.

The GPSL3 had excellent potential, although unfortunately it took time to attract other donors. Now that Norway have become pooled funding partners, Flanders could consider re-joining the pool. The topic of lifelong learning also aligns with domestic priorities (especially if linked to innovation and upskilling and Green Skills/ Just Transition) and Flanders could explore how the Global Skills Programme tools can benefit Flanders or benefit from Flemish expertise.

Therefore, **the way forward for the Trust Fund, based on the evaluation findings and the Policy Delphi, includes a more coherent and targeted approach to the selection of projects, based on a few overarching priorities (remaining in alignment with Flanders' policy priorities) that set the foundation for the next few years of project**

design. These priorities can still remain high-level and therefore flexible (e.g. “skills” or “child labour”). This will allow ILO to use the Trust Fund for more coherent and targeted interventions and create deeper impact, particularly through the use of pooled funding programmes. It also allows better planning within ILO as there are only specific departments and units that would be able to receive funding (those working on the identified priorities) allowing them to plan how the TF can strengthen their work.

The Cooperation Agreement points specifically to Southern Africa, although the 2020-2025 portfolio was more flexible, also including India and global projects. The Policy Delphi results are indecisive regarding the **geographical focus** of future TF projects, and on the balance between global and country-level projects. The results do show that it is important to maintain global projects and products. In case of the latter, Flanders has a clear Foreign Policy priority to contribute to global challenges. Therefore, ILO-Flanders cooperation on tools addressing global challenges can be a strategic approach for both.

At the same time, there is less interest in maintaining the strong focus on Southern Africa. Policy Delphi respondents different in their perspectives but generally ranged between having half of the portfolio focus on Southern Africa and having full flexibility of the portfolio.

Within the South Africa portfolio, all PD respondents unanimously agreed that *the ILO can also support broader economic cooperation (e.g. regarding ILS in trade) and more strategic technical support*. This shift in type of cooperation in South Africa would enhance the value of the Trust Fund in relation to the 2019-2024 Foreign Policy Note of Flanders, which indicates that “Flanders’ cooperation with South Africa should evolve from development cooperation to strong and broad political, economic and diplomatic cooperation.”

The way forward for the Trust Fund portfolio is to maintain a balance between global projects (focusing on development of tools and products) and country-level projects. In case of the latter, the interest in Southern Africa can be respected, but other countries should be targeted as well. In case of South Africa in particular, the ILO and Flanders should explore how the TF can function as mechanism to support Flanders – South Africa economic cooperation (rather than development cooperation-type interventions).

The 2020-2025 portfolio was diverse in its **thematic areas** as well, as mentioned above. Interviewees perceived that there could be somewhat more narrow priorities to create more coherence thematically as well.

Several topics were mentioned by interviewees and then presented in the Policy Delphi. “*Trade agreements and the integration of ILS in trade agreements*” was most often chosen as key priority area for the upcoming years. This topic strongly aligns with Flanders’ foreign and domestic policies for the upcoming years. Namely, it allows closer cooperation with the EU (as mandated to negotiate trade agreements and implement the new regulation on Corporate Social Due Diligence); it allows Flanders to contribute to compliance with human rights convention and contribute to the SDGs, and provides opportunities for free trade, benefiting Flemish companies.

Furthermore, the focus on trade agreements aligns with the ILO’s crosscutting priority and unique added value to promote international labour standards. The ILO Strategic Plan for 2026-2029 mentions that ILS will be mainstreamed in all interventions and that ILO will focus on “Setting and upholding robust international labour standards”.¹³³

The PD respondents furthermore noted that the TF modality should increase its attention to exploring synergies with the EU, which could be achieved through the attention to ILS and trade agreements.

A second topic often chosen as priority is the *Greening and Just Transition*. This topic can also be highly beneficial for both ILO and Flanders, as environmental sustainability is also a cross-cutting concern of ILO, it is a key EU topic and priority, and it links with Flanders’ domestic and global priorities, creating opportunities for Flemish experts to contribute to global solutions and for Flanders to fund global solutions that can (indirectly) address Flemish green priorities.

At the same time, the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan of ILO notes that greater emphasis will be placed on supporting workers and enterprises in navigating transitions to formality and towards the green and digital economies. ILO will also focus on “Facilitating a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies.”¹³⁴

Similarly, considering the attention of the EU paid to the just transition, the development of global products and solutions linked to greening could be an entry point to gauge attention and involvement of the EU.

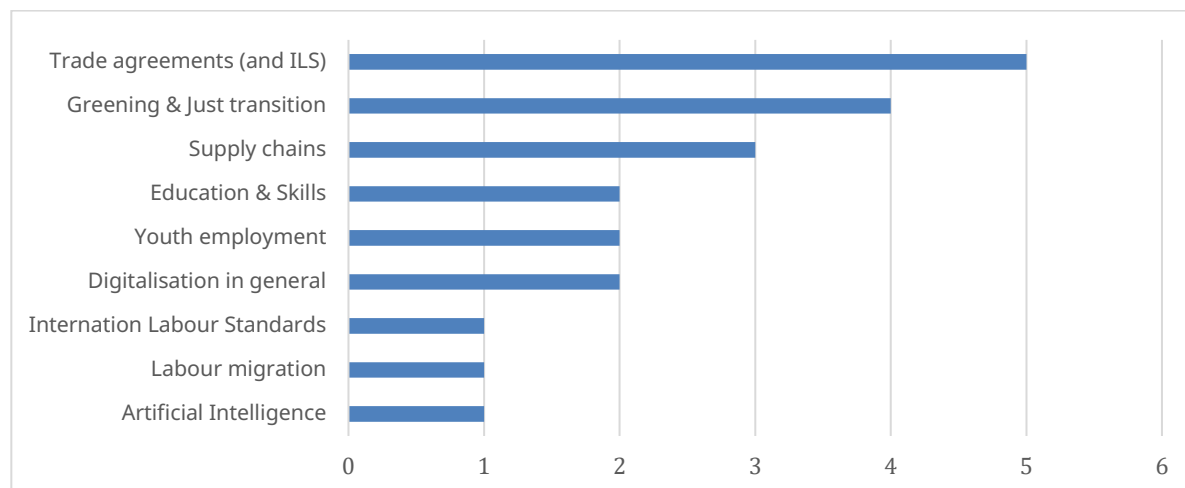
Several other topics were considered important as well, such as supply chains, education, youth employment and digitalization. These topics can also contribute to priorities of both Flanders and the ILO. As mentioned in one of the open answers to the PD, the topics have also high potential to be integrated within broader initiatives, or to merge

¹³³ The ILO’s Strategic Plan for 2026–29. Governing Body 352nd Session, Geneva, 28 October–7 November 2024

¹³⁴ The ILO’s Strategic Plan for 2026–29. Governing Body 352nd Session, Geneva, 28 October–7 November 2024

several topics into one project. For example, mainstreaming sustainability and greening in supply chains and trade agreements.

Figure 4. Policy Delphi responses regarding priority topics



Source: Policy Delphi survey (n=7). Which of the following topics do you see as absolute priorities for the TF in the upcoming five years. Think not only about global priorities but particularly the areas where this TF can add value. Pick max. 3.

The Policy Delphi also discussed some broader topics related to **coordination between Flanders and ILO under the TF**. The most recent Coordination Meeting was held in a slightly different format, which allowed for a more high-level policy discussion beyond the mere presentation of project results. Most of the Policy Delphi respondents appreciated this new format. Most respondents also appreciated the current self-evaluation approach to reporting on the projects' achievements.

If the future portfolio becomes more internally coherent, under a few jointly identified objectives aligned with Flemish policy priorities, the reporting and coordination meetings can also be strengthened by discussing the combined impact of the portfolio towards the objectives. It also allows both parties to exchange their experiences with new trends and challenges affecting those priorities and explore solutions together.

Lastly, as mentioned above, there may be a need for the Trust Fund to more clearly profile itself as foreign policy instrument for Flemish objectives (as compared to a development cooperation modality). In this regard, the Policy Delphi explored whether respondents would be open to **other types of collaboration under the TF**.

The *co-creation of global tools and solutions* was considered by all respondents as an interesting opportunity to expand collaboration under the TF. A previous PD question already found that some part of the TF can remain allocated to global products. It aligns with Flanders' interest in addressing global challenges, promoting Flanders' visibility, and in being closely involved in innovation and networks of innovators.

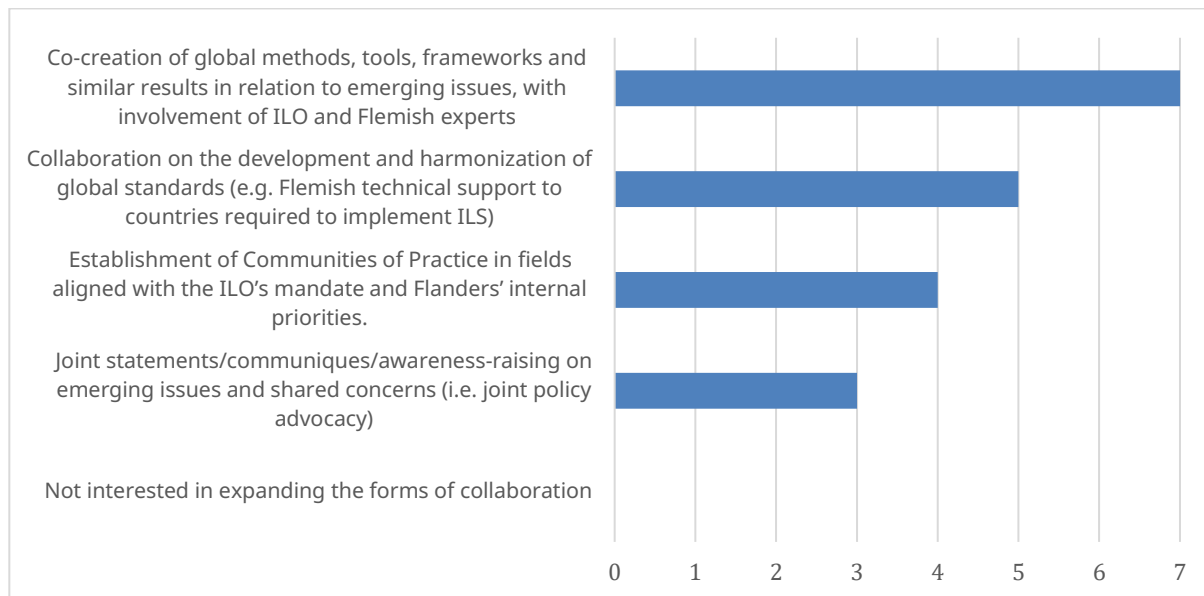
It also aligns with ILO's Strategic Plan and its interest in facilitating technological advances, just transitioning, and related processes for which global products or solutions could add value. The global products can also include additional Recommendations or ILS that can be prepared with Flemish expertise and support (like the apprenticeship recommendation).

ILO-Flanders collaboration can also include *technical support to countries in the progress of negotiating trade agreements with the EU* (particularly priority countries of Flanders). Several PD respondents would be interested in collaborating on the adoption and implementation of ILS in line with trade agreement expectations, or technical support on greening such trade agreements. In this case, it would be less of a project modality (Flanders funds, ILO implements) but rather a partnership between Flanders-ILO-country to jointly work towards trade agreement objectives.

Though slightly less often mentioned, the establishment of *Communities of Practice* or expert networks could be highly beneficial for Flanders as modality for its experts to gain more access to global innovators, keeping up with technological developments, and increasing visibility and contact with other global actors. It can also serve as vehicle for the joint development of global solutions.

In this regard, **the TF can also build on the concept of "visibility"**. The visibility of Flanders in global forums and in project documentation so far has been largely sufficient. Interviewees suggest that ILO and Flanders can focus on joint communication about the TF's impact to a broad range of audiences.

Figure 5. PD responses on new forms of collaboration



Source: Policy Delphi survey (n=7). The following list includes a few potential options for Flanders and ILO to expand and diversify their collaboration. Which of the following, if any, are of interest to you? (This is an initial exploration, not an exhaustive list).

Considering the nature of ILO and Flanders' priorities, there is potential to address global challenges together through broader cooperation beyond the more standard development project. Both parties' strong focus on expertise and legal standards creates a foundation for the joint development of products, joint technical support to partner countries, and joint innovations created through expert networks.

In conclusion, the Trust Fund modality and Cooperation Agreement do not require amending in the upcoming years as they achieve their objectives regarding trust and efficiency. However, the year-to-year and multi-year planning can be approached more strategically by identifying common priorities (e.g. trade, greening, lifelong learning, innovation) that the Trust Fund will focus on. This may ultimately deepen impact, and -if Global Programmes are funded- enhance the visibility of Flanders as a long-term partner in a selected field.

By having more concrete joint objectives in mind, more attention can then also be paid to exploring the stages of implementation: e.g. one year focusing on designing a global product, and the next year piloting the product in selected countries. At the same time, looking from the perspective of objectives also creates more flexibility in choosing the right form of collaboration to achieve it, e.g. either through a project modality, or through ILO-Flanders joint technical support, or by funding a multi-year technical taskforce to develop a solution.

7. Conclusions

The implementation of the ILO-Flanders Trust Fund between 2020-2025 created visible added value for both the ILO and Flemish strategic priorities and mandate. Thematic areas covered by the Trust Fund linked to the P&Bs and Strategic Plan 2022-2025 of the ILO, as well as to domestic policy documents and the Foreign Policy note of Flanders. The overlapping thematic priorities and interests created a diverse portfolio aligned with emerging priorities and interests.

The broad scope of the Cooperation Agreement, covering the entire mandate of ILO and Flanders, and the flexibility from the side of Flanders, allowed the ILO to actively engage stakeholders in the project design process and design activities aligned with country needs and CPOs. Youth and women were included in some of the projects.

Both ILO and Flanders also had dedicated policy objectives regarding development cooperation/foreign policy cooperation and its modalities: Since both ILO and Flanders policies referred to lightly-or unearmarked funding as preferred modality, the Trust Fund fit within both parties' priorities.

The Trust Fund was effective in achieving its results, both as a modality and through its projects. As modality, the TF created a trusting partnership between ILO and Flanders, which resulted for ILO in improved planning and predictability, enhanced efficiency, and flexibility to adjust to emerging issues. For Flanders, it also enhanced efficiency, created some networking opportunities (although not with the EU), and ensured Flanders' global visibility. The portfolio created opportunities for Flemish organizations and experts to work directly with ILO. The portfolio projects also created results at policy, institutional and individual levels. Several results, such as global tools and methods have the potential to create results across the three dimensions in the future as well. Some projects were praised in particular for creating unique tools and research outputs, in areas where donor funding is traditionally limited.

However, there was limited opportunity for reinforcement between the projects (with the exception of projects acting as "phase II") and the portfolio lacked coherence or a clear strategy or approach, even within South Africa where multiple projects were implemented. This was caused in part by the broad scope of the Cooperation Agreement and the broad policy objectives of both ILO and Flanders, while priorities were agreed only on a yearly basis. As a result, impact is achieved by individual projects, but no impact for countries or beneficiaries was created through the portfolio as a whole.

The Trust Fund modality created visible efficiency gains for the ILO, particularly at HQ level. The modality reduces administrative processes, and its flexibility allows for smooth adjustment of project processes. Some of the project staff at country level did not directly notice efficiency gains as they still have to apply the ILO's internal quality assurance and approval procedures. However, the flexibility of Flanders regarding adjustments, extensions, and reporting requirements significantly facilitated the work of project staff as well.

The difference made by the TF is largely about the TF providing opportunities to try-and-test new approaches which are subsequently taken up by other donors, and through the TF's support for underfunded areas. The most visible impact of the TF over the past five years is the adoption of ILO Recommendation 208, which resulted from Flanders-funded research and continued to influence future projects and development of tools.

Most results established by the portfolio are sustainable, particularly the tools and research products. Several new partnerships are also continuing beyond project timelines, and certain activities were taken over by other donors. More funding is needed to take some results forward.

The evaluation and forward-looking analysis show that the TF has been of great added value for Flanders and the ILO, and that only some adjustments in focus are needed to ensure that the Trust Fund remains aligned with both parties' strategies and mandates in the upcoming years. Flexibility, efficiency, trust, and alignment of priorities form the strengths of the TF over the period 2020-2025 while the scattered portfolio, limited use of pooled funds (and related networking opportunities) and lack of real long-term planning were its limitations.

Overall, ILO and Flanders staff remain highly satisfied with the Trust Fund and are dedicated to continuing the partnership in the forthcoming years.

8. Lessons Learned and Good Practices

Lessons learned

- ▶ The South Africa portfolio comprised multiple projects and benefited from on-the-ground presence of both Flanders and ILO. However, many decisions on project design in South Africa were made between Geneva and Brussels, **with limited opportunities for the Flanders representation in Pretoria and the ILO South Africa office** to collaborate on, and influence, the portfolio in the country. In fact, the Flanders representation was not always fully aware of the TF projects in the country. This hindered the representation from being actively involved and potentially liaising with other interventions and activities of Flanders.
- ▶ The participation of Flanders in the Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning was meant to attract other donors to the pooled fund and enable Flanders to cooperate with other donors. However, during this period, no other donors joined. **ILO can encourage, but not control, the participation of other donors.** Therefore, if this interaction is a core priority for Flanders, it could consider joining pooled funds that already have other donors, or first form agreements with other donors to subsequently join together.

Good practices

- ▶ **The adjustment of the payment progress for ITCILO significantly reduces the administrative burden identified in the ITCILO Digital Skills project.** During this project, various administrative steps had to be taken to transfer funds from ILO HQ to ITCILO, which caused delays for ITCILO. It was agreed between ILO and Flanders that, in future efforts involving ITCILO, the budget allocated to ITCILO can be transferred to Turin directly, without creating budget lines and reporting systems at HQ. Both ILO HQ and ITCILO staff perceive this as important step to increase efficiency.
- ▶ **The modality as a whole enhanced efficiency for ILO and Flanders in terms of administrative workload and trust.** For Flanders, the TF requires only one yearly transfer and no contracts to be signed for each effort. Similarly, at ILO HQ level, the TF allowed better planning and also reduced the administration related to contracts. In the field, the flexibility of the TF facilitated the work of project teams to remain adaptive, and the reporting requirements were also not heavy on the ILO.
- ▶ **The Trust Fund supported interventions that are often underfunded or low on donors' priority lists.** This refers to both thematic areas, but also to testing innovative approaches. In several cases, the initial results of the Trust Fund projects received additional funding from other donors to scale-up.

Additional details are provided in Annex 8.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the evaluator prepared the following recommendations. They include one large recommendation for the refocusing of the Trust Fund as a whole, and separate recommendations for smaller tweaks.

- ▶ **Recommendation 1: Apply a more focused and longer-term approach to the selection of projects, aligned with Flanders' foreign policy objectives and ILO's Strategic Plan.**

The Trust Fund functioned largely in a satisfactory manner, requiring no changes to its foundational structure and approach. However, the evaluation found that there was limited coherence within the portfolio and that a rather fragmented approach was applied to the selection of projects. Furthermore, some projects of the portfolio seemed more "development cooperation" rather than "foreign policy and multilateral cooperation".

Chapter 6 on the forward-looking approach provided insights into the future priorities of both Flanders and ILO, and some recent trends that may influence the TF in the future, such as budget cuts of Flanders in development cooperation. Interviewees and Policy Delphi respondents expressed openness to explore a more coherent approach to the Trust Fund.

Therefore, considering the preferences of consulted ILO and Flanders staff, the results of the evaluation, and the priorities of Flanders and ILO for the upcoming years, the following adjustments are recommended for the next five years:

- **Recommendation 1.1.: Agree on two or three strategic, narrower priorities or objectives that the Trust Fund should achieve over the next five years.** This creates coherence in the portfolio, facilitates reinforcement among projects, allows ILO and Flanders to better understand and measure how the individual projects support the overall TF objectives. As identified in the Forward-Looking chapter, the focus on **ILS in trade agreements**, and **Just Transition** are important for both parties in upcoming years, but other priorities can be identified as well, where greening and other topics are integrated. In the selection of priorities, include the EU's engagement and interest, which would facilitate networking and collaboration with EU institutions.
- **Recommendation 1.2.: Select one or two global challenges related to these priorities for which a joint ILO-Flanders approach can create solutions.** This can include the development of a global tool or guideline, or supporting the drafting of a Recommendation for presentation in the GB and ILC, which can subsequently be piloted in selected countries. For the modality, Flanders and ILO can explore different approaches that rely more on "cooperation" between Flanders and ILO instead of a project mode. Furthermore, additional partners can be engaged in this process, creating important networking opportunities for Flanders, but also ILO.
- **Recommendation 1.3.: If possible - identify or establish one Global Programme of ILO that aligns with the strategic priorities and has a multi-donor funding mechanism and advisory board comprising all donors, to which Flanders can contribute.** This allows ILO to make deeper impact in a selected area, while maintaining the strategic focus of the TF. Flanders will have more networking opportunities, while still aligning its contribution with its policy objectives. If skills are considered a core priority for the upcoming years, Flanders could consider re-joining the Global Skills Programme, with Norway. Through the advisory committee, Flanders can promote the integration of e.g. greening in skills programmes to align with its foreign and domestic priorities and propose its own experts to contribute to some of the Global Programme's work (within ILO's procurement rules).
- **Recommendation 1.4.: Maintain the current balance of projects targeting South Africa, as it remains a priority of Flanders.** For Flanders, cooperation with South Africa should no longer focus on development, but rather on economic cooperation. Therefore, the country could serve as piloting country for global solutions under 1.2., or benefit from more technical support, such as the implementation of ILS. At the same time, respondents also indicated that they are open to a broader range of countries (e.g. the Flanders policies also refer to India and North and East Africa). To ensure relevance of the portfolio, the selection of South Africa should be made only if it truly makes sense and not solely to satisfy the requirement to target this country.
- **Recommendation 1.5.: Align the Trust Fund management approach with the above recommendations.** This means that the yearly meetings can be more about progress towards the identified challenges and objectives and reporting could also be more focused on the outcomes and contributions of

the project to the Trust Fund's objectives. In case multiple efforts take place in one year, reporting can also be on an annual, clustered basis to report on the overall portfolio progress towards the objectives.

Addressed to:	Timeline:	Resources:
Flanders, ILO PARTNERSHIPS	As soon as possible – early 2026.	This should not affect the resource allocation.

The following recommendations apply irrespective of whether Recommendation 1 is fully implemented or not.

- **Recommendation 2: Pay closer attention to the integration of key crosscutting concerns of the TF in the portfolio, namely women, youth, and social dialogue, but also ILS and environmental sustainability as key priority of both Flanders and ILO.**

The Cooperation Agreement specifies that the Trust Fund should priorities efforts supporting **women, youth, and social dialogue**. These three aspects remain crucial to the ILO in the upcoming years. However, the current analysis of projects, and consultations with staff, showed that these crosscutting concerns were not equally and systematically integrated across the portfolio. The forthcoming 2026-2030 portfolio could make more efforts to mainstream these concerns, taking into consideration which concerns also align with the Flemish policy priorities. For example, future interventions could apply the following questions in the project design phase to ensure integration of the crosscutting concerns:

- Do women / youth face specific needs and challenges in relation to this topic/project and are their needs properly documented in the project design?
- Is there an opportunity to use social dialogue as a method to achieve the envisaged project results, while strengthening social dialogue in the process?
- Were women / youth and social partners consulted in the project design?
- Does the intervention need to take specific measures or tweaks to the activities, to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the intervention for women / youth?
- Do the results benefit men and women equally, beyond the mere participation rates?
- Do the results increase capacity of constituents to engage in social dialogue?
- Are constituents able to maintain and strengthen the results after the intervention is completed? Are barriers for social dialogue sufficiently addressed by the intervention?
- Will the intervention create lasting results for women and youth, and are mechanisms for sustainability of results for them put in place?

The analysis of future priorities demonstrates that both parties wish to increase their focus on addressing climate change and on **environmental sustainability**. Considering that the latter is a cross-cutting priority for ILO's overall work, there is a great potential to integrate the environment more explicitly into the TF portfolio, even when projects are not specifically focused on this topic. For example, future interventions could apply the following questions in the project design phase to ensure integration of the environment:

- Does this topic in any way touch upon, or affect environmental sustainability?
- Do global trends in climate change influence this topic in any way, and do such changes and influences need to be taken into account in the intervention?
- Is there an opportunity to promote sustainability through this project, both through its outcomes and objectives, but also through its implementation tools?
- Can we monitor how the intervention contributes to, or negatively affects, environmental sustainability (e.g. its footprint)?

Similarly, ILO prioritises the integration of **International Labour Standards** across its future portfolio, which is currently a crosscutting priority as well. For Flanders, ILS are especially relevant in terms of ethical business, trade agreements, and human rights protection. Furthermore, one of the most important impacts of the TF was the adoption of Recommendation 208. Therefore, the future TF portfolio could explore more opportunities to promote compliance with ILS through its interventions. Besides dedicated interventions on this topic (e.g. the proposed technical support to trade agreements), ILS can also be mainstreamed in other interventions. For example, future interventions could apply the following questions in the project design phase to ensure integration of the environment:

- Are this topic and challenge covered by any of ILO's conventions or recommendations? Can the instructions and ideas of those ILS form the basis for the design of the intervention?

- In case of a convention: has the country already adopted the convention? If not, can the intervention include joint Flanders-ILO advocacy for its adoption? If yes, can the issue be addressed by providing technical support on the implementation of the convention?
- Can the elements of the convention or recommendation be used as expected outcomes or indicators of results of the interventions?
- Will this intervention create long-term impact on the implementation of the ILS requirements and are constituents able to maintain and drive this process?
- OR: If this topic is not covered by an ILS, is there a need to develop a recommendation of convention on the topic? Can the cooperation with Flanders feed into the development of the ILS?

Addressed to:	Timeline:	Resources:
Flanders, ILO PARTNERSHIPS	To be used on forthcoming projects	It might slightly increase the time needed for project design.

► **Recommendation 3: Explore alternative cooperation mechanisms for the implementation of the Trust Fund, beyond the more traditional project structure.**

The mandate of the Directorate General for Multilateral Cooperation under the Flemish Foreign Policy Department is focused on foreign policy and multilateral cooperation and is not responsible for the Flemish development cooperation portfolio. As the Trust Fund falls under the multilateral cooperation DG, it is not a modality for development cooperation.

However, from the side of ILO, the Trust Fund is one of its development cooperation modalities and the way some of the activities are structured also resembles other development cooperation projects of ILO. Interviewees demonstrate that it might not be completely clear to ILO that for Flanders “development cooperation” and “foreign policy” are different.

The importance of better utilizing the Trust Fund as foreign policy instrument for Flanders links to recent budget cuts in Flemish development cooperation and the risk that the Trust Fund could be cut if it is not sufficiently recognized as foreign policy instrument.

There are various opportunities for the portfolio to explore other forms of cooperation, and the current Cooperation Agreement also allows for some flexibility. Opportunities for different forms of collaboration can include:

- Co-creation of guidelines and tools for global challenges by the ILO, Flemish experts, and potentially other experts and partners.
- Establishment of (temporary) working groups of ILO, Flemish, and other actors to discuss potential solutions for global challenges and exchange lessons learned and good practices (e.g. community of practice).
- Joint advocacy and subsequent joint technical support for the adoption and implementation of ILS.

Addressed to:	Timeline:	Resources:
Flanders, ILO PARTNERSHIPS	From now on, in the design of new initiatives	No impact. Interventions are designed based on the TF budget

► **Recommendation 4: Identify concrete areas where ILO, Flanders and the Trust Fund can create unique added value.**

The Trust Fund is highly valued by the ILO staff as it has provided funding for thematic areas and countries that are less popular among other donors. Where other donors pay increasingly strong attention to country-level support, Flanders still remains open to funding global tools and solutions. Therefore, while both parties recognize that the Trust Fund volume is relatively small compared to the contribution of other donors, the fund was generally used in a manner that allowed the budget to create added value.

The future Trust Fund projects should ensure that the unique added value of Flanders can still be maximized (even in case where part of the budget is allocated to a global programme). For example, under Recommendation 3, the selection of global challenges for joint solutions can focus on areas that are not yet heavily dominated by other donors, so that Flanders can carve out a niche area and ensure its visibility there. At the same time, this allows the ILO to strengthen its portfolio through support for underfunded areas and equally create added value in areas not (largely) touched by other UN agencies.

Some examples of niche areas that would meet those criteria can include:

- Greening in the field of work, focusing particularly on women and youth, and supply chains, creating solutions that Flanders could also benefit from domestically.
- Promoting compliance with ILS and the Corporate Social Due Diligence Regulation in the context of trade agreements, with support of Flemish legal experts and with EU engagement.
- Global-level research, working groups, and subsequent development of guidelines related to ongoing technological advancements (AI) and innovations affecting OSH and fundamental rights at work, allowing Flanders to stay updated on these trends.

Addressed to:	Timeline:	Resources:
Flanders, ILO PARTNERSHIPS	From now on, in the design of new initiatives	No impact.

Annex 1. South Africa case study

Alignment with Flanders and ILO priorities

Flanders has had a consistent, long-term presence in, and cooperation with, South Africa, and has a diplomatic representative in South Africa for over a decade. In 1994, Flanders and South Africa signed a "Declaration of Intent" to augment bilateral relations and establish the widest possible cooperation. The Declaration refers explicitly to **cooperation in the fields of education and training, small and medium businesses, and social development**.¹³⁵ This was followed by an agreement in 1996 to cooperate in the fields of **education**, culture, science, **technology** and sports.¹³⁶ At the time of the evaluation, the Government of Flanders still maintains similar priorities and competences in the country¹³⁷ and has various ongoing cooperation frameworks. The 2022 work plan for the 1996 Agreement explicitly refers to collaboration in the field of **higher education, science and innovation; human rights; youth; and trade and investment**.¹³⁸

Between 2020-2025, the **ILO-Flanders Trust Fund portfolio** in South Africa aligned strongly with the priority areas listed in the cooperation agreements and work plans described above. For example:

- Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation: This project directly aligned with the above-listed priorities on science and innovation.
- Digital skills development for youth NEET in South Africa: This project is linked both to the youth priority and the higher education priority.
- Apprenticeships Development for Universal lifelong Learning and Training (ADULT): This project specifically targets the school-to-work transition of youth.
- Flanders' contribution to the Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning: This contribution included a "skills innovation challenge", "costing of lifelong learning in South- Africa study and e-learning module for teachers on digital skills".
- Promoting Decent Work through Productivity and Workplace Cooperation interventions in South Africa's clothing manufacturing sector: This project targets SMEs (a priority from the 1994 Declaration), while SCORE can be seen as innovative approach to support skills development and digitalisation in the sector. In general, decent work links to the priorities of human rights and social development.

Additionally, the 2020-2025 period built extensively on prior ILO-Flanders work done in South Africa and therefore there is a continuity of ILO-Flanders-South Africa cooperation for the Trust Fund to build on and maintain.

The ILO's priorities for South Africa are described in the **Decent Work Country Programme and the Country Programme Objectives**. The ILO's main priorities in South Africa are to address high unemployment, inequality, and poverty by focusing on employment creation, enhancing productivity, enterprise development, and addressing issues related to labour policies.¹³⁹

Interviewees and desk research demonstrate that **the Trust Fund projects were aligned with the objectives of ILO in South Africa**, particularly through targeted interventions in enterprise development, productivity enhancement, and skills for youth employment (particularly digital skills), all aligning with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda in the country.

The project Promoting Productivity and Decent Work in South Africa's Clothing Sector is linked to Country Programme Outcome ZAF101, which focuses on: *"Enterprise development support for SMEs and Cooperatives on their transition to formality with a focus on improving productivity, working conditions and environmental sustainability"*.

¹³⁵ Declaration of Intent between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of Flanders. 1994.

¹³⁶ Verdrag tussen de Vlaamse regering en de regering van de Republiek Zuid-Afrika inzake samenwerking op het gebied van onderwijs, kunst, cultuur, wetenschap, technologie en sport. 1996.

¹³⁷ <https://www.flanders.org.za/About>

¹³⁸ Joint Communiqué of the Seventh Flanders - South Africa Joint Committee. 24 March 2022

¹³⁹ Interviews with ILO staff. Project documents.

The ADULT project is linked to the South-Africa CPO ZAF103, which focuses on: *“Increased capacity of constituents to create decent and productive employment in the rural economy”*. The project contributed to capacity building and social dialogue enabling stakeholders to promote quality apprenticeships.

Similarly, the Digital Skills development for youth NEET project aimed to decrease the digital skills gap and enhance the employability of youth in digital jobs, and therefore equally contributed to ZAF103.

Interviewees with ILO staff also confirmed that the projects directly contributed to ILO's priorities in the country. This relates not only to the content of the projects, but also to ILO's efforts to maintain support for the country. In this regard, interviewees explained that the position of South Africa as middle-income country means that it is less prioritized by donors (particularly in the current climate of reduced development funding). The contribution of Flanders is therefore valuable to maintain the portfolio of ILO in the country.¹⁴⁰

Alignment with stakeholder and country needs

Projects are agreed upon between Flanders and ILO before they are officially commenced. This includes the development of a project proposal by ILO, feedback from Flanders, and the subsequent finalization and approval of the project.

Some of the project documents explicitly referred to **stakeholder consultations at the design or inception phase** of the project. For example, the *“Assessing Social Capabilities”* project document explicitly refers to an *“inception workshop with local research collaborators, international experts, and constituents to validate research framework, methodology and gain endorsement from the stakeholders”*.¹⁴¹ One stakeholder interviewed for the current evaluation also confirmed that they were able to influence the design of the project to ensure it aligned with the national context and stakeholder needs.¹⁴²

However, not all project documentations explicitly refer to stakeholder consultations throughout the project implementation, but their input can be assumed from the references to efforts ensuring national ownership. For example, the SCORE project progress report indicates that the project *“engaged with the tripartite constituents and steering group of the Retail, Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (R-TCLF) master plan to secure national commitment, buy-in and ownership”* and the project relied on national stakeholders to manage the SCORE trainings. This enabled stakeholders to influence the direction of the project as well.¹⁴³

Many ILO staff confirmed that **Flanders, as donor, was flexible enough to allow ILO and stakeholders to shape the projects** to the needs of stakeholders and local contexts.¹⁴⁴ In particular, ILO staff praised the flexibility of Flanders to allow adjustments in case of changing needs or contexts. For example, one ILO respondent noted that *“this is one of the advantages of working with Flanders. There is a degree of flexibility -within limits- for us to fill existing gaps.”*

Some criticism expressed to both Flanders and ILO related to the fact that (in earlier days of the evaluation period) project design often took place at Geneva-Brussels level, with insufficient involvement of staff based in South Africa, both from ILO and from the Flanders representation in Pretoria.¹⁴⁵

Visibility of Flanders and engagement with donors and stakeholders

Project reports indicate that measures were taken to ensure the **visibility of Flanders**, by including the logo in all project materials, and inviting Flanders' representatives to speak at events, e.g. a certificate ceremony and a knowledge-sharing event.¹⁴⁶ Some interviewed stakeholders also remember seeing Flanders' representatives at events.¹⁴⁷ Interviewed stakeholders were all aware that the project they participated in was funded by Flanders. One stakeholder remembered that, in the beginning of the project, the ILO gave a comprehensive introduction to Flanders and why Flanders was involved in projects in South Africa.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁰ Interviews with ILO staff and stakeholders.

¹⁴¹ Project Document GLO/18/39/FLA Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation.

¹⁴² Interview with a stakeholder

¹⁴³ Promoting Decent Work through Productivity and Workplace Cooperation interventions in South Africa's clothing manufacturing sector (ZAF/23/01/FLA) Final progress report May 2023 to June 2024

¹⁴⁴ Interviews with ILO staff

¹⁴⁵ Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff.

¹⁴⁶ Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff.

¹⁴⁷ Interviews with stakeholders

¹⁴⁸ Interview with a stakeholder

Events in which Flanders participated allowed for exchange with South African stakeholders but also allowed for engagement with UNDP and GIZ (through the innovation challenge in case of the latter). The Global Skills Programme also included mechanisms for coordination among donors, such as the 2024 Global Skills Forum. Donor visibility also ensured within the Global Skills Programme, including through joint thematic publications (for example on financing, jointly presented by Norway and Flanders in a workshop) and coordinated launch of reports.

However, the Global Skills Programme (including activities in South Africa) was envisaged to bring together various donors within a pooled funding, but initially only comprised Flanders. Other donors joined in parallel funding streams. When Flanders withdrew from the pooled funding, NORAD just joined. Therefore, the objective of enhancing the visibility of Flanders among other donors in South Africa in the programme was not fully achieved in the context of the pooled fund.

Individual, institutional, and national policy outcomes and TF added value

At **national and international level**, the projects with a focus on South Africa were effective in creating new tools and mechanisms.

Both ILO and Flanders staff referred particularly to the VET costing analysis that was done at global level and in South Africa. The costing exercise methodology for financing lifelong learning - that was piloted in South Africa - provides a new, systemic tool for government and policymakers to plan for education and training finance. It is rather unique in the world and interviewees explained that the results from the pilots in South Africa are being replicated with other funding.¹⁴⁹

The research conducted by projects involving South Africa produced various recommendations and repositories that can influence future efforts. For example:

- The project Assessing social capabilities (ZAF/19/01/FLA) produced research that improved the understanding of productive transformation and economic development. It also elaborated on tools that can be used to measure companies' capabilities to diversify.
- The ADULT project (GLO/20/02/FLA) generated innovative ideas and policy options for modernising apprenticeships and developed seven thematic papers and a main report which serve as "rich repositories of innovative practices" for apprenticeships.

Additionally, The ADULT project supported the High-level policy dialogue and Capacity building workshop held in Pretoria, South Africa under the ILO's South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) project "Promoting Quality Apprenticeships in India, South Africa, China, Ethiopia, and Switzerland". More than 30 senior officials from the tripartite constituents from India, South Africa, China, and Ethiopia gathered to share good practices and lessons learned on apprenticeships.¹⁵⁰

At **institutional level**, the project reports mention predominantly the increased capacity, knowledge creation, and the development of new tools and systems for partner organizations, including government bodies, industry councils, and business support groups.

"In South Africa, TVET institutions and TVET educators received capacity-building to digitalise training services and to develop digital courses themselves. The GPSL3 developed four pre-entry level digital skills programmes and subsequently ITC-ILO project trained TVET trainers to deliver digital skills trainings at their institutions.¹⁵¹ Additionally, the innovation lab provided by the ITC-ILO for the ILO Digital Skills Challenge Call supported the winning VET institutions to enhance the quality of their ideas.¹⁵²

The SCORE project trained several SCORE trainers to build capacity of clothing factories to enhancing productivity and working conditions. Interviewees perceived measurable improvements in working

¹⁴⁹ Interviews with ILO staff

¹⁵⁰ Final progress report for the ADULT project.

¹⁵¹ ProDoc of the ITC-ILO Digital Skills project, and interviews with ILO staff

¹⁵² Internal evaluation of Flanders' contribution to the GPSL3

conditions and worker compensation in beneficiary factories.¹⁵³ Some interviewees noted that the results of those trainings are still visible, as factories are maintaining the new practices and principles.¹⁵⁴

The SCORE project used the SCORE methodology to train **workers** and managers in clothing factories. Interviewed ILO staff and stakeholders noted that the project supported working conditions in the factories. As workers are mostly women, the project created important results for them.¹⁵⁵

The GPSL3 provided digital skills training for 128 youth NEET in South Africa. The continued implementation and upscaling of the piloted materials, combined with the results of the capacity-building, are expected to benefit vastly more youth in the future.¹⁵⁶

Efficiency of the South Africa portfolio

While there is a general understanding that the Trust Fund projects are small, the ILO teams were able to deliver all expected results within the planned budgets, suggesting **adequate financial planning** and risk management. One Flanders representative admired the results that ILO can create with relatively small budgets, due to their highly qualified staff.¹⁵⁷ The SCORE project leveraged existing SCORE trainers in South Africa to enhance the efficient project implementation as well.¹⁵⁸

At the same time, ILO staff involved in the projects in South Africa noted that Flanders is a highly flexible and trusting partner, which ensured that reporting requirements were reasonable and that requests for no-cost extensions were easily accepted. Overall, the **administrative burden** of the Trust Fund projects was perceived as low, compared to other donors.

*"In South-Africa, the GIZ co-funded some elements of the ILO Digital Skills Challenge Call of the Global Programme funded by the TF. I don't know if in a bilateral project or standard project situation, I could have attracted GIZ. The TF modality included the flexibility to attract co-funding and expand the scope of the project."*¹⁵⁹

However, the absence of a dedicated focus on portfolio coherence meant that there were little opportunities for reinforcement and cost-sharing within the TF portfolio in Africa. Interviewees recognized that the different projects had different objectives and different stakeholders, which limited the potential for reinforcement. Interviewed ILO project staff had limited knowledge about the other TF-funded projects.

Some **delays** were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which required revisions in the methodology of the project "Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation".

Impact and sustainability

The most visible example of impact was found regarding **continued cooperation** between ILO and ITC-ILO and D-Teach. The Flanders contribution to the Global Skills Programme in South Africa included a cooperation with the Flemish D-Teach institution. At the end of the GPSL3 Digital Skills Challenge Call, VET institutions noted that the country lacks a national digital skills tool for teachers. Although the Skills Challenge Call itself had ended, ILO, ITC-ILO and D-Teach continued working together on the tool.¹⁶⁰

A different form of impactful collaboration occurred between the ILO Pretoria Office and the Flanders Diplomatic representation. The TF portfolio in South-Africa resulted in frequent engagement between Flanders and ILO staff. It was this relationship that ensured that Flanders was invited to events, although the engagement of the Pretoria representation of Flanders was not always consulted in project design (also not by the Brussels office).¹⁶¹

In terms of **sustainability of project results**, some examples can be found as well. Although there is currently no funding available to continue SCORE trainings in South Africa, ILO staff reported that they witnessed some individual

¹⁵³ Interviews with ILO staff and stakeholders

¹⁵⁴ Interview with a stakeholder

¹⁵⁵ Interviews with ILO staff and stakeholders

¹⁵⁶ GPSL3 final progress report and internal evaluation.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Flanders staff

¹⁵⁸ Final progress report of the project Promoting Decent Work through Productivity and Workplace Cooperation interventions in South Africa's clothing manufacturing sector

¹⁵⁹ Interview with ILO staff

¹⁶⁰ Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff

¹⁶¹ Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff

initiatives from the score trainers themselves.¹⁶² *"The bargaining council and the South African clothing textile workers, they reach out to me almost every week, you know, wanting to do more with us."*¹⁶³ Stakeholders and ILO themselves also reported that, after several months, they still see *"sustained increase in productivity in many of these firms that participated."*¹⁶⁴

However, the targeted VET institutions in South Africa depend heavily on external funding to continue activities and the SCORE trainers cannot continue their work if there is no funding for them.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Interview with ILO staff.

¹⁶³ Interview with ILO staff.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with ILO staff and a stakeholder

¹⁶⁵ Interview with ILO staff.

Annex 2. Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. About the ILO-Flanders Trust Fund

1.1. Background

The cooperation between the Flanders and the International Labour Organization (ILO) began in 1991, when Flanders signed its first agreement with the ILO's International Training Centre (ITC-ILO) in Turin, then known as the International Centre for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training. Initially, the cooperation involved study visits to Flanders and training sessions held in Geneva and Turin. Over time, the cooperation evolved, with Flanders beginning to fund long-term projects carried out by both the ITC-ILO and ILO.

The Government of Flanders and the ILO signed a new Framework agreement in March 2011. It provided a broad and coherent policy framework for all voluntary contributions from the Government of Flanders, which included both Trust Fund contributions and technical development assistance. That agreement was replaced by a new cooperation agreement signed in March 2016 which places a priority on promoting decent work for women and young people, with particular attention to social dialogue.

1.2. Supported activities

The ILO Development Cooperation Dashboard (DC Dashboard) provide details of Flanders (Department of Foreign Affairs, Government of Flanders, Belgium) supported development cooperation projects. The DC Dashboard shows that from January 2016 to May 2025 Flanders supported 19 development cooperation projects worth US\$ 14.8 million. These projects are largely focussed in Africa (US\$ 11.2 million) and particularly concentrated in South Africa (US\$ 9.38 million) (Table 1). The policy areas supported through these projects are employment, enterprises, governance, social dialogue, standards and fundamental principles and rights at work.

2. Independent evaluation

2.1. Mandate and purpose

The 2016 cooperation agreement between the Government of Flanders and the ILO stipulates in Article 5§8: *“Every four years, starting from the signature date of the current agreement, an independent review of the overall cooperation conducted under the present agreement will be undertaken. The cost of this overall review will be covered under this Trust Fund.”*

In July 2020 an [independent review of the Flanders Trust fund](#) (review period of January 2016 to July 2020) was completed which provided advice to the Government of Flanders and ILO on the future directions of the cooperation. The independent review provided evaluative evidence on the Trust Fund’s relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and visibility. Twelve recommendations, three lessons learned, and two good practices were produced, along with a management response to the evaluation’s recommendations were provided.

An **independent final evaluation of the ILO – Flanders Trust Fund** is mandated to be completed by the end of January 2026. In line with the mandate and role of the evaluation office as outlined in the 2017 Evaluation Policy the purpose of an independent evaluation is to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and emerging impact of the activities funded. Using existing evaluations, the Evaluation Office has already undertaken of activities funded under the FTF as well additional evaluative work this evaluation will essentially examine process-oriented elements of the FTF such as the key strengths, weaknesses, lessons learned, and good practices related to the Fund’s modality and delivery mechanisms as the most important dimension of the evaluation. The evaluation should provide forward looking recommendations regarding the future use of the Trust Fund in order to enhance collaboration between Flanders and the ILO in support of their mutual mandates and priorities.

2.2. Scope

The Trust Fund’s independent evaluation will focus on two specific and interconnected components:

A. **Review the performance of the Trust Fund supported projects under the current agreement from August 2020 to December 2025.**

A total of eight projects (Table 1) have either been completed or are still active during the evaluation period, totaling US\$ 5,262,409.00.¹ They cover common themes of employment and enterprise development at the global and country-level (specifically in South Africa). For projects with existing self-assessments, midterm, and final evaluations, these will be used to provide evidence of progress, achievements, and challenges, while projects without such evaluations will on a selective basis be included as case studies. The evaluation will primarily aim to identify cross-cutting issues across projects to inform future collaboration.

¹ As the 2020 independent review covered the period January 2016 to July 2020, this independent evaluation will begin from August 2020.

Table 1 – List of all development cooperation projects to be evaluated (2020-25)

	Project symbol	Project title	Country	Start date and end date	Total project budget (USD)	Remarks
1	GLO/20/23/FLA	Inclusive Trade and Decent Work: Supportive Domestic Policies for Better Social, Labour Market and Sustainable Enterprise Outcomes (SUPPORT) (closed)	Global	01/09/2020 - 31/12/2023	510,859.00	Will be included in evaluation
2	GLO/20/02/FLA	Apprenticeships Development for Universal lifelong Learning and Training (ADULT) (closed)	Global	01/08/2020 - 31/08/2023	700,000.00	Will be included in evaluation
3	GLO/24/12/FLA	Trade and investment arrangements: Implementation and stakeholder engagement for promoting decent work (active)	Global	14/06/2024 - 13/06/2026	425,877.00	Will be covered partly, considering implementation timeline and expenditure figure
4	ZAF/19/01/FLA	Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation (closed)	Global	01/12/2019 - 30/11/2021	87,010.00	Self-evaluation will feed into the evaluation exercise
5	IND/18/51/FLA	Paving the way for a sustainable natural stone industry in India (closed)	India	07/08/2018 - 31/12/2022	400,661.00	Covered in previous evaluation (partly)
6	ZAF/23/01/FLA	Promoting Decent Work through Productivity and Workplace Cooperation interventions in South Africa's clothing manufacturing sector (active)	South Africa	02/05/2023 - 01/05/2025	396,039.00	Self-evaluation will feed into the evaluation exercise
7	GLO/21/29/MUL	Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning (GPSL3) (closed)	Global	11/01/2022 - 31/12/2024	1,111,821	Will be included in evaluation
8	N/A	ITC-ILO project: Digital Skills development for youth NEET in South Africa (closed)	South Africa	1/06/2023 - 1/06/2024	333,376	Will be included in evaluation

B. Review the Trust Fund's modality, with particular attention to its mechanisms for delivering expected results.

The second component will focus on the Trust Fund's overall alignment with the mandates, priorities, and needs of the Government of Flanders and the ILO. It will also identify strengths and challenges of the Trust Fund's modality, along with suggestions for the future. Table 2

(below) provides an overview of the evaluation's focus through the Trust Fund as a Modality with Thematic Project insights.

Table 2: Evaluation matrix- Trust Fund as a Modality with Thematic Project Insights

Evaluation Focus	Trust Fund Modality (Overall)	Thematic Projects Funded Under the Modality (sample based)
Relevance	Alignment with ILO/Flanders priorities, strategic rationale	How well each project aligns with national priorities and Decent Work goals
Coherence	Internal (within ILO); External (with Flanders, partners)	Thematic coherence across projects; alignment with national policies
Effectiveness	Achievement of the Fund's intended objectives as a modality	Evidence of results in sample projects (output/outcome level)
Efficiency	Fund disbursement, administrative processes, resource use	Operational and financial efficiency at project level
Sustainability	Durability of the Fund's approach and its ability to foster long-term collaboration	Sustainability of outcomes and ownership in sampled projects
Emerging Impact	Added value of the modality in terms of partnerships and influence	Tangible impacts at local/systemic levels (if observable)
Delivery Mechanism Assessment	Fund governance, flexibility, stakeholder engagement, learning loops	How delivery approaches affected project performance
Lessons Learned & Good Practices	What the Trust Fund as a modality has shown in terms of what works and does not work, including follow-up to recommendations from the previous independent evaluation (2020). What can be learned from cooperation modalities of other comparable funding partners?	Extracted from cross-cutting project insights and experiences, including follow-up to recommendations from the previous independent evaluation (2020).

The below proposed **evaluation's questions** will be refined by the evaluator in the inception report. Evaluation questions related to both components will be organized using the OECD/DAC's internationally recognized evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, emerging impact and sustainability - leading to forward-looking recommendations regarding the future use of the Trust Fund.

The evaluation will address the ILO's cross-cutting policy drives, which include gender equality, disability inclusion and non-discrimination, throughout the evaluation process. The evaluator will also review data and information that is disaggregated by age, sex and indigenous group and assess how gender-related strategies and outcomes improve the lives of women and men (to be included in the inception report and the final evaluation report).

Evaluation questions and issues that could be assessed are as follows:

Relevance

- How relevant were the projects to local and national contexts and needs, including that of the beneficiaries?
- How relevant are the projects to the mandate and priorities of the ILO and the Government of Flanders?
- To what extent is the Trust Fund aligned with Flemish and ILO policy priorities and needs?

- Is the Trust Fund's governance structure appropriate and relevant to deliver on its desired results?
- How can the alignment between Flemish priorities and the ILO's areas of work be strengthened during the identification phase of new projects?

Coherence

- How do the projects that the Trust Fund supports link to ILO Country Programme Outcomes? Are they implemented in a coherent manner?
- To what extent was the pooled funding mechanism aligned with the broader ambitions of the ILO and the Flemish Government?

Effectiveness

- To what extent have the projects achieved their desired results?
- How effective are the governance, coordination and management structures of the projects under review?
- To what extent has the Trust Fund achieved its objectives as a modality?
- To what extent does the Trust Fund encourage the mainstreaming of gender equality and inclusion into its activities? Did the projects' design and implementation successfully mainstream gender and inclusion?
- To what extent have the recommendations from the 2020 independent evaluation been implemented?
- To what extent did the Trust Fund and its activities contribute to improved visibility of its projects and make a lasting impact the lives of beneficiaries?

Efficiency

- To what extent were the projects implemented in a cost-efficient and timely manner?
- How efficient is the Trust administrative procedures, fund disbursements and use of resources?
- Are there opportunities to make the mechanisms of the Trust Fund more efficient?
- Does the Trust Fund offer flexibility in its approach and are stakeholders engaged in a meaningful manner?
- Is there an alternative model that would better fit the cooperation?
- What is the potential (or lack thereof) for financing through pooled funding mechanisms?

Emerging impact

- What is the added value of cooperation between the Government of Flanders and the ILO?
- What impact has the Trust Fund had at the local and/or systemic levels?

Sustainability

- What strategies have been put in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Trust Fund's results (e.g., capacity building, policy alignment, local ownership)?
- How sustainable is the Trust Fund's approach and its ability to foster long-term collaboration?

Lessons learned and good practices

- What are some of the lessons learned and good practices derived from the project interventions

- What are the Trust Fund's lessons and good practices with respect to its modality? What has worked and what challenges need to be addressed for improvement?
- What can the Government of Flanders and ILO learn from cooperation modalities of other comparable funding partners?

2.3. Methodology

The evaluation's methodology will be grounded in the ILO's Evaluation Policy (2017) and associated policy guidelines, which align with international evaluation standards such as the OECD/DAC Principles and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and ethical guidelines. It will also draw from the ILO's clustered evaluation approach ([Guidance Note 3.3](#)) particularly relevant given the Trust Fund modality's multi-country and multi-year scope. The predominant thematic focus of the projects under evaluation includes employment and enterprise-related outcomes—specifically in the areas of skills development, employment policy support, and enterprise productivity and sustainability.

The evaluation will apply a mixed-methods approach to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources. This approach will combine three complementary methodologies: a theory-based, a case-based, and participatory evaluation approach.

- **The theory-based approach** will utilize the intervention logic, or theory of change, to test the causal linkages between inputs, outputs, and outcomes, including the underlying assumptions. This will help assess progress against the stated objectives, particularly at outcome level, and guide the matching of specific evaluation questions to appropriate methods. A gender analysis will be embedded through the use of sex-disaggregated data and application, ensuring the representation of women and persons with disabilities throughout the evaluation process.
- **A case-based approach** will be used to analyze selected project countries or modalities in more depth. These case studies will assess observable results and explore how the projects contributed to development change. The focus of individual case studies may centre on a thematic issue, a regional pattern, or specific implementation characteristics, depending on findings during the inception phase.
- **The participatory approach** will incorporate stakeholder engagement across all evaluation phases, as promoted in [Guidance Note 4.5](#). This includes a stakeholder validation workshop, which will allow diverse actors—from ILO officials and donors to constituents and implementing partners—to provide feedback on findings and recommendations.

Data collection methods will include:

- **Desk review** of project documents, progress reports, evaluations, steering committee minutes, and communication materials;
- **Key informant interviews** with ILO staff, Government of Flanders, national partners, and social partners;
- **Thematic case studies or field visits** to selected locations based on project relevance, status, and scale; and
- **A stakeholder workshop** to validate emerging findings before the draft report is finalized.

Finally, the evaluation will apply the [ILO EVAL's performance assessment methodology](#) using 29 predefined KPIs. These KPIs are designed to assess development effectiveness, sustainability, coherence with ILO's normative frameworks, and cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability. This ensures consistency across evaluations and helps assess both

project-level results and the strategic integration of the Trust Fund modality within ILO's broader institutional mandate and tripartite structure.

This robust and participatory methodology will provide actionable insights to inform the future strategic direction of the ILO-Flanders partnership and enhance the effectiveness of future interventions under similar modalities.

2.4. Roles, responsibilities and management arrangements

The independent evaluation will be managed by the ILO Evaluation Office through an appointed Evaluation Manager and will be done in close cooperation with the stakeholders including the donor. A qualified independent evaluator (consultant) will be selected through a competitive process. The Evaluation Office will be responsible for the timely completion of quality-orientated deliverables.

The ILO, together with key stakeholders will identify ILO staff, Flanders' Government officials and national officials to interview, and meet with during potential field visits/thematic case studies. The Government of Flanders will be invited to review and comment the evaluation's terms of reference, inception report and the draft evaluation report, upon assurance by the ILO of the evaluation-related technical quality of these products.

2.5. Timeframe

The evaluation's milestones, deliverables and dates are outlined in table 3, below.

Table 3 – Timeframe of the evaluation

Phase	Task	Responsible person	No. of working days	Dates
1. Inception	Preparing and finalizing the concept note	Evaluation manager	7 days	May- June
	Send concept note to stakeholders for review		7 days	June
	Prepare and finalize the TOR		7 days	July
	Submit the draft TOR for stakeholders' review		2-week review period	July
	Open competition for evaluator and contract successful candidate		2 weeks	June
	Develop/refine evaluation questions and methodology	Evaluator	4 days	September

	Virtual meetings/briefings with stakeholders		3 days	September
	Submit inception report to evaluation manager for review		2-week review period	September
	Finalize inception report based on comments from stakeholders		1 day	September
2. Data collection	Desk review	Evaluator	7 days	Complete by 15 November
	Interviews		5 days	
	Field visit(s)		5 days	
	Stakeholder workshop – share preliminary results		1 day	By 5 December
	Writing draft report and is submitted to the evaluation manager		10 days	By 15 December
	Draft report is submitted to stakeholders by evaluation manager	Evaluation manager	2-week review period	By 16 December
3. Final report preparation and submission	Consolidate comments from stakeholders and send to the evaluator	Evaluation manager	1 day	By 15 January
	Evaluator reviews comments and addresses them as appropriate. Sends comment log and final report and executive summary to evaluation manager	Evaluator	2 days	By 18 January
	Quality review of report is undertaken	Evaluation manager	1 day	By 20 January
	Submits full evaluation package		1 day	By 22 January

	to EVAL for formal approval			
	Approves final report	EVAL	2 days	By 25 January

The total estimated numbers of days the evaluator is expected to undertake is **38 working** days between September 2025 and January 2026.

Milestones and deliverables	Tentative dates
Concept note is reviewed and finalized	30 May 2025
Terms of reference (final)	By 30 July 2025
Evaluator is selected and contracted	By 30 June 2025
Inception report (final)	By 30 September 2025
PRM session	30 September 2025
Data collection	By 15 November 2025
Stakeholder workshop	5 December 2025
Draft evaluation report	15 December 2025
Final evaluation report	30 January 2026

2.6. Deliverables

The ILO Evaluation Office, through the appointed evaluation manager, is responsible for the drafting of the evaluation Terms of Reference, contracting the evaluation consultant, and the overall management and technical quality assurance of the evaluation process and products in a participatory manner.

The independent evaluator is responsible for the following deliverables:

- **Deliverable 1: An inception report**

The inception report will provide the evaluator's in-depth understanding of the evaluation's purpose, what is being evaluated and why, along with a detailed matrix explaining how each evaluation question will be answered. The evaluator is also encouraged to refine the evaluation questions in the inception report, if need be. Moreover, the inception report will indicate the rationale for selecting specific country/countries for case study visit(s), the evaluation's limitations and a theory of change.

- **Deliverable 2: A draft evaluation report**

The draft evaluation report includes:

- Executive summary
- Methodology
- Background to the Flanders-ILO Trust Fund and evaluation
- Evaluation findings
- Recommendations
- Lessons learned
- Good practices
- Annex(es)

The draft evaluation report will take into consideration feedback from the stakeholder workshop

- **Deliverable 3: A final evaluation report** with an executive summary that takes into consideration the feedback from all stakeholders on the draft report.
- Performance scorecard
- Infographic (2-pages max), showcasing the evaluation findings and including narrative on impact

2.7. Budget

In agreement with the funding partner, the funding for this evaluation process will be provided through the modality or the [ILO Evaluation Trust Fund \(IETF\)](#). The IETF provides support for the evaluation of development cooperation projects to enhance organizational learning. It gives the opportunity for funding partners to assign 1.5% of project budgets for the evaluation to the IETF instead of the required 2%, as stipulated in the [ILO evaluation policy](#). Table 4 (below) indicates the evaluation budget for the projects at the 1.5% rate through the IETF.

Table 4. Evaluation budget at 1.5% through the ILO Evaluation Trust Fund

	Project symbol	Project title	Total project budget	1.5% for evaluation budget	Comments
1	GLO/20/23/FLA	Inclusive Trade and Decent Work: Supportive Domestic Policies for Better Social, Labour Market and Sustainable Enterprise Outcomes (SUPPORT)	510,859	7,662.88	
2	GLO/20/02/FLA	Apprenticeships Development for Universal lifelong Learning and Training (ADULT)	700,000	10,500.00	
3	GLO/24/12/FLA	Trade and investment arrangements: Implementation and stakeholder engagement for promoting decent work	425,877	6,388.15	
4	ZAF/19/01/FLA	Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation	87,010 *	N.A	No additional case study from South Africa needed as covered under ZAF/16/01/FLA
5	IND/18/51/FLA	Paving the way for a sustainable natural stone industry in India	400,661	3,004.95	As this project was partly covered in the previous evaluation, this current evaluation will review the project's remaining timeline (from 2020-2022)
6	ZAF/23/01/FLA	Promoting Decent Work through Productivity and Workplace Cooperation interventions in South Africa's clothing manufacturing sector	396,039 *	N.A	No additional case study from South Africa needed as covered under ZAF/16/01/FLA

7	GLO/21/29/MUL	Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning (GPSL3)	1,111,821	16,677.32	
8	N/A	ITC-ILO project: Digital Skills development for youth NEET in South Africa	333,376	5,000.64	
			TOTAL	US\$ 49,234.95	

* Projects with completed evaluations or no evaluations that would be duplicative for sample purposes are not included in the total evaluation budget, and thus their evaluation budgets are marked as "n/a."

2.9 Ethical code of conduct

The independent final evaluation will comply with evaluation norms and standards and follow ethical standards, all as specified in ILO's evaluation procedures. The ILO adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation norms and standards as well as to the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standards, and the evaluation team must abide by the [EVAL's Code of Conduct](#) for carrying out the evaluation.

The evaluator cannot have any prior links to the Flanders- ILO Trust Fund, including its management, design, implementation, or any other actual or perceived conflict of interest that would interfere with the independence of the evaluation. All data and information received from the ILO or other stakeholders for this evaluation will be treated as confidential.

2.10 Additional documentation

The evaluator will seek guidance from the following documentation for the purpose of this evaluation:

- ILO Evaluation Policy https://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationreports/WCMS_603265/lang--en/index.htm
- ILO Policy Guidelines for Evaluation https://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationpolicy/WCMS_571339/lang--en/index.htm and including the following checklists and templates:
 - [Preparing the evaluation report](#)
 - [Filling in the evaluation title page](#)
 - [Writing the evaluation report summary](#)
 - [Writing the inception report](#)
 - [Lessons learned](#)
 - [Good practices](#)
 - [Evaluation summary](#)
 - [Evaluation title page](#)
- DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/development-co-operation-evaluation-and-effectiveness/evaluation-criteria.html>
- Norms for Evaluation in the UN System <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>
- Standards for Evaluation in the UN System <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/22>

Annex 3. Evaluation matrix

The evaluation matrix includes the operationalised questions for the main evaluation questions. There is no operationalisation for the “forward-looking view” questions as they were expected to arise from the answering of the evaluation questions in each criterion.

Table 3. Relevance

QUESTION	SUB-QUESTIONS	METHODS & SOURCES	INDICATORS
HOW RELEVANT WERE THE PROJECTS TO LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS AND NEEDS, INCLUDING THAT OF THE BENEFICIARIES?	To what extent do the interventions align with the specific needs of women?	- Desk research on challenges faced by women, and on intervention design - Interviews with ILO staff, Flanders, and stakeholders	Existence of background research/needs assessments done to inform the interventions Extent to which the activities and approaches of the interventions address directly the challenges faced by women, as identified in literature Extent to which respondents perceive that the activities are gender-sensitive and address the main challenges faced by women
	To what extent do the interventions align with the specific needs of youth?	- Desk research on challenges faced by youth, and on intervention design - Interviews with ILO staff, Flanders, and stakeholders	Existence of background research/needs assessments done to inform the interventions Extent to which the activities and approaches of the interventions address directly the challenges faced by youth, as identified in literature Extent to which respondents perceive that the activities address the main challenges faced by youth
	To what extent were interventions relevant considering local and national needs?	- Desk research on challenges faced by the regions and countries, and on intervention design - Interviews with ILO staff, Flanders, and stakeholders	Reflection on policy priorities, national and local challenges and other insights in project design Extent to which the activities and approaches of the interventions address align with the priorities, needs and challenges in the countries or regions, as identified in literature Extent to which respondents perceive that the activities address the main national/regional priorities and needs.
HOW RELEVANT ARE THE PROJECTS AND THE TRUST FUND TO	To what extent do the interventions align with the mandate and priorities of	- Desk research on ILO priorities and intervention design - Interviews with ILO staff	Extent to which project documents reflect on ILO's cross-cutting priorities, P&B and other strategies

THE MANDATE AND PRIORITIES OF THE ILO AND THE GOVERNMENT OF FLANDERS, INCLUDING ON GENDER AND INCLUSION?	ILO including on gender and inclusion?		Extent to which respondents perceive that the interventions align with the priorities of ILO
	To what extent do the interventions align with the mandate and priorities of Flanders including on gender and inclusion?	- Desk research on Flanders' priorities and intervention design - Interviews with Flanders	Extent to which project documents reflect on key priorities listed in Flanders' strategies and policies (e.g. Decent work, women and youth, social dialogue, and Southern Africa). Extent to which respondents perceive that the interventions align with the priorities of Flanders
	To what extent does the Trust Fund align with the mandate and priorities of ILO including on gender and inclusion?	- Desk research on ILO priorities and the Trust Fund design - Interviews with ILO staff	Extent to which Trust Fund documents reflect on ILO's cross-cutting priorities, P&B and other strategies Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund aligns with the priorities of ILO
	To what extent does the Trust Fund align with the mandate and priorities of Flanders including on gender and inclusion?	- Desk research on Flanders' priorities and Trust Fund design - Interviews with Flanders	Extent to which Framework documents reflect on key priorities listed in Flanders' strategies and policies Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund aligns with the priorities of Flanders

Table 4. Coherence

QUESTION	SUB-QUESTIONS	METHODS & SOURCES	INDICATORS
HOW DO THE PROJECTS THAT THE TRUST FUND SUPPORTS LINK TO ILO COUNTRY PROGRAMME OUTCOMES? ARE THEY IMPLEMENTED IN A COHERENT MANNER?	To what extent were the projects designed to contribute to each country's CPO?	- Desk research on the CPOs of each country and on the project objectives - Interviews with ILO staff	Extent to which the project objectives and outcomes align with the objectives of the CPO. Extent to which respondents perceive that the projects aligned with the objectives of the CPO.
	To what extent do projects in each country build on each other to achieve the CPOs?	- Desk research on project activities - Interviews with ILO staff and stakeholders	Evidence of joint activities, use of past project results and other examples of mutual reinforcement among projects. Examples of mutual reinforcement, or the absence thereof, mentioned by respondents.
TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE POOLED FUNDING	To what extent was the pooled funding mechanism aligned with the broader ambitions of the ILO	- Desk research on ILO priorities for funding mechanisms and approaches - Interviews with ILO staff	Extent to which the mechanisms and modalities described in the Cooperation Agreement align with the priorities of ILO in terms of funding and development cooperation

MECHANISM ALIGNED WITH THE BROADER AMBITIONS OF THE ILO AND THE FLEMISH GOVERNMENT?			Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund aligns with ILO's priorities for funding and development cooperation
	To what extent was the pooled funding mechanism aligned with the broader ambitions of Flanders?	- Desk research on Flanders priorities for development cooperation and approaches - Interviews with Flanders staff	Extent to which the mechanisms and modalities described in the Cooperation Agreement align with the priorities of Flanders in terms of funding and development cooperation Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund aligns with Flanders' priorities for funding and development cooperation

Table 5. Effectiveness

QUESTION	SUB-QUESTIONS	METHODS & SOURCES	INDICATORS
TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE PROJECTS ACHIEVED THEIR DESIRED RESULTS, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION?	What progress did the projects create towards improved skills and employability of women, youth and other target groups?	- Desk research on project results - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff - Interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries	Examples of progress towards improved skills and employability reported in M&E documents and by respondents Extent to which respondents perceive that the project(s) contributed to enhanced skills and employability. Specific examples of progress for women and youth, as mentioned in reports and by respondents.
	What progress did the projects create towards improved institutional capacity to teach skills?	- Desk research on project results - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff - Interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries	Examples of new pedagogies, teaching and mentoring skills, and other indicators of improved institutional capacity as reported in M&E documents and by respondents Extent to which respondents perceive that the project(s) contributed to enhanced institutional capacity to enhance skills development Specific examples of improved capacity to support skills development for women and youth, as mentioned in reports and by respondents.
	What progress did the projects create towards improved national capacity to support skills development through social dialogue?	- Desk research on project results - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff - Interviews with stakeholders	Examples of progress towards improved social dialogue and policy development related to skills, as reported in M&E documents and by respondents Extent to which respondents perceive that the project(s) contributed to enhanced national capacity for social dialogue and policy-making related to skills.
TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE TRUST FUND ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVES AS MODALITY?	Did the Trust Fund portfolio contribute to the overall objectives of ILO within the competences of Flanders including on gender and inclusion?	- Desk research on project results - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff	Examples of achievements aligned with ILO P&B and other strategic objectives Extent to which respondents perceive that the portfolio added value to the achievement of the P&B objectives, as compared to single-funded projects.

TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2020 INDEPENDENT EVALUATION BEEN IMPLEMENTED?	Did the Trust Fund portfolio contribute to the countries' Decent Work agendas?	- Desk research on project results - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff - Interviews with stakeholders	Examples of achievements aligned with DWCP objectives of project countries Extent to which respondents perceive that the portfolio added value to the achievement of the DWCP objectives, as compared to single-funded projects.
	Did the Trust Fund portfolio contribute to achieving the SDGs?	- Desk research on project results - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff	Examples of achievements aligned with the SDGs Extent to which respondents perceive that the portfolio added value to the achievement of the SDGs, as compared to single-funded projects.
	Which actions were taken to address the recommendations?	- Desk research on Trust Fund documentation - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff	Examples and evidence of measures taken to implement the recommendations, as reported in documentation and by respondents
	Which recommendations were not addressed and why?	- Desk research on Trust Fund documentation - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff	Evidence and justifications most commonly reported for non-implementation of recommendations.
	To what extent did the projects take measures to ensure their visibility?	- Desk research on project results - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff - Interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries	Examples of communication materials, visibility strategies and other documentation used to enhance project visibility. Examples of visibility measures taken, as reported by staff Extent to which respondents perceive that the project results were sufficiently presented and visible
	To what extent did the Trust Fund modality support increased visibility of the projects?	- Desk research on project results - Interviews with ILO and Flanders staff - Interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries	Examples of the use of the Trust Fund modality to enhance project visibility, as reported in documentation and by respondents Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund modality enhances the visibility of project results, and how.

Table 6. Efficiency

QUESTION	SUB-QUESTIONS	METHODS & SOURCES	INDICATORS
TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED IN AN EFFICIENT MANNER?	To what extent were projects implemented in a cost-efficient manner?	- Desk research on project evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff	Examples and evidence of savings, cost-sharing and other measures used to reduce costs and enhance efficiency Extent to which respondents perceive that the projects were implemented efficiently and that sufficient efforts were made to reduce costs.

	To what extent were projects implemented in a timely manner?	- Desk research on project evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff - Interviews with stakeholders	Examples and evidence of delays and of timely achievement of results, according to work plans and other timelines. Examples of factors creating delays or supporting the timely implementation, within and outside ILO control Extent to which respondents perceive that the projects were implemented in a timely manner.
	How effective are the governance, coordination and management structures of the projects under review?	- Desk research on project evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff	Evidence of coordination mechanisms in place at project level, particularly of Project Advisory Committees allowing Flanders' participation. Examples of delays or of efficiency created through the project governance structures Extent to which respondents perceive that project governance mechanisms were suitable and efficient.
HOW EFFICIENT IS THE TRUST FUND AS MODALITY?	How efficient are the Trust Fund's administrative procedures?	- Desk research on project evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff	Evidence of efficient and inefficient procedures reported in project evaluations and documentation, and as reported by respondents. Extent to which respondents perceive that the administrative procedures are efficient, and are more efficient compared to single-funded projects.
	How efficient are the Trust Fund's disbursements?	- Desk research on project evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff	Evidence of efficient and inefficient disbursement reported in project evaluations and documentation, and as reported by respondents. Extent to which respondents perceive that the disbursements are efficient, and are more efficient compared to single-funded projects.
	How efficiently are the Trust Fund's resources used?	- Analysis of the effectiveness criteria - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff	Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund resources are allocated in a manner to maximise results and enhance reinforcement and complementarity of projects.
	Is the Trust Fund's governance structure appropriate and relevant to deliver on its desired results?	- Analysis of the effectiveness criteria - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff	Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund governance structure is efficient and maximises exchange and discussion between ILO and Flanders Evidence of the active use of coordination/governance mechanisms (e.g. minutes).
DOES THE TRUST FUND OFFER FLEXIBILITY IN ITS APPROACH AND ARE STAKEHOLDERS	Is the Trust Fund modality flexible to allow adjustment of projects to changing needs and contexts?	- Desk research on project evaluations and contexts - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff - Interviews with stakeholders	Examples and evidence of project adjustments made to align with changing needs Evidence of approval of project changes by Flanders

ENGAGED IN A MEANINGFUL MANNER?	Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund structure allows for sufficient flexibility to ensure continuous relevance	
	Is the Trust Fund modality flexible to allow meaningful engagement of stakeholders?	- Desk research on project evaluations and design - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff - Interviews with stakeholders Evidence of stakeholder consultations at design and implementation stages of projects. Extent to which respondents perceive that stakeholders had sufficient voice in the project design and implementation.

Table 7. Impact

QUESTION	SUB-QUESTIONS	METHODS & SOURCES	INDICATORS
WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF FLANDERS AND THE ILO?	What is the added value of the Trust Fund for the ILO and its objectives?	- Interviews with ILO staff	Examples of the added value of the Trust Fund modality most commonly reported by respondents
	What is the added value of the Trust Fund for Flanders and its objectives?	- Interviews with Flanders	Examples of the added value of the Trust Fund modality most commonly reported by respondents
	What is the added value of the Trust Fund for the projects and beneficiaries, particularly for women and youth?	- Desk research on project evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff - Interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries	Examples and evidence of mutual reinforcement and exchanges of lessons learned among projects to create deeper impact on beneficiaries Examples and evidence of results created as a result of the Trust Fund modality Extent to which the projects created (progress towards) their intended impact at local level
	What is the added value of the Trust Fund towards policy/system-level impact?	- Desk research on project evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff - Interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries	Examples and evidence of mutual reinforcement and exchanges of lessons learned among projects to create deeper impact on policies and system-level developments Examples and evidence of results created as a result of the Trust Fund modality Extent to which the projects created (progress towards) their intended impact at system-level

Table 8. Sustainability

QUESTION	SUB-QUESTIONS	METHODS & SOURCES	INDICATORS
WHAT STRATEGIES HAVE BEEN PUT IN PLACE TO ENSURE THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TRUST FUND'S RESULTS (E.G., CAPACITY BUILDING, POLICY ALIGNMENT, LOCAL OWNERSHIP)?	Does the Trust Fund provide for an overall framework for sustainability of its projects?	- Desk research on Trust Fund documentation - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff	Evidence of guidance, strategies and other policies on sustainability as part of the Trust Fund Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund modality provides sufficient support to ensure sustainability of projects
	Does the Trust Fund include requirements for specific sustainability measures?	- Desk research on Trust Fund documentation - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff	Evidence of requirements for specific activities (e.g. capacity building, ownership) in projects to ensure sustainability. Extent to which respondents perceive that the Trust Fund requires specific sustainability measures
	To what extent do the projects include sustainability measures according to the Trust Fund requirements?	- Desk research on project strategies and evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff	Evidence of sustainability strategies and measures by projects, aligned with Trust Fund requirements (if any) Extent to which respondents perceive that projects' sustainability strategies are in line with the expectations under the Trust Fund.
HOW SUSTAINABLE IS THE TRUST FUND'S APPROACH AND ITS ABILITY TO FOSTER LONG-TERM COLLABORATION?	To what extent are the results of the projects sustainable?	- Desk research on project strategies and evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff - Interviews with stakeholders	Evidence of sustainability of results as provided in project evaluations. Extent to which respondents perceive that results are sustainable. Results most commonly reported as sustainable / unsustainable by respondents and in evaluations.
	To what extent are existing collaboration mechanisms created through the projects sustainable?	- Desk research on project strategies and evaluations - Interviews with ILO and Flanders' staff - Interviews with stakeholders	Examples and evidence of continued collaboration after project completions. Extent to which collaboration mechanisms have been institutionalised in the work and functioning of stakeholder institutions. Extent to which respondents perceive that collaboration will continue in the future

Annex 4. Evaluation schedule

The evaluation was conducted along **three main phases**: 1) inception phase, 2) data collection 3) reporting and finalisation.

Table 9. Timeline of the evaluation

	September				October				November				December				January			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Kick-off call with ILO																				
Initial desk research and interviews																				
Elaboration of the methodology																				
Submission of the Inception Report																				
Feedback and resubmission of the IR																				
Online interviews																				
Development of case study																				
Analysis and reporting																				
Policy Delphi																				
Submission of the Draft Report																				
Preliminary Findings workshop																				
Receipt of feedback																				
Resubmission and finalisation																				

Annex 5. Documents reviewed

TF Documentation

ILO – Government of Flanders Cooperation Framework 2016

Project Document. GLO/20/23/FLA SUPPORT: Inclusive trade and decent work: supportive domestic policies for better social, labour market and sustainable enterprise outcomes

Project Document GLO/18/39/FLA Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation.

Project Document. Digital skills development for youth NEET in South Africa. 9 February 2023.

Paving the way for a sustainable natural stone industry in India Project Code (IND/18/51/FLA). Final Progress Report 2018-22.

Flanders' contribution to the Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning GLO/21/29/MUL (108574). Final Progress report 1 August 2021 - 31 August 2023

Paving the way for a sustainable natural stone industry in India (IND/18/51/FLA) Final Progress Report 2018-22.

Apprenticeships Development for Universal lifelong Learning and Training (ADULT) (GLO/20/02/FLA) 1 August 2021 - 31 August 2023

Promoting Decent Work through Productivity and Workplace Cooperation interventions in South Africa's clothing manufacturing sector (ZAF/23/01/FLA) Final progress report May 2023 to June 2024

Inclusive Trade and Decent Work: Supportive Domestic Policies for Better Social, Labour Market and Sustainable Enterprise Outcomes (SUPPORT) (GLO/20/23/FLA) Final Progress Report 01-SEP-2020 to 31 DEC 2023

Assessing social capabilities for new technologies, innovation and job creation (ZAF/19/01/FLA) Final Progress Report December 2019 - NOVEMBER 2021

ILO Documentation

ILO Evaluation Policy (2017)
https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_mas/%40eval/documents/policy/wcms_603265.pdf

ILO Guidance Note 3.3: Strategic clustered evaluations to gather evaluative information more effectively.
<https://www.ilo.org/publications/guidance-note-33-strategic-clustered-evaluations-gather-evaluative>

ILO Programme and budget for the biennium 2022–23

ILO Programme and budget for the biennium 2024–25

The ILO's Strategic Plan for 2022–25. Governing Body 340th Session, Geneva, October–November 2020

ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2020–25, adopted by the GB 340th Session, Geneva, October–November 2020

Flanders documentation

2019-2024 Policy Note for Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/view-file/32213>

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Annex 6. List of interview respondents

Table 10. Flanders interviews

- Thomas Peeters (Brussels)
- Katrien de Pauw (Brussels)
- Delphine Delouvroy (Brussels)
- Geraldine Reymenants (formerly in Pretoria)

Table 11. ILO staff interviews

Name	Location (HQ/Field)	Department / project
Peter Van Rooij	HQ Geneva	PARTNERSHIPS
Aparajita Singh	HQ Geneva	PARTNERSHIPS
Rie Vejs Kjeldgaard	HQ Geneva	Former PARTNERSHIPS
Sietse Buijze	HQ Geneva	BUD/CT
Luz Espinoza	HQ Geneva	BUD/CT
Guy Thijs	HQ Geneva	EVAL
Marva Corley-Coulibaly	HQ Geneva	RESEARCH
Caroline Fredrickson	HQ Geneva	RESEARCH
Cheryl Chan	HQ Geneva	MSMS Branch, Enterprises
Marlen de la Chaux	HQ Geneva	MSMS Branch, Enterprises
Majda Grine	HQ Geneva	EMPLOYMENT
Alice Voza	HQ Geneva	ap/justtransition
Pedro Da Fonseca	HQ Geneva	SKILLS
Takaaki Kizu	HQ Geneva	SKILLS
Srinivas Reddy	HQ Geneva	SKILLS
Carlien Van Empel	ILO Brussels	N/a
Jens Dyring Christensen	ILO Pretoria	ZAF/23/01/FLA
Alexio Musindo	ILO Pretoria	Country Director
Satoshi Sasaki	ILO New Delhi	IND/18/51/FLA
Sudipta Bhadra	ILO New Delhi	IND/18/51/FLA
Tom Wambeke	ITC-ILO	ITC-ILO project: Digital Skills development for youth NEET in South Africa
Delphine Dall Agata	ITC-ILO	ITC-ILO project: Digital Skills development for youth NEET in South Africa
Giuseppe Zefola	ITC-ILO	ITC-ILO project: Digital Skills development for youth NEET in South Africa

Table 12. Stakeholder interviews

Name	Organization / Role
Phumeza Nobhongoza	SCORE Trainer
Etienne Vlok	South African Clothing Workers Unions
Abieda Abrahams	South African Clothing Workers Unions
Mlulamisi Mhlanga	Clothing Bargaining Council

Annex 7. Questionnaires

1. High-level Trust Fund stakeholders

The following questions were posed to staff of Flanders and ILO who have a broader overview of the Trust Fund and can comment on its management and implementation across different projects. The questionnaire was adapted further to each interviewee depending on their role and organization.

- What adaptations were made to the Trust Fund and its implementation after the previous evaluation? How/to what extent were the evaluation recommendations implemented? Which ones were not, and why?
- How do you see the role of the Trust Fund in terms of ILO's mandate and priorities? Does ILO have specific priorities related to such funding mechanisms as compared to one-off project funding?
- How do you see the role of the Trust Fund in terms of Flanders' funding mandate and priorities? Do you have specific priorities related to such funding mechanisms as compared to one-off project funding?
- How do you see the role of the Trust Fund in terms of Flanders' mandate and priorities in terms of projects? How do the TF objectives align with your policy priorities? Including on strengthening coordination of Flanders – ILO – EU institutions?
- Within the Trust Fund projects portfolio, do you see any coherence and reinforcement between the projects? How? What examples can you give of how projects are related to each other?
- What is the added value of the Trust Fund in ensuring coherence among projects, if any?
- Are the Trust Fund objectives flexible enough to ensure adjustment to different country CPOs? How?
- What progress can you see across the project countries in terms of:
 - o improved skills and employability of women, youth and other target groups?
 - o improved institutional capacity to teach skills and provide quality apprenticeships?
 - o improved national capacity to support skills development through social dialogue?
- What contribution has the Trust Fund made towards ILO's P&B objectives and other strategies? What was the added value of the TF in achieving those higher objectives?
- What contribution has the Trust Fund made towards Flanders' objectives and other strategies, including on promoting linkages with other EU institutions? What was the added value of the TF in achieving those higher objectives?
- How did you ensure the visibility of the projects? Did you use a different approach under the Trust Fund as compared to traditional projects? How did you ensure visibility of the Trust Fund itself?
- Are there any aspects of the Trust Fund implementation so far that you are not satisfied with? What adjustments have been made?
- How would you evaluate the efficiency of the projects under the Trust Fund. Does the Trust Fund modality enhance efficiency of projects? E.g. through cost-sharing and staff sharing?
- How does the Trust Fund modality compare to one-off projects in terms of administrative efficiency? What are its pros and cons in terms of administration and disbursement of funds?
- Looking at the portfolio overall, were the Trust Fund resources used for the most pressing issues in relation to skills and employability? And were resources prioritised to meet Flanders' main objectives?

- How do you evaluate the governance of the Trust Fund? Is there sufficient space for monitoring and exchange? Have you made any changes to projects or approaches during the coordination meetings?
- Do individual projects allow for sufficient engagement of Flanders' representatives, e.g. through advisory committees? What is the added value of the Trust Fund modality in terms of engagement of Flanders?
- What has been the added value, if any, of the Trust Fund for the overall impact on beneficiaries?
- What has been the added value, if any, of the Trust Fund for the overall impact on policy change?
- What requirements and frameworks does the Trust Fund provide in terms of project sustainability? Are there specific elements projects need to include to ensure sustainability? Do you believe ILO projects have taken sufficient measures to ensure sustainability?
- To what extent are the results of the projects sustainable? To what extent are existing collaboration mechanisms created through the projects sustainable?

2. Project-level stakeholders

These questions were posed to stakeholders who were involved in one (or a few) project only and can comment more on the implementation-level of specific Trust Fund projects.

- What do you know about the ILO-Flanders Trust Fund and its objectives?
- How did the existence of the Cooperation Agreement and Trust Fund influence the design of the project? Were there specific requirements from the TF that you had to keep in mind?
- Did the requirements of the Trust Fund allow you to actively engage stakeholders in the design? Was there sufficient flexibility for stakeholders to inform the design based on their needs?
- How did you select the target groups? How did you identify their needs? Specifically of women and youth?
- Did the project align with the CPO of the country? How? Did the TF modality support this alignment?
- Were you able to identify complementarities, synergies, mutual reinforcement opportunities with other projects under the Trust Fund? By who, and how, was this identified? Does the TF modality support such synergies more compared to one-off projects?
- What progress can you see across the countries in terms of:
 - o improved skills and employability of women, youth and other target groups?
 - o improved institutional capacity to teach skills and provide quality apprenticeships?
 - o improved national capacity to support skills development through social dialogue?
- What do you see as the added value of the Trust Fund to achieve these results? Would they have been the same if the project was one-off rather than part of the TF?
- How did you ensure the visibility of the project? What was the added value of the TF in enhancing visibility of the projects themselves and of Flanders?
- How would you evaluate the efficiency of the project? Does the Trust Fund modality enhance efficiency of your project? E.g. through cost-sharing and staff sharing with other TF projects?
- How does the Trust Fund modality compare to one-off projects in terms of administrative efficiency? What are its pros and cons in terms of administration and disbursement of funds in your project?
- Were there any delays or challenges you faced in the project implementation? Did they link with the TF modality or they were unrelated?

- Did the Trust Fund structure allow you to make changes in the project design and implementation, e.g. based on changing needs and monitoring results? Were the requirements flexible in this regard? E.g. for budget reallocation.
- How does the TF modality influence project management? Did you have specific requirements for management structures? Did Flanders participate in the advisory committee (if any)?
- What has been the added value, if any, of the Trust Fund for the overall impact on beneficiaries?
- What has been the added value, if any, of the Trust Fund for the overall impact on policy change?
- Did the TF have any requirements and frameworks in terms of project sustainability? Are there specific elements you needed to include to ensure sustainability? What measures did you take to ensure sustainability?
- To what extent are the results of your project sustainable? To what extent are existing collaboration mechanisms created through the projects sustainable?

Annex 8. Lessons learned and good practices

4.1. Lessons learned

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	Lack of initial engagement hinders effective country-level support by Flanders delegations
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	The Flanders representation was not always fully aware of the TF projects in the country. This hindered the representation from being actively involved and potentially liaising with other interventions and activities of Flanders
Context and any related preconditions	The South Africa portfolio comprised multiple projects and benefited from on-the-ground presence of both Flanders and ILO. However, many decisions on project design in South Africa were made between Geneva and Brussels, with limited opportunities for the Flanders representation in Pretoria and the ILO South Africa office to collaborate on, and influence, the portfolio in the country.
Targeted users / Beneficiaries	Flanders' staff
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	The lack of initial involvement limited opportunities for the Flanders representation in Pretoria and the ILO South Africa office to collaborate on, and influence, the portfolio in the country.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	More involvement can enhance coherence among projects on the ground.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	n/a

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	ILO cannot fully control the participation of donors in pooled funding
Brief description of lessons learned (link to specific action or task)	Participation of donors in a pooled fund should not be a goal or indicator as it is not something that ILO has full control over. ILO can encourage, but not guarantee, the participation of other donors.
Context and any related preconditions	The participation of Flanders in the Global Programme on Skills and Lifelong Learning was meant to attract other donors to the pooled fund and enable Flanders to cooperate with other donors. However, during this period, no other donors joined.
Targeted users / Beneficiaries	
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	There was some disappointment among both Flanders and ILO regarding the success of the GPSL3 to attract additional donors.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	

4.2. Good practices

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	Adjusted payment processes can enhance efficiency
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	It was agreed between ILO and Flanders that, in future efforts involving ITCILO, the budget allocated to ITCILO can be transferred to Turin directly, without creating budget lines and reporting systems at HQ. Both ILO HQ and ITCILO staff perceive this as important step to increase efficiency.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	During this project, various administrative steps had to be taken to transfer funds from ILO HQ to ITCILO, which caused delays for ITCILO. The adjusted payment procedure can be maintain for future projects to continue enhancing efficiency
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	The change in payment procedures allows ITCILO to mobilise quicker.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Less delay in project implementation.
Potential for replication and by whom	This can be replicated in all future ILO projects with ITCILO involvement.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	The TF modality reduces administrative workloads for both ILO and Flanders
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Through the modality of the Trust Fund, administrative processes for both ILO and Flanders are reduced at all stages of the project and proposal cycle.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The TF does not create additional procedures, requirements or quality measures beyond those already introduced by ILO. Therefore, compared to other donors who impose their own processes, there is less administrative burden on project teams from the donor side. At ILO HQ level, the TF allowed better planning and also reduced the administration related to contracts. In the field, the flexibility of the TF facilitated the work of project teams to remain adaptive, and the reporting requirements were also not heavy on the ILO.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	The absence of additional procedures allows ILO to be more flexible to emerging needs and situations
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Improved flexibility and relevance of projects, less administrative costs
Potential for replication and by whom	The TF modality can be a blueprint for other donors.

Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	Contribution to the ILO Development Cooperation Strategy 2022-2025.
GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	The Trust Fund supported interventions that are often underfunded or low on donors' priority lists
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The TF provided essential funding that allows ILO to implement interventions/research that could otherwise not be implemented, due to an absence of donor interest.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	Various thematic areas are lower on the donor agenda, due to decreasing funding availabilities and prioritisation of country-level urgent support. The TF's flexibility allowed ILO to propose important projects that are otherwise overlooked.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	ILO implemented projects and conducted research that would not have taken place without the TF.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	In several cases, the initial results of the Trust Fund projects received additional funding from other donors to scale-up.
Potential for replication and by whom	Flanders and ILO should continue exploring niche areas where the TF can provide added value.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	