DEval
GERMAN INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

Institute for Development Strategy

From Ritual to Rigour

A collaborative dialogue on improving efficiency assessment practice

Markus Palenberg Institute for Development Strategy

Martin Noltze German Institute for Development Evaluation

Prepared with AI assistance (Claude, Anthropic). Icons and cartoons created with ChatGPT (OpenAI). The presenters are responsible for the content.

EES 2026 Biennial Conference · Lille · 28 October 2026

Agenda

1 **Introduction** **p. 2**

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"As to the analysis of cost in relation to outputs and outcomes as revealed by the accounts for the Swedish contribution and the detailed scrutiny of each project, ***the results yielded must on the whole be said to give good value for money****."*

(an evaluation report)



"As the evidence behind this statement is not given in the report, the reader ***cannot assess the validity of the assessment****. The case is not unique. All too often, conclusions like the one above are presented without supporting data."*

(a quality review of evaluation reports)

Source: Forss, Vedung, Kruse, Mwaiselage and Nilsdotter (2008), Are Sida Evaluations Good Enough?, Sida, Stockholm, p. 33.

Issues with efficiency analysis in evaluation reports

80%

of 3,779 evaluations from 19 organizations consider efficiency. But

few

explain their methods and data.

87%

of 932 German-funded interventions were rated efficient. But the ratings are explained only to a

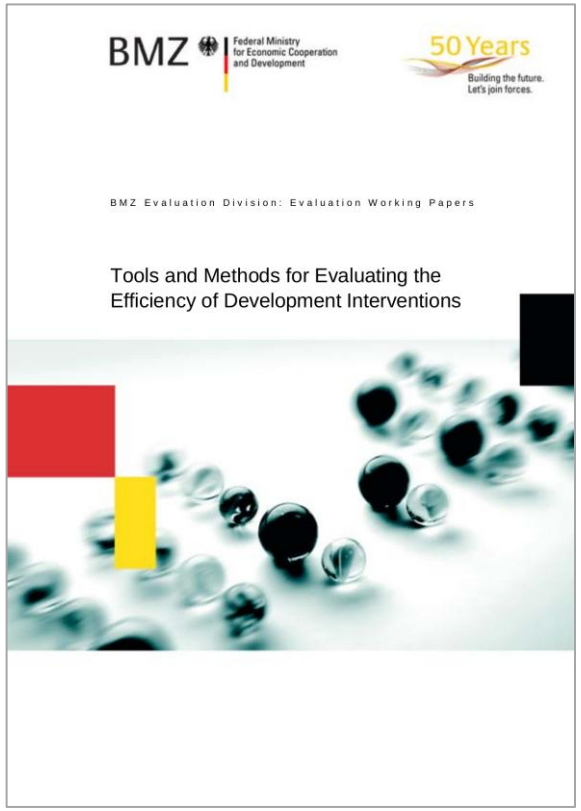
small extent.

Methods that compare the efficiency of interventions are

rare.

Sources: Noltze, Kühltau and Süß (2026), Efficiency in German Development Cooperation. Meta-evaluation and Evaluation Synthesis, DEval, executive summary (German sample: 698 GIZ and KfW evaluations of 932 interventions, 2018–2024); international sample as reported in Palenberg and Noltze (2026), p. 2.

Our work so far



2011

Tools and methods for evaluating the efficiency of development interventions

Palenberg, for BMZ

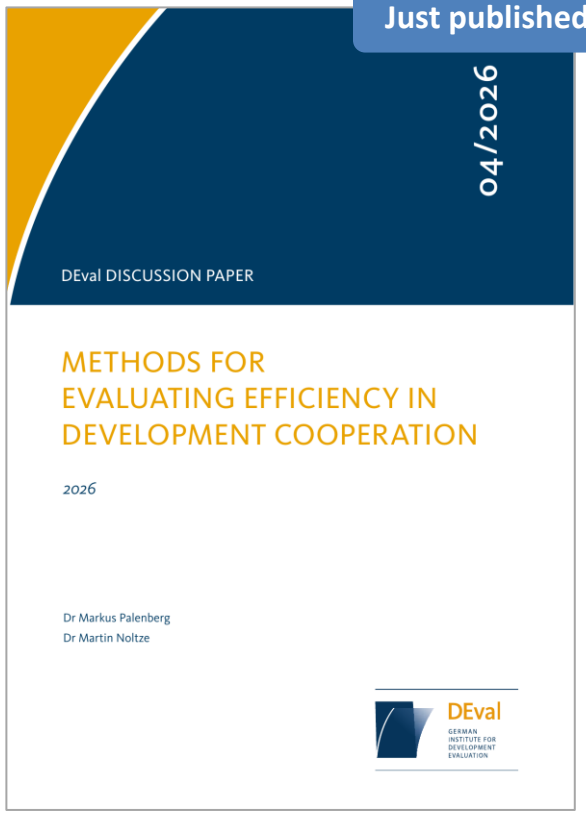


2026

Efficiency in German development cooperation. Meta-evaluation and evaluation synthesis

Noltze, Kühltau and Süß, DEval

Just published



2026

Methods for evaluating efficiency in development cooperation

Palenberg and Noltze, DEval discussion paper

Methods alone are not enough

What we understand reasonably well

- Different concepts of efficiency
- The methods, with their strengths, weaknesses and requirements
- Required competencies

What we still don't understand enough

- What other factors limit the space for efficiency analysis in practice?
- What can be done about them?



This is what we want to explore with you today

Nine challenges

Conceptual and normative				What do we mean by efficiency, who values, and how can we compare?
Analytical				Can we measure, attribute and analyze it?
Systemic				Who can do it, who wants it, and who uses it?

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Efficiency? One word, many meanings



Confusion about types and definitions of efficiency

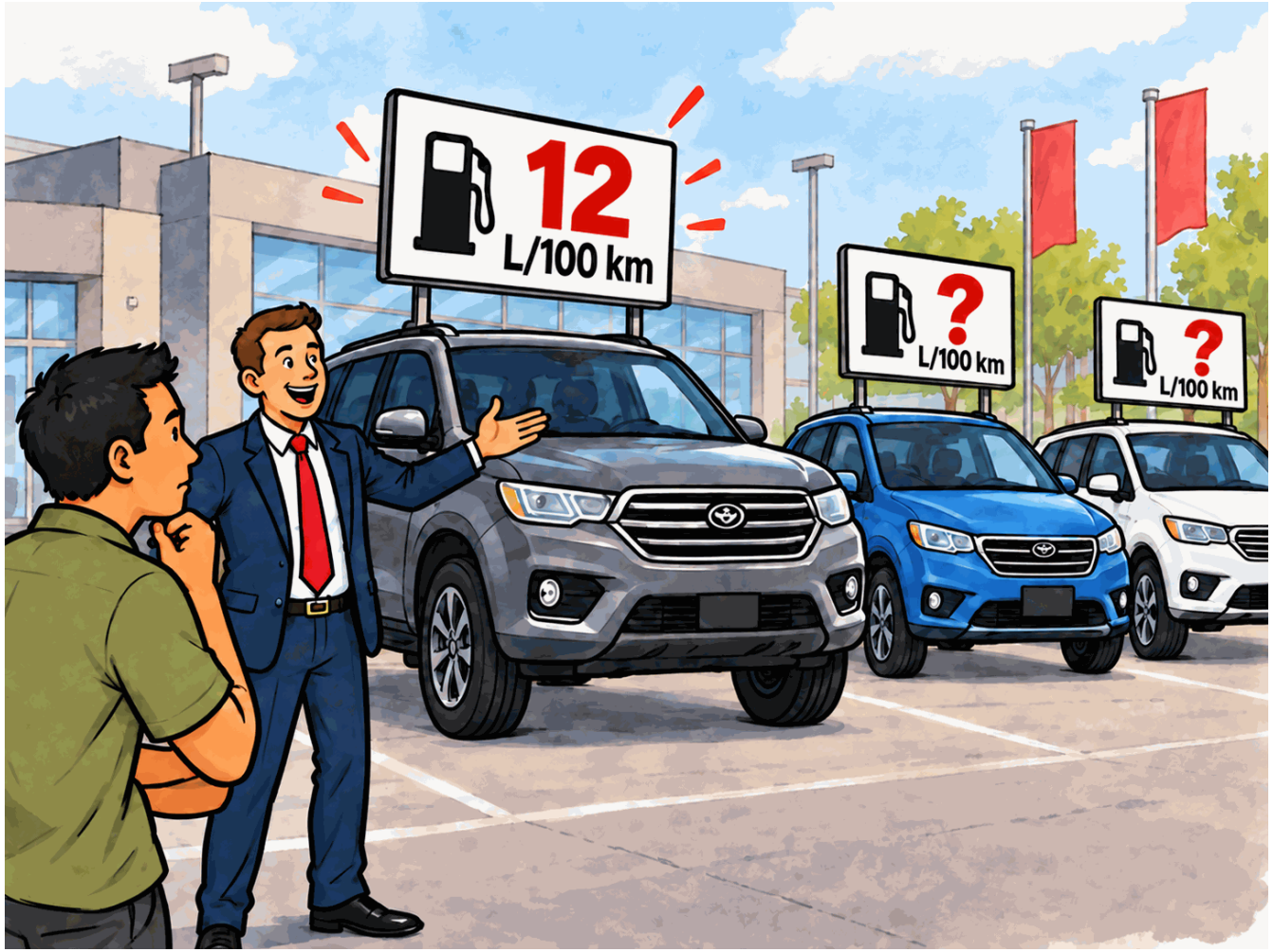


Who values? The analyst or those affected?



Who can really assign values to costs and benefits?

Efficient – compared to what?



Efficiency needs comparison.

But how to do that?



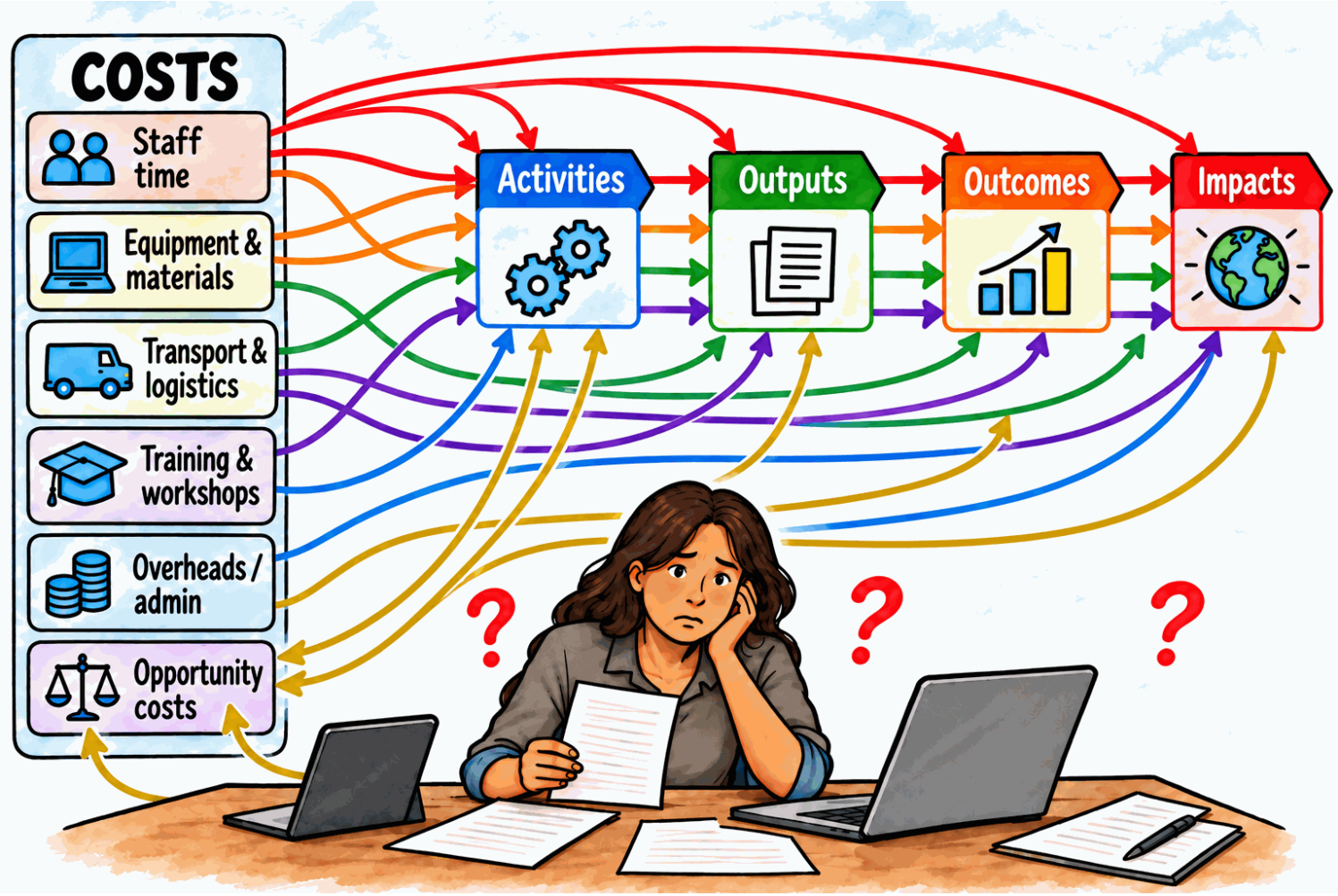
Where are the cost and results data?



Suitable cost and results data are often not available



~~Cause~~ Cost and effect: which costs produced which results?



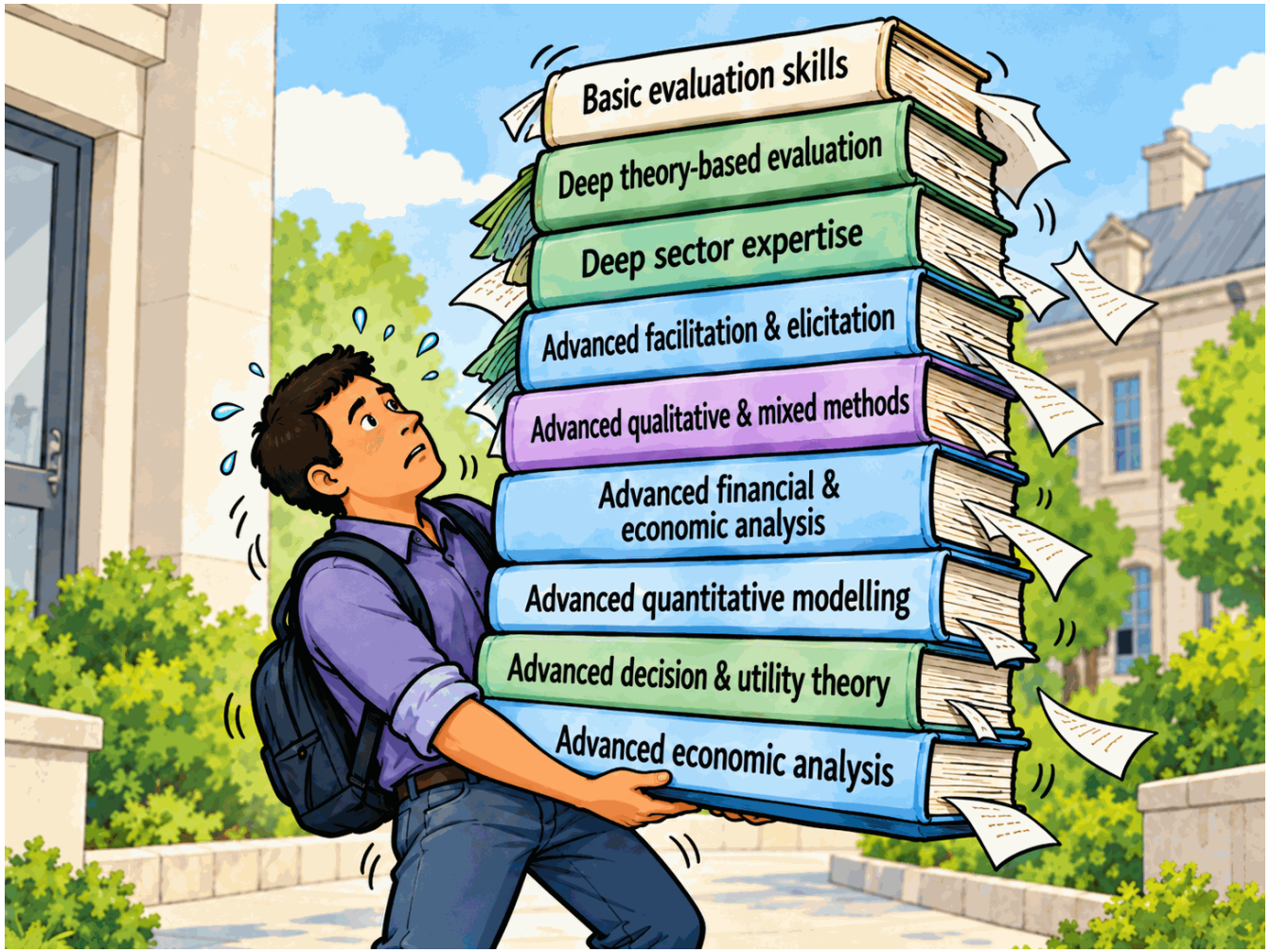
Efficiency analysis needs to attribute results to costs!

So many methods – which one fits?



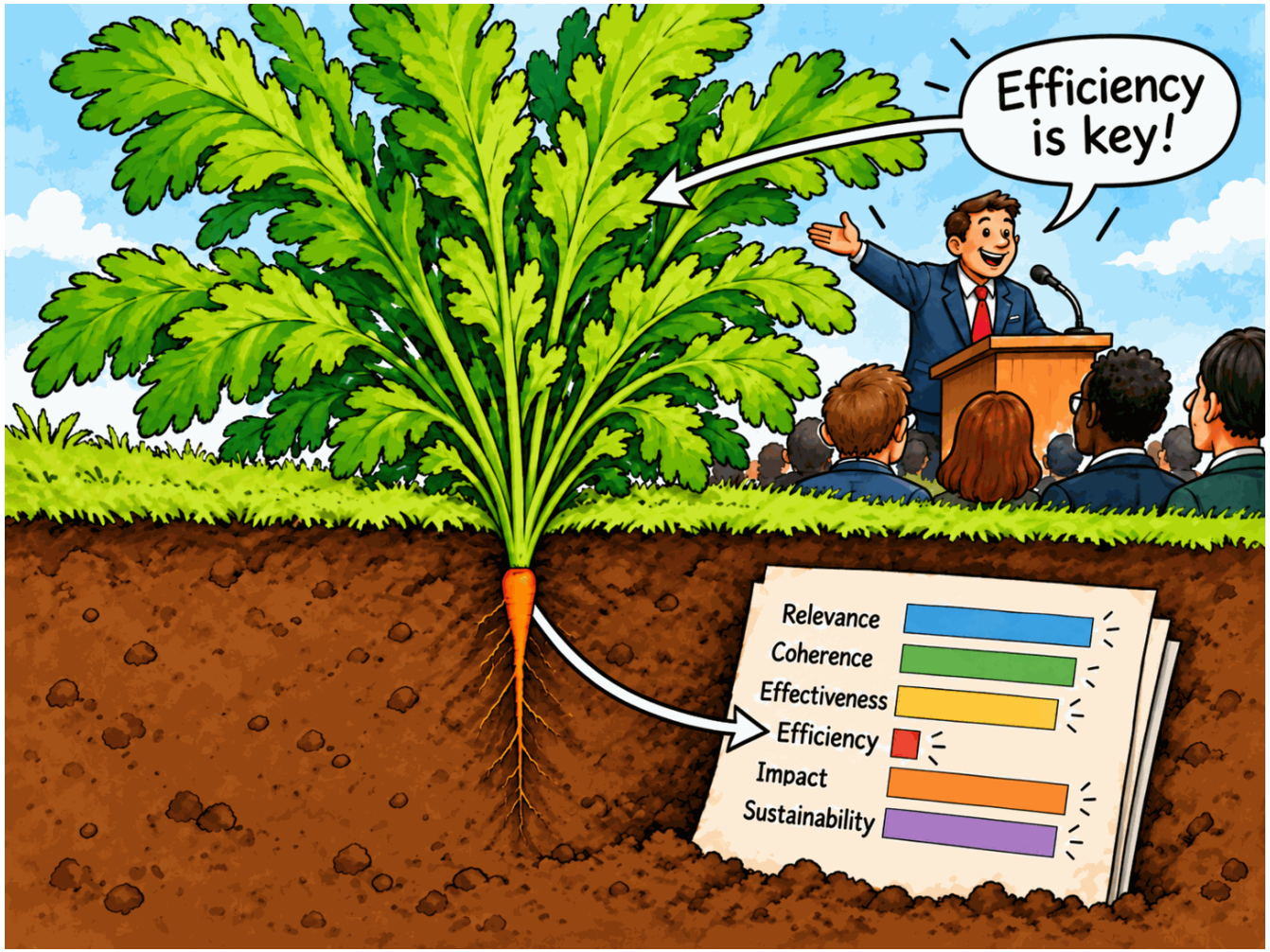
Methods are fragmented and still being developed

Who has all these competencies?



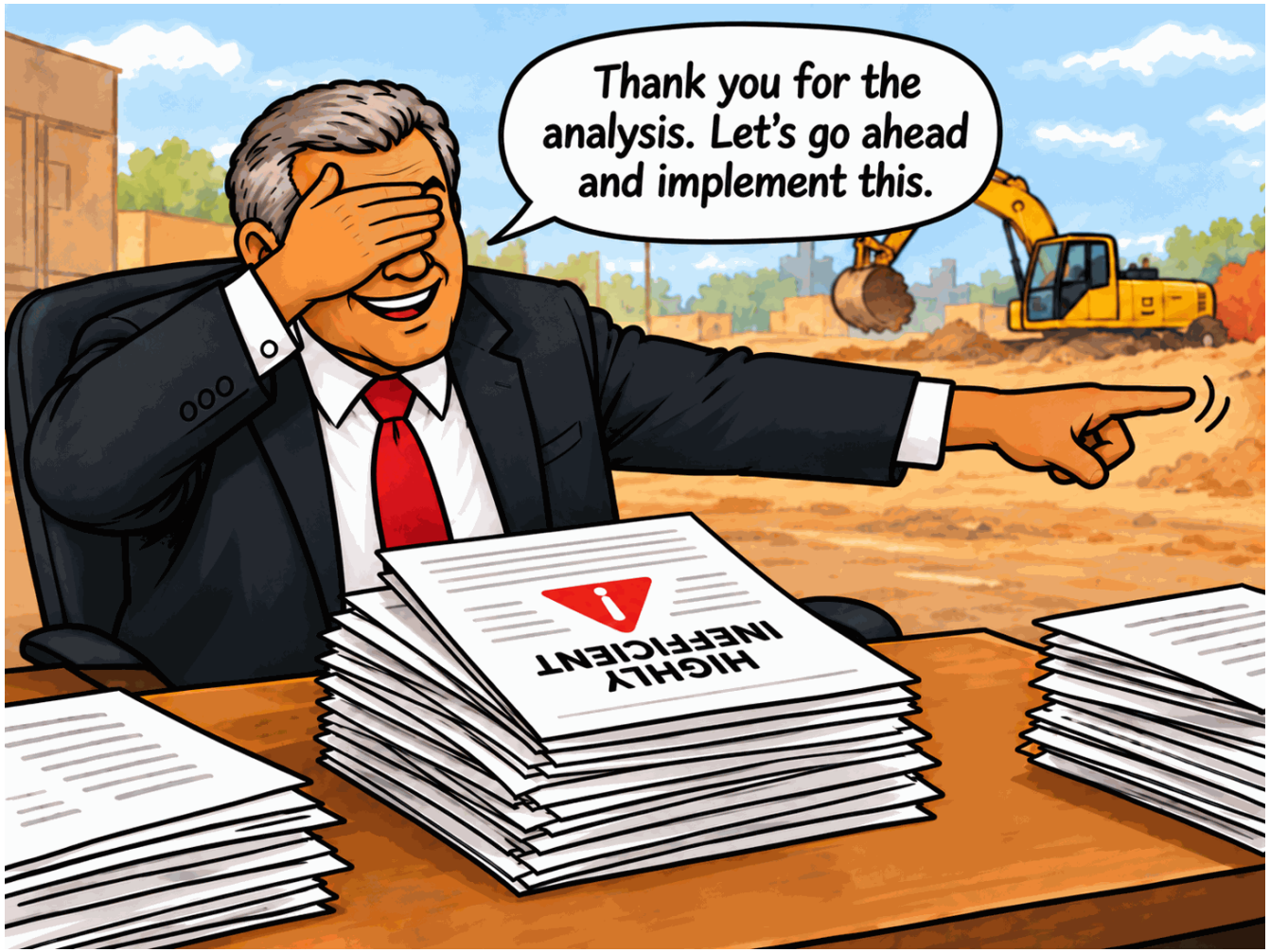
How can evaluators and commissioners know enough?

How much do we really want efficiency analysis?



Do we walk the talk?

Do efficiency findings inform decisions?



To what degree do we follow efficiency recommendations?

And to what degree should we?

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Group work

Group A · Conceptual and normative



Challenges 1–3

Group B · Analytical



Challenges 4–6

Group C · Systemic



Challenges 7–9

1. Join the group closest to your experience. Split up if a group is large.
2. Choose a rapporteur who notes everything on the harvest sheet.
3. Try to address each of your group's three challenges.
4. Share your experience: **what has worked, what has failed?** (20 minutes)
5. Discuss and agree on **realistic steps forward** (20 minutes)

What have you seen work well – or fail?

What would a realistic step forward look like?

20 minutes share your experience

20 minutes agree on steps forward

The rapporteur notes everything on the harvest sheet

Group A
Conceptual and normative



Group B
Analytical



Group C
Systemic



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Thank you

Markus Palenberg
markus@devstrat.org
www.devstrat.org

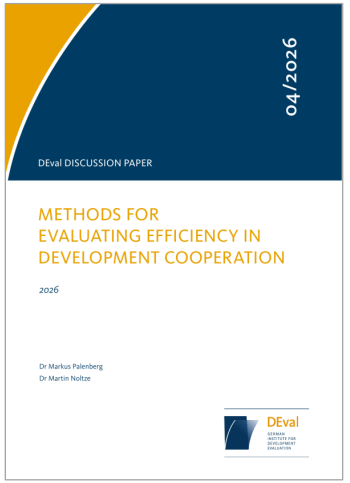
Martin Noltze
martin.noltze@DEval.org
www.DEval.org

Download the meta-evaluation



Efficiency in German Development Cooperation. Meta-evaluation and Evaluation Synthesis

Download the discussion paper



Methods for Evaluating Efficiency in Development Cooperation

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Reviewed and approved by the presenters, who are responsible for the content.