



empowering people. Network Evaluation

Executive Summary

Impact Matters

To learn more about the impact of our work and to further develop our approach, Siemens Stiftung initiated a comprehensive independent evaluation of the *empowering people. Network.* In accordance with our standards of transparency, this report presents an executive summary of the evaluation results and recommendations along with an introduction from the board of Siemens Stiftung.

Preliminary Remarks

SIEMENS STIFTUNG

The *empowering people. Network* (epNetwork) was established in 2013 and since then continued to gain members and expand its portfolio of services. It targets and strengthens organizations, which are developing and implementing technological solutions that are applicable in local development contexts - thus leveraging a strong potential for poverty reduction and improved access to services.

Siemens Stiftung has planned and realized the epNetwork activities on the basis of the I-O-O-I (input-output-outcome-impact) method adopted for the philanthropic sector by PHINEO¹. In 2017, Siemens Stiftung commissioned CEval GmbH, an independent institute for evaluation, to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the *empowering people. Network*.

The objective of the evaluation was to get reliable insight on the achieved results, an assessment of the chosen instruments and thus creating a base for further conceptual development of the network (see page 4 of the Executive Summary). Since the foundation asked for a professional and holistic evaluation, CEval developed its own impact model as a basis for a comprehensive analysis of both primary and secondary data. Data collection methods comprised qualitative interviews, in-depth case studies, a focus group discussion as well as quantitative online surveys. Answers to individual and detailed questions were just as interesting for us as some of the key findings on the OECD-DAC criteria – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability – and derived expert recommendations. Siemens Stiftung was able to trace in detail the design and methodology of the evaluation procedure that CEval undertook.

¹ PHINEO is an independent, non-profit analysis and consulting company for effective social commitment

These favourable inferences are highly valuable for the current network redesign. For example, it has become clear that success in supporting organizations depends to a large extent on internal conditions and circumstances such as size and current enterprise stage. As one result, the level of development and business potential of the member organizations needs to be raised and the access criteria reviewed accordingly.

The evaluation's findings encourage further concentration on an individual and long-term support of the organizations in a familiar atmosphere as a characteristic feature of the network. Personal support services such as the epExpert Service and epOnsite Training have been proved to contribute a high impact therefore will be expanded. However, online training offers and webinars were classified as less effective and therefore will not be developed further.

Thorough analysis, sophisticated survey designs and an engaged examination by CEval have completely met Siemens Stiftung's expectations to broaden its information base and to achieve new learnings. Keeping up with its high standards of transparency and conscious intent to share the results and learnings with network members, peers and partners, Siemens Stiftung publishes the evaluation results in the form of the following Executive Summary.



Rolf Huber
Managing Director Siemens Stiftung

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objectives and scope of the evaluation

To meet its own standards with respect to transparency and impact orientation Siemens Stiftung commissioned the external evaluation of the *empowering people. Network (epN)*. In this regard, the **objectives of the evaluation** were:

- i) to generate information of the intervention's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (i.e. the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria),
- ii) to provide a basis for strategic planning along the input-output-outcome-impact logic within Siemens Stiftung's working area of development cooperation,
- iii) to create learning opportunities for the implementers of the intervention (i.e. the epN-team),
- iv) to enhance accountability on the use of Siemens Stiftung's endowments,
- v) to share insights with beneficiaries (i.e. epN-member organizations) and partners of the epN-ecosystem (i.e. other donors, researchers, networks, intermediate organizations, and politicians),
- vi) to produce baseline information for future evaluations.

Within the **scope of this evaluation**, assessment was limited to results for epN-members emanating from activities implemented between August 2015 and August 2017. The evaluation was conducted by the Center for Evaluation (CEval GmbH) between April and November 2017.

The *empowering people. Network*

As **subject to this evaluation**, the epN can be described as:

- i) a platform of support and exchange for social enterprises and innovators who promote and implement technological solutions in developing countries;
- ii) a network with around 80 member organizations from which 46 joined through winning an *empowering people. Award* (epAward) in the years 2012/13 or 2015/16; and
- iii) an intervention in the field of development cooperation which supports its members in the field of organizational development, individual professionalization and networking.

Technological solutions thereby have to aim at improved basic services in the fields of energy, water, food, agriculture, waste and recycling, housing, education or information and communication technology (ICT). Besides the disbursement of prize money for the epAward of 200.000€ per cycle, **activities of the epN** comprise:

- i) the *empowering people. Workshop* (epWorkshop) as annually global event directed to founders or staff of epN-member organizations,
- ii) the *empowering people. Onsite* (epOnsite) as regional training format for local staff of epN-member organizations (2-3 events per year),
- iii) the *empowering people. Expert Service* (epExpert Service) as short-term secondment of expert volunteers to epN-member organizations,
- iv) the *Self-Assessment Manual for Social Entrepreneurs* (SAMforSE) as tool to facilitate reflection on own business model and ecosystem and for selected SAMforSE users the possibility to participate in a personal coaching program (also open to non-epN-member organizations),
- v) *Stories about us* as tool created for hands-on workshops to develop practical skills on how to tell a business narrative (also open to non-epN-member organizations),

- vi) *Online Trainings* hosted in cooperation with partners from the epN-ecosystem to address different topics such as business modelling, market research or distribution,
- vii) the *epN-website*, with general information on social entrepreneurship and technology, including the Solutions Database which showcases awarded technological innovations,
- viii) *epUpdates* as newsletter to inform about latest epN-developments, upcoming activities, and new technological innovations,
- ix) the *epBlog* to provide further insights into the network and its members, and
- x) a *Facebook Page*, a *Twitter Account*, and a *LinkedIn Page* to spread the epN in social media.

Network evaluation and theory of change

The evaluation was informed by a **network understanding** developed by Provan und Kenis (2008). When evaluating networks, one has to consider that a number of different organizations contribute partially to the final outcome. Thus, network evaluations are rather complex compared to evaluations of a single organizational unit.² To explain multiple causes and effects within networks, three different fields were taken into account: the organizational field (i.e. resources brought into the network as well as administrative and organizational structure), the network itself and the community field. Figure 1 displays how the epN strives to achieve changes through and on these three different fields. This is also called a **Theory of Change (ToC)**.

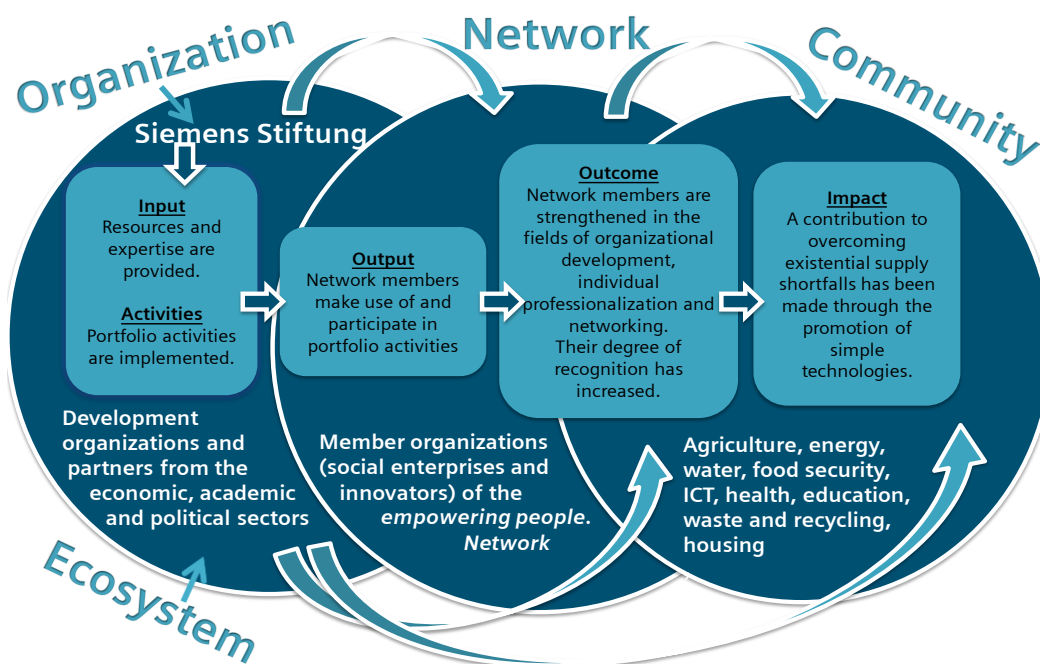


Fig. 1 - Theory of change

² Provan, K. G., & Kenis, P. (2008). Modes of network governance: Structure, management, and effectiveness. *Journal of public administration research and theory*, 18(2), 229-252.

Evaluation design and methodology

Regarding the evaluation design, a **contribution analysis** was performed. It aims at deriving plausible conclusions on the effects of an intervention by analyzing whether and why outcomes occurred. As this was the first evaluation of the epN and as comprehensive baseline data did not yet exist an **ex-post facto design** was applied. It followed a **participatory approach** with continuous exchange with Siemens Stiftung throughout all stages of the evaluation process.

In the beginning the ToC (as displayed above) and a more detailed results model were developed. An analysis grid with empirically measurable indicators then informed the development of data collection instruments. It guided data analysis and structuring of results. In a **mixed-methods** approach different data sources, data collection instruments and analysis methods were **triangulated** to validate findings.

Secondary data provided by Siemens Stiftung comprised excerpts of the impact-oriented planning, available monitoring data, outputs of 'stories about us', excerpts from google analytics on the website, facebook insights, financial budget and full-time equivalents for 2016 and 2017 and annual reports. The **online survey** was designed as full population survey. Out of a total of 175 invitees³, 90 completed the questionnaire. Given potential self-selection bias of participants, results are not representative in a statistical sense. However, a response rate of 51% is compared to similar surveys satisfactory and allows to derive hints on the epN's success.

Qualitative data was collected in two steps. First, **expert interviews** with members of the ecosystem, representatives of similar networks, and representatives of epN-member organizations as well as a **focus group discussion** (FGD) with the latter were conducted. Second, in-depth **case studies** with 8 epN-member organizations comprised further interviews with management, staff and stakeholders. In total 68 persons were approached. Expert interviews, discussants and the epN-organizations for the case studies were selected by applying stratified sampling procedures. This ensures that data on epN-members of both epA-cohorts, of less and more active network members, and of less and more successful organizations, as well as on experts from the ecosystem which are closely and those which are loosely connect to the epN informed the evaluation.

Qualitative data was analyzed by employing **qualitative content analysis**, whereas quantitative data underwent **descriptive analysis**. To enhance inter-subjective comparability of results, analyses were reviewed by an evaluator not directly involved in the data collection process.

Evaluation findings and conclusions

RELEVANCE

To assess the relevance of the epN, the evaluation focused on the following questions: (i) Do epN-member organizations view the membership beneficial for themselves? (ii) How do the activities and services offered by the epN relate to the needs of the epN-members? (iii) Are the activities and services offered by the epN appropriate to improve access to reduce basic supply shortfalls?

Based on the indicators developed in the analysis grid, the **epN-membership is beneficial for the epN-members**. This is supported by both, the online survey with average benefit rated well above 7 on a scale from 0-10, as well as by all case studies and expert interviews which affirmed benefits of the epN. The **relevance of the online services** was assessed as almost equally satisfactory.

Funding and fund raising were identified as pending needs but are not a priority of the epN. However, activities related to organizational development, marketing and networking **match well with the epN-members' current**

³ Out of the 80 epN-member organizations Siemens Stiftung had established contact to 175 individuals.

needs. More than three quarters of those that participated in the online survey or were interviewed personally identified at least two actual needs in these fields.

Through its clear focus on organizations promoting technologies to increase access to basic services, the epN is **highly consistent with its own overall goals** and intended impact. Roughly two thirds of interviewed epN-member organizations and experts acknowledged the epN's potential to **contribute to the reduction of basic supply shortfalls** through supporting emerging organizations.

To conclude the support offered by Siemens Stiftungs's epN is judged as relevant to member organizations.

EFFECTIVENESS

To assess the epN's effectiveness the causal link established in the ToC and the detailed elaborations in the results model were explored in two steps: (i) epN's effectiveness was evaluated at the output level of offered activities and online services. (ii) It was assessed whether these results yield to desired outcomes according to the results model (i.e. contribution to (i) organizational development, (ii) acquisition of professional skills, (iii) networking, (iv) learnings, and (v) increased visibility).

Figure 2 shows, epN-members are aware of the activities offered by the epN to a varying extent. **epOnsite** and **epWorkshop** are very **well known** by more than 90% of survey respondents, **epExpert Services** and **online trainings** is known by roughly 80%. **SAMforSE** and **Stories about us** lagged a little bit behind but still yielded awareness rates around 70%. **Most epN-members make use of the offers** provided by the epN. On average they had participated in 1.6 activities over the past 24 months.

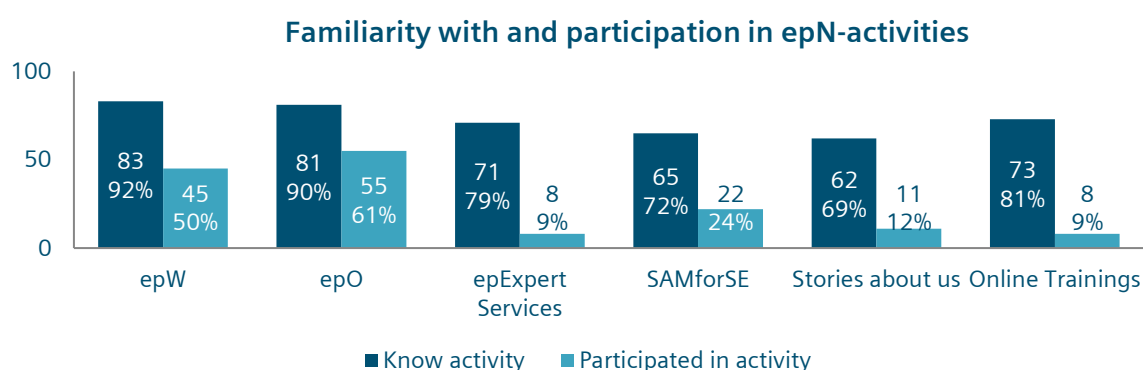


Fig. 2 - Familiarity with and participation in epN-activities

Figure 3 discloses, the level of awareness and usage varied for the different online information channels as well. While the **website** is quite **well-known** by roughly 80%, **the Solutions Database, epUpdates, and Facebook** were **only partially known** by around 50%. The **Blog, LinkedIn, Twitter, and the resource section on the epN-website** proofed to be **quite unknown**. **Roughly half of the respondents engaged with Facebook and epUpdates, while a third used the website.**

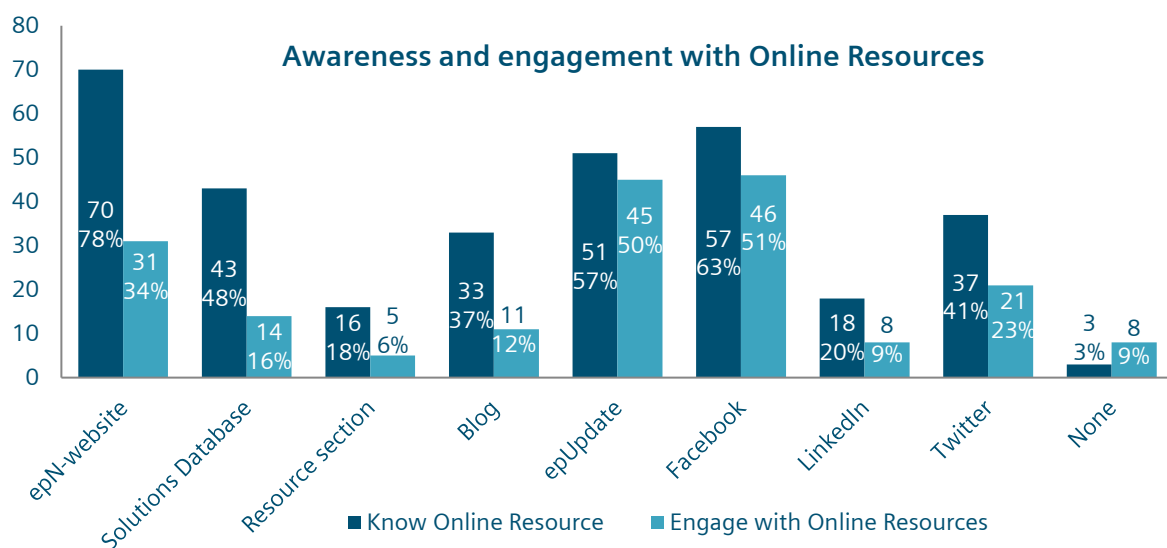


Fig. 3 - Awareness and engagement with Online Resources

According to the respondents, **online resources** provide **informational and user-friendly content** on the topics of social entrepreneurship and technology. Press releases and **promotional material** exist for **about two thirds** of all epN-member organizations.

At the **outcome level**, respondents of the online survey were **moderately positive** that the **epN contributed to organizational development**. During the case studies, the majority of interview partners from the epN-member organizations were able to establish a **direct link between offered activities or introduced methods and the outcomes on their organizations**.

Furthermore, results support that **epN's activities enables members to increase their knowledge and competencies**. Survey respondents generally confirmed that the epN contributed to foster the development of its members by an average rating of 7 on a scale from 0-10. All interview partners who had participated in epN's activities confirmed that they had learned something useful. Figure 4 displays that the **vast majority was able to implement new learnings**.

With respect to networking, figure 5 shows that the **epN has made a great contribution towards better networked epN-members**. More than 75% of the survey respondents, and 11 out of 13 interviewees from different epN-member organizations stated that they were able to make new contacts and in several cases also intensify existing contacts through their epN-membership. Almost half of the organizations were in exchange with more than three new contacts.

The **majority of epN-members also learn from each other**: survey respondents rated the learning opportunities provided by the network with an average rating of 6.4 on a scale from 0-10. This aspect was also mentioned during several case study interviews. According to the interviewees, technology exchange and overcoming business challenges were two of the most common issues where epN-member organizations were able to learn from each other.

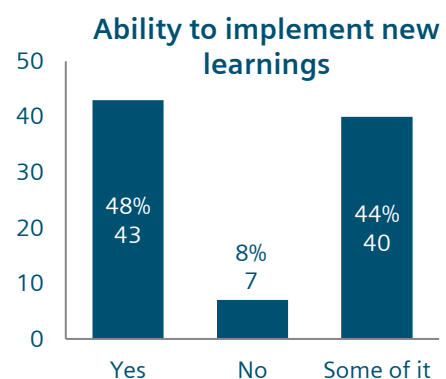


Fig. 4 - Ability to implement learnings

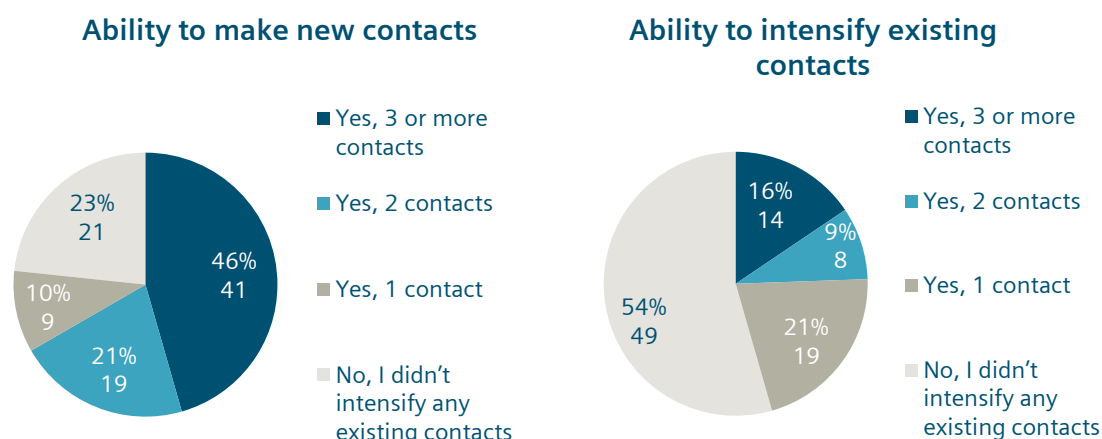


Fig. 5 - Networking of epN-member organizations

It turned further out that **culture and motivational spirit created by the epN-team is a distinguishing feature** for many epN-member organizations. This goes far beyond the actual activities and services provided. Through participating in trainings or communicating with the epN-team and other epN-members, interview partners reported that they received a lot of inspiration and motivation to continue their work. This is valuable when they feel challenged or drained by everyday difficulties.

Finally, **online resources contribute to increased awareness of the epN-member organizations**. Half of the epN-member organizations reported effects such as increased requests for information received after being listed in the solutions database. Provided examples of the case study interviews further illustrate this mechanism.

In terms of the **user rates of epN's online resources, trends were varying**. Page views of the website declined drastically during the reporting time frames (1 October 2015 - 30 September 2016 and 1 October - 30 September 2017). This can be strongly associated with the epAward process in 2015/2016 which has attracted disproportionate attention. The number of followers of the Facebook page increased slightly between 2016 and 2017.

To conclude, the epN is an effective intervention to lift up social enterprises and innovators in the fields of organizational development, individual professionalization and networking.

EFFICIENCY

To assess the efficiency of the epN secondary data was analyzed. It comprises (i) actual budgets and full-time equivalents (FTE) for the financial years (FY) 2016 and 2017, and (ii) planning documents.

The analysis revealed significantly more spending in 2016 than in 2017. While financial and FTE allocations towards the budget category epAward decreased in 2017, the budgets for Capacity Building and Online Activities increased. For the budget categories Support, Research and Partnership only marginal increases were observed. However, given the lack of reference points at this stage and the disproportionate influence of the epAward ceremony in FY 2016, the **analysis can only lay the foundation for future assessments** when FY 2016/2017 can serve as baseline information.

On a different note, a **high degree of professionalism and thorough preparation and planning of the activities** contributes to efficiency at implementation level. Further, Siemens Stiftung has recently introduced a much

stronger focus on impact monitoring which enhances efficiency by informing strategic planning and enabling the epN-team to track progress of indicators formulated for several project modules. The evaluation, however, shows that impact-oriented planning still lacks alignment with overarching objectives of the epN and a greater precision of some of the formulated indicators.

Overall, a comprehensive conclusion on the epN's efficiency is yet impossible.

IMPACT

The available empirical material does not allow a rigorous impact assessment. However, possible contributions of the epN towards achieving its intended impact, i.e. a reduction of basic supply shortfalls through the promotion of simple technologies, were assessed. The following questions guided the contribution analysis: (i) Does the epN contribute towards reducing existential supply shortfalls? (ii) Are there any negative unintended effects? (iii) Are target groups being reached by the epN-member organizations? (iv) How do the activities and services of the epN contribute towards the overarching goals of Siemens Stiftung?

Activities offered by the epN support organizations towards organizational growth, extended outreach to potential clients or beneficiaries, and in some cases, creation of employment opportunities in their target regions. **Impact** is thus achieved **through an indirect mechanism of targeted support for organizations who are promoting technical solutions to increase access to basic services.**

All organizations assessed through the case studies were found to exhibit a **strong focus on technology advancement** to increase access to basic services for underserved communities in at least one of the targeted sectors. With the exception of three organizations that were still in the developing or piloting phase, all epN-members were distributing their technologies in at least one country. The **majority of epN-member organizations** is thus **able to reach their target groups**. Most of them had developed diverse and mostly effective strategies and were either **planning to extend** their operations **to other countries** or regions **or were already doing so**. **No negative unintended impacts** could be identified during discussions with various interview partners.

Lastly, the analysis revealed a **great coherence between the activities and information services** offered by the epN and the overarching goals of Siemens Stiftung. The goal of the epN to promote technical solutions to extend access to basic services is fully in line with one of three support pillars of Siemens Stiftung as well as with their overarching goal to contribute to sustainable and social development **in line with the Sustainable Development Goals**. The same holds true for the geographical priorities of Siemens Stiftung. More than two thirds of all supported organizations are based in Africa, Latin America, or Europe.

To conclude, plausibility assessment suggests that the epN contributes to its intended impact the reduction of basic supply shortfalls in developing countries.

SUSTAINABILITY

To assess the sustainability of the epN, the evaluation team looked at (i) the ability of epN-member organizations to maintain the positive effects of trainings in which they had participated, (ii) the continuation of networks created amongst epN-member organizations, and (iii) the organizational changes that had been actuated by the epN.

However, given the wide variety of ongoing activities a **comprehensive sustainability assessment has not been possible** at this stage. A major challenge was also posed by the fact that 7 out of 13 qualitatively assessed epN-

member organizations joined the epN only less than two years ago after the epAward ceremony in 2016. The **time span of their membership is too short** to make any substantial judgements on the sustainability of epN's activities. For these reasons, **merely preliminary considerations** are provided.

According to case study interviews and the focus group discussions, **half of the organizations which joined the epN** after the epAward ceremony **in 2013** were at a point where they had **institutionalized positive benefits** of epN's capacity building measures. Besides the time of entry into the epN, the **extent to which new learnings were institutionalized apparently depends on the capacity and resources** of the respective organization. Some organizations who were still in their earlier phase or operated with a comparatively smaller team reported difficulties to institutionalize new learnings in their operational procedures. Comparatively more advanced organizations, in turn, stated that new concepts and learnings were used to improve their operational and human resource procedures or to extend or improve outreach to potential clients or beneficiaries.

With respect to **networking**, the analysis shows **mixed results**. Less than 25% of survey respondents had been regularly in touch with at least two other epN-members. In contrast, results from the case studies were more positive 3 out of 8 organizations stated that they were in intensive contact with two or more other epN-member organizations and 3 examples of promising future cooperation were provided. Due to the limitations described above, the extent to which processes and changes actuated by the epN could be sustained by the epN-member organizations themselves was particularly difficult to assess. **4 out of 6** organizations that had joined the epN in 2013, **confirmed** that they were **able to entrench positive organizational changes which could be ascribed to their participation in epN activities**.

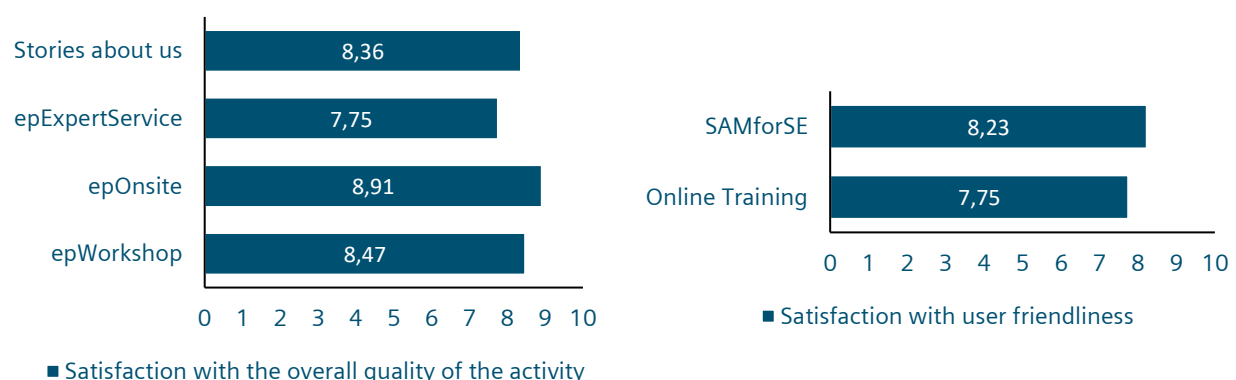
In conclusion, although the empirical database does not allow a sound sustainability assessment, findings provide first promising hints.

KEY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AND COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES

epN's **key strengths** lay in:

- i) the **provision of relevant inputs around the topics of organizational development and learning** including the communication of relevant tools.
- ii) the **great professionalism** of its staff,
- iii) the **positive atmosphere** of the network, and
- iv) the **personal communication with each network member**.

Satisfaction with epN's activities



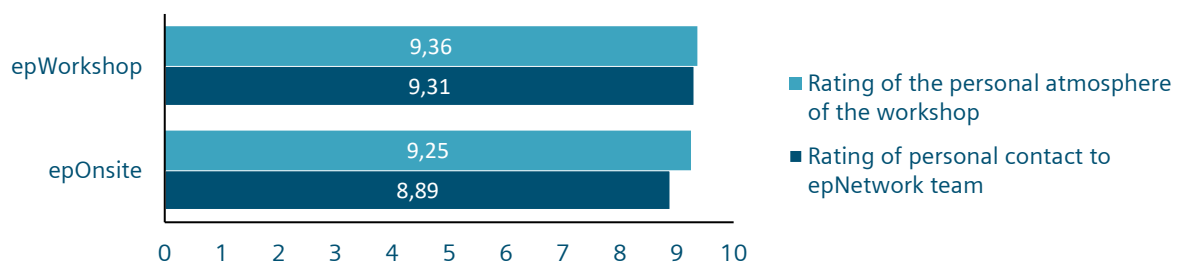


Fig. 6 - Satisfaction with epN's activities

Figure 6 underlines a high rate of satisfaction among most of epN-member organizations who participated in this evaluation. Information obtained from the participants does not allow to derive considerable weaknesses. The **comparative advantages** of the epN are as follows:

- i) Unlike many other support interventions in developmental contexts, the **epN accompanies social entrepreneurs and innovators over a longer period of time.**
- ii) The **diversity and regional distribution of the epN-member organizations is seen as a unique** feature allowing for exchange between organizations working on different continents and under various conditions.
- iii) The **epN also creates synergies** within the network which are illustrated by several concrete examples of **cooperation among network members** and the opening up of further **support opportunities through the ecosystem.**
- iv) **Siemens Stiftung finally contributes to greater credibility of the epN-member organizations** towards potential cooperation partners and investors.

Recommendation

To build on the achievements made and to consolidate some of its services, CEval derives a number of recommendations from the evaluation findings and the conclusions drawn. Key recommendations are as follows:

With regard to **improving the activities and services** offered:

- i) **Opportunities should be explored how to consolidate and advance topics** introduced by the trainings.
- ii) It is recommended to **address financing and fundraising needs** (e.g. offer insights on developing business plans, writing fundraising proposals, crowd-funding, introduce methods for customer care and acquisition, or accessing venture capital).
- iii) Siemens Stiftung should consider **inviting organizations to actively contribute to training delivery** or reserve slots as "BarCamps" allowing participants to develop contents on the spot.
- iv) A **closer collaboration with experts from Siemens AG or other companies** should be considered to expand epExpert Services and to help epN-members overcoming technical challenges. It would be also helpful to form sector clusters of epN-member organizations and to assign expert contact persons to these clusters.
- v) In order to increase efficiency CEval advises to **reconsider the format of online trainings** as the online survey shows that it only benefitted a small amount of epN-member organizations. In case of maintaining the format of online services, CEval would recommend to better promote participation in trainings and to consider small incentive mechanisms such as issuing of certificates or vouchers to benefit from further activities.

To **enhance results on the outcome level:**

- vi) As personal communication and the personal atmosphere were distinguishing features which kept many organizations committed to the epN, Siemens Stiftung should **consider to refrain from further increasing the number of epN-members**. Instead, it should to strengthen or deepen relations with current epN-members.
- vii) To ensure sustainability particularly regarding networking the epN-team should **consider mechanisms to encourage exchange and cooperation amongst members to bridge the time gap between the onsite trainings** (e.g. set up thematic or geographic online-based working groups, have virtual sessions with expert coaching on common challenges, or award small grants for specific proposals on future collaboration).
- viii) In order to further **increase the visibility of epN-member organizations** CEval advises to **continuously document the progress** of its members and to circulate their success stories. This would also contribute to the dissemination of epN's knowledge base.
- ix) The epN-team should **promote further dissemination of training contents and information services among local staff** of the epN-member organizations (e.g. encourage contact persons of the epN to spread learnings or actively point to available online resources, invite other staff to contribute with lessons learned from the field to epN's knowledge base, foster networking with local or regional experts and investors, or partnering with other support networks onsite to organize more activities at the local level).

Finally, to improve **planning, monitoring and evaluation**:

- x) A more consistent result-oriented monitoring system is recommended to prepare the ground for enhancing the intervention itself and to facilitate strategic planning, outcome reporting, and future evaluations. This requires to **systematize the Input-Output-Outcome-Impact (IOOI) logic of the epN by integrating the separately developed impact logics** for the different network modules (epOnline, epCapacity Building, epAward, epPartnerships, SAMforSE, Stories about us, epSupport) **into a single impact logic** for the entire network. The **whole epN-team should participate** in this process in order to guarantee a common understanding of the developed impact logic.
- xi) In order to refine indicators for monitoring and reporting purposes, CEval also recommends Siemens Stiftung to **have a look at the indicators developed for this evaluation**. It is advisable to critically review which indicators are most appropriate and necessary for the day-to-day needs of the epN-team.

For further questions, please contact us:

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