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**Working on stable access to energy sources on a timely,
sustainable and affordable basis in the OSCE**
**Independent Evaluation of the OSCE's work on Energy
Security**



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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank	KPI	Key performance indicators
ALRI	Agency for Land Reclamation and Irrigation	MCD	Ministerial Council Decisions
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina	NGO	Non-governmental Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organizations	OCEEA	Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities
CPC	Conflict Prevention Centre	OIO	Office of Internal Oversight
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility	OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
DKU	Kazakh-German University	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
DMF	Department for Management and Finance	OSG	Office of the Secretary General
DHR	Department for Human Resources	PBPR/RUR	Programme Budget Performance Report/Resource Utilization Report
ExB	Extrabudgetary	PESU	Programming and Evaluation Support Unit
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	POiD	Programme Office in Dushanbe
EED	Economic and Environmental Dimension	pS	participating States
EEDIM	Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting	RBM	Results-based management
EEF	Economic and Environmental Forum	RES	Renewable Energy Sources
EQ	Evaluation Questions	UB	Unified Budget
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group	UBP	Unified Budget Proposal
E&Y	Ernst and Young	UN	United Nations
FO	Field Operation	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
HPP	Hydro Power Plant	UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency	UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
		WIN	Women and Men Innovating & Networking for Gender Equality



Introduction

Having stable access to energy sources on a timely, sustainable and affordable basis, which is a widely used definition of ‘energy security’ at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), is a precondition for economic growth and stability. Without predictable, reliable and economically sound energy supplies, economies cannot prosper. The production and consumption must be managed responsibly to protect the environment. Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability requires comprehensive energy policies that encourage efficiency, innovation and the adoption of clean energy. Challenges brought about by climate change, are having an impact on the entire OSCE region and the Organization is addressing them through various actions. In this context, energy security constitutes an important part of the OSCE’s concept of comprehensive security.¹

Within the OSCE Secretariat, the Office of the OSCE Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) addresses security-related economic and environmental issues. OCEEA works with the OSCE field operations (FOs) and other OSCE executive structures on activities aimed at enhancing the overall energy security of the participating States (pS). The thematic objectives of these interventions range from promoting network resilience and protection of critical energy networks to providing legal support to the pS in various energy-related areas and contributing to improved governance and

transparency. The activities also consist of measures aimed at enhancing regional energy security dialogue co-operation and cross-border connectivity. The tools and approaches utilized include analytical exercises, capacity-building and training events, as well as (regional) awareness-raising workshops and conferences. In addition, some OSCE activities also include direct in-kind support and/or provision of hardware and materials.

This Independent Evaluation of the OSCE’s work on Energy Security during the period 2010–2022² provides an assessment of the OSCE activities on energy security to date. The purpose of the evaluation was threefold: to provide accountability for results vis-à-vis the OSCE’s pS, to inform organizational learning by providing insights in the energy security portfolio and results, and to provide information on the OSCE’s added value and comparative advantage in this thematic area for future programming. The assessment was conducted between October 2023 and June 2024 by a mixed team of OIO staff and an independent energy security expert. It included initial in-house stocktaking and subsequent data collection and analysis, which included desk research, a field visit to the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe (POiD), interviews with the OCEEA’s staff and five additional FOs, as well as a survey distributed to representatives of the pS. This report presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

1. The OSCE and Energy Security

Ministerial Council Decisions, mandates and Unified Budget objectives

The OSCE's work on energy security is based on several **Ministerial Council Decisions (MCDs)**. Jointly, these MCDs constitute a high-level mandate for the OSCE to engage in further work on energy security. They direct the OSCE to increase its capacity to contribute to strengthening energy security but also cover other related policy areas. The most relevant MCDs are depicted in Figure 1:

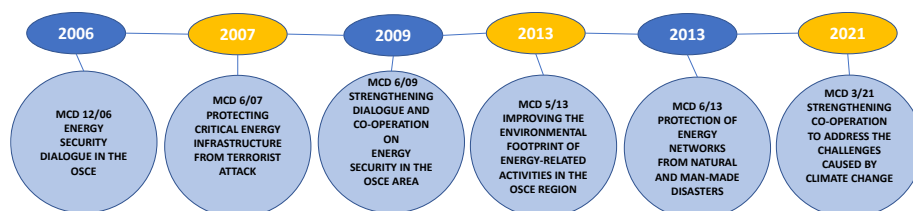


FIGURE 1 – KEY MCDs RELATED TO ENERGY SECURITY

The MCDs are complemented by the **OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension 12/2003**, which stresses the importance of economic and environment co-operation to tackle emerging economic and environmental challenges and threats to security, to enhance security and stability through collaboration, and to prevent possible conflicts in the OSCE region. It includes a special section on energy, stressing that the OSCE will encourage energy dialogue and make efforts to diversify the energy supply, ensure the

safety of energy routes, and make more efficient use of energy resources. The document also points out that the OSCE will support further development and use of new and renewable sources of energy.³

The Strategy Document gives the OCEEA specifically (as well as the institutions and field presences, within their respective mandates) the mandate to develop early-warning mechanisms and indicators for the assessment of the implementation of relevant commitments in collaboration with other international organizations, to develop and implement relevant programmes and projects, and to facilitate the dialogue among participating States. Annually, the OSCE organizes the Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF), which is the main and highest-level event within the Economic and Environmental Dimension (EED) of the OSCE.⁴ The EEF is a platform for policy dialogue on economic and environmental issues linked to security and contributes to the elaboration of recommendations and follow-up activities to address these topics.⁵ As such, the EEF intends to raise awareness and stimulate the political will of the 57 OSCE pS in dealing with economic, environmental and security-related issues, to share best practices, as well as to foster a dialogue with representatives of international organizations, the business and academic communities, and civil society.⁶ During the evaluation's temporal scope, topics of energy, and energy security, were discussed at various levels of intensity at the EEF. The OSCE also holds the yearly Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting (EEDIM) to review the implementation of the commitments undertaken by the OSCE pS in response to various MCDs. It provides a framework to enhance

dialogue and co-operation on key thematic areas within the EED.⁷ The 2019 EEDIM, for instance, focused on the management, legal protection, and co-operation around energy and shared natural resources like water.⁸

The OCEEA's high-level mandate is translated into Unified Budget proposals (UBP) between 2010–2022 with the overarching objective from 2010–2016 “to promote economic security, stability, international economic co-operation and good governance in the OSCE area”. Since 2017, the OCEEA's overarching objective was changed into “Enhanced security and stability through international co-operation on economic and environmental issues”. OCEEA activities included, inter alia, assistance to pS in implementing their commitments in the fields of energy security, promoting sustainable energy and dialogue, and best practices, in the energy security field and related capacity-building and networking, such as energy diplomacy workshops, knowledge exchange events, training events and the production of briefing files, speeches, policy papers and reports to advise and support the Secretary General, Chairpersonship and Troika.

The work of the OCEEA on energy security is complemented by some specific mandates and activities of the OSCE FOs. While some FO mandates refer directly to energy or energy security, others treat the theme more implicitly, and have broader mandates around economic and environmental activities. The key EED FO mandates with possible implications on energy/energy security, are outlined in Table 1:

TABLE 1 – OSCE FOs AND ENERGY SECURITY

Field operation	Mandate: EED (with possible energy security implications)
The OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe	Supporting the efforts of the Republic of Tajikistan aimed at further economic and environmental development through , inter alia, further improvement of business and trade opportunities, development of energy and transport , good governance and combating corruption, as well as the protection of the environment, water resource management and disaster risk reduction
The OSCE Centre in Ashgabat	Promote the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments as well as the co-operation of Turkmenistan within the OSCE framework, with special emphasis on the regional context, in all OSCE dimensions , including the economic, environmental , human and political aspects of security and stability
The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan	To support the efforts of the Government of Uzbekistan with regard to further socio-economic development and the protection of the environment in the Republic of Uzbekistan.
The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina	The OSCE will be working in concert with a wide range of institutions of the international community... in fields such as the needs of the population at the onset of winter , the return of refugees to their country and place of origin, the economic reconstruction and the establishment of a civic society.
The OSCE Programme Office in Astana	The Office shall implement projects in... economic and environmental dimension... energy security ; management of water resources ; protection of the environment ; disaster risk reduction ...
The OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek	The Office should work towards the following priority areas such as...projects related to the economic and environmental dimension , with an emphasis on economic and ecological development... environmental protection, water management issues and natural disaster reduction

Since 2002, the OSCE has also been supporting the establishment, operation and networking of Aarhus Centres, assisting the governments in implementing the Aarhus Convention, which was created to empower the role of citizens and civil society organizations in environmental matters following the principles of participative

democracy. The Aarhus Centres network has been rapidly growing during the years, reaching now a total of 60 Centres in various OSCE pS.⁹ The work of the Centres also addresses issues with implications for energy security, such as climate change, disaster risk reduction and water resource management.¹⁰ However, energy security per se is not the focus of the Centres' activities.

The energy security landscape in the OSCE region

The needs and challenges that the OSCE-assisted pS are facing today are inevitably a reflection of global trends. Climate change is undeniably one of the main factors that is and will continue to affect the pS, and technological changes and challenges are another key factor to consider. Over the last ten, fifteen years, Renewable Energy Sources (RES), along with energy storage possibilities, have expanded massively, growing in maturity and efficiency, transforming the way energy is being produced and gradually replacing the centralized model with a decentralized one. At the same time, digitalization renders energy infrastructure more responsive, allowing to deal with energy flows in real time. More electricity is consumed as a result of, inter alia, electric vehicles' (EV) share growth, artificial intelligence, decarbonization efforts and the changing climate. These trends are likely going hand in hand with overarching geopolitical trends, such as, possibly, gradually intensifying trade disputes between China, the US and the EU, and competition for strategic raw materials. At the same time, mainly due to the war against Ukraine, we are witnessing intensive efforts by pS to diversify energy sources and markets.

Given these trends, the energy agenda is likely to remain pressing for each of the pS in which the OSCE is carrying out its energy security-related activities (mainly in Central Asia and, to some extent, South-Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe). The pS are not necessarily on the same development level, and their political priorities may differ, also depending on external factors such as, inter alia, their geographical locations and natural resource endowments. For example, in terms of energy market reforms and market liberalization, some countries in South-Eastern Europe (e.g., Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) are more advanced than the Central Asian countries. This is largely thanks to the European Union (EU) membership aspirations of these countries and their implementation of the energy-related EU acquis.¹¹ However, reforms are also being implemented in Central Asian countries. They mainly revolve around splitting (unbundling) the incumbent energy companies into smaller companies along the value chain so as to increase financial transparency and efficiency of company functioning, possibly with the aim of privatizing certain state-owned assets. Almost all Central Asian countries have embarked on a transition from a subsidized energy sector model into a more cost-reflective one. The relatively low purchase power is a limiting factor, however.

Viewing the energy situation in the OSCE-assisted pS from the energy-mix point of view, some can cover their energy demand largely by generating it domestically. Among the Central Asian States, Turkmenistan is the country with the largest hydrocarbon reserves, followed by Kazakhstan. The gas export potential of Turkmenistan continues to grow and the country is heavily reliant on gas in its energy mix, as is Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan relies mainly on coal and is among

the world's top coal producers. Kazakhstan has also a relatively large hydro-power potential and very large solar and wind potential. Kyrgyzstan's hydrocarbon reserves are smallest among the other Central Asian countries although its RES potential, especially hydro-power, is relatively large. Tajikistan is the Central Asian country with the largest hydro-power potential. In South-Eastern Europe, hydro-power is an important source for electricity production, along with coal. All assisted pS are eyeing RES as a way to improve their energy security situation, diminish their dependence on the volatile global coal market and address environmental challenges stemming from the reliance on fossil fuels. Some of them have put in place a framework promoting RES, for example feed-in-tariffs, established a guaranteed buyer and also a system for processing guarantees of origin. Others have been conducting renewable energy auctions to attract investment in the sector.

Aging energy infrastructure is a challenge common to all assisted pS. A relatively high percentage of generation units as well as distribution and transmission infrastructure are beyond the intended lifetime and in need of refurbishment or replacement. This requires massive investments amplified by the prospective necessity to also integrate larger volumes of RES and the transition towards a more digital future (e.g., adjustments of control rooms and steering systems, deployment of smart meters, etc.). All these measures need to be taken while ensuring protection against cyberattacks.

OSCE activities: programmes and projects

OSCE energy security mandates are translated into Unified Budget (UB) programmes, which are implemented through various projects and activities. Activities mainly include capacity-building, knowledge-exchange and various instances of stakeholder engagement (e.g., pS vis-à-vis OCEEA/FOs) and awareness-raising. The budgetary sources are both the UB and Extrabudgetary Funding (ExB), and the overall budget over the period of evaluation reached ca. €13 million (M) over the temporal scope of the evaluation (45 projects). In addition to the OCEEA's very modest yearly UB programme activity budget of ca. €30,000, the OCEEA relies on ExB funding to implement energy security activities. The OCEEA-led initiatives and related ExB budgets since 2010 are outlined in Figure 2.¹² The largest areas in terms of planned multi-year project budgets amount to ca. €8.6M (with €4.7M pledged so far) of the OCEEA's overall energy security ExB portfolio, covering climate change and disaster preparedness with regional co-operation and gender mainstreaming as crosscutting themes. A strong regional dimension is present in all ExB energy security projects while gender mainstreaming is addressed across the project portfolio with various intensity. It should be noted that some ExB projects have/had considerable funding gaps in terms of the difference between the project 'budget' (i.e., the foreseen amount) and the 'pledges' received from donors (i.e., the actual money available). For instance, the Green Ports and Connectivity project (2018–2024) had a planned project budget of €3.7M (both phases) but only received and spent €1.5M. The project on Mitigating Climate Change Threats (2022–2025, ongoing) has

a budget of €2.4M but to date a funding gap of ca. €1M (the differences at the time of writing are outlined in Figure 2).

In addition, several FOs have implemented interventions related to energy security since 2010, mostly funded through the UB. An overview of UB and ExB projects, as well as related budgets, is presented in Figure 3.¹³

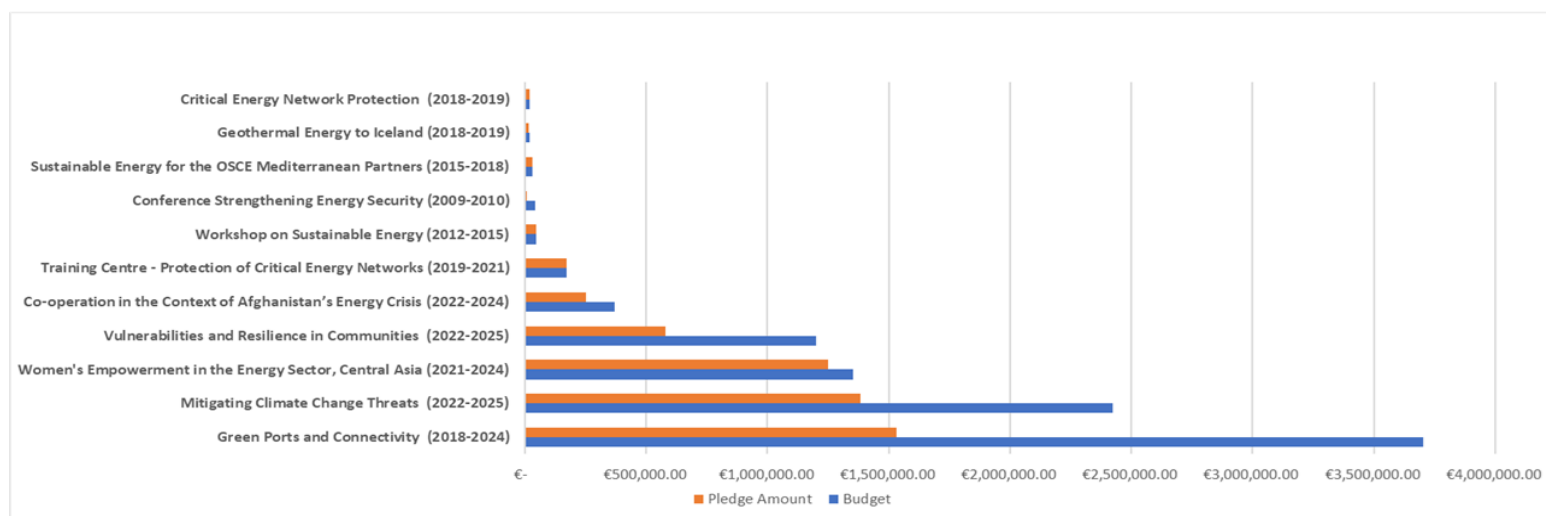


FIGURE 2 – OCEEA: ExB ENERGY SECURITY PROJECTS, BUDGETS, PLEDGES SINCE 2010

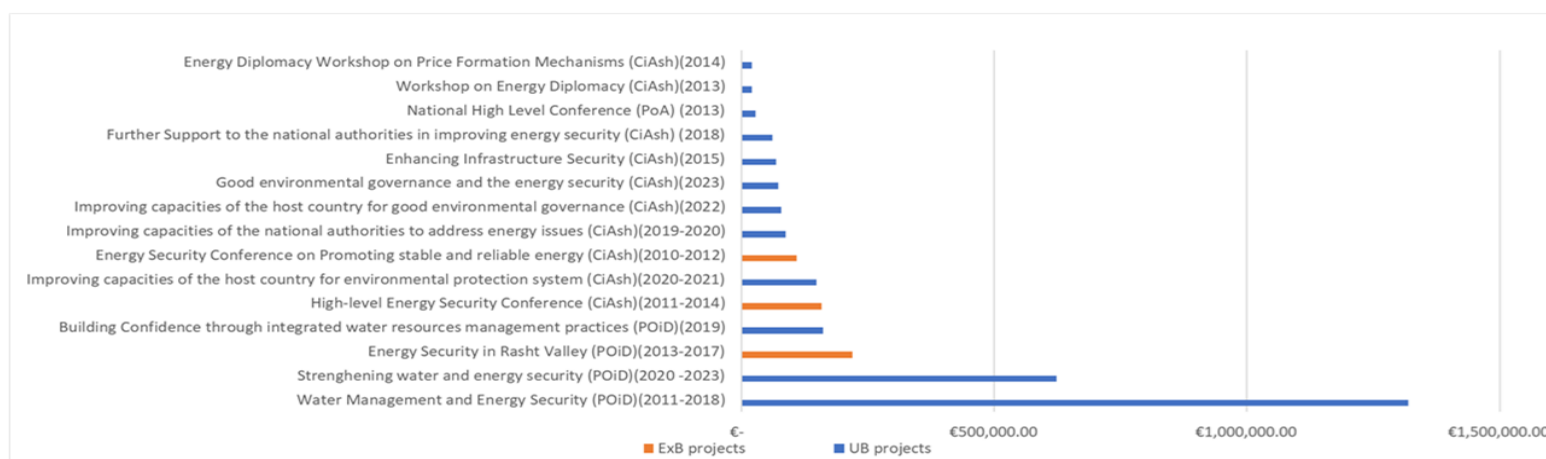


FIGURE 3 – FOs: UB AND ExB ENERGY SECURITY PROJECTS AND BUDGETS SINCE 2010

2. Evaluation Approach

Methodology

This is a theory-based evaluation¹⁴ where during the inception phase the evaluation team reviewed the basic segments of the OSCE theory of change¹⁵ related to energy security and fine-tuned the Evaluation Questions (EQs) outlined in the evaluation's Terms of Reference. The evaluation applied a mixed-methods design using a range of data collection tools, including desk review, semi-structured on-site and remote interviews, and a survey.

The initial data sources included MCDs and strategic documents, UB programme documents and project documentation for the portfolios outlined previously in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the POiD was selected for a field visit to better grasp the OSCE energy security work from a field perspective. The POiD is one of the OSCE FOs with an explicit mandate related to the development of energy and transport and a visit was feasible due to the availability of respondents within the given timeframe, as well as logistically. Interviews at the POiD were complemented by (remote) interviews with staff working in other FOs with mandates and/or activities related to the energy sector (which consisted of five additional FOs, as well as the OCEEA's representatives). To further strengthen the primary sources data set, a survey was distributed to OSCE delegates of all 57 pS (the response rate was 21 per cent) followed by six remote interviews with pS officials who indicated their availability. Given the response rate, the collected data from pS officials was only used to provide views of selective pS on

the topic, and not to generalize views of the pS collectively. The key data sets are summarized in Figure 3 below:



FIGURE 4 – KEY DATA SETS

The evaluation's qualitative and quantitative findings were synthesized and triangulated, where feasible, per EQs and related conclusions were generated. Subsequently, targeted recommendations were derived from the developed conclusions. Anonymous direct quotations stemming from the interviews are presented in the findings' section in italics and with quotation marks to illustrate the findings. Quality assurance was overseen by the OIO and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) chaired by the OIO (and comprised of OSCE staff from the OCEEA and FOs). The ERG was also a valuable source of additional data. The ERG reviewed all key deliverables for this evaluation, including the Terms of Reference, the Inception Report and the final Evaluation Report.

Evaluation Criteria and Questions

Five criteria were assessed in this evaluation: Relevance (retrospective as well as future-oriented), Comparative Advantage, Effectiveness, Coherence (internal & external), Gender and Human Rights Mainstreaming. The key evaluation questions were the following:

Relevance (retrospective/present)

To what extent have the energy security-related projects and activities of the various OSCE executive structures responded to the needs of pS and implemented relevant MC decisions and OSCE commitments in this area?

Relevance (future-oriented)

To what extent are planned energy security projects and activities geared to meet the needs of the relevant stakeholders in the coming years?

Comparative Advantage

To what extent does the OSCE use its comparative advantage vis-à-vis other actors in implementing energy security-related projects and activities in the OSCE region?

Effectiveness

To what extent and how have the OCEEA and the FOs achieved results in the focal areas of energy security programmes and activities?

Coherence (internal & external)

To what extent are the OSCE energy security-related projects and activities internally and externally co-ordinated?

Gender and Human Rights Mainstreaming

To what extent have gender equality and human rights considerations been taken into account in the OCEEA's and FOs' energy security programmes and activities?

Challenges and Limitations

- **Data availability and quality:** The availability and quality of data and the rotationality of OSCE staff affected the analysis of the OSCE's energy security work over the defined period. This involved limited accuracy and availability of information, limited project and programme performance data, limited documented evidence of achieved results and limited availability of data to reconstruct a theory of change related to the OSCE's work on energy security. The evaluation team mitigated these information gaps with additional interviews and document review. However, due to limited resources the evaluation team was not able to embark on an extensive primary (proxy) data collection and often relied on (limited) secondary data sources.
- **Field visit:** One field visit was executed and the energy security work in other FOs, and in pS, was not covered on-site due to time, budget or logistical constraints. The evaluation team made additional research efforts, conducted (online) interviews and carried out a survey.
- **Analytical and conceptual challenges:** Due to limited resources and timeframe, the evaluation team was not able to fully exploit all features of a theory-based evaluation, including an OSCE-wide validation of the reconstructed theory of change informing some of the refined EQs (especially related to the Effectiveness criterion). Therefore, the evaluation team could not always provide overarching conclusions on the OSCE's energy security work. These challenges were tackled by

safeguarding a strong link between the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. This prevented situations when high-level conclusions and recommendations are not backed by relevant data.

- **Scope-related limitations:** Energy security is not an area of high budgetary relevance, as evident from the rather modest budget figure of ca. €13M between 2010–2022, including significant funding gaps for some ExB projects. Out of this amount, four larger OCEEA-driven ExB projects, with a budget of ca. €8.5M, started rather recently (i.e., around 2020, taking strong hits from the COVID 19-related implementation challenges) and are still ongoing. This was an additional limitation in terms of assessing results of the OSCE energy security assistance.
- **Political sensitivities & ethical considerations:** Energy issues are subject to various political sensitivities exacerbated by the ongoing war against Ukraine and a challenging political environment for the OSCE, reflected in the lack of consensus on the UB approval since 2022.¹⁶ In this context, the evaluation team was guided by the 'do-no-harm principle', cognizant of the power relations that sometimes exist between evaluators and respondents, as well as of any political sensitivities related to the context within which the OCEEA and FOs implement their energy security-related interventions. Prior to engaging with any participant or interviewee, a verbal informed consent was sought. All interactions with evaluation participants were conducted in a confidential, respectful and non-threatening way, seeking needed accommodations as appropriate (e.g.,

time, platform). Data collected through interviews and used in the report omit personal identifiers to protect the privacy of the respondents.

3. Evaluation Findings

Relevance (retrospective/present)

To what extent have the energy security-related projects and activities of the various OSCE executive structures responded to the needs of pS and implemented relevant MCDs and OSCE commitments in this area?

✓ **Finding 1:** The OSCE's work on energy security is consistent with the OCEEA's mandate, as well as mandates of FOs (where relevant) and relevant MCDs. Mandates are translated into UB programmes, with OSCE activities targeting the (sub-)themes defined by the mandates, although with fluctuating intensity. No UB programmes and projects are outside of the scope of the MCDs or the OCEEA's and/or FOs' mandates.

The MCDs at large cover topics such as environment-friendly energy supply (MCD 12/2006), diversification of energy mix, energy market transparency and investments in the energy sector (MCD 06/2009), physical security of critical energy infrastructure (MCD 06/2009), including protection from terrorist attacks (MCD 06/2007) and natural disasters through better planning and incorporation of disaster preparedness and risk reduction into the planning process (MCD 06/2013). They also cover energy efficiency and energy saving (MCD 06/2009), reduction of energy poverty (MCD 12/2009) and addressing climate change through promotion of sustainable development (MCD 06/2009), improving the environmental footprint of energy-related

activities (MCD 5/2013) and increased use of clean and renewable energy sources (MCD 03/2021).

The OSCE's mandate is defined in these MCDs as facilitating dialogue among pS, facilitating the exchange of best practices and discussion on possible areas of collaboration. Various OSCE executive structures are mentioned to contribute as well within their respective mandates and available resources and at the request of the pS. The broader mandate of the OCEEA,¹⁷ as defined in the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension 12/2003, also tasks the OCEEA with developing early-warning mechanisms and indicators for the assessment of the implementation of relevant commitments and to develop and implement relevant programmes and projects in areas where it can add value, and has or can obtain cost-effectively the expertise and resources required.

The OCEEA's UB programmes related to energy/energy security have changed somewhat over time. While energy-related work was initially included in the Programme 'Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities', energy security is included since 2017 under the 'Main Programme: Activities Relating to the Economic and Environmental Aspects of Security'.

Generally, the energy security activities and projects are aligned with organization-wide commitments and are within the scope of one or several MCDs and mandates of the OCEEA and/or FOs (where relevant). However, the actual OSCE project/programme portfolio is somewhat scattered and uneven. For example, there have been relatively few projects addressing regional co-operation and market

transparency/liberalization, despite the fact that this is directly linked to improving the investment climate in the energy sector, which is one of the OSCE's high-level commitments. Only a few examples of initiatives addressing these issues (in one way or another) have been identified. They include the recent study describing effects of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan on Central Asia's energy sector, the energy security conference on Strengthening regional co-operation in Central Asia for promoting stable and reliable energy (organized in 2010), the Energy Security and Sustainability - the OSCE Perspective conference (organized in 2013), the 2023 Regional Workshop on Energy Co-operation and Natural Resource Management in Central Asia (within the context of the situation in Afghanistan) and the annual Vienna Energy Security Dialogue (along with the meetings of the Vienna Energy Club). The 2014 Energy Diplomacy Workshop on Price Formation Mechanism and the 2013 Chairpersonship High-level Energy Conference, Integrating Global Energy Markets - Providing Energy Security are probably the only examples of bona fide market transparency and investment-related activities.

Several OSCE initiatives address climate change threats to critical energy infrastructure and deal with current or possible future effects of climate change, often through focusing on disaster risk preparedness. The project Mitigating Climate Change Threats to Critical Energy Infrastructure is a flagship initiative in this regard. A number of OSCE projects, especially those carried out in Central Asia, also deal with water management and water protection. This includes, for instance, the ongoing Strengthening Water and Energy Security at National, Regional and Local Level through Fostered Dialogue and Co-

operation. Some of these projects partially focus on the modernization of infrastructure [drinking water, refurbishment of small hydro-power Plants (HPPs)]. The water management projects are complemented by projects aiming at strengthening overall environmental protection systems and improve environmental governance. Environmental governance and public participation in the decision-making process is also promoted through the OSCE Aarhus Centres.

However, despite the multiple OSCE commitments related to the environment and climate change, there are relatively few activities that in concrete terms promote RES. The Promoting Green Ports (phase I and II) intervention launched in 2018 is the one prominent project within the policy area related to the promotion of RES. In addition, in Tajikistan, the FO carried out a project aiming at reconstructing small HPPs and at installing solar solutions [photovoltaics (PVs), solar heat collectors] in remote off-grid areas under its programme for economic and environmental activities. This initiative also entailed training the local population in the use of these installations. In 2024, just outside the temporal scope of this evaluation, the OCEEA launched an e-learning course on Renewable Energy, Energy Transition, and Energy Efficiency in Central Asia in partnership with the Kazakh-German University. Another policy area that did not receive as much attention is the reduction of energy poverty. The only two projects identified in this respect are linked to the above-mentioned activity aiming at reconstructing small HPPs and at installing solar solutions in remote Tajik off-grid areas, recently implemented by the OCEEA, with over 1,000 beneficiaries. The approximate distribution of energy security projects across the key MCDs thematic areas is presented in Figure 4

below (a stronger shading demonstrates a higher frequency of projects).



FIGURE 4 – FREQUENCY OF MCDs THEMATIC AREAS APPEARING IN PROJECTS

Despite some provision of hardware and material, predominant means through which the OSCE is addressing various energy policy commitments are ‘soft measures’, as per its mandate. This means, inter alia, promotion of transparency, dialogue and exchange of good practices, support of co-ordination and co-operation between the public and private sectors, among the pS as well as with other international organizations.

✓ **Finding 2:** With few exceptions, FOs do not have explicit energy security mandates. This does not prevent them to address energy-related matters from the good governance or economic co-operation angle, as well as Chairpersonship priorities, in line with pS needs. Limited financial resources, limited staff on the post table working on energy, as well as technical capacity, are more restraining factors than mandates.

The evaluation team’s review did not identify situations of FOs deviating from their mandates when carrying out their energy security activities. To approach energy security from the broader environmental perspective was also quoted as an example of an area

that can be carried out. Nevertheless, one of the interviewed persons expressed the need for updating the mandates as some of the wording may be obsolete in relation to today’s needs. Another respondent requested a stronger strategic coherence through joint planning. A top-down planning was quoted as crucial to ensure a synergy with the OSCE’s overall mandate.

✓ **Finding 3:** OSCE activities are relevant in relation to energy policy challenges and needs of the assisted pS. These have been identified through a continuous, but sometimes administratively heavy, dialogue with the assisted pS. The design of OSCE projects/programmes considers outcomes of this dialogue.

The character of challenges pS are facing today is more or less in line with the global energy sector trends of decentralization, decarbonization and digitalization. All of the assisted pS are affected by climate change, not the least through the impact it is having on their electricity generation potential. All of these countries must decarbonize some of their energy production, address the deteriorating environment and cope with adverse economic consequences. They are considering a more liberal trading regime as a way to boost their energy security and ensure a stable energy supply. They weigh pros and cons of a greater regional integration.¹⁸ However, given the level of economic development, technological potential and climate conditions in the assisted pS, the possibilities of addressing these challenges vary largely and support from the international community is much needed.

Looking at the OSCE activities from the pS' relevance angle, most of the OSCE respondents were confident that their actions are contributing to the development of viable national policy agendas. Some FO representatives have frequent meetings with the national authorities, understand the national energy landscape rather intimately and are well aware of the main challenges facing the assisted pS. As a rule, relevant national authorities and national energy experts are consulted on the design of the projects. Some respondents have highlighted that in some cases this dialogue is mandatory and constitutes an additional monitoring mechanism for host authorities over the exercise of FO mandates. In these cases, the FOs are required to report to the national authorities, which adds an extra layer of politico-administrative burden and diverts FOs' resources from monitoring and *"scanning the horizon"* for relevant topics to work on, including on energy security. According to some respondents, the creation of an internal, structured two-way feedback mechanism between the OCEEA and FOs could benefit relevance and internal co-ordination. Current mechanisms are rather ad hoc and not secure enough according to some interlocutors, as the *"communication platform at the OSCE is poorly developed"* (see also the chapter on Coherence).

Various respondents brought up the limited technical capacity of the OCEEA and FOs as a restricting factor for efficient negotiations with the governments. Calls for a more efficient and flexible OSCE mechanism to hire external consultants to fill the gaps of missing in-house technical knowledge were relatively frequent during the interviews. A number of respondents also stressed that when drafting technical documents, the FO staff provides inputs where appropriate, and if

there is a shortage of in-house technical knowledge, which is not unusual (given the human resources constraints), the FO hires external expert consultants (but this is not a *"quick process"*).

✓ **Finding 4:** Modest financial resources, as well as limited human resources and technical capacity, limit the relevance of the OSCE energy security portfolio in quantitative terms while from the qualitative perspective there are some pertinent strategic initiatives (e.g., related to climate change) and promising community-based innovative pilot activities, also with gender components.

The challenging budgetary situation remains a *"hot issue"*, even as OSCE interviewees frequently claimed the OSCE is *"punching above its weight"* despite being *"chronically short of money"*. Some support this claim by stressing that the FOs are treated by the national authorities on *"equal terms"*. Despite occasional impediments to an FO's work, the majority opinion is that the OSCE's successful historical track record, going well beyond the energy security assistance, has been translated into a positive image and the themes covered, such as climate change, are relevant. Opinions on the sustainability of this situation vary while there seems to be a common consensus that this status quo is apparently not helped by the situation when *"the OSCE planning process is too slow, other international organizations, or bilateral donors, get approvals of their projects within 3 months which is not the case of the OSCE"*. In addition, more focus on a specific niche could increase relevance in comparison to *"stretching too thin"* across a large thematic portfolio.

To further substantiate the financial shortages claims, the evaluation team looked more closely at the situation in the POiD. The FO's annual budget for possibly energy-related UB programme activities (incl. water management-related activities) is around €150K (€144K in 2023). This budget is further divided between the activity areas of energy, water and irrigation, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). It is apparent that in this context it is difficult for the FO to be compared to larger organizations that are specialized in the energy sector. For example, the EBRD's current cumulative investment in Tajikistan is €946M, out of which €507M go to projects (including energy-related). Generally speaking, even though the activities financed through ExB funding may be a useful contribution to assist pS in line with their needs, these are still relatively small in financial terms and are of an ad-hoc character (the highest OSCE energy security ExB project budget, managed by the OCEEA, amounts to ca. €3M).

A number of interlocutors stressed that the OSCE's activities, in general, focus too much on (co-)sponsoring conferences and workshops, alternatively on the acquiring of *"soft skills"* via capacity-building activities, and not enough on *"hard projects"*—i.e., projects that aim at the modernization of energy infrastructure or at driving the energy market reform agenda. However, there seems to be an understanding among the various stakeholders, if not an acceptance, that the OSCE *"cannot compete"* with larger development organizations/donors.

Therefore, the emphasis is on small-scale, agile and innovative initiatives, such as the OCEEA's pilot on Empowering Women to Drive Sustainable Energy Access in Rural Tajikistan: A Catalyst for Community

Development and Wellbeing.¹⁹ Despite the budgetary limitations, the ongoing OCEEA-managed ExB project under which this activity was implemented bears the evidence of the ability of the OSCE to work efficiently and achieve results in a complex political environment. In general, projects in Central Asia have been quoted by several respondents to be very successful, with the flagship OCEEA project Mitigating Climate Change Treats for Critical Infrastructure, launched in 2022 (i.e., at the end of the evaluation's temporal scope), being mentioned as a particular success to date.

✓ **Finding 5:** The majority of the 11 pS survey respondents stressed that energy security is an important topic the OSCE should actively pursue. Some pS would even elevate the importance of the energy security-related activities in the context of the war against Ukraine.

The general opinion was that the OSCE is well-suited to foster dialogue and co-operation in this specific area. However, there are obvious challenges caused by the current geopolitical conditions characterized by, inter alia, the war against Ukraine. The OSCE works very well regionally (all the OCEEA's ExB-funded projects have a regional dimension), can assist regions without any other *"organizational umbrellas"*, and its mandate generally serves the concerned pS well. To increase the OSCE's relevance, it might be helpful for the Organization to assist with climate change vis-à-vis critical infrastructure issues, energy transition initiatives as well as energy crisis-response policies/assistance. All these topics were identified as highly relevant themes in the (near) future.

At the same time, the OSCE could play a bigger role in Central Asia, at the nexus of energy security-related water management and conflict prevention. Some pS respondents suggested that despite the current political limitations, the OSCE could be more proactive and self-driven in terms of addressing and tackling human-made and natural disasters related to energy infrastructure, and focus on preventing armed conflicts (inter- and intra- state) stemming from energy insecurity (*“OSCE projects should specifically focus on this issue”*). The evaluation team found that in terms of the implementation of MC Decision 3/11 on the OSCE’s capabilities related to the conflict cycle,²⁰ the OSCE currently does not have a systemic approach to analyse the relationship between energy (in)-security and conflict.

Figure 5 below describes the response of the pS to the distributed survey in relation to the importance of the energy security agenda:

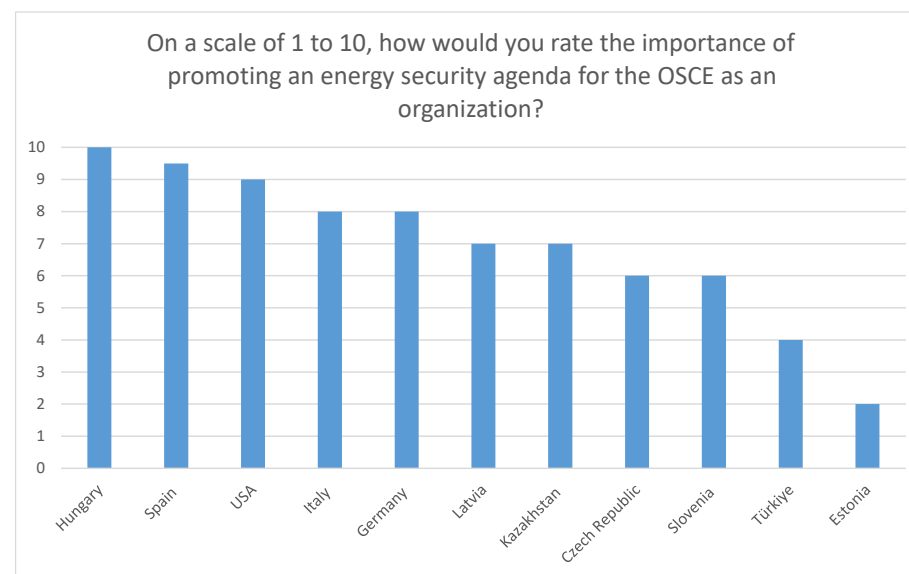


FIGURE 5 – ENERGY SECURITY AND THE OSCE, pS SURVEY

Relevance (future-oriented)

To what extent are planned energy security projects and activities geared to meet the needs of the relevant stakeholders in the coming years?

✓ **Finding 6:** Reviewed ongoing activities are in line with global energy security trends and have a relevant regional focus. At least some of the current trends are likely to gain even more relevance. If future activities continue to promote these themes in OSCE regions, while also proactively identifying the emerging ones, the OSCE activities are likely to remain relevant.

At large, OSCE activities on energy security at the time of writing are addressing the challenges stemming from decentralization, decarbonization and, to an extent, digitalization trends. The competition over precious metals²¹ (having a considerable conflict potential) is not addressed yet. The OSCE's projects deal increasingly with the environment and management of climate change and adaptation. A few initiatives support RES and the modernization of infrastructure and assets (decentralization), and there are also limited examples of projects supporting digitalization. Some of the past projects cover energy market aspects and promote cross-border trade and co-operation. The energy market aspect is not strictly related to the global energy trends mentioned above. Nonetheless, it is important as it fosters cross-border co-operation and improves access to energy.

The second phase of the project Promoting Green Ports and Connectivity in the Caspian Sea Region, launched in 2020 and concluded in May 2024, responds well to future challenges. Since the beginning of this project, the OSCE has been working on the conceptualization and implementation of a green logistics hub concept in all four regions, through the execution of several decarbonization and greening activities.

In 2023, the project Mitigating Climate Change Threats to Critical Energy Infrastructure was initiated by the OCEEA. It is the single largest OSCE energy-related ExB project in terms of planned budget (almost €2.5M) and aims to map the scope of risks posed by climate change to energy systems in different OSCE sub-regions, fostering access to actionable and localized climate projections that meet the needs of the energy sector and enhancing capabilities to read, interpret and use downscaled climate data to prepare energy systems for future climate realities.

In 2023, the OCEEA ExB project Strengthening Energy Sector Co-operation and Analysis in Central Asia in the Context of Afghanistan's Energy Crisis was launched. It presents a comprehensive analysis of the implications of Afghanistan's regime change for energy stakeholders in Central Asia and regional energy co-operation. It highlights key developments in Central Asia in terms of the effects of the changes to Afghanistan's energy landscape since 2021, identifies ongoing and emergent risks for energy trade with Central Asia, and analyses the prospects of key regional infrastructure projects.²² Last but not least, in 2024, the OCEEA launched the e-learning course Renewable Energy, Energy Transition, and Energy Efficiency in Central

Asia. The course, available to all interested experts in the OSCE region,²³ contains several learning modules focusing on the technical, legislative, economic and financial dimensions of renewable energy development in Central Asia.

In light of the above, the thematic focus of the OSCE's ongoing initiatives is relevant and has the potential to contribute to the progress of assisted pS within the energy policy area, as well as stimulating cross-border co-operation. The evaluation team did not identify any desirability of a dramatic shift in the thematic focus of OSCE projects in order to remain relevant. Some trends are even likely to intensify (climate change). However, the interviewees stressed that the OSCE should actively identify new trends and challenges that arise with technological development and environmental changes. As already indicated, one example of a new challenge that is likely to arise over the next few years is the increased competition over precious metals that are necessary for a successful energy transition. This competition may lead to increased geopolitical tension and possibly also regional rivalry. To moderate and handle these potential conflict drivers, experience gained from regional water management (which also has conflict potential as it involves upstream and downstream countries with different concerns and interests) could be utilized.

✓ **Finding 7:** The security aspect of climate change and the energy transition has future relevancy. Many interlocutors suggested to elaborate on this theme further, especially in specific regional contexts, possibly developing it into a flagship or core theme of the Organization's energy security focus.

The influence of climate change on the critical energy infrastructure, and energy security in general, has been quoted on numerous occasions as an important theme to address. One of the points raised was that the OSCE could, or should, play a bigger role in Central Asia in response to the profound impact of climate change on the hydropower resources, which could lead to various levels of disagreements and/or conflicts between the upstream and downstream countries. Energy transition, and renewables, are topics for the future but the *"current geopolitical trends make it difficult"* to work on these issues. However, this should apparently not be a reason for inaction and the OSCE should look creatively into various means to deliver on its energy security commitments.

Another quoted aspect that shall shape future interventions concern energy crisis-response policies and assistance, especially in terms of developing more tools for co-operation in situations of energy crisis. The post-war reconstruction of Ukraine, from the energy security perspective, was also mentioned but, again, the conclusion was that there is currently *"no political climate"* for discussing more broadly any of these forward-oriented topics.²⁴ It has been stressed that it is crucial for the OSCE to work within its current mandate, based on consensus and detailed discussions among all 57 pS.

✓ **Finding 8:** OSCE's broad mandate coupled with limited resources in the area of energy security make it necessary to explore a niche that is well aligned with its comparative advantage and security co-operation objectives.

One of the major issues that many respondents highlighted is the unpredictability of the budget situation and lack of funds that would enable the OCEEA and FOs to focus their engagement and add value in view of the engagement of other international organizations. Even though there is an understanding that the OSCE is not a development agency and is not meant to compete with other international organizations, the perceived challenge seems to be to remain relevant among other, stronger players, especially in areas that require substantial and tangible funding for further development. Both energy and the environment are such areas and as one respondent put it, *“people [here] don’t take you seriously until you bring budget”*.

Having a very broad focus and relatively little available funds does not solve the equation and according to some respondents, the OSCE should identify a niche, within the realm of energy security, in which it could become a leader and in which its specialized expertise would bring an undisputable value-added. However, some respondents also highlighted that the OSCE should stick to its *raison d’être*, which is to continue primarily being a political organization and not a development agency, and act effectively from this premise. In this context, representatives of one of the interviewed FOs stressed that *“in the process of identifying the niche, both the energy and environment could possibly be approached from the perspective of OSCE’s original ideas and values of good governance and human rights”*. Some activities, such as capacity-building activities on transboundary water management and related confidence-building aspects, as well as topics of circular economy (and related energy security issues) and forward-looking strategic frameworks on disaster risk reduction, go into that direction.

One interviewee stressed that in this context, the *“OSCE is well-placed to offer a platform for a discussion on how to balance the energy mix in a regional context”* (meaning seeking synergies between energy mixes of various jurisdictions, something highly relevant in both Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe, with a relative intensive reliance on power generated by HPP).

Virtually all interviewees stressed that the provided funding and human resources for energy security are very restrained, some of them also pointing out that even the thematic budgets for FOs are split unevenly, with environment and energy security areas receiving much less than the first dimension. As one respondent put it, *“if there are any priority policy areas in which OSCE would like to remain relevant, adequate funds should be allocated”*. This should apparently be supported by additional measures that could strengthen the future relevance of the OSCE’s energy security assistance, such as top-down strategic guidance paired with a longer-term work plan.

A number of interlocutors in Dushanbe mentioned that it would be beneficial to carry out some projects where the OSCE would assist in the development of infrastructure (or other more tangible activities) to support energy poverty reduction, which is a highly relevant issue in the country. There seems to be plenty of room for action, especially in the villages on the border with Afghanistan. However, there are other organizations implementing projects with a similar focus (UNDP, Welthungerhilfe) and it remains a question whether the OSCE is best placed and prepared for this type of work. The POiD plans to continue its (modest) project activities and to contribute to major conferences, highlighting in particular the conference organized as part of the

Dushanbe Water Process and the 3rd Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference, both of which took place in 2024. In 2025, the POiD plans to contribute to the Glaciers Conference, a major event organized by the United Nations (UN).

Overall, the OSCE's continuous support to the development of energy policy agendas of the assisted pS helps to build trust, maintains its position as a reliable partner and creates a positive co-operation outlook for the future, including at the regional level.

Comparative Advantage

To what extent does the OSCE use its comparative advantage vis-à-vis other actors in implementing energy security-related projects and activities in the OSCE region?

✓ **Finding 9:** The OSCE's key comparative advantage is its field presence, which is effectively utilized for direct interaction with national-level as well as local communities, identifying very clearly local needs and fulfilling the early warning function where applicable and mandated, and rapid response, if needed.

The self-evaluation reports refer, although not extensively, to the 'added value' of OSCE field operations, which is usually assessed in positive terms. In this regard, a strong and competent field presence appears to be the leading example of OSCE's added value linked to related aspects such as, inter alia, the trust extended to the FOs by the public, their political contacts and the long-term engagement in the countries in question.

An often-presented example of comparative advantage is the OSCE's ability to work with a wide range of stakeholders, with the EED being the ideal platform for such co-operation (as it is the least controversial dimension in today's political climate). The idea of confidence-building and co-operation through consensus is a guiding principle in many OSCE projects. These include the OSCE-led project Mitigating Climate Change Threats to Critical Energy Infrastructure by bringing together national experts that jointly prepare a climate change and energy security risk assessment report (followed by an energy-relevant climate

model for Central Asia). In this sense, this activity supports the consensus-building and common approach to regional challenges.

The relatively low controversy around the EED (including energy security issues) in comparison to other OSCE dimensions allows for some level of co-operation in today's politico-military context and the OSCE strives to project its added value in this regard. There is some limited evidence of activities carried out by the OCEEA and/or FOs, with which security was improved through actions within the EED. One such example is the aforementioned OCEEA project distributing equipment for solar energy production to women, enabling them to produce their own solar energy in villages on Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan. The provided access to heat and light has the potential to dampen the tensions in conflict-prone areas (e.g., women do not need to collect wood in the darkness, the provided solar panels mean enhanced surveillance and service conditions for border guards, etc.).

✓ **Finding 10:** The OSCE grasps well the local realities and has good in-country networks, which, together with a longer-term presence in the respective countries, are factors that help the Organization to exercise its political influence, including in relation to energy security. To an extent, this also applies to the regional level.

Nearly all respondents mentioned that the OSCE, through its network of in-country field operations and Aarhus centres, has a unique "*local dimension*" and access to rural areas it should utilize in developing and implementing its activities. Apparently, no other international organization has a similar comparative advantage, and this asset

should be further cultivated, possibly trying to revive the image of a “*peace-builder*” and an organization that is much closer to the people. However, there have been concerns that, due to the fact that some in-country field operations and/or offices have been closed in some host countries, this comparative advantage may be disappearing.

In addition, the overall mandate of the OCEEA, combined with the presence of OSCE field operations in CA and SEE regions, have been mentioned by several respondents as an additional comparative advantage. The OSCE apparently has a good overview of the security situation and should aim at identifying common threats and challenges, possibly also seeking synergies between FOs and in combination with other OSCE dimensions when designing future activities (e.g., approaching energy security from the vantage point of good governance and/or human rights). It has been often quoted that energy security and/or water management is a good thematic field to focus on and approach from a regional perspective. It also has been stressed on various occasions that FOs should intensively work together with the Secretariat to identify key activities, and the OCEEA's role mandated across the OSCE region, and hence co-ordinating regional initiatives, should be strengthened and formalized.

✓ **Finding 11:** The cross-dimensional aspect of the OSCE's approach to energy security, its good knowledge of local reality, as well as its flexibility are all specific organizational assets. An additional value is the OSCE's experience in small-scale initiatives with education and gender mainstreaming components, as well as its experience to operate in hard-to-reach areas.

The field visit to the POiD revealed the fact—also confirmed by other FOs—that compared to other international organizations active in the field, the OSCE's budget (on energy security) is small, hence its scope of action is limited. The POiD lacks the resources to develop and maintain in-depth energy sector-related expertise and relies by definition on external ad-hoc experts. However, the added value that was instantly brought up by several interviewed stakeholders is that the OSCE's approach to energy security is broader than the usual approach applied by other international organizations. It builds on OSCE principles and commitments in the politico-military, economic and human dimensions and when initiatives are defined, the OSCE's staff considers these dimensions and their overall contribution to security as well as the regional dimension.²⁵ Whenever energy security in a specific country is discussed, the OSCE looks at how the project possibly could contribute to the improvement of the general security in the country and/or the region. However, this can bring issues of taking on too much vis-à-vis the available resources. The lack of a formalized OSCE strategic framework on energy security, identifying relevant priority areas, is an impediment to realistic planning.

There is also the notion of “*localness*” mentioned by some interviewees as an OSCE-specific advantage. The OSCE runs projects that interact directly with local communities, such as the Aarhus Centres, but also other forms of education, for example the green economy workshops engaging the local population. A majority of respondents stressed that this approach should be further utilized and, where possible, expanded. One of the respondents in Central Asia mentioned that international organizations' funds are being increasingly channelled

through the government instead of being provided directly to NGOs, and that there is too much red tape around funding applications. It has been suggested that this is something the OSCE could reflect in its efforts of further cultivating “localness” (e.g., by providing related capacity-building and/or using its political influence to advocate for simplified procedures).

Some of the interviewees also mentioned that OSCE projects are very flexible compared to other donors’ projects (for example, key indicators could be updated at a later stage, during the implementation). Moreover, some interviewed experts stressed that the OSCE is often also perceived by various stakeholders as being “politically neutral”, as a platform where matters of security can be freely discussed between states with diverging interests, and as an organization that does not promote the interest of any pS or group of states. This notion seems to remain in place despite the ongoing war against Ukraine and related political frictions. This was highlighted during the interviews as a positive feature.

Further elements highlighted as possible comparative advantages are the OSCE’s experience with small-scale approaches including education and gender mainstreaming components. In Tajikistan, for instance, the Organization may be particularly fit to engage in activities to support the two state-run educational institutions with their technical curricula, also covering the energy sector. The OSCE’s specific know-how can be beneficial in terms of supporting the education of future female engineers, including on renewable energy aspects and issues of cyber/ICT security in the energy sector. Another stakeholder in Dushanbe highlighted that, due to the OSCE’s extensive track record

of working in remote areas, the Organization could engage more in the monitoring of glaciers and rural electrification efforts (since this does not require massive funding but brings about considerable and tangible benefits for local communities, increasing their well-being and energy security situation).²⁶

✓ **Finding 12:** The OSCE’s outreach to a broader public to present its strengths and added value in the field of energy security has been limited.

During the interviews the commonly quoted comparative advantage was the OSCE’s position to act from a regional perspective as well as the existence of FOs (with the FOs’ staff having a good knowledge of local issues). The discussions with some respondents further suggested that the established structures/mechanisms for co-operation at the local level are working reasonably well.

However, some interlocutors also pointed out that the OSCE does not promote and sell its comparative advantages in the energy security well enough, it should do more and communicate more actively with the public (incl. via social media). In this context the Vienna Energy Security Dialogue²⁷ was mentioned as a good example that can be possibly further expanded and/or promoted.

Effectiveness

To what extent and how have the OCEEA and the FOs achieved results in the focal areas of energy security programmes and activities?

✓ **Finding 13:** The achieved results are predominately on an output level, given the interventions' focal areas (i) capacity-building/training events, networking, knowledge-exchange, and (ii) co-drafting of energy policies and regulations. The thematic coverage of results cuts across the whole OSCE energy security portfolio in line with the MCDs.²⁸

Intended outcomes in the UBP's over the period of evaluation related to energy/energy security included:

- 1) Intensified international economic co-operation in the OSCE area, in particular on transport security and energy security (2010–2016)
- 2) Support provided to strengthening good governance in the OSCE area, in particular in the energy and transport fields, and in promoting public-private partnerships (2012)
- 3) Strengthened international co-operation in the OSCE area on environmental issues related to land degradation, water management, waterways and sustainable energy (2012)
- 4) Strengthened international co-operation in the OSCE area on environment and security aspects of sustainable development and energy (2013–2016).

5) International co-operation on environment and security issues, as well as on energy security strengthened, including through the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative (2017)

6) Environmental good governance and sustainable energy are an integral part of relevant national policies and practices in support of sustainable development (2017)

7) Enhanced energy security through better protection of critical energy networks from natural and man-made disasters and increased use of energy efficiency and renewable energy (2018–2022).

Programme outcomes are the mid-term results that should lie within the reasonable influence of the OSCE.²⁹ Related intended outputs (specific products or services resulting from OSCE activities) include:

- 1) Strategic policy advice provided to pS in support of pathways to sustainable and secure energy, energy network protection and the sustainable use of energy in transport
- 2) One new network in the field of renewable energy established to transfer knowledge and exchange best practices involving both policymakers and the private sector
- 3) Awareness raised and capacity-building provided in at least two pS on improving the environmental footprint of energy-related activities, including on the role of women
- 4) Briefing files, speeches, policy papers and reports on energy security are drafted to advise and support the SG, the Chairpersonship and the Troika

The Programme Budget Performance Report/Resource Utilization Report (PBPR/RUR) reports mainly on these outputs but it is unclear on what evidence and methodology the information included in these documents is based (essentially, the PBPR/RURs are designed as brief internal self-evaluations). While internal UBPs also include specific and measurable outcome-level KPIs for the OCEEA's intended energy security outcomes, these KPIs do not appear to be within the reasonable influence of the OCEEA given its portfolio of work, and are also not credibly reported on in the PBPR/RURs.³⁰ For instance, the targets presented for some of the relevant KPIs towards the end of the evaluation's temporal scope include, inter alia, a "25% increase in share in renewable energy consumption in total final energy consumption in at least one [OSCE] region", "economic costs of blackouts [in OSCE region] cut by 10%", "10% increase in share of renewable energy in electricity production in the OSCE area by 2025".

A vast majority of the expected results in project documents are output-oriented³¹ and the OCEEA monitors mainly these outputs. There are no (decentralized) evaluations yet assessing how these outputs contribute to programme outcomes.³² The interventions' focal areas identified by the evaluation team are (i) capacity-building/training events, networking, knowledge-exchange and (ii) assistance in drafting energy policies and regulations. A very limited portfolio of activities has been observed in terms of (iii) provision of infrastructure-related solutions (i.e., 'hardware projects'). The financial scopes of the already completed interventions are limited, which also limits their ability to deliver tangible outcome-level change induced by outputs. The UB/ExB project budgets oscillate around €100K.

Interventions with larger budgets, between €1.5M–€3.7M, took off only towards the end of the evaluation's temporal scope (around the year 2020) and are still ongoing. In general, it appears that the OSCE energy security project work was very limited until approximately the year 2020 when some projects/programmes with larger budgets took off (their cumulative projected budget constitutes ca. 60 per cent of the overall OSCE energy security financial envelope within the evaluation's temporal scope).

However, also those bigger interventions predominantly address the identified output-oriented focal areas. Moreover, they are ongoing (and were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic), which makes an assessment of higher-level results, as per the date of writing, problematic. In addition, some of these activities are mainly outside of the OSCE's control (e.g., the actual implementation of national laws, possibly drafted with OSCE support, is within the pS' domain). The very limited OSCE documentation offering information on energy security results (e.g., self-evaluations, progress reports) predominately covers output-level achievements (both UB and ExB funding). In the vast majority of cases the documents, in particular the self-evaluations, suggest that the foreseen project/programme objectives have been fulfilled (often at the level of "satisfactory" or "highly satisfactory").³³

Examples of reported results (at output level) in project documentation (outside the PBPR/RUR reporting) within the focal area (i) capacity-building/training events, networking, knowledge-exchange include knowledge provision on how to effectively integrate renewable energy into the energy supply for operations,³⁴ conduct of digital readiness workshops,³⁵ a mentoring programme for Central Asian women on

energy,³⁶ the organization of several girls' engagement activities³⁷ and sustainability/consultative meetings with climate and energy experts.³⁸ Within the focal area ii) assistance in drafting energy policies and regulations, the identified results include draft national and local energy plans prepared,³⁹ an impact assessment of the labour market conducted,⁴⁰ national documents making reference to climate change risks prepared,⁴¹ regulatory documents prepared⁴² and by-laws related to waste management developed.⁴³ Regarding the focal area (iii) provision of infrastructure-related solutions, the evaluation team identified two projects, one of them revamping existing a micro-HPP⁴⁴ and the provision of 20 households with off-grid clean energy technologies, accompanied by gender-focused training.^{45,46} Essentially, all these results are outputs defined as *"specific products or services resulting from several OSCE activities"*.⁴⁷

Due to the aforementioned very limited reporting on outcome level results, the interviews with relevant stakeholders were an additional source of information.⁴⁸ When asked to rate the level of effectiveness of the OSCE's activities, and to what extent their objectives have been fulfilled in the past, most of the respondents struck a more critical note. While they generally did not question past achievements of the OSCE in the area of peace-building operations, they were not convinced of the effectiveness of energy security work. It has been stressed on several occasions that the impact of OSCE action in the area of energy security is naturally not as strong as the impact other organizations have with adequate budgets and adequate technical capacity.

Moreover, the character of OSCE activities limits the Organization's extent of control in terms of delivering higher-level (e.g., outcome)

results. An example would be a socio-economic or a political change as a result of implemented legislation, since this is under the pS' control. The fact that even smaller interventions attempt to cross all dimensions of the OSCE's work was mentioned by some interlocutors as a factor undermining effectiveness. That is to say, it is not uncommon to encounter even small-scale energy security-related projects covering environmental aspects, rural development, law enforcement, media and the judiciary. When looking at the limited budgets assigned to the projects, as well as the human resources and timeframes, the viability of these project designs, in terms of high-level results' delivery, comes immediately into question.

✓ **Finding 14:** The OSCE is able to achieve good value for money and quick wins but budgetary and technical limitations prevent significant OSCE-driven changes in the energy security area.

Despite the *"budgetary problems"*, several interlocutors highlighted that the OSCE often managed to achieve *"good value for money"*. In other words, an OSCE activity brings a result that is worth the money spent. Several respondents also underlined the necessity to be realistic about the expectations in terms of what the OSCE invests in the various policy areas (including energy security) and what it gets back— *"success of a conference cannot be measured by assessing whether an OSCE banner or logo have been placed behind the scene"*, one approached person said.

During the interviews, respondents gave various examples of past and present projects that they believe have been effective on the national level. The reported results areas are generally compatible in the three identified focal areas. In Kazakhstan, the initiative Promoting Dialogue

and Confidence-Building on Transboundary Waterways between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was highlighted as a platform to discuss a wide-range of topics related to water management (the majority of electricity in Central Asia is water-generated)⁴⁹. Similarly, the OSCE's support of the working group meeting on environmental protection under the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Chu-Talas Water Commission, provided by the POiA and the POiB, respectively, was mentioned as a successful networking and knowledge-exchange activity. The OSCE support of the co-operation platform International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea was another, similar example given.

In Turkmenistan, the OSCE contributed to an analysis of the energy supply of RES to remote communities within a larger project concerning environmental management in the oil and gas sector. In this context, it shall be noted that in Turkmenistan, the OSCE has a long-standing co-operation with the State Energy Institute and was involved (through an external consultant) in a pilot project on a solar hydrogen system for remote settlements. The OSCE Centre in Ashgabat has also contributed to the drafting of the 2023 Strategy for Renewable Energy and to the concept of Energy Diplomacy 2021–2025. The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan does not seem to have any energy security interventions under implementation, although the FO observes also the energy security situation, especially taking into account the regional context in Central Asia (incl. Afghanistan) and the issues at the nexus of energy security and conflict prevention (e.g., the aforementioned issues related to water management).

For many FOs the issue of energy/energy security is only a fragment of their activities (if at all) in their respective countries, as they mainly deal

with human rights and good governance, and *“energy security should be perceived from this angle”*, according to some FOs' interlocutors. The budgets and emphasis on energy security work are, overall, very limited, which influences the delivery of results. The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina mentioned the contribution of the Aarhus Centres active in the country in supporting the Coalition for River Protection. Apparently, this initiative managed to stop the project of building 400 mini-hydropower plants, as these apparently would be detrimental to the environment. Some of the respondents repeatedly highlighted that the OSCE is *“not a development agency”*, which opens the question as to what extent the Organization should engage in development assistance projects.

✓ **Finding 15:** Results related to energy security fluctuate over time with a reinvigorated focus on the sector around the year 2020. The achievements are limited and mainly linked to 'soft' activities, such as networking and capacity-building.

The key inhibiting factors are budgetary limitations and an absence of forward-looking strategic direction for the OCEEA and FOs on energy security. It will be critical to closely monitor the results of the ongoing activities with larger budgets, including their contribution to immediate and mid-term outcomes. Some innovative (community-focused) assistance has been delivered with a possibility for scaling up. To further grasp the notion of energy security 'results', the evaluation team looked at the issue of effectiveness also through the lens of the Tajikistan field study. The topic has been discussed with FO staff as well as external stakeholders. Follow-up discussions on the projects reviewed during the desk phase⁵⁰ did not bring any significant

additional information, mainly due to the limited institutional memory related to these interventions. The reviewed (self-)evaluations confirmed that the achievements were mainly at the level of outputs and in line with the already identified three focal areas. Capacity-building itself, together with networking and awareness-raising at various levels, including day-to-day communication and outreach with the government and civil society, are the main output-oriented, 'soft', support. This includes the work of the five Aarhus Centres throughout the country, apparently contributing to awareness-raising, as they are one of the few places where the public can find information on environmental policies and legislation (including information related to energy security). The interviewees also stressed the OSCE's assistance to the Agency of Land Reclamation and Irrigation in drafting (secondary) legislative and normative acts related to the Water Code, adopted back in 2020.

However, some shifts from 'soft' approaches towards 'hard' solutions have been spotted. In particular, the PoID's Water Management and Energy Security project (2011–2018, ca. €1.2M, cumulatively), which initially focused on capacity-building and dialogue but then changed its focus towards solar-hydro hybrid solutions, reportedly resulting in 99 households with improved access to electricity in the served areas and an installation of solar panels for two social institutions, a school and a hospital. Additionally, 25 PVs were installed to provide access to energy to one larger village and two schools, as well as 30 electric meters to keep account of energy consumption of the hybrid (micro HPP and solar panels) installation. Also, the aforementioned project Empowering Women to Drive Sustainable Energy Access in Rural

Tajikistan—implemented by the OCEEA with some FOs' support—provides hardware solutions with relevant training components. The OCEEA is also expanding its work on energy access for rural areas in Tajikistan and a set of capacity-building activities that shall help people in the Khatlon region, bordering Afghanistan. All those projects have a small-scale character, which limits their broader impact.

A reoccurring theme during the interviews was how many tangible results the OSCE can achieve in the energy security area by *"promoting certain measures"* in comparison to *"delivering solutions"*, including investments and hardware-related assistance. In this context, some external respondents pointed out a possible way to increase effectiveness by *"attaching their capacity-building initiatives"* to large-scale energy investment projects of key international donors and organizations.

✓ **Finding 16:** The awareness of pS of the OSCE's results in the energy security sector is limited. They are aware mainly, if not only, of results related to activities they are directly involved in. However, for these interventions their assessment of (the expected) results is positive.

When the evaluation team reached out to the pS on the OSCE's energy security effectiveness, their responses were mainly linked to the interventions they were directly involved in as ExB donors. The overall knowledge about the OSCE's results related to energy security were limited. The OCEEA-organized Vienna Energy Security Dialogue has been mentioned as a result on its own and a potential springboard for further activities, a generator of ideas and a useful vehicle for

increasing the OSCE's visibility in the sector. One participant highlighted the OSCE's ability to *"assist in addressing and creating regulatory frameworks"*.

In terms of concrete projects, some pS had high expectations in terms of results, especially in relation to the often-quoted (and ongoing) OCEEA project Mitigating Climate Change Threats to the Energy Sector in the OSCE Region (similar to many OSCE activities, this intervention is focused on capacity-building and co-ordination, but also includes some analytical work, such as risk assessments). Another ongoing project that apparently seems to have considerable result potential is the OCEEA's project Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment in the Energy Sector in Central Asia for Energy Security and Sustainability. As many other OSCE energy security interventions, these projects also include a significant bulk of output-level results (e.g., co-operation and information exchange, risk assessments, mentoring etc.) and it is unclear how these shall be transposed into outcome and/or impact levels.

Internal and External Coherence

To what extent are the OSCE energy security-related projects and activities internally and externally co-ordinated?

✓ **Finding 17:** Internal co-ordination between the OCEEA and FOs on issues of energy security is ad hoc and unstructured. The intensity of information exchange varies and there is no clear organization-wide modus operandi on energy security matters.

Several OSCE documents refer to the co-ordinating role of Secretariat bodies [e.g., the Office of the Secretary General (OSG), OCEEA and the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC)] but the actual co-ordination of energy security work is in practice limited. At the UB level, the performance-based programme budgeting methodology enables and requires multi-year planning,⁵¹ and the annual UB preparation exercise is one of the only occasions where some level of strategic planning and discussion between the OCEEA and FOs can occur.⁵² In this regard, the dialogue is not continuous but rather revolving, concentrated into a period of a few months. The evaluation team found no evidence that a detailed premediated planning of concrete UB energy security activities was done jointly by the OCEEA and FOs. The CPC/PESU does formally facilitate, to some extent, communication between the OCEEA and FOs on the interventions' design at the programmatic level (UB-funded activities) and project level (ExB-funded activities). Although consultations with the CPC's Programming and Evaluation Support Unit (PESU) are mandatory, and the Unit facilitates co-ordination, it has no strong tools and mandate to ensure actual coherence between the OCEEA and FOs.⁵³ OSCE guiding documents related to the UB process include responsibilities of the OSG to ensure UB document quality control and of the CPC in facilitating programmatic co-ordination among Secretariat and FOs⁵⁴ but the evaluation team found no evidence of strong OSCE-wide co-ordination on energy security issues in practice.

According to the representatives of both the OCEEA and the FOs, the level of exchange on the planned development of the respective projects can be improved. The evaluation established that there is no

generally accepted guidance on how to internally communicate on energy security matters. No formalized structures for information exchange are established in this regard. The reviewed documentation also does not suggest any formal requirement for ensuring continuous co-ordination on the energy security portfolio between the OCEEA and the FOs. At the same time, the mandate of the OCEEA refers to the need to strengthen the EED components of the FOs' work, depending on their respective mandates. The OSCE Manual for Programme and Project Managers⁵⁵ outlines that it is the Programme Manager who is responsible for identifying projects that will contribute to the achievement of the programme outputs, outcomes and objectives as outlined in the UBP. Internal instructions set out the criteria of complementarity—i.e., that activities foreseen under the programme proposal are well co-ordinated with those of all other parts of the Organization. The assessment of ExB projects is co-ordinated by CPC/PESU by sharing draft project proposals between the Secretariat and FOs and following up on issues raised. UB programmes of the Secretariat, however, are reviewed by the OSG and do not allow for all details and the scope of co-ordination and co-operation to be reflected. The reviewed self-evaluation reports did not offer any additional evidence of structured, or formal, co-ordination between the OCEEA and FOs on energy security matters.

On repeated occasions, the interviewees highlighted that the extent of information-sharing between the OCEEA and the FOs depends on *“coming and going individuals”* at the Secretariat and FOs. When (an occasional) co-operation between the OCEEA and FOs occurs, the volume of data exchange fluctuates. From time to time, even relatively

important information *“falls between the chairs”*. One particular issue mentioned in this context relates to the lack of *“secure channels”* for exchanging sensitive or confidential information between the OCEEA and FOs. A reoccurring point during the interviews was a perception of the OSCE as being *“too decentralized”*, with a lack of guidance and understanding of the organization-wide objectives and priorities related to energy security. Indeed, mandates of the OCEEA and FOs differ, and hence their workplans, and there is no mid-/long-term energy security strategy that would push the OCEEA and FOs to walk on the same path. This is, however, not specific to the thematic area of energy security and has been found in evaluations of other thematic areas as well.⁵⁶

Some of the reviewed documents⁵⁷ mention that the OCEEA is in co-operation with the FOs tasked, inter alia, to support awareness-raising on the impact of energy-related activities on the environment. However, as a concrete example of a joint action in this regard has not been identified, this statement appears to have more a declaratory character. Further research revealed some fragmented examples of the OCEEA's and FOs' co-operation, such as OCEEA-driven workshops aimed at reviewing linkages between climate change and potential security risks. A certain level of co-operation between the OCEEA and FOs was also detected in the framework of the activities resulting in the Handbook on Protection of Electricity Networks from Natural Hazards.⁵⁸ Some documentation mentions activities where it is likely that the OCEEA and FOs have co-operated, even though explicit evidence is missing.⁵⁹

In this context, several FO representatives stressed that they would very much welcome a reintroduction, and rejuvenation, of the on-site annual Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting (EEDIM) gatherings in Vienna (which were moved online around the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, and their quality reportedly deteriorated; the offline format was revived towards the end of 2023).⁶⁰ During the field visit to Tajikistan, the interlocutors mentioned that these meetings provided an opportunity to keep a record of the initiatives and activities across the OSCE (including the FOs). In addition, the EEDIM was a forum allowing OSCE staff also to *“align with common values”* and gain *“a sense of corporate identity”*—i.e., to some extent it was a substitute for a non-existing overarching OSCE strategy on energy security. It was repeatedly mentioned that having a clear, joint planning process through which multiannual energy security priorities would be established together, and in which both the OCEEA and FOs would be involved, would create a good working environment and boost understanding of these priorities across the OSCE.

At the same time, it was also frequently pointed out that in some cases there may be a mismatch in expectations and in the level of expertise that the FOs are able to provide at the request of the OCEEA, and vice-versa. Moreover, the perceived decentralization and lack of co-ordination was viewed by some FOs as occasionally something positive. In their words, it enables them to put to use their local knowledge *“without too much red tape and interference that may complicate things”*.

✓ **Finding 18:** Coherence with external stakeholders, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector entities and international organizations, is generally ensured, especially in the framework of larger interventions. Coherence with national authorities is satisfactory but sometimes considered too administration-heavy.

Active co-ordination with external stakeholders has been observed, especially in the case of large OCEEA-implemented energy security projects. This applies to the OCEEA-managed Promoting Green Ports project (both project phases), which is a tangible example of successful co-operation between private and public sectors, has regional-level coverage and includes significant outreach and co-operation with other international partners, namely the EBRD and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Similarly, during the implementation of the project Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, or in the framework of establishing the Dniester River Basin Commission (both activities having indirect links to energy security), there were tangible signs of co-operation with the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNECE. For the projects Mitigating Climate Change Threats to Critical Energy Infrastructure and Strengthening Energy Sector Co-operation and Analysis in Central Asia, the regional co-ordination aspects were particularly strong.⁶¹ One of the starkest examples of enhancing coherence with external stakeholders is the annual Vienna Energy Security Dialogue, organized by the OCEEA together with the World Energy Council Austria, Ernst and Young, and the Federation of Austrian Industries, as well as the Vienna Energy

Club, bringing together Vienna-based international organizations dealing with energy.

The level of co-ordination has a tendency to decrease with the budgets of the implemented activities in the field. For example in Tajikistan, which has a small energy security portfolio, the interviewed international organizations had very little knowledge, if any, of the OSCE's energy security-related work.⁶² The POiD representatives are also not participating in a donor co-ordination council on the topic of energy attended by important donors, such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. This is a missed opportunity to further enhance the OSCE's energy security portfolio in Tajikistan in the framework of the FO's mandate.⁶³ Moreover, the POiD participates in similar working groups on different topics. However, in this context, the OCEEA respondents stressed that they have a *"frequent exchange with USAID⁶⁴ Power Central Asia colleagues and organize regional joint activities in Central Asia"*, and POiD representatives highlighted that they had *"implemented series of activities, including [an] Energy Diplomacy Workshop"* (apparently over various time periods within the evaluation's temporal scope), which was reportedly well-received. (The evaluation team was not informed about these activities when talking to international organizations in Tajikistan).

When it comes to host country authorities, the FOs' activity and project ideas for the following year are regularly discussed with them at various levels and the exchange of information is deemed satisfactory and proportionate by the OSCE staff involved. In Tajikistan, during the two to three budget discussion rounds, the FO draws on its local knowledge and needs, supported by discussions with local

stakeholders (the FO's proposals are shared with stakeholders; each year, one large meeting with stakeholders is held) and suggest activities to be reflected in the UB. The identified themes are not discussed in-depth with the OCEEA. In the same vein, when the OCEEA comes up with ideas for an ExB-funded project, and interacts with pS in this regard, these are not necessarily discussed in detail with the FO, although some level of feedback is sought (incl. through a CPC/PESU-led draft ExB project proposal review and assessment, in the framework of the existing procedures).

The Tajikistan field visit further demonstrated how external coherence is ensured in practical terms. Tajikistan's Ministry of Energy and Water Resources is the main counterpart of the FO in relation to energy security. The POiD frequently, both formally and informally, interacts with the Ministry on a regular basis on concrete thematic areas related to the EED, including energy security. During the interviews, the Ministry representatives were very positive on the level of co-operation with the OSCE. The FO is repeatedly invited to comment on legislative measures and have on several occasions proposed draft wording of some laws, especially secondary legislation. Moreover, the FO also maintains a vibrant communication with other local stakeholders, such as CSOs.

The external coherence factor was also discussed with some pS representatives. A majority of the interviewees confirmed their appreciation of the work and role of FOs in relation to the external stakeholders. Some of them also praised their own lively communication with the OCEEA around some ExB-funded energy security projects. In general, there seems to be a widely shared notion

that the FOs are one of the most valuable assets. They give the OSCE a local presence and direct contact with communities that other international organizations may not reach. At the same time, some interlocutors expressed the need for stepping up the OCEEA's role in terms of ensuring a regional (and OSCE-wide) co-ordination on energy security matters.

Gender and Human Rights Mainstreaming

To what extent have gender equality and human rights considerations been taken into account in the OCEEA's and FOs' energy security programmes and activities?

✓ **Finding 19:** The OSCE ensures that gender aspects are adequately mainstreamed within its energy security portfolio, in line with its multiple commitments in this regard. Human rights considerations are approached from this perspective. The majority of achieved results are at the output level, usually well-linked to the OSCE's higher-level commitments.

The OSCE recognizes that equal rights and opportunities for women and men are essential to peace, democracy and sustainable economic and environmental development. The pS have declared their commitment to gender equality in the 1999 Charter for European Security and the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and related decisions. These commitments have also been reflected in the OSCE's EED, which contains the energy security portfolio. In 2011, the MCD on Promoting Equal Opportunity for Women in the Economic Sphere (MC.DEC/10/11) was adopted and

through the 2013 MCD on Improving the Environmental Footprint of Energy-related Activities in the OSCE region (MC.DEC/5/13), the pS have agreed on mainstreaming gender into the development and implementation of projects and policies related to energy sustainability. In the 2021 MCD on Strengthening Co-operation to Address the Challenges Caused by Climate Change (MC.DEC/3/21), this commitment was reiterated and the importance of effective involvement of women in decision-making processes in the field of climate change once again highlighted.⁶⁵

Similar to the overall OSCE energy security portfolio, it seems that the gender mainstreaming of OSCE's energy security work gained momentum around the year 2020. The review of the project/programme-level documentation suggests that a gender perspective is considered at the levels of design and implementation of the OCEEA and FOs projects. A gender lens is included in the project proposals and the self-evaluation reports (which generally offer a good scoring in this regard). However, the majority of delivered results would be again at the output level. In some situations, gender equality is just one of multiple project aspects, treated as a cross-cutting issue, and there are also activities with gender as the key focus of project objectives and results. An example of the former could be the aforementioned OCEEA project Promoting Green Ports and Connectivity in the Caspian Sea, as part of which workshops on gender-equality and career-advancement coaching were carried out.⁶⁶ Another example of a cross-sectoral approach is the ongoing OCEEA project Mitigating Climate Change Threats to Critical Energy Infrastructure, within which a gender analysis of climate change's

impact on energy security is to be produced. In terms of the latter, perhaps the best example of a project that is most explicitly linked to gender and energy is the aforementioned OCEEA-driven project Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment in the Energy Sector in Central Asia for Energy Security and Sustainability initiated in 2021, with various components—including a mentoring programme—organized together with the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition. Linked to this activity, a study analysing (through a gender lens) the socio-economic benefits of the energy transition in Central Asia was produced, conducted jointly with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). Moreover, a scholarship programme was launched for Central Asian, Afghan and Mongolian women aiming to enrol in the German-Kazakh University's Master Degree Programme in Strategic Management of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency. The project also contains a set of pilot activities aimed to expand rural women's access to clean energy.

The FOs implemented a number of smaller gender-focused projects during the reviewed period, such as, inter alia, Empowerment of Women in Central Asia in Rural Areas, a study on the discrepancies between educational achievement and earnings in the labour market in Kyrgyzstan (including the energy sector), and Gender-responsive disaster risk reduction practices in Europe, a study analysing the impact of disaster on different communities, including on women (published by the FO in Serbia). Moreover, the WIN (Women & Men Innovating & Networking for Gender Equality) initiative promotes joint work of the OSCE executive structures and FOs, including on women's

economic and environmental empowerment. All these themes have links to energy security.

A number of respondents from FOs confirmed that the OSCE is actively promoting gender mainstreaming in their everyday contact with the national stakeholders, including stressing gender aspects within formal communication with host country governments and supporting gender mainstreaming at the strategic level (this also involves activities linked to energy security). The field visit to POiD reiterated these findings. When preparing the UB projects, the gender aspect is considered, including for activities focused on energy security. The POiD follows organizational provisions in this regard and is also co-operating with the Tajik Committee on Women and Family Affairs to promote the general gender mainstreaming agenda applicable to various sectors, including energy security. Furthermore, the FO's ambition to enhance the role and participation of women in the energy/environment sector translates (among other things) to the support of the Syrdarya River Basin Forum (through which women can voice their ideas on improving water management in Tajikistan⁶⁷). The pilot project Empowerment of Women in Central Asia in Rural Areas, which delivered equipment enabling the beneficiaries to run their own solar energy production, has been mentioned in this report on several occasions.

Education was a particular topic that repeatedly came up during the stakeholders' interviews in Dushanbe whenever gender aspects were discussed. The discussions revealed that the Ministry of Energy and Water Management might be interested in the OSCE's support for two education institutions that are actively enrolling young women

(preparing them for a career as engineer). The Ministry pointed out that before the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, young Afghan women were regularly attending Tajikistan's engineering schools (and then often returned home). A representative of Pamir Energy revealed that the company had introduced a special scholarship for women that comes with an employment guarantee [a part of Pamir Energy's corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy]. It was pointed out that these models are worth replicating and the OSCE was called upon to support similar activities (with potentially positive spillover effects into Afghanistan).

Despite the generally positive picture, challenges have been noted, especially in terms of making sure that there is a consistent understanding across the OSCE what gender mainstreaming entails and how to turn the high-level commitments into practical activities. In this regard, one respondent stated that gender mainstreaming at the OSCE is an *"uphill battle"* not only in relation to energy security but overall. However, as also suggested by the independent evaluations of the OSCE Gender Action Plan,⁶⁸ there seems to be steady progress, albeit one that is uneven within the Organization. According to one of the interviewees, the gender equality principles are being taken seriously by the OSCE and the Organization itself promotes women.

✓ **Finding 20:** Interviews with pS respondents suggested that gender is well-mainstreamed. The topic is also addressed at a high level within one of the key energy security-related MCDs.

The survey and interviews with the pS did not raise any concern in terms of gender mainstreaming across the OSCE's energy security

work. The limited scope of the engagement with the pS did not allow for an in-depth discussion on the matter. There is a general perception that the OSCE's work on energy security is well within the boundaries of relevant MCDs. In this regard, MC.DEC/5/13 taken in Kyiv, with its commitment to gender mainstreaming within the energy sector, is the most explicit point of reference. One of the pS' representatives highlighted that a promotion of gender equality is particularly important in Central Asia where gender inequalities persist. In that context, the success story of Pamir Energy in this field was mentioned. Other respondents highly praised the project Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment in the Energy Sector in Central Asia.

4. Conclusions

Relevance

✓ **Conclusion 1:** The OSCE's energy security interventions are in line with the MCDs and the OCEEA's and/or FOs' mandates and are relevant to its partners. Given the broad scope of the mandates and limited resources available, it remains challenging to realize the ambitions of the mandates to their full potential, especially in the case of the FOs.

The OSCE energy initiatives are supporting OSCE pS in meeting their commitments to secure a predictable, economically viable, commercially sound, and environmentally responsible energy supply, as well as to ensure the physical security of critical energy infrastructure and to reduce the environmental impact of energy activities. Full implementation of the mandates has been hampered by the limited financial resources and workforce dealing with energy security issues. Another reason seems to be a lack of OSCE-wide strategic, and coherent, guidance on energy security. At the same time, there is limited technical capacity of OSCE staff to effectively engage on expert issues with national and international counterparts. This includes convincingly advocating for energy security engagements from the vantage points of other OSCE dimensions, such as good governance. At the field level, there is also a risk that when developing an energy security project design, staff are too responsive to government requests and do not adequately consider project

relevance in context of the broader OSCE mandate and objectives. {Findings 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 19, 20}

✓ **Conclusion 2:** The OSCE implements some pertinent forward-looking interventions responding well to the present-day energy security issues and future trends, especially in the context of climate change. However, some emerging themes are addressed only marginally and the nexus between energy security and conflict prevention and resolution is not the main focus of the OSCE's work in the sector.

Climate change, and related mitigation and adaptation measures, is a gigantic future-looking theme linked to energy security and the OSCE is in full recognition of this fact. Nevertheless, there are other burning energy security issues recognized by expert communities which seem to be tackled by the OSCE rather marginally, and some of them not at all. All these themes, if unaddressed, might lead to conflicts that could be accelerated by, inter alia, good governance deficiencies (including corruption), trade-related disputes, border management issues, as well as political and historical factors. These energy security issues include, inter alia, digitalization in the energy sector, related cyber security issues, the increased competition over precious metals (such as copper, cobalt or lithium), and hydrogen and large-scale storage projects (and related transportation and infrastructure costs and arrangements).

The relation between energy security and conflict prevention and resolution is not the main focus of the OSCE's work in the sector. The

Organization's work at the intersection of energy security and conflict prevention is rather implicit, especially when it comes to concrete interventions, and the OSCE currently does not have a systemic approach to analyse the relationship between energy (in)security and conflict. There are some small-scale field projects carried out by the OCEEA and/or FOs which aim at improving security through actions in the energy-related area. The evaluation also identified an ongoing OSCE-wide analytical work focused on the interrelation between climate change and energy security in terms of mapping climate change and security hotspots but the interplay between conflict prevention and energy insecurity is not addressed holistically.

In addition, although nuclear energy is outside the OSCE's scope of work, it is hard to ignore it completely, as by some expert communities it is considered a cornerstone of energy security. There might be valid reasons to open this topic in future, for instance in the framework of decarbonization. However, even if the OSCE continues to focus only on the substantive topics it has covered so far it will remain thematically relevant. All these energy security topics, despite being selected rather erratically and without a clear strategic direction, have implications for the security in the OSCE region {Findings 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 17}

✓ **Conclusion 3:** Some of the smaller community-focused activities, including energy-related hardware/equipment provision, seem to respond well to local needs and delivered instant tangible results to the end beneficiaries.

Those activities, including the provision of mini-solar power stations and related community training courses, can be considered relatively low-hanging fruits, not only in terms of their relevance and direct effects. They can further contribute to the increased OSCE visibility in the assisted pS, as well as their ownership of the OSCE's support. Despite occasional political challenges, the OSCE generally exercises political influence in the assisted pS and has vibrant local networks. This can be, and often is, skilfully factored into (small-scale) OSCE projects. However, it should be carefully considered whether the OSCE, as a regional security organization, should position itself as an actor providing development assistance, and if so, to what extent and under what conditions. This is the conundrum to solve when considering the OSCE's next (strategic) steps in the field of energy security. Any small-scale activities should be always linked to broader OSCE security objectives. {Findings 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16}

✓ **Conclusion 4:** There is to date no structured mechanism facilitating the translation of substantive outcomes of the OSCE's high-level engagements and networking events into concrete OSCE energy security activities.

It appears that the key forward-looking events on the energy security agenda will be/are rather high-level. The examples cover, inter alia, the Economic and Environmental Forum Cycle, the Vienna Energy Security Dialogue, the Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference and the UN-organized Glaciers Conference. However, there is no structured approach in place to facilitate the translation of outcomes of these networking and knowledge-exchange activities to feed off each other

and feed into the OSCE's assistance to pS while taking into account their different, and sometimes diverging, needs.

In this context, the evaluation suggests that the OSCE's comparative advantage is not widely articulated to the expert community and broader public. Doing so could increase the OSCE's visibility in the sector and potentially raise the interest of relevant co-operation partners, which in turn could lead to focusing on value-added areas and possibly attract additional financial resources and collaboration opportunities. {Findings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 17, 18}

Comparative Advantage

✓ **Conclusion 5:** The extent to which the OCEEA can leverage the OSCE's comparative advantage to promote regional co-operation in the area of energy security is dependent on the mobilization of ExB resources and its ability to leverage the Organization's experience in conflict prevention and resolution.

In spite of the lack of an approved UB since 2021, and its relatively small UB budget to cover a large number of thematic areas, the OCEEA manages not only to carry on with its high-level networking and outreach work on energy security but also implements some relevant, and promising, ExB projects, often with a regional dimension. However, despite the OCEEA's fundraising, the generally limited financial and human resources available, and a lack of strategic prioritization, remain a serious impediment. In this regard, it is questionable whether the OSCE's comparative advantage alone can carry the Organization forward in a sector in which massive investments are often a

precondition of success (including having a place at the table with key stakeholders). It seems that strategic prioritization and focusing on smaller number of energy security activities is almost an imperative given the dire economic situation of the OSCE and the unpredictability of budgets, at least for the near future. It appears that the OCEEA and FOs are generally, and consciously, following this path, although perhaps not fully tapping into the OSCE's past experience and potential when navigating the situation. This includes not sufficiently leveraging the OSCE's conflict prevention and management work to inform its energy security work. {Findings 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18}

✓ **Conclusion 6:** The OSCE's comparative advantage in terms of its (long-standing) field presence, accompanied by operational flexibility and an ability to grasp local realities, constitutes a good platform for the Organization to punch above its weight.

The FOs have a general understanding of the current energy security landscape and a skill to find entry points for host country governments, civil society and local communities. This includes an ability to operate in hard-to-reach areas. The deteriorated geopolitical situation at the time of writing poses significant challenges for the OSCE as a consensus-based security organization and affects the work of its FOs. Despite this state of affairs, the FOs are still able to navigate this complicated environment in relation to its energy security portfolio and are seen, by some, as a partner of choice despite their scant resources. It cannot be overstated how much, in a situation of the OSCE's UB approval process being blocked for a third consecutive year,

this demonstrates remarkable resilience on the part of the OSCE and the dedication of its staff. {Findings 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11}

Effectiveness

✓ **Conclusion 7:** The majority of results delivered are at the level of outputs achieved (products and services resulting from OSCE activities, i.e., training courses conducted, events organized, studies produced). Due to the fact that the Organization initiated only recently its work with higher budgets in the field of energy security, the evaluation was not able to find credible evidence for the OSCE's contribution to intended longer-term outcomes.

Although there is a good track record in output delivery, including a considerable coverage of gender issues, the evaluation did not establish credible evidence of tangible results in terms of delivering on intended outcomes. Given the fairly recent expansion of the OSCE's energy security portfolio and the mid- to long-term nature of this work, the evaluation could not establish the contribution to longer-term outcomes. Moreover, as mentioned above, the coverage of energy security themes is rather fragmented, with the selected topics including climate change/energy transition, water management, infrastructure protection and other fields. The key achievements in these areas are related to the successful implementation of capacity-building and training initiatives, knowledge-exchange, as well as assistance in drafting energy policies and regulations. Some achievements were also notable in terms of a direct, and very limited, provision of energy hardware in the field. All these outputs are

generally in line with the UB programme objectives to promote economic security and stability, international co-operation and good governance in the OSCE area and related key expected outcomes (i.e., intensified international economic co-operation in the OSCE area, in particular on transport security and energy security).

In general, measuring effectiveness and overall policy-level progress through (small-scale) projects focusing largely on awareness-raising, dialogue facilitation and knowledge-provision/sharing, is challenging. This is evident especially when the workshops, or drafted documents, are stand-alone events and not followed up by some technical initiatives that could potentially induce some significant higher-level change. In this context it cannot be overlooked that the larger energy security ExB projects were launched only around the year 2020 and the majority of them are still ongoing at the time of writing (but were disrupted and delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic). This might give a chance for some of the higher-level results to materialize in the (near) future. This is underlined by the fact that the current energy security portfolio is the strongest the OSCE has ever managed (during the evaluation's temporal scope). The collected data reveal that the average budget of the **active** energy security ExB projects is €1.7M, while their cumulative budget constitutes over 60 per cent of the overall OSCE energy security project/programme portfolio between 2010 and 2022 (i.e., within the evaluation's temporal scope). For comparison, an average budget of **no longer active** projects is more than ten times lower, somewhere close to €150K.

For assessing effectiveness, and higher-level results in general, it is necessary to have a reasonable quality and quantity of results-based management (RBM) information, in particular stemming from monitoring and evaluation. However, this is not the case in relation to the area of energy security where the evaluation team identified only four decentralized evaluations touching upon the issue of energy, albeit very lightly (and no indications on energy security), fewer than 20 self-evaluation reports with very limited information on any kind of results beyond outputs (leaving aside the oscillating quality of these evaluations and the fact that self-evaluations are prone to bias) and a limited number of activity-oriented progress reports.

The reviewed internal PBPR/RUR reports focus mainly on outputs with unclear evidence and methodology supporting the reporting. The outcome-level KPIs identified in the PBPR/RUR towards the end of the evaluation's temporal scope are specific and measurable but have limited relevance for the OSCE's work. Given the limited size of the OSCE energy security portfolio, as well as related technical capacity and political limitations, these KPIs (and related targets) also do not appear very realistic. The additional survey and interviews conducted by the evaluation team gathered some additional data but could not plug the significant RBM gaps, given the scope and resources available for this evaluation. This also limited the options for a follow-up and triangulation.

This conclusion resonates with the 2021 Independent Evaluation of Results-Based Management in the OSCE⁶⁹ pointing out OSCE-wide RBM shortcomings. In this regard, it is an imperative that RBM

arrangements, especially for the ongoing energy security portfolio, are significantly enhanced. This includes the need to ensure that KPIs at the programme level are relevant and feasible, and that both outputs and outcomes are monitored, in addition to the need to plan for (formative) decentralized evaluations of larger interventions, in line with the 2022 OSCE Evaluation Policy provisions.⁷⁰ {Findings 1, 2, 5, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19}

Internal and External Coherence

✓ **Conclusion 8:** Internal coherence between the OCEEA and FOs on energy security matters, and to some extent also within the Secretariat, is rather ad hoc and not guided by any clear formal mechanisms. There is no high-level organization-wide discussion, framework, and coherent direction on the OSCE's energy security work, which reduces the OSCE's leverage and weakens its strategic posture in relation to this topic.

The flow of communication between the FOs and the Secretariat on energy security has been fragmented. The quality and intensity of the OCEEA's co-operation with each single FO varies and is mainly concentrated on hands-on co-ordination of some specific project activities. Where such co-ordination occurs, it appears to be usually functional, focused on bigger projects implemented by the OCEEA. Co-ordination between the OCEEA and FOs is less obvious in the framework of smaller projects run by the FOs, and also not necessarily needed.

The OSCE has a variety of guiding principles and approaches to ensure programmatic co-ordination between the Secretariat (involving in addition to the OCEEA also the OSG and CPC) and the FOs (for UBP documents, they are reviewed by the OSG, while for ExB projects they are reviewed and co-ordinated by CPC/PESU). In the majority of cases, they have a general character and do not target energy security activities per se (but are also applicable to energy security). The gathered evidence suggests that these approaches are not always fully implemented in practice, or when they are, their ability to strengthen the OSCE's internal coherence on energy security is low.

An internal structured discussion and strategic framework for the OSCE's work on energy security are missing. The issues of the Organization's comparative advantages, as well as technical and resource capacities, are not analysed in-depth. At the same time, the feedback required from the pS suggests that there is interest from the side of the pS that the OSCE deals with energy security. The advantages of being a 'decentralized' organization (i.e., FOs being quasi-independent and close to the end beneficiaries) does not offset the disadvantage of not having an overall strategic direction (and results framework with relevant KPIs). The COVID-19 pandemic, and disruptions to work caused by it, further undermined internal coherence. Additional limiting factors include limited technical capacity and expertise on energy security across the OSCE workforce, staff turnover and budgetary constraints.

The geopolitical and administrative challenges the OSCE faces at the time of writing does not have to prevent an internal discussion on the

OSCE's energy security strategy within its current mandates and commitments. If such a discussion were to take place, it should also address the strong mismatch between the OSCE's high-level mandates on the one hand, and limited human and financial resources and technical capacity on the other. Moreover, it should consider the context of the ongoing war against Ukraine and the impact it has on energy security in the OSCE region, including in terms of the damage to energy infrastructure. Taking into the account the temporal scope of this evaluation, i.e., 2010–2022, this topic has not been extensively addressed in the OSCE's interventions during this timeframe. However, it is hard to imagine that it would not feature in any forward-looking strategic discussion on the OSCE's approach to energy security. {Findings 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 17}

✓ **Conclusion 9:** Co-ordination with external partners is ensured in the framework of larger (mainly ongoing) interventions, driven by the OCEEA. For projects implemented by FOs, co-ordination with external partners—other than the national authorities—is weaker. Co-ordination with national authorities is naturally stronger for FOs than the Secretariat, and is generally perceived as well-managed and sufficient, although not always well-structured.

A majority of OSCE energy security projects involve one or several international organizations. This aspect is further supported by high-level networking events, such as the annual Vienna Energy Security Dialogue, organized by the OCEEA, successfully bringing together international organizations and experts dealing with energy [e.g., Energy Community, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA),

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), etc.] from across the OSCE area and beyond. Regarding FOs, the co-operation with international donors and organizations seems to be less intensive, including the case of the OSCE's absence at the Donor Co-ordination Council on the topic of energy in Tajikistan (the field visit destination). It is probable that the observed shortcomings in terms of internal coherence spilled over into not optimally co-ordinated outreach to external partners at the field level. There have been instances of the Secretariat and the FOs co-ordinating with external partners in the same country but not in a unanimous way. Improved co-ordination is desirable also due to a limited technical capacity of the FOs' staff, as well as domestic political pressures—these factors make outreach to external stakeholders (e.g., large multilateral agencies) more difficult.

The interaction of the OCEEA with national authorities seems to be mainly focused on the communication with the pS delegations in Vienna. The intensity of communication varies and tends to be more frequent with those that are also donors of OSCE energy security ExB interventions. The gathered data suggest that the communication is rather high-level but not necessarily focused on day-to-day co-ordination related to expected results. The data further suggests that the OCEEA is well-respected and trusted by the ExB-providing pS to ensure an effective implementation of ongoing energy security projects, especially from 2020 onwards.

For the FOs, the co-ordination can be administratively heavy in terms of FOs' reporting requirements towards the hosting pS (both at the

level of project design and implementation). The pS-requested high frequency of reporting in some FOs' destinations opens up a question about bona fide needs for such an administrative burden. {Findings 2, 5, 6, 10, 16, 18}

Gender Mainstreaming and Human Rights

✓ **Conclusion 10:** Gender was/is well mainstreamed across the OSCE energy security portfolio. Human rights within the OSCE energy security assistance have been predominantly approached through a gender lens perspective, as promoting gender equality is one of the OSCE's human rights commitments.

The majority of OSCE gender-related interventions in the energy sector focused either on empowering women through education and/or vocational training, strengthening of entrepreneurial and managerial skills and networking within the business sector, or on providing access to (renewable) energy to women in remote areas. Improving education and skills of women certainly has the potential of contributing positively to social justice and human rights in general, also in the energy sector. By engaging more women, the sector becomes more representative of society as a whole and the talent pool and innovation potential increases. The energy sector benefits from this and there might be positive spillover to the energy security policy area as well (by making it more gender-responsive).

The OSCE is recognizing these aspects and there seems to be an overall positive tendency in gender mainstreaming in relation to energy security. The effect that the OSCE seeks to achieve through its

initiatives, aims at supporting its gender equality commitments, and the majority of these activities appear to be successful and well-received by the direct beneficiaries and pS governments. The recent independent evaluation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality implementation over the 2018–2022 period confirms this trend by outlining that the OSCE has achieved tangible results on gender mainstreaming in its projects.⁷¹ {Findings 4, 9, 11, 13, 19, 20}

5. Recommendations

Specific recommendations to implement

- ✓ **Recommendation 1 (OCEEA):** Develop a forward-looking internal OSCE energy security strategy to ensure overall coherence of the OSCE's energy security work, as well as related results' delivery.

The approach shall be robust and holistic, encompassing strategic-level objectives and priorities, cross-cutting issues, technical issues (e.g., functioning of secure internal communication channels), division of responsibilities (with regard to the focus on regional versus national energy security challenges) and financial implications. An in-depth analysis of the interrelation between energy security and the conflict cycle should feed into the strategy. Subsequently, this framework can inform the development of the OCEEA's future programme outlines and UBPs, and map FOs' engagement. The substantive results of the OSCE's high-level engagements and discussions on energy security shall also inform the strategy and programme design, where appropriate.

All relevant OSCE stakeholders shall be consulted in a structured way, especially CPC and FOs with relevant work on energy security. The work should further entail the development of a results framework (with new KPIs), covering also new trends in the energy security sector, current and emerging security challenges as a consequence of energy (in)security, likely technological developments and environmental changes. Particular attention should be given as to how much—and

how—the OSCE can achieve changes in the energy security area beyond the delivery of outputs (formulating more relevant KPIs).

The evaluation revealed that some aspects of energy security have been addressed more intensively than others. There is an over-representation of projects addressing climate change/environmental governance (above all water management) and projects relating to disaster risk reduction and energy resilience compared to other policy areas. Energy market-related projects and energy efficiency projects are not as prevalent. However, this thematic imbalance is not necessarily something negative. Given the limited resources, focusing on fewer thematic areas (mid-term) and developing a niche for the OSCE is an approach that could bring benefits, enabling the Organization to do more with less. Perhaps risk reduction and the protection of infrastructure from human-made and natural disasters could become such a focus and, in this case, the OSCE should consider to also seek co-operation with other international organizations, such as the IAEA, in line with MC.DEC/6/07. The war against Ukraine has clearly shown that nuclear, gas and oil infrastructure are as vulnerable and important as electricity. Another option would be to follow a more conflict-prevention related approach towards prioritizing the OSCE's energy security work.

- ✓ **Recommendation 2 (OCEEA):** Establish an OCEEA-FOs co-ordination mechanism for the co-ordination of (regional) projects and activities in the energy security sector to improve the OSCE's leverage and considering economies of scale.

While respecting the mandates of the various FOs, the OCEEA should strengthen its leading role in co-ordinating the energy security

portfolio OSCE-wide. This would require additional human resources, which might not be secured short-term given the dire budgetary situation the OSCE is in at the time of writing. A clear strategic direction (see Recommendation 1) would help clarify roles and minimize duplication, dissonances and/or unnecessary administrative burdens, as well as technical challenges.

At the same time, there is a need for internal capacity-building and awareness-raising to strengthen the technical competence on energy security matters of OSCE staff at all levels. Particular attention should be given to FOs with relevant mandates in this regard, due to their irreplaceable position as direct intermediaries with the host country authorities and broader societies. However, whenever a project requires active input from FOs, it should be the OCEEA's role to co-ordinate efforts. Such a co-ordination mechanism could take the form of a network of focal points for energy security (or more broadly for the environment, if applicable).

✓ **Recommendation 3 (OCEEA):** Explore possibilities of co-operation with donors implementing larger, 'hard' infrastructure projects that are relevant for the OSCE and where the Organization can add value, especially in terms of complementing these interventions with 'soft' components, such as institutional capacity-building.

Given the mismatch between the OSCE's energy security high-level commitments and broad mandates and the reality on the ground, including the low operational budgets, joining external partners that implement activities aligned with the OSCE's goals could be a possible solution to bridge this gap. The comparative advantage the OSCE possesses, especially in terms of its in-depth knowledge of local and

regional issues, and its ability to operate in the field, could attract the attention of major players in the energy sector. All relevant entry points should be explored (and related political implications considered), be it high-level energy security conferences or direct (semi-formal) communication with the counterparts in the field. Regarding the latter, it is an imperative that the OSCE joins all relevant energy-related donor co-ordination mechanisms in areas where FOs dealing with the EED/energy security are located. Proactive knowledge-exchange and outreach to external partners should be scaled-up to explore possibilities for additional funding.

✓ **Recommendation 4 (OCEEA):** Develop and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework to improve periodic tracking of OSCE energy security results at all levels and plan for decentralized evaluations in line with the OSCE's Evaluation Policy. Such an M&E plan can be annexed to the OCEEA's Energy Security Strategy and feed into UBP submissions (see Recommendation 1).

The need to enhance results measurement within the energy security portfolio is urgent. The documentation of results on energy security is unstructured, with not enough in-depth analytical information. Outcomes are not sufficiently defined⁷² and/or tracked and institutional memory is weak. Decentralized evaluations focused on energy security have not yet been conducted, which is partially due to the more recent start of some projects.

There is a need to invest in the development of a results framework, e.g., defining and monitoring of outcomes at all levels. In addition, the OCEEA should plan and conduct decentralized (formative) evaluations of ongoing ExB energy security projects and programmes/portfolios, in

line with the OSCE's Evaluation Policy.⁷³ This includes actively ensuring that relevant OSCE staff feeds lessons learned into new, and ongoing, projects, programme policies and strategies.

Other considerations for the OCEEA and Field Operations

✓ **Consideration 1 (OCEEA and FOs):** When designing an energy security initiative, consider making the link with the conflict cycle more explicit and focus on a limited number of the most relevant issues to tackle to keep it feasible and realistic.

Energy security work can be more clearly related to the conflict cycle. While it should be informed by the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, energy security initiatives should also be focused enough to be able to produce meaningful results. In this context, when designing an initiative, the OSCE could try to make the link with the conflict cycle more explicit and avoid trying to fit too many different issues into it (avoiding the 'Christmas tree effect'). Co-ordination with relevant functions in the Secretariat, including CPC/PESU, should be sought in this regard. For viable designs of OSCE energy security interventions it is essential to conduct thorough needs assessments and cost-benefit analyses. However, these steps involve budgetary considerations that the Organization can only support once there is consensus on the approved budget, or through dedicated ExB projects.

✓ **Consideration 2 (FOs):** Leverage the OSCE's vast experience in small-scale projects close to local communities and implemented in hard-to-reach areas, while also ensuring their adequate visibility.

With its rich field presence history and experience, including operating in remote areas and/or conflict hotspots, the OSCE is uniquely positioned to implement activities that can have an almost instant positive result for local communities and at the same time enhance the OSCE's visibility. This can create multiple win-win situations, and it is an imperative that the visibility aspect needs to be addressed proactively in terms of professional outreach and communication campaigns, including on social media. The pilot and innovative activities focused on energy security can be further scaled up or used as an example to address strategic themes with high cost-benefit ratios. These activities include, inter alia, on-site monitoring of glaciers, off-grid rural electrification, technical education of girls and women in the energy sector, and possibly also energy poverty mitigation.

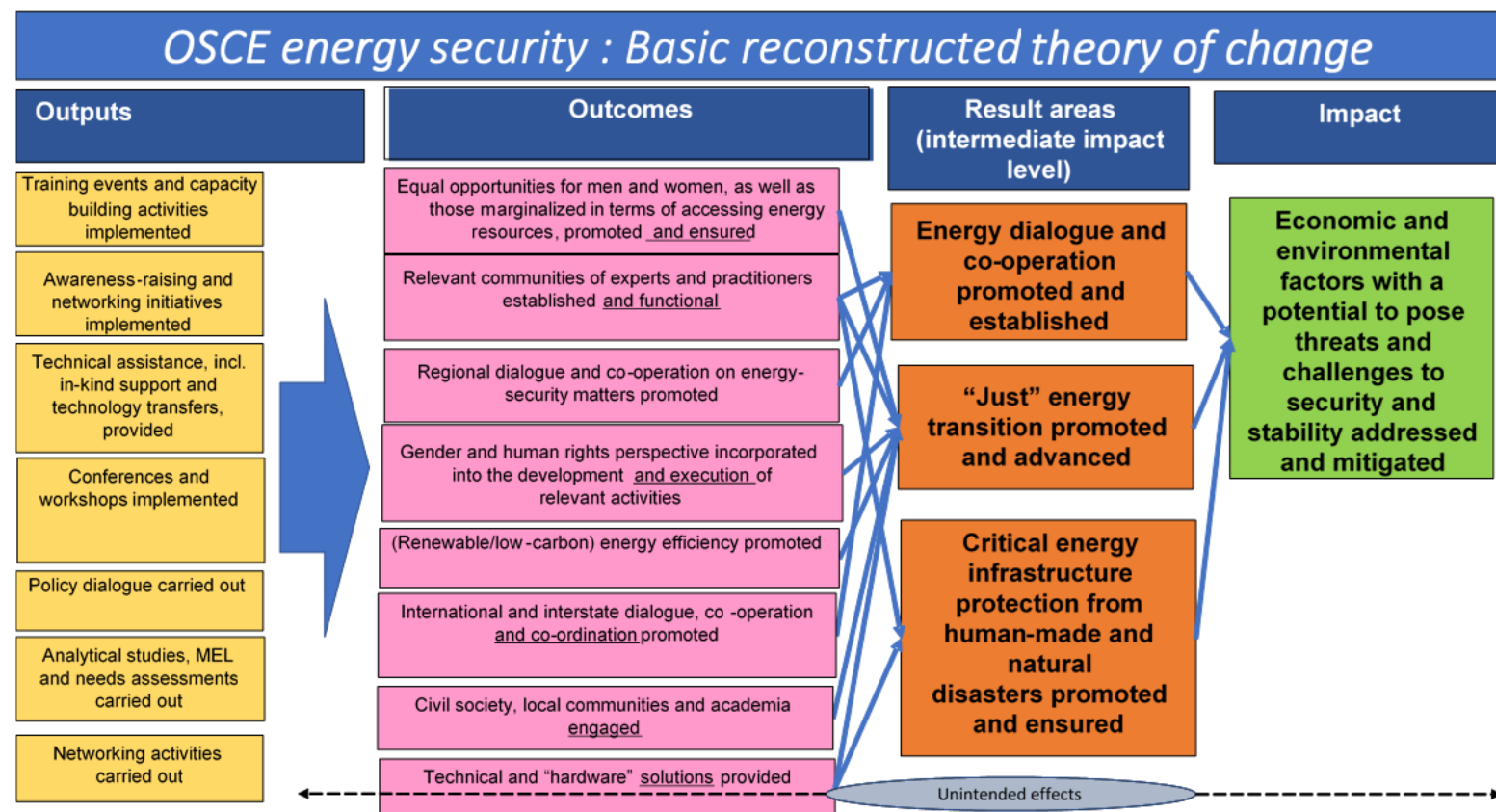
6. Management Response and Action Plan

Area/ Issue	Recommendation	Client	Accept (Yes/ No)	Implementation Plan	Implementation date (quarter, year)
Strategic planning	1. Develop a forward-looking internal OSCE energy security strategy to ensure overall coherence of the OSCE's energy security work as well as related results' delivery.	OCEEA, in coordination with relevant FOs and SEC departments	Yes	OCEEA will initiate consultations with key departments (OIO, PESU, CPC, OSG, GIP) and FOs with energy security mandates to understand priority areas and discuss with them how best to approach the development of an internal OSCE-wide energy security strategy, consistent with the OSCE mandate in this field and based on realistic needs of pS and financial resources. OCEEA will establish a working group with key actors from each relevant department/FOs with the aim of producing an internal energy security strategy document defining roles, objectives and priorities. Participating States will also have to be consulted and their positions reflected in the document.	1. Feb-March 2025: prep work and focal points identification + creation of OSCE wide working group 2. March-June 2025: consultations with working group + surveys to gather inputs and priorities 3. June-September 2025: Synthesize consultation outcomes to identify strategic priorities, needs, challenges 4. October 2025 - February 2026: Working group drafts strategy based on consultation outcomes, aligned with realistic needs/resources.

					5. Feb-March 2026: present draft strategy to senior managers/leadership 6. April – September 2026: finalization and internal approval with implementation plan
Internal coherence	2. Establish an OCEEA-FOs coordination mechanism for the coordination of (regional) projects and activities in the energy security sector to improve OSCE's leverage and considering economies of scale.	OCEEA, in coordination with relevant FOs	Yes	OCEEA will ask each FO with a mandate on Energy to join a coordination meeting twice a year to share priorities, inform about key developments and requests from host countries and pS in Vienna, and to synergize work.	1st meeting online – February / March 2025 2nd meeting in person – margins of EEDIM for cost saving by end of 2025
External coherence	3. Explore possibilities of co-operation with donors implementing larger “hard” infrastructure projects that are relevant for OSCE and where the Organization can add value, especially in	OCEEA, in coordination with relevant FOs	Yes	OCEEA, in coordination with relevant FOs, will conduct consultations with pS and major financial institutions involved in development of large infrastructure project to identify whether the OSCE could have a complementing role.	Jan – June 2025: consultations to be held by OCEEA with relevant external and internal stakeholders. FOs with energy mandates/portfolios will be asked to conduct consultations with relevant stakeholders at national level in host pS, where relevant. June-Dec 2025: share and discuss findings with internal leadership.

	terms of complementing these interventions with “soft” components, such as institutional capacity building.				
M&E	4. Develop and implement an M&E framework to improve periodic tracking of OSCE energy security results at all levels and plan for decentralized evaluations in line with OSCE’s Evaluation Policy. Such an M&E plan can be annexed to OCEEA’s Energy Security Strategy and feed into UBP submissions (see Recommendation 1).	OCEEA	Yes	OCEEA in consultation with OIO and PESU will develop an M&E plan for OCEEA’s UB and ExB projects.	By Dec 2025.

Annex I: Basic reconstructed theory of change



Annex II: List of Findings

Relevance (retrospective/present)

Finding 1: The OSCE's work on energy security is consistent with the OCEEA's mandate, as well as mandates of FOs (where relevant) and relevant MCDs. Mandates are translated into UB programmes, with OSCE activities targeting the (sub-)themes defined by the mandates, although with fluctuating intensity. No UB programmes and projects are outside of the scope of the MCDs or the OCEEA's and/or FOs' mandates.

Finding 2: With few exceptions, FOs do not have explicit energy security mandates. This does not prevent them to address energy-related matters from the good governance or economic co-operation angle, as well as Chairpersonship priorities, in line with pS' needs. Limited financial resources, limited staff on the post table working on energy, as well as technical capacity, are more restraining factors than mandates.

Finding 3: OSCE activities are relevant in relation to energy policy challenges and needs of the assisted pS. These have been identified through a continuous, but sometimes administratively heavy, dialogue with the assisted pS. The design of OSCE projects/programmes considers outcomes of this dialogue.

Finding 4: Modest financial resources, as well as limited human resources and technical capacity, limit the relevance of the OSCE energy security portfolio in quantitative terms while from the qualitative perspective there are some pertinent strategic initiatives (e.g., related to climate change) and promising community-based innovative pilot activities, also with gender components.

Finding 5: The majority of the 11 pS survey respondents stressed that energy security is an important topic the OSCE should actively pursue. Some pS would even elevate the importance of energy security-related activities in the context of the war against Ukraine.

Relevance (future-oriented)

Finding 6: Reviewed ongoing activities are in line with global energy security trends and have a relevant regional focus. At least some of the current trends are likely to gain even more relevance. If future activities continue to promote these themes in OSCE regions while also proactively identifying the emerging ones, the OSCE activities are likely to remain relevant.

Finding 7: The security aspect of climate change and the energy transition has future relevancy. Many interlocutors suggested to elaborate on this theme further, especially in specific regional contexts, possibly developing it into a flagship or core theme of the Organization's energy security focus.

Finding 8: The OSCE's broad mandate coupled with limited resources in the area of energy security make it necessary to explore a niche that is well aligned with its comparative advantage and security co-operation objectives.

Comparative Advantage

Finding 9: The OSCE's key comparative advantage is its field presence, which is effectively utilized for direct interaction with national-level as well as local communities, identifying very clearly local needs and fulfilling the early warning function where applicable and mandated, and rapid response, if needed.

Finding 10: The OSCE grasps well the local realities and has good in-country networks, which, together with a longer-term presence in the respective countries, are factors that help the Organization to exercise its political influence, including in relation to energy security. To an extent, this also applies to the regional level.

Finding 11: The cross-dimensional aspect of the OSCE's approach to energy security, its good knowledge of local reality, as well as its flexibility, are all specific organizational assets. An additional value is the OSCE's experience in small-scale initiatives with education and gender mainstreaming components, as well as its experience to operate in hard-to-reach areas.

Finding 12: The OSCE's outreach to a broader public to present its strengths and added value in the field of energy security has been limited.

Effectiveness

Finding 13: The achieved results are predominately on an output level, given the interventions' focal areas (i) capacity-building/training events, networking, knowledge-exchange, and (ii) co-drafting of energy policies and regulations. The thematic coverage of results cuts across the whole OSCE energy security portfolio in line with the MCDs.

Finding 14: The OSCE is able to achieve good value for money and quick wins but budgetary and technical limitations prevent significant, OSCE-driven changes in the energy security area.

Finding 15: Results related to energy security fluctuate over time with a revigorated focus on the sector around the year 2020. The achievements are limited and mainly linked to 'soft' activities, such as networking and capacity-building.

Finding 16: The awareness of pS of the OSCE's results in the energy security sector is limited. They are aware mainly, if not only, of results related to activities they are directly involved in. However, for these interventions their assessment of (the expected) results is positive.

Internal and External Coherence

Finding 17: Internal co-ordination between the OCEEA and FOs on issues of energy security is ad hoc and unstructured. The intensity of information exchange varies and there is no clear organization-wide modus operandi on energy security matters.

Finding 18: Coherence with external stakeholders, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector entities and international organizations, is generally ensured, especially in the framework of larger interventions. Coherence with national authorities is satisfactory but sometimes considered too administration-heavy.

Gender and Human Rights Mainstreaming

Finding 19: The OSCE ensures that gender aspects are adequately mainstreamed within its energy security portfolio, in line with its multiple commitments in this regard. Human rights considerations are approached from this perspective. The majority of achieved results are at the output level, usually well-linked to the OSCE's higher-level commitments.

Finding 20: Interviews with pS respondents suggested that gender is well-mainstreamed. The topic is also addressed at a high level within one of the key energy security-related MCDs.

Annex III: Endnotes

¹ Based on <https://www.osce.org/resources/factsheets/energy-security>

² While the evaluation's primary focus was on the work of the Organization during this time period, it also looked at more recent initiatives to answer one more forward-looking evaluation question.

³ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/3/20705.pdf>

⁴ Due to a lack of consensus on the political agenda there was no EEF organized in 2023.

⁵ Based on <https://www.osce.org/oceea/eeef>

⁶ Based on https://www.osce.org/event/25th_eeef_prep1

⁷ Based on <https://www.osce.org/chairpersonship/557523#:~:text=The%20EEDIM%20is%20held%20once,areas%20within%20the%20second%20Dimension>

⁸ <https://www.csce.gov/articles/2019-economic-and-environmental-dimension-implementation-meeting>

⁹ <https://aarhus.osce.org/countries>

¹⁰ Based on <https://aarhus.osce.org/>

¹¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/acquis.html>

¹² Several consecutive projects were compiled together, displaying as a single project. Therefore, the graphs do not show all 45 projects.

¹³ Ditto

¹⁴ <https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/theory-based-approaches-evaluation-concepts-practices>

¹⁵ The developed provisional theory of change (see Annex I) had only an informative character and was not extensively reviewed by the Evaluation Reference Group.

¹⁶ The Organization operates on the basis of the 2021 UB, with zero nominal growth.

¹⁷ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/3/20705.pdf>

¹⁸ Factors to consider are, inter alia, the risk of energy poverty and negative social impact, which push the national monopolies in some cases to hold back real market competition and related regional co-operation. Additional challenges are the ongoing war against Ukraine, the situation in Afghanistan and the EU's enlargement fatigue (weakening an appetite of some pS to pursue reforms).

¹⁹ Strictly speaking, this is not a stand-alone project but an activity within a bigger ExB portfolio of the OCEEA.

²⁰ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/b/86621.pdf>

²¹ E.g., Lithium is an important component for the production of car batteries.

²² <https://www.osce.org/oceea/564931>

²³ <https://www.osce.org/oceea/563701>

²⁴ The OCEEA's project Mitigating Climate Change Threats to the Energy Sector is, among other things, providing Ukraine with the climate data needed to reconstruct the energy sector in a disaster-resilient and sustainable manner.

²⁵ The largest OSCE energy security projects (Promoting Green Ports and Connectivity in the Caspian Sea Region or Managing Climate Change Threats to Critical Energy Infrastructure) illustrate this approach well.

²⁶ Small PVs may to some extent shield the population from the expected electricity price hikes (the cost of electricity in Dushanbe during winter months is around US\$150/month, while the average monthly income is around US\$300, so there is limited room for further price increases and not enough money to invest in small-scale RES from a family budget).

²⁷ <https://www.osce.org/occea/574637>

²⁸ E.g., water management, conflict prevention, energy transition, infrastructure protection, etc.

²⁹ Programme outcomes are the mid-term results induced by the outputs. An outcome is a medium-term impact a programme wants to achieve, en route to the fulfillment of objectives. Although affected by outside factors, the outcome must lie within the reasonable influence of the OSCE. Outcomes must focus on the tangible change introduced by the programme (<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/1/70693.pdf>).

³⁰ Following the adoption of the 2017 UB, the Permanent Council tasked the Secretariat to share Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with participating States, with a view to discussion in the ACMF (PC.DEC/1252/Corr.1). The full list of KPIs has only been shared with the pS in 2017. KPIs are currently used as internal management and monitoring tools and serve as reference indicators to reflect a quantitative or qualitative change measuring the outcome, which is outside of the OSCE's control but within its sphere of influence and should not be set unrealistically/unfeasibly high.

³¹ That is to say, (i) they are defined only at the output level, (ii) they are presented as outcomes in the project documents, but they are actually outputs (e.g., an output such as "advanced energy security and sanitation initiatives are introduced at rural level" is presented as outcome/impact) or (iii) the outcomes are well-defined but the internal reporting is done only at the output level (an outcome such as Enhanced Energy Security through better protection of Critical Energy Networks is reported as "...as an example, the Vienna Strategic Energy Dialogue, jointly organized with the World Energy Council and Deloitte, discussed latest technological and economic developments", OSCE PBPR 2019).

³² For more information on the types of results at the OSCE please refer to <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/1/70693.pdf>, p. 22

³³ These ranking levels are used in the self-evaluation reports.

³⁴ Promoting Green Ports and Connectivity in the Caspian Sea

³⁵ Ditto

³⁶ Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment in the Energy Sector in Central Asia for Energy Security and Sustainability

³⁷ Ditto

³⁸ Mitigating Climate Change Threats to Critical Energy Infrastructure

³⁹ Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment in the Energy Sector in Central Asia for Energy Security and Sustainability

⁴⁰ Ditto

⁴¹ Mitigating Climate Change Threats to Critical Energy Infrastructure

⁴² Building Confidence through Introduction of Integrated Water Resources Management practices, Tajikistan

⁴³ Improving Capacities of the Host Country to Promote Good Governance and Strengthen the Energy Security

⁴⁴ Rasht Valley in Tajikistan

⁴⁵ Empowering Women to Drive Sustainable Energy Access in Rural Tajikistan

⁴⁶ Some OSCE projects/programmes have an explicit focus on gender mainstreaming. It shall be noted that each project/programme might include more of the identified focal areas and the reviewed documentation did not offer weighting of these clusters in terms of budgets, importance or participants' breakdown.

⁴⁷ For more information on the types of results at the OSCE please refer to <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/1/70693.pdf>, p. 22

⁴⁸ The respondents were predominately OSCE staff; the limited number of external stakeholders interviewed during the field trip to Tajikistan were not familiar with OSCE results in the energy security sector.

⁴⁹ <https://www.osce.org/programme-office-in-astana/559233>. Despite the fact that this initiative is outside of the evaluation's temporal scope (it took place in 11/2023), it is an interesting forward-looking example of an OSCE-supported cross-border confidence-building initiative.

⁵⁰ For example, Strengthening water and energy security through experience-sharing, dialogue and institutionalization; Energy Security in the Rasht Valley; Strengthening water and energy security at national, regional and local level through fostered dialogue and co-operation; Water Management and Energy Security; and Building confidence through introduction of Integrated Water Resources Management practices.

⁵¹ OSCE Performance Based Programme Budgeting - Essential Resources. Second edition, 2007

⁵² In addition to regional Heads of Mission meetings where each thematic area covers their upcoming plans.

⁵³ For more information on the ExB compliance process, refer to the OSCE Financial/Administrative Instruction 04/2004 (Extrabudgetary Contributions).

⁵⁴ FAI 2/2005 – Provisional – Unified Budget and Programme Implementation

⁵⁵ [70693.pdf \(osce.org\)](#)

⁵⁶ E.g., the independent evaluation of the OSCE's anti-corruption assistance, see: Supporting incremental changes in the fight against corruption: Independent Evaluation of the OSCE's Anti-Corruption Assistance 2011–2021

⁵⁷ E.g., the 2013–2014 Activity Report of the OCEEA

⁵⁸ Followed by the establishment of the Virtual Competency and Training Centre for the Protection of Critical Energy Networks in 2019.

⁵⁹ The Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus project co-ordinated by the OCEEA and carried out under the ENVSEC initiative together with UNEP, UNDP, UNECE and REC in 2014.

⁶⁰ There was a renewed meeting in 2024.

⁶¹ Several energy security co-ordination meetings among energy decision-makers and experts from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan occurred.

⁶² Some significant donors did not make themselves available for interview during the evaluation teams' visit to Dushanbe.

⁶³ One of the reasons cited was a departure of a POiD focal point responsible for these matters.

⁶⁴ United States Agency for International Development

⁶⁵ <https://www.osce.org/Chairpersonship/507050>

⁶⁶ <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/437435>

⁶⁷ Water management in Tajikistan has a link to energy security due to the country's hydropower potential.

⁶⁸ <https://www.osce.org/oio/563924>

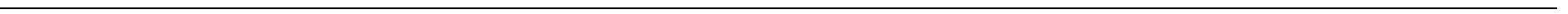
⁶⁹ <https://www.osce.org/oio/491587>

⁷⁰ In general, decentralized evaluations should be conducted for all programmatic ExB interventions with ExB project budgets of €400K or higher (for more detailed information refer to <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/c/535323.pdf>)

⁷¹ <https://www.osce.org/oio/563924>

⁷² "Programme outcomes are the mid-term results induced by the outputs. An outcome is a medium-term impact a programme wants to achieve, on route to the fulfillment of objectives." (Project Management in the OSCE, A Manual for Programme and Project Managers, 2010, p. 22)

⁷³ Some decentralized evaluations are already being planned for relevant ExB projects requiring a decentralized evaluation, with the exception of the Green Port project, which has no decentralized evaluation planned or conducted yet.





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