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Factsheet 4
Learning for future projects

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This factsheet discusses opportunities for collaborative, cross-project learning. The procedure and organisation of the learning process is presented in three steps.

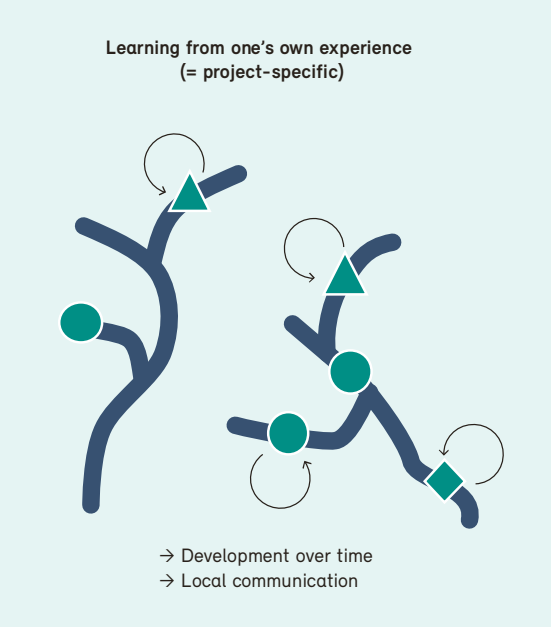
4.1 Opportunities for collaborative learning

The restoration of 4,000 km of Swiss watercourses and lakeshores by 2090 is a complex undertaking spanning several generations. At the same time, this lengthy time horizon also permits systematic learning from experience for future projects. Systematic, cross-project learning reduces uncertainties and makes it possible to continuously optimise the planning and implementation of projects and to make the most effective use of frequently limited resources (Roni & Beechie 2013).
With the standardisation of implementation and outcome evaluation, the FOEN is laying the foundations for a collaborative experience-sharing and learning process. Thanks to standardised surveys, cross-project assessment of the effects of different restoration measures will in future be possible, as project-specific experiences and findings become comparable (Box 4.1). This will result in an improved, more generalised understanding of the processes involved and of the factors inhibiting or promoting the effectiveness of restoration projects (cause-effect relationships). The comparability of experiences also provides the basis for transferring knowledge gained to future projects, e.g. in the form of recommendations for action for the strategic planning of watercourse restoration or the planning of measures.

Box 4.1: Two types of learning from implementation and outcome evaluation

1. Learning from one's own experience (project-specific)

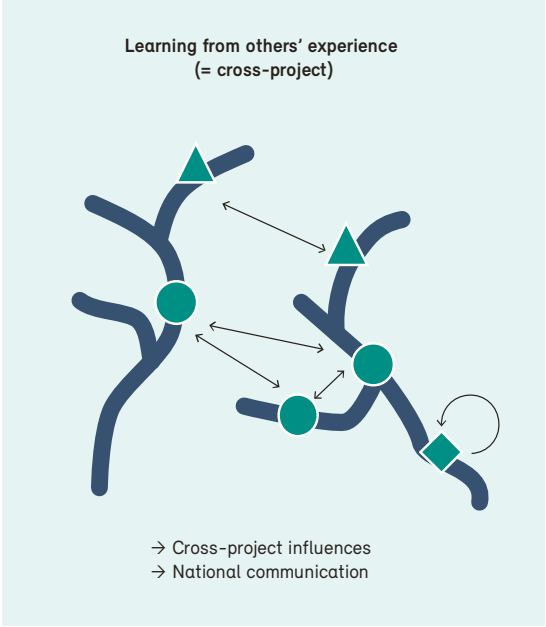
The managers of a restoration project accumulate specific experience in the course of the project and draw conclusions for future, similar projects. Development over time can be followed in detail on a project-specific basis.



A prerequisite for project-specific learning is the collection of and reflection on experiences within the project.

2. Learning from others' experience (cross-project)

The wealth of experience accumulated in other people's projects is utilised for one's own project planning and implementation. Through cross-project analysis, influences can be systematically explored, as a wide variety of contexts are covered (e.g. influence of restored length, watercourse size, fragmentation).



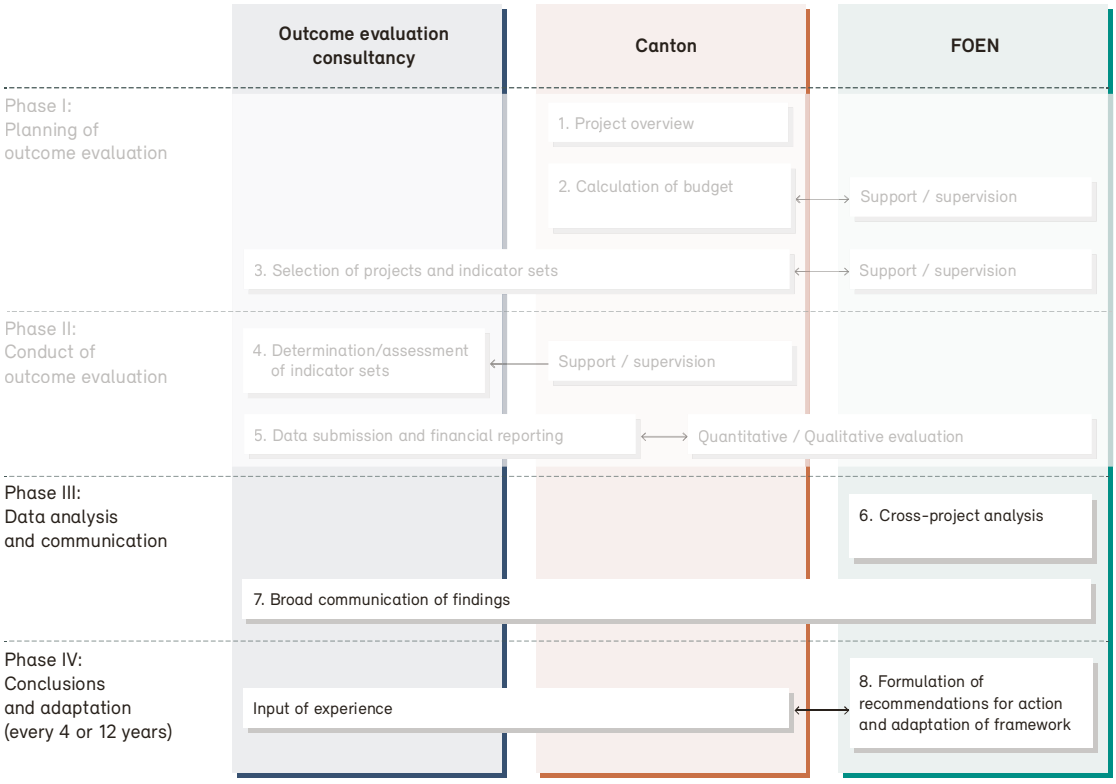
A prerequisite for cross-project learning is that data collected from numerous different projects in a standardised manner is centrally analysed, with the results being processed for direct use, e.g. in the form of recommendations for action.

4.2 Procedure and organisation of collaborative learning

A collaborative learning process is an ambitious goal. However, this does not take place automatically, but requires planning, mutual coordination and structure. The data obtained in the STANDARD and

EXTENDED outcome evaluations are further processed in two phases and three steps (Fig. 4.1); primary responsibility lies with the FOEN. The three steps are described in the following sections. Background information and conceptual foundations are presented in Factsheet 7.

Figure 4.1: The three steps for further processing of data from the STANDARD and EXTENDED outcome evaluations. These steps and phases build on Steps 1–5 of the STANDARD and EXTENDED outcome evaluations (Factsheets 2 and 3).



Phase III: Data analysis and communication

Step 6: Cross-project analysis

The FOEN is responsible for the centralised cross-project analysis of data from the STANDARD and EXTENDED outcome evaluations. As well as outcome evaluation data (indicator field surveys), project-specific information from implementation evaluation (project characteristics) is taken into consideration. In addition, for each project, other explanatory variables from existing geodata are considered, such as agricultural land use or the number of barriers in the catchment. Geodata collection is also undertaken in a centralised manner.
Centralised data analysis is commenced at an early stage, so that the initial phase of the STANDARD and EXTENDED outcome evaluation can be closely monitored and supported. Timely reporting of experience by project managers helps to optimise field surveys and the overall framework.

Step 7: Broad communication of findings

The findings of the outcome evaluation are widely communicated at regular intervals, as soon as consolidated results are available. Communication is to be targeted, using appropriate formats. The cantons are free to use their own data for communication.

Phase IV: Conclusions and adaptation (every 4 or 12 years)

Step 8: Formulation of recommendations for action and adaptation of framework

In a participatory process with stakeholder involvement, findings from the outcome evaluation are translated into recommendations for action. These are fed into the revision of the Handbook on Programme Agreements in the Environmental Sector and into decision-making aids, e.g. for the development of strategic planning for watercourse restoration.
Experience from practice is used for periodic evaluation and, if appropriate, optimisation of the STANDARD outcome evaluation and for the identification of future questions for the EXTENDED outcome evaluation.

List of modifications

Relevant changes are marked in green.

Date (mm/yy)	Version	Change	Responsibility
4/2020	1.02	Correction of spelling errors, minor terminological modifications	Eawag