

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung

The Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation

Terms of Reference for Evaluations

- Evaluation within BMZ programme no. PN 2023 28144RLS0040 - Asia

OUTLINE OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Background, context, and rationale for the evaluation [unterhalb]
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1. BACKGROUND, CONTEXT, AND RATIONALE FOR THE EVALUATION

The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS) is a German political foundation that is part of the democratic socialist movement. True to the legacy of its namesake Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919), it stands in solidarity with the workers' and women's rights movements. The organization serves as a forum for debate and critical thinking about political alternatives, as well as a research centre for social development. The RLS has close ties to the German party DIE LINKE.

Since 2002, the RLS has been actively engaged in accompanying political, socio-economic, and social developments in East Asia. In 2008, the RLS established a regional office in Beijing, the capital of China, to further its mission of promoting socio-political and economic development in the spirit of democratic socialism through education, research, and international cooperation.

The RLS Beijing office collaborates with a diverse range of Chinese partner organizations, including government and Communist Party research and education institutions, academies of science, universities, and higher education institutions. Its activities include organizing national and international conferences, dialogue initiatives, seminars, and workshops on pressing societal issues. Additionally, the office supports scientific research in social sciences and its practical applications, facilitates researcher exchanges, and co-publishes studies and reports with Chinese partners. The cooperation focuses on topics such as social, ecological, historical, international, and general socio-economic and developmental issues. This longstanding collaboration provides a solid foundation for evaluating the office's transformation into a think tank and its contributions to fostering dialogue and understanding in the region.

The decision to transform the office into a think tank stems from the evolving nature of our engagement in the region. Over the years, we have progressively shifted away from a donor- and project-based role due to several factors:

This process was essentially motivated by three developments:

Firstly, by a changed world political situation, which is increasingly characterized by a bloc-confrontational system competition and is fuelled by an almost uniform anti-China rhetoric in the Western media. This makes it necessary to take a differentiated approach to the country and try to establish a complex counter-discourse.

Furthermore, China's development model and its increasing global influence represent a political and cognitive challenge for left-wing parties, organizations and actors in Europe. Therefore, an original left-wing discourse on China is needed, in which China's political theories, visions and norms, as well as China's contradictions and tensions, can be reflected upon in the context of the country's historical development and incorporated into the development of one's own socialist strategy.

Secondly, by the legal and administrative framework of the Chinese NGO law, that has made it impossible to continue the traditional donor role of the RLS Beijing office, which was focused on activist and civil society grassroots organizations, and has necessitated a shift towards academic and policy-advising partner institutions and more theoretical-analytical research objectives. Many of these partner-organization (Party- and government associated institutions) are legally not able or willing to accept direct financial support for project implementation. Consequently, the collaboration is now based on jointly designed projects, where each partner contributes their

respective expertise and resources. This shift requires to take on a more active role, moving beyond funding and coordination to become a driving force in shaping and implementing initiatives.

Thirdly, by this partner constellation and the modified procedures for setting topics and developing projects. The partner organizations have great self-confidence in their own ideas and concepts when it comes to setting topics and project formats, as well as in their special expectations and demands regarding cooperation with the RLS Beijing office. Consequently, the identification of topics for joint projects is usually the result of lengthy discussion processes, and the expectation of the RLS is that it will provide expertise as well as its political network. In this sense, the Beijing office is already involved in a reflective discourse in China to a certain extent, and its specific socialist-Marxist orientation gives the Beijing office a unique position as a political discussion partner. On the one hand, this gives the Beijing office some kind of influence on the Chinese debate and creates opportunities to be a central hub in the German-Chinese socialism discourse.

The programme is being implemented with funds from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The **overall objective** (long-term vision, impact) for the RLS in Beijing is as follows:

The program contributes to peace and security, social justice, and socio-ecological transformation in Asia.

In the current programme cycle (2024–2026), we are working toward this overall objective by way of three thematic areas, called programme components, each of which has its own programme objective. The programme objectives apply for each three-year funding period and are at the level of direct effect. The achievement of the objectives is monitored by means of indicators.

RLS' understanding of evaluation

RLS' understanding of evaluation is that of a process of organisational learning, which supports the improvement of RLS' conception, steering (management) and execution of its work. The involved partner organisations should be informed about the objectives of the evaluation. If an evaluation is to be successful, everyone involved (RLS staff, representatives from the partner organisations) must participate in the process and be given access to the findings. The evaluator will assume an advisory role, i.e. rely above all on reflection, learning processes, and dialogue. During the evaluation, the evaluator has to adhere to the DAC principles and standards, the DEGEVAL evaluation standards, and the BMZ evaluation criteria.

2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

As already mentioned, the RLS would like to transform its office in China from an office that mainly acts as a funder for local NGOs into a think tank, or at least significantly increase its think tank activities. This transformation process has already begun, with the office gradually shifting away from a donor-based approach towards a more collaborative and knowledge-driven role. Existing partnerships are increasingly structured

around joint projects and reciprocal knowledge exchange, reinforcing the office's evolving function as a platform for analysis, dialogue, and strategic input. The office's aim and aspiration should be to conduct research and produce policy reports, serve as an intellectual hub and source of knowledge and analysis, help decision-makers understand and address multifaceted issues and stimulate and influence public debate. This evaluation is intended as a learning process to assess the effectiveness of the transformation steps already taken in the given administrative-institutional and political-cultural context and to gain insights for future strategic developments.

The NGO law that has been in force since 2017 imposes a tight administrative framework. All projects for the following project year must be applied for and approved in an elaborate bureaucratic coordination and planning process with the umbrella organization, the security authorities and the respective project partners. This means that it is hardly possible, if at all, to react to current events at short notice. Financial expenditure on the part of the office is only possible in connection with pre-approved projects with partner organizations, which massively restricts the free or even creative choice of project formats.

Furthermore, operating under the NGO Law, the office is not permitted to implement its own measures but has established strong partnerships that enable the facilitation of joint projects. These partnerships have become the foundation of our work, allowing for collaborative initiatives that align with local conditions and regulatory frameworks.

In view of these administrative constraints, but also in view of the challenge of actually realising scientific-political exchange in different cultural, historical, political-communicative contexts, the Beijing office of the RLS began as early as 2018/2019 to gradually align the partner projects with long-term, i.e. multi-year cooperation formats (e.g. publication or joint research projects) and continuous expert and participant groups. However, this reorientation was interrupted by the Covid-19 restrictions.

The evaluation is initiated to analyse and improve the organizational transformation of the office to mobilize expertise and ideas, with a focus on how it is perceived by partners and the implementation of internal strategies. It is not intended to evaluate the work of partner organizations but rather to optimize the work of the RLS itself. The findings aim to support institutional learning and provide a foundation for strategic decision-making.

The evaluation examines how successful the transformation of the RLS office in China into a think tank has been, and how the office is perceived by partner organizations. It will analyse the expectations and needs of partners regarding the RLS, whether and how their perception of the office has changed over the past five years, and how they evaluate the RLS strategy in China. Another focus is on the perspective of the office's staff: How do they view their work, the strategic direction, and their role within it? Additionally, the evaluation will assess to what extent the RLS's self-image as a think tank aligns with external perceptions and identify successes and challenges in the transformation process. Furthermore, it will examine how the work of the office is perceived from Berlin: **Which expertise, publications, and analyses reach stakeholders in Germany, and how are they utilized?** Finally, it will address how the RLS can further enhance its influence and impact in both China and Europe and explore the specific requirements for a think tank in the Chinese context.

The evaluation pursues the following objectives:

- Analyze the transformation of the office into a think tank and identify its success factors.
- Identify the perceptions, needs, and expectations of the partners.
- Assess the alignment between the RLS's self-image and external perceptions.
- Develop recommendations for further optimizing the transformation process and strategic orientation.

3. SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION: FOCUS AND SCOPE

1. The results of this evaluation should be used to eventually make adjustments in the process of transformation into a think tank office and provide reflections that can be considered in strategic planning processes of the office. Analyze the transformation of the office into a think tank and identify its success factors.
 - What specific changes were made to the office to transform it into a think tank?
 - What factors contributed most to the success of this transformation?
 - To what extent have working practices changed as a result of the new approach?
 - What challenges were encountered during the transformation process and how were these overcome?
2. Identify the perceptions, needs, and expectations of the partners.
 - How do the partners perceive the changes in the office? What positive and negative feedback is there?
 - What specific needs and expectations do the partners have in relation to the new direction?
 - To what extent do the partners feel involved in the transformation process?
 - What communication channels do the partners use to express their perceptions and needs?
3. Assess the alignment between the RLS's self-image and external perceptions.
 - To what extent has the external image of the RLS changed?
 - To what extent do the external perceptions of the partners match the self-image of RLS?
 - What differences or discrepancies exist between the self-image and the external perception?

- What factors have contributed to differences in perception between internal and external stakeholders?
- 4. Develop recommendations for further optimizing the transformation process and strategic orientation.
 - What specific measures could be taken to further optimize the transformation process?
 - Which strategic directions should be prioritized in order to achieve the think tank's goals?
 - How can the needs and expectations of partners be better integrated into strategic planning?
 - What additional resources or support would be required to continue the transformation successfully?

The evaluation is based on the following methods of analysis:

- Interviews with RLS staff, the department, ZID-L, and selected partners (e.g., universities).
- Written surveys of institutional partners.
- Analysis of media inquiries, publications, and reports to assess goal achievement.

The evaluation focuses on results at the micro, meso, and macro levels, particularly in the context of perception and outreach.

4. APPROACH, DELIVERABLES, AND ROLES OF THE EVALUTORS

A German and a local evaluator jointly determine the specific design, the implementation, and reporting of the evaluation. The German evaluator assumes the overall responsibility for the evaluation.

The evaluators provide a proposal, i.e. the Inception Report. It is based on the Terms of Reference and, if applicable, first interviews and a short study of documents. It provides details of the planned implementation of the evaluation project, the methodological approach, and other steps, including the timeline and a work plan. The Inception Report will be prepared in English.

The evaluators implement a systematic, empirical evaluation study that draws conclusions and provides recommendations that correspond to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation described above.

They prepare a comprehensive evaluation report, which presents the conclusions and resulting recommendations (information about the requirements of the evaluation reports can be found below, see chapter 5). The evaluation report will be provided in English. An Executive Summary of the Report needs to be provided in English and German.

The evaluators will also present RLS (office and headquarter) central findings and recommendations in workshops and/or similarly suited formats.

Data collection: Data will be collected in Berlin/Germany and in China. In addition to a complex document analysis, there will be interviews (or questionnaires) with RLS staff, partner organisations or other suitable persons in the respective country.

Participation: Staff of the RLS regional office Beijing and the unit in Berlin has to be involved in the central steps of the evaluation process and the knowledge production.

Adherence to professional standards, principles and evaluation criteria is required, i.e. OECD-DAC (2010 a, b) and DeGEval (2001, 2016) standards. The RLS attaches particular importance to standards that ensure the fairness of the evaluation and increase the finding's usefulness and the likelihood that they will be used. The evaluators have to observe the quality requirements.

The evaluation will be mainly carried out in English. The final evaluation report has to be prepared in English.

The RLS will provide relevant documents and contact information. Due to contextual and logistical constraints, the evaluation will be conducted as a desk study, without the evaluator traveling to China. All data collection will take place remotely through online interviews, written surveys, and the analysis of available documents and reports. This approach ensures that the evaluation process remains efficient and comprehensive while addressing the challenges of in-country access. The RLS will facilitate communication with key stakeholders and provide the necessary documentation to support a thorough and effective desk-based evaluation.

5. REPORT AND ADDITIONAL EVALUATION PRODUCTS

The evaluation report is the central "product" of the evaluation and has to adhere to the following standard structure (unless exceptions have been agreed). It must start with the Executive Summary, which is intended for publication, 4-6 pages) and includes final recommendations for each of the areas to be evaluated. The evaluation report has 30-40 pages.

Standard structure for evaluation reports

I. Summary

Important: Executive Summary for the contracting authority; central findings and corresponding recommendations, including the primary recipients of the particular recommendations

II. Preliminary Remarks

Issues to be addressed: methodology (short description, more detailed in chapter III.), activities, timeframe of the evaluation, set up of the evaluation team, participation of partner organisations in the evaluation

III. Presentation and Rationale of the Evaluation Study Design

More detailed and comprehensible description and justification of the evaluation study design, i.e. methodology, specific proceedings, self-reflection or self-review of the evaluator with regard to the evaluation process, limits/scope of the findings, quality criteria.

IV. Short Description of the of Programme Components within the Framework of the Regional Programme

Idea and concept, functioning, target group, objectives of programme components, integration into the overall RLS programme

V. Short Presentation of Framework Conditions

VI. Results of the Evaluation

Findings / Results of the respective evaluation questions

VII. Conclusions

Conclusions from findings; starting from project-specific (if any) to programme-related to overall conclusions; referring to evaluation questions

VIII. Recommendations

Any recommendations assigned to the underlying findings and primary recipient of the recommendations

IX. Supplementary Remarks

X. Appendix

Work flow, travel itinerary, questionnaire, sources

The Inception Report is another important product, which is to be coordinated with the PME staff unit following preliminary talks and reviewing of records. The Inception Report is based on the TOR and oral, recorded agreements with the CID-RLS' PME staff unit and, if appropriate, with the respective regional unit and/or the CID-RLS regional office. The Inception Report is to be prepared in English.

Other evaluation products to be prepared, for example presentations from the final on-site workshop, minutes of the final discussion, etc. have to be attached to the final report.

If appropriate, publications in internal periodicals (newsletters, RLS newsletters) and publications/presentations in external expert forums can be provided.

In general, the CID/RLS is interested in publishing findings regarding its work and the cooperation with partners worldwide. If one of the parties of this evaluation wishes to publish evaluation findings, data, or information about the evaluation process, this requires the written consent of the CID/ RLS.

6. EXTENT OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation contains both formative and summative elements. The evaluation supports organizational learning and is intended to be incorporated directly into the planning process for the next funding application.

The evaluation will primarily focus on assessing the transformation of the RLS office in China into a think tank. This includes evaluating the processes, outputs, and outcomes of this transition at different levels—micro (individual staff and partner organizations), meso (organizational structures and strategies), and macro (regional and international impact). The scope encompasses the analysis of relevant documents, structured interviews, and surveys with key stakeholders, as well as the assessment of the office's role and influence within the socio-political and academic landscape in China. The evaluation will be conducted online due to logistical and contextual constraints, with

an emphasis on ensuring inclusivity and data reliability. The evaluation will take place between March 2025 and February 2026. The final evaluation report should be available at End of February 2026 at the latest.

7. TIMELINE

Date	Location	Activity, remarks (if applicable)
December 2024	Beijing / Berlin	Kick-off meeting
April 2025	Beijing/Berlin	Finalization of Terms of Reference (ToR)
May	Berlin	Tender
June/July	Berlin	Kick-off meeting with evaluators
		Inception Report
End of October	Beijing	Data Collection
January 2026	Beijing/Berlin	First draft of the evaluation report
February 2026		Final report
		Presentation of the evaluation

8. TENDER

Search for an evaluator for an evaluation in Asia

The RLS is looking for an evaluator for the evaluation of the work of its China office.

The evaluation will be conducted in English and will cover the period June 2025 – January 2026.

The evaluation is formative in its focus and is intended to support organizational learning and contribute to the upcoming strategic planning process of the regional program.

Applications are possible as an individual as well as in a team.

Offer and deadlines

Please submit the following documents:

- a substantive proposal for an evaluation study according to the Terms of Reference, including a time schedule,
- total fees and daily rates; travel expenses will be reimbursed according to BRKG (daily allowances will not be reimbursed additionally)
- a detailed and comprehensive CV,
- informal explanations of your work and working methods, indicating your experience with impact analysis of activities of social organizations in an international context, especially with political education projects, and with related evaluations
- if you have experience with other important aspects of our tender / terms of reference, please refer to them as well

Expected qualifications

- High methodological competence, especially in qualitative and participatory methods, high analytical skills
- Evaluation experience, especially in the field of political education work
- Experiences with feminist approaches in educational and political work and their evaluation
- Advanced Knowledge on result based management
- Very good knowledge of the English and German language
- Knowledge of Chinese language is an advantage
- Good knowledge of the region and its actors
- Knowledge of the work of political foundations is an advantage
- Intercultural competence

Documents from interested parties in English should reach us electronically by 8th June 2025. The final order will be placed by 13th June.

Contact

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