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GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community

April 2024

Corporate strategic evaluation – main report

Imprint

As a service provider with worldwide operations in the fields of international cooperation for sustainable development and international education work, GIZ works with its partners to develop effective solutions that offer people better prospects and sustainably improve their living conditions. GIZ is a public-benefit federal enterprise and supports the German Government and a host of public and private sector clients in a wide variety of areas, including economic development and employment promotion, energy and the environment, and peace and security.

The Corporate Unit Evaluation of GIZ reports directly to the Management Board. She is separate from and independent of GIZ's operational business. This organisation strengthens the independence. The Corporate Unit Evaluation is mandated to generate evidence-based results and recommendations for decision-making, to provide a credible proof of effectiveness and to increase transparency on the results.

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List of abbreviations

AA	German Federal Foreign Office
BMG	German Federal Ministry of Health
BMUV	German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
BMWK	German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CIP	International Potato Center
CSE	Corporate strategic evaluation
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ELVIS	Procurement, Contracting, Properties, Property Management, Language Services
ETH	Swiss Federal Institute of Technology
EU	European Union
FCDO	UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FC	Financial cooperation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
GloBe	Sector and Global Programmes
IDOS	German Institute of Development and Sustainability
IKI	International Climate Initiative
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IC	International cooperation
KC	Competence centre
KfW	KfW Development Bank
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OE	Organizational unit
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OII	Oxford Internet Institute
OSF	Open Society Foundation
PM	Partnership manager
RAC	Rooted apical cuttings
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SNF	Swiss National Science Foundation for the Promotion of Scientific Research
TUMI	Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative
TC	Technical cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Management response

Based on the findings and conclusions of this corporate strategic evaluation (CSE), the evaluation team has drawn up four recommendations to improve GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community. These recommendations relate to the excellence (1) and expertise (2) of GIZ, and to its business development (3) and administrative requirements (4).

The academic and research community contributes to expertise, innovation and evidence in GIZ's portfolio of services, and generates considerable added value for the company's visibility and positioning at the strategic level. In this way, it directly supports GIZ's **excellence** in service provision. However, the CSE makes it clear that this added value is not yet being used strategically for the company. There is no strategic guidance on the precise aims of such cooperation; nor does GIZ carry out systematic partner analyses. GIZ's areas of excellence offer an important starting point for using the added value of the academic and research community more systematically in the future.

Excellence requires professional expertise. But knowledge and **expertise** at GIZ are dispersed across the company, which leads to complex interfaces within the organisation. This is also true of GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community. As such, knowledge of the cooperation arrangements and the results, evidence and innovations they produce are not easily available across projects, sectors and divisions. Moreover, GIZ lacks specific tools to build long-term partnerships and to use these partnerships for the improvement of GIZ's expertise. At the same time, 90% of GIZ staff believe there is a need for greater cooperation with academia and research in order to maintain or build up the company's sectoral expertise. In this respect, action needs to be taken.

The CSE has shown that, so far, cooperation with the academic and research community has only indirectly influenced GIZ's **business development**. For example, just 50% of GIZ staff overall and only 28% of commission managers who took part in the CSE survey noted an influence on the procurement of funds. Accordingly, the business development potential that academia offers through its complementary expertise, evidence generation and innovativeness is insufficiently recognised and is not deployed in a targeted manner. At the same time, commissioning parties derive hardly any added value from GIZ's diverse cooperation arrangements or they take too little notice of them. GIZ is therefore not exploiting its unique selling point vis-à-vis commissioning parties of a broad, practically oriented academic and research network across the global North and South. The commissioning parties have expressed a wish for better networking and/or the 'translation' of academic findings for policy management purposes. This highlights the potential to strengthen GIZ's position in its dealings with the commissioning parties.

Finally, the CSE has shown that, from the point of view of both GIZ staff and the cooperating academic and research organisations, there is a need to **simplify contract management** to make such cooperation more attractive to both sides.

Below, the Management Board responds to the individual recommendations of the evaluation team.

Recommendation 1: With respect to its topics of excellence, GIZ should define the objectives of cooperation arrangements with the academic and research community and put them into practice. (Lead: Sectoral Department)

- To this end, for each topic of excellence it should be determined **how the cooperation with the academic and research community** will be used to **generate evidence and innovation, develop standardised, scalable solutions, set agendas, position GIZ and increase its visibility.**

- Based on this, and defined by certain criteria, **key academic stakeholders** must be chosen with the aim of forming longer-term partnerships. The selection criteria should include: reputation in the field of expertise; a balanced mix of actors from universities, research institutes and think tanks in Germany, Europe, partner countries and supra-regional networks; the academic partner's orientation towards practical implementation; suitability for consortium formation; other criteria if necessary for business development.
- The **objectives of the arrangements** with individual academic partners will then be integrated into the **operational plan of the respective topic of excellence**. As such, the partnerships with academic stakeholders in the topic of excellence require a clear **contact structure** that ensures that the collaborations and their results are utilised and communicated across project and departmental boundaries. This should also serve as a contact structure for the academic partners.

The recommendation is adopted with the following observations:

The focus on topics of excellence is meaningful and resource-efficient in terms of promoting cooperation with the academic and research community. However, such future cooperation should also include access to state-of-the-art expertise in selected standard products, as well as networking for our foresight activities.

It is not necessary to create separate contact structures for academic and research partners in the topics of excellence. The contact structure should result from the specific partnership and is a task for those responsible for the respective topics of excellence. To ensure the cooperation arrangements are visible across the company and to disseminate the results company-wide, the partnerships and contact structures should be incorporated into GIZ's overall partnership management.

The cooperation with academic stakeholders from the Global South presents GIZ with a special competitive advantage in the topics of excellence, one that must be exploited.

Specific formats for cooperation should be identified and applied, to enable us to build and maintain partnerships with the academic and research community in the long term (e.g. as part of specialist working groups, Sectoral Department expert forums).

Recommendation 2: GIZ should create the conditions for using its cooperation with the academic and research community to strengthen its own expertise in a targeted manner.

- In order to minimise knowledge loss and increase the efficiency of knowledge management, the company should resume the project to create an **Extended Customer Relationship Management (XRM) system**. It should do this as soon as possible, depending on the resources available. This system will be used to administer contacts with, inter alia, academic and research partners, making it easier to see who is cooperating with a specific partner, as well as when, where, how and with what means they are doing so.
- In the future, **self-initiated measures** should be used in an even more targeted manner to further develop topics of excellence and other areas with outstanding academic stakeholders, and to position them in the international cooperation landscape. The Corporate Development Unit should embed this in its policy on self-initiated measures, with all other departments taking this policy into consideration. As a strategic side-benefit, this can strengthen the long-term relationship between GIZ and the academic and research community. The Corporate Development Unit provides advice on the exact design of self-initiated measures.
- To increase and maintain its level of expertise, GIZ should establish **cooperation arrangements with universities aimed at recruitment and HR development** addressing (foreseeable) bottleneck profiles and topics of excellence. This process should be headed

by the Human Relations Department with the support of AIZ. It might involve targeted internship programmes; retention measures and the cultivation of contacts following internships; thesis and research work in the project context, with corresponding working time models and up-skilling measures.

- Future **innovation management** should provide guidance on how to choose topics and formats for cooperation with academia and research that promote innovation (and as such also professionalism and business development), and how to implement the resulting cooperation arrangements. (Lead: Sectoral Department).
- Cooperation with the academic and research community should be viewed as an important building block in the context of the planned **study on expertise** (Lead: Sectoral Department).

The recommendation is adopted with the following observations:

The development of an XRM system is envisaged, but for resource reasons it is unlikely to be achieved before 2027. An earlier realisation depends on additional resources that are currently not available.

Self-initiated measures should be seen as a common means of promoting cooperation with the academic and research community or of increasing the commitment of academic and research stakeholders to GIZ. This requires close coordination with Innovation Management. However, self-initiated measures are not exclusively aimed at this kind of cooperation, so it is not necessary to fix this in a policy. The Corporate Development Unit can advise on the importance of the academic and research community in the design of a self-initiated measure.

The Corporate Development Unit should develop good practice examples of sustainable partnerships with the academic and research community that arise from self-initiated measures.

In order to maintain and strengthen GIZ's expertise and to encourage evidence-based work, GIZ staff should in future have access to the databases of the most important academic journals.

Recommendation 3: For business development, targeted use should be made of cooperation arrangements with academic and research stakeholders.

- GloBe, the Sectoral Department and the regional departments should ensure that **they increasingly and systematically introduce the results of their cooperation with the academic and research community into the dialogue with the commissioning parties**, thereby contributing to the setting of the latter's agenda and to business development. In particular, academic partners from the Global South should be involved.
- In the context of **business development projects**, GIZ's Client Liaison and Business Development Department should more systematically examine the extent to which expertise, evidence and innovation provided by the academic and research community can be used for business development. On this basis, guidance should also be provided for the decentralised business development units, because this is where a large part of the business is created.
- Where particularly intensive cooperation arrangements exist with specific academic stakeholders, the Client Liaison and Business Development Department, International Services and the operational departments should work together to generate new approaches to business development, and enter into **co-creation** with these stakeholders.

The recommendation is adopted with the following observations.

The business development potential of cooperating with the academic and research community cannot be separated from the agenda-setting potential vis-à-vis the commissioning parties. Both are of great importance in our dialogue with the latter. It is necessary here, with the

support of the Client Liaison and Business Development Department, to work out for selected topics what formats can be used to incorporate the results and intended impacts of GIZ's academic cooperation into the dialogue with commissioning parties.

All organisational units must also examine the competitive advantages offered by cooperation with the academic and research community. This is not solely the responsibility of the Client Liaison and Business Development Department in the context of business development projects.

GIZ's existing cooperation arrangements with the academic and research community in the Global South constitute a clear competitive advantage that must be better exploited by all organisational units, including in the implementation of GIZ's current business development strategy.


Recommendation 4: The administration of cooperation arrangements with the academic and research community should be simplified.

Together with the Finance Department and with the support of the Legal Affairs and Insurance Unit, the Procurement and Contracting Division should examine appropriate criteria and options for simplified contractual cooperation with the academic and research community, as part of the considerations on strategic supplier and recipient management – in particular:

- Specific contractual conditions, e.g. property rights
- Differentiation of requirements in the institutionally specific commercial and legal eligibility checks and in financial processing, e.g. reduced obligation to provide evidence.

The Procurement and Contracting Division, the Finance Department and the Sectoral Department should integrate specific advisory and information services for GIZ staff who wish to cooperate with the academic and research community on a contractual basis into existing advisory structures (e.g. the Operational Advisory Services on Financing). Here, the aim is to raise awareness of the fact that, when cooperating with the academic and research community, equality of interaction is not merely a contractual issue, but is also a question of self-image and the lived partnership, as well as transparent communication and professional expectation management.

This recommendation is adopted with the following observations:

 ELVIS and the Finance Department will establish or continue strategic dialogues with up to ten of the most important cooperation partners from the academic and research community. This will take the form of a 'round table' whose aim is to agree specific steps for the simplification of contractual cooperation. It is essential to include actors from the Global South. The ten selected participants at the round table should cover the typical partner types (e.g. universities and think tanks) and formats (e.g. services, grants), not only with a thematic focus on the topics of excellence, but also examining the existing experiences of cooperation. Representatives of the operational departments, the Sectoral Department and the Corporate Development Unit should be involved so they can contribute to the selection of partners and raise recurring problem cases. The agreements should result in standardised formats that also apply to other academic stakeholders and partners.

At the same time, there is a need for advice not only on contractual aspects (drafting and processing of contracts) but also technical and strategic issues. Regarding the contractual level, the Procurement and Contracting Division and the Financial Management – Contracts Section should provide joint, coordinated advice – both internally for GIZ colleagues and externally for the academic partners – as far as that is possible with the existing resources. At the technical and strategic level, the Corporate Development Unit and the Sectoral Department should raise awareness about expectation management, as well as the sometimes different working environments of academia and development cooperation with regard to objectives, success criteria/standards, administrative requirements and incentives.

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team would like to thank all those involved inside and outside GIZ who took the time to support this evaluation with their contributions and comments. This evaluation would not have been possible without our interviewees from the academic and research community, from the commissioning side, from international cooperation organisations and, of course, from within the company. We say a big thank you to all of them. We would also like to thank the members of the reference group and the sponsors of the thematic case studies for their active support of the evaluation.

Executive summary

By 2028, GIZ wants to transform itself from a project organisation into an implementer of integrated solutions for global challenges. To achieve this, it will rely, among other things, on systematic partnerships. The academic and research community constitutes a transformative stakeholder, whose expertise, academic objectivity, innovative strength and credibility can potentially complement GIZ's core competence as an implementation expert. Against this background, the GIZ Management Board commissioned the Evaluation Unit to carry out a corporate strategy evaluation (CSE) examining 'GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community'.

The aim of the evaluation is firstly to take stock of GIZ's current cooperation with the academic community: Is GIZ cooperating with relevant stakeholders in the context of current transformation agendas? How well placed is GIZ to cooperate with the relevant academic stakeholders for specific subject areas at sectoral/strategic level? The evaluation should accommodate the perspectives both of GIZ's commissioning parties and of the academic stakeholders who are cooperating: How do they think the cooperation between GIZ and the academic and research community should work? The evaluation also asks what GIZ can learn from the experience of other actors in international cooperation who have worked with this community. Finally, the aim is to show the impact that cooperating with academia has on GIZ and its work, and to identify potential for expanding this. The evaluation is intended to encourage learning and enable an evidence-based discussion and decision-making process for the further development of the cooperation with academics and researchers at GIZ.

Is GIZ cooperating with relevant academic stakeholders as part of current transformation agendas?

1. Cooperation with academia is a multifaceted part of GIZ's daily work, and not just in the context of today's transformation agendas. It involves academic stakeholders from the global North and South alike, usually involving several academic stakeholders at the same time, and in all sectors

(albeit with different roles on the part of the academic and research community). Cooperation with universities is particularly frequent in projects. Regardless of the sector, GIZ staff assume that they have made the right choice when it comes to cooperation partners, i.e. that they are cooperating with the most important academic stakeholders in their sector.

2. GIZ is working successfully with academic and research stakeholders from both the Global North and the Global South, in all four of the transformation topics examined (just transition, global health, feminist development cooperation, digitalisation). In the field of digitalisation, standardised products and approaches have been developed and scaled up with the academic and research community with particular success. In all four priority areas, this cooperation has had a positive impact on GIZ's visibility and sectoral positioning. However, GIZ was not seen by the academics as being on an equal footing in the areas of global health and feminist development cooperation. The contribution of academia and research is crucial for GIZ's performance in all four cases. Academic stakeholders are also considered crucial for the development of new topics such as just energy transition and pandemic preparedness.
3. However, the role of academic stakeholders from the Global South is generally seen too little in terms of their possible contribution to transformation agendas. Partners from the Global South are rarely strengthened as strategic actors performing an independent role in the development process. Rather, they usually serve as 'pure' implementation partners in the projects. This approach ignores the important translation and legitimisation function that local academic stakeholders perform vis-à-vis governments, authorities and other actors in the partner country, as well as the professional excellence that these actors possess.

How well placed is GIZ to cooperate with the relevant academic stakeholders for specific subject areas at sectoral/strategic level?

4. Overall, none of the existing central systems (strategies, partnership management, knowledge management, administrative formats) support a strategic orientation of GIZ's cooperation with academics and researchers.
5. At present, there are no guidelines or strategic orientation at the company level on the importance of cooperation with the academic and research community, on strategic milestones and objectives, on role expectations or on the demarcation of implementation expertise and academic expertise. Cooperation with the academic and research community has not yet been explicitly integrated in the company's strategy documents (Business Development Strategy, HR Strategy, Business Environment and Trends Report).
6. In GIZ's strategic partnership management, only 12 out of 155 stakeholders can be categorised as belonging to the academic and research community. Their selection mainly reflects sectoral preferences. Needs analyses for identifying, evaluating and monitoring cooperation with the academic and research community are rare, even beyond strategic partnership management. Instead, cooperation usually takes place with already known and/or prominent players.
7. When it comes to managing partnerships, besides the strategic partnership management there are various decentralised entry points at departmental level and in the projects. Overall, cooperation with the academic and research community is organised in a decentralised way at GIZ.
8. For cooperation with the academic and research community, there is no knowledge management that systematically registers the experiences and results of cooperation for the entire company or individual sectors, or establishes coherence in cooperation across different projects. Simultaneous cooperation with one academic stakeholder in several projects – even across sector boundaries – does happen, but it is usually not designed in this way from the outset, but occurs rather by chance.

9. For all parties involved, GIZ's administrative and bureaucratic requirements for academic and research stakeholders present the biggest challenge. This is especially true of cooperation with stakeholders in the Global South.

What can we learn from other actors in international cooperation about working together with the academic and research community?

10. Other international cooperation (IC) organisations benefit from strategic orientation in the form of a cooperation strategy or general guidance for action. This promotes a common understanding of why such cooperation is needed and how it should be organised. Two out of seven IC organisations surveyed have cooperation strategies, but they are geared towards cooperation within the research community or the promotion of research in development cooperation. Overall, the IC organisations surveyed refer to different selection criteria for cooperation with academics, from excellence rankings to an emphasis on cooperation with academic stakeholders from the Global South.
11. Four out of seven IC organisations examined have specialised organisational units (e.g. Office of the Chief Economist, Research Desk, Research Department) that are responsible for cooperation with the academic and research community. These communicate the latest research results to the organisation, promote research or conduct research themselves.

How does the cooperation with GIZ work, from the perspective of the academic and research community and of the commissioning parties?

12. The consulted commissioning parties assume that GIZ involves academics in its work as a matter of course. In their view, GIZ is doing this successfully. Against the backdrop of the current debate on the effectiveness of development cooperation, they see a greater need for GIZ to feed academic evidence into its work. Moreover, it is important to them that, when choosing the academic stakeholders with whom it cooperates, GIZ should not only consider their excellence, but

should actively involve stakeholders from the partner countries. The commissioning parties repeatedly expressed the wish that GIZ should share with them any knowledge it develops together with the academic and research community, and that it should act as a knowledge broker. This offers significant potential for strengthening the relationship with the commissioning parties and for business development.

13. From the point of view of the academic and research community, GIZ is not an attractive cooperation partner due to the high administrative burden involved in cooperation. Nevertheless, GIZ offers them the advantage of being able to apply their research and, as an implementing agency with a global presence on the ground, presents complementary benefits. The academic and research community prefers a (non-hierarchical) partnership approach to cooperation, which respects their academic independence. Cooperation based on partnership that aims to achieve positive change in the partner countries is the connecting element between GIZ and the academic and research community.

How does GIZ use cooperation to achieve its objectives? How successful is it in doing so?

14. Cooperation with academia increases GIZ's visibility and helps it to position itself as expert organisation vis-à-vis lead executing agencies and, to a limited extent, also the commissioning parties. This is shown by both the case studies and the company-wide survey. Visibility is created especially by jointly appearing with the academic and research community, or through the collective development and provision of approaches and solutions. The inclusion of academic expertise, innovation and evidence is particularly important for the sectoral positioning.
15. At the project level, the academic and research community – where it is actively involved in the projects – plays a decisive role in the provision of services. In particular, it contributes sectoral expertise and innovative strength to the cooperation, thereby strengthening GIZ's expertise. It acts as an independent and therefore credible actor and can facilitate access to stakeholders in different contexts. Academic stakeholders from the Global

North and the Global South alike are partners in evidence generation and agenda-setting. Overall, the case studies showed great potential for agenda-setting in cooperation with the academic and research community, especially in politically sensitive topics, such as the phasing out of fossil fuels, violence against women or working conditions in the gig economy.

16. At present, GIZ staff assess the impact of cooperation with the academic and research community on direct acquisition of funds as low, although the rating is slightly higher than average in the “climate” and “rural development” topics. The survey only identified an indirect influence of such cooperation on the acquisition of funding in the case of IKI consortium partnerships. At the same time, GIZ staff rated the potential benefits of cooperation with academics for business development as high. This shows that the added value and complementary competences of the academic and research community are not yet sufficiently used for business development. This added value lies above all in the contribution of expertise, innovation and evidence, which expands and strengthens the service portfolio and enables the provision of services. In some cases, there is also competition with think tanks and research institutes for funding. However, this is not an obstacle to cooperation with GIZ.
17. Cooperation with academia has a fundamentally positive effect on GIZ's reputation as an implementing agency with expert knowledge. This is also confirmed by GIZ's commissioning parties. However, they see GIZ first and foremost as implementation experts, with the complementary capacities of the academic and research community merely a supplement to GIZ's main role. This reveals that the company does not include the extensive cooperation arrangements it pursues with academic and research stakeholders around the world systematically in its dialogue with commissioning parties. This is precisely where the potential lies for a positive influence on GIZ's reputation beyond its image of being solely an expert in implementation.
18. At the strategic level, the academic and research community can play a greater role in GIZ's transformation into a provider of integrated solutions.

Even if cooperation with this community is currently too rarely used as an integrated resource across projects and sectors, it does promise added value with regard to standardising and scaling up products and approaches. The prerequisite is that the cooperation is planned from the outset and that the academic and research community is interested in practically testing its approaches and solutions on the ground.

19. In the topic of excellence Just Transition, the Sectoral Department carried out a needs and partner analysis to identify the most important (academic) partners in the field. Cooperation with the academic and research community was also crucial here in order to enter the field rapidly and to position the company in the sector for commissioning parties and lead executing agencies. Just Transition projects also integrate agenda-setting vis-à-vis the lead executing agencies. Especially in the politically sensitive area of phasing out fossil fuels, cooperation with the academic and research community has crucial added value due to the provision of independent evidence.
20. So far, cooperation with the academic and research community has played only a minor role in strategic personnel recruitment and development. At the same time, high demand has been identified to provide the necessary expertise in the future, especially in bottleneck sectors.

Based on these results, the evaluation comes to the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

With respect to its topics of excellence, GIZ should define the objectives of cooperation arrangements with the academic and research community and put them into practice. (Lead: Sectoral Department)

To this end, for each topic of excellence it should be determined how the cooperation with the academic and research community will be used to generate evidence and innovation, develop standardised, scalable solutions, set agendas, position GIZ and increase its visibility.

Based on this, and defined by certain criteria, **key academic stakeholders** must be chosen with the aim of

forming longer-term partnerships. The selection criteria should include: reputation in the field of expertise; a balanced mix of actors from universities, research institutes and think tanks in Germany, Europe, partner countries and supra-regional networks; the academic partner's orientation towards practical implementation; suitability for consortium formation; other criteria if necessary for business development.

The **objectives of the arrangements** with individual academic partners will then be integrated into the **operational plan of the respective topic of excellence**. As such, the partnerships with academic stakeholders in the topic of excellence require a clear **contact structure** that ensures that the collaborations and their results are utilised and communicated across project and departmental boundaries. This should also serve as a contact structure for the academic partners.

Recommendation 2

GIZ should create the conditions for using its cooperation with the academic and research community to strengthen its own expertise in a targeted manner.

- In order to minimise knowledge loss and increase the efficiency of knowledge management, the company should resume the project to create an **Extended Customer Relationship Management (XRM) system**. It should do this as soon as possible, depending on the resources available. This system will be used to administer contacts with, inter alia, academic and research partners, making it easier to see who is cooperating with a specific partner, as well as when, where, how and with what means they are doing so.
- In the future, **self-initiated measures** should be used in an even more targeted manner to further develop topics of excellence and other areas with outstanding academic stakeholders, and to position them in the international cooperation landscape. The Corporate Development Unit should embed this in its policy on self-initiated measures, with all other departments taking this policy into consideration. As a strategic side-benefit, this can strengthen the long-term relationship between GIZ and the academic and research community. The Corporate Development Unit provides advice on the exact design of self-initiated measures.

- To increase and maintain its level of expertise, GIZ should establish **cooperation arrangements with universities aimed at recruitment and HR development** addressing (foreseeable) bottleneck profiles and topics of excellence. This process should be headed by the Human Relations Department with the support of AIZ. It might involve targeted internship programmes; retention measures and the cultivation of contacts following internships; thesis and research work in the project context, with corresponding working time models and up-skilling measures.
- Future **innovation management** should provide guidance on how to choose topics and formats for cooperation with academia and research that promote innovation (and as such also professionalism and business development), and how to implement the resulting cooperation arrangements. (Lead: Sectoral Department).
- Cooperation with the academic and research community should be viewed as an important building block in the context of the planned **study on expertise** (Lead: Sectoral Department).

Recommendation 3

For business development, targeted use should be made of cooperation arrangements with academic and research stakeholders.

- GloBe, the Sectoral Department and the regional departments should ensure that **they increasingly and systematically introduce the results of their cooperation with the academic and research community into the dialogue with the commissioning parties**, thereby contributing to the setting of the latter's agenda and to business development. In particular, academic partners from the Global South should be involved.
- In the context of **business development projects**, GIZ's Client Liaison and Business Development Department should more systematically examine the extent to which expertise, evidence and innovation provided by the academic and research community can be used for business development. On this basis, guidance should also be provided for the decentralised business development units, because

this is where a large part of the business is created.

- Where particularly intensive cooperation arrangements exist with specific academic stakeholders, the Client Liaison and Business Development Department, International Services and the operational departments should work together to generate new approaches to business development, and enter into **co-creation** with these stakeholders.

Recommendation 4

The administration of cooperation arrangements with the academic and research community should be simplified.

- Together with the Finance Department and with the support of the Legal Affairs and Insurance Unit, the Procurement and Contracting Division should examine appropriate criteria and options for simplified contractual cooperation with the academic and research community, as part of the considerations on strategic supplier and recipient management – in particular:
 - Specific contractual conditions, e.g. property rights
 - Differentiation of requirements in the institutionally specific commercial and legal eligibility checks and in financial processing, e.g. reduced obligation to provide evidence.
- The Procurement and Contracting Division, the Finance Department and the Sectoral Department should integrate specific advisory and information services for GIZ staff who wish to cooperate with the academic and research community on a contractual basis into existing advisory structures (e.g. the Operational Advisory Services on Financing). Here, the aim is to raise awareness of the fact that, when cooperating with the academic and research community, equality of interaction is not merely a contractual issue, but is also a question of self-image and the lived partnership, as well as transparent communication and professional expectation management.

1 Introduction

1.1 Object, objectives and questions of the evaluation

By 2028, GIZ wants to transform the way it works, changing from a project organisation to an implementer of integrated solutions for global challenges. When it comes to reshaping GIZ's service provision and operating model, the cooperation with partners is very important because 'we are not trying to implement as much as possible ourselves' (Destination GIZ 2028). In order to achieve the highest quality and impact for commissioning parties and partner countries, GIZ intends to rely even more systematically on partnerships in the future. After all, the complementary strengths and competences that different partners contribute through cooperation arrangements should help GIZ maintain and promote the quality, innovative strength and effectiveness of its work.

The special importance of the academic and research community as a transformative actor in international cooperation is already made clear in the 2030 Agenda as an international framework for action. For example, high-quality higher education is defined as an objective in Sustainable Development Objective (SDG) 4, and science and research are among the essential instruments for implementing the SDGs. The implementation principle of 'shared responsibility' also calls for official development cooperation to work together with other stakeholders to achieve the SDGs, and explicitly cites academia as an important partner. The academic and research community is diverse, ranging from universities and non-university research institutes, to academic networks, consortiums and think tanks.¹ It has the potential to complement GIZ's core competence as a specialist in implementation with expertise, networking, by supplying evidence and contributing technical and methodological innovation, and by ensuring academic objectivity and independence.

Against this background, the GIZ Management Board commissioned the Corporate Unit Evaluation to carry out a corporate strategic evaluation (CSE) on the topic of 'GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community. Together with the Management Board and the Reference Group, the following objectives and questions were defined for the evaluation.

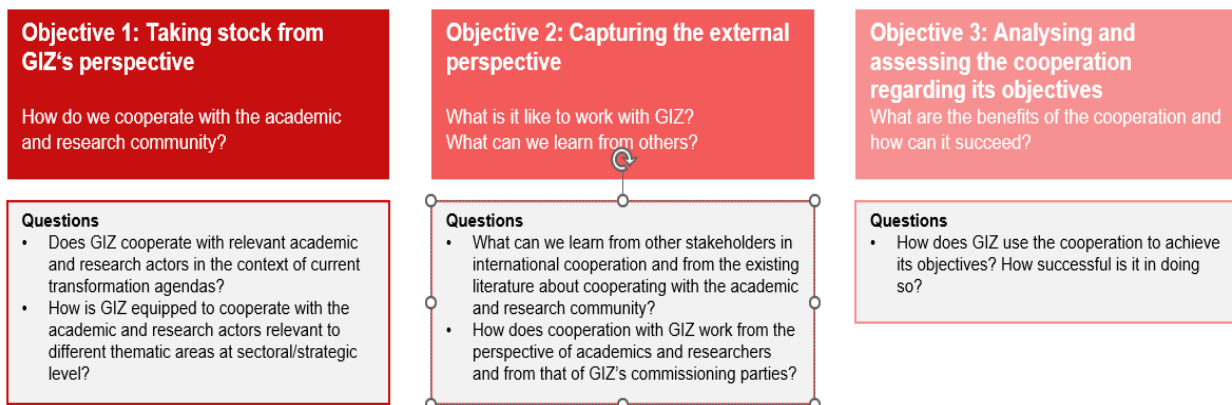


Figure 1: Evaluation objectives and questions

¹ In this document we use the terms 'the academic and research community', 'the academic community' and 'academia' interchangeably to depict GIZ'S cooperation with this range of actors.

The evaluation is intended to encourage learning and enable an evidence-based discussion and decision-making process for the further development of the cooperation with academia at GIZ. It builds on earlier corporate strategic evaluations examining cooperation arrangements and partnerships, in particular an evaluation of 'Cooperation with the private sector' (2018) and the 'Joint evaluation of the FC/TC cooperation' (2023), conducted together with KfW Development Bank.

This report is structured as follows: Section 1.2 describes the evaluation process and the data sources for the evaluation results. The involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process is also discussed here. Section 2 of the evaluation deals with the results and is divided into three parts. Section 2.1 systematically reviews the status quo of cooperation with the academic and research community and describes GIZ's position in that cooperation. Section 2.2 delves more deeply into GIZ's cooperation practice, describing how cooperation with academia is currently integrated in the company's documents, structures and processes, and how cooperation arrangements are selected and managed. It also examines the cooperation arrangement with academic stakeholders from partner countries, which play a pivotal role for GIZ, especially against the backdrop of the debate on colonial continuities. By systematically describing factors that promote or hinder cooperation with the academic and research community, this CSE also shows how this cooperation can be shaped in the future. Section 2.3 is devoted to the effectiveness of GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community. It shows what GIZ is already achieving or can achieve together with academics and researchers, and which potential the cooperation holds for the future. The results take into account the views of GIZ staff as well as those of GIZ's commissioning parties and the academic stakeholders with whom it cooperates. Approaches taken by other international cooperation organisations that work together with the academic and research community are included in the report in text boxes, as are a series of quotes from the survey. The most important graphs and diagrams are embedded in the main text; others can be found in the annex. Section 3 draws summary conclusions from the results and sets out recommendations for changes that the evaluation team deems necessary for improved cooperation with the academic and research community.

1.2 Evaluation process

The design and methodological approach of the CSE have already been explained in detail in the concept note and the inception report and will therefore only be briefly outlined here. This is intended to provide the data foundation necessary to comprehend the results, conclusions and recommendations. GIZ's Corporate Unit Evaluation and Technopolis formed a joint evaluation team to design and carry out the evaluation, headed by the Corporate Unit Evaluation.

The evaluation design can be divided into three partly overlapping phases.

Phase I – Literature review, first-round interviews, portfolio analysis, interviews with international cooperation (IC) organisations

In the first phase of the evaluation, some 60 academic publications were systematically reviewed to identify existing findings on cooperation with the academic and research community in development cooperation. GIZ's own internal strategy documents and handouts were also evaluated. Interviews were conducted with 34 GIZ colleagues from various fields, and with 45 representatives of cooperating academic stakeholders.

At the same time, a portfolio analysis was carried out. It examined documents (module proposals, interim and final reports and evaluations) from 629 projects from between 2018 and 2023, including bilateral projects funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), sector and global programmes, projects funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) and GIZ self-initiated measures. The documents were systematically checked for the naming of academic and research stakeholders, using a keyword

search and a sample-based, qualitative analysis.² The interviews and portfolio analysis served to obtain an initial overview of the significance and practice of cooperation with the academic and research community – both in terms of quality and quantity. Based on this, 14 cause/effect hypotheses about GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community were developed for further analysis.

In addition, interviews were conducted with representatives of seven IC actors:

- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- Open Society Foundation (OSF)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

This was intended to identify (good) practices for cooperation with the academic and research community as well as the challenges these organisations have faced, and thereby to derive lessons for GIZ.

Phase II – Case studies and interviews with commissioning parties

The case studies served to gain as deep an insight as possible into the impacts of cooperation between GIZ and academic stakeholders. For this purpose, the reference group selected four cause/effect hypotheses from the 14 in the previous evaluation phase for consideration in the case studies:

- Cooperation with the academic and research community contributes to the **transformation** of GIZ's working methods towards **integrated solutions**, with a focus on excellence of implementation.
- Cooperation with the academic and research community contributes to the improvement of **GIZ's reputation**.
- Cooperation with the academic and research community gives GIZ visibility and assists its sectoral **positioning** and ability for **agenda-setting**.
- Strategic cooperation with the academic and research community contributes to **the development and maintenance of an attractive service portfolio** and, as such, helps **maintain and increase** GIZ's total income.

These four hypotheses were analysed on the basis of four case study topics – **just transition, global health, feminist development policy and digitalisation** – using 12 specific examples of cooperation. The first three case study topics were taken from the priority areas of the German Government, while digitalisation was included as a particularly important cross-cutting topic. For the case studies, 24 GIZ staff and 13 representatives of academic stakeholders were interviewed and various documents related to the respective cooperation were evaluated. One additional cause/effect hypothesis was also examined separately, using a document analysis and interviews with GIZ staff:

- Cooperation with academic partners makes a positive contribution to **strategic HR development**, including recruitment and further **training** within the company.

Finally, the GIZ's strategic partnership management was examined separately with respect to cooperation with the academic and research community.

At the same time, nine interviews were conducted with representatives of GIZ's commissioning parties:

- German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
- German Federal Foreign Office (AA)
- German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK)

² The quantitative evaluation of the portfolio can only state whether or not academic stakeholders are named in the project documents, not if a cooperation arrangement actually existed. In order to examine the cooperation arrangements, the documents of a sample of 40 projects with that particularly frequent mention academic and research stakeholders were analysed qualitatively.

- German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV)
- German Federal Ministry of Health (BMG)
- European Union (EU)

These were used to identify the requirements and expectations of commissioning parties with regard to cooperation with the academic and research community, and to gauge their opinion of the quality of GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community to date.

Phase III – Survey

The evaluation was completed with a survey. This served to quantitatively supplement and check the previously gathered data. The survey was aimed at managers in GIZ's GloBe Department and the Sectoral Department (directors of division, section heads and heads of competence centres), at the Sectoral Department's planning officers, and at cluster coordinators and commission managers (GloBe and regional departments). Between 18 January and 1 March 2024, 276 people took part in the survey – a response rate of 22%. This number of 276 participants – including 175 commission managers and 39 directors of division, section heads and heads of competence centres from the Sectoral Department and GloBe – made it possible to carry out a comprehensive analysis, including comparisons between the different sectors the respondents worked in. It is important to consider the possibility of selective response bias when interpreting the results. Employees with a lot of experience of cooperation with academics or with particularly strong opinions on the topic probably participated in the survey in greater numbers than their colleagues with little or no such experience.

Stakeholder engagement

The evaluation process was designed to be participative. Its implementation was supported by a reference group in which the following GIZ departments were represented: Corporate Development Unit, Client Liaison and Business Development Department, Sectoral Department, and Sector and Global Projects Department (GloBe). The Africa Department represented GIZ's regional departments in the reference group. Six reference group meetings took place over the course of the evaluation, but the group members were available to the evaluation team as contact persons with their expertise and organisational knowledge, far beyond the meetings. In addition, the case study survey was accompanied by mentors with specific sectoral expertise from the Sectoral Department and GloBe at departmental and section management levels. They helped choose the cooperation arrangements with academic stakeholders to be assessed in each case study, and they contributed to the subsequent discussion and validation of the results in workshops. The evaluation's final results and recommendations were not only discussed beyond the reference group meetings with representatives of all participating departments.

The evaluation process' participatory approach was meant to ensure the relevance of the results and recommendations to the stakeholders and their respective departments. Through the collective selection of objectives and questions, the discussion and validation of the evaluation design and of the (preliminary) results, as well as the evaluation's recommendations, the stakeholders had the chance to participate actively in the evaluation process and develop ownership. At the same time, it enabled the evaluation team to capture recent developments, incorporate additional sectoral and organisational expertise. This in turn ensured the evaluation's alignment with the stakeholders' needs.

2 Evaluation results

2.1 GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community: status quo

The evaluation shows that cooperation with the academic and research community is part of GIZ's day-to-day work. The survey shows that 98% of the participating GIZ staff have worked with academic stakeholders before, in either a current or previous position with GIZ. This concurs with the findings of the portfolio analysis. Of the total 629 projects that ran or ended between 2018 and 2023, 549 (87%) reveal a cooperation arrangement with academic stakeholders. The portfolio under consideration shows neither a sectoral nor a regional focus, but rather an equal distribution of the evidence of cooperation across all sectors and regions.³

Cooperation with the academic and research community is relevant for GIZ. Regardless of the sector, 90% of the survey participants consider increased cooperation with the academic and research community as necessary to bring technical expertise to GIZ. However, as shown by Figure 2, academics are not always the most important cooperation partners. For example, actors from the sectors of business and civil society are more often seen as the most important cooperation partners. The relevance of the academic and research community in GIZ's work is more likely to be confirmed by the fact that across all sectors, less than a third of the survey participants view academics as the most important partners compared to business and civil society (see Figure 3). On the other hand, the importance of business and civil society varies from sector to sector. For example, in the TOPIC cluster 'Economy and Employment', the private business sector is naturally viewed as by far the most important partner, while the same can be said for civil society in the TOPIC clusters 'Security, Reconstruction, Peace' and 'State and Democracy'. Although the academic and research community is not seen as the most important partner for cooperation in any of the TOPIC clusters, it is consistently rated second across all sectors – i.e. it is not 'insignificant' in any sector.

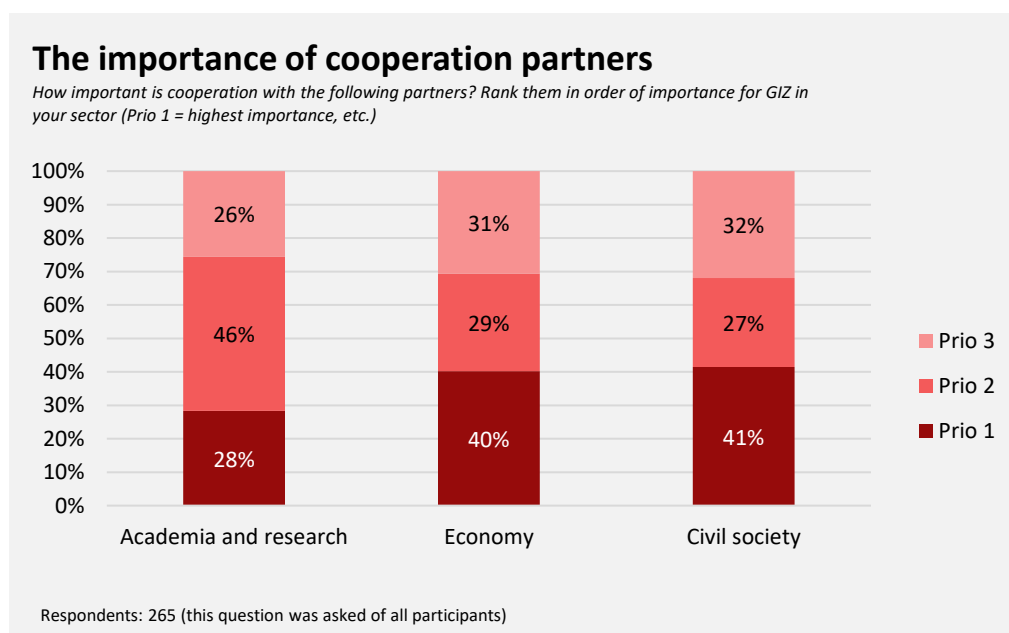


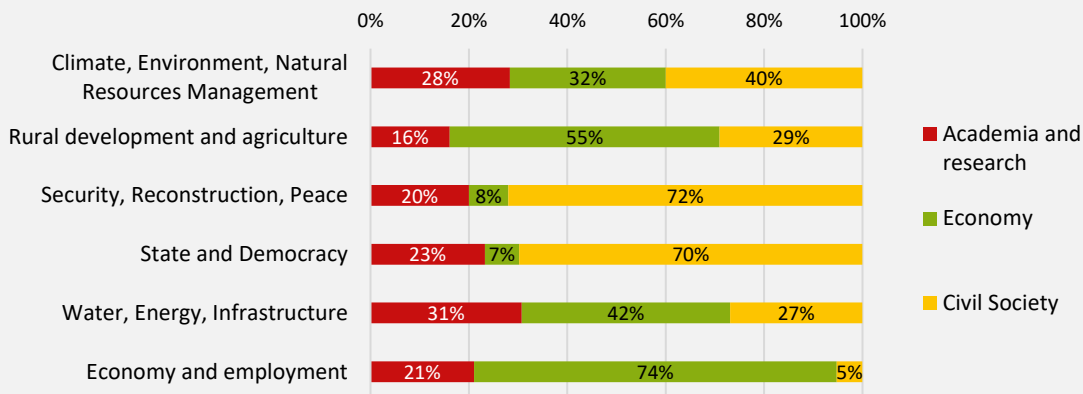
Figure 2: The importance of cooperation partners
 Source: online survey

³ The portfolio analysis included 64 GIZ self-initiated measures, 133 IKI projects, 207 sector and global projects and 225 BMZ-funded projects with Central Project Evaluation (ZPE) that had been implemented or completed between 2018 and 2023. Since this is explicitly not a random sample, the portfolio evaluation can show trends but cannot claim to be representative.

Most important partner by sector

How important is cooperation with the following partners? (1= highest importance, 2= second highest importance, 3= lowest importance)

Shown here: % highest importance



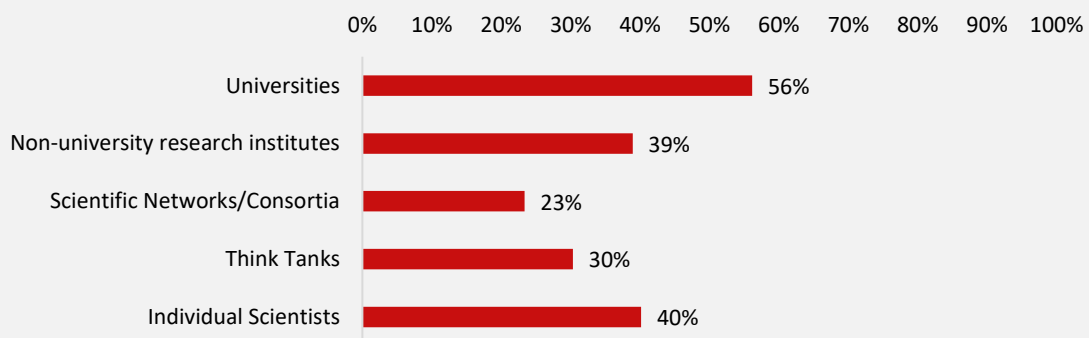
Interpretation aid: "In the government and democracy sector, 23% categorise science as the most important cooperation partner. Only 7% see business as the most important cooperation partner, whereas 70% see civil society as the most important"
 Respondents: 265 (this question was asked of all participants)

Figure 3: Most important partners, by sector
 Source: online survey

Within the academic and research community, universities are GIZ's most frequent cooperation partners in projects. The survey (Figure 4) showed that 56% of the projects cooperate with universities. Cooperation with individual scientists (40%) and research institutes (39%) come second, while cooperation with think tanks (30%) takes place only about half as often as with universities. The pre-eminence of universities among GIZ's academic partners is also confirmed by the portfolio analysis, which found evidence of cooperation with universities in 75% of the 629 projects examined.

Academic and research cooperation in projects

Do you cooperate in your project with...?



Respondents: 151 commission managers for 244 current projects (incl. those without academia and research collaborations)

Figure 4: Academic and research cooperation in projects
 Source: online survey

In its projects, GIZ cooperates with roughly equal numbers of stakeholders from the Global North and the Global South. The survey shows that 75% of the participating commission managers in current projects cooperate with academic stakeholders in the Global South, while 74% cooperate with those from the Global North. Figure 5 provides a more detailed breakdown of the locations of GIZ's academic partners: the largest number come from the partner countries (65%), followed by Germany (58%); academic partners from Europe (38%; excluding Germany) outweigh those from North America (13%). The strong integration of cooperation with academic stakeholders from the partner countries is also reflected in the portfolio analysis: more than half (56%)

of the academic stakeholders identified in a sample of 40 projects running between 2018 and 2023 came from a GIZ partner country.

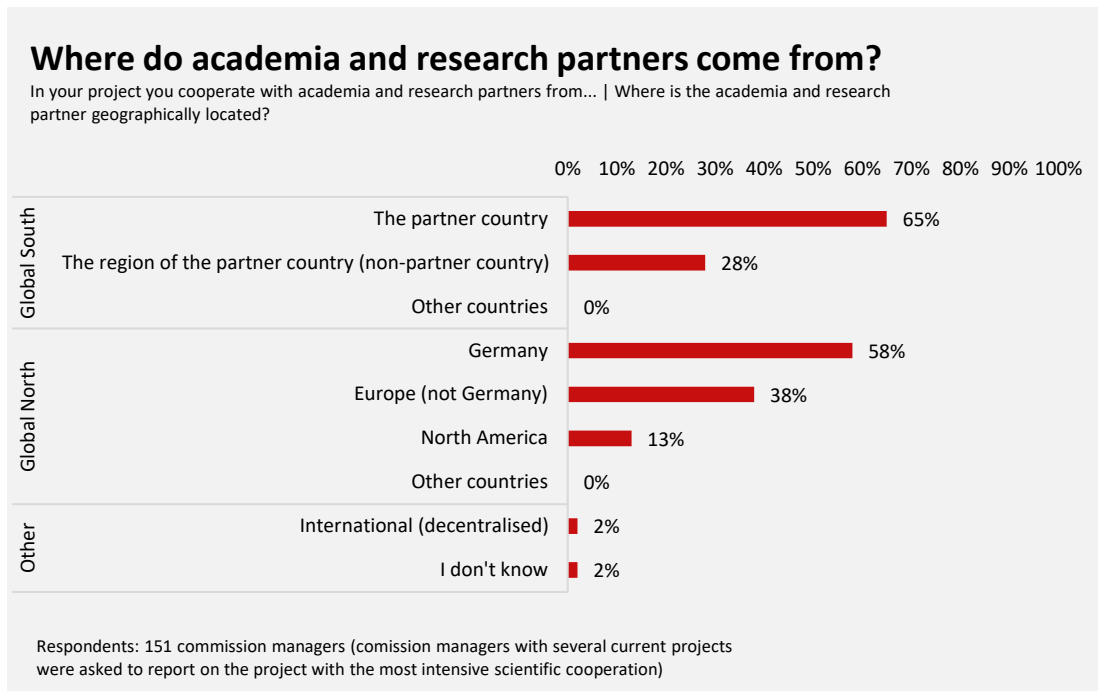


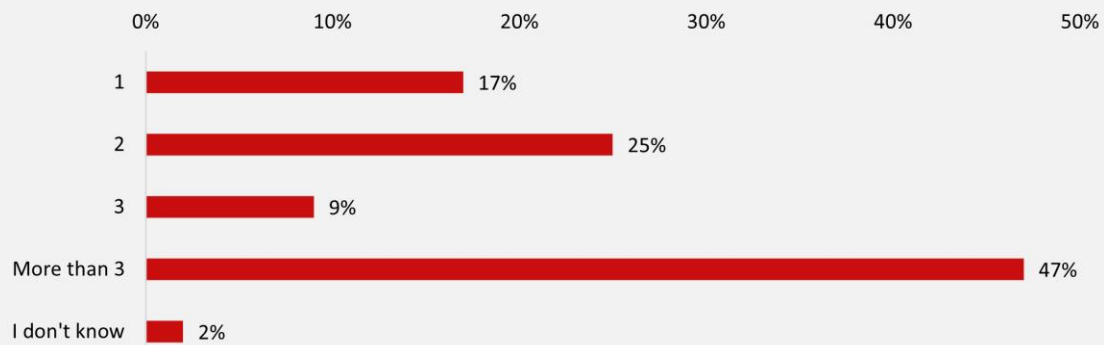
Figure 5: Geographical origin of the partners in academia and research
Source: online survey

Interesting patterns can also be identified with regards to the origin of individual types of stakeholder: For example, more than half of cooperation arrangements with universities noted in the survey and almost half of those with individual scientists are located in the partner country. Think tanks and research institutes have a similarly even distribution between partner countries and Germany.

When GIZ cooperates with the academic and research community, there is usually cooperation with several academic stakeholders at the same time, including stakeholders from the Global South and the Global North. The survey (Figure 6) shows that 81% of the participating commission managers who pursue cooperation with academics in their current projects, cooperate with more than one such stakeholder, and in almost half (47%) of the projects, even with more than three academic stakeholders. Figure 7 shows that in a majority of sectoral and global programmes (61%) as well as regional programmes (52%) which entail cooperation with the academic and research community, more than three academic stakeholders are involved. It can be assumed that this is due to the size and complexity of the projects. Sector programmes also need to be particularly well networked with the academic and research community in the respective sector to fulfil their advisory task. However, even among projects in the bilateral portfolio that cooperate with academics, in a relative majority of cases (39%) this involves more than three stakeholders simultaneously.

Number of academia and research collaborations in projects

How many partners from academia and research are you cooperating with in your project?



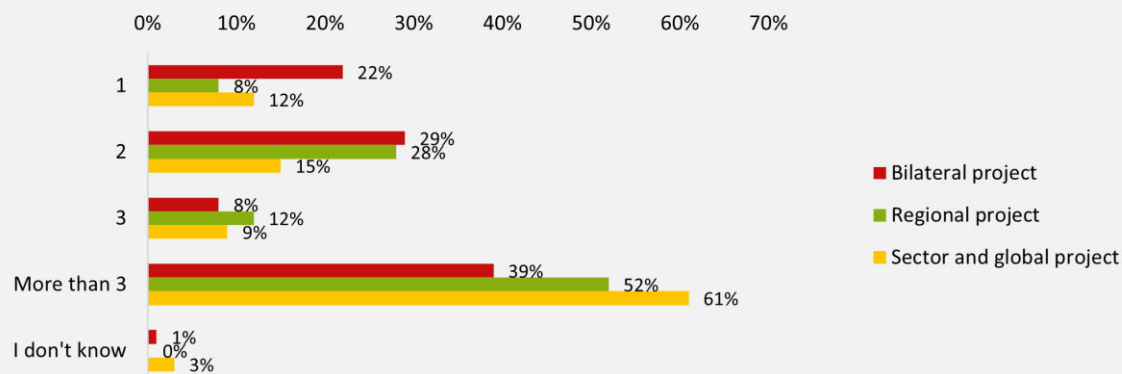
Respondents: 151 commission managers (with academia and research cooperation in current project)

Figure 6: Number of cooperation arrangements with academic and research community in projects

Source: online survey

Number of academia and research collaborations in projects

How many partners from academia and research are you cooperating with in your project?



Respondents: 143 commission managers (with academia and research cooperation in current projects)

Figure 7: Number of cooperation arrangements with academic community in projects, by type of project

Source: online survey

Practical experience

Cooperation with many academic stakeholders

One of the objectives of the global Digital Transformation project is to improve working conditions in the gig economy in a total of 24 countries. The project is collaborating closely with the **Oxford Internet Institute (OII) at the University of Oxford**, the **Social Science Research Center Berlin**, as well as universities and think tanks in the 24 countries in which the project is being implemented. The cooperation is based on financing.

In 60% of the projects with cooperation with academics covered by the survey, cooperation with the academic and research community in the Global South and Global North is carried out at the same time (Figure 7). This suggests that many GIZ projects involve a North-South exchange between academics.

Practical experience

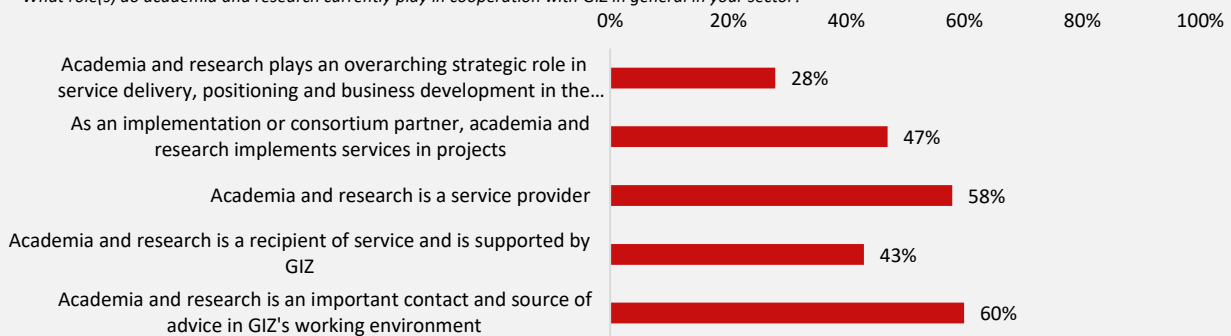
North-South cooperation between academic stakeholders in GIZ projects

‘Among our components in Jordan, we have one focused on cooperation between universities in Jordan and Germany. This has created sustainable structures. They are now continuing to cooperate with one another, and some town partnerships have even been created’ (Int_GIZ_47).

The academic and research community plays a multifaceted role in cooperation with GIZ. As Figure 8 shows, it acts as a point of contact and advisor to GIZ, sometimes as a service provider or implementation partner, sometimes as a recipient of benefits.

Role of academia and research in the sector

What role(s) do academia and research currently play in cooperation with GIZ in general in your sector?

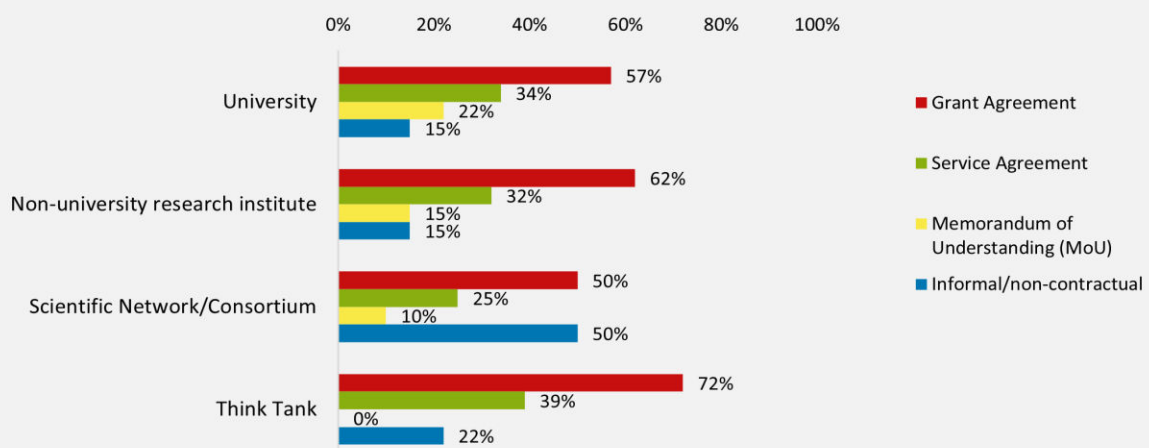


Respondents: 272 (this question was asked of all participants)

Figure 8: Role of academia and research in the sector
Source: online survey

Contractual basis for cooperation by type of actor

How is the cooperation contractually regulated?



Respondents: 150 commission managers (with academia and research cooperation in current project)

Figure 9: Contractual bases of cooperation, by type of stakeholder
Source: online survey

There are differences in the **role of academia across different sectors** (see Annex 1): For example, the academic and research community is often viewed as an implementation and consortium partner in the TOPIC clusters ‘Climate, Environment, Management of Natural Resources’ and ‘Rural Development and Agriculture’. It

frequently acts as a service provider in the clusters 'Climate, Environment, Management of Natural Resources' and 'Water, Energy, Infrastructure'. In the TOPIC cluster 'Rural Development and Agriculture', the academic community is often funded by GIZ.

Financing is by far the most common form of contract. The commission managers participating in the survey stated that in more than half of the cooperation cases (56%), there is a **funding contract** with the academic partner. Contracts for works or services contracts are concluded in 37% of the cases recorded in the survey. Memorandums of Understanding also exist in 15% of cases. In 21% of cases, there is no contractual or formally agreed basis for the partnership. This distribution is independent of the type of academic stakeholder (Figure 9): **Funding** predominates for universities as well as for research institutes and think tanks. Contracts for works or services also play a similarly important role in cooperation with all types of academic stakeholders. Differences, on the other hand, are most likely to arise in the location of the academic stakeholders (see Annex 2): While **funding** for academic stakeholders in the Global North clearly predominates, funding and contracts for works or services are roughly balanced for academic stakeholders in the Global South. This means that **contracts for works or services** are more important for academic stakeholders in the Global South than for academic stakeholders in the Global North.

2.2 GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community in practice

The view of the commissioning parties on cooperation with the academic and research community

GIZ's commissioning parties do not make any explicit demands on GIZ to cooperate with the academic and research community. Nevertheless, there are various implicit expectations of GIZ to integrate research in its work. For example, no formalised involvement of academics at the strategic level – for example in the form of a chief economist – is seen as necessary (Int_AG_61,91). GIZ is primarily seen as an implementing organisation commissioned with implementing projects of the highest quality. Cooperation with academia can be helpful in this respect, depending on the topic and context, and after weighing up costs and benefits. (Int_AG_1,3,61,91).

Against the backdrop of the current debate on the effectiveness of development cooperation, commissioning parties see the need to incorporate academic evidence into GIZ's work. This should already be done in the planning of the projects. However, direct cooperation with an academic stakeholder is not always necessary for the provision or retrieval of academic evidence.

Commissioning parties are formulating their requirements more strongly in technical and academic topics, such as 'climate' or 'energy': Here, GIZ must be able to provide state-of-the-art academic expertise. Cooperation between GIZ and academia makes perfect sense here (Int_AG_2,3,61,91,97). Other topics mentioned by individual commissioning parties as useful areas of cooperation between GIZ and the academic and research community were agricultural research, migration, and artificial intelligence.

The commissioning parties have different views with which academic stakeholders GIZ should cooperate. Particularly in the more technical and academic sectors, some commissioning parties demand that GIZ cooperates with the most renowned academic stakeholders in Germany and on the international stage (Int_AG_61). **In general, however, all the clients surveyed emphasise that a diversity of actors is desired.** A balanced mix of German, internationally renowned and academic and research partners from the partner country is seen as advantageous. Especially against the background of the discussion about colonial continuities in development cooperation, the involvement of academic stakeholders and knowledge bearers from the partner countries is necessary. One interview partner also calls for cooperation with the scientific community to be focussed on institutions from Germany, other EU states and partner countries (Int_AG_3).

In principle, commissioning parties have the impression that GIZ is already working with the relevant academic stakeholders in the sector (Int_AG_2, 3, 11, 76, 91, 97). Only one interview partner saw still room for improvement (Int_AG_97). Potential for improvement in cooperation is seen regarding better integration of academic evidence in planning and impact measurement (Int_AG_3, 76, 97) as well as in an even stronger involvement of academic stakeholders from the Global South. The growing sector of think tanks on the African continent in particular offers additional networking potential (Int_AG_11). In addition, one interview partner shared the impression that the administrative burden of cooperation with GIZ was too great for the academic and research community (Int_AG_61).

However, there is a clear wish that GIZ should share the knowledge it acquires in cooperation with the academic and research community with its commissioning parties. The results of cooperation between GIZ and academia should not be monopolised by GIZ, allowing the company a position of 'knowledge dominance'. Rather, GIZ's task is seen as the sustained contribution of the expertise it gains from cooperating with the academic community (Int_AG_3, 76, 91). Here, GIZ is also partly credited with the role of a 'knowledge broker': GIZ should more proactively identify relevant academic stakeholders and bring them into ministerial formats (Int_AG_76), whereby the limitations of the current budget situation are also emphasised here (Int_AG_91).

Objectives and impacts of cooperation with academia, from the perspective of other IC organisations

The international cooperation organisations pursue different **objectives** in their cooperation with academic stakeholders. For all the organisations, **knowledge generation and transfer** play an important role in the cooperation. The following interesting priority areas were identified:

- **Sida** and **OSF** both highlight their focus on building and strengthening research capacities and the research environment in third-party countries. They emphasise the promotion of local competences and the exchange with local academic stakeholders, especially those from the Global South or in war-affected and crisis regions.
- **FCDO**, **EBRD** and **SDC** underline the importance of cooperation with the academic community in terms of **the provision and use of academic knowledge and evidence** for solving global challenges, designing and implementing programmes, and verifying the effectiveness of projects on the ground. In doing so, the organisations also use evidence generated by the academic community in their work as advisors to policymakers.
- An important objective for **UNDP** is to play a pioneering **'thought leadership'** role in international development. According to interviewees, academic cooperation helps UNDP to improve networks and approaches to work, while encouraging discussions and decisions that are more evidence-based.

Embedding the cooperation with academics in GIZ's work

In its Corporate Strategy 2023-2028, GIZ has set the objective of focusing more systematically on partnerships. **However, cooperation with academia is not yet embedded in the company's strategic documents.** GIZ's Business Development Strategy 2023-2025 focuses exclusively on partnerships with multilateral actors, not with academia. While the Human Relations Strategy 2023+ names universities as cooperation partners for recruiting future junior staff and providing training and upskilling programmes, it holds no further detail about the academic and research community as a cooperation partner for achieving the objectives of GIZ's HR Department. GIZ's Environment and Trends Report 2022 explains in general terms how strategic cooperation with civil society, academia and the private sector is seen as key to pursuing future topics, such as the digital and green transformation (GIZ's ability to deliver; p.40 and p.50), and it describes how think tanks are increasingly perceived as competitors for GIZ (p.29). The Environment and Trends Report does not address current developments and trends in academia and research, but experts from the academic community were interviewed and included in discussion rounds for the preparation of the report. Currently, the Environment and Trends Report cooperates exclusively with academic stakeholders in Germany. In the future, however, more expertise from partner countries will be included. On the other hand, a comprehensive response to trends in the academic and research community is not seen as possible due to limited resources (Int_GIZ_40).

The lack of integration of academic cooperation in GIZ's strategic documents contrasts with the academic literature on cooperative relations. Here, the existence of cooperation strategies is seen as an important prerequisite for the success of cooperation (Guimón 2013; Ritzen, 2019; TPI, 2020; Østergaard and Drejer, 2022).

GIZ does not administer its cooperation with the academic community centrally. Besides the direct cooperation of individual projects with academic stakeholders, various decentralised points of contact exist with limited responsibility for managing the cooperation. For example, the Competence Centre for Education, Vocational Education and Training and the Labour Market pools expertise on higher education in partner countries and is responsible for cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). On behalf of BMZ's Education Sector Division, the Universities for Development Service Unit of the Vocational Education and Training Sector Programme acts as a point of contact and advice for German and international academic stakeholders who want to become active in development cooperation and refers them both within and outside the GIZ. However, it is not charged with actively initiating or monitoring cooperation between GIZ and the academic and research community. Another interface to academia is the Departmental Economic Analysis team of the regional departments, some of whom have a certain responsibility for exchanges or cooperation with the academic and research community. The existence of a structure in the form of an intermediary person, organisational unit or committee that coordinates and structures the cooperation is considered advantageous in the academic literature (Miller, McAdam and McAdam, 2016; Chernikova, 2017).

How cooperation with the academic and research community is integrated in other international cooperation organisations

Only two of the organisations surveyed have formalised their cooperation with the academic and research community in dedicated (research) **strategies** that define objectives and priorities as a guiding framework.

- **Sida** pursues the 'Strategy for Cooperation with and for Research in Development Cooperation' (2015-2021). The strategy was developed by Sida in close cooperation with the Swedish Government and its cooperation partners, based on previous strategy periods. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the final draft of the strategy, which is adopted by the government. As part of this strategy, the government decides on cooperation priorities, while Sida is responsible for the way in which it is implemented, selecting the partners as well as the cooperation models.
- **The SDC** presents a descriptive research concept for the Development and Cooperation policy area (2021-2024), which defines the objectives and challenges of academic cooperation as well as the research priorities.

Several organisations have dedicated **organisational units**, which either have research capacities themselves and/or are responsible for cooperation with the academic and research community.

- **FCDO** has its own research department, which provides expert analyses and advice, uses academic findings for the development and diplomatic impact of the FCDO, promotes science and technology partnerships and ensures close cooperation with other academic actors.
- The **EBRD** has a Chief Economist with its own research unit (Office of the Chief Economist; OCE), which acts as an internal research and evaluation unit, and also cooperates selectively with external academic actors.
- **USAID** also has a Chief Economist, with its own research unit (Office of the Chief Economist; OCE), which is responsible for the generation and use of impact evidence and advises the management level of the organisation.
- **The SDC** has a Research Desk that is responsible for the research concept, promotes research and maintains partnerships with Swiss academic stakeholders.

USAID also claims to have anchored cooperation with the academic and research community in its corporate culture. Science is seen as an essential component of international cooperation, and academic stakeholders are seen as the engine of development. The management level encourages employees to invest resources in academic cooperation and maintain contacts with science in addition to their daily work. This is supported by making activities with academia visible by highlighting best practice examples, establishing mechanisms to facilitate cooperation, and providing appropriate resources for cooperation. In the near future, a guideline for cooperation with the academic and research community will also be developed and a platform for the exchange of experience will be tested.

GIZ's strategic partnership management **plays a significant role**: organisations and institutions that are of relevance to GIZ in terms of their service provision, positioning or business development can be accorded the status of 'strategic partner' or 'context stakeholders' within GIZ. Strategic partners are more firmly integrated in GIZ's operational work. They are also considered important for the achievement of GIZ's strategic objectives, while context stakeholders tend to act as important reference organisations in GIZ's working environment or are important for GIZ's positioning in the development cooperation environment. Proposals for strategic partnerships and context stakeholders are introduced in a decentralised manner by the divisions, while the Management Board ultimately decides on the status. Every strategic partner or context stakeholder has a partnership manager

(PM) at GIZ. This person acts as the contact person for the respective actor and is responsible for the orientation of the partnership. In addition, the partnership managers are also internal contact persons within GIZ for specific cooperation with the respective partner and are intended to pool knowledge and experience on the partnership. All strategic partners and context stakeholders are listed with their PM in the representation matrix. Every two years, the strategic partnerships are reviewed for their relevance and the representation matrix is updated accordingly. The Official Bodies and Strategic Partnerships Section in the Corporate Development Unit accompanies the process of prioritising the strategic partnerships, provides tools for assessing the partnerships and advises the organisational units on applying for strategic partnerships. It also advises the units and PMs on ongoing partnerships.

At present, only a small percentage of academic stakeholders are listed as strategic partners or context stakeholders of GIZ. Currently, the representation matrix includes 12 academic stakeholders (7.7%) among the 155 institutions and organisations listed as strategic partners or environmental organisations. However, only nine civil society and church organisations (5.8%) and 21 economic actors (13.5%) can be found in the representation matrix.

Overall, the existing criteria for prioritising strategic partnerships are not being applied systematically. As reasons for prioritising academic stakeholders as strategic partners or context stakeholders, GIZ interviewees cited their outstanding technical expertise in the sector and their role in positioning GIZ in the development cooperation environment or in the sector (Int_GIZ_5, 16, 29, 56). In most cases, prioritisation was based on long-standing cooperation arrangements with the respective actor and **not on a systematic selection** of actors classified as strategically relevant for the sectors or GIZ. In some cases, it is also GIZ's Management Board that selects strategic partners or context stakeholders from within the academic community directly and without prior prioritisation by the departments (Int_GIZ_5, 71, 87). **As a result, academic partners have not yet been systematically selected according to their overarching strategic benefit to GIZ but reflect sectoral preferences.**

The partnership manager's contact structure, which is associated with the status of strategic partner and context stakeholder, was considered helpful in steering the partnership. At the same time, it became apparent that the strategic partnerships with academic stakeholders are very different and often oscillate in their intensity. Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) exist with only five out of twelve academic partners, which give the partnerships a more formal framework. Annual meetings of the management board levels of both organisations were mentioned as strategic exchange formats, as were regular meetings at the level of divisional or department heads. In some cases, the PM is in continuous exchange with the academic stakeholder (GIZ-Int_5, 16), in other cases the PM describes the contact with the strategic academic partner as only 'sporadic' (GIZ_Int_29, 56). In one case, however, the PM also carried out joint environmental analyses with the strategic academic partner (GIZ_Int_87).

The partnership managers see the greatest challenges in the lack of knowledge management on partnerships. There is the impression that the PM and its tasks are not sufficiently known, especially in the field structure, and that they are not informed about contacts and cooperation arrangements with the respective strategic partner or context stakeholder. **In principle, it is criticised that information on who, when and where**

GIZ cooperates with an academic stakeholder can only be obtained with great effort, as this is not reflected in GIZ's systems (Int_GIZ_5, 17, 22, 29, 56, 87). Furthermore, the small proportion of working time that a PM can spend on partnership management is seen as problematic (Int_GIZ_84). On the other hand, the advisory services of the Official Bodies and Strategic Partnerships Section in the Corporate Development Unit are praised. In particular, the existence of clear terms of reference for PM, advice on MoU and the implementation of exchange formats among PM were mentioned positively (Int_GIZ_5, 84, 87).

'The flow of information is not good. We do not have the ability to aggregate the information. Actually, we should write down every year what was going on. Due to the lack of information flow, you can't work strategically at all.' (Int_GIZ_56)

In addition to the representation matrix with GIZ's strategic partners and context stakeholders, there is the so-called **Partner Finder**. Besides GIZ's strategic partners and context stakeholders, the Partner Finder also lists 'other partners of the departments' with which individual departments have a non-strategic working relationship. There are currently 464 actors listed here, of which 79 (17%) can be counted as academic stakeholders. Only some of the academic partners are named as GIZ contact persons in the Partner Finder. It is striking that it is primarily the Sectoral Department that enters its academic partnerships into the Partner Finder. Although the Sectoral Department has a person responsible for partnership management at the level of Departmental Strategy and Coordination, the initiation and maintenance of partnerships is also decentralised via the individual competence centres.

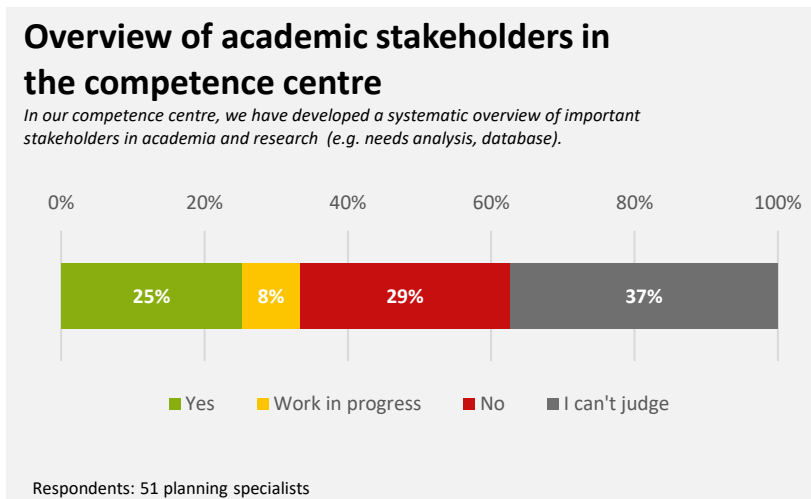


Figure 10: Overview of academic stakeholders in the competence centre
Source: online survey

In some competence centres, systematic needs analyses for partnerships (also, but not only, with the academic community) are carried out. However, this is not standard. For example, only 25% of the specialist planners in the survey state that they have developed a systematic overview of cooperation with academics in their competence centre, while a further 8% state that such an overview is in preparation (Figure 10).

Practical experience

Taking stock of partnerships in the Just Transition Task Force

As part of the Just Transition Task Force, a dedicated team of developers was set up for partnership management. Their task was to evaluate existing partnerships and to identify new partnerships in the areas of Financing Just Transition, Social Economic Transformation and Just Energy Transition, which are considered particularly important. When reassessing existing partnerships, it was found that they could achieve much more in terms of content than GIZ was previously aware of. Think tanks in particular fit the profile they were looking for. In total, the process took 12 to 15 months. First, the specialist planners involved had to free themselves from their sectoral-specific knowledge and develop a new cross-sectoral perspective. Overall, the impression was that GIZ is already well networked in the field of Just Transition and needs to become more aware of the potential of existing partners.

Beyond the Sectoral Department, the initiative and responsibility for cooperation with academics is often decentralised in the projects. However, this means that cooperation arrangements with academic partners are usually not thought of as strategic but based on the short- to medium-term needs in the implementation of the projects. However, this contradicts the claimed intention formulated in the corporate strategy to develop and offer integrated solutions across projects. This was criticised by several participants in the survey:

'The assessment of the strategic relevance and prioritisation of cooperation is low, hardly coordinated across departments and highly fragmented overall, also because donors pay little attention to it and project logic continues to shape practice.' (Quote Survey).

'With our project logic, duration, and priority on partner orientation, however, we mainly cooperate with the academic community on a selective basis and on an occasion- or activity-related basis. These short-term and one-off requests on our part are not relevant for the leading academic players. If we want to increase cooperation with the academic and research community, projects must also be designed in this way. Long-term collaborations with specific research partners would have to be identified during the review and formalised before the start of the project.' (Quote Survey)

Establishing the cooperation

In fact, systematic needs assessments are only one of several – and not the decisive – approaches to identifying academic partners at GIZ. **There is a clear tendency in GIZ to cooperate with academic stakeholders who are already familiar.**

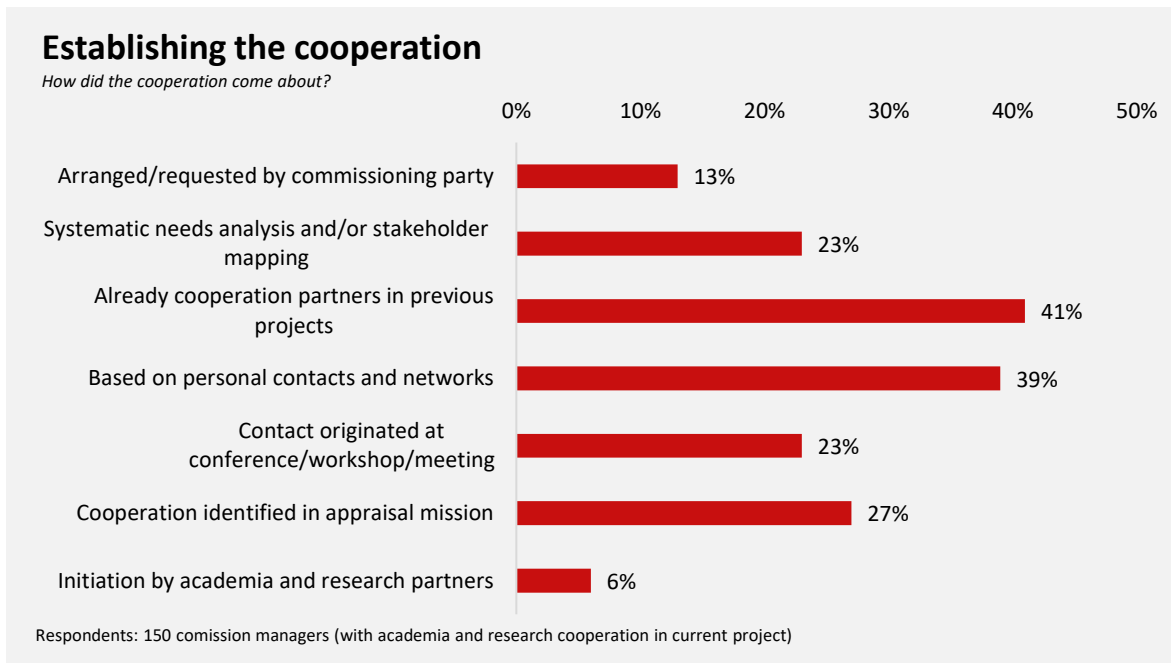


Figure 11: Establishing cooperation arrangements
Source: online survey

The survey (Figure 11) shows that in 41% of cases, cooperation arrangements with the academic community have been 'carried over' from previous projects. In 39% of the cases, the cooperation was based on personal contacts and networks, and in 23%, the contact with academia was established at an event. A more systematic approach to identifying and initiating partnerships via the audit mission in projects or a needs analysis was mentioned in 27% and 23% of the cases, respectively. The strong focus on cooperation with 'well-known' academic stakeholders is also confirmed in the interviews with GIZ colleagues. The importance of previous collaboration with an academic partner, personal contacts and events is also emphasised here. This tendency to cooperate with familiar figures without carrying out a systematic selection and evaluation of the cooperation was also criticised several times in the survey:

'A regular assessment of whether the cooperation arrangements benefit us does not take place systematically. We often find ourselves in a sort of dependency loop and work with the same familiar actors over and over again. This diminishes our diversity and effectiveness.' (Quote from survey)

In addition, however, academic partnerships are also specifically selected according to the level of awareness of their expertise or reputation in the sector or subject area (Int_GIZ_31,33,39). It is also important to emphasise that cooperation with academic stakeholders who have been known and proven for some time also offers advantages to both GIZ and the academic community. Long-term cooperation can lead to a better mutual understanding of the objectives and procedures of the cooperation partner, so that friction losses are reduced. The literature on cooperation with the academic and research community also shows that existing cooperation with the same or similar actors has a positive effect on the cooperation arrangement (Johnston and Huggins, 2016; Sjöo and Hellström, 2019; PBA, 2019)

Overall, the requirements of commissioning parties play only a minor role in GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community. The survey showed that only in 13% of cases did the cooperation with an academic stakeholder in a project come about through the mediation or request of a commissioning party. As Figure 12 illustrates, clients are much more likely to demand cooperation with academic partners from the Global North. Where cooperation is already identified in the review mission, it is much more common with actors from the Global South.

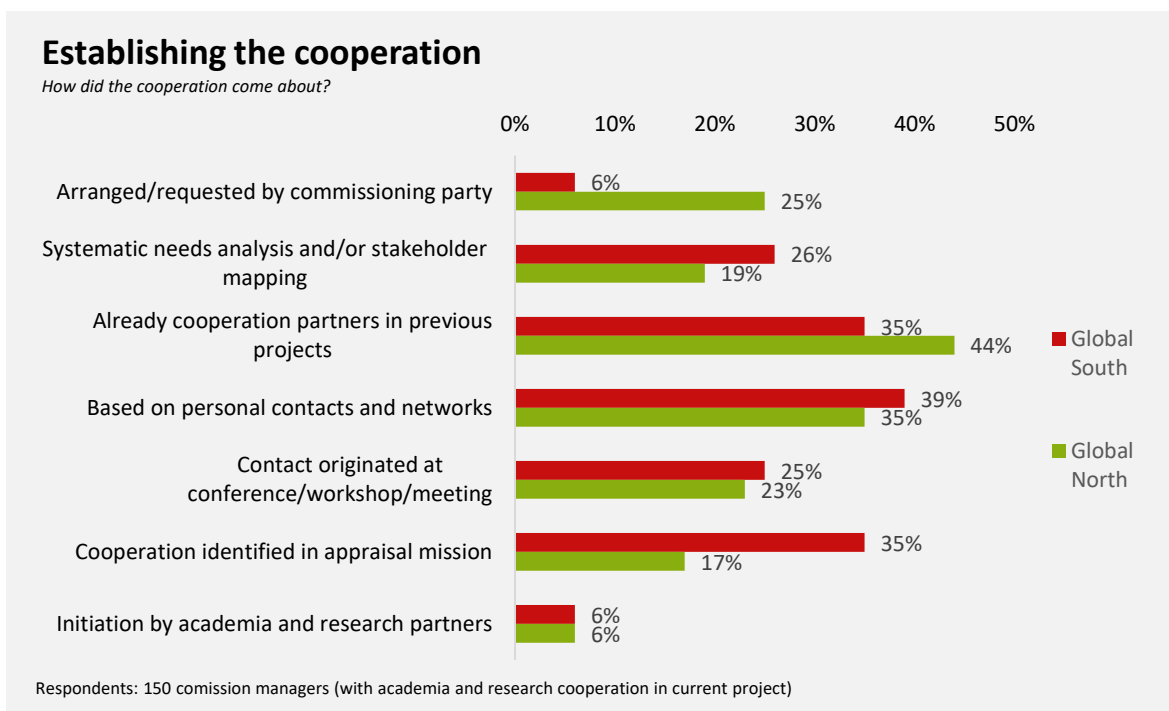


Figure 12: Establishing cooperation arrangements, by location
Source: online survey

Despite the relatively unsystematic approach to identifying academic partners, there is a feeling within GIZ that colleagues know who the most relevant stakeholders are in the respective sectors and that they cooperate with them. Figure 13 shows that 85% of the GIZ staff responding to the survey, regardless of their position in the company, believe they have a good overview of the academic stakeholders relevant to them in their sector, and 72% agree that cooperation with the most relevant academic stakeholders is already underway in their sector. However, only 59% of survey participants say that assessments are regularly made in their sector as to whether ongoing cooperation arrangements can achieve their objectives.

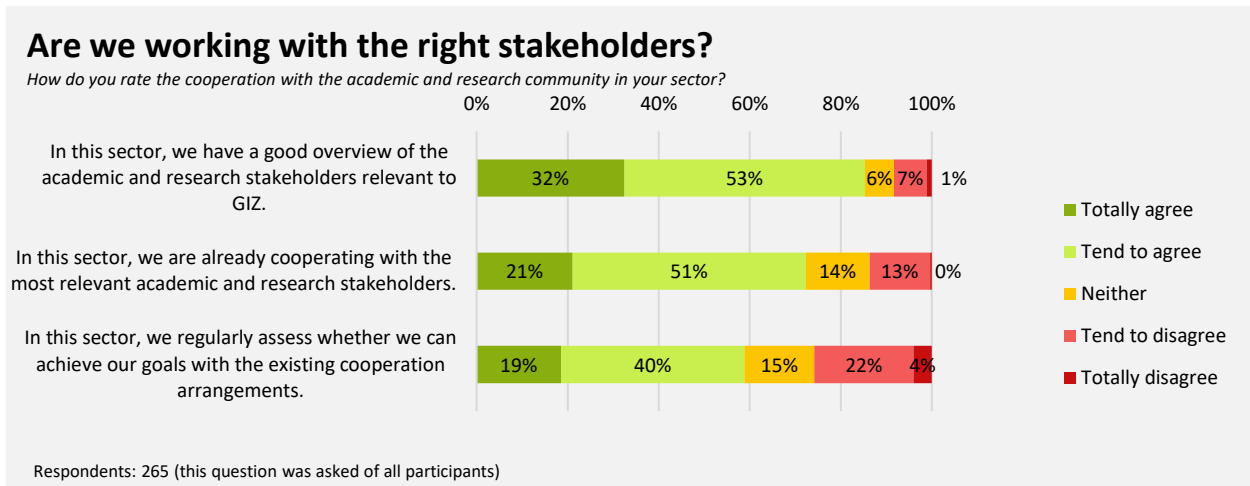


Figure 13: Cooperation with the relevant stakeholders
Source: online survey

As Figure 14 shows, the more technical and scientific sectors stand out positively: climate, environment, and management of natural resources; water, energy, and infrastructure; and (in part) rural development and agriculture. Here, the rate of agreement with all three statements is particularly high.

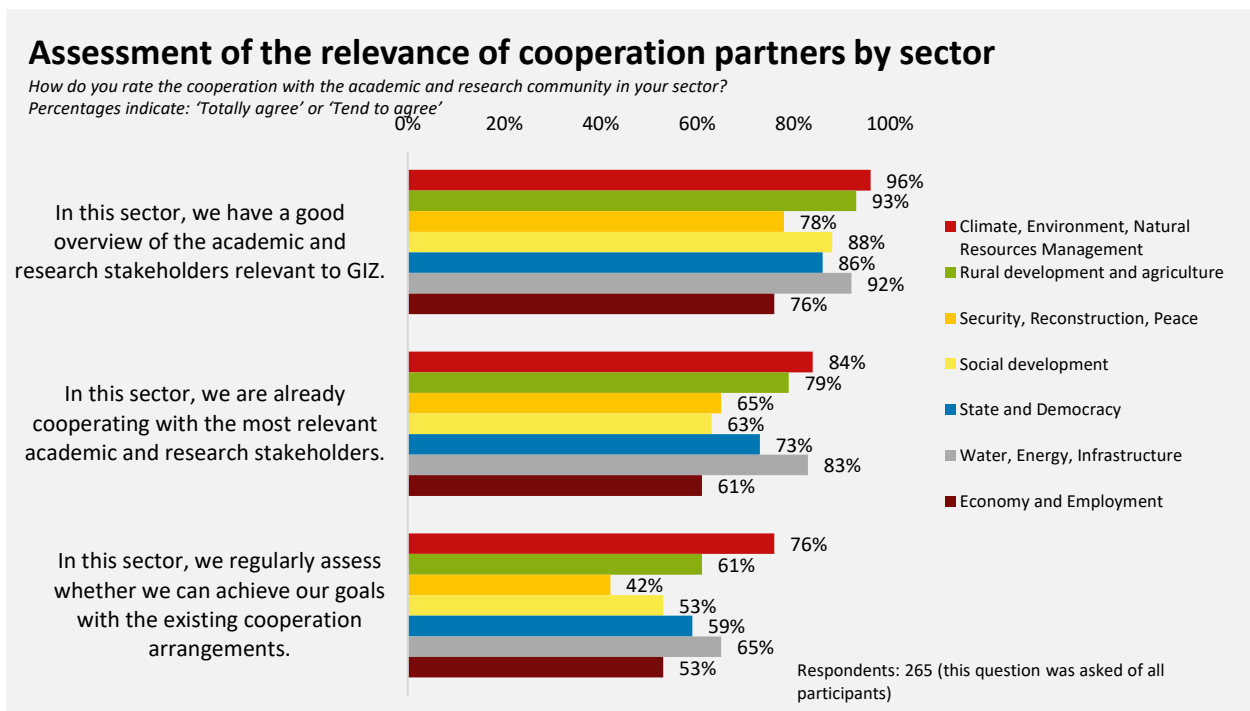


Figure 14: Assessment of the relevance of cooperation partners, by sector
Source: online survey

The impression of GIZ staff that they are cooperating with the most relevant academic stakeholders in the sector is also supported by the portfolio analysis. For example, GIZ project documents specifically searched for renowned German research institutes and societies, as well as for top ten international universities and think tanks in the fields of climate and global health. There were clear indications that GIZ cooperates with many of these renowned institutions or at least refers to them in project documents. The particularly frequent mention of German academic stakeholders, such as the institutes of the Fraunhofer Society, the Leibniz Association or the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS; see Figure 15), is striking. However, interviews with GIZ staff show that rankings for universities and think tanks for the selection of cooperation partners are not considered a decisive criterion (Int_GIZ_16, 31, 37).

The problem is therefore not the establishment of cooperation with the most relevant academic stakeholders in the sector, but the lack of exchange of knowledge and contacts related to the cooperation arrangements. For example, only 37% of survey participants believe that GIZ has a good company-wide exchange of knowledge and contacts relating to cooperation with academics (Figure 16).



Figure 15: Academic stakeholders identified in a portfolio analysis
 Academic stakeholders named in all types of projects, according to the number of coded projects, in which the stakeholders are named at least once. The larger the name of the institution, the larger the number of projects the corresponding stakeholder is named in.
 Source: Technopolis based on portfolio analysis.

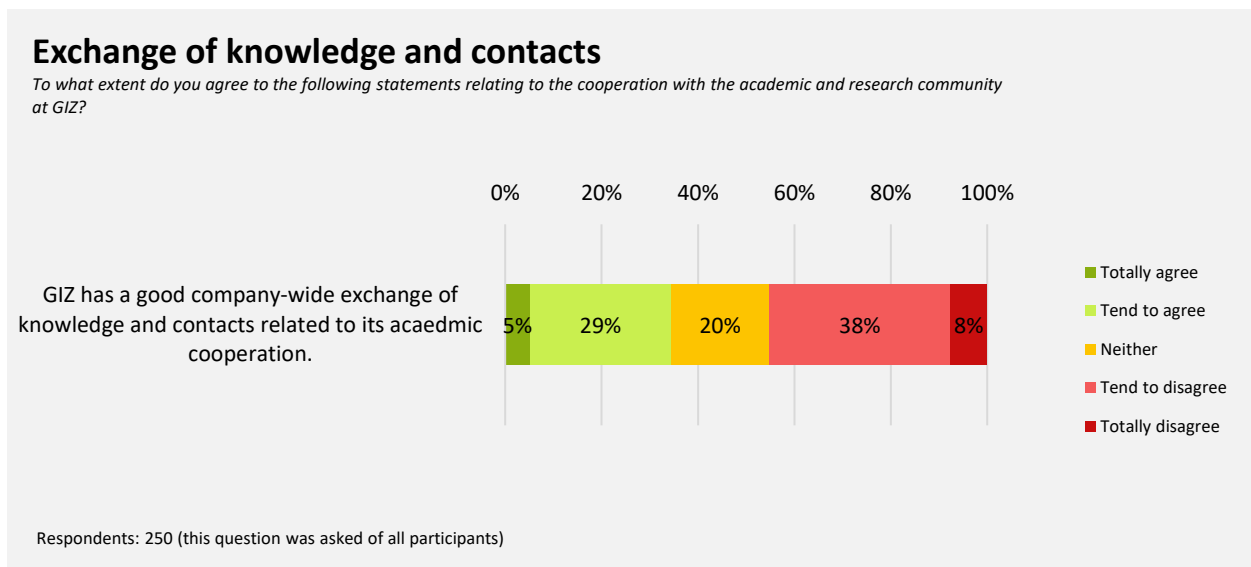


Figure 16: Exchange of knowledge and contacts
 Source: online survey

It is true that the PMs for strategic partners and context stakeholders provide concrete contact structures, at least for this group of actors. However, even they can only partially fulfil their task, as GIZ currently has no instrument for exchanging basic information and the results of cooperation with academics, and for integrating this in the company. The case studies also showed that the same academic stakeholder cooperated simultaneously in different projects and in some cases also in different sectors. However, there was no systematic exchange of information among the projects about the work with the partner. In addition, there is currently no procedure for feeding the results of cooperation with academic partners, as achieved in GloBe or the GIZ field structure, into the Sectoral Department's competence centres. This usually only happens on the initiative of individual employees (Int_GIZ_15, 91). It must be emphasised that a lack of knowledge management and the lack of disclosure of products and results of cooperation has already been identified as a problem in the strategic evaluation of the cooperation with economic partners (GIZ 2018: 40-43).

How other international cooperation organisations identify and select academic partners

The IC organisations surveyed handle the identification and selection of **academic stakeholders** as well as the maintenance of existing contacts very differently. Interesting tendencies and priority areas include:

- **Selection criteria include both excellence and diversity:** some actors, such as **FCDO**, place a strong emphasis on **academic excellence** (i.e. leading academic figures, proven quality of academic work in the respective field, measured in terms of performance records, research quality and specific expertise). However, **equitable partnerships and diversity are playing** an increasingly important role. Thus, **USAID** pursues a localisation approach that focuses on local needs and local institutions. In this approach, academic actors with different backgrounds have taken on an increasingly central position in projects in recent years. Similarly, **UNDP** relies on greater cooperation with the Global South and multidisciplinary work through guidelines for ensuring diversity in partnerships. This often relies on cooperation with **networks and alliances of actors** from the Global South to compensate for structural deficits on the part of individual stakeholders. **SDC** has its own **commission for research partnerships with developing countries** and emphasises the strengthening of partnerships on an equal footing.
- **OSF** perceives **think tanks** as increasingly important partners for knowledge generation, but above all for the **transfer of knowledge to the policy level**. It has a programme to expand strategic partnerships with think tanks, which funds research on selected topics with the mandate to disseminate the results to relevant decision-makers.
- If necessary, **EBRD** draws on the (personal) network of individual researchers on an ad-hoc and informal basis. **SDC** prepares mappings of relevant academic actors for various sectors and regions.
- **SDC** also cooperates with **research funding organisations** (in this case the Swiss National Science Foundation) to promote research activities in the field of development cooperation through joint programmes.

GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community from partner countries

Academic stakeholders from partner countries are considered particularly important as cooperation partners in implementation. Yet, they are rarely seen as strategic partners. For example, there are currently no stakeholders from the Global South among the strategic partners and context stakeholders from the academic community. In fact, academic partners from the partner countries are not seen as strategically relevant for GIZ. From the point of view of strategic partnership management, they are particularly important in the concrete implementation of the projects (Int_GIZ_71, 84, 91). The majority of commission managers who cooperate specifically with academic partners from the partner countries also see them as service providers (see Figure 17).

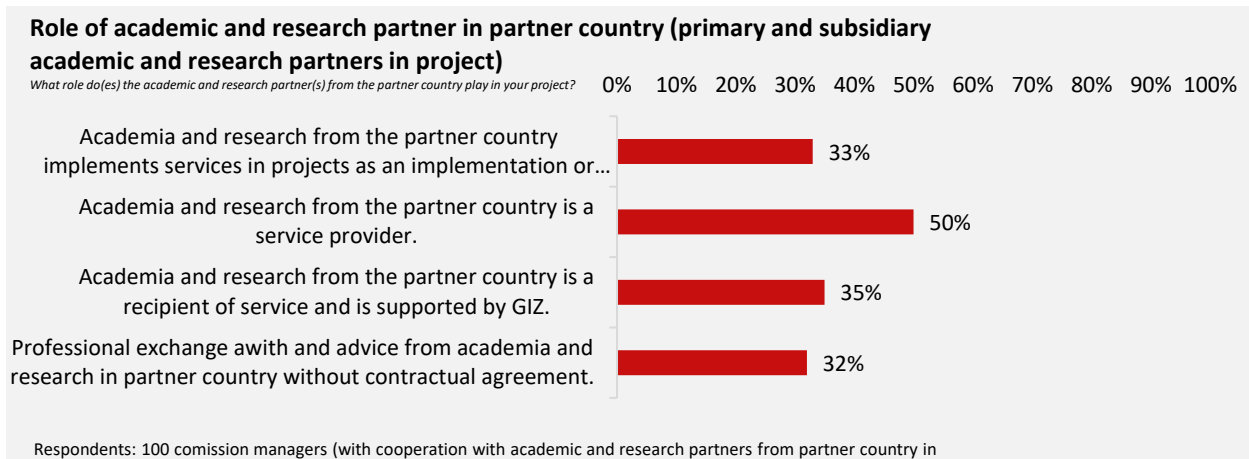


Figure 17: The role of local academic partners
Source: online survey

Local academic and research stakeholders contribute local knowledge to projects and legitimacy vis-à-vis the political partner. In the implementation of projects, the commission managers clearly see the strength of local academic stakeholders in the contribution of local knowledge. As Figure 18 shows, 91% of the participating commission managers agreed with this statement in the survey. 82% of the commission managers also see increased legitimacy with their lead executing agencies through cooperation with local academic and research stakeholders. On the other hand, agreement with the statement that without cooperation with academic stakeholders in the partner country, the project objectives cannot be achieved with the same quality is somewhat lower – at 72%.

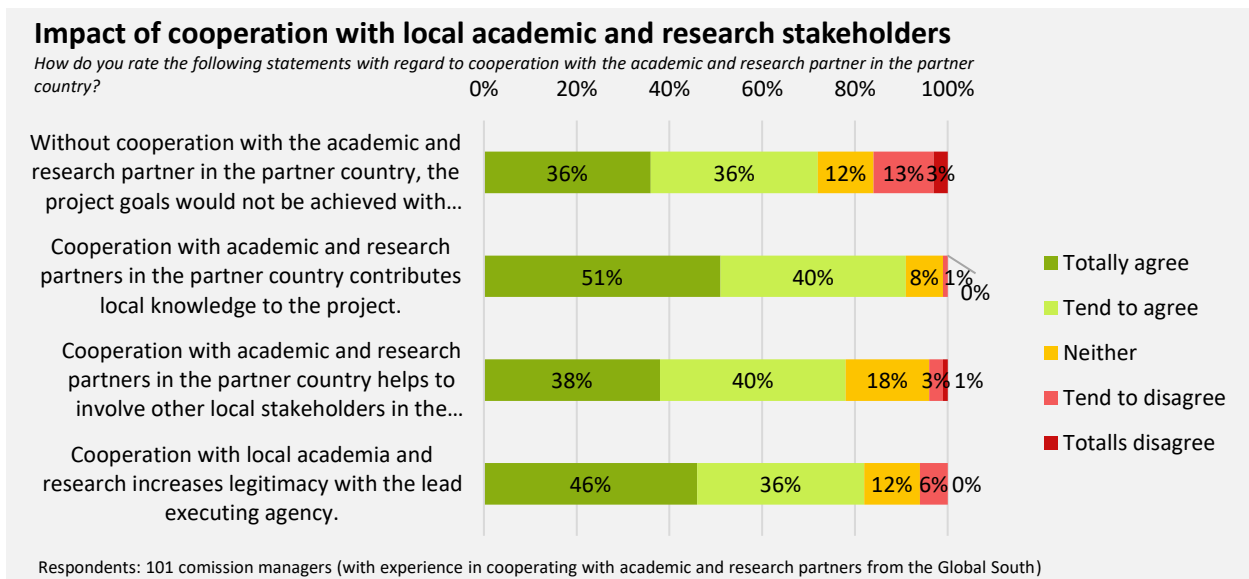


Figure 18: Impacts of cooperation with local academic stakeholders
Source: online survey

Against the background of the discussion about colonial continuities in development cooperation, great importance is attached to the involvement of knowledge carriers and academic and research stakeholders from the Global South. While the quantity of cooperation between GIZ and academic stakeholders is quite high, this does not say anything about the quality of the cooperation arrangement. For example, the survey (Annex 2) showed that contracts for works and services play a greater role for academic stakeholders from partner countries than for academic stakeholders from the Global North. However, contracts for works and services involve a more hierarchical cooperation arrangement in the form of a client/contractor relationship.

Figure 19 shows that **GIZ is currently not sufficiently reflecting on its roles and positions of power in cooperation with local academic stakeholders**. Only 38% of all survey participants have the impression that such reflection takes place at GIZ.

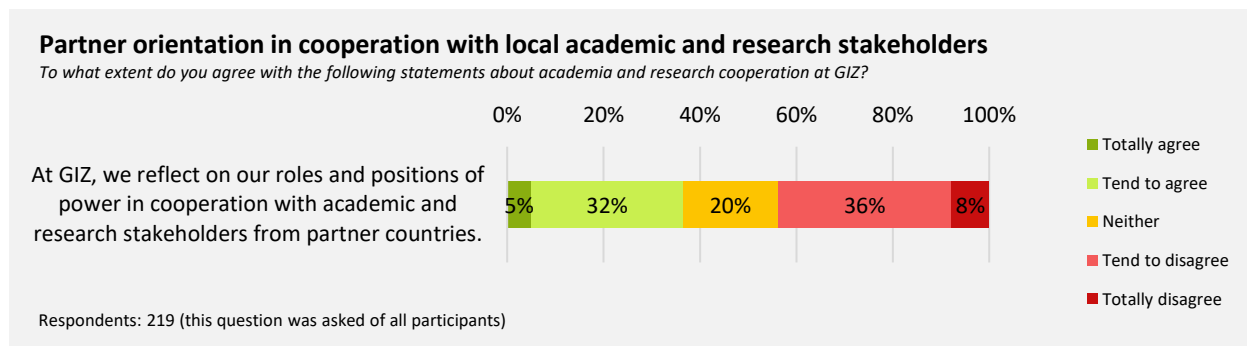


Figure 19: Partner orientation in cooperation with local academic stakeholders
 Source: online survey

The impression is somewhat more positive if only responses are considered by commission managers who cooperate with the academic and research community in partner countries (see Figure 20). Here, 56% of the participating commission managers state that there is some reflection regarding the roles and positions of power in cooperation with academic partners from the partner country. **This speaks for a more critical reflection of GIZ's own role in specific cooperation arrangements.** 99% of the participating commission managers who work with academic stakeholders from the Global South in their projects also state that the communication in the cooperation is respectful. 78% state that decisions on the design of cooperation between GIZ and academic stakeholders are made jointly.

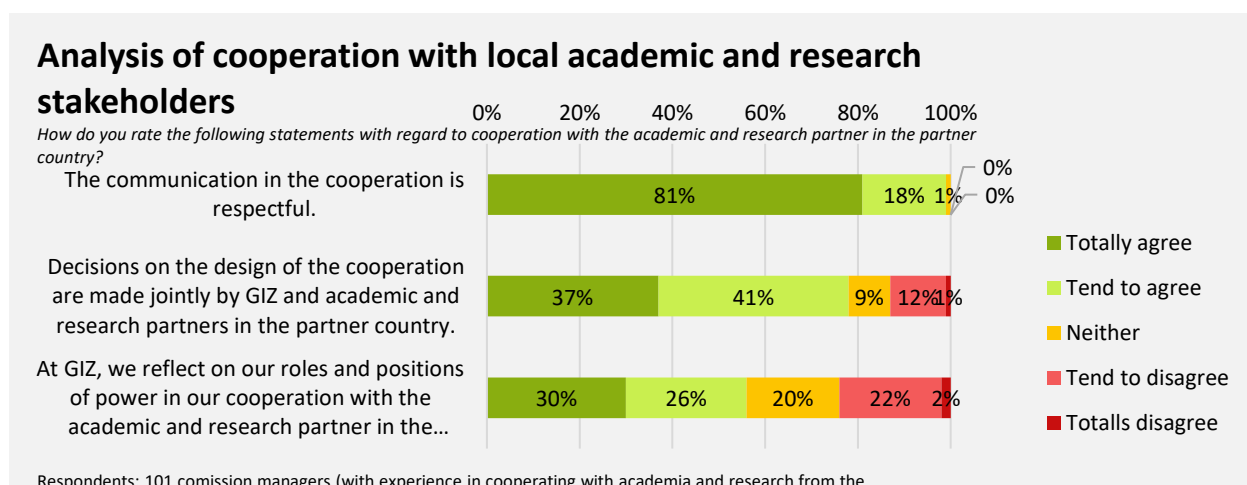


Figure 20: Evaluation of cooperation with local academic stakeholders
 Source: online survey

Factors that hinder and support cooperation between GIZ and the academic and research community

At first glance, the working worlds of academia and development cooperation are separated by major differences in objectives, measures of success and communication styles: While the academic community aims to gain knowledge through (basic) research, the focus of development cooperation is implementing practical solutions in projects to improve living conditions in partner countries. Academic approaches can be measured, for example, in terms of methodological quality, publications and citations, whereas the success of a development cooperation project is based on the internationally recognised OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. This goes hand in hand with differing funding modalities for academia and development cooperation and the project and funding cycles that differ accordingly, as well as administrative requirements.

In fact, GIZ staff perceive the administrative and bureaucratic demands placed on the academic and research community to be the greatest challenge in cooperation. As Figure 21 shows, 57% of the commission managers in the survey stated that GIZ's bureaucratic requirements had a negative impact on cooperation with the academic partner. In addition, however, the lack of administrative capacities of the academic partners (36%), the lack of academic understanding of the working methods and requirements of development cooperation (31%) and inappropriate contract and funding formats (24%) are also seen as obstacles to cooperation. Thus, the four most frequently mentioned negative factors for cooperation relate to administrative issues of cooperation.



Figure 21: The challenges of cooperation

Source: online survey

It shows that the lack of administrative capacity is a major problem for academic stakeholders from the Global South. For example, 42% of the commission managers participating in the survey see this as an obstacle for academic stakeholders in the Global South, but only 28% for academic stakeholders in the Global North (see Annex 3). In addition, this factor is also perceived more strongly by universities (36%) than by think tanks (22%). In contrast, the factor of staff turnover is recognised as a significantly greater obstacle among academic stakeholders at think tanks (28%) than at universities (9%) (see Annex 4).

Similarly, from the point of view of the academic and research community, GIZ is not an attractive cooperation partner because of the high administrative burden involved in cooperation.

In all case studies, academic partners cited the administrative burden of cooperation with GIZ as the biggest obstacle, which in some cases jeopardises cooperation as such. Academics and researchers are sometimes tied down by bureaucratic processes and are unable to carry out their actual work (Int_Wiss_24, 69). GIZ interview partners in the case studies confirmed this view of the academic partners. They report an additional administrative burden for the involved GIZ projects when even large and renowned academic partners must be supported with additional staff in order to cope with GIZ's administrative requirements.

'[Our] finance department [...] do[es] more work for GIZ audits than for all the other institutions [taken] together. It's a huge amount of work. [...] No, [working with GIZ] is not efficient.' (Int_Wiss_69)

In discussions with GIZ staff and academic stakeholders, the following administrative challenges were mentioned more frequently:

- From the point of view of the respondents, contracts are concluded too slowly, so that too much time passes before the cooperation can begin. As a result, there is greater time pressure from the beginning (Int_Wiss_28; multiple mentions in the survey).
- There are unclear and changing contact structures for contracts and settlements, so that academic partners and GIZ staff do not know who to turn to when problems arise. Advice on contracts and settlements is not perceived as sufficient (Int_GIZ_15, 62; Int_Wiss_69).
- In some cases, academic stakeholders are dependent on cooperation with other academic stakeholders (e.g. in partner countries) for funding. When it comes to the necessary forwarding of funds, the procurement rules of universities and in some cases think tanks differ from those of GIZ, which leads to problems with auditing (Int_GIZ_15, 37, 62; Int_Wiss_69).
- Conducting audits is clearly too time-consuming and unjustified, especially in view of the demands of other donors (Int_Wiss_28, 69; mentioned several times in the survey).
- The Sectoral Department cannot provide financing. For cooperation with the academic and research community, it is therefore dependent on its own measures or service contracts. Service contracts, on the other hand, are associated with a more hierarchical client/contractor relationship and are sometimes avoided by academic stakeholders for reasons of academic independence (Int_GIZ_24, Int_Wiss_28, 94; mentioned in the survey).

In addition, academic stakeholders stated that the divergent time horizons between academia and GIZ were an obstacle. For example, the projects as a whole or the contractual duration of GIZ's funding for research are too short to develop academically meaningful findings and incorporate them into GIZ's work. Differing views on intellectual property rights were also mentioned in discussions as an obstacle to cooperation (Int_GIZ_24, 94). Nevertheless, the differing time horizons, the lack of understanding of the methods and needs of academics, the intellectual property rights, and the lack of coherence between the two sides' objectives played only a subordinate role in the survey, cited as challenges to cooperation.

Success factors

What factors contributed to the success of the cooperation with the academic partner?



Respondents: 150 comission managers (with academia and research cooperation in current projects)

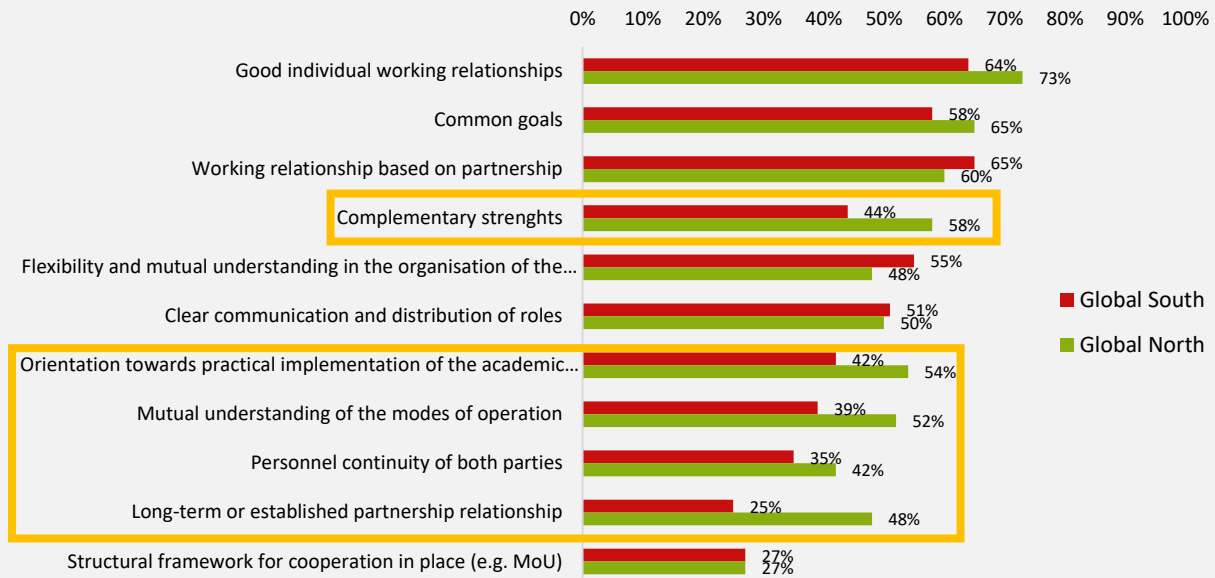
Figure 22: Success factors for cooperation

Source: online survey

GIZ staff see good individual working relationships (65%), common objectives (60%), and a working relationship based on partnership (59%) as factors for the success of cooperation with academia (Figure 22). It becomes clear that no success factor stands out. In addition, these factors are not exclusively success factors of cooperation with the academic and research community but represent general factors of good cooperation arrangements. The joint evaluation of collaboration between technical and financial cooperation actors also showed that factors such as mutual understanding of the way of working, good individual working relationships or flexibility in the design of the working relationship have a positive influence on cooperation (KfW/GIZ 2023). What is more striking, however, is – as Figure 23 shows – that some factors are rated higher for academic partners from the Global North than for academic partners from the Global South. This applies to the factors ‘complementary strengths’ (14 percentage points difference), ‘practical orientation of the academic partner’ (12 percentage points difference), ‘mutual understanding of the way of working’ (13 percentage points difference) and ‘long-term established partner relationship’ (23 percentage points difference). These factors are therefore much more important for the success of cooperation with academic stakeholders from the Global North. There is also a different weighting regarding the actor type of university or think tank (see Annex 6): For example, ‘complementary strengths’ (12 percentage points difference), ‘mutual accommodation and flexibility in the working relationship’ (22 percentage points difference), ‘practical orientation’ (13 percentage points difference) and ‘mutual understanding of the way of working’ (difference of 12 percentage points) are more important at universities. In the case of think tanks, only the factor of ‘personnel continuity’ (14 percentage points difference) is rated significantly higher.

Success factors

What factors contributed to the success of the cooperation with the academic partner?



Respondents: 150 comission managers (with academia and research cooperation in current projects)

Figure 23: Success factors for cooperation, by location of the academic partner

Source: online survey

Both GIZ and the academic and research community emphasise that they prefer a cooperative approach based on partnership to a hierarchical one. Financing arrangements were highlighted as a cooperation format that enables academic freedom and independence, while expressing cooperation based on partnership (Int_Wiss_28, 94). The cooperation in the IKI consortium projects is also described as beneficial for partnership between GIZ and academia, despite the high demands placed on the part of the commissioning party (just transition case study).

Practice is the connecting element between GIZ and the academic and research community. Despite the challenges mentioned above, academic stakeholders are motivated to work with GIZ. In addition to generating third-party funding, which is of great importance to many academic stakeholders – especially in the Global South – GIZ gives academics the opportunity to put their own research into practice. From the point of view of the academic and research community, GIZ offers a very good starting point for this with its presence in the partner countries and the logistical possibilities it provides as an implementing organisation. In addition, GIZ offers academic stakeholders access to policy actors, both in Germany and in partner countries (Int_Wiss_69, 92, 104, 124). This shows that the academic community is often interested in combining the objective of gaining knowledge with improving living conditions. The practical orientation of the academic partner (47%) is also an important success factor for GIZ. This was also emphasised on many occasions in discussions with GIZ staff (Int_GIZ_15, 24, 41, 48, 60). This shows a clear coherence of objectives between academic stakeholders and GIZ in improving living conditions in the partner countries. The survey results make it clear that a mutual understanding of each other's working methods must prevail or be continuously promoted.

2.3 Impact of cooperation with the academic and research community

First, this chapter is intended to provide a general overview of the added value of cooperation with the academic and research community. Subsequently, individual effects are discussed in detail. The analysis is based on five impact hypotheses of cooperation with the academic and research community, which were selected together with the commissioning board and reference group:

- Cooperation with academia contributes to transforming GIZ's working methods towards integrated solutions with a focus on excellent implementation.
- Cooperation with academia contributes to improving GIZ's reputation.
- Cooperation with the academic community gives GIZ visibility and helps with its sectoral positioning and agenda-setting.
- Strategic cooperation with the academic and research community contributes to the development and maintenance of an attractive service portfolio and thus to the continuance and increase of GIZ's total income.
- Cooperation with academic partners as a training institution makes a positive contribution to strategic HR development, including recruitment and training within the company.

At the corporate level, cooperation with the academic and research community is considered to have the greatest impact in terms of contributing technical expertise and capacities, in GIZ's sectoral positioning, in bringing innovation into the product and service portfolio, and in increasing the visibility of GIZ (Figure 24). For example, 88% of all survey participants agreed that the academic and research community contributes technical expertise and capacities in its sector, without which GIZ would not be able to provide its services to the same standard. 83% said that academic cooperation helps them position themselves in their sector and brings innovation to products and services. 78% of the participants believed that cooperation with academia increases GIZ's visibility in their sector.

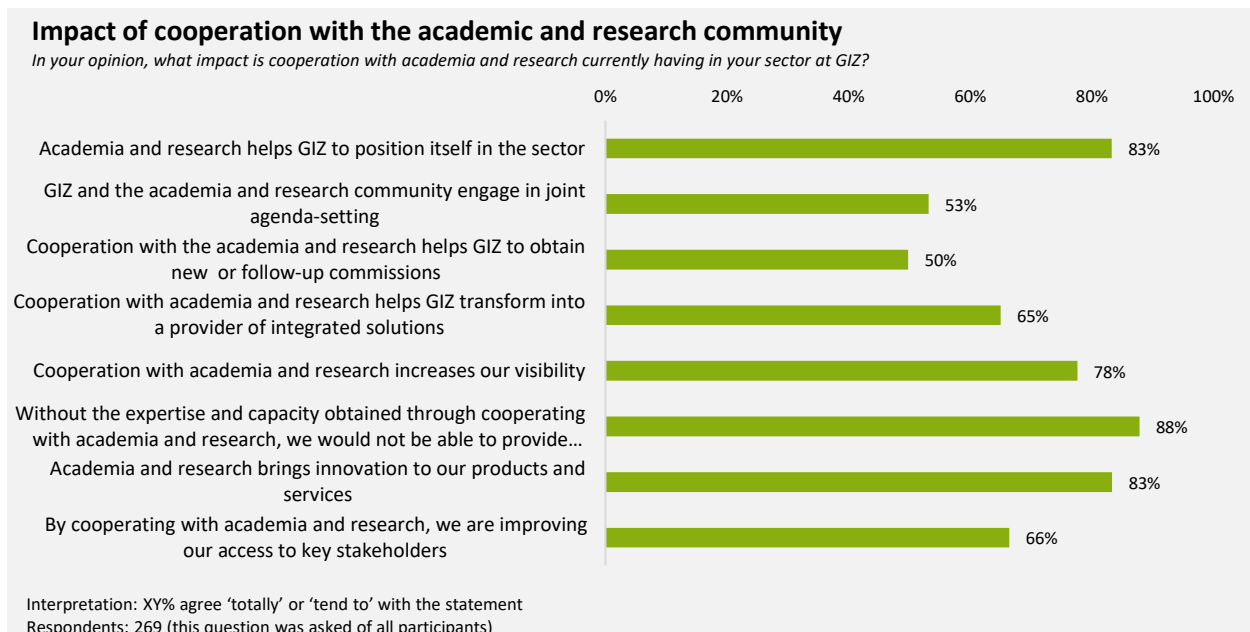


Figure 24: Impact of cooperation with the academic community
 Source: online survey

At the level of the projects, the added value of cooperation with the academic and research community is seen primarily regarding the achievement of project objectives. For example, 88% of the commission managers participating in the survey stated that the cooperation with the academic partner in the project had already or foreseeably will generate a positive effect on the achievement of the project objectives. The provision of local expertise (81%), the contribution of evidence (77%) and innovation (72%) as well as the increase in the

visibility of GIZ (74%) were also rated highly (Figure 25).

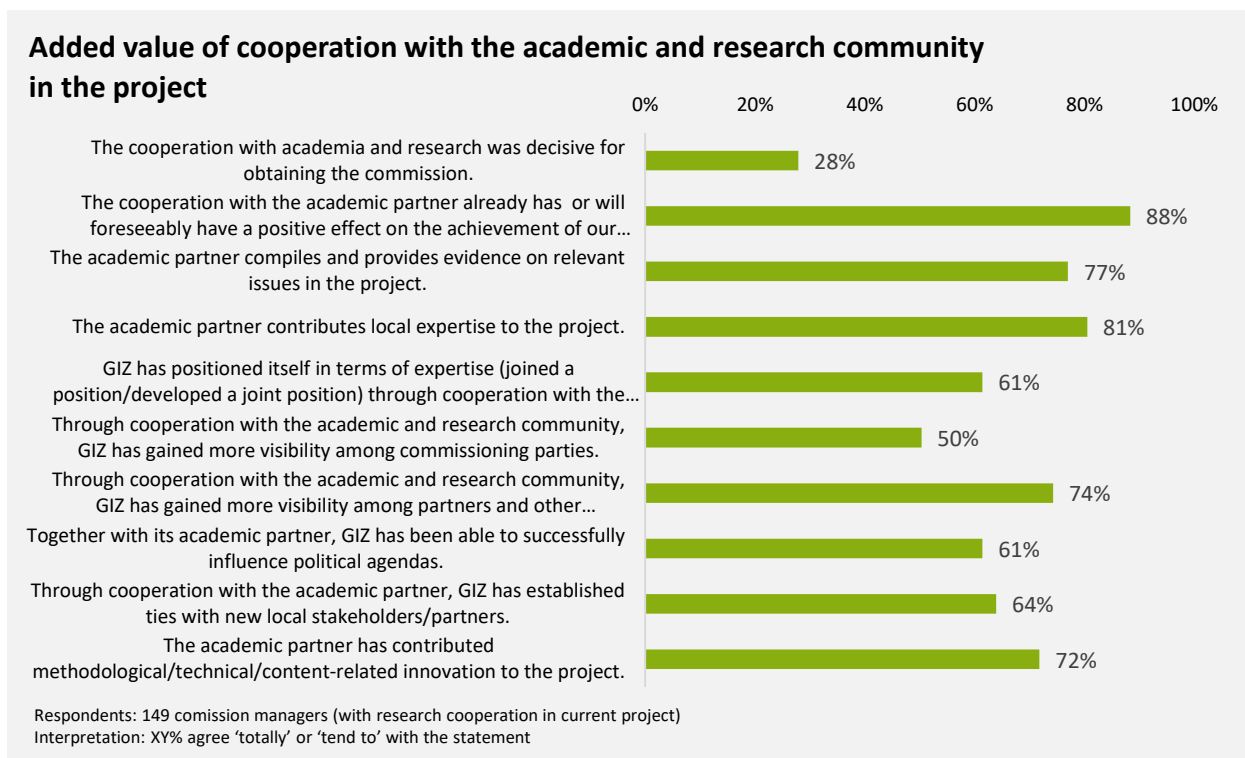


Figure 25: Added value in the project of cooperation with the academic community
 Source: online survey

In contrast, cooperation with the academic and research community at the level of the company and the projects is considered to have little added value for business development. Only 50% of the survey participants stated that cooperation with the academic and research community would help GIZ to obtain new and follow-up contracts, and only 28% of the participating commission managers saw an influence of cooperation with academics on obtaining the contract.

Impact on the transformation of GIZ's way of working towards integrated solutions

With the 2028 target vision 'From project organisation to implementer of integrated solutions for global challenges' and the Corporate Strategy 2023-2027, GIZ has provided itself with a clear framework for change processes within the organisation. A modular system of standardised, scalable products that are put together according to demand is intended to promote integrated solutions as well as cross-project work on topics and in partnerships. In addition, partner countries shall be provided even better support in representing their positions in international debates. To assess how far cooperation with the academic community contributes to a transformation of GIZ's working methods towards integrated solutions, the following indicators have been defined:

- The academic and research community supports standardisation and scalable products.
- The academic and research community works with GIZ on cross-project topics and in cross-project partner constellations.
- Needs analyses for cooperation with the academic and research community are conducted and the cooperation arrangements are aligned accordingly.
- Academic and research stakeholders from partner countries contribute local expertise, access to other stakeholders, local (digital) solutions and HR capacities to develop the cooperation.
- Academic and research stakeholders from partner countries help to represent their countries in international debates (exploratory indicator).

In the survey, cooperation with the academic and research community is considered to have a moderate effect in the transformation into a provider of integrated solutions. As can be seen in Figure 24, 65% of all

participants in the survey agreed that academia already has a role to play here and can thus contribute to the implementation of GIZ's corporate strategy.

The standardisation and scaling of products and approaches should play an important role in the company to complete GIZ's transformation into a provider of integrated solutions. Figure 26 shows that GIZ managers **attribute an important role to cooperation with the academic and research community in standardised products**. In this regard, it is assigned only a slightly smaller role than business and civil society. In contrast to business and civil society, however, the importance of cooperation with the academic and research community is seen more in the development of standardised products than in their implementation.



Figure 26: The demand for cooperation to ensure standardised products
 Source: online survey

The case studies also showed that there is potential for the creation of standardised products and their scaling in cooperation with the academic and research community. For example, several projects under consideration developed approaches, prototypes and models that have already been applied to other contexts or are in principle standardisable and scalable. At the same time, it became clear that, despite their existing potential, the cooperation arrangements are not yet explicitly geared towards the development of standardised and scalable products and approaches. Instead, the products are often only identified as standardisable and scalable in retrospect and then reused in follow-up projects or referred to other projects.

As a further factor in transforming GIZ's working methods towards integrated solutions, cooperation with the academic and research community should take place across projects and sectors. Here, the case studies show that cooperation with individual academic stakeholders primarily takes place over several consecutive projects. **Simultaneous cooperation with an academic stakeholder in several projects – even across sector boundaries – does take place but is usually not designed in this way from the outset, but rather happens by chance.** In addition, there is the lack of knowledge management already described in Section 2.2: All case studies showed that information and results on cooperation with the academic and research community are not systematically shared between the projects or between sectors and areas.

As already described, needs analyses for the identification and orientation of cooperation with the academic and research community have so far only rarely been conducted. However, both the survey (Figure 11) and the case studies show that the systematic identification of cooperation with academics via test missions is at least of some importance. **Within the case studies, there was only one academic stakeholder from a partner country who gained international visibility through his work with and for GIZ.** On the other hand, the explanations of cooperation with academic stakeholders from partner countries in Section 2.2 show that **cooperation with academic stakeholders in partner countries is very important at GIZ.** Both the survey and the case studies confirm that academic stakeholders from partner countries make a significant contribution to

the effectiveness of projects with their expertise, their networks, and the development of locally adapted solutions.

Overall, the evaluation finds that GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community is partly contributing to a transformation of the way we work towards integrated solutions. Success factors for this can be derived from the case studies: For example, partnerships with academics, **which are geared from the outset to developing and scaling up approaches, and involve the complementary capacities of both stakeholders, generate synergy effects that are advantageous for the development of integrated solutions.** In this constellation, academia provides know-how, innovation and/or evidence, while contributing its reputation for independence, and provides access to academic networks and other stakeholders in the partner country. GIZ finances the development of innovative solutions with the academic stakeholders, scales them up and provides access to a context for their application and to lead executing agencies. **However, there are deficits in the needs-based orientation of the cooperation and the cross-project and cross-departmental cooperation with academic partners in the sense of an integrated use of resources.**

Practical experience

Standardisation and scaling of approaches and products

As part of the global digital transformation project, GIZ supported an approach by the Oxford Internet Institute (Oxford University) to assess labour standards among companies in the gig economy. In cooperation with other academic stakeholders this was scaled up across 24 countries.

Together with the Space Enabled Research Group of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Sectoral Department's Data Lab developed a prototype for an interactive app for sustainable mobility planning. This was initially used as an experiment in the Transformative Urban Mobility Initiative (TUMI) in Dar es Salaam and has since been used for another project in Indonesia.

The impact on GIZ's reputation as a technically competent implementer

To gauge the extent to which cooperation with the academic and research community serves to improve the reputation of GIZ as a technically competent implementer, GIZ staff, academic stakeholders and commissioning parties were asked to provide an appropriate assessment.

GIZ staff rate the impact of cooperation with the academic and research community on GIZ's reputation as moderately positive. For example, 41% of the survey participants rated the influence of cooperation on GIZ's reputation vis-à-vis commissioning parties and 43% the influence of cooperation on GIZ's reputation vis-à-vis partner governments as high (Figure 27).

Influence of cooperation with academia and research on GIZ's reputation among other stakeholders

How big is the influence of the cooperation with academia and research in your sector on GIZ's reputation among the following stakeholders?

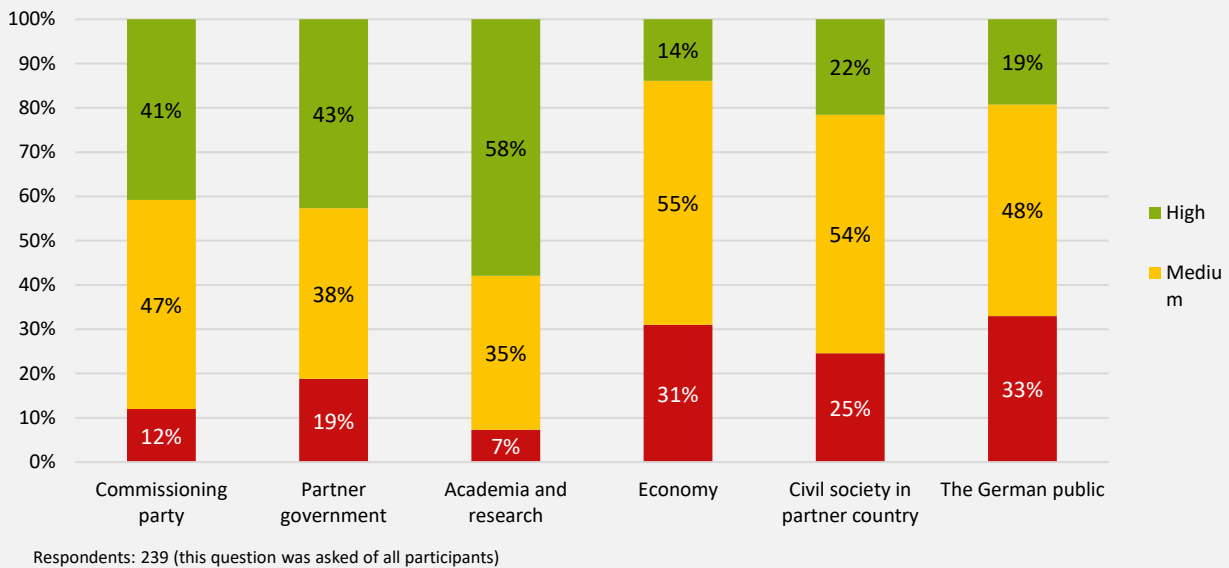


Figure 27: The influence of cooperation with the academic community on reputation among other actors
Source: online survey

The case studies provided a mixed picture of the impact of cooperation with the academic and research community on GIZ's reputation. In the case studies for just transition and digitalisation in particular, GIZ staff described how cooperation with academic stakeholders has increased **GIZ's reputation as a competent organisation in the respective field**. In all case studies, GIZ was also rated as a technically competent partner by the academic stakeholders surveyed. However, in this regard no direct connection can be established with the academic cooperation arrangements analysed. Rather, it is a general recognition of GIZ's technical competence by the academic community.

In the case studies for global health and feminist development policy, meanwhile, it became clear that GIZ is regarded by academia as a junior partner. Here, the academic community saw GIZ's complementary expertise not in the technical area, but rather in access to and networking with other stakeholders, as well as access to the application context. GIZ staff criticised the fact that the academic partners did not fully appreciate GIZ's existing substantive expertise. All the case studies also emphasised that cooperation with academic stakeholders particularly from partner countries had a positive effect on GIZ's reputation vis-à-vis its lead executing agencies in the partner country. This is also emphasised by the survey results (see Figure 18).

GIZ's commissioning parties generally see that cooperation with the academic and research community has a positive effect on GIZ's reputation. However, they expect GIZ to remain primarily an 'implementation expert', supplemented by the complementary skills and expertise of the academics. To this end, it is considered important to have a context-specific mix of recognised German and international stakeholders as well as academics from the Global South. By better explaining to the commissioning parties the cooperation arrangements already in place and describing their results, it might even be possible to enhance GIZ's reputation. Conversely, it could damage GIZ's reputation if it fails to sufficiently incorporate effective cooperation with academia in its work (Int_AG_61, 97).

Overall, cooperation with the academic and research community has a positive effect on GIZ as a competent implementer. At the same time, GIZ has not yet communicated the full scope and results of its cooperation with the academic and research community to the commissioning parties so as to expand its reputation beyond that of just an 'implementation expert'. As described above, the commissioning parties would certainly like to see GIZ play a stronger role as an intermediary between academia and policy (see Section 2.2).

Practical experience

Reputation, scaling up and business development with the help of the academic and research community

'In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic our project managed to establish a huge cooperation arrangement with the academic community, in the form of implementation projects in the health sector, for the whole of South America – and that right at the beginning of the pandemic. The financial return and the reputational return for the company was and still is very, very high. The cooperation has been massively expanded with more arrangements in other fields (HIV and refugees; syphilis; infectious diseases that affect neonatal health). This has created an extremely beneficial win-win situation, in which the national partner has also included diaspora organisations. All the cooperation arrangements offer services directly to the target group. They are achieving results that are used at the highest policy level and they have achieved an innovation transfer that is still proving successful to this day (e.g. innovation transfer around SARS-CoV-2 is fully used in the current dengue waves).' (Free text survey response)

Impact on GIZ's visibility, sectoral positioning, and agenda-setting

At the corporate level, GIZ staff see a clear added value of cooperation with the academic and research community in terms of GIZ's visibility and technical positioning. For example, 83% of GIZ staff participating in the survey believe that cooperation with the academic and research community has a positive impact on GIZ's sectoral positioning, and 78% believe that cooperation with academics increases GIZ's visibility. Commission managers, on the other hand, see only a moderately positive added value of cooperation with the academic and research community for GIZ's sectoral positioning and visibility. It is striking that the added value of cooperation with academics in projects for visibility vis-à-vis lead executing agencies and other stakeholders is estimated to be significantly higher (74%) than vis-à-vis clients (50%).

The case studies for just transition and digitalisation demonstrated that GIZ also gains significant visibility in projects. Appearing together at different communication events as well as the joint provision of innovative products and approaches were seen as particularly important in this regard. To some extent, the academic community also derives gains in visibility from the cooperation with GIZ.

In all case studies, but particularly those for just transition and digitalisation, the interviewees from GIZ and the academic and research community observed a positive effect on the sectoral positioning. Especially in digitalisation, the GIZ interviewees claimed the cooperation with academic stakeholders was to thank for the opportunity to position the company rapidly in the sector. In the just transition case study, the respondents from GIZ and academia alike identified a mutually reinforcing sectoral positioning for both sides from their cooperation.

Overall, the case studies make it clear that the international reputations of 'big' academic research stakeholders such as MIT, Oxford University and Charité have a positive effect on GIZ and lead to increased visibility vis-à-vis commissioning parties, partners and, in some cases, the international expert community, as well as to a rapid sectoral positioning. As both the case studies and the survey show, cooperation with academic stakeholders in partner countries leads to an equally important regional visibility vis-à-vis lead executing agencies.

GIZ staff rate the added value of cooperation with academics and research for agenda-setting as moderate, both in terms of the sector (53%) and in relation to projects (61%). However, there were sectoral differences (Figure 28): The added value was seen as particularly high in the TOPIC cluster 'Climate, Environment, Management of Natural Resources' at 74%. This was in line with the results of the case study Just Transition: Especially in this thematic area, cooperation with the academic and research community is also deliberately used to set agendas. This is explained by the fact that this topic area is only just beginning to form and differentiate in

the international debate, which offers opportunities for co-creation.

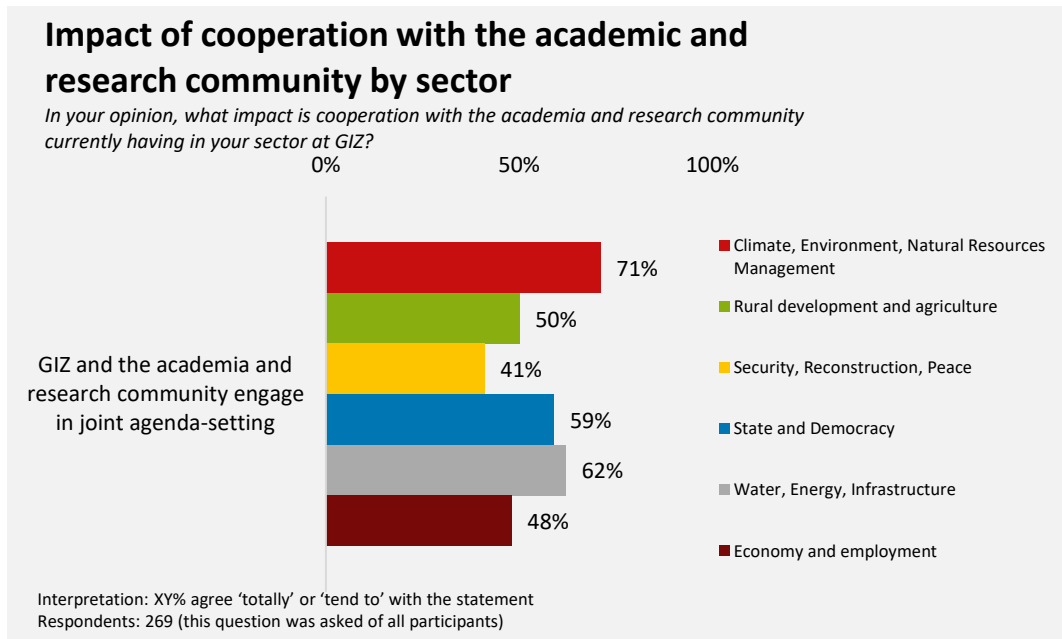


Figure 28: Impact of cooperation with the academic community, by sector: agenda-setting
 Source: online survey

Overall, the case studies showed great potential for agenda-setting in cooperation with the academic and research community, especially in politically sensitive topics – such as the phase-out of fossil fuels, violence against women or working conditions in the gig economy. Here, academic stakeholders made agenda-setting possible in the first place with the help of the evidence they collected or provided and their credibility. The agenda-setting potential of cooperation with the academic and research community is successfully used in the implementation of projects, especially vis-à-vis partners and other stakeholders in the partner country. In addition, the case studies showed that GIZ can help shape content at an early stage and thus influence the political agenda assisted by the credibility and reputation of academic partners, especially in newly emerging topics. However, such agenda-setting, especially towards GIZ's commissioning parties, is currently taking place only sporadically and seems to be limited to certain sectors – such as Just Transition.

Practical experience

Visibility, sectoral positioning and agenda setting

'We had a thesis paper on religion and feminist development policy written by a **professor**. [...] The product helps us with GIZ's internal and external positioning and brings new perspectives to the debate.'

'Together with the **Environmental Research Centre Leipzig**, we implemented an IKI project in Colombia. Innovative spatial planning processes and valorisation of ecosystem services contributed to better regional planning. The method was presented at the IUCN World Congress, one of the most important nature conservation conferences, and was considered by the participants to be very valuable for their own work.'

'We have pursued a successful international agenda-setting for peatland protection with the **Michael Succow Foundation**.'

Impact on business development

GIZ takes a broad approach to business development. The aim is to maintain and increase the total income of the company. In addition to the direct acquisition of funds, this includes, above all, the development and maintenance of an attractive service portfolio. For the analysis of the effect of cooperation with academia and research on business development, it was therefore considered to what extent...

- cooperation with the academic and research community leads to new and follow-up orders,
- GIZ's academic partners contribute technical expertise and capacity to the provision of services, without which projects could not be implemented in this way,
- GIZ's academic partners provide access to issues, donors, and other stakeholders,
- GIZ's academic partners incorporate methodological/technical/content-related innovation into their products/services,
- academic partners contribute evidence to the service portfolio/products.

The survey shows that the added value of cooperation with the academic and research community in terms of acquiring new and follow-up contracts is estimated to be the lowest compared to all other effects. For example, only 28% of the participating commission managers state that the cooperation with the academic and research community had an influence on the acquisition of the contract. At GIZ overall, 50% and thus significantly more people rate the influence of cooperation with the academic and research community on the acquisition of new and follow-up projects as positive. Nevertheless, the influence of such cooperation on direct business development also receives the lowest approval in comparison. The case studies were also only able to identify the case of an IKI project in the field of Just Transition, in which the consortium partnership with an academic stakeholder had an influence on the acquisition of the project. Figure 29 also shows that the influence of cooperation with the academic and research community on fundraising is estimated to be significantly higher than in other sectors, especially in the sectors 'Climate, Environment, Management of Natural Resources' and 'Rural Development and Agriculture', at 62%. At least for the Climate, Environment and Natural Resources Management sector, this can be attributed in part to the International Climate Initiative (IKI), for which GIZ must enter into consortia with other actors – such as the academic community. The case studies on Just Transition and Global Health showed that GIZ is occasionally in competition with its academic partners for the acquisition of funds.

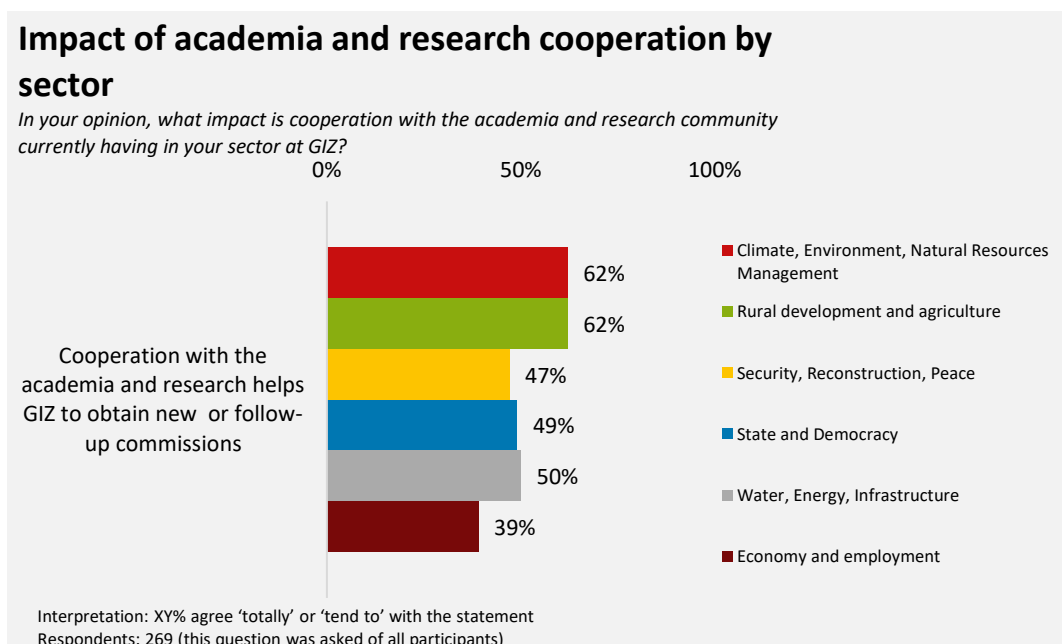


Figure 29: Impacts of cooperation with the academic community, by sector: new and follow-up commissions
 Source: online survey

Although cooperation with the academic and research community currently plays only a minor role in the direct acquisition of funds, it is considered to have a high potential for business development overall. As Figure 30 makes clear, 82% of GIZ's managers participating in the survey believe that GIZ needs to cooperate with academia to improve business development in the sector in question. However, economic partners are considered to be even more important for business development at 89%. Overall, the discrepancy between the perceived potential of cooperation with academia and research for business development and its current role in attracting funding makes it clear that there is still untapped potential for business development in cooperation with the academic and research community. For example, only two of GIZ's business development projects (GEPs) are currently cooperating with academic stakeholders. **This illustrates that the added value that cooperation with the academic and research community brings to business development is not yet recognised or used.**

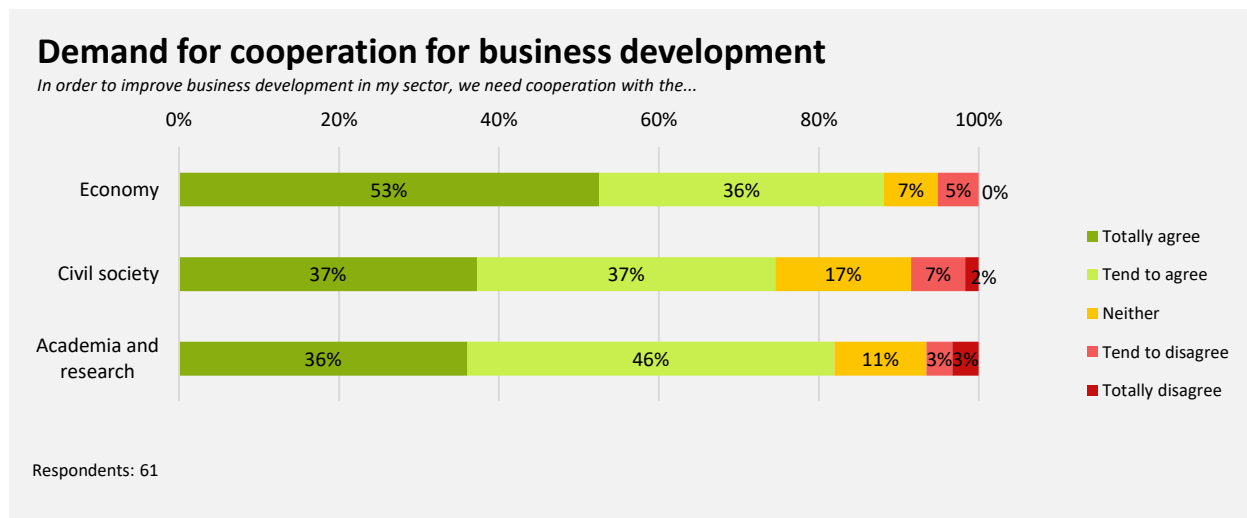


Figure 30: The need for cooperation for business development
Source: online survey

At present, the greater added value of cooperating with the academic and research community for business development comes not from the acquisition of funds, but from the contribution of expertise, innovation and evidence that expands and strengthens the service portfolio and enables GIZ to provide services. For example, 90% of all respondents in the survey believe that increased cooperation with academia will be necessary in the future to contribute technical expertise to GIZ (Figure 31). 88% are convinced that cooperation with academia will provide GIZ with technical expertise and capacities without which it would not be possible to provide services of the same quality. A further 83% agree that academic stakeholders bring innovation to GIZ's products and services (Figure 24).

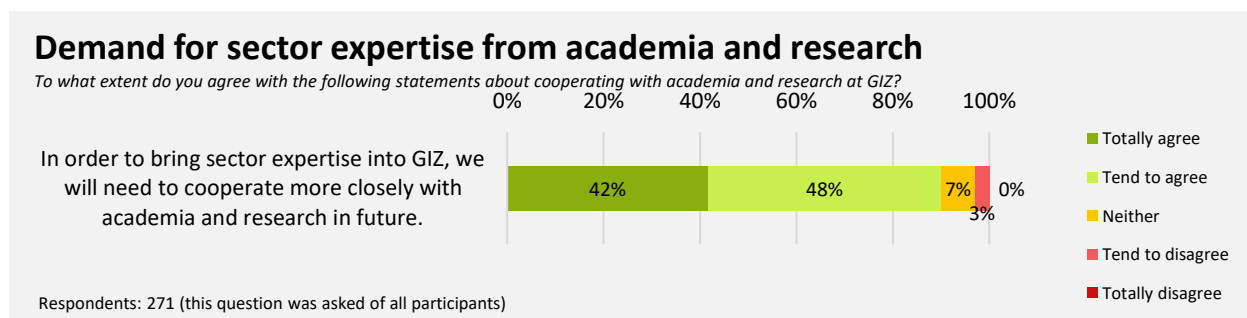


Figure 31: The need for technical expertise from the academic and research community
Source: online survey

At the level of the projects, too, cooperation with academia and research is considered to have a clear added value for the provision of services. For example, 88% of the participating commission managers attest to the

positive effect of such cooperation on the achievement of the project objectives. 77% state that academic stakeholders produce evidence relevant to the project, and 72% attribute the introduction of innovation in the project to cooperating with the academic and research community (Figure 25).

The case studies also confirm the decisive contribution of academic stakeholders to the provision of services. According to the GIZ staff surveyed, the objectives of the projects considered in the case studies were only achievable through cooperation with the academic community. In all the cases considered, the academic community contributed technical expertise and innovation to the cooperation.

Practical experience

Innovation in service delivery

‘Cooperation with CIP (International Potato Center) and the Potato Working Group of the Global Project Green Innovation Centres: Seed potatoes always presented a bottleneck in the potato value chain, as they were not available at the right time or in the right place. Through CIP’s new rooted apical cuttings (RAC) technology, this has been solved, which has boosted potato production in India, Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, and Mali.’

The case study on digitalisation particularly showed that cooperation with academia also facilitates the rapid development of entire subject areas for GIZ. Academic stakeholders are also considered crucial for the development of topics such as the just energy transition and pandemic prevention.

In all case studies, the cooperation with academic stakeholders brought **significant learning effects for GIZ staff**, which were important for the development and maintenance of the service portfolio. In the cases examined, however, this was only a deadweight effect and **not systematically integrated as an objective of the cooperation. In addition to their expertise, academic stakeholders contribute additional capacities in the form of reputation and credibility as well as specific communication capacities.** For example, the case studies described how academic stakeholders from the Anglo-Saxon world not only contribute excellent research but are also particularly good at preparing and communicating approaches and results in a way that is appropriate for the target group. **This shows that academic stakeholders have strong convening power vis-à-vis various stakeholders** – from lead executing agencies, civil society and economic actors, to academic networks and, in some cases, the commissioning parties. This strengthens GIZ’s own, existing convening power.

In addition, the case studies showed that **when the academic and research community contributes evidence for GIZ’s work, this is crucial for the provision of services as it legitimises GIZ’s work and promotes access to important stakeholders.** In all the case studies, academic stakeholders from partner countries were particularly important for gaining access to other local stakeholders, networks, and policy actors. As such, they made the implementation of the services possible in the first place. When invited to comment in free text form, many of the survey respondents emphasised the great potential of academic cooperation arrangements for generating evidence and stressed the urgent need to make more use of this potential.

Practical experience

Evidence in the provision of services

As part of the Programme for the Prevention of Violence against Women, GIZ cooperated with the **Universidad San Martín de Porres** in Peru. Using the evidence produced in the cooperation, it was possible to demonstrate the economic impact that violence against women has on the private sector, the public sector and society as a whole. This was crucial in gaining access to and support from partners in the private sector and the state, and for project implementation. (Case Study Feminist Development Policy)

'In a project for which I used to work, we were able to analyse almost in real time through a cooperation with the **University of Vechta** in 2020 how our partners were affected by the coronavirus, what helps them and what support helps them most in the situation – with a control group. This helped us to make decisions quickly to be there for our partners, especially in the crisis, and to support them as quickly as possible and in line with their needs in a complex situation. A real stroke of luck!' (Free text comment in the survey).

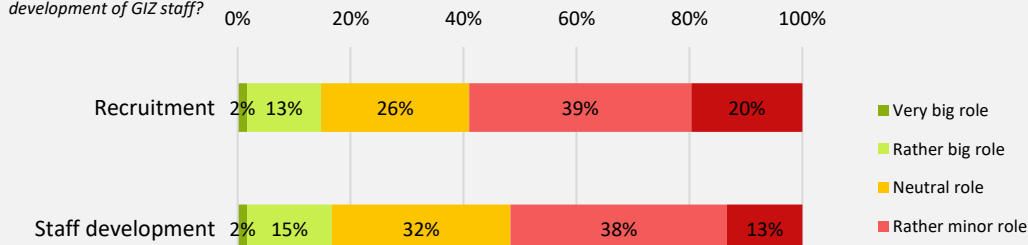
Impact on strategic personnel recruitment and development

Against the backdrop of demographic change and the shortage of skilled workers, GIZ is facing major challenges to its strategic recruitment and HR development. The shortage of skilled workers is already leading to staff shortages in GIZ's IT and energy divisions. GIZ's new policy on fixed-term contracts will mean that there will be less flexibility in the recruitment of experts from outside GIZ in future. This makes training and upskilling measures for GIZ's existing staff all the more important. The evaluation therefore asked the question what role the cooperation with the academic and research community currently plays in personnel recruitment and development and how this could change in the future.

So far, cooperation with the academic and research community has played only a minor role in strategic personnel recruitment and development. This is also reflected in the responses of the GIZ managers who took part in the survey. Only 15% and 17% respectively attributed a major role to cooperation with the academic and research community in the recruitment of skilled workers and personnel development (Figure 32).

Current role of cooperation with academia and research for HR

What role do academia and research partnerships currently play in your sector in the recruitment and development of GIZ staff?



Respondents: 61

This question was only asked of directors of division and heads of section in GloBe as well as heads of competence centre at the sectoral department.

Figure 32: The current role of cooperation with the academic community with respect to GIZ HR

Source: online survey

For example, cooperation with academic stakeholders in the area of HR takes place but is not geared towards strategic personnel recruitment and development. Personnel secondments in the form of job shadowing, for example, are included in an MoU with the Robert Koch Institute, while an MoU with the Potsdam

Institute for Climate Impact Research provides for the ‘mutual integration in terms of content and personnel in teaching and training courses (and those of the University of Potsdam)’. In addition, GIZ supports university research and training in a self-initiated measure that entails an endowed professorship for international food security at Justus Liebig University Giessen. However, this is not part of GIZ's own strategic HR development. There are sometimes internship programmes, such as with the Hertie School of Governance or the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich (Int_GIZ_25). However, these are not geared to GIZ's strategic staffing needs. University marketing at career events and similar formats are conducted sporadically and only at the request or interest of individual universities. Final theses are supervised in some organisational units. However, this is the responsibility of the unit itself and is not recorded centrally (Int_GIZ_25). In addition, an upskilling programme in cooperation with the academic and research community is planned in the Human Relations Strategy 2023+.

In addition to the lack of inclusion of cooperation with academics in strategic personnel development and continuing education, gaps in analysis and knowledge management are identified. For example, there are no assessments from which universities applicants at GIZ come or which interns take up follow-up positions at GIZ (Int_GIZ_22). Thus, no patterns in recruitment can be identified that could be used to conduct more targeted recruitment at individual universities. In addition, knowledge about relevant academic networks of individual organisational units and sectors is not easily available throughout the company.

The case studies also showed how important cooperation with academics is for learning by GIZ staff and for embedding new expertise in GIZ. Moreover, in the survey GIZ staff also reported some isolated innovative strategies for academic cooperation for HR in their organisational units.

Practical experience

Innovative HR strategies in cooperation with the academic and research community

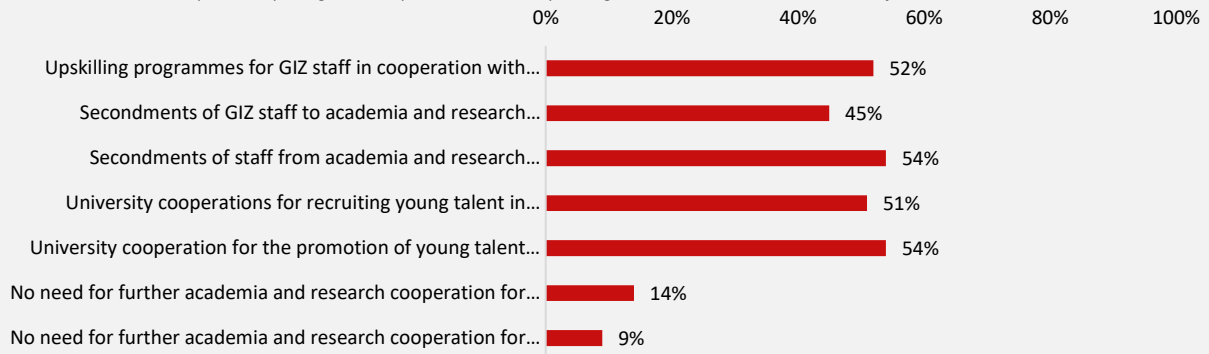
‘Through cooperation with academic stakeholders, such as universities like the United Nations University in Bonn, GIZ has also been able to start supporting young researchers. Existing networks in the UN system have been expanded and strengthened’ (quote from survey of commission managers)

‘Use of a junior consultant who is also a 50% PhD student at a university to apply a new agile working method in a project and evaluate it as a PhD student at the same time. This is done also with regard to further development as a “product”.’ (Quote from Survey by Cluster Coordinator)

There is a fundamental potential and need for cooperation with academics with the aim of strategic personnel development and further training at GIZ. As Figure 33 shows, around half of the GIZ managers participating in the survey welcome options such as upskilling programmes in cooperation with the academic community, the reciprocal secondment of staff between academia and GIZ, and university cooperation for the recruitment or promotion of young researchers. Only very few survey participants saw no need for cooperation with academics at all.

Preferred priority areas for future cooperation with academia and research regarding recruitment and staff development

Where should the HR department place greater emphasis on when cooperating with academia and research in the future?



Respondents: 65

This question was only asked of directors of division and heads of section in GloBe as well as heads of competence centre at the sectoral department.

Multiple choice: respondents could select any number of answer options

Figure 33: Preferred priority areas for future cooperation arrangements with the academic community, with an eye on personnel development and recruitment

Source: online survey

3 Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

It has become clear that cooperation with the academic and research community is part of GIZ's day-to-day work. Cooperation with the academic and research community takes place in all sectors and includes different types of academic partners in Germany, the Global South and beyond. The academic and research community plays a multifaceted role in cooperation with GIZ, sometimes as a co-implementer, sometimes a service provider, sometimes an advisor. In other cases the academic partners are supported by GIZ. There are various formats for these different roles, with financing arrangements predominating, but cooperation with academia may also entail service contracts, MoUs or consortium partnerships.

Cooperation with the academic and research community is effective and represents added value for GIZ. On the strategic level, the cooperation has the greatest impact on GIZ's visibility and its sectoral positioning. By contributing its professional expertise, innovation and evidence, the academic and research community makes a significant contribution to GIZ's expertise. In doing so, it serves to reinforce and further develop GIZ's service portfolio. It enables service delivery and as such makes an indirect contribution to business development. **At the project level, when there is cooperation, the academic and research community play a decisive role in the provision of services.** In the process, the academic stakeholders contribute additional capacities in the form of reputation and credibility alongside their expertise. German and large international academic stakeholders in particular create visibility for GIZ through their reputation and, in some cases, also through their communication skills, opening up access to further important stakeholders. Academic stakeholders from partner countries enable the provision of services through their contextual knowledge and access to lead executing agencies.

Nevertheless, the evaluation also shows that cooperation with academia has further potential to help fulfil GIZ's vision as a provider of integrated solutions – a potential that needs to be exploited. For instance, the academic and research community offers additional convening power, **which has so far been used too rarely by GIZ for agenda-setting, especially vis-à-vis commissioning parties.** GIZ's commissioning parties have the impression that in most cases GIZ succeeds in cooperating with the most relevant scientific actors in the respective sector. Despite this, the commissioning parties see GIZ primarily as an 'implementation expert'. Thus, cooperation with the academic and research community is mainly seen by the commissioning parties as a vehicle for strengthening GIZ's implementation capacity. The extensive cooperation arrangements that GIZ has with a wide range of academic stakeholders in the Global North and the Global South alike are not yet recognised by the commissioning parties. It is here that GIZ has an opportunity to play a stronger role as a broker between academia and policy. As the CSE shows, this is also explicitly desired by the commissioning parties. **This role harbours the potential to positively influence GIZ's reputation beyond that of a pure implementation expert, to appear more strongly as an agenda-setter in cooperation with the scientific community and to indirectly influence business development.**

The evaluation shows that scientific **cooperation has so far only had a minor impact on the direct acquisition of funds. This contrasts with the perception of GIZ employees that cooperation with academia can be of great importance for business development. This discrepancy shows that GIZ has not yet consistently used the complementary characteristics of science - such as expertise, innovation, evidence and visibility - for business development.**

By developing evidence in the context of cooperation arrangements, the academic and research community can have a decisive effect on GIZ's provision of services. As an independent entity, the academic and research community has the potential to verify the effectiveness of GIZ's work and thus legitimise it vis-à-vis various stakeholders. The evaluation shows that the role of academia as an 'evidence partner' can be utilised

even more by GIZ. Against the backdrop of the current debate on the effectiveness of development cooperation, this potential is also emphasised by GIZ's commissioning parties.

In addition, the CPE shows that cooperation with academics can play an important role in the standardisation and scaling of products and approaches, especially if both sides use their complementary skills in a targeted manner. A practice-oriented academic stakeholder can contribute expertise, innovation, evidence and his (academic) network. GIZ can offer financing opportunities and, with its global presence and its staff with sectoral and implementation expertise, access to a wide range of (political) actors and contexts. In this way, cooperation with academics can make a very direct contribution to Destination GIZ 2028. **In contrast, cooperation with the academic and research community is rarely designed to be cross-project or cross-sectoral and thus rarely part of integrated solutions.**

The cooperation with academia is not yet systematically connected to strategic personnel development and training. Against the backdrop of demographic change and a tight market for skilled workers, there is an increasing need to maintain and further develop GIZ's expertise.

Despite their presence in GIZ's day-to-day work and their effectiveness, none of the existing central systems (strategies, partnership management, knowledge management, administrative formats) supports a strategic orientation of GIZ's cooperation with research and academia. For example, cooperation with academic stakeholders has not yet been included in GIZ's strategic documents. There are no guidelines or rules that provide orientation for the establishment of cooperations with the academic and research community or the steering of such a partnership. This is in contrast to other international cooperation organisations, which have corresponding cooperation strategies or orientations as well as specialised organisational units for cooperation with the academic and research community. At GIZ, on the other hand, partnership management for scientific stakeholders is largely decentralised and anchored in individual areas, units or projects. Although criteria and instruments exist for identifying cooperation partners, they are not specific to the academic and research community. Stock-taking exercises or needs analyses of academic partnerships are rarely carried out. In addition, the criteria for selecting academic partners in strategic partnership management are not applied consistently. As a result, strategic academic partners are currently not consistently assessed and selected according to their usefulness for GIZ's corporate strategy. Nevertheless, GIZ manages to cooperate with the relevant academic stakeholders in the respective sector. This is also the impression of the commissioning parties. However, it is not the establishment of cooperation arrangements with the most relevant academic stakeholders in the sector that is problematic, but the lack of exchange about these cooperation arrangements. So far, this has not been pursued systematically across project, sector and divisional boundaries. As a consequence, the academic cooperation arrangements and their results are not sufficiently known and can therefore not be used throughout the company. This also makes it more difficult to systematically communicate the results of academic collaborations to politicians and other stakeholders.

Academic stakeholders from the Global South are well integrated into GIZ's work, but not at the strategic level. The evaluation shows that GIZ cooperates just as frequently with academic stakeholders from the Global South and the Global North. In many projects, cooperation is carried out simultaneously with academic stakeholders from the Global South and the Global North, so that the potential for a North-South exchange of academic stakeholders is given here. Nevertheless, it is clear that the academic and research community stakeholders from the Global South are more likely to be seen as partners in the implementation of projects. For example, GIZ's strategic partners do not yet include any academic stakeholders from the Global South. In addition, academic stakeholders from the Global South are significantly more often listed purely as service providers than academic stakeholders from the Global North. In this respect, GIZ sees the potential to question its own role and position of power more critically vis-à-vis academic stakeholders from partner countries. This is all the more important because academic stakeholders from the Global South contribute significantly to the success of the project through their academic excellence, their contextual knowledge and their access to local stakeholders. As transformative actors, they also play an important role in partner countries and continue to play an increasingly important role in the discussion on global transformation agendas. It is important to bear in mind that commissioning parties also expect GIZ to exploit the full range of academic expertise and systematically include the

perspective of researchers from partner countries. GIZ has a decisive advantage in this area and can act as a broker thanks to its existing network with academic stakeholders from the Global South.

The desire to achieve positive change in the partner countries is the connecting element between GIZ and the academic and research community. The administrative and bureaucratic requirements are seen as the biggest challenge. With its presence in the partner countries and the financial, logistical and human resources of an implementing organisation, GIZ offers the academic community the opportunity to put its research into practice. At the same time, GIZ benefits from practice-oriented academic findings for its service delivery. For this purpose, a cooperative approach based on partnership, which also emphasises the independence of the academic stakeholder, is preferable. Of the cooperation formats currently available to GIZ, this is most likely to be the case with financing agreements and consortium partnerships. However, the administrative and bureaucratic requirements that GIZ places on academic and research stakeholders are seen as a disadvantage. In the eyes of the academics these significantly reduce GIZ's attractiveness as a cooperation partner.

3.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this corporate strategic evaluation (CSE), the evaluation team has identified four recommendations to improve GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community. These recommendations relate to GIZ's excellence (1), GIZ's expertise (2), business development (3) and administrative requirements (4).

The academic and research community brings expertise, innovation and evidence to GIZ's portfolio of services and generates great added value for GIZ's visibility and positioning at the strategic level. In this way, it directly supports GIZ's **excellence** in the provision of services. However, the CSE makes it clear that this added value has not yet been used strategically for the company: There is neither a strategic orientation as to the objective of cooperation with academia and research, nor are systematic partner analyses carried out. GIZ's topics of excellence offer themselves as a central starting point for using the added value of academia and research more systematically in the future.

Excellence requires professional expertise. Knowledge and **expertise** at GIZ are dispersed in a decentralised manner, which leads to complex interfaces within the organisation. This also applies to GIZ's cooperation with the academic and research community. Knowledge about cooperation and its results/evidence/innovations is therefore not available across projects, sectors and divisions. In addition, there is a lack of formats to build long-term partnerships and to use them to further develop GIZ's expertise. At the same time, however, 90% of GIZ staff say that increased cooperation with the academic and research community is needed to maintain or build up sectoral expertise at GIZ. There is a need for action here.

The CSE has shown that cooperation with academic and research partners has so far only had an indirect influence on GIZ's **business development**. For example, only 50% of GIZ staff overall and only 28% of commission managers who took part in the CSE survey see an impact on fundraising. Accordingly, the business development potential that academia and research offer through their complementary expertise, evidence generation and innovative strength is not sufficiently recognised and used in a targeted manner. At the same time, commissioning parties hardly experience any added value from GIZ's diverse cooperation or do not take sufficient advantage of it. GIZ is therefore not making use of its unique selling point of a broad, practice-oriented academia and research network in North and South. They would prefer either better networking with the academic community and/or a 'translation' of their findings for political management. There is potential here to strengthen GIZ's position vis-à-vis its commissioning parties.

Finally, the CSE has shown that, from the point of view of both GIZ staff and the academic and research community, **simplifications in contract management** are necessary in order to make cooperation more attractive for both sides.

Recommendation 1:

With respect to its topics of excellence, GIZ should define the objectives of cooperation arrangements with the academic and research community and put them into practice. (Lead: Sectoral Department)

- To this end, for each topic of excellence it should be determined **how the cooperation with the academic and research community** will be used to **generate evidence and innovation, develop standardised, scalable solutions, set agendas, position GIZ and increase its visibility**.
- Based on this, and defined by certain criteria, **key academic stakeholders** must be chosen with the aim of forming longer-term partnerships. The selection criteria should include: reputation in the field of expertise; a balanced mix of actors from universities, research institutes and think tanks in Germany, Europe, partner countries and supra-regional networks; the academic partner's orientation towards practical implementation; suitability for consortium formation; other criteria if necessary for business development.
- The **objectives of the arrangements** with individual academic partners will then be integrated into the **operational plan of the respective topic of excellence**. As such, the partnerships with academic stakeholders in the topic of excellence require a clear **contact structure** that ensures that the collaborations and their results are utilised and communicated across project and departmental boundaries. This should also serve as a contact structure for the academic partners.

Recommendation 2:

GIZ should create the conditions for using its cooperation with the academic and research community to strengthen its own expertise in a targeted manner.

- In order to minimise knowledge loss and increase the efficiency of knowledge management, the company should resume the project to create an **Extended Customer Relationship Management (XRM) system**. It should do this as soon as possible, depending on the resources available. This system will be used to administer contacts with, inter alia, academic and research partners, making it easier to see who is cooperating with a specific partner, as well as when, where, how and with what means they are doing so.
- In the future, **self-initiated measures** should be used in an even more targeted manner to further develop topics of excellence and other areas with outstanding academic stakeholders, and to position them in the international cooperation landscape. The Corporate Development Unit should embed this in its policy on self-initiated measures, with all other departments taking this policy into consideration. As a strategic side-benefit, this can strengthen the long-term relationship between GIZ and the academic and research community. The Corporate Development Unit provides advice on the exact design of self-initiated measures.
- To increase and maintain its level of expertise, GIZ should establish **cooperation arrangements with universities aimed at recruitment and HR development** addressing (foreseeable) bottleneck profiles and topics of excellence. This process should be headed by the Human Relations Department with the support of AIZ. It might involve targeted internship programmes; retention measures and the cultivation of contacts following internships; thesis and research work in the project context, with corresponding working time models and up-skilling measures.
- Future **innovation management** should provide guidance on how to choose topics and formats for cooperation with academia and research that promote innovation (and as such also professionalism and business development), and how to implement the resulting cooperation arrangements. (Lead: Sectoral Department).

- Cooperation with the academic and research community should be viewed as an important building block in the context of the planned **study on expertise** (Lead: Sectoral Department).

Recommendation 3:

For business development, targeted use should be made of cooperation arrangements with academic and research stakeholders.

- GloBe, the Sectoral Department and the regional departments should ensure that **they increasingly and systematically introduce the results of their cooperation with the academic and research community into the dialogue with the commissioning parties**, thereby contributing to the setting of the latter's agenda and to business development. In particular, academic partners from the Global South should be involved.
- In the context of **business development projects**, GIZ's Client Liaison and Business Development Department should more systematically examine the extent to which expertise, evidence and innovation provided by the academic and research community can be used for business development. On this basis, guidance should also be provided for the decentralised business development units, because this is where a large part of the business is created.
- Where particularly intensive cooperation arrangements exist with specific academic stakeholders, the Client Liaison and Business Development Department, International Services and the operational departments should work together to generate new approaches to business development, and enter into **co-creation** with these stakeholders.

Recommendation 4:

The administration of cooperation arrangements with the academic and research community should be simplified.

Together with the Finance Department and with the support of the Legal Affairs and Insurance Unit, the Procurement and Contracting Division should examine appropriate criteria and options for simplified contractual cooperation with the academic and research community, as part of the considerations on strategic supplier and recipient management – in particular:

- Specific contractual conditions, e.g. property rights
- Differentiation of requirements in the institutionally specific commercial and legal eligibility checks and in financial processing, e.g. reduced obligation to provide evidence.

The Procurement and Contracting Division, the Finance Department and the Sectoral Department should integrate specific advisory and information services for GIZ staff who wish to cooperate with the academic and research community on a contractual basis into existing advisory structures (e.g. the Operational Advisory Services on Financing). Here, the aim is to raise awareness of the fact that, when cooperating with the academic and research community, equality of interaction is not merely a contractual issue, but is also a question of self-image and the lived partnership, as well as transparent communication and professional expectation management.

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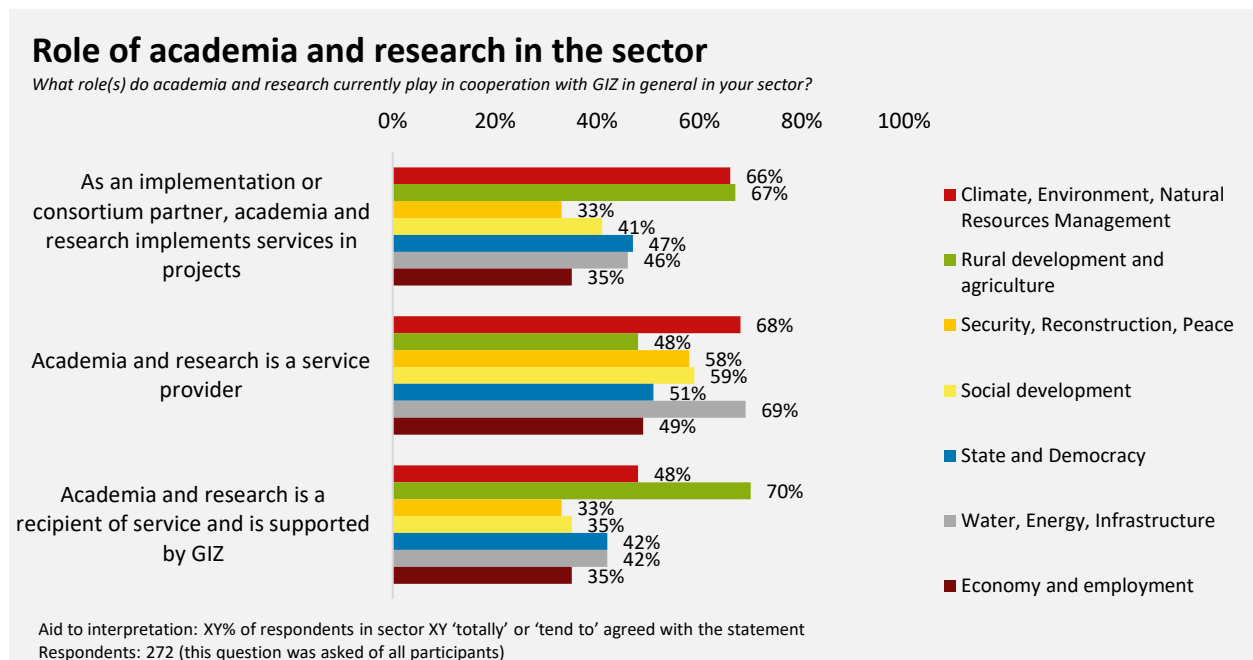
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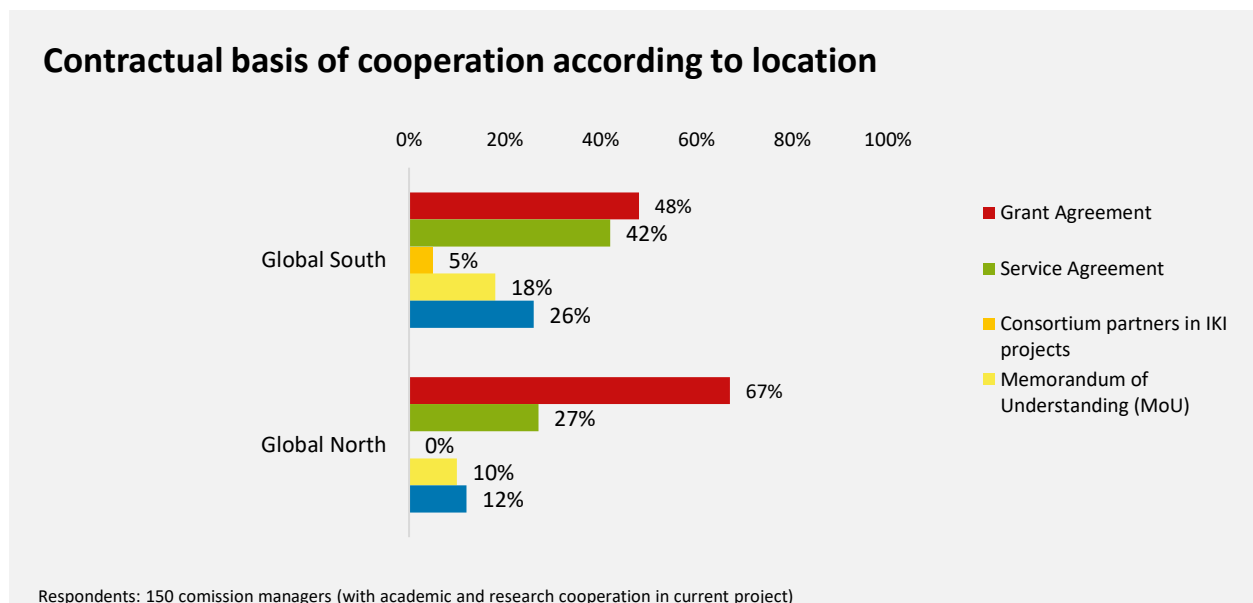
5 Annex

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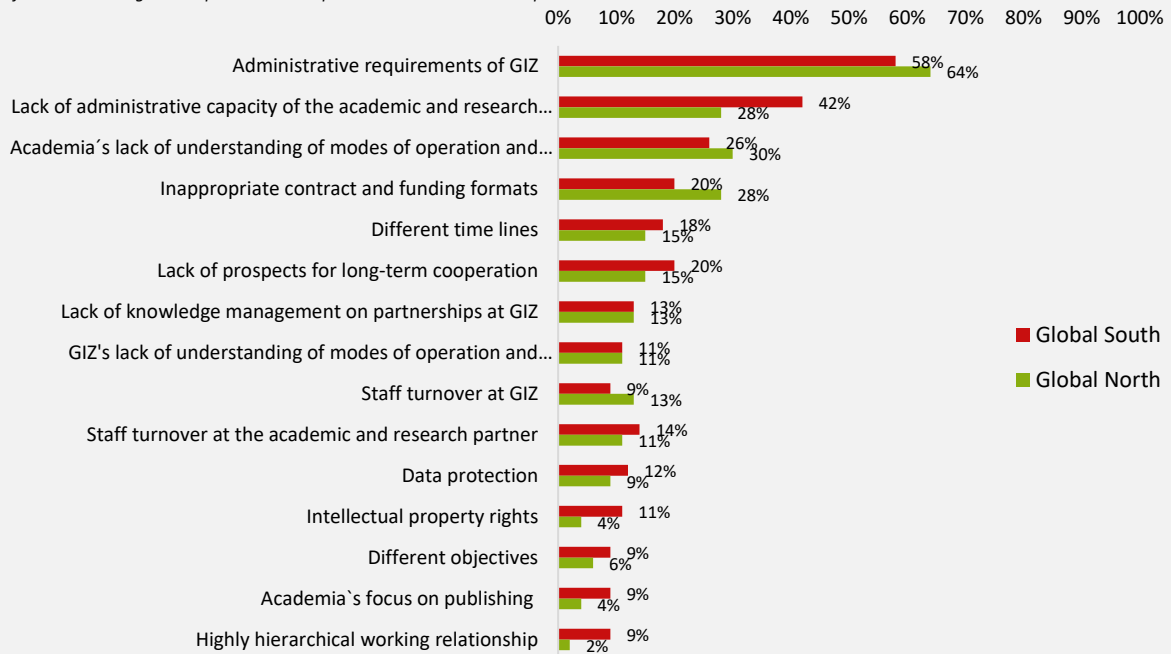
Annex 1: Role of the academic community, by sector
 Source: online survey



Annex 2: Contractual basis of cooperation according to location of the academic partner
 Source: online survey

Challenges from the perspective of GIZ employees

What factors had a negative impact on the cooperation with the academic partner?

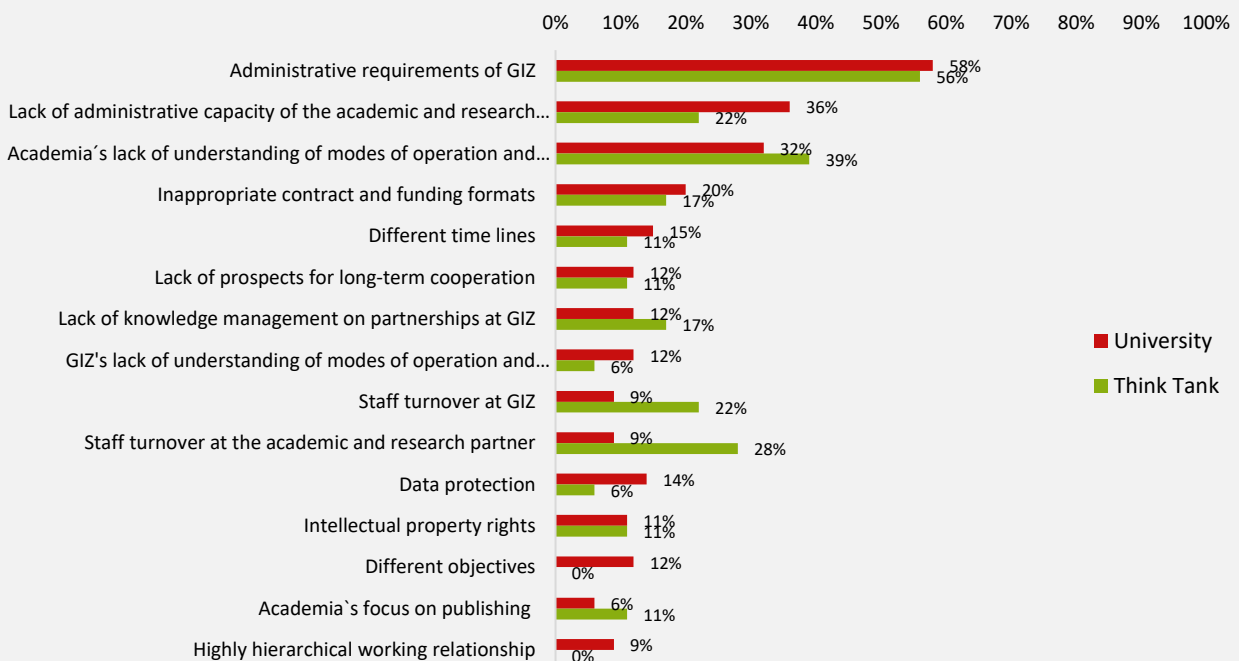


Respondents: 148 commission managers (with academia and research cooperation in current project)

Annex 3: Challenges in cooperation according to the location of the academic partner
Source: online survey

Challenges from the perspective of GIZ employees

What factors had a negative impact on the cooperation with the academic partner?

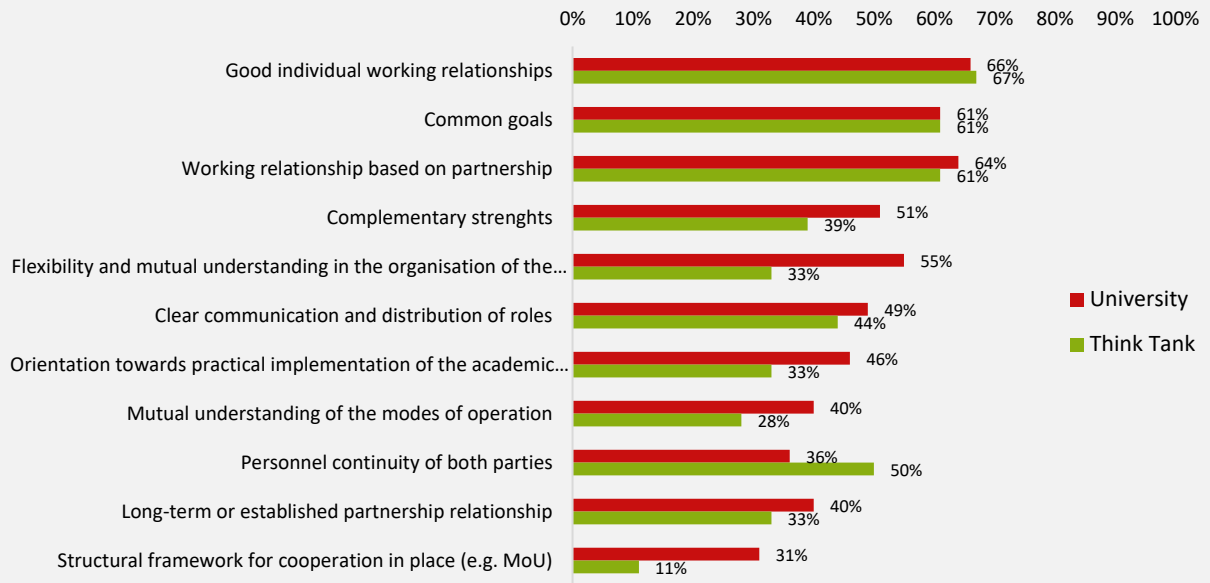


Respondents: 148 commission managers (with academia and research cooperation in current project)

Annex 4: Challenges of cooperation, by type of stakeholder
Source: online survey

Success factors

What factors contributed to the success of the cooperation with the academic partner?



Respondents: 150 comission managers (with academia and research cooperation in current projects)

Annex 5: Success factors of cooperation, by type of stakeholder

Source: online survey

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