



Promoting Joint European Action in Development Cooperation

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List of Abbreviations

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
BGK	Polish development bank
BGR	Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (Germany)
BIO	Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
CDP	Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (Italy)
CICID	Interministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development (France)
COFIDES	Spanish development finance institution
CSO	Civil society organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEG	Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH
DFI	Development finance institution
DG	Directorate-General
DGD	Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (Belgium)
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
EAMR	External Assistance Management Report
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFSD+	European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FIIAPP	International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies

GERF	Global Europe Results Framework
GEPMS	Global Europe Performance Monitoring System
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
GNI	Gross National Income
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
GVR	Joint Procedural Reform (Germany)
IYBA	Investing in Young Businesses in Africa
KfW	German development bank
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MAP	Bilateral partnership framework (Spain)
MAUC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (Spain)
MINEFI	Ministry of Economy, Finance, Industrialization and Digitalization (France)
MIP	Multi-annual Indicative Programme
MORE	Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation framework
MPCA	Multi-partner Contribution Agreement
MSMEs	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
NDICI-Global Europe	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPSYS	Operational System
PFM	Public Financial Management
PTB	National Metrology Institute (Germany)
SAIDC	Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEED	Supporting Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SNV	SNV Netherlands Development Organisation
TAEUFIQ	Team Europe Initiative for Iraq
TEI	Team Europe Initiative
UMIC	Upper middle-income country
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Executive Summary

The European Union (EU) and its member states have committed to improving collaboration by promoting a ‘Team Europe’ approach. The approach seeks to enhance visibility, boost development effectiveness, and expand the EU’s global role. The Team Europe approach builds on the foundation of the ‘Working Better Together’ agenda that emphasises the value of giving diverse European actions a common direction and a mutually reinforcing character. Expressions of this agenda include efforts to advance joint programming and create joint European initiatives.

This study examines the enablers and challenges to working more closely together facing the EU, member states, and member-state agencies. Using three main analytical dimensions as its guide, it explores the potential for linking and harmonizing European actions. These dimensions are the **partner orientation** of cooperation, **coordination and steering** dynamics, and **monitoring and reporting** practices. On one level, the three dimensions structure a review of the profiles of the EU and six EU member states: Belgium, France, Germany, the Slovak Republic, Spain, and Sweden. On another level, they frame the analysis of case studies of five joint European initiatives. The joint initiatives include examples of country-focused Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) in Iraq, Mozambique, and the Lao PDR as well as two regional initiatives: the Euroclima initiative in Latin America and the regional TEI Investing in Young Businesses in Africa (IYBA).

Responding to partner needs and interests is a basic tenet of effective development cooperation. European legislative frameworks present commitments to aligning with partner strategies. They also note preferences for using partner-country systems for implementation. In practice, European donor countries vary in how they engage with partners. As examples, France, Germany, and the EU to a great extent disburse funding to public-sector actors, while Spain and Sweden channel a larger share of their aid to civil-society organisations. The Slovak Republic and France rely heavily on project-based interventions, while Belgium and Sweden to a greater degree privilege core programmatic funding to partner organisations.

Joint European initiatives present several potential benefits to partners. These include the possibility of attracting additional funding, improvements in the knowledge base about where European donors are active, and progress in making European approaches more consistent and improving coordination. A key limitation of the joint initiatives reviewed in this study is that they do not directly entail fresh funding. In the absence of this selling point, other dimensions of added value become more relevant. The recognition of coordination gains as a potential area of added value for joint European initiatives places pressure on European actors to define more clearly the rationale for creating new forums for coordination alongside existing avenues for interaction between donors and partner-country stakeholders.

Coordination and steering issues within EU and member-state systems indicate the potential to expand European interlinkages in development cooperation planning and implementation. For the EU and member

states, strategic frameworks identify a political willingness to align national and EU priorities and approaches. Member-state country strategies also acknowledge linkages to EU cooperation initiatives. Such strategies vary in scope. In some cases, however, they serve a limited knowledge-sharing purpose for other European actors. For Belgium and Germany, a key limitation is that country strategies are not publicly available. France and Sweden illustrate the limitation of country strategies which typically focus on development cooperation activities, or a subset thereof, without outlining the broader political and economic interests in which cooperation is embedded. The development of country strategies that are more comprehensive, transparent, and comparable to those of other European actors can be part of a common European agenda for enhancing strategic consistency.

Coordination is a central issue in the review of how the EU and member states can work better together in the context of joint initiatives. The cases in this study reveal that there is a need for clarification of the respective coordination roles of the various actors. This relates to distinguishing the coordination roles of EU delegations from those coordination tasks assumed by member-state agencies in country-level cooperation, the division of roles between EU institutions and EU delegations within regional initiatives, or separating the European Commission's steering role from the project management role exercised by member-state agencies. Strengthening coordination and steering within joint initiatives indicates a need to allocate adequate resources to these tasks.

One recurrent challenge in bringing European cooperation programmes together is the limited synchronisation of the timeframes for the planning and implementation. The problem of synchronisation may be attributable to differences in aid programming periods and varied emphases on the short-term or long-term orientation of planning. Limited synchronisation also applies to project approval procedures, disbursement timeframes, and reporting cycles. Addressing synchronisation challenges requires harmonisation of planning timeframes within EU and member-state systems.

The harmonisation of monitoring and reporting practice is similarly not only a process relevant across EU and member-state systems but also a challenge that applies within them. The coexistence of multiple reporting standards reflects differences in accountability requirements between political systems as well as different approaches among implementing agencies. The EU and member states show a political commitment to improving results-based management systems. However, donors face the challenge of striking a balance between aggregated and project-level results reporting. They also need to balance between accountability and communication objectives, on the one hand, and learning and decision-making support goals, on the other. As member states work to harmonise national standards, it is relevant for them to review how their adjustments in practice enable greater consistency with EU standards.

The project-level case studies further illustrate the persistence of differences in reporting standards. Although involvement in EU aid implementation has familiarized member states and member-state agencies with common European standards, the case studies suggest that European actors are reluctant to pursue more joint monitoring and reporting especially due to the additional workload that it involves. The promotion of joint monitoring and reporting requires consideration of the capacity limitations linked to engaging with multiple standards simultaneously. There is therefore a need for reflection on the potential for reducing the complexity of monitoring and reporting frameworks as a means of creating space for more joint work.

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that strengthening linkages among European actors is not just a matter of adapting administrative practices at the implementation level. It is also about clearly providing a sense of direction for joint European efforts and developing an institutional architecture to bring diverse actors and approaches closer together.

EU institutions, member-state administrations, and member-state implementing entities should focus on three areas moving forward: **1) defining the rationales of joint initiatives, 2) acknowledging the additional coordination workload** that the “Working Better Together” agenda generates, and **3) allocating resources to better match expected tasks and available capacities.**

Firstly, the EU and member states should clarify and document the rationales of joint initiatives over and above some resource mobilisation logic. In light of the limitations of joint initiatives to generate fresh resources, their value should be articulated in terms of their coordination and efficiency potential. This clarification of objectives and intended benefits has implications for how the achievements of joint initiatives should be measured.

Secondly, the EU and member states need to acknowledge the coordination costs that are associated with efforts to implement the Working Better Together agenda and demonstrate the added value of joint initiatives in relation to existing coordination mechanisms. Coordination can have negative associations such as adding to the complexity of management structures or creating an additional work burden. There should therefore be a cautious approach to developing new European coordination mechanisms, especially if similar aims are achieved with other functioning coordination platforms. Improved access to relevant information about the activities of other European actors can foster improvements in coordination. This is a rationale for producing cooperation strategies that present consistent information on objectives, financial commitments and ways of working across European systems.

Thirdly, the EU and member states should ensure that human resources are allocated to match the level of ambition of joint initiatives. The division of roles and responsibilities of European actors should also be more clearly defined. By endorsing a political commitment to the Working Better Together agenda, European actors have to acknowledge the need for additional investments in coordinating their work. The human-resource commitments required to facilitate collaboration should therefore be reviewed and reinforced. Reviewing capacities should involve determining the appropriate division of responsibilities in European systems. This requires examining the coordination roles and capacities of EU delegations in relation to member-state entities. It also concerns the division of labour between the personnel with steering functions and those with project implementation functions. Strengthening capacities for joint action may involve dedicating resources specifically to coordination tasks and may require a redirection of the staffing resources involved in executing other tasks in light of budgetary constraints.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose of the Study

The European Union (EU) and its member states have long stated a commitment to improving the collective effectiveness of their development interventions. However, the divided competences between EU and national-level decision-making, shifting political agendas, and the limited definition of the comparative advantages of EU and member-state programmes have all contributed to persistent overlaps and inefficiencies in European development cooperation (Kugiel, 2020).

Efforts to improve EU and member-state collaboration have recently gained new momentum with the development of the Team Europe approach. The Team Europe approach reflects an EU agenda that seeks to enhance the visibility of European cooperation, strengthen the effectiveness of EU and member state actions, and expand the EU's global role. Team Europe is intended as a platform for bringing together the diverse modalities and instruments that the EU, member states, and their implementing agencies use (Council of the European Union, 2023).

Against the backdrop of the Team Europe agenda, this study examines the factors that enable or limit efforts by the EU, member states, and member-state agencies to work more closely together. It identifies the perceptions of challenges and opportunities that are evident within specific operational settings. The study examines country-level and regional-level arenas for cooperation and the potential for strengthening the links among European development cooperation actors within joint initiatives.

1.2 Research Approach

To contextualise the analysis of the enablers and the constraints on a stronger common orientation in the planning and implementation of European development cooperation, the research process first involved a desk-based analysis to outline important features of the aid management systems of the EU and six EU member states: Belgium, France, Germany, the Slovak Republic, Spain, and Sweden. The annex to this study presents the dimensions for comparing these systems along with the resulting donor profiles.

To assess how cooperation unfolds in concrete operational settings, GIZ identified case studies that provide examples of joint European initiatives which are linked to ongoing multi-donor actions. The case studies include three country-level initiatives: the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) 'Private Sector Development' for Iraq (TAEUFIQ), the TEI E-Youth in Mozambique, and the Green Deal TEI in the People's Democratic Republic of Laos (hereafter Lao PDR). The study also examines two regional initiatives: Euroclima, contributing to the TEI Green Transition in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the TEI Investing in Young Businesses in Africa (IYBA).

These cases vary on several dimensions (see Table 1). They reflect different governance levels and geographical contexts for promoting joint European action, they differ in terms of sectoral priorities and the respective constellations of European actors, and they vary in complexity. As an indication of the differences in cooperation contexts, Iraq is a middle-income country without a long tradition of European donor coordination, Mozambique has provided an example both of progress toward greater harmonisation and of the loss of momentum around the development effectiveness agenda, and Lao PDR is a case of an established tradition of EU joint programming.

The main input for the case-study analysis consisted of interviews with representatives of EU institutions, member states, member-state agencies, and partner-country stakeholders. The interviews aimed to collect varied perspectives on the building or stumbling blocks of European development effectiveness. Interviews had an exploratory orientation, leaving room for stakeholders to identify important issues within the general framework provided.

Table 1. Overview of Case Studies

Initiative Name	Sector	Geography	No. of Team Europe Members ¹
TAEUFIQ Iraq	Finance and business	Iraq	7
E-Youth Mozambique	Employment, education, and empowerment	Mozambique	13
Green Deal Laos	Agriculture and forestry, vocational skills, local development	Lao PDR	9
Euroclima	Climate mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity protection	Latin America and Caribbean	6 ²
IYBA	MSME and business ecosystem development	Sub-Saharan Africa	13

Source: Authors' presentation.

Across the initiatives and stakeholders consulted, the interviews addressed four core themes:

- 1) How partners have been involved in the development and implementation of the joint European initiatives
- 2) Perceptions of whether and how the joint European initiatives offer added value
- 3) Factors that facilitate or hinder efforts of European actors to work better together
- 4) Recommendations on how joint European action could be improved

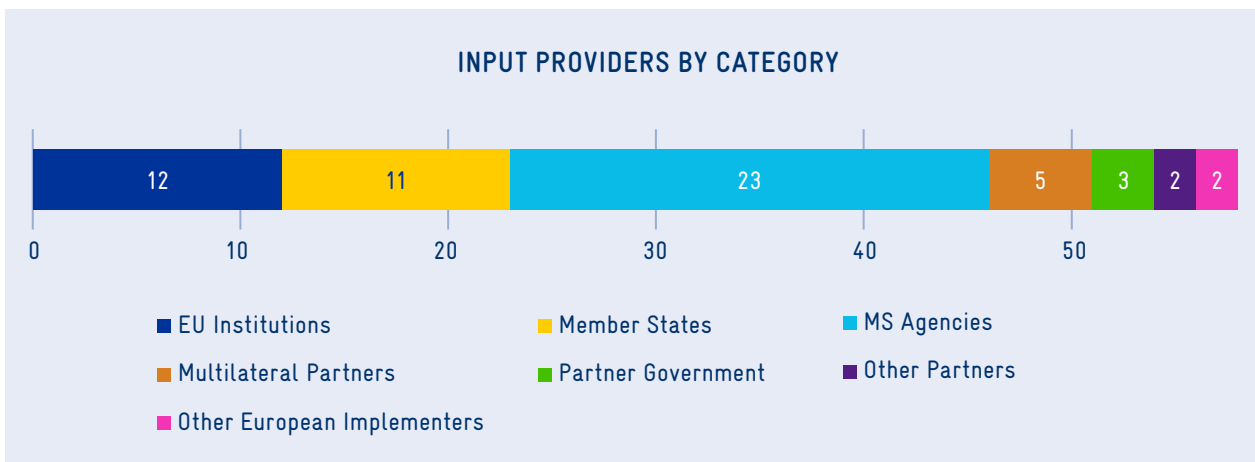
¹ This number corresponds to the actors listed for the initiatives on the Team Europe Joint Programming Tracker as of May 1, 2024. The total includes the EU, member states, and public development banks or development finance institutions that are listed separately in the tracker: capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/team-europe-tracker_en.

² The number refers to the EU and the five European agencies that implement the initiative. Eleven European actors are listed on the TEI tracker as participants in the related TEI labelled Green Transition Euroclima Latin America and the Caribbean.

These themes cover three main dimensions of analysis. First, the study aimed to understand perceptions of the **partner orientation** of joint European initiatives, exploring the nature of partner participation in joint initiatives, partner interests toward the initiatives, and whether joint initiatives engendered changes in cooperation priorities. Second, the study sought to review **coordination and steering** dynamics within joint initiatives, examining issues of alignment of objectives, how the characteristics of different organisations influence collaboration, as well as the convening role played by EU institutions. Third, the study collected inputs on **monitoring and reporting** practices, taking note of explanations for limited joint monitoring and reporting as well as possibilities for increasing the joint orientation of European approaches.

The lead author conducted 48 separate interviews for the study involving a total of 55 interview respondents. All but two of these interviews were conducted virtually. Three additional respondents provided written comments on the main study questions. As Figure 1 below indicates, the input providers predominantly represent European perspectives, with representatives of member-state implementing agencies constituting the single largest group of respondents. Twenty input providers shared a headquarters-level perspective, while 38 individuals offered views from a country-level perspective. The interviews were conducted between September 2023 and March 2024, primarily in the final months of 2023. The input from them therefore reflects a snapshot of perceptions over a limited point in time within processes that are continuously evolving.

Figure 1. Summary of input providers by key stakeholder categories.



Source: Authors

1.3 Structure of the Report

Chapter 2 of this report situates the case studies by providing an introduction to the political commitments of the ‘Working Better Together’ agenda. It introduces the ‘Team Europe’ approach, outlines findings from key studies on experiences in promoting that approach, and notes the varied usages of the term Team Europe. Chapter 3 reports findings from interview research on the country-level case studies. Each section follows a common structure that addresses several dimensions of the cooperation relationships between European actors and partner countries as well as the coordination processes that shape the interactions between European actors in these settings. Chapter 4 presents findings on the regional TEI cases using a similar structure. Chapter 5 synthesises findings from the case studies and the donor profiles and derives the present study’s implications for policy and practice.

2. Working Better Together as Team Europe

2.1 Policy Foundations

The current ‘Working Better Together’ agenda represents a continuation of European political commitments to improve coherence and coordination in line with the aid effectiveness agenda that gained traction two decades ago (European Commission, 2021).

The first High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness took place in Rome in 2003. It drew attention to how the diversity of donor practices created administrative challenges in aid management for partner countries. The conference outcome document called on donors to simplify and harmonise procedures, to review ways of adapting donor institutions to facilitate harmonised practices, and to find means of sensitizing staff to the benefits of pursuing harmonisation, among other recommendations (OECD, 2003). The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) affirmed the central role of harmonisation as a means of improving aid delivery, designating it one of five pillars of the effectiveness agenda. In the Paris Declaration, the concept of harmonisation is linked to actions to reduce duplication and to promote more common approaches to analysis, implementation, and review (OECD, 2005). In connection with efforts to appeal to a wider range of cooperation providers, the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan in 2011 did not place similar weight on harmonisation as a pillar of the effectiveness agenda. Nevertheless, the outcome document highlighted areas of action such as the need to use country systems and to promote joint analytical work that were consistent with its predecessor frameworks (OECD, 2011).

As a large but not always unified bloc within the OECD DAC community, the EU and member states have played an important role in shaping the evolution of the aid effectiveness agenda (Carbone, 2021). Milestones in European efforts to operationalise effectiveness commitments include the agreement on a code of conduct to advance division of labour principles in 2007, the advent of joint programming in 2010, and the introduction of the Team Europe concept in 2020 (Lundsgaarde, 2022).

The European Commission views joint programming as a means of combining the resources and capacities of European actors to promote greater collective impact and visibility. Framed as a country-specific, voluntary, and flexible process, joint programming involves several steps. The steps include the joint analysis of development challenges in a given context, the formulation of a joint response, and the elaboration of a joint monitoring and reporting framework. The Commission considers the mapping of ongoing European activities and planning cycles to be relevant starting points to determine whether joint programming should be pursued in a given context (European Commission, 2023).

The Team Europe approach emerged in 2020 during the global Covid-19 pandemic, as the EU and member states were encouraged to consolidate crisis response funding. Council conclusions on the approach highlighted the role that EU delegations should play in promoting coordination between the EU, member

states, and member-state agencies while stressing the need for information sharing among all European actors (Council of the European Union, 2020). Within a year, the approach was developed further with the presentation of Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs). TEIs are expected to promote ‘transformative impact and systemic change’, align with the objectives of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe (‘NDICI – Global Europe’) framework, and support the goal of strengthening EU joint programming (Council of the European Union, 2021).

The Team Europe approach constitutes a *political agenda*. From the start, the Team Europe agenda has highlighted the potential for increased EU leverage on the global stage resulting from the consolidation of funding and the coordination of European positions in multilateral forums (European Commission, 2020).

In the context of the programming of the ‘NDICI – Global Europe’ financing instrument for the 2021–2027 period, EU delegations were encouraged to identify up to two potential TEIs in their respective Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (MIPs). In programming guidelines, TEIs were framed as ambitious flagship initiatives that could enhance European visibility (European Commission and European External Action Service, 2020). As a further step in operationalizing TEIs, a common Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation (MORE) framework was developed in 2022 and introduced in 2023. The framework calls for the development of a joint intervention logic as a basis for the assessment of individual TEI progress and proposes indicators to enable an aggregated view of TEI contributions to outcomes and impacts across several sectoral priority areas (Working Group on TEI Monitoring and Evaluation, 2022).

By the end of 2023, 168 TEIs had been established, 132 of which were country-level initiatives. A total of 17 of the 32 regional initiatives focused on cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa. A further four TEIs had a global scope (European Union, 2023).

2.2 Findings from Analyses of Team Europe

As the Team Europe agenda has evolved, several analyses have characterised the focus of the approach and identified opportunities and challenges related to its further development. Jones and Teevan (2021) emphasised that the Team Europe approach initially enjoyed wide political support at headquarters level and promised to enhance European strategic communication as a branding tool. However, the study raised concerns that further linkages to country programmes and partner interests would be needed to strengthen its added value.

Keijzer et al. (2021) described the Team Europe agenda as a coordination process unfolding at different governance levels. They emphasised that in Team Europe’s initial phase, visibility goals appeared to outweigh effectiveness objectives. The analysis indicated that Team Europe was a Europe-centred approach and could benefit from greater incorporation of partner perspectives. At the same time, they noted that the integration of different European development cooperation programmes under a Team Europe umbrella was not assured. The study highlighted the room for improvement both in the engagement with external stakeholders and among European actors (Keijzer et al., 2021).

A Commission-funded study examining early experiences with TEIs focused on the participation of member states and member-state agencies in the initiatives (ECORYS, 2023). The study explored the motives and interests of member-state entities in engaging with the initiatives, barriers to participation, and potential ways of improving inclusiveness. It suggested that many European stakeholders had a positive view of potential opportunities via TEIs. Factors such as the desire to take part in joint political dialogue or to identify

business opportunities offered a motivation to participate. However, the study also pointed to concerns about the transaction costs associated with TEI participation and encouraged the EU to take steps to limit the coordination burden moving forward. Suggestions for improvement included involving partners in the development of TEIs at an early stage, increasing information availability to enable member states to identify relevant initiatives, strengthening the EU knowledge base about unfamiliar actors such as development finance institutions (DFIs), and increasing the alignment of development planning cycles (ECORYS, 2023).

A further study commissioned by the Spanish Council Presidency in 2023 reviewed lessons learned from five TEIs, including two regional TEIs and three country-level initiatives (Keijzer et al., 2023). The study explored how the Team Europe approach was being implemented in diverse settings to provide recommendations on how TEIs could better address visibility and effectiveness objectives in the future. The study concluded that early experiences with the TEIs pointed to positive aspects of the initiatives. These positive aspects include the ability of TEIs to attract interest from partner and member state stakeholders, their alignment with partner priorities, and their contribution to strengthening coordination among European development partners (Keijzer et al., 2023).

The same study highlighted several issues that should be addressed to make TEIs a more successful mechanism for integrating European cooperation efforts. As regards objectives, the EU and member states could both clarify the specific goals of individual TEIs and better define the intended linkages between TEIs and other European initiatives including Global Gateway or joint programming efforts. With respect to governance, the study recommended that steering processes should ideally be streamlined to allow for flexible solutions adapted to the geographical context. In a similar vein, the study cautioned against overprescription and standardisation in instructions from Brussels. The development of joint intervention logics was an example of a prescriptive measure that was prematurely applied in the cases examined. Finally, the study proposed that regional TEIs should make efforts to decentralise their working methods to enable stronger engagement with partners at the level of implementation (Keijzer et al., 2023).

2.3 Team Europe as a Diverse Group of Actors

The term Team Europe can have multiple meanings. As noted in the discussion on the genesis of the Team Europe concept in section 2.1 above, Team Europe can be used as shorthand for a political agenda intended to enhance the collective visibility of EU actors in development cooperation. The term can also refer to a group of actors or an approach to working. This section discusses Team Europe as a group of actors. Section 2.4 discusses Team Europe as a way of working.

Team Europe is often used as a collective noun that *describes the set of actors who constitute the group*. This group includes the EU Institutions, EU member states, member-state agencies, European development finance institutions and public development banks involved in policy formulation and implementation. These actors vary in several respects, such as the history and scale of their development cooperation engagements, their preferences for disbursing funds via specific modalities, their organisational setups for steering and implementing cooperation, and their monitoring and reporting practices. The profiles of the European Union and six member-state systems in the annex to this study illustrate some of these variations, which are summarised in Tables 2, 3, and 4 below.

European actors pursue diverse cooperation approaches while agreeing on general principles for action. There is a common understanding that aid is more effective when it responds to partner needs and interests, for example. This precept can be translated into practice in multiple ways: via the alignment of donor priorities with partner strategies, through the consultation mechanisms providing partners with influence, in the choices of implementation channels, or by increasing aid predictability. As Table 2 reflects, relevant differences in European cooperation programmes include preferences for cooperation with certain types of partners and the varied emphasis on programme or project-based approaches.

Table 2. Characteristics of Selected European Donors in Relation to the Partner Orientation of Aid

Partner Orientation	
European Union 	<p>The EU adopts a multi-stakeholder approach to cooperation and states a preference for using partner-country systems for implementation. Its support focuses on public-sector entities. Contributions to multilateral organisations and civil-society organisations are also important in volume. According to Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) monitoring, the EU's performance with respect to using partner-country results frameworks has declined. Challenges in using partner-country systems for implementation and reporting relate to the shifting aid agenda, administrative capacity constraints, and changes in state-society relations in partner countries</p>
Belgium 	<p>The 2013 Belgian Act on Development Cooperation states a preference for the use of partner-country systems in line with aid effectiveness commitments. The strong reliance on pooled funding mechanisms is an indicator of partner-oriented support. GPEDC monitoring points to declining use of partner-country systems, however.</p>
France 	<p>French law notes that development policy is based on dialogue with partner countries and the consideration of partner strategies and needs. France has a strong public sector orientation in aid provision, and it stands out as a European donor with a continuing commitment to budget support. Project-type interventions predominate, however. In GPEDC monitoring, France has a mixed performance related to the partner orientation of aid. It performed slightly above the DAC average in using partner-country results and planning frameworks but below average in its use of PFM systems.</p>
Germany 	<p>Recent government commitments signal a shift toward strengthened interaction with various societal actors. Partnerships via the public sector are significant. Germany retains budget support on a small scale but also maintains a project orientation. Although partner orientation is a guiding concept, assessments point to average performance in responding to partner needs.</p>
Slovak Republic 	<p>The assessment of partner needs is one factor shaping sectoral priorities in country programmes, with the capacities within the Slovak system and monitoring and evaluation findings also named as key influences on decision-making. Slovak bilateral aid is heavily oriented toward project-type interventions and applies a variety of modalities. Public-sector actors and multilateral actors are the most important implementation channels for bilateral aid.</p>
Spain 	<p>The large proportion of aid funds distributed via non-governmental actors and civil-society organisations is provided mainly as non-core support and contributes to a strong project orientation. GPEDC monitoring assessed Spanish performance positively with regard to alignment with partner-country strategies and planning frameworks. However, adopting partner indicators in project planning has been more challenging. Spain performed well below the DAC average in using partner monitoring systems.</p>

Partner Orientation	
Sweden 	Sweden emphasises a multi-stakeholder orientation in its partner engagement. It stands out among the donors profiled for its heavy reliance on multilateral organisations as well as strong support for civil-society organisations. In addition, the Swedish approach favours core or programmatic funding to partners. Sweden performed well on measures of partner orientation in GPEDC monitoring but followed the general trend of a higher level of strategic alignment with country-determined planning frameworks, lower alignment with respect to the use of country-specific indicators, and still lower reliance on data from government monitoring systems.

Source: Author's compilation based on material presented in the annex to this study.

The different approaches that Team Europe actors pursue reflect variations in national systems for development cooperation management. One example of the diversity of planning approaches illustrated with information as summarised in Table 3 below is that the donors vary in terms of the scope and transparency of country strategies. While the EU publishes detailed overviews of its country priorities and financial commitments through multi-annual indicative programmes, for example, country strategies are not systematically published by Belgium and Germany.

Although the EU and member states have some enduring characteristics in their management profiles, their development cooperation systems are not static entities but also evolve over time in response to shifting political agendas and organisational reforms. As an example, in France the formulation of a new legal basis for development cooperation in 2021 marked the continuation of a long-term trend toward increasing organisational consolidation of international cooperation programmes. The most recent reforms include placing the technical cooperation organisation Expertise France under the umbrella of the AFD Group and strengthening the aid coordination role of French ambassadors at the country level (République Française, 2021). As the profiles in the annex indicate, changes in the legislative or strategic basis for cooperation are not unique to France. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) introduced its 'BMZ 2030' reform in 2020 to promote an increased concentration of aid resources, Spain adopted a new development cooperation law at the start of 2023, and Sweden published a new policy framework for cooperation at the end of the same year.

Table 3. Coordination and Steering Features of Selected European Donors

	Strategic Basis	Organisational Setup
European Union 	The NDICI – Global Europe Regulation outlines priorities and preferred ways of working. Multi-annual indicative programmes are the primary strategic guide for geographical and thematic programmes and follow the EU budgetary planning cycle.	Within the legislative framework shaped by the Council and Parliament, the European Commission and European External Action Service share policy development, management and coordination responsibilities. In the absence of a dedicated implementing agency, a variety of actors implement aid through contracting arrangements.
Belgium 	The 2013 Belgian Act on Development Cooperation outlines guiding principles, including commitments to harmonisation in EU and multilateral settings as well as support for a division of labour approach. Numerous sectoral strategies guide cooperation, while country strategies are not published.	The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid within the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation provides overall steering. Enabel and the Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries (BIO) serve as the main implementers.

	Strategic Basis	Organisational Setup
France 	<p>A 2021 law favours a convergence in priorities in French and EU development cooperation and expresses support for joint programming. Country planning has been guided by diverse strategies in a piecemeal fashion.</p>	<p>The Ministry of the Economy, Finance, and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty, and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs jointly oversee the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), France's main operational actor. Recent reforms strengthen the coordination role of ambassadors.</p>
Germany 	<p>Germany does not have a development cooperation law or an overarching governmental strategy, though ministerial strategies such as 'BMZ 2030' define the contours of action. Country strategies are formulated following partner dialogues but are not published.</p>	<p>Several ministries oversee international cooperation, with the BMZ, the independent development ministry, playing a central role. There is a separation between policymaking and implementation functions, as well as operational separation between technical and financial cooperation.</p>
Slovak Republic 	<p>The official Development Aid Act dating from 2007 provides the foundation. Five-year overarching strategy documents offer a planning framework. The Slovak Republic publishes three-year country strategy documents for its small number of programme countries.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs serves as the national Official Development Assistance (ODA) coordinator and provides leadership in strategy formulation. The Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC) is the main implementing entity for Slovak aid, while the national export credit agency is expected to increase in importance.</p>
Spain 	<p>Legislation passed in 2023 aims to align Spanish cooperation with international agendas and strengthen the effectiveness of implementing agencies. A four-year Master Plan framework provides overall direction. Published country strategies are typically prepared for four-year periods, with the potential for alignment with partner planning cycles.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (MAUC) exercises a central steering role within the cooperation system but does not have a predominant funding role. Diverse approaches exist among Spanish implementing agencies, which include AECID, COFIDES, and FIIAPP. The recent legislative update foresees a stronger strategic role for AECID.</p>
Sweden 	<p>Sweden's development policy has typically been guided by an overarching strategy along with thematic, geographical, and organisational strategies. A new strategy document published in 2023 indicated that the proliferation of different types of strategies had complicated development cooperation steering. It pointed to future changes to strategy development and implementation, for example adapting country strategies to encompass aspects of bilateral cooperation beyond aid.</p>	<p>The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the primary role in defining cooperation priorities and initiating strategy development. The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) serves as the main implementing entity and translates the geographical and thematic cooperation priorities into funding commitments to particular initiatives, working in partnership with other actors.</p>

Source: The authors, based on the information compiled in the annex to this study.

In addition to variations in priorities, preferred modes of implementation, and organisational setups, European donors differ in how they monitor and report cooperation results. Such differences may emanate from other features of donor systems, such as the way that objectives are defined in strategic frameworks, the time horizons for planning, and the capacities within the system to collect and review data (OECD, 2023a). Results management systems can serve multiple functions. Promoting accountability and communicating achievements of funds spent are relevant in justifying expenditures. Monitoring and reporting can also contribute to learning and provide decision-making support to improve the effectiveness of cooperation programmes (OECD, 2023a). In practice, the different weight attached to these functions across European systems influences variations in results management systems. As Table 4 indicates, Belgium and Sweden appear to emphasise learning goals to a greater extent than other donors profiled here.

Table 4. Summary of Characteristics of the Monitoring and Reporting Practices of Selected European Donors

Monitoring and Reporting Practice	
<p>European Union</p> 	<p>The EU seeks to consolidate results management and introduced the Operational System OPSYS, to improve the integration of planning, reporting, and management functions. OPSYS provides a common system for some European Commission DGs and their implementing partners to report on predefined core indicators. These are associated with EU corporate results frameworks when used as aggregation indicators. Limited to particular interventions, OPSYS eases the expected preferred use of core indicators, but also allows customised indicators. The OPSYS rollout is linked to the Global Europe Results Framework (GERF), which guides the monitoring of 'NDICI – Global Europe' implementation. The updated results framework and the OPSYS monitoring and reporting tool are part of a new Global Europe Performance Monitoring System (GEPMS). This is presented as a means of adapting the EU results monitoring approach by emphasizing communication, management, and learning functions of results reporting in addition to the accountability orientation that previously dominated EU practice.</p>
<p>Belgium</p> 	<p>A provision in the Development Cooperation Act calls for the creation of a uniform reporting system to systematically monitor results. Partners are expected to follow a traffic-light system in their annual reporting to indicate when objectives are being fully, partially, or poorly met. The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) initiated a reform of its results-management framework, adopting standard indicators as a basis for more systematic reporting. Belgian cooperation has a strong results culture and emphasis on learning with the potential for further consolidation of results reporting frameworks across the cooperation system.</p>
<p>France</p> 	<p>Although French ODA adopts aggregate indicators, the application of results-based management methods has been uneven across governmental entities. The limited use of country strategies has hindered the development of country-specific performance frameworks, making results management primarily project-focused. AFD develops a broad range of indicators to monitor project-level results. The new Cooperation Law presents a general results framework, listing aggregate indicators linked to nine priority areas of intervention. Annual reporting refers to identifying impacts, but in practice the emphasis remains on lower stages of the results chain, focusing on where funding is directed, and which beneficiaries are served. As of 2023, the AFD group planned to revise its monitoring and evaluation policy in order to increase awareness about the impacts of its activities and ensure that assessments contributed to learning and decision-making support.</p>

Monitoring and Reporting Practice	
<p>Germany</p> 	<p>German results-based management practice has focused on project-level assessment associated with the approaches of implementing organisations. The BMZ 2030 and joint procedural reform processes initiated an extension of the project-level orientation to broader portfolios. However, there is a continuing need to strengthen a results-based culture and harmonise approaches. There is also potential to increase the learning orientation of results reporting. In 2022, the BMZ introduced standard indicators to aggregate results across its development cooperation modules. Such indicators apply only to GIZ and KfW portfolios and are designed to serve political communication rather than shape operational steering. The introduction of these indicators is viewed as an important step in promoting German coherence by harmonizing the reporting approaches of GIZ and KfW.</p>
<p>Slovak Republic</p> 	<p>Strategies stress a commitment to results-based management and present indicators related to organisational improvement objectives as well as cooperation priorities. Extensive project monitoring is undertaken. The approach to results-based management is still a work in progress.</p>
<p>Spain</p> 	<p>Spain has sought to improve the guidance provided for monitoring frameworks by developing a manual to structure the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of country partnership frameworks. Progress in developing monitoring reports under a common system has been uneven. Country partnership strategies present a results framework listing objectives defined by the partner country alongside lines of action reflecting Spanish priorities. Annual monitoring based on the country strategies has progressed, but there is potential for the further consolidation of monitoring approaches since implementing agencies have their own monitoring systems and limited effort has been made to aggregate findings from diverse sources to provide input for aid decision-making.</p>
<p>Sweden</p> 	<p>Sweden has a strong results-based management orientation distinguished by its focus on long-term results and emphasis on tailoring monitoring and reporting practices to the context. Sweden also has a learning orientation with a focus on contributing to adaptive programming. The policy framework stresses that monitoring and reporting procedures should be harmonised with those of other aid providers, while partner monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems should be strengthened. Country strategies provide a basis for annual country-level reporting through 'strategy reports' which influence programming of funds. The 2023 policy framework will guide future monitoring and reporting practice. Despite its support for a more comprehensive approach to country strategies and a continued emphasis on robust results monitoring, the framework suggests streamlining results management by limiting the number of objectives that the strategies pursue. It also proposes improving aid transparency, including by simplifying and clarifying the government's reporting formats vis-à-vis the parliament.</p>

Source: The authors on the basis of the donor profiles presented as an annex to this study

Variations among Team Europe actors are not limited to differences in organisational setup but also relate to experiences of interaction with the EU and other Team Europe actors. Relationships between member states and the EU vary. This highlights the multiple roles that the EU and member states play in the development cooperation arena. From one perspective, the EU is a policy system that provides a platform for the elaboration of shared strategic directions for development policy. However, the EU is also an actor in its own right, reflected in the diplomatic role of the 145 EU delegations that engage with non-EU countries and international organisations on trade, development, foreign policy, and security issues (European Court of Auditors, 2024). The EU has additional roles related to the coordination of activities of other European cooperation providers and as a source of funding for development programmes (Lundsgaarde, 2022).

For their part, member states and their implementing agencies can have different roles vis-à-vis the EU in policy formulation and implementation. They can, for example, contribute to the coordination of political positions under a European umbrella, participate in aid coordination directed by the EU, provide co-financing for initiatives that are also supported by the EU, or serve as implementers of EU funding via delegated cooperation agreements ('contribution agreements'). One reflection of the nature of differences in EU-member state relationships is the scale of EU funding implemented via member-state agencies over time. Between 2014 and 2021, almost 39 percent of the financial volume of EU-delegated cooperation to member-state agencies was channelled through German agencies, while another 31 percent of funds flowed through French agencies (Lundsgaarde, 2022). A further example of the different levels of engagement of member states in EU cooperation is their varied participation in Team Europe Initiatives, as Table 5 indicates.

Table 5. Overview of EU Member State Participation in Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs).

Member State	Regional and Global TEIs	Country TEIs	Total	Percent of Total Number of TEIs in which the member state engages
France	31	100	131	78
Germany	31	95	126	75
Netherlands	17	68	85	51
Spain	22	55	77	46
Sweden	20	44	64	38
Italy	16	45	61	36
Belgium	18	41	59	35
Denmark	9	20	29	17
Finland	13	13	26	15
Luxembourg	10	16	26	15
Portugal	11	12	23	14
Ireland	6	16	22	13
Austria	7	14	21	13
Czechia	8	13	21	13
Estonia	4	5	9	5
Poland	3	6	9	5
Hungary	3	5	8	5
Lithuania	2	4	6	4
Slovak Republic	2	4	6	4
Latvia	2	3	5	3
Romania	3	2	5	3
Greece	2	2	4	2
Slovenia	4	0	4	2
Malta	3	0	3	2

Member State	Regional and Global TEIs	Country TEIs	Total	Percent of Total Number of TEIs in which the member state engages
Cyprus	0	2	2	1
Bulgaria	1	0	1	1
Croatia	1	0	1	1

Source: Based on information from the European Commission's Team Europe Tracker available at capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/team-europe-tracker/team-europe-actors/tei, as of March 2024. The six donors profiled in this study are highlighted in the table. The column reporting the percentage of total TEIs is the total of all TEI participation divided by the total number of 168 TEIs. This overview does not account for differences in the quality of member state participation or the varied scope of the initiatives themselves.

Consistent with the multifaceted character of the relationships between the EU and other Team Europe actors, Team Europe actors also engage with one another in multiple constellations. As one example, the Practitioners' Network for European Development Cooperation includes 16 member organisations and eight associates, including development agencies with a technical assistance orientation and foreign ministries. Knowledge exchange and the promotion of harmonisation are among the network's main objectives.³

Within the technical cooperation landscape, the cooperation among a consortium of European development agencies – the British Council, Enabel, Expertise France, GIZ, and LuxDev – in the field of Vocational Education and Training through the VET Toolbox initiative is an example of structured collaboration that preceded the formulation of TEIs.⁴ In this case, the EU played an important role in the orchestration of joint work as the predominant funder of the initiative.

In the development finance sphere, proposals to strengthen the European Financial Architecture for Development (EFAD) have encouraged development finance actors to pursue common standards and review the potential for increased joint action (Council of the European Union, 2019). The development finance providers AECID (Spain), AFD (France), CDP (Italy), and KfW (Germany) sought to strengthen their collaboration via a Team Europe Finance Platform where procedural harmonisation was a stated objective.⁵ As a continuation of this collaboration, these same actors created the Joint European Financiers for International Cooperation (JEFIC) network in 2021, which has since added the Polish development bank BGK as an additional member.⁶ In a similar vein, the European Development Finance Institutions (EDFI) grouping serves as an umbrella organisation for European development finance institutions oriented toward private sector financing.⁷

2.4 Team Europe as an Approach to Collaboration

Team Europe can also be understood as a *way of working*. A Team Europe approach addresses the political objective of strengthening the EU's voice in global affairs by more effectively combining the resources and capacities of Team Europe members. This approach takes as a starting point the recognition that European actors have different comparative advantages. At the same time, it suggests that increasing collaboration with respect to the planning, implementation, and monitoring of development cooperation allows European actors to make better use of them. Increased coordination provides a foundation for more joint action, both

3 www.dev-practitioners.eu

4 vettoolbox.eu/about-us

5 www.afd.fr/en/actualites/financing-platform-cooperation-european-public-development-banks

6 www.afd.fr/en/jefic

7 www.edfi.eu/who-we-are/edfi

at the level of formulating common strategic frameworks and at the level of implementation. The general conceptualisation of the Team Europe approach does not present a preference for any specific implementation modality and indicates that the process of Working Better Together can involve both the pooling of resources and the maintenance of a mixture of aid modalities following a division of labour logic (European Commission, 2021).

At the operational level, there are several elements to bringing actors with varied resources together. On one level, it requires knowledge generation and information exchange among Team Europe actors to map existing priority areas and identify opportunities for consolidation or further differentiation of activities. On a second level, the process of building a more unified approach requires committing administrative resources to steering and coordination functions to allow for continuous dialogue and the development of a common planning framework. In moving toward joint implementation, EU guidance encourages Team Europe actors to review administrative measures such as procurement or financial management procedures to increasingly harmonise practices (European Commission, 2021).

The objective of encouraging collaboration among European actors can be translated into practice through a multi-partner contribution agreement (MPCA). In an MPCA arrangement, the EU prepares a single contract for two or more pillar-assessed organisations to jointly implement EU-funded actions. An MPCA assigns one organisation a leading management and coordination role, although the relationship among implementing agencies is deemed non-hierarchical. While an MPCA indicates potential for joint action, it also enables the participating organisations to use their own implementation procedures.

The VET Toolbox example noted briefly above illustrates the MPCA approach. In this case, the Belgian implementing agency Enabel hosts the coordination hub for the initiative, which serves as a platform for knowledge exchange and the development of a common framework for monitoring, evaluation, and learning, in addition to general coordination of the consortium (VET Toolbox, 2023). The participating European agencies have responsibilities for implementing the initiative's components in a total of 11 partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Implementation follows a division of labour logic, where agencies operate in distinct geographies. Sharing a common set of objectives, participating agencies can draw on their individual strengths such as expertise, local networks, and approaches to implementation. The diversity of approaches under a common umbrella can contribute to learning across agencies about what works well (Interviews 45, 48). However, the diversity of agency approaches also presents a challenge for the development of a common monitoring and reporting framework. This underlines the need to clearly articulate coordination needs within the initiative, define the roles and responsibilities between the funder, coordination hub, and member-state agencies, and ensure that capacities exist to exercise the functions a joint approach requires (Interviews 45, 48).

3. Country-level Case Studies

The case studies of TEIs in three country contexts below follow a common structure. They first present descriptive background information on the TEIs and the cooperation setting. They then outline findings from interview research with respect to the main study themes dealing with the partner orientation of cooperation, coordination and steering dynamics, and monitoring and reporting practices. Potential areas for improvement related to each of these areas are noted in the respective sections. A final section in each case study highlights suggestions for how to strengthen the initiatives' added value.

3.1 Iraq

3.1.1 Background on the Team Europe Initiative and the Cooperation Context

The EU and its member states began developing the TAEUFIQ initiative in mid-2020 and approved an overview document in June 2022. When interview research on this initiative was conducted, the initiative was at an early stage of implementation, having been formally launched only in May 2023. The overarching theme of the initiative is the promotion of diversified, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth. Under this umbrella, the TEI proposes three specific priority areas: 1) banking sector reform and access to finance; 2) entrepreneurship and business development; 3) business and investment enabling environment. The first overview document associated with the initiative reported that 17 core projects would together give the TEI a funding volume of EUR 158.3 million (European Union, 2022). It is the only TEI in Iraq.

The funding for these projects comes from the bilateral programmes of the EU, Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands, including via four core projects co-financed by the EU and Germany. Primary implementation partners include member-state implementing organisations and international organisations, as well as a small number of Iraqi partner organisations (European Union, 2022). Following an initial phase where Team Europe consisted of the core group of funders identified above, its membership expanded to include Finland and Sweden. This constellation of participants represented a minority of the EU member states who have a diplomatic presence in Iraq.

Two key characteristics of the development cooperation setting influence the context in which TEI implementation takes place. The first characteristic is that the effort to defeat the Daesh and subsequent recovery and reconstruction efforts provided a key motivation for a European cooperation presence in the country (Interviews 1, 2, 3). Humanitarian assistance was a focus of post-conflict cooperation. Thus, the process of transitioning from a humanitarian to a development focus is a general cooperation challenge with implications for coordination prospects (Interviews 2, 4). The second characteristic is that Iraq is an upper-middle-income country (UMIC) where oil revenues constitute an important source of public funding.

On the one hand, the UMIC status makes Iraq an atypical partner country (Interview 2) where development coordination structures have shallow roots (Interview 1). On the other hand, this implies that the cooperation agenda is broader than development cooperation goals, with member states pursuing different economic interests (Interview 3). The UMIC status also has implications for the prioritisation of Iraq as a cooperation country. Two interviewees noted that the prospects for Iraq to acquire additional funding from European partners in the future might be limited in light of greater needs in other partner countries (Interviews 17, 19).

The Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Iraq signals that joint dialogue between the EU and member states provided a foundation for movement toward joint programming, while engagement with the Team Europe Initiative was envisioned to further stimulate this process. The initial presentation of the TEI in the MIP stated an intention to focus on economic growth and job creation in line with Commission priorities. It also stated that the combined development portfolios of the EU and member states within the Team Europe priority area was EUR 454 million in 2020, well in excess of the EUR 114 million indicative funding amount for Iraq allocated from the MIP for EU cooperation in the 2021–2024 period (European Union, 2021c). The indicative EU financial contribution to the TEI in the MIP was EUR 60 million. An overview document of expected EU and member state contributions to the TEI in 2022 noted a funding volume of EUR 158.3 million (European Union, 2022).

3.1.2 Perceptions of Partner Interests and Added Value

This section outlines interviewee perceptions of the nature of partner-country interests in the TAEUFIQ initiative and concludes with an indication of areas where the partner orientation of the initiative can be strengthened.

Despite the Iraqi government's potential to mobilise resources via other channels, opportunities for obtaining funding and technical expertise are considered one main interest of national stakeholders in European initiatives (Interviews 4, 19). While the scope for additional European funding may grow with the participation of new European development partners, the resource mobilisation role of the TEI was initially limited, given that it largely reflected the bundling of existing programmes (Interviews 2, 3, 19). One interviewee pointed to the stronger interest of the Government of Iraq in obtaining larger-scale financing packages from multilateral organisations (especially the World Bank) than the smaller-scale grants for capacity building activities that are provided under the TEI umbrella (Interview 1).

Beyond the possibility of acquiring additional funds, interviewees indicated that the potential for increased coordination is another aspect of the initiative's perceived added value. European efforts to coordinate can enable the government to have a common entry point and interface with the European cooperation system (Interviews 5, 9). Increased coordination may help to address challenges of fragmentation in the government itself and limit the extent to which governmental actors can exploit limited information exchange among donors to request the same things from different organisations (Interview 17). Other interviewees indicated an evolution in the governmental perspective on coordination, noting a growing demand for and engagement with coordination processes (Interviews 15, 18).

A final dimension of added value for partners is the platform that a joint European initiative can offer to implementing partners – in this case UN organisations – to amplify their voice on questions of policy reform vis-à-vis governmental stakeholders (Interviews 13, 15). The EU and member states have leverage in national policy dialogue due to the funding they provide.

Potential areas for improvement of partner involvement

- ➔ Although the TEI was described as an initially EU-driven process (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4), a few respondents recognized the value of ongoing efforts to promote engagement with country-level stakeholders including the government (Interviews 1, 4, 11).
- ➔ Ideas on how to strengthen engagement with the Iraqi government included:
 - organizing further dialogues with like-minded ministries (Interview 4),
 - arranging more joint meetings with government involving Team Europe members (Interviews 3, 9), and
 - developing a single joint project with the Iraqi government (Interview 2).
- ➔ More generally, strengthening consultation among the EU and member states to review their respective rationales for supporting specific partner organisations in order to develop a more coherent approach to partner engagement (Interview 15).
- ➔ Reviewing the nature of sectoral priorities addressed within the initiative to improve alignment with partner needs (Interview 13).
- ➔ Attention to how the steering and management of the initiative can be adapted to improve communication to Iraqi stakeholders was highlighted as another relevant area for reflection (Interview 9).
- ➔ Potential gains from the formalization of coordination processes to facilitate collaboration were also noted (Interviews 17, 19). In considering the adaptation of coordination processes to better address partner interests, one interviewee cautioned against adding to existing meeting workloads. This individual noted that partner organisations already engage in a variety of coordination forums and stressed the need to clearly articulate the objectives for any additional coordination structure (Interview 18).

3.1.3 Coordination and Steering Issues

The key drivers of and constraints to the Working Better Together agenda can be summarised under the categories of ‘interests’, ‘organisational issues’, and ‘capacities’. These categories each encompass both enablers and obstacles to cooperation.

Interests: Several interviewees underlined a commonality of purpose between the EU and member states engaging in the country, noting that this provides a basis for collaboration. This is reflected in the agreement on the selection of unifying themes in the TEI framework itself (Interviews 3, 5) and a perception that the development of Iraq is a high donor priority to which many different actors can make a relevant contribution (Interview 6). While there are differences in emphasis on concrete priorities and the focus of interventions, there is a perception of an alignment of the objectives of the EU and member-state agencies within the area of private-sector development (Interviews 1, 4). This alignment of objectives is reinforced by the funding relationship between the EU and member-state agencies (Interview 9). Beyond shared thematic interests, there is support for increased European visibility in the country (Interview 9).

Despite these stated affinities, differences in underlying interests also pose a challenge for closer cooperation between the EU and member states. Differences in EU and member state interests include the limited political commitment of member states to engage with the TEI (Interviews 2, 3), differences in preferences concerning

the selection of implementing partners (Interview 4), and varied areas of specialisation (Interview 5). The varied scale and role of member states within the country is another factor limiting cooperation. Cooperation prospects reflect underlying power dynamics as member states with larger bilateral programmes, a higher degree of visibility, and more existing access to governmental actors question the added value of a Team Europe approach and display reluctance to work through the European platform (Interview 6, Interview 15). A further brake on cooperation is the fact that member-state agencies as well as other implementing partners compete with one another for financial resources (Interviews 9, 13).

Organisational issues: From a general perspective, the delegation of aid decision-making responsibilities to the country level was noted as one element enabling closer collaboration with other European cooperation providers (Interviews 1, 3, 9). Other interviews highlighted assets within specific member-state systems. As examples, efforts to improve the coherence of the activities of diverse actors within an individual member-state system (Interview 4), the possibility of flexibly reallocating funding (Interview 6), or the recourse to annual programming in the country context (Interview 11) were identified as factors allowing improved engagement with other European actors. Additional organisational factors supporting involvement in the TEI included the existence of a dedicated unit at headquarters level to review TEI implementation (Interview 11) and regular information exchange within the organisation on EU engagement (Interview 9).

At the same time, differences in approaches to planning and managing cooperation pose a challenge for closer collaboration. At the one level, the limited synchronisation of planning cycles and approval processes for the disbursement of funds can inhibit progress on interlinking programmes (Interviews 11, 19). At a second level, cooperation actors are subject to different constraints that emanate from steering processes. With respect to TEI engagement, the absence of clear guidance from the headquarters level on how to engage with the initiatives (Interview 3, Interview 6) has been one such constraint. In a similar vein, organisations with responsibilities for overseeing funding have different approaches to engaging with programme or project implementation. The EU is perceived as an actor that expects more intensive engagement resulting in additional demands for information from implementing organisations, for example (Interview 9).

Multiple interviewees noted that coordination mechanisms foster collaboration when they promote transparency in decision-making and encourage information sharing among participants (Interviews 13, 15, 19). There are multiple coordination forums in the country and regular meetings at the level of heads of cooperation among the EU and member states (Interviews 3, 19). The intensity of coordination varies depending on the specific context for collaboration, with co-financing arrangements highlighted as one area where coordination is more involved (Interview 3).

Capacities of European actors: The ability of European partners to participate in coordination processes and allocate time to engagement with other actors is shaped by the availability and quality of human resources in country offices.

The longer-term posting of key personnel to perform leadership roles in EU coordination was one positive example of capacity-related factors supporting coordination in this context (Interview 6, Interview 9). Another positive point related to the organisational capacities of specific implementing agencies, with interviewees acknowledging variations in terms of the administrative resources that are available to personnel working in different organisations (Interviews 1, 9).

Actors in the country also face several capacity constraints. First, for both the EU and member state representations, there is a perception that there is limited staff available to fulfil expected tasks (Interviews 3, 11). This can constrain the possibilities for undertaking coordination-related tasks. European coordination

is understood to involve a heavy workload in engagement at both political and technical levels (Interview 2). For the TEI in particular, interviewees pointed out that there was not a dedicated secretariat to coordinate the TEI despite an initial intention to fund one. The lack of a secretariat appears to suggest different perceptions about the appropriate funding role of the EU vis-à-vis member states in creating an infrastructure for TEI management (Interviews 1, 3).

One interviewee underlined that the EU should maintain its umbrella function in the country, as member states have difficulty assuming this role (Interview 6). In a similar vein, another interviewee suggested that the EU delegation farmed out coordination responsibilities despite having a justification for assuming a stronger coordination role itself (Interview 9). The allocation of resources toward coordination may be limited owing to project-level funding allocations in co-financing arrangements (Interview 1). In the absence of dedicated funding for the TEI, there has been pressure to use project funds to support Team Europe activities, an approach which implementing partners are reluctant to support (Interview 18).

Other capacity constraints derive from the challenging security context in Iraq. There is a high level of staff rotation that limits the continuity of personnel (Interview 6). In addition, the security situation inhibits freedom of movement and freedom of exchange with other stakeholders (Interviews 5, 9) and provides an obstacle to the conduct of joint activities promoting collective visibility within the country (Interview 11).

Potential areas for improvement of coordination and steering issues

Interview partners identified several general ways that cooperation among European partners could be improved:

- ➔ Exploit the potential to upstream policy planning issues. Increase joint analysis as a basis for complementary activities and limit duplication (Interviews 9, 15).
- ➔ Foster concertation in the programming phase where there may be more flexibility to align approaches before implementation proceeds (Interview 17).
- ➔ Provide a unifying theory of change or intervention logic that would be helpful in bringing European partner activities closer together (Interviews 17, 18).
- ➔ As regards the planning phase of cooperation, improve the joint knowledge base for decision-making by sharing assessments produced by the EU, member states, and agencies engaging in the country more systematically, for example via a distribution list (Interview 4).
- ➔ Improve coordination processes themselves, for example by encouraging more regular dialogue among co-financing partners (Interviews 1, 2) or improving the political dialogue among the EU and member states at the embassy level (Interview 9).
- ➔ Create more formalized and institutionalized coordination structures. This could contribute to making coordination processes less dependent on the approach taken by key personnel in the process (Interview 19). Further considerations on enhancing coordination are outlined in section 3.1.5 below.

3.1.4 Monitoring and Reporting Issues

Responses to questions on monitoring and reporting practices and the prospects for closer collaboration among European development partners in this area indicated that there is variation in European monitoring and reporting practices but also some areas of alignment. Several explanations for limited alignment in reporting practices came up, including: the legacy of diverse monitoring approaches from projects not planned at the same time (Interview 1); differences in the level of ambitions of individual donors as well as the scale of their programmes (Interview 2); and the lack of development of a monitoring and reporting framework in the TEI context thus far (Interviews 3, 6, 11). At the same time, there is a lack of mutual awareness about the monitoring and reporting practices of other European actors (Interviews 4, 9).

ENABLERS FOR JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

Although interviewees conveyed that diverse European approaches to monitoring and reporting coexist in country-level implementation, linkages to EU-funded programmes promote a degree of consistency. Implementing partners receiving EU funding are required to use EU reporting systems, leading to a familiarisation with EU reporting practices (Interviews 4, 9, 15, 17). The mechanism of a multi-partner contribution agreement was named as one approach that provides a basis for a common monitoring and reporting orientation (Interview 15). However, there are also limits to the degree of consolidation in reporting approaches. For European agencies participating in EU co-financing arrangements, joint reporting is conducted in the context of co-financed projects, while bilateral requirements guide monitoring and reporting practice outside of the co-financed projects (Interview 1).

OBSTACLES TO JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

Interviewees indicated that there is not a strong demand or push for greater joint monitoring and reporting on the part of the EU and member states (Interviews 3, 9, 19). In addition to the basic question of whether joint monitoring and reporting should be an objective and an activity to which to commit further resources, interviewees indicated that the differences in European monitoring and reporting practices reflect underlying differences in programming approaches. For example, the selection of different priority areas and target beneficiaries can mean that European partners would not need to monitor the same activities (Interview 18). In another example, the varying levels of flexibility in reallocating funding can have implications for the choice of monitoring and reporting approach (Interview 17).

Potential areas of improvement in joint monitoring and reporting practice as per interviewee suggestions

- ➔ Greater use of joint monitoring and reporting would require further attention to several issues. These issues include:
 - the formulation of common objectives (Interview 1),
 - agreement on the appropriate level of reporting (Interview 2),
 - the definition of the respective roles of involved actors (Interview 6), and
 - the general integration of monitoring considerations into the early stage of programme planning (Interviews 9, 17).
- ➔ Greater involvement of country-level experts in monitoring and evaluation. Knowledge of the context is considered highly valuable in enhancing the validity of findings and ensuring that knowledge produced through monitoring and reporting can be used by country-level stakeholders (Interviews 13, 15, 17).

3.1.5 Strengthening Added Value of the TEI

As indicated above, one key element of the perceived added value of the TEI is its potential to improve coordination among European actors (Interviews 2, 4, 9, 11). Interviews identified three areas for further reflection to strengthen coordination efforts. First, there is a question of what types of activities should be a focus for European coordination efforts. For example, one interviewee emphasised the value of developing common political messages to influence legislative processes more effectively, permitting member states and member-state agencies to obtain political backing from the EU and the wider community to promote reform (Interview 9).

Second, there is a question of what level(s) of coordination deserve more emphasis. Multiple interviewees noted the coexistence of diverse coordination mechanisms, for example at the project level (Interview 3), among implementation partners (Interview 11), or coordination at the sectoral level (Interview 18). In light of the regional divisions in Iraq and the existence of regional offices for selected donors, strengthened coordination between central and regional structures could also be envisaged (Interview 4).

Third, how to motivate European actors to make resource commitments to enhance coordination processes? Coordination efforts are sometimes perceived as a large additional block of work, the immediate benefits of which are not always clear (Interviews 1, 3). Multiple interviewees highlighted the benefits of additional coordination, such as increasing information exchange (Interview 3) and reducing duplication (Interviews 3, 11, 15, 17). Another interviewee underlined that it would be helpful to provide a proof of concept to demonstrate the value of joint European initiatives (Interview 5). These points indicate that motivating European actors to engage more intensively in coordination requires a clear articulation of the expected gains and how they outweigh possible costs.

There are several reasons for the reluctance of European partners to engage more intensively in coordination. Beyond the capacity questions that have already been mentioned, member states hold different perceptions of the benefits of closer collaboration. For larger member states that already have higher visibility and access to the government, the need for joint participation in policy dialogue under the Team Europe banner is not clearcut, whereas smaller states may benefit more clearly from gains in visibility and access by associating themselves with actors that have a larger resource base (Interviews 2, 6, 19). In addition, the EU and member

states continue to discern advantages in pursuing bilateral approaches. Bilateral approaches can be perceived as advantageous for their ability to directly address sensitive or strategic issues for the bilateral provider (Interview 9), their greater speed in development and implementation (Interview 6) or their ability to demonstrate a specific competence and foster visibility (Interview 11). Building a stronger case for joint work therefore implies demonstrating how efficiency gains from combining resources, presenting a unified front vis-à-vis partners, and leveraging influence outweighs the reasons for resistance to common approaches.

3.2 Mozambique

3.2.1 Background on the Team Europe Initiative and the Cooperation Context

The EU's MIP for Mozambique presented two TEI proposals. One was a 'Green Deal' initiative focusing on climate action and the promotion of a green transformation. The other was the E-Youth TEI. The initiatives were linked to the two priority areas with the largest indicative financial commitments in the MIP. The MIP suggested that EUR 138 million could be directed toward the E-Youth initiative, noting that the real commitment would be contingent on the willingness of member states to provide additional resources. This proposed volume would have accounted for a large share of the EUR 163 million indicative allocation for the 'Growing Youth' priority area within the EU country programme for 2021 to 2024 (European Union, 2021d).

Against the backdrop of a large youth population and development challenges such as the lack of employment opportunities for this growing demographic, the TEI 'E-Youth' focuses on three 'Es' to serve the needs of young people in Mozambique. First, the TEI seeks to promote educational opportunities via primary education, technical and vocational training, and higher education. Second, the TEI aims to support employment opportunities with assistance for entrepreneurship and improvements in the business-enabling environment. Third, the initiative supports youth empowerment to enable more participation in decision-making processes.

EU informational materials report that 11 member states participate in the TEI E-Youth in addition to the EU and European Investment Bank: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.⁸ However, the extent of member state participation varies in light of the different scope of individual member state country programmes and their respective staffing levels (Interview 27).

The MIP for Mozambique indicates that efforts to promote stronger European collaboration and movement toward joint programming predated the country programming exercise. In particular, the MIP notes that the EU and member states adopted a Joint Action Plan in 2019 to address the Working Better Together agenda, which emphasised actions to better understand and align priorities, promote EU leverage, advance joint implementation, and increase the visibility of EU and member state cooperation (European Union, 2021d). Although the objectives of joint programming and the TEIs are described in similar terms, interviewees signalled that the status of joint programming toward the end of 2023 was uncertain. While one interviewee suggested that the result of earlier efforts to increase collaboration (such as support for pooled funding approaches) had contributed to a high level of cooperation nearly resembling a joint programme (Interview 26), others pointed to the unclear status of the commitment to joint programming (Interview 27) or reported a loss in visibility of joint programming measures at the same time that the TEI was developing (Interview 36).

8 capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/team-europe-tracker/partner-countries/mozambique/mozambique-e-youth_en

3.2.2 Perceptions of Partner Interests and Added Value

As in the case of Iraq, one of the main interests that national stakeholders in Mozambique are expected to have in joint European initiatives is the possibility of accessing additional funding. Several interviewees noted that the provision of fresh funding was not an element of the TEI, making it challenging to directly demonstrate or communicate the value of the initiative toward Mozambican stakeholders (Interviews 22, 26, 27, 36).

Rather than offering new funds, a key function of the TEI has been to present an overview of how different European cooperation programmes contribute to the opportunities for youth agenda. This has involved a mapping exercise to document priority areas and ongoing commitments of European cooperation providers. The mapping exercise covered 150 projects that fall under the Team Europe umbrella, which are in turn linked to a dozen European cooperation programmes (Interviews 37, 41). This mapping presents opportunities to raise awareness among the European providers themselves and can potentially contribute to the reallocation of resources within European programmes (Interviews 27, 33). However, the initiative rather emphasises a continuity of cooperation given that its main themes were priority areas before the TEI emerged and adjustments to European programmes have been limited thus far (Interview 36).

While the mapping of activities has potential benefits for European providers, it also has advantages for the partner government since it provides a means of identifying underserved areas, for example in relation to funding coverage within specific sectors across the country (Interviews 27, 37). Another perceived benefit of the initiative for stakeholders within the country is the prospect that the development of a common platform for partner engagement with European cooperation providers can simplify engagement (Interview 24). European coordination can also be an avenue for limiting duplication and the inefficient use of resources (Interview 37). Strengthened coordination among European actors can be a step toward limiting transaction costs in the interface between European cooperation providers and the partner government.

Potential areas for improvement of partner involvement

Although the E-Youth initiative remains at an early stage of development, interviewees suggested several possible means of strengthening its value.

- ➔ At a basic level, the end objective of the initiative could be articulated more clearly (Interview 37). Several interviewees highlighted challenges in communicating the function of the initiative given its complexity (Interviews 22, 26).
- ➔ As a possible remedy for some communication challenges, one interviewee suggested that a range of different communication material could be developed for the respective areas of engagement and for different target groups. (Interview 36).
- ➔ National stakeholders played a limited role in the initial development of the TEI, though mechanisms for regular interaction including consultations and a working group to report on TEI progress have developed since its creation (Interview 27). Further formalization of a dialogue structure to foster information exchange between the government and Team Europe members would enable partner involvement in the initiative and drive a stronger planning and implementation focus (Interview 37).
- ➔ In light of the concurrent existence of other coordination forums in the country, interviewees highlighted the importance of either defining the added value of the Team Europe platform in relation to other coordination mechanisms or considering how European coordination functions can be integrated into existing mechanisms (Interviews 24, 26, 37).

3.2.3 Coordination and Steering Issues

This section follows the structure outlined in the previous case study by examining the enablers and challenges for Working Better Together in relation to interests, organisational issues, and capacities.

Interests: At the level of interests, the political commitment to more unified European action that emanates from EU and member-state headquarters provides one foundation for closer cooperation. The political interest in working with other European actors is evident in the funding commitments made to TEI priority areas, the prioritisation of a more unified and visible European approach to cooperation, and increased interest in joint programming (Interviews 22, 26, 36). Just as the prospect of additional funding was viewed as a possible interest on the part of Mozambican stakeholders in the TEI, the interest of member-state entities in strengthening their association with European collaborative processes may also have a financial motivation. This is because member-state agencies also look to the EU as a potential funding source (Interviews 24, 26, 41).

The sustained interest of European actors in TEIs cannot be taken for granted. A couple of interviewees suggested the potential for diminished interest in TEIs was a result of either shifting domestic political agendas or concern about the limited achievements of the TEIs themselves (Interviews 27, 33). The desire to maintain bilateral visibility may also constrain interests in further cooperation in a European context (Interviews 27, 41). A final limitation on the scope of shared interests among European providers is the fact that some actors have affinities with cooperation providers outside of the Team Europe group in terms of the priorities that they pursue. These relationships with non-European providers can offer relevant opportunities for information exchange and joint action (Interview 36).

Organisational issues. On a broad level, EU delegations, member-state embassies, and the country offices of implementing agencies have different levels of flexibility to engage independently in country-level work. Decentralised structures that allow in-country staff more autonomy from their headquarters generally enable engagement with other actors. In contrast, more centralised systems face greater difficulties in embedding their actions in a European approach, for example with respect to the timely provision of relevant information (Interviews 26, 33, 36, 41).

Coordination mechanisms represent another enabler for closer European collaboration. The TEI is an additional process that has developed alongside existing coordination processes such as regular meetings of European Heads of Cooperation (Interview 22). BMZ is leading the coordination of the TEI and has commissioned GIZ to support their secretarial tasks.

Interviewees underlined the positive contribution that the EU delegation and Team Europe secretariat have made to steering the development of the TEI but also highlighted several challenges in this coordination structure. TEI coordination has been perceived as an additional commitment that was imposed on the EU delegation with limited guidance provided on how to structure coordination processes (Interviews 26, 27). While Germany's coordination role is acknowledged positively by other European actors as a demonstration of an added resource commitment, early experiences point to some limitations of a member-state agency having responsibility for TEI steering. For example, there is a perceived need for continued strong EU delegation involvement in coordination due to the importance of building linkages to EU headquarters (Interviews 24, 27). The reliance on a member-state agency to assume a coordination function also raises concerns about the possible reduction of collective European visibility and the uncertain sustainability of funding (Interviews 24, 26, 27, 36).

Capacities of European actors: Abilities to participate in coordination processes and allocate time to engagement with other actors is shaped by human resources in country offices. As suggested in the discussion of steering mechanisms above, the availability of dedicated resources to support personnel undertaking coordination tasks is an enabler for more joint European action.

In the example of the E-Youth TEI, there are multiple capacity constraints. The delegation of a secretariat function to Germany points to the lack of additional resources from the EU that would enable the EU delegation to assume a more important role in the steering of the initiative. TEI coordination tasks are one of many responsibilities of EU delegation staff assigned to the TEI, and the TEI has not involved new EU funding commitments (Interview 22). While the provision of resources from the BMZ through GIZ to support coordination functions indicates that some capacities at the level of member states have offset the above shortfall, other member-state entities do not have the same options. As the allocation of additional staffing resources to coordination work is not even a given for Germany, involvement in extra EU coordination processes can present a particular burden for smaller member state administrations (Interviews 22, 24, 33, 41).

Potential areas for improvement of coordination and steering issues

- ➔ Although there is broad support for the political agenda of promoting closer European cooperation under the Team Europe umbrella, the limited availability of resources to undertake new activities poses a challenge to better linking European cooperation programmes. The TEI process could also be strengthened as regards clarifying the strategic framework and articulating the initiative's main objectives (Interviews 22, 41).
- ➔ Further guidance from EU and member-state headquarters would be useful to better position the contribution of the initiative in relation to other cooperation activities (Interviews 22, 24).
- ➔ Given that the TEI represents an additional forum for coordination in a context where a variety of other coordination avenues coexist, there is a need to more clearly define the added value of the TEI as a coordination mechanism and ensure that this alternative coordination forum does not have negative consequences for other functional forums (Interviews 24, 26).
- ➔ The TEI's information-sharing function and knowledge tools can be further developed to ensure that the awareness of planned activities of European providers informs decision-making of other European providers at an early stage of planning processes (Interview 27).

3.2.4 Monitoring and Reporting Issues

The development of a monitoring and reporting framework had only recently been initiated for the TEI by the end of 2023. Constraints to pursuing joint monitoring and reporting appear to outweigh enabling factors in this case, pointing to a challenging pathway moving forward.

ENABLERS FOR JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

At a basic level, moves toward joint monitoring may be helped by an underlying recognition by cooperation providers that informing other actors about their achievements is advantageous (Interview 33). Another factor supporting joint monitoring is an existing commitment in select member-state agencies to align monitoring practices more closely with the EU approach (Interview 26). The organisation of a joint monitoring process

has also been fostered with the hiring of a monitoring and reporting expert via an EU technical assistance contract (Interview 27).

OBSTACLES TO JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

Fundamentally, there may be limited demand for a joint monitoring approach in light of the continued need for European actors to fulfil reporting obligations vis-à-vis their own headquarters (Interviews 24, 36). There are numerous differences in EU and member-state monitoring and reporting practices that are perceived as challenges in the development of a common monitoring and reporting approach. Differences exist at the level of defining objectives, identifying the relevance of specific indicators to adopt, and clarifying how concepts such as impact should be understood (Interview 22). The awareness of the differences in approach among European actors is in some cases limited (Interviews 36, 41). Nevertheless, initial efforts to develop a joint framework point to challenges in bringing together actors that have independent systems for reporting that vary in their informational requirements (Interviews 27, 33).

Just as capacity limitations can also constrain participation in coordination processes, some concern exists about the additional burden that joint monitoring can present. Inputting monitoring data consumes administrative resources. If joint monitoring contributes to a harmonisation of procedures, it may be advantageous. However, if it reflects an alternative system, it can be problematic for administrations with limited capacities, as they will need to develop knowledge of multiple reporting systems (Interviews 33, 41).

Potential areas of improvement in joint monitoring and reporting practice

- ➔ Several interviewees noted the positive contribution that a joint monitoring framework could make to bringing European approaches closer together. Efforts to develop a joint intervention logic intend to clarify the means of tracking results and also aim to improve communication about the TEI toward the partner government.
- ➔ Interviewees acknowledged that the process of developing a joint monitoring framework remains at an early stage of development and reflected that it could be driven forward with a recognition that it is a learning process, which would, for example, require further training on the common reporting standards as one area of emphasis (Interviews 26, 27, 33, 41).
- ➔ To take into account the capacity constraints outlined above, it is relevant to consider how to streamline reporting requirements to create space for more joint work.

3.2.5 Strengthening Added Value of the TEI

The E-Youth TEI provides a platform for documenting and communicating the range of European actions linked to its key objectives and did not yet reflect joint implementation when interviews for this study were carried out. It was instead viewed as an umbrella for diverse bilateral projects. Perceived advantages of the continued use of bilateral approaches include their flexibility, speed of disbursement, and ability to develop capacities to engage in relevant areas. However, there is also a recognition that time invested in coordination and joint work can contribute to long-term effectiveness and greater impact (Interviews 24, 26, 33, 41).

While the E-Youth TEI coordination process presents an opportunity to focus information exchange on its priority objectives, the TEI constitutes an additional avenue for interaction in a setting where there are already other active forums involving many of the same actors (Interviews 24, 26, 27). This implies that the TEI's added value could be strengthened if the relationship with other coordination processes were clarified with a view to limiting the additional coordination burden. Moving forward, the initiative could also offer added value if the component projects are integrated more clearly into a common planning framework, rather than standing as a collection of independent initiatives (Interview 37). Finally, it might be helpful for European cooperation providers to engage in further knowledge exchange with other TEIs (Interview 41).

3.3 Lao PDR

3.3.1 Background on the Team Europe Initiative and the Cooperation Context

European development cooperation with Lao PDR is considered to be a best-practice example of the Working Better Together agenda. European cooperation providers initiated a joint programming process in 2014 and agreed on a joint programming document in 2016. This document was unusual as it was the first instance of a joint programming strategy replacing an EU MIP. The joint programming document outlined the priorities of European providers across seven priority sectors, with the largest financial commitments directed to education and scholarships, agriculture and rural development, and nutrition. The document indicated that European actions would follow prescriptions from the division of labour agenda, whereby European providers would adopt a specialised approach to funding and work in a concentrated way within a small number of sectors (European Union, 2016).

The European experience with joint programming has continued in the current programming period, resulting in a joint strategy for 2021–2025. The strategy outlines commitments in priority sectors that are similar to those reflected in its predecessor framework, grouping sectoral priorities into the three broader thematic areas of green and inclusive economy, human capital, and good governance. At the same time, the joint programming strategy stresses the overall focus on green issues across thematic areas (European Union, 2021a).

The prioritisation of environmental issues is evident in the strategy's presentation of a 'Green Team Europe Initiative' for the country, an umbrella for actions addressing sustainable agricultural development on the one hand and improving forest management on the other. The EU joint strategy for the Lao PDR noted an indicative EU financial contribution of EUR 42 million to this TEI, contingent on the commitments made by other Team Europe actors (European Union, 2021a).

The constellation of European cooperation providers differs slightly from the earlier strategy period, in light of the departure of the United Kingdom from the group and a reordering of the rankings of individual member states with respect to their level of funding commitments. It is notable that Luxembourg is the most important European member state within the joint programming planning framework, with a financial commitment exceeding other Team Europe actors in this context. Germany, Switzerland, France, and Hungary also contribute a large volume of funding, while Finland and Ireland provide small contributions within the Team Europe framework (European Union, 2021a).

As an indication of the evolution of the European policy agenda following the joint programming strategy's publication, the joint programming document has been relabelled a Team Europe Strategy. The strategy presents the Green Deal TEI as one component of the joint programme. Since its initial presentation, the Team Europe Initiative has developed to encompass three distinct flagship projects, dealing respectively with

agricultural and forestry issues, vocational skills development, and local development. Together with the EU and the European Investment Bank (EIB), France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, and Switzerland have been the main participants in the TEI. The agricultural and forestry component has itself been labelled as the ‘Team Europe Partnership with Laos to boost sustainable trade and investments in agriculture and forestry sectors (TICAF)’ and has also been presented as a Global Gateway flagship initiative.⁹ The Team Europe label thus applies to three different levels of cooperation.

3.3.2 Perceptions of Partner Interests and Added Value

A mid-term review of the implementation of the joint programming strategy was carried out in 2023. Survey responses from development providers, governmental actors, non-governmental organisations, and other entities suggested that there was continuing interest in the priority areas outlined in the strategy as well as support for the Team Europe approach. A consultation involving representatives of numerous government ministries in connection with this review process indicated a positive view of the alignment of the EU strategy with national development objectives, while suggesting potential adaptations of the EU programme.

One of the main areas of perceived partner interest in the Team Europe Initiative relates to the topics that it addresses. Key priority areas for engagement have represented national focal areas for a long period and the TEI represents a continuation of existing cooperation programmes that the Lao government supports, building on established relationships with governmental counterparts (Interviews 29, 31, 35).

Another possible benefit to partners is the added coordination and bundling of projects that the TEI promotes, encouraging the EU and member states to work in a more unified way within the country (Interviews 28, 29, 31, 46, 47). A main reference point for the development cooperation approach of the partner government is the *Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation*, covering the 2016–2025 period. This document underlines the government’s commitment to international development effectiveness principles, emphasizing government ownership, the importance of development partner alignment with country strategies and systems, and the support for harmonisation. The harmonisation and simplification of development partner procedures by adopting programme-based approaches and other common planning, implementation, and review approaches is also noted as a priority area in the Declaration (Government of Lao PDR and UNDP, 2016).

Despite the interest expressed in more coordination, however, it is not always clear to European providers that the Lao government prefers a collective approach (Interviews 28, 38). Even with the formulation of a joint strategy, there are independently managed cooperation programmes and varied channels for government stakeholders to engage with the EU and member states. There is also a continued governmental interest in engaging in bilateral policy dialogues with European partners that address broader economic and political themes such as trade and human rights issues (Interview 46).

The coexistence of a common umbrella and generally autonomous programmes creates a communication challenge for European partners vis-à-vis national stakeholders in clarifying the relationship between the Team Europe approach and bilateral programmes (Interviews 38, 39). However, since the Team Europe Initiative includes components stemming from specific bilateral programmes, added emphasis on the Team Europe Initiative may actually serve to increase the visibility of bilateral initiatives. This can potentially lead to increased funding for the bilateral programme (Interview 39). At the same time, the articulation of a bilateral initiative under the Team Europe umbrella can be viewed as a mechanism to increase the visibility of the EU (Interview 35).

9 international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/global-gateway-eu-and-lao-peoples-democratic-republic-launch-new-flagship-develop-coffee-tea-and-2024-03-14_en

Potential areas for improvement of partner involvement

- ➔ Interviewees highlighted different perceptions of the need for changes in partner engagement, with Team Europe coordination described both as an additional burden for local stakeholders and as a positive experience characterized by early engagement with governmental stakeholders in joint planning (Interviews 28, 31). The quality of engagement with local partners can be shaped by several factors, including the cooperation capacities of national counterparts, the nature of partner satisfaction with the status quo, and the appetite for added engagement (Interviews 28, 39).
- ➔ One specific area highlighted as having potential for reform for European actors was to reduce confusion in communication between Team Europe members and governmental stakeholders by retaining a clear view of the distinct responsibilities of different Team Europe actors in interacting with government counterparts (Interview 35). Addressing this point can also involve clarifying the distinctive role of the EU as a cooperation provider. The EU pursues a variety of roles, for example acting as a bilateral funder or source of co-financing, in a way that appears similar to the member states (Interview 47).
- ➔ Positive experiences with the TEI thus far suggest the potential to reinforce favourable aspects of the approach rather than taking a fundamentally different course of action. Increased co-funding of projects to promote more efficient resource use, limit duplication, and pool expertise and resources is one example of how to build on the achievements of ongoing efforts (Interview 46).
- ➔ Another positive element of the cooperation context is that the joint programming strategy fosters synchronization between the planning cycles of the EU and the Lao PDR by aligning with the 2021–2025 time horizon of the Lao PDR’s 9th National Socio–Economic Development Plan. However, member–state bilateral programmes continue to operate according to varied programming cycles (European Union, 2021a). There may therefore be potential for further synchronization among Team Europe actors in the country.

3.3.3 Coordination and Steering Issues

Consistent with the other case-study chapters, the drivers and constraints of Working Better Together are summarised below in relation to the themes of interests, organisational issues, and capacities.

Interests: As the commitment to joint programming in the country indicates, European cooperation actors generally have a high political commitment to the Team Europe approach and report strong strategic alignment on core objectives (Interviews 28, 29, 31, 39). To the extent that differences in priorities exist, these reflect the specialisation of member states and are considered compatible with a division of labour logic that allows for compartmentalised implementation (Interviews 31, 35, 38). Affinities among European providers are due not only to the small number of actors present in the Lao PDR but also to the contrast with the development providers outside of the EU community (Interviews 29, 38). Differences in priorities among European actors nevertheless reflect their respective foreign policy interests and approaches to engagement in the country and can pose a challenge for the full alignment of EU and-member state actions with the objectives of the partner government (Interview 47).

Organisational issues: The limited number of European donors present in the Lao PDR is not only an advantage in encouraging the alignment of interests but also in ensuring functional coordination (Interviews 31, 39). The view of the steering role of the EU delegation in the country is generally positive, with delegation staff characterised as effective, friendly, professional, knowledgeable, and engaged

(Interviews 28, 29, 38, 39). However, there can be more varied experiences with coordination outside of the Team Europe constellation, as sector working groups are organised by different donors and counterparts and produce varied results (Interview 28).

Although the general picture of European cooperation is that the EU and member states work effectively together, they also have organisational differences that can limit the scope of their cooperation. For example, French allocations are dependent on a process of project approval that can limit their forward planning orientation. European actors also have recourse to different modalities. As an example, the EU is able to provide budget support, while Germany has discontinued use of the instrument in the Lao PDR. Hungary's cooperation profile is dominated by tied project loans and scholarship funding.

Within a division of labour, different modalities can coexist without interfering with the effectiveness of other cooperation modalities. This raises the question of whether the consolidation of the Team Europe approach requires the further integration of the modes of cooperation. Continuing differences in the decision-making processes of the EU and member states add complexity to engagement and coordination with the partner government and require partners to have knowledge of the varied policies and procedures of European actors (Interview 47). Although the existence of joint programming in the country suggests that there is some level of alignment in planning horizons, there are seemingly still challenges related to the synchronisation of budgetary and planning cycles (Interview 31). There is also potential for harmonisation with respect to procedures for project appraisal, developing project guidelines, and preparing impact assessments (Interview 47). These differences pose a complication rather than a barrier to joint work. By promoting the standardisation of procedures through joint planning and supporting the harmonisation of planning cycles, the EU can contribute to reducing complexity in this cooperation setting (Written Input 3).

Capacities of European actors: In this setting, the capacity constraints of local counterparts to participate in added coordination efforts were considered a key capacity limitation (Interviews 28, 31), while the self-assessment of European capacities was generally positive. The capacities of European actors may also be enhanced by the type of support that they receive from their headquarters. One interviewee noted favourably the high quality of support from headquarters on how to manage delegated cooperation agreements (Interview 35).

While limitations in European capacities were rarely noted, smaller administrations clearly experience difficulties in engaging with joint European processes due to basic human resource limitations. This challenge can be compounded if specific European partners do not receive any additional funding from their headquarters to support joint implementation initiatives more actively (Interview 38).

Potential areas for improvement of coordination and steering issues

Though the European cooperation context in the Lao PDR seems to have many features that enable collaboration among European cooperation actors, interviewees also pointed to areas for improvement.

- ➔ Coordination meetings could be increasingly used as a platform for learning from implementation experiences (Interview 35).
- ➔ Sustainability of the funding for the coordination function within the EU delegation is an issue, indicating uncertainty about how expertise should be anchored in the delegation to ensure a strong connection to EU processes (Interview 39).
- ➔ Standardization of planning and approval procedures is needed. Harmonizing project implementation manuals is one relevant example of this (Interview 47).

3.3.4 Monitoring and Reporting Issues

ENABLERS FOR JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

There are several foundations for more joint monitoring and reporting among European actors in the Lao PDR. Joint technical reports and common project mission reports within the country offer existing examples of small-scale joint reporting work. A joint reporting framework has been established with the Green Deal TEI (Interview 31), and there are positive examples of joint monitoring and reporting in projects funded by the EU together with other European actors (Interview 46). There is also some interest in the potential for examining how common evaluation efforts can generate information about lessons learned from European development interventions (35).

OBSTACLES TO JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

As in other countries, there is a lack of awareness about the monitoring and reporting practices of other cooperation providers (Interviews 31, 35), however there is also a perception of differences across systems that may be challenging to reconcile (Interview 29). While the TEI is viewed positively as a way of providing an overview of European activities in different areas, the adoption of a joint monitoring and reporting approach is viewed as an additional work burden (Interview 28). Monitoring and reporting can especially absorb resources of donor organisations and may not directly impact the partner government. This can contribute to a perceived lack of demand from the partner government to promote change while EU member states themselves do not express a strong demand for more joint monitoring and reporting (Interview 29).

Potential areas of improvement in joint monitoring and reporting practice

- ➔ At a fundamental level, one area for improvement in both bilateral and joint European monitoring and reporting practice is further strategic reflection on what purposes a reporting framework must serve and how it fits with the resources available to respond to reporting requirements (Interview 28). One challenge for donor organisations in assuming additional monitoring and reporting responsibilities is that they are likely to face accountability demands from their own systems that are already time-consuming.
- ➔ Another consideration is to identify the platforms where monitoring and reporting issues should be discussed, as there seems to be limited attention to the topic in existing coordination bodies (Interview 35).
- ➔ Finally, there is a need for Team Europe actors to exchange further among themselves to address procedural differences and promote greater consistency in the monitoring and evaluation frameworks that they adopt (Interview 46).

3.3.5 Strengthening Added Value of the TEI

Although collaboration between the EU and member states in the Lao PDR rests on a solid foundation that has developed over the last decade, stakeholders see opportunities for building further linkages among European partners. Maintaining a strong political commitment to the Team Europe approach, the increasing identification of member-state entities with a European spirit and approach, and additional common actions in the forms of seminars, joint evaluations, or planning activities may help to encourage joint action (Interviews 29, 31, 38). Attention to the resourcing of the initiative can also serve to clarify its added value and define the relationship between the EU and member states in the process. There is a lack of awareness about the intended additional financing related to the TEI that the EU may provide as well as uncertainty about criteria that might be applied to determine how it is allocated (Interview 35).

4. Regional-level Case Studies

The two regional case studies below follow the same common structure as the three country TEI cases above.

4.1 Euroclima

4.1.1 Background on the Initiative

The Euroclima initiative extends longer-term cooperation experiences between the EU, member states, and governments in Latin America dating back to 2010. It is characterised as an embodiment of the Team Europe approach that predates the introduction of the Team Europe concept (Interviews 21, 40). The more recently formulated TEI 'Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) – Green Transition' proposes an expansive approach to cooperation by placing Latin America and the Caribbean under a common umbrella. The Euroclima initiative promotes cooperation on climate mitigation and adaptation as well as biodiversity protection. It focuses on enhancing in-country and cross-country policy dialogue to support improvements in national policy frameworks to address climate and environmental goals and to facilitate knowledge exchange across national ministries. One aspect of regional cooperation is that it provides a framework for cooperation with countries that do not have an MIP. In its self-presentation, Euroclima is now labelled as a Global Gateway Initiative.¹⁰ This indicates that the character of the initiative is evolving alongside the development of the Global Gateway approach.

The overall objective of the longstanding Euroclima initiative is to strengthen knowledge about climate-change issues within Latin America and the Caribbean and to generate ideas on how to address key challenges. The initiative provides support to environmental policy and planning processes, funds pilot projects in the area of climate adaptation, and fosters the development of communities of practice relevant to core areas of engagement (Euroclima+, 2022).

The Euroclima initiative is based on a co-financing partnership between the EU and the German government; it relies on AECID, AFD and Expertise France, FIIAPP, and GIZ as European implementing partners along with the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) from the UN family.¹¹ The initiative has a three-tiered governance structure: 1) a steering committee consisting of representatives of national ministries from the region concerned; 2) a programme management committee involving the European Commission and representatives of member-state agencies to discuss operational issues; and 3) a programme secretariat based

¹⁰ www.euroclima.org/en/home-en/background

¹¹ www.euroclima.org/en/home-en/work-team

in Brussels which serves a coordination function and has responsibility for logistical aspects of programme implementation.

4.1.2 Perceptions of Partner Interests and Added Value

Although the Euroclima initiative has a regional focus, a key area of emphasis in partner engagement has involved country-specific dialogue processes aiming to identify gaps in partner needs in relation to the formulation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to address climate challenges (Interviews 20, 21). National environment ministries have historically been the main counterparts for European partners in the initiative (Interview 42). Country dialogues build on preparatory consultations and stakeholder outreach (Interview 44). Engagement with national programme focal points who represent governmental interests and have a responsibility for shaping the initiative's implementation in their respective countries also serves to strengthen the demand-driven approach (Euroclima+, 2022).

There are several perceived advantages for partners to engage with the Euroclima initiative. The prospect of additional grant financing in relation to climate action priorities is one interest (Interviews 12, 42, Written Input 2). However, limited additional funding is directly available through the programme, and this can present a challenge in communicating the nature of the offer to partners (Interview 44). Other interests include the potential to participate in convening activities to raise awareness on climate-action needs and involvement in knowledge exchange across the region, where there is also a possibility of tapping into European expertise (Interviews 21, 42).

Partner interests across the region are not uniform, given the different needs of partner countries, their varied histories of engagement with European cooperation providers, and diverse cooperation objectives. While certain partner-country representatives express an interest in obtaining funding for pilot initiatives, others see potential for Euroclima support to pave the way for larger investment programmes (Interview 43). These differences in emphasis also reflect an evolution in the initiative itself, characterised in one interview as a shift from a project focus toward a more strategic orientation (Interview 43).

Interviewees pointed to the evolution of the character of engagement with partners accompanying the transformation into an initiative associated with the Global Gateway. One perception is that the Global Gateway focus embeds the initiative in an EU investment agenda rather than strengthening a focus on the promotion of nationally determined development goals (Interview 20). This shift in orientation is linked to an adaptation of processes for partner engagement, where cooperation priorities increasingly originate from Brussels (Interview 40, Written Input 2). In some contrast to these perspectives, another interviewee indicated that the initiative had improved the manner in which partner needs are matched with available resources over time by clarifying the opportunities available through the initiative at an earlier stage in dialogue processes (Interview 44).

Potential areas for improvement of partner involvement

- ➔ The promotion of a stronger demand-driven orientation is one area for further reflection as the initiative continues. A Eurocentric formulation of Global Gateway priorities may contradict the goal of securing greater global influence if it means that European actions are not responsive to partner interests. Questions about the demand-driven quality of the initiative relate to how regional actors are involved in the definition of priorities and how actors such as local enterprises benefit from the opportunities the initiative creates (Interview 20).
- ➔ As noted above, country dialogues have provided a vehicle for the articulation of partner demands within the regional initiative. The evolution of the initiative in terms of its geographic and thematic scope points to adaptation needs in how dialogue processes are organized to allow for the articulation of partner demands. In the extension of the initiative to the Caribbean, for example, the limited capacities of counterpart ministries suggest that streamlining dialogue to focus on technical issues could be valuable (Interview 40), while expanding the range of involved ministries in Latin America might be relevant to promote a transformational agenda (Interview 42).
- ➔ In promoting more effective dialogue processes, one interviewee made note of the challenge stemming from the limited continuity of focal points in partner governments and stressed the need for a good understanding of what the initiative can offer in order for governments to realize potential benefits (Interview 44).
- ➔ Finally, one interviewee noted that the advantages of the initiative to partners might be clearer if the linkages to other programmes implemented by member-state agencies in the region could be strengthened (Interview 43).

4.1.3 Coordination and steering issues

As in the country-level cases outlined above, the key drivers to and constraints on the Working Better Together agenda are summarised below with reference to the themes of interests, organisational issues, and capacities.

Interests: Interviewees report a strong alignment of the objectives of European partners in the initiative, building on their connection to partner needs and the long tradition of cooperation among the participating European agencies (Interviews 12, 21, 42, Written Input 2). However, in light of the wide geographical and thematic scope of the initiative, European partners can also have different priority areas. These are not only linked to the negotiated areas of cooperation within the Euroclima platform but reflect broader priority areas where member state organisations are active outside of the Euroclima context (Interviews 12, 21, 40, 42). Even within the initiative, some competition among agencies can exist due to the desire to enhance visibility as a means of acquiring additional funds (Interview 20).

Organisational issues: As the introduction to this chapter indicated, there is a three-tier governance structure for the initiative linking a policy steering function to dialogue on operational issues among implementing partners. The cooperation structure provides for a definition of responsibilities in assigning leadership roles to particular agencies and identifying how other actors are involved via contribution agreements (Interview 21). Continuity within the steering and management group with respect to personnel involved has been viewed as an asset in fostering a Team Europe spirit, facilitating the development of ties at an individual level that influence the nature of interactions among agencies (Interview 44).

While the initiative reflects a commitment to Working Better Together through the joint governance structure, interviewees noted several areas where there is potential to improve coordination processes. One general challenge relates to the multiple levels and country settings in which the initiative is implemented. There can be coordination challenges even between the EU actors, particularly in the relationship between the European Commission and EU delegations, given that delegations can have varying levels of interest in the initiative (Interview 12). Defining the focus for coordination efforts requires consideration of the added value of higher-level and Brussels-centred coordination versus coordination that is closer to the level of implementation (Interview 40). At the headquarters level, there is potentially a stronger focus on cross-cutting issues and the need to acknowledge multiple agendas. At the same time, country offices may have different understandings of the relevant timelines for planning and implementing programmes as well as competing perceptions of what can be achieved in a given setting (Interview 43).

Another coordination challenge relates to defining the relationship of the Euroclima initiative to other evolving agendas such as the Global Gateway and the TEI LAC Green Transition. The scope of EU and member state actions covered by the additional initiatives have not been clarified, suggesting limitations in communications on the objectives of the approaches (Interview 21).

A final area for further reflection in the organisation of Euroclima concerns the potential to outline more clearly the funding allocation criteria within the initiative (Interviews 20, 42).

Capacities of European actors: The interest in reviewing the functionality of coordination processes is linked to capacity concerns, as engagement in coordination can absorb a large share of project resources (Interview 40). This can limit the funding available for the mobilisation of agency expertise. There are perceived capacity limitations at different levels of the initiative. The EU institutions steering the initiative are perceived as understaffed and having limited sectoral expertise (Written Input 2). There are also perceived limitations in the capacities of implementing agencies participating in the initiative, which vary in terms of their access to co-financing as well as staffing levels (Interview 12, Written Input 2). Limitations in staffing can affect the speed of accomplishing administrative tasks and the ability to effectively compete for funding.

Potential areas for improvement of coordination and steering issues

- ➔ Challenges in the coordination of regional initiatives require a clearer distribution of responsibilities among actors, including EU headquarters and delegations. Clear guidance from headquarters will be necessary to ensure all delegations contribute more equally.
- ➔ The relationship between the action and agendas such as the Global Gateway and the TEI LAC Green Transition needs to be set out clearly.
- ➔ There is a need to exercise caution so that the volume of funds directed to coordination tasks is not excessive in relation to the funds directed to mobilizing agency expertise
- ➔ Funding allocation criteria within the initiative need to be agreed by the involved actors.

4.1.4 Monitoring and Reporting Issues

ENABLERS FOR JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

Through the mechanism of a multi-partner contribution agreement, implementing agencies are not required to harmonise their procedures, as the pillar-assessment process acknowledges the adequacy of organisational implementation standards (Interview 21). However, the cooperation agreement that forms the basis for the Euroclima initiative introduced provisions that required participating entities to adopt a common monitoring and reporting standard. This specifies how agencies should report, when they should report, and how to input data into a common system (Interview 42). The initiative introduced an information technology platform in 2021 called EUCLIDES, which was developed specifically for Euroclima and promotes programme-wide monitoring and the aggregation of results. A publicly available annual report presents a summary of the initiative's achievements, listing results and a variety of indicators related to six separate lines of action (Euroclima+, 2022).

The common system provides an open and transparent system for results management as a basis for implementing agencies to review information made available by other European partners (Interview 12). One interviewee noted that involving partners in the development of a monitoring framework can foster a spirit of co-creation and indicated that the initiative had already included positive experiences in developing monitoring and reporting approaches that meet with partner expectations via a public-private partnership platform (Interview 44).

OBSTACLES TO JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

Even with a common reporting framework, there are still challenges in aligning practices. For example, the EU and member-state agencies are at different stages in the development of their own monitoring and reporting frameworks, illustrated by varied experiences using logframes or standard indicators (Interview 21). The Euroclima initiative's common reporting platform was perceived to take a long time to develop and is not universally seen as easy to use (Interview 12). Its development prior to the introduction of the EU's OPSYS reporting system also means that there are different EU systems in place to track the same data.

Potential areas of improvement in joint monitoring and reporting practice

- ➔ Staff capacity to respond to reporting requirements in a timely manner, paying attention to how implementation and reporting responsibilities are synchronized (Interview 20).
- ➔ Formulation of objectives for the initiative, as this can impact the development of a monitoring and reporting framework.
- ➔ Planning horizons for the initiative could potentially be adjusted to accommodate long-term goals to a greater extent (Interview 42).

4.1.5 Strengthening Added Value of the Joint European Initiative

As the Euroclima initiative is understood as a positive illustration of the Working Better Together approach, there is concern that ongoing adaptations to the initiative may compromise its advantages. One particular area of concern is the perception of growing complexity in the initiative, which can create confusion both for the agencies implementing the programme and their partners within the region (Written Input 2).

As noted earlier in this chapter, the relationship between Euroclima, the TEI LAC Green Transition, and the Global Gateway requires further clarification (Interview 21). The possible integration of Euroclima into other EU processes may limit its visibility and thus the attractiveness to partners of engaging with the initiative (Interview 12). At the same time, multiple interviewees noted the potential to consider how the cooperation between the EU and member states could be extended beyond the Euroclima setting. They felt this would strengthen the linkages between bilateral programmes and the European initiative and possibly draw on the expertise of a wider range of agencies and actors (Interviews 40, 43, Written Input 2).

4.2 Investing in Young Businesses in Africa (IYBA)

4.2.1 Background on the Initiative

The IYBA Team Europe Initiative aims to support business ecosystem actors and improve the quantity and quality of financial and technical assistance for enterprises. This includes pipeline development to support investor involvement in early-stage financing, enabling increased access to micro, small and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) financing, and supporting the business and innovation ecosystem via regulatory reform and increased capacity in the financial sector. The initiative has a regional orientation, with implementation limited to eight African countries: Benin, Cameroon, Comoros, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, and South Africa. TEI IYBA implementation involves helping EU member states, development finance institutions, and key public and private sector actors to work better together, increasing public-private dialogues, promoting knowledge sharing, increasing the number of new MSMEs, and increasing the quantity and quality of public and private investment across the continent.

As of August 2023, the European Commission indicated that a total of EUR 4.6 billion in funds had been identified as linked to this initiative, of which EUR 1.9 billion stemmed from EU programmes and EUR 2.7 billion from member state programmes.¹² The individual programmes highlighted as components of the TEI have a smaller financial scope. For example, the IYBA Supporting Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Development (SEED) programme involves a commitment of EUR 23 million over eight years, with a focus on support for the development of business ecosystems. This component of the IYBA initiative is managed by a consortium of European agencies: Expertise France, GIZ, SNV, Enabel, and SlovakAid.¹³

12 international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/007eade7-1dd2-4693-b8a9-5a315ebdcaf4_en?filename=Investing%20in%20Young%20Businesses%20in%20Africa%20-%20Overview%20August%202023.pdf&prefLang=bg

13 international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/investing-young-businesses-africa_en?prefLang=bg

4.2.2 Perceptions of Partner Interests and Added Value

Multiple interviewees indicated that the development of the IYBA initiative was primarily Brussels-driven, involving limited interaction with partners in Sub-Saharan Africa in its initial phase (Interviews 7, 8, 10, 23, 32). There are different explanations for this. As it was conceived, a primary emphasis was placed on considering how European actors work together and establishing a cooperation framework, while a second phase of action involved operationalising the initiative and conducting further outreach with Sub-Saharan African partners (Interview 10). Another explanation for limited partner engagement at the outset was the wide scope or abstract nature of the topics covered, potentially making it more challenging to organise outreach (Interview 8). Finally, the perception of limited engagement at the early stage may also reflect the fact that early outreach efforts related to information collection and the mapping of needs and interests (Interviews 23, 30).

As the initiative deals both with issues around the development of business ecosystems and the financing opportunities available to private sector actors, many types of stakeholders are relevant interlocutors. Potential partners to engage with on this agenda include governments, financial institutions, enterprises, research organisations, educational institutions, and regional organisations (Interviews 14, 23, 25).

The European focus during the development of the initiative was underlined by the fact that partner governments were involved more visibly at the launch / roll-out stage at the country level (Interviews 14, 32). This may partly reflect the business orientation of the initiative as this highlights the need for engagement with stakeholders beyond the government. At the same time, part of the initiative has involved the creation of country-specific dialogue forums to incorporate input from local authorities. There is variation across the country contexts where the initiative is implemented as regards how these dialogue structures function and some uncertainty about the influence that partners have in decision-making in connection with their participation in these forums (Interviews 16, 30, 32).

Despite the general characterisation of the initiative as initially strongly Brussels-driven, interviewees noted several potential interests of partners in the initiative. Two respondents emphasised that partner interests related to the thematic priorities of the initiative, while acknowledging that the subject matter – rather than the format for engagement – was a key motivation for participation (Written Input 1, Interview 34). Thematically, the initiative addresses priority areas that have been the focus of prior initiatives (Interviews 30, 34).

The added value to partners may build on areas of interest in earlier initiatives. The provision of capacity-building support to governmental actors to foster business ecosystem development is one example (Interview 7). While unlocking funding opportunities provides one motivation for partner engagement, interviewees also signalled that other characteristics formed important elements of the offer presented to IYBA partners. One such feature is the potential for knowledge generation to identify the challenges that entrepreneurs face in different Sub-Saharan African settings (Interviews 16, 23). Information exchange is also relevant as an explanation of the added value of the initiative for European participants (Interview 7, Interview 10). Similarly, while the development of a more coordinated European approach represents a perceived selling point to partners (Interview 8), the adaptation of European ways of working to encourage efficiencies in collaboration is also seen as an added value of the initiative for European actors (Interview 10).

Potential areas for improvement of partner involvement

- Develop local governance of the initiative further to enhance the extent to which the initiative reflects partner interests (Interview 16).
- Improve flows of information from the country level to headquarters level to increase awareness about implementation progress on the ground can also benefit European partners (Interview 23).
- Review the linkages between technical level coordination processes and political coordination at country level to facilitate more harmonized policy dialogue (Interview 7).
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of different organisations can serve to check the increased complexity of the joint initiative (Interview 8).
- Further involvement of regional actors such as the African Development Bank could be beneficial to strengthen the initiative (Interviews 30, 34).

4.2.3 Coordination and Steering Issues

As in other cases, enablers and obstacles to Working Better Together are discussed below with reference to the themes of interests, organisational issues, and capacities.

Interests: From one perspective, the political commitment of member states to the initiative is indicated simply by the voluntary character of participation, though there is variation among Team Europe members in terms of the financial scope of their participation and role in implementation (Interview 34). Member state participation can be influenced by a commitment to the thematic priority area or shaped by broader interests in pursuing more action through a collective European process, the continuation of a legacy of engagement with other member-state agencies, or by the adoption of a default position that engaging in partnerships with other actors is a valuable course of action (Interviews 23, 25, 30, 32).

However, the commitment to participating in the initiative also comes alongside other ongoing areas of engagement. Even for EU institutions, there are competing demands on engagement. At the country level, other programmes and country-level TEIs can take precedence over engagement with the regional TEI (Interview 14). There can thus be a challenge in creating coherence between headquarter-level priorities and country-level priorities, and vice versa (Interviews 7, 10). Another challenge in aligning the interests of involved European actors is the different mandates of the participating entities. Development finance institutions and technical assistance agencies may have traditions of working with different types of actors, varied understandings of key issues, and different approaches to managing risk (Interviews 10, 23).

Organisational issues: At the headquarters level, the European Commission assumes a leading convening role with member-state representatives also involved in the work of a steering committee that reviews the strategic directions of the initiative. Several respondents acknowledged the positive role of the secretariat in managing the initiative but also noted the potential for increasing the functionality of coordination processes (Interviews 8, 23, 25, 30, 32, 34).

Shared political objectives and ongoing dialogue processes provide a foundation for more harmonised action at the implementation level to bridge differences among European organisations in terms of their ways of working. However, respondents also noted several harmonisation challenges. These included a continuing lack of synchronisation of planning cycles (Interview 14), the application of different auditing

requirements (Interview 10), and differences with respect to procurement and contracting procedures (Interview 32).

Capacities of European actors: Selected interviewees noted there are adequate capacities to engage in specific areas (Interviews 8, 23, 25), and one interview highlighted the role that dedicated funding to the initiative played in enabling this capacity (Interview 25). Even so, the general picture provided by interviews is that the coordination processes related to IYBA reflect an additional administrative burden that places pressure on available organisational capacities to engage (Interviews, 7, 8, 14, 16, 30, 34).

Capacity constraints also exist at the country level in facilitating a stronger EU coordination role. On one level, there is a challenge related to the lack of additional resources provided via the initiative, leaving the agenda dependent on the personal motivation of delegation staff to engage (Interview 14). This challenge may be more pronounced for a regional initiative than for country-level TEIs, where capacities have been strengthened through the vehicle of seconded national experts (Interview 14). On another level, there may be limited direct incentives for EU staff to undertake additional coordination tasks as performance reviews focus on programme implementation achievements such as approving contracts rather than engaging in coordination or policy dialogue activities, which may be more diffuse in character and more difficult to link to concrete results (Interview 7). In this respect, the capacity for coordination is not only linked to the financial resources provided to sustain such activities but also concerns how coordination activities are valorised as tasks in their own right.

Potential areas for improvement of coordination and steering issues

- ➔ One possible area for improvement relates to the nature of engagement of European actors within the coordination structures. Respondents indicated that attention to the level of representation from individual organisations could improve participation.
- ➔ The increased involvement of development finance institutions was highlighted as desirable (Interviews 10, 30).
- ➔ While acknowledging a positive view of the secretariat, interviewees suggested that further attention to the clarification of the steering role of the Commission would be helpful. This would serve to delimit political and steering responsibilities more clearly from administrative engagement in project management (Interviews 8, 25).
- ➔ The Commission could limit its engagement with project-level activities as the initiative moves more firmly into an operational phase, given that implementing agencies are selected to manage funds on the basis of EU confidence in their systems (Interview 32).
- ➔ Improved coordination between the European Commission and EU delegations is another area to improve in order to encourage collaboration within the broader Team Europe setting (Interview 16).
- ➔ The clarification of the objectives of the initiative and the guidance provided to the country level is relevant in light of confusion about the implications of the Global Gateway for country programmes as well as the relationship between TEIs and the multi-annual indicative programmes (Interview 7).
- ➔ From a headquarters perspective, there is a perception that the complex themes and broad geographic scope of the initiative likely requires additional personnel associated with the EU institutions. They are needed not only to perform a convening and agenda-setting role but also to promote information exchange and knowledge-generation functions across the initiative (Interview 16).
- ➔ At the same time, the scope of the initiative may require increased member-state capacities dedicated to ensuring consistency and adequate expertise in accompanying the initiative's development in Brussels (Interview 10) as well as to executive project management roles (Interview 16).

4.2.4 Monitoring and Reporting Issues

ENABLERS FOR JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

Interviews stressed that the IYBA initiative was at an early stage in terms of defining a planning framework and did not yet constitute a joint programme, so there is a limited basis for joint monitoring and reporting (Interviews 7, 8). However, movement toward joint monitoring and reporting can be supported by the interest that EU institutions have articulated in advancing a joint monitoring and reporting framework (Interview 32). Earlier experiences with EU reporting frameworks via engagement with the European Fund for Sustainable Development as well as familiarity with the common reporting standards encouraged via the OPSYS reporting system have increased awareness of EU reporting requirements (Interviews 16, 23). One interviewee noted that the mechanism of a Multi-partner Contribution Agreement served to create common standards (Interview 16).

OBSTACLES TO JOINT MONITORING AND REPORTING

There is a perception that the EU interest in pursuing more joint monitoring and reporting is not shared by member-state agencies (Interview 8). This is partly due to the perceived complexity of EU logframes (Interview 8). Member-state agencies also maintain different procedures for preparing reports (Interview 16). While the Multi-Partner Contribution Agreement construct is noted above as an enabler for the promotion of common standards, it allows pillar-assessed organisations to rely on their own procedures, and the reporting burdens of member-state agencies continue to vary (Interview 16).

EU standards may also imply an additional layer of reporting effort for member-state entities and their partners (Interviews 23, 30). There may also be an emphasis on collecting different types of information to reflect the different purposes of monitoring and reporting, with the EU perceived to focus more on quantitative measurements, while additional emphasis on qualitative measures could potentially strengthen organisational learning processes (Interview 23). A related obstacle is that joint monitoring and reporting efforts imply that additional resources will need to be invested in coordination tasks, which may detract from investments in implementation (Interview 32).

Potential areas of improvement in joint monitoring and reporting practice

- ➔ Make staffing capacities available to contribute to additional workstreams to promote more joint monitoring and reporting (Interview 14).
- ➔ Strengthen the role of localised monitoring that relies on the monitoring systems of partners to the extent possible (Interviews 16, 34).

4.2.5 Strengthening Added Value of the Joint European Initiative

While respondents noted positive elements of joint efforts, they also highlighted several issues for further consideration as the initiative evolves. This includes taking steps to widen the scope for participation of member-state entities in dialogue processes (Interviews 23, 25, 34). Member-state entities also seek clarification on the extent to which additional funds can be accessed due to engagement with the initiative as well as what criteria are applied in the selection of implementing entities (Interviews 8, 30). Multiple interviews pointed to the relevance of further reflection on how to synchronise EU and member-state planning cycles (Interviews 7, 8, 14). A final consideration relates to the prospect of more pooling of administrative resources at the level of implementation (Interview 7). This last point emphasises that questions on the resourcing of joint initiatives may also be informed by discussions on the opportunities that increased joint work presents for reallocating funds for certain functions in implementation.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Synthesis of Findings and Conclusions

This section summarises the study's key take-aways. It highlights recurrent findings in the case studies of joint initiatives and identifies conclusions relating to the three analytical dimensions used to structure the case-study chapters and the donor profiles. Table 6 presents a summary of findings in the case studies as regards the same dimensions.

Table 6. Overview of Findings from the Case-study Chapters

Case Study	Partner Orientation	Coordination and Steering	Monitoring and Reporting
TAEUFIQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited additional funds • Increased EU coordination as potential benefit • Communication strategy and European rationales for engaging with specific partners merit further reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite overall political alignment, varied interests affect collective approach • Attention to upstream planning issues including synchronisation relevant • Coordination limited by capacity constraints and lack of clarity on definition of roles between EU, member states, and implementers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in approaches reflect variations in ambitions and scale of European programmes • Experiences with EU provides basis for affinity with common approach • Obstacles to common approach include programming differences and lack of member-state demand
E-Youth Mozambique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited additional funds • Partner benefits come from improved awareness of European activities and coordination potential • Communication strategy and development of dialogue structures can be improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political commitment to more collective approach • Different levels of flexibility for country offices influence cooperation prospects • TEI secretariat function is delegated to member-state agency but requires continued EU engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing experiences with EU reporting favour joint action • Dedicated technical assistance capacity to accompany joint efforts • Continued bilateral reporting requirements and capacity constraints limit member-state demand for joint work • Differences persist in definition of objectives and indicators

Case Study	Partner Orientation	Coordination and Steering	Monitoring and Reporting
Green Deal Laos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEI reflects a continuation of long-term emphases • Partner government favours joint planning and harmonisation • Collective engagement coexists with continued interest in bilateral relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High political commitment to collective approach evident • Coordination is facilitated by the small number of European donors and follows a division of labour logic • Planning processes of EU and member states remain distinct, reflecting different modes of cooperation and planning horizons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale examples of joint reporting available • Challenges of reconciling different systems persist • Joint approach poses additional burden for donor administrations
Euroclima	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convening activities and dialogue focus rather than funding emphasis • Evolution in partner engagement follows from initiative's expanded scope • Global Gateway raises questions about nature of demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-tiered governance structure oversees implementation • Coordination challenges exist between Brussels and the country level • Linkage of initiative to additional member-state initiatives in region can be further developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common standard for implementing partners established in framework agreement • Different levels of development of member state monitoring frameworks pose difficulty • Initiative-specific reporting coexists with OPSYS platform to track results
IYBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as a Brussels-driven initiative with limited partner involvement initially • Emphasises engagement with private sector • Potential areas of improvement include strengthening local participation in country dialogues and ensuring better information flow from country level to Brussels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge in securing even participation of member states in steering structures • Clarification of the delineation between steering function of EU and project management function of member-state agencies relevant • Further guidance on linkage between regional initiative and country programmes would be valuable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited development of common monitoring and reporting framework • Existing experiences with EU initiatives facilitate awareness of common standards • Member-state agencies do not express strong demand for joint monitoring and reporting given the increased complexity and limited capacities

Source: Based on the material presented in this report.

The EU's Working Better Together agenda and the TEIs acknowledge that the EU and its member states have diverse strengths and do not suggest that closer cooperation among European actors requires a convergence of European aid delivery models. The preservation of agency-specific ways of working may be reinforced in cooperation agreements such as the MPCAs. Cases of positive cooperation like the collaboration among Team Europe actors in the Lao PDR signal that approaches based on a division of labour logic can also be advantageous. Nevertheless, the harmonisation of European donor practices provides one avenue for strengthening joint approaches.

In reviewing the **partner orientation** of the initiatives, one recurrent finding is that partners typically appreciate cooperation initiatives that supply additional funding. The initiatives generally did not involve providing extensive new resources, however. In the absence of additional funding, other features of cooperation become a potentially stronger selling point. In the country-level initiatives, the prospect that TEIs can promote coordination, improve information collection on where European donors are active, and foster coherent interlinked action represents another element of added value that extend beyond a funding role. In the regional initiatives, the possibility to contribute to knowledge generation and exchange were additional selling points. This finding suggests that European actors should clearly communicate the intended benefits of joint initiatives that extend beyond funding commitments.

As the cases of the TAEUFIQ, E-Youth, and IYBA initiatives highlight, the involvement of partner-country stakeholders in TEI development has in some cases been limited. This reflects the fact that TEI development is part of an overarching EU agenda, and that the demand for these initiatives has not originated from country-level cooperation. In simple terms, the value of such initiatives for partners can be strengthened with further efforts to define the place of TEIs within already complex cooperation settings. Given the potential advantage of TEIs in fostering coordination among European donors mentioned above, it is essential for European actors to distinguish the role of TEIs as a coordination mechanism from other existing forums for donor coordination that create an interface with partner-country stakeholders.

With respect to **coordination and steering** issues within joint initiatives, interview respondents generally emphasised that the objectives of European actors were well-aligned and that strong political commitment to the initiatives formed the basis for closer cooperation. At the same time, interviewees acknowledged that differences in interests influence the wider context of cooperation for European actors. These differences relate to foreign policy objectives as well as development cooperation activities outside of the joint initiative and can have consequences for whether and how intensively European actors engage in joint work.

Increased transparency about the interests and activities of European actors outside of a given initiative can increase awareness about the different objectives that influence the wider cooperation context. Cooperation strategies provide one avenue for articulating priorities and documenting financial commitments. As the donor profiles in the annex suggest, one common challenge facing European actors is that development cooperation strategies do not present a comprehensive picture of engagement. Cooperation strategies should ideally summarise the main policy objectives of European actors within a given setting and provide information about the full scope of funding originating from the actor in question.

The case studies draw attention to how the division of responsibilities between European actors in the coordination and steering of joint initiatives is defined. In Iraq and Mozambique, clarifying the respective coordination roles of EU delegations and member-state agencies was one area respondents felt worthy of further reflection. The Euroclima case raises questions about the division of tasks between EU institutions in Brussels and EU delegations. The IYBA case signals the potential to refine the distinction between a steering role exercised by the European Commission and the project-management role undertaken by member-state agencies. Across the cases, the goal of strengthening coordination and steering efforts is linked to the availability of administrative resources to assume these functions.

One recurring challenge identified in interviews relates to the limited synchronisation of the timeframes for the planning and implementation of cooperation programmes (Interviews 7, 8, 14, 19, 24, 28, 31, 35, 37, 41). Beyond the alignment in time periods for aid programming, the problem of synchronisation can reflect differences in terms of the short-term or long-term perspective of the respective planning. Limited

synchronisation can also apply to project approval procedures (Interview 47), disbursement timeframes (Interview 46), and reporting cycles (Interview 28). Unsynchronised planning horizons can not only be a challenge for cooperation among different European actors but can also relate to differing timeframes for headquarters and country offices within a single system (Interview 43), inconsistencies between implementing organisations within a given system, or even variations between projects implemented by a single organisation (Interview 24).

As the brief overview of the evolution of the aid effectiveness agenda in section 2.1 indicated, the lack of synchronisation in planning has long been recognised as an obstacle for more coherent interlinked action. It was also noted that it limited flexibility among European actors at the time that joint programming was first introduced as a planning concept (Lundsgaarde, 2022). The persistence of this challenge indicates that resolving it is not an easy task. As a first step, the drivers of inconsistent planning timeframes should be better documented by European cooperation partners.

For the EU and member state administrations, strategies can provide a tool for improving the alignment of planning timeframes. As section 2.3 and the donor profiles in the annex indicate, European actors adopt strategies that differ in terms of their scope and with respect to their accessibility to other stakeholders. To address challenges of limited synchronisation, European country strategies should outline the reasoning behind the choice of a given planning timeframe and specifically address any constraints the adopted timeframe presents for collaboration with European actors within the specific setting.

In the area of **monitoring and reporting**, the case studies highlight that European cooperation is characterised by the coexistence of multiple reporting approaches. The continued need to satisfy reporting requirements in bilateral programmes contributes to limited interest in assuming additional reporting burdens in joint initiatives. As a commitment to joint monitoring and reporting can imply an extra workload, European actors should explore opportunities for reducing the complexity of national and EU-level reporting requirements to create space to pursue common approaches across systems.

The case studies present mixed views on the prospects for increasing monitoring and reporting linkages. Experiences with EU aid implementation have increased familiarity with common European standards and provide a foundation for pursuing joint work. At the same time, national administrations are perceived to be at different stages with respect to the development of robust results management systems. Differences in views on what purpose monitoring and reporting procedures serve are a basic constraint to strengthening common approaches.

The donor profiles in the annex indicate that the harmonisation of monitoring and reporting is a work in progress within individual member-state systems and among EU institutions themselves. The challenge applies both to well-established donors including Belgium, France, Germany, and Spain, as well as the Slovak Republic as an example of a newer European donor. The harmonisation challenges within these systems reflect the reliance on multiple implementation agencies. They also reflect efforts to balance different dimensions of monitoring and reporting. At the one level, there is a search to balance the different functions of monitoring and reporting, as accountability and communication objectives have often outweighed the objectives of promoting learning and decision-making support. At another level, there is a search to balance a focus on developing aggregated indicators versus more project-level and context-specific indicators. While most of the donors profiled aspire to further develop systems for aggregating results reporting, Sweden seems to be an exception, given its stronger focus on developing context-specific results reporting. As the EU and member-state systems further advance their monitoring and reporting frameworks, they can draw inspiration

from EU aggregated results frameworks to make the balance of objectives and form of reporting more consistent across European cooperation systems. Similarly, when reviewing its corporate results frameworks, the EU could learn from member states' experiences.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the above findings and conclusions, this section formulates recommendations based on recurring messages expressed during the research phase.

Overall recommendations in the field of partner involvement

- In the absence of new funding, TEIs need to focus on better communicating their initiatives and the value they are bringing to their partners. In country-level initiatives, added value is also created by the prospect of improved coordination, improved information collection on where European donors are active, and an increase in coherent interlinked action. In the regional initiatives, the possibility to contribute to knowledge generation and exchange are additional selling points.
- Taking a more demand-driven approach is necessary to ensure buy-in from partners. A Eurocentric formulation of Global Gateway priorities may contradict the goal of securing greater global influence if it means that European actions are not responsive to the interests of partners.
- The roles and responsibilities of individual TEI actors need to be better defined and communicated to partners.
- To integrate national stakeholder interests, it is necessary to integrate European coordination functions into existing mechanisms or define the added value of additional TEI coordination structures.

Overall recommendations in the field of coordination and steering

- EU and member states should make use of country strategies to ensure alignment of their work and to communicate more transparently. The objectives of an initiative should be clearly defined and put in perspective with overarching strategies such as Global Gateway.
- EU and member states should jointly identify the drivers of inconsistent planning timeframes as a first step to address synchronisation issues.
- Actors should rely more on tools such as joint analysis, a unified theory of change, harmonised project implementation manuals, and other joint activities that contribute to a more coordinated and informed way of cooperating with one another. This can also be fostered by sharing existing analyses and information.
- Coordination structures should be defined by all actors. In doing so, it is important to also consider the structure's added value and ensure that it is complementary to already existing exchange fora.
- Especially for regional initiatives, a clearer distribution of responsibilities among actors, including EU headquarters and delegations, is necessary.

Overall recommendations in the field of monitoring and reporting

- European actors should explore opportunities for reducing the complexity of national and EU-level reporting requirements to create space to pursue common approaches across systems with the overall aim of further harmonising monitoring systems. In doing so, they should consider increasing the use of localised systems.
- Monitoring considerations need to be better taken into account in the early stage of programme planning to allow for adequate capacities among all actors and a coherent monitoring framework for the TEI.
- Joint monitoring frameworks should bring European approaches closer together, strengthening joint results orientation and communication.

5.3 Strategic Considerations on Advancing the Working Better Together Agenda

The examples in this study underline that the Working Better Together agenda has numerous strategic dimensions. Strengthening linkages among European actors is not only a question of adapting administrative practices at the level of implementation but also about clearly providing a sense of direction for joint European efforts and developing an institutional architecture to bring diverse actors and approaches closer together.

To improve future collaboration, this report indicates that EU institutions, member-state administrations, and member-state implementing entities should focus on three areas moving forward: 1) defining the rationales of joint initiatives; 2) acknowledging the additional coordination workload that Working Better Together generates; and 3) allocating resources to create a better match between expected tasks and the capacities required to perform them.

Clarifying the rationales of joint initiatives: The need to define and communicate the objectives and intended benefits of joint initiatives more clearly is linked to reflections on partner and member-state entity perceptions of the added value of joint initiatives. As noted in section 5.1 above, one key motivation for partners to take an interest in European initiatives is the possibility of accessing funding. The case studies reveal that up to now TEIs have not primarily involved the provision of fresh resources. Instead of offering resources, the selling point of the TEIs is rather to present an overview of how various projects relate to one another and to promote coordination among different initiatives. The coordination objective can be linked to other goals such as knowledge generation and efficiency. The clarification of the immediate goals of the initiatives is relevant to provide a basis for tracking their achievements over time. In the near-term, one implication of this clarification of objectives is that TEI progress can be measured in terms of how a given initiative contributes to mapping European priorities, identifying overlaps and synergies and pursuing more unified approaches. This recommendation relates not only to TEIs individually, but also to TEI collaboration in a more collective sense.

Recognizing coordination costs: Emphasizing that a central objective of the TEIs is to improve coordination among European entities may be unpopular because coordination is often viewed as a means to an end rather than as an objective in itself. Coordination can also have negative associations such as adding to the complexity of management setups or creating an additional work burden. These negative associations should motivate efforts to limit the growth of coordination platforms and to define how new coordination mechanisms relate to existing processes. One basis for more coordinated approaches is having access to

relevant information about the activities of other European actors. As noted in section 5.1 above, a review of donor strategy papers provides a tool for documenting planning approaches. The revision of strategies should involve reflection on how European actors can generate consistent information across European systems that contributes to a stronger shared knowledge base on European engagement in a given setting.

Matching tasks with resources: By endorsing a political commitment to Working Better Together, European actors acknowledge the need for additional investments in coordinating their work. A key implication is that the human resource commitments required to facilitate collaboration should also be reviewed and reinforced. On the one hand, ensuring that the capacities within European systems are directed to the tasks that are an outgrowth of Working Better Together is a question of determining the appropriate division of responsibilities between actors in European systems. This requires examination of the division of labour between personnel with steering and project implementation functions, for example. On the other hand, strengthening capacities for joint action may also involve dedicating resources specifically to coordination tasks. The relevance of staffing issues to the Working Better Together agenda is underlined by perceptions that effective coordination often depends on constructive working relationships that form among individuals employed in different organisations. This implies that efforts to promote the continuity of personnel within joint initiatives and enable team-building across organisational boundaries should be prioritised.

The country cases point to differing levels of commitment to investing in coordinating functions within EU delegations. EU delegations are natural candidates to assume a coordination role in EU-driven initiatives, but in practice they have not been endowed with additional resources to undertake an expanded coordination role in connection with the implementation of TEIs and may prefer to prioritise other tasks or delegate coordination responsibilities to implementing partners. To resolve this problem, attention should be paid not only to the actual funding provided to delegations to perform coordination tasks but also to the expected balance of responsibilities of staff on the ground. The question of capacities is thus not purely a question of the scale of available funds but also a question of how funding is allocated to the execution of specific tasks. General budgetary constraints will limit the prospects for resolving capacity limitations with the provision of additional funds alone. It is therefore important to review the allocation of resources to reflect Working Better Together goals.

Strategic reflection on the division of roles and responsibilities in European development cooperation should not only take place at the level of EU institutions but should also extend to member-state systems. There is a risk that the conceptual emphasis in Working Better Together on preserving the diversity of member-state approaches can reinforce path dependency within member-state systems. Additionally, it can limit their willingness to confront national constraints to strengthening the EU's collective global development actions. This study provides some building blocks for further analysis and reflection among member states on their roles within the EU system. As the donor profiles illustrate, the analysis of the distinctiveness of member states and their implementing organisations in terms of the priorities they pursue, the stakeholders they engage with, and the modalities they adopt provides a starting point for understanding commonalities and differences among European actors. In a further step, member states could profit from examining how approaches to planning can promote flexibility and enable joint work with other European actors. Such internal reviews should ideally generate knowledge about adaptation needs within national systems that can contribute to the further development of the Team Europe approach.

6. Annex: Profiles of The European Union and Six European Donors

The overall goal of this project is the identification and analysis of challenges, opportunities, and the determinants of success or failure of efforts to align EU and member-state development cooperation with common goals and to undertake joint implementation. The focus is on the fundamental development cooperation approaches of the EU and selected member states and their implementing organisations and the operational framework conditions for development cooperation that they engender. The main criteria for the analysis and comparison of the EU and member states relate to: 1) partner orientation; 2) the coordination or steering of cooperation; and 3) monitoring and reporting practices. Operational framework conditions encompass approaches to planning, budgeting, and assessing development cooperation. The identification of different ways of working thus includes programming approaches and the choice of cooperation modalities, the use of country systems, and systems of monitoring and evaluation.

The donor overviews presented in this annex point to shared qualities and differences in operational approaches to development cooperation to inform deliberation on the potential for further joint European action. Seven European donors are profiled in this analysis: the EU institutions, Belgium, France, Germany, the Slovak Republic, Spain, and Sweden. With the exception of the Slovak Republic, these donors are among the most active participants in Team Europe Initiatives (see Table 5). The donor profiles feed into reflection about the areas where changes in approaches and procedures among individual actors could promote more harmonisation and joined-up action and contribute to the more effective planning and implementation of EU development cooperation.

The donor profiles follow a similar structure linked to the three main dimensions of analysis: the partner orientation of aid, steering and coordination, and monitoring and reporting practices.

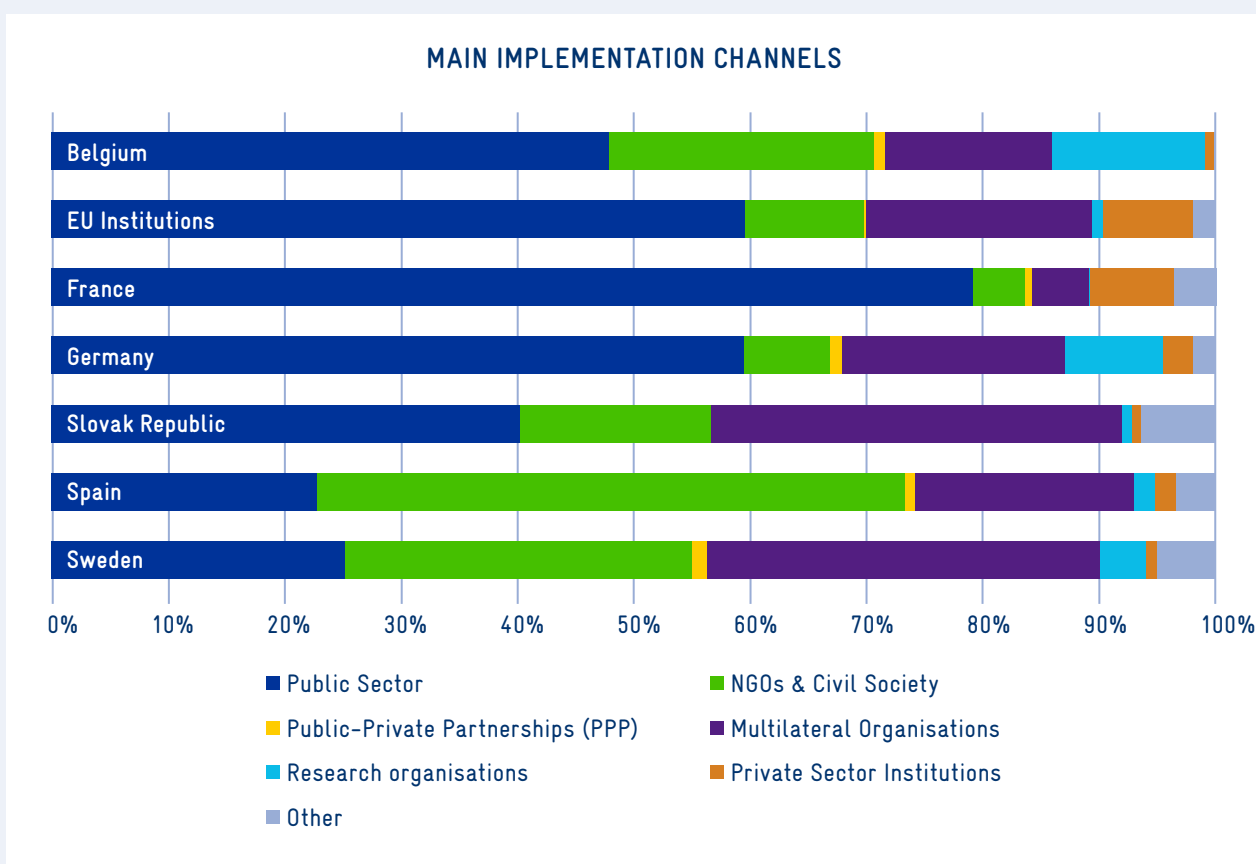
Partner orientation: One cornerstone of the development effectiveness agenda is the recognition that effective development cooperation depends on leadership from developing countries and the responsiveness of interventions to partner needs (OECD, 2011). The meaning of the ownership principle has been contested and has evolved over time, and development partners have applied the principle to varying degrees (Keijzer and Black, 2020). However, the assessment of the partner orientation of donor actions continues to be a central guidepost in reviewing how development cooperation serves its main rationale.

The essence of the ownership principle on the effectiveness agenda is that development cooperation should have a demand-driven focus that responds to the interests of partners and other stakeholders, and contributes to strengthening partner institutions. In its initial monitoring rounds, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) identified four main indicators of a partner orientation in development cooperation: 1) the alignment of donor priorities to partner-country strategies; 2) the predictability of donor financing; 3) the use of country systems in aid delivery; and 4) the untying of aid (OECD & UNDP, 2019).

The summary of EU and member-state performance on these indicators in the initial GPEDC monitoring rounds provides one yardstick for the analysis of partner orientation.

The term ‘partner’ applies to a wide range of entities, and donor emphasis on specific partner categories varies along with preferences for aid implementation channels. OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) data on the main implementation channels that each European donor uses (public sector, civil-society organisations, and multilateral organisations) provides an indication of how the partner orientation in individual cooperation programmes is expressed. Figure 2 compares the profiles of the EU and the six member states with respect to their preferred implementation channels.

Figure 2. Overview of main implementation channels for selected European development partners.



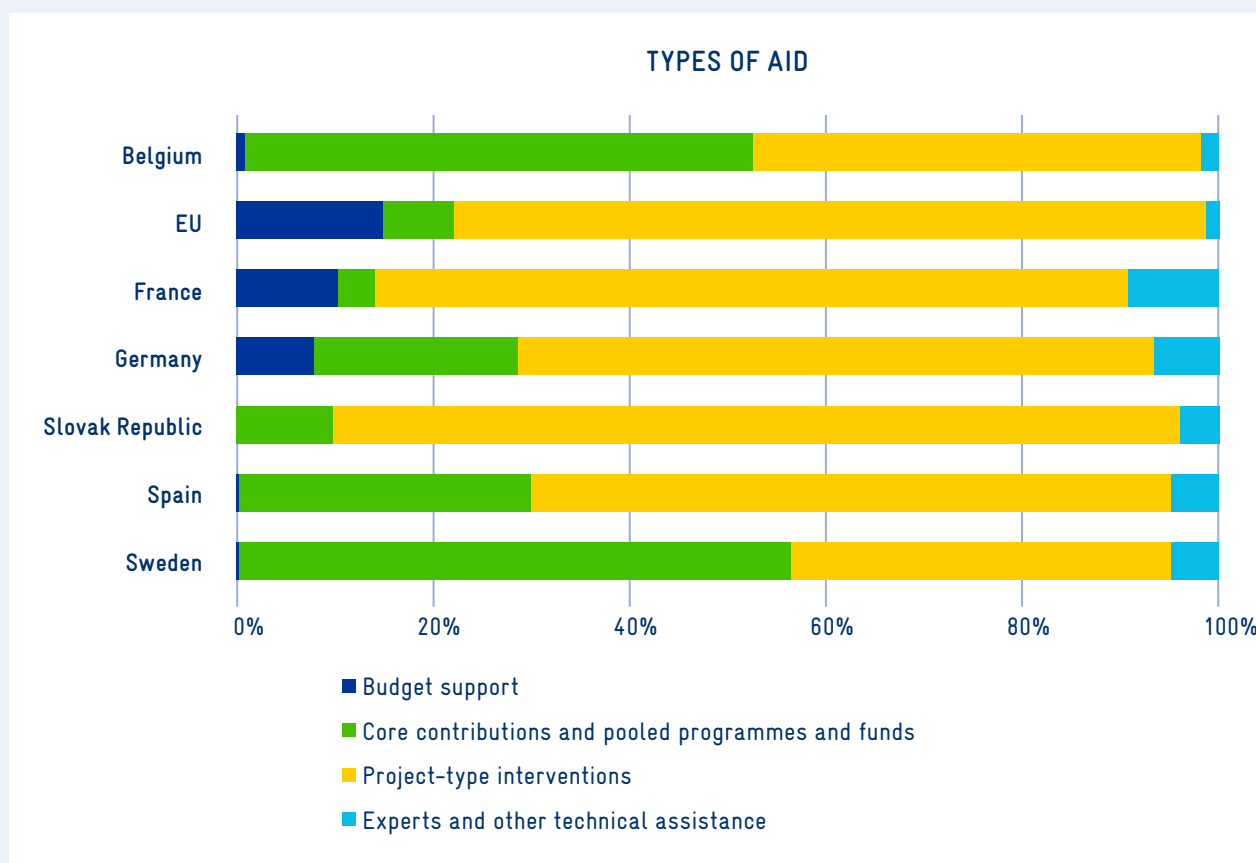
Source: (OECD.Stat, 2023). The figures are based on the cumulative share of gross disbursements for the period 2017–2021, covering all developing countries and all sectors. The OECD ‘public sector’ category does not differentiate between funding implemented through the public implementing agencies of development cooperation providers and funding implemented by partner governments.

A general trend in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) community is that the partner orientation in development cooperation is reflected more strongly at the level of formulating priorities than it is with respect to relying on how partners are involved in implementation. A key driver of the trend has been a decline in the use of country systems. This trend is linked to a diminished preference for the use of modalities such as budget support, which channels funding via partner governments and aims to strengthen their public financial management (PFM) systems. The choice of aid modalities thus provides a further indicator of the partner orientation. Figure 3 presents an overview of general categories of modalities that the European cooperation providers profiled in this analysis prefer, pointing out that project-type interventions represent the largest category in most of the donor cases analysed here, with Belgium and Sweden providing exceptions.

Steering and coordination: This analytical dimension encompasses strategic frameworks for pursuing closer cooperation with other European actors as well as the organisational setup for setting priorities, allocating funds, and implementing cooperation. At the level of strategy, the analysis examines how a commitment to common EU planning and implementation is reflected in donor legislative frameworks and development strategies. It also outlines donor practices concerning the formulation and use of country strategies and makes note of relevant guidance providing a framework for the implementation of geographical programmes.

In addition to reviewing steering documents, the analysis presents a summary of elements of the organisational structure of development cooperation management. It highlights the roles of ministries and implementing organisations within a given donor system and identifies relevant issues with regard to the linkages between country-level entities and headquarters.

Figure 3. European Donor Provision of Different Types of Aid (2017 – 2021)



Source: Author's presentation based on data from OECD.Stat (2023). The figures show the cumulative share of the main categories of country-level aid for the period 2017–2021. The overview thus excludes support for scholarships, debt relief, administrative costs, support for asylum seekers and refugees, and additional in-donor aid expenditures. The calculation is based on data on gross disbursements through all channels of aid and all sectors across developing countries.

Monitoring and reporting practices: To present an overview of donor practices for assessing progress in achieving development cooperation aims with a view to accountability and learning, the analysis highlights the nature of commitments made in legislative or strategic frameworks as a means of assessing expectations as regards monitoring and reporting within the donor system. The analysis also reviews the general commitment to results-based management and issues that have been raised in OECD DAC peer reviews about a given donor's practices for assessing results. Finally, the summaries of monitoring and reporting practices characterise the content of available reports on donor cooperation programmes.



6.1 European Union

6.1.1 Partner Orientation

At the strategic level, the *New European Consensus for Development* from 2017 outlines a shared vision for development for the EU institutions and EU member states. The document includes an overview of thematic priorities as well as an indication of how European actors should implement a vast agenda. The Consensus serves to translate the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development to EU commitments and outlines the need for greater coordination and coherence among EU and member state actions under a ‘Working Better Together’ label (European Union, 2017).

The Consensus conveys an approach to partner engagement that involves cooperation with an array of stakeholders, including various governmental interlocutors, civil-society organisations, and private sector entities. It emphasises that political dialogue should be pursued with and beyond governments (p. 7), acknowledges the importance of civil-society organisations in advancing democracy and human rights concerns (p. 8), and stresses a role for private sector actors as partners promoting investment and economic development (p. 27). In outlining intentions about how the EU and its member states should work together at country level, the Consensus highlights that joint programming ‘should be led by the partner country’s development strategy and aligned to country priorities’ (p. 38). The Consensus similarly underlines that development cooperation should be country- or region-specific and tailored to the needs, strategies, priorities, and resources of partners (p. 44). It states an intention to use partner-country systems in aid implementation when possible and to promote untying of aid (p. 55).

The current legislative framework for European development cooperation maintains these orientations. The NDICI – Global Europe Regulation emphasises that cooperation between the EU, its member states, and partner countries should be based on development effectiveness principles, including ownership of development priorities by partner countries, and signals a preference for the use of partner institutions and systems for implementation (NDICI 8.6).¹⁴ Inclusive and multi-stakeholder dialogue is expected to be integrated into programming processes (NDICI 12.2). The period for the preparation of geographical programmes should ideally be synchronised and aligned with partner-country strategy cycles (NDICI 13.1). To ensure that cooperation programmes are adapted to different partner contexts, the legislation indicates that programming choices should reflect a range of considerations including: developmental, economic, and environmental criteria; partner commitments to shared values and political and economic reform; partner capacities for domestic resource mobilisation (NDICI 13.2).

EU institutions provide aid in varied forms, including via grants, budget support, trust funds, financial instruments, budgetary guarantees, and blending operations (NDICI 27.1) and disburse funding to a variety of partner organisations as implementers. As Figure 2 indicates, public sector entities were the leading implementation channel for EU institutions between 2017 and 2021, accounting for nearly 60 percent of the EU’s disbursements to developing countries in this period (OECD.Stat, 2023). Multilateral organisations were the second-largest implementation channel, delivering almost 20 percent of EU aid (OECD.Stat, 2023). The EU has continued to prioritise budget support as an aid modality at a higher level than many member states. As Figure 3 highlights, the EU provided nearly 15 percent of the aid disbursed at country level as budget support between 2017 and 2021 (OECD.Stat, 2023). Despite this emphasis, project-type interventions remained the dominant form of assistance, representing over 76 percent of country-level aid in this period.

¹⁴ In this document, in-text references to the NDICI – Global Europe Regulation (European Union, 2021b) are noted with ‘NDICI’ together with an indication of the specific part of the regulation that is the basis for the information provided.



Monitoring reports produced under the GPEDC umbrella present a mixed picture on the performance of EU institutions as regards their partner orientation. While the GPEDC reports noted that 84 percent of EU cooperation programme and project objectives were aligned to partner-country strategies in 2018, the reliance on partner-country results frameworks and monitoring data declined between 2016 and 2018. GPEDC monitoring data concluded that the EU's use of country PFM systems improved across the two monitoring rounds, with 53 percent of EU funding to the public sector using these systems by 2018, slightly under the OECD DAC average (GPEDC, 2022b).

A report focusing on the performance of EU institutions and member states in relation to GPEDC indicators noted that declines in EU performance with regard to the use of country-owned planning tools and results indicators was consistent with a broader trend among development partners. However, multilateral organisations generally outperformed bilateral aid providers here (BKP Development Research & Consulting and Lattanzio Advisory, 2020). The report points to the increasing prioritisation of technical cooperation and a focus on investment projects as reasons for the declining use of country planning and results frameworks by the EU institutions (p. 13). It also highlights that reliance on country planning and results frameworks varies depending on the channels and sectors of assistance prioritised as well as the type of activities supported. Policy-focused activities and public sector support favour greater use of country systems, while technical cooperation, emergency aid, and support to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private-sector actors are less amenable to such an approach. The EU institutions also displayed challenges with respect to the predictability of aid. The report suggested that this could be attributable to the transition to a new programming period for EU funds (p. 34).

In addition to questions about the quality of the GPEDC monitoring data itself, the report identifies several possible explanations for the declining or mixed performance of the EU and EU member states on indicators of development effectiveness. Explanations linked to donor characteristics include factors such as budgetary constraints, capacity limitations in aid administrations, and the role of domestic political interests such as migration in shaping aid choices. The report also notes explanations for declining performance linked to the changing context in developing countries such as the rising role of non-DAC cooperation providers and changing state-society relations in partner countries. The rising importance of cooperation in fragile states complicates the greater use of country systems in light of challenges with partner-country institutions. Finally, the report indicates that the mixed performance in strengthening key indicators for partner orientation reflects trade-offs in pursuing other dimensions of development effectiveness. For example, the increased decentralisation of aid management can contribute to a lower use of country systems due to an improved understanding of how to adapt cooperation to country circumstances, and increased support to actors beyond government is consistent with calls for the broadened approach to development partnerships as foreseen by the Busan Partnership (BKP Development Research & Consultancy and Lattanzio Advisory, 2020).

6.1.2 Coordination and Steering

STRATEGIES AND GUIDELINES

At a broad level, strategic guidance for the direction of EU development cooperation is provided by the European Council and Council of the European Union (hereafter the Council), which represents the collective perspectives of member states and sets the political contours for EU action. As an example of this overarching guidance, the Council published Conclusions in April 2021 that stressed the importance of coordination among the EU, member states, development finance institutions, and other implementing agencies under the umbrella of a Team Europe approach. In this document, the Council outlined seven



principles for the implementation of Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs), indicating that TEIs should have a transformative quality, support reform efforts, align with partner needs, and pursue effectiveness aims, among other recommendations (Council of the European Union, 2021).

Along with the European Parliament, the Council also negotiates the legislative and budgetary framework for EU cooperation proposed by the European Commission. The current legislative and budgetary framework covering EU development cooperation is the ‘NDICI – Global Europe’ Regulation, which was negotiated over a three-year period beginning with the Commission’s presentation of a proposal in March 2018 and concluding with the adoption of the legislation by the Council and the Parliament in June 2021. The legislation entailed a major reform in EU development cooperation by providing a framework for consolidating instruments that had been governed by ten separate regulations and one decision. It also integrated the formerly extra-budgetary European Development Fund (EDF) into the EU budget. The budgetary incorporation of the EDF is one indication of a shift toward an enhanced role for the European Parliament in contributing to the formulation of strategic priorities and providing oversight (Immenkamp, 2021).

The NDICI-Global Europe Regulation identifies three main pillars for EU cooperation: geographical programmes; thematic programmes; and rapid response actions (NDICI 4). The regulation also presents the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) as an important avenue for expanding investments and promoting access to finance (NDICI 31.2). The External Action Guarantee (EAG) serves to support EFSD+ operations that are backed by EU budgetary guarantees (NDICI 31.3).

The regulation identifies geographical programmes as the primary avenue for cooperation (NDICI 4.5). This prioritisation is reinforced with the budgetary allocation between programme areas, as the regulation assigns EUR 60.34 billion of an overall financial envelope of EUR 79.462 billion to geographical programmes for the 2021–2027 period, representing 76 percent of the total (NDICI 6.1). Within the geographical envelope, Sub-Saharan Africa is clearly prioritised as the destination for nearly half the funds. The European Neighbourhood is another key priority region, accounting for nearly one third of allocated funds (NDICI 6.2).

As noted earlier, the NDICI regulation also identifies principles for the programming of cooperation. It identifies multi-annual indicative programmes (MIPs) as the main planning documents for geographic and thematic programmes (NDICI 14, NDICI 15). MIPs should ideally include an overview of EU priorities, a summary of the expected results of EU contributions, and a presentation of performance indicators as well as indicative financial allocations to key priority areas. These documents may also specify the modes of implementation (NDICI 14.2). Although the MIPs follow the general planning horizon for the EU multi-annual budgetary framework, they are subject to mid-term reviews and may be reassessed if crises emerge in a given context (NDICI 16.3, NDICI 16.5).

The European Commission and the European External Action Service prepare guidelines for EU delegations on structuring the preparation of the MIPs and standardising the documents’ formats. The guidelines remind delegations about the EU strategic objectives that programmes should reflect and the principles informing the choice of cooperation approaches, in addition to outlining how programming processes should be organised. Delegations manage interactions with a variety of stakeholders during the programming process, with consultations expected to take place with a European cluster consisting of EU member states and closely associated cooperation providers active at the country level, a local cluster involving partner-country stakeholders, and an international cluster involving multilateral organisations, non-EU bilateral providers,



and additional civil-society and private-sector representatives (European Commission and European External Action Service, 2020).

MIPs incorporate the following elements:

- Identification of the partner strategic or planning framework the MIP relates to
- Review of the context and elaboration of the rationale for the selection of key priorities
- Indication of the potential for synchronisation of EU planning with a given national cycle
- Overview of the status of EU joint programming
- Indication of funding allocations across the main priority areas
- Identification of planned Team Europe Initiatives (European Commission and European External Action Service, 2020).¹⁵

The NDICI regulation indicates that joint programming should be the preferred approach to EU country programming (NDICI 12.2). Despite this preferential status, the EU conceives joint programming as ‘voluntary, flexible, inclusive, and tailored to the country context’ (European Commission, 2021: 11). In practice, this means that the joint programming process can take different forms depending on the interests of EU delegations and participating member states in a given context (Lundsgaarde, 2022).

Policy guidance nevertheless proposes a common general framework for pursuing joint programming, which ideally encompasses the joint analysis of the cooperation context, the identification of the respective contributions of participating aid providers, and the formulation of a joint response (European Commission, 2021). If a joint programming process leads to a joint response document, the strategy may either replace the EU’s country planning document (the MIP) or act as a supplement to it. In the former case, which is rare in practice, the joint programming document acquires the legal status of the main cooperation framework via a Commission decision. In cases where the joint programming document does not gain this legal status, it must clearly specify the relationship between EU contributions to the joint response and the existing EU cooperation framework (European Commission, 2021).

ORGANISATIONAL SETUP

As noted above, the steering of EU development cooperation hinges on high-level strategic guidance and the establishment of the legislative and budgetary framework for action, which is shaped by the voice of member states via the Council and the views of the European Parliament. The European Commission serves as the primary manager of development cooperation in its capacity as the EU’s executive body (OECD, 2018a).

Several Commission services perform a policy and management role with respect to European development cooperation, and others engage in international cooperation as an extension of their sectoral policy competencies. The Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) has a preeminent role in formulating EU development policy, particularly with respect to cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The Directorate-General for the European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) is the lead entity in managing cooperation

¹⁵ In order to provide focus within programming documents, general guidance indicates that the EU should select at most three priority areas for engagement and propose at most two Team Europe Initiatives. In practice, individual priority areas can encompass a variety of activities distributed across multiple sectors, undermining the intended aim of focusing EU support (European Court of Auditors, 2023).



with countries in the EU's Southern and Eastern neighbourhood, overseeing neighbourhood policy and supporting accession processes. The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) manages humanitarian assistance disbursements.

In addition to the above three, the European External Action Service (EEAS) functions as the EU's diplomatic corps and assumes a development policy coordination role related to its mandate to promote EU political interests abroad. The EEAS has authority over the EU Delegations and recruits the Heads of Delegations (OECD, 2018a). The creation of the EEAS led to a shift in staffing within the EU administration, with a rising prioritisation of diplomatic career tracks at the expense of staffing levels for individuals with development expertise (OECD, 2018a). In addition, the creation of a common EU diplomatic service brought with it a strengthening of the political role of EU Delegations in representing the EU vis-à-vis partner countries. EU Delegations have central roles in carrying out preparatory analysis for country programming processes and drafting the priorities for an EU response that ultimately results in an MIP (Görtz and Keijzer, 2012). Programming can nevertheless be characterised as an interactive process between delegations on the one hand and the Commission and EEAS headquarters on the other, with the latter steering preparation overall.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is another important EU cooperation actor. Primarily oriented toward mobilizing investment within the EU and historically considered to have different development-policy emphases than the European Commission, the EIB has recently pursued a stronger alignment of its work with other EU institutions (Erforth, 2020). At the same time, the EIB has been an important implementer of the EU development finance agenda. The NDICI – Global Europe Regulation establishes exclusive investment windows for the EIB related to sovereign and sub-sovereign lending operations (Lundsgaarde et al., 2022). The EIB's position in the EU development cooperation system was reinforced with the EIB's creation of a dedicated development arm in 2022 – EIB Global – to provide an umbrella for lending activities and project-related technical assistance outside the EU (EIB, 2023). This greater scope for the EIB has been the subject of contention. Debate on the EIB's role has included questions about the basis for the privileged position of the EIB, the EIB's limited country presence, the Commission's role as a manager of blended finance and guarantee operations, as well as concerns about the EIB's global development expertise (Erforth, 2020).

The Commission and EEAS have policy and management roles and the EU does not have a dedicated implementation agency for development cooperation. Implementation therefore takes place on the basis of different contractual arrangements with a variety of organisations inside and outside the EU. Funding may be disbursed under the European Commission's different management modes, with the direct management mode and the indirect management mode providing the main alternatives.

The *direct* management mode requires Commission involvement in the formulation and assessment of calls for proposals, the signature of grant agreements, the monitoring of results, and the disbursement of funds.¹⁶ In European development cooperation, the direct management mode has been relevant for the provision of budget support, preparing calls for tender, and managing grants to civil society organisations (CSOs). European CSOs have raised concerns that the funding available to CSOs has dwindled under the NDICI – Global Europe framework alongside an increasing prioritisation for indirect management arrangements with member-state agencies and international organisations (CONCORD, 2023).

16 See commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/funding-management-mode_en



The *indirect* management mode is the main approach to delivering European development assistance and humanitarian aid. It is characterised by the delegation of budget execution tasks to implementing partners.¹⁷ To qualify as an EU implementer in this context, organisations must submit to a pillar assessment that ensures that organisational financial management, accounting and auditing systems meet EU budgetary standards (European Commission, 2018: Art. 154). Multilateral organisations, member-state implementing agencies, public development banks, and development finance institutions are examples of the types of organisations that have completed EU pillar assessments. An evaluation of EU experiences with delegated cooperation arrangements noted that the cooperation approach faced limitations in achieving the effectiveness aims that was a key rationale for their expanded use. The reason given was that upfront preparations still required extensive engagement on the side of EU institutions and that EU member state participation in them was uneven (ECORYS, 2016). German and French implementing organisations together accounted for roughly 70 percent of EU funding delivered through member-state organisations between 2014 and 2021, while 18 member states each implemented less than one percent of EU cooperation delegated to member states (Lundsgaarde, 2022).

6.1.3 Monitoring and Reporting Practices

The most recent OECD peer review of the EU praised the EU's progress in improving its overall results management framework. However, it also noted the potential to better harmonise results approaches across EU institutions, in light of the different results management system in use at the EIB and the use of a separate system for results management related to the management of budget support (OECD, 2018a). The review highlighted the relevance of attempting to further consolidate the findings from the large number of reports on results of EU development cooperation in order to increase the knowledge base on determinants of intervention success and failure. This would be useful to inform future programming decisions (OECD, 2018a).

The introduction of the OPSYS information management system has been presented as a means of improving the integration of planning, reporting, and management functions. It provides a common platform for the European Commission, EU delegations, and implementing partners and allows for reporting on predefined core indicators. These can be associated with EU corporate results frameworks when used as aggregation indicators. Limited to particular interventions, OPSYS eases the expected preferred use of core indicators, but also allows customised indicators.¹⁸ The rollout of OPSYS is linked to the development of a revised global results framework for EU external action, the Global Europe Results Framework (GERF), which aims to guide the monitoring of the implementation of the NDICI – Global Europe instrument (Council of the European Union, 2022). The updated results framework and OPSYS platform are components of a new Global Europe Performance Monitoring System (GEPMS). The Commission has presented the GEPMS as a means of adapting the EU approach to results monitoring by emphasizing communication, management, and learning functions of results reporting in addition to the accountability orientation that previously dominated EU practice (European Commission, 2022).

The GERF distinguishes between three levels of indicators. Level 1 indicators reflect measures of development impact; level 2 indicators reflect EU contributions to partner progress at the level of outputs and outcomes; and level 3 indicators correspond to inputs and processes supported by the EU (Council of the European Union, 2022; European Commission, 2022).

17 See commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/funding-management-mode_en

18 See wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/OPSYS



The NDICI – Global Europe outlines several general expectations toward the Commission in terms of monitoring and reporting. It specifies that the Commission must submit an annual progress report on the implementation of the NDICI – Global Europe instrument to the European Parliament and the Council (NDICI 41.4). The report must include information on the implementation of the EFSD+, featuring a review of its compliance with development effectiveness principles, among other considerations (NDICI 41.7). EU delegations and INTPA operational services also report on an annual basis to the headquarters level via the External Assistance Management Report (EAMR) process, which provides information on implementation progress and relevant management issues as well as serving an accountability function for the use of funds.¹⁹

In addition to these overarching frameworks, the EU proposes the development of complementary monitoring processes that accommodate the formulation of shared intervention logics with cooperation partners and the development of processes for joint monitoring of cooperation between the EU and member states. A TEI Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation (MORE) Framework has been developed as an extension of guidance on the purposes and forms of Team Europe Initiatives. It emphasises that an important basis for joint monitoring of TEI implementation is the clarification of the joint intervention logic of the TEI, and also notes the potential for increasingly standardizing the indicators that contributing entities use to monitor and aggregate results.²⁰ The MORE framework encourages harmonisation by outlining how indicators used by selected member-state entities match indicators from the EU results framework, however the framework also acknowledges a continuing role for member states and the EU in monitoring their interventions separately following practices in their respective accountability systems. As an extension of the development of joint intervention logics, the TEI MORE framework encourages joint monitoring, analysis, and decision-making relating to the implementation of TEIs.

19 wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/INTPA+monitoring+and+reporting+framework%3A+corporate+level

20 wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=95552549



6.2 Belgium

6.2.1 Partner Orientation

A law enacted in 2013 provides the legal foundation for Belgian development cooperation and humanitarian assistance (Kingdom of Belgium, 2013). It identifies the main objectives of cooperation and key principles for action. The short text positions Belgian cooperation in firm alignment with international commitments to the development effectiveness agenda. The Act indicates that strengthening democratic ownership, aligning with partner priorities, and using partner procedures and management systems are foundational principles for cooperation. The Act states a preference for using partner-country systems for the implementation of cooperation unless risk assessment determines that this is not viable. Considerations guiding government-to-government cooperation represent a core component of the Act, with additional provisions outlining possibilities for Belgian cooperation with multilateral and non-governmental organisations (Kingdom of Belgium, 2013). The Act stresses overarching objectives of cooperation, such as the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development, poverty reduction, and the reduction of inequalities, and indicates that the cooperation approach is anchored in the Millennium Development Goals.

While the general legal basis predates the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, Belgian development actors implement activities in line with key concepts from the broader development agenda. Examples include attention to addressing vulnerable populations' needs consistent with the 'Leaving No One Behind' concept and to action to promote integrated approaches to cooperation that reflect the holistic character of Agenda 2030 (Braeye et al., 2020).

Public-sector entities serve as the primary implementation channels for Belgian development cooperation, accounting for 48 percent of cumulative aid disbursements between 2017 and 2021 (OECD.Stat, 2023). As Figure 2 indicates, support via NGOs represents the second largest channel for Belgian aid disbursement. From 2017 to 2021, NGO support accounted for 23 percent of Belgian disbursements, while implementation via multilateral organisations represented 14 percent of the total (OECD.Stat, 2023). Belgium's reliance on common strategic frameworks as a source of predictable, flexible, and pooled funding for NGOs has been highlighted as an area of strength in its development cooperation programme (OECD, 2020). The prioritisation of core support to NGOs contributes to the large share of Belgian funds that are registered as 'core contributions and pooled programmes and funds' in Figure 3. Between 2017 and 2021, such funding amounted to 52 percent of country-level aid, while project-type interventions represented another 45 percent of disbursements in this period (OECD.Stat, 2023).

Despite commitments to using partner-country systems, monitoring of Belgian development cooperation in the GPEDC context indicated declining reliance on country systems between 2016 and 2018 (GPEDC, 2022a). This assessment noted a significant drop in the use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools, including on measures of alignment with partner objectives, adoption of partner indicators, and reliance on partner data. This change marked a shift in Belgium's performance compared to other European development partners, as it was one of the best performers among EU member states in 2016 and nearly at the bottom of the rankings two years later (BKP Development Research & Consulting and Lattanzio Advisory, 2020).

The GPEDC assessment similarly showed the deterioration in Belgian performance in terms of most indicators relating to the use of country PFM systems, an exception being an increase in the use of national systems for budget execution. In 2018, only 30 percent of Belgian aid to public-sector entities relied on country PFM systems (GPEDC, 2022a). While these measures placed Belgium well below the DAC average,



Belgian performance was stronger with respect to other indicators of its commitments to effectiveness principles. Belgium placed well above the DAC average with respect to untying of aid and in the annual predictability of disbursements (GPEDC, 2022a).

6.2.2 Coordination and Steering

STRATEGIES AND GUIDELINES

The Belgian Act on Development Cooperation from 2013 provides overarching strategic guidance for cooperation priorities. In its section 13, the Act stresses an interest in advancing coordination and complementarity with other aid providers and explicitly promotes harmonisation with EU aid as well as with multilateral aid. In section 16, referencing cooperation choices with partner countries, the law suggests that decisions on priority partner countries should in part reflect division of labour considerations. The law also echoes commitments from the EU division of labour agenda by indicating that there should only be a maximum of three priority sectors per partner country. Section 20 states a preference for the elaboration of common donor strategies for partner countries, ideally in the form of a common EU strategy (Kingdom of Belgium, 2013).

While there have been overtures to reform the strategic framework for Belgian development cooperation, high-level policy guidance remains limited in scope (OECD, 2020). The Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Development Cooperation has published numerous strategies that have a sectoral orientation.²¹ A strategic note outlining Belgium's comprehensive approach draws attention to measures to increase policy coherence in external action among diverse Belgian ministries. The note stresses the relevance of seeking synergies with the EU and other development actors in the pursuit of global cooperation approaches that draw on resources from different policy fields. It also identifies the linkage between EU joint programming and the development of whole-of-government approaches as an important area for further engagement.²² The interest in promoting greater coherence and coordination among Belgian development cooperation actors was also reflected in governmental initiatives to advance integrated country policies from 2014 onward (Klimis et al., 2018).

Despite this attention to integrated country policies, Belgium does not publish its country strategy documents. Instead, overviews of the cooperation programmes in a given setting are provided via embassy websites or through Belgian implementing organisations. The formulation of country programmes is based on letters of instruction that are approved by the Minister for Development Cooperation (DGD, 2022). The most recent OECD DAC peer review of Belgian development cooperation suggested the country programming process was strongly shaped by headquarters-level considerations on appropriate priorities, with limited decision-making or budgetary authorities delegated to Belgian embassies (OECD, 2020).

21 See diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/politique/cooperation-au-developpement-et-aide-humanitaire/qui-sommes-nous/notes-strategiques

22 See www.diplomatie.be/oda/comprehensive_approach_en.pdf



ORGANISATIONAL SETUP

The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) is the main governmental actor responsible for policy formulation and management of development cooperation within the Belgian system. The Directorate-General has been integrated into the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Development Cooperation since 2002. This Federal Public Service is the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is headed by two ministers: a Minister of Foreign Affairs and a Minister of Development Cooperation.²³ The DGD is itself divided into four directorates:

- A Geographical Directorate, with responsibility for overseeing regional and country-level cooperation
- A Thematic Directorate, a key task of which is the management of engagement with multilateral actors including the European Union
- An Organisational Management Directorate, which serves as the primary corporate administration
- A Humanitarian Aid and Transition Directorate that oversees humanitarian assistance.

A Strategic Committee is also linked to the directorates to promote intragovernmental coherence.²⁴

In 2020, the DGD was directly responsible for the disbursement of 58 percent of Belgium's total Official Development Assistance. The Federal Public Service Finance was the second most important governmental entity, having responsibility for 25 percent of ODA funds (OECD, 2022b). The Federal Public Service Finance has authority over the management of disbursements to multilateral organisations, including Belgium's contribution to the EU budget. However, the DGD assumes a policy-steering role with respect to EU funding, underlining its predominant position in shaping the contours of Belgian development cooperation (OECD, 2020).

The DGD relies on two Belgian entities as key implementers: Enabel and the Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries (BIO). Both organisations are steered by the strategic orientations outlined in five-year management contracts with the DGD (OECD, 2020).

Enabel was created in 2018 as a successor to the Belgian Technical Cooperation agency (BTC). The reform process leading up to this change sought to expand the mandate of the development agency to allow it to undertake public service contracts for international cooperation beyond the bilateral cooperation programme. It aimed to increase the autonomy and flexibility of the agency by promoting a portfolio management approach so the agency could reallocate funding at the country level more easily. The reform also permitted the agency to make contracts at the level of implementation to improve its ability to find suitable partners (OECD, 2020).

In 2021–2022, Enabel had a business volume of over EUR 256 million, with 1,725 staff administering more than 150 ongoing projects. Projects in Central Africa accounted for nearly half of the total volume, with West and North Africa constituting other important areas of intervention in line with broader geographical priorities. Eighty percent of Enabel's activities in this period were carried out in fragile states (Enabel, 2022). Enabel can potentially deploy a range of instruments and determine how they should be combined within a given cooperation portfolio. These instruments include: grants, contributions to multi-donor funds or the

23 Further information about the nature of the Federal Public Service and the portfolios of the ministers is provided at: diplomatie.belgium.be/en/about-us.

24 See diplomatie.belgium.be/en/about-us/directorate-general-development-cooperation-and-humanitarian-aid-dgd



provision of sectoral budget support, technical assistance to support capacity-building, innovative financing instruments such as outcome-based financial assistance, and loans (Enabel, 2020).

Enabel's activities are guided by a ten-year strategy, with 2030 as the current planning horizon. The strategy indicates that in addition to implementing Belgian development cooperation, Enabel should help strengthen the impact of Belgian cooperation by implementing contracts on behalf of other international funders. These partnerships are expected to be aligned with Belgian cooperation priorities and principles (Enabel, 2020). Anchored in the Belgian system, it seeks not only to contribute to the integration of development cooperation instruments, but also serves as a hub for Belgian expertise to promote the Sustainable Development Goals and as an actor contributing to efforts to increase public awareness of Belgian cooperation. Enabel's strategy highlights a systemic approach to development in partner countries, involving operating at different governance levels and partnering with states and societies to strengthen capacities and improve governance (Enabel, 2020).

The Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries (BIO) is Belgium's development finance institution. Established in 2001, its mission is to support private sector growth in developing countries. It pursues this aim by providing long-term financing for companies and private infrastructure projects, as well as providing technical assistance such as support for feasibility studies (BIO, 2022). In 2021, the organisation reported commitments to 22 new investment projects with a total volume of EUR 104 million, and ongoing investments of EUR 662.5 million across 232 development projects. The Belgian state serves as the only shareholder of BIO and the company is thus directly accountable to the Belgian government and parliament. It is embedded in the Belgian development cooperation system as can be seen from its focus on the priority countries for Belgian cooperation and efforts to exchange knowledge and coordinate with other actors in the system, notably Enabel (BIO, 2022). In contrast to Enabel, which has a strongly decentralised organisational structure and extensive field presence, BIO has only two small regional liaison offices to have a presence on the ground in key regions: an office for West Africa in Abidjan and one for East Africa in Nairobi.²⁵

6.2.3 Monitoring and Reporting Practices

A DGD strategy note from 2015 outlines the main elements of Belgian policy related to managing results (DGD, 2015). The guidance responds to a provision in the Act on Development Cooperation that calls for the creation of a uniform reporting system to systematically monitor the achievement or non-achievement of results. The policy note identifies five basic principles of action to underpin the global framework for results management. The principles highlight that:

- 1) The use of results management by Belgian development actors is a main means of strengthening the results achieved by the DGD.
- 2) New financing choices should take prior development results into consideration.
- 3) Lessons learned from specific interventions should benefit the understanding of what works well and what does not work beyond the context of an individual intervention.
- 4) The DGD should transparently communicate results achieved.
- 5) Strengthening the capacities of local actors and their abilities is essential in order to generate relevant data and knowledge on cooperation results.

²⁵ See www.bio-invest.be/en/liaison-offices



When engaging with partner organisations, the DGD emphasises the review of organisational management processes as a basis for cooperation. Partners are expected to follow a traffic-light system in their annual reporting as an indication of when objectives are being fully, partially, or poorly met. The policy note foresees minimal intervention on the part of the DGD if programmes proceed smoothly but requires dialogue and possibly corrective measures from partner organisations if goals are not being met. Annual reports, mid-term evaluations, and final reports on an intervention are the primary means for the DGD to maintain oversight of the progress of interventions (DGD, 2015).

To provide a uniform basis for the comparison of results across interventions, the policy note indicates that the DGD will develop a methodology for comparing and aggregating results (DGD, 2015). The OECD DAC Peer Review of Belgium in 2020 reported that DGD had initiated a reform of its results-management framework, notably adopting standard indicators as a basis for more systematic reporting. The peer review saw the linkage of multilateral organisations' and civil-society organisations' results-based management systems to accreditation processes as one indicator of a strong results culture. However, the review noted the potential for further consolidation of results reporting frameworks across the cooperation system and highlighted that BIO's results reporting to the DGD had been limited in scope (OECD, 2020).

Enabel's corporate strategy indicates that a results-based approach is integrated into 'all dimensions of its management and decision-making' (Enabel, 2020: 19). The strategy notes several ways that this approach is translated into practice. It highlights that one focus of monitoring and evaluation methods is on assessing outcomes and stresses the long-term horizon for assessing results. In addition, the strategy underlines the organisational intention of rebalancing the purposes of monitoring and evaluation to increasingly emphasise its relevance for learning and decision-making to evolve beyond a historical focus on accountability (Enabel, 2020).



6.3 France

6.3.1 Partner Orientation

French development cooperation is currently in an adaptation phase, following the revision of the legal basis for cooperation. At the political level, an overarching framework for development cooperation is provided by the *Programming Act on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities* that was adopted by the French Parliament in July 2021 (République Française, 2021). Its first section expresses a commitment to aligning French cooperation with the development strategies of partner countries and responding to partner needs, as well as the goal of engaging in a complementary and non-competitive way in relation to other international aid providers. The legislation links French cooperation to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and related international agreements, and situates French cooperation within a European development policy framework (République Française, 2021). The legislation sets the orientations and financial envelope for ODA for the period 2020 to 2025 as well as the mechanisms for steering cooperation in this period by way of an appended report. It foresees an increase in the grant share of French aid, an expansion of support to civil-society organisations, and increased aid to subnational governments. It also notably presents a three-year timeline for France to reach a target of providing the equivalent of 0.7 percent of Gross National Income (GNI) as ODA by 2025 (République Française, 2021; section 2).

The French parliamentarian Hervé Berville was given the task of proposing how to modernise the French development cooperation system ahead of the legislative process leading to the adoption of the 2021 law. His report on this subject identifies strengths and weaknesses of French cooperation, and notes that France could strengthen engagement with societal actors as a means of adapting its partnership approach, including outreach to the French public, civil-society organisations, decentralised cooperation actors, and private sector actors such as local small and medium-sized enterprises (Berville, 2018). At the same time, Berville's report also underscores the relevance of defining a future strategic approach with reference to a pluralism of partnerships based on shared responsibility, reflecting a systemic understanding of how to advance development objectives.

As Figure 2 indicates, France stands out from the other aid providers profiled in this study due to the large share of its aid that has been disbursed via public sector entities. Between 2017 and 2021, some 79 percent of French bilateral aid was disbursed through the public sector (OECD.Stat, 2023). The small share allocated to NGOs reflects a historical neglect of NGO funding, while the small proportion going to multilateral organisations is a reflection of France's prioritisation of core funding as a means of multilateral support. France also stands out as a bilateral donor for its continuing commitment to budget support, with ten percent of gross disbursements in the 2017–2021 period linked to this approach. Nevertheless, project-type interventions represented the lion's share of disbursements, accounting for 77 percent of disbursements in the same period (OECD.Stat, 2023; see Figure 3).

Data from the GPEDC monitoring rounds suggests that France has performed slightly better than the DAC average with respect to its use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools and slightly below the DAC average in its use of PFM systems (GPEDC, 2022c). The French development cooperation picture is also mixed with respect to other GPEDC indicators. It scores well in terms of untying its aid and aid predictability, but garners lower marks in relation to the publication of quality data to international platforms (GPEDC, 2022c). France is generally in the middle of the pack with respect to EU member-state performance in relation to the GPEDC indicators, with its performance often similar to that of the EU institutions (BKP Development Research & Consulting and Lattanzio Advisory, 2020).



6.3.2 Coordination and Steering

STRATEGIES AND GUIDELINES

France's 2014 Act on Development Cooperation stated a French commitment to promoting joint programming between the EU and its member states (section 5). However, the parliamentary report preceding the adoption of its 2021 successor law presents a critical view on the status of joint programming efforts, noting that the New European Consensus on Development primarily focused on cooperation areas rather than providing operational guidance on the adaptation of practices.²⁶ Moreover, the report stresses the limited scope of joint programming achievements, particularly in terms of making collaboration between national and European levels function more smoothly (Berville, 2018). The analysis of the comparative advantages of national and EU entities to assign lead responsibility for cooperation in priority areas is one of several proposals that Berville puts forward as a means of increasing the effectiveness and visibility of European cooperation.

A report annexed to the 2021 Act on Development Cooperation underlines the need for multilateral and coordinated action in order to face global challenges. It also expresses the view that development cooperation is a means of projecting French and European values in an environment of great power competition. The overview of objectives and principles highlights the interest of France in seeking convergence with geographical and sectoral priorities of European cooperation. It notes an interest in anchoring action in joint programming and bringing together other European actions to create leveraging effects, increase effectiveness, and strengthen the scope of results through the multiplication of actions (République Française, 2021).

The current strategy for the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) provides additional perspectives on the linkages between French and European cooperation. While stressing the unique strengths of the AFD related to its strong Africa presence, financing tools and climate expertise, the strategy suggests that projects implemented in partnership with other actors have greater value than projects implemented without partners (AFD, 2018: 17). The strategy highlights co-financing partnerships with the German development bank KfW and the EIB as illustrations of a partnership approach.

The AFD strategy places emphasis on having a French and European reflex in partnership development and suggests that programmes should have the potential to link with European initiatives. The strategy also makes note of the AFD's privileged relationship with the European Commission, which the agency seeks to maintain and diversify in connection with the expanded scope for EU development finance. Alongside these European accents in the organisational strategy, the AFD also states its support for a model of cooperation that maintains European donor diversity, promoting subsidiarity and opportunities to achieve leveraging effects while maintaining a European preference for delegated cooperation arrangements as an implementation approach (AFD, 2018: 36).

A brochure providing an overview of the AFD Group's engagement with the EU documents the AFD's extensive portfolio of delegated cooperation projects, as well as co-financing partnerships. The brochure indicates that the AFD is strongly committed to efforts to strengthen EU cooperation via support for the Global Gateway and Team Europe Initiatives. In addition, the brochure highlights French participation in other networks promoting European effectiveness aims, including the Joint European Financiers for International Cooperation grouping and Practitioners' Network. It signals a role in encouraging bridgebuilding between European agencies with different implementation profiles (AFD Groupe, 2023).

26 Guidance on the operationalisation of the Working Better Together agenda was developed after the publication of Berville's report (see European Commission, 2021).



The 2018 OECD DAC peer review of France indicated that the existence of joint programming in specific country settings provided a stimulus for France to discontinue the preparation of bilateral country strategies in those contexts.²⁷ However, the general picture of country programming provided in the peer review suggests that in practice French cooperation has pursued a piecemeal approach to planning at the country level. One challenge is that diverse government ministries may adopt their own country strategies. The AFD may also formulate country strategies of its own. These country strategies present an overview of objectives and financial commitments and link areas of engagement to specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (AFD Groupe, 2022). However, AFD allocations can be independent of priorities outlined in strategies because of the agency's application of a demand-driven approach to funding projects via specified windows. As a means of addressing this fragmentation of planning frameworks and strengthening capacities for monitoring and oversight, the peer review proposed that France should develop a more comprehensive approach to country programming that should document the respective contributions of diverse French actors at the country level (OECD, 2018b).

ORGANISATIONAL SETUP

To address longstanding issues of fragmentation, France has undertaken a series of organisational reforms over the last quarter of a century, starting with the major institutional reform process carried out in 1998. That reform notably resulted in the merger of a dedicated Ministry for Cooperation into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it strengthened the position of the AFD as the pivotal operational actor in French cooperation (Assemblée Nationale, 2018).²⁸ A further reform in 2004–2005 strengthened the intergovernmental coordination body and articulated a sectoral division of labour between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the AFD, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintaining an emphasis on governance, justice, security, culture, higher education, and research and AFD focusing on social and economic development. The 2014 development law introduced new means of exercising democratic oversight and promoting evaluation. The law also led to the creation of Expertise France as a means of consolidating technical cooperation programmes (République Française, 2014). The law was credited with contributing to the consolidation of French approaches to engaging in fragile contexts and improving human resources management at the AFD among other achievements (OECD, 2018b).

While improving coordination and transparency in the French cooperation system have been key objectives of the longstanding reform efforts, the creation of new mechanisms for coordination has also been criticised as adding to the complexity of the system rather than resolving underlying challenges in the division of competences among governmental actors (Assemblée Nationale, 2018).

The French development cooperation system remains complex. At a broad level, the Interministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development (CICID) provides cross-governmental strategic guidance on cooperation priorities. Two key ministries provide leadership and oversight on development cooperation issues. The first is the Ministry of the Economy, Finance, and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty (MINEFI). Responsibilities for questions of multilateral development finance, including the management of debt relief, support for international financial institutions, and climate finance fall under the remit

²⁷ When the present study was being finalized (end of May, 2024), the publication of the latest OECD DAC peer review of French cooperation was forthcoming. Interested readers should therefore be able to find a current analysis of development cooperation management characteristics in France in the 2024 peer review.

²⁸ The current name of this ministry is the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.



of its Directorate-General for the Treasury.²⁹ The second key ministerial player is the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, which provides strategic guidance for development cooperation as part of its broader diplomatic mandate.³⁰

These two ministries share a primary oversight role with respect to the AFD, the main operational entity in the French cooperation system. AFD has a hybrid profile as a development agency and public development bank. It is wholly owned by the French state but is subject to banking regulations and mobilises resources through capital markets. Consistent with its investment orientation, a large component of its funding profile consists of loans to state, subnational, and private-sector actors. In line with its hybrid profile, AFD has varied modalities at its disposal, including the ability to provide guarantees and equity in addition to supplying grants to lower-income countries. In 2022, grant funding represented 16 percent of its total commitments, with funding coming primarily from the French state and the EU.³¹

Proparco is a subsidiary of the AFD, with a mission to promote private-sector development by providing financing to businesses and financial institutions.³² The implementing entity Expertise France characterises itself as an interministerial agency with responsibility for international technical cooperation. Since January 2022, Expertise France has been integrated into the AFD Group and acts as a subsidiary under the AFD umbrella. The merger endows the AFD Group with an even broader range of cooperation tools under one roof and aims to enable a more coherent and integrated French response to partner development needs. In 2021, 51 percent of Expertise France's funding came from the EU institutions, with 38 percent stemming from French government ministries and the AFD, and the remainder accounted for by funds from other donors (Expertise France, 2022).

Despite the consolidation of mandates around two ministerial actors and one core operational entity, French development cooperation budgeting is complex. Budgetary responsibilities for development cooperation are assigned to 14 different government ministries, encompassing 13 budget categories and 24 separate budget programmes (OECD, 2023b). The two principal budgetary funds, respectively managed by the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and MINEFI, represented only one third of ODA expenditure at the time of the last DAC peer review (OECD, 2018b).

Although parliamentarians receive a report on the overall French contribution to international solidarity which attempts to present a global picture of French ODA commitments, the fragmentation of budgetary lines has made parliamentary oversight of the French strategy for cooperation more difficult (Assemblée Nationale, 2018). The lack of transparency in budgetary reporting makes ODA policy less accessible as a policy field to members of parliament. One key point of criticism highlighting a disconnect between stated objectives and financing commitments is the perception of a mismatch between the priority countries identified in French strategies and the actual destination for ODA funds, with middle-income countries seemingly unduly privileged as partners (Assemblée Nationale, 2018).

29 See www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/tresor-international/l-aide-au-developpement

30 See www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/development-assistance

31 See www.afd.fr/sites/afd/files/2024-02-03-54-44/Investors%20presentation%20-%20%20Feb%202024.pdf

32 See www.proparco.fr/en



The fragmentation in the overall management setup for French cooperation has also had consequences for the steering of aid at the country level. The 2018 OECD DAC Peer Review of France pointed to challenges due to the country-level role of multiple French actors and an unclear division of responsibility between the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the AFD (OECD, 2018b). While ambassadors have been entrusted with a coordination responsibility as well as the authority to approve projects, including AFD projects, in practice project development activities for the AFD are largely HQ-oriented. This has made it difficult for ambassadors to fully assume their coordination mandates. Embassies have also experienced challenges in performing an oversight role due to the lack of comprehensive partnership frameworks guiding French cooperation at the country level (OECD, 2018b).

In addition to strengthening cross-governmental strategic capacities at the level of the central government, the 2021 development cooperation law seeks to promote a more comprehensive and coherent approach to French country-level engagement by strengthening the coordination responsibility of ambassadors. French ambassadors in partner countries have the authority to organise a consultative forum – or ‘local development council’ – that provides a basis for outlining the orientations of development cooperation following consultation with stakeholders, including partner representatives and a variety of French stakeholders. These orientations should result in a country strategy and country programming under the ambassador’s authority (République Française, 2021).

The law also emphasises the need for coherence and strategic alignment of AFD Group activities with the political priorities outlined by the central government. The AFD group is subject to steering from the government through its strategic board and through the mechanism of a framework agreement with the state. In addition, the ministers responsible for oversight of the AFD are expected to conduct an annual review of the AFD’s performance in relation to the objectives and indicators defined by its strategic board. The law emphasises that AFD country-level engagement comes under the remit of the ambassador and that its activities should be consistent with the priorities elaborated in the Local Development Council. Country programming documents are also subject to approval via the AFD’s own decision-making procedures (République Française, 2021).

6.3.3 Monitoring and Reporting Practices

The 2018 DAC peer review painted a mixed picture of French performance in applying a results-oriented approach based on quality monitoring. On a positive note, the review stressed that French ODA was aligned to aggregate indicators. However, it also indicated that the application of results-based management methods was uneven across governmental entities. The limited use of country strategies in French development cooperation has posed a challenge for the development of country-specific performance frameworks for assessing results, making results management primarily a project-focused endeavour (OECD, 2018b). The peer review noted that the AFD develops a large range of indicators to monitor project-level results. At the same time, the review suggested that the organisation has primarily used the knowledge generated from project monitoring for accountability purposes, rather than adopting a learning orientation (OECD, 2018b).

The new cooperation law presents a general results framework, providing a list of aggregate indicators linked to nine priority areas of intervention. The results framework distinguishes between bilateral and multilateral indicators, and each priority area includes an indicator emanating from the results framework linked to the EU’s 2018 results framework (République Française, 2021).



In a presentation of the AFD Group's results from the first year of operations encompassing Expertise France in 2022, the group provided a summary of activities. One emphasis in this presentation was the provision of information about the volume of funding dedicated to different regions and priority areas, as well as the financing commitments from different entities within the AFD Group. Another emphasis was on the description of funded projects (AFD Group, 2023). Although annual reporting may still adopt the language of identifying impacts, in practice the emphasis remains on lower stages of the results chain, focusing on where funding is directed, and which beneficiaries are served.

As of 2023, the AFD Group has sought to revise its monitoring and evaluation policy in order to increase awareness of the impacts of its activities and ensure that assessments contributed to learning and decision-making support, both at the policy-steering level and at the operational level (AFD, 2023).



6.4 Germany

6.4.1 Partner Orientation

The agenda for German development cooperation has evolved over the last three decades. It has shifted since the turn of the millennium from an emphasis on poverty reduction and aid effectiveness toward supporting reforms in global framework conditions for development, and has more recently moved to increasingly promote the limitation of migration and promotion of private sector development as rationales for cooperation. Despite some changes to the agenda and the ministries involved in setting the German cooperation agenda, the German system has displayed institutional continuity reflected in the stably strong role for German implementing agencies (Öhm, 2021).

Priority areas for German engagement have evolved with changing governing coalitions, which have respectively set the stage for the adaptation of ministerial agendas. The 2021 Coalition Agreement provides an overview of the general priorities of the government for the period 2021–2025, aligning German engagement with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Amongst the priorities specific to the development policy field are commitments to provide the equivalent of 0.7 percent of GNI in aid along with additional climate financing flows and to better coordinate the ODA flows managed by the various ministries (Bundesregierung, 2021).

With respect to the partner orientation of aid, the agreement highlights several stakeholder groups with which German engagement should be strengthened, signalling an intention to support societal actors that promote inclusion and democratic development. This includes focusing on women and marginalised communities as well as civil-society organisations, unions, political foundations, private foundations, and churches. In addition, the agreement mentions engagement with unions, companies and civil-society organisations as an avenue for addressing issues of working standards and basic income provision (Bundesregierung, 2021).

Public sector entities represent the main category through which German aid is channelled. Between 2017 and 2021, 60 percent of German aid was disbursed via the public sector (see Figure 2). Another 19 percent of funds were implemented by multilateral organisations. Research organisations accounted for a slightly larger share of cumulative disbursements (eight percent) than NGOs and civil society (seven percent) in this period (OECD.Stat, 2023). As for the EU institutions and France, a large share of German aid disbursements is classified under project-type interventions. Between 2017 and 2021, project-type interventions amounted to 65 percent of country-level aid. Contributions to pooled funds and programmes were the second-largest category of intervention types, amounting to 21 percent of disbursements. Germany stands out as one of the donors continuing to provide budget support, primarily in the form of sectoral budget support. In the period summarised in Figure 3, budget support represented eight percent of German country-level aid (OECD.Stat, 2023).

An assessment of the partner orientation of Germany's development cooperation in comparison to other key multilateral and bilateral providers concluded that Germany was an average performer compared to its peers, with the field of democracy, civil society, and public administration seemingly one area where Germany faced particular challenges in responding to partner expectations (Guffler et al., 2020). That study noted differences between German embassies, KfW, and GIZ regarding the extent to which stakeholders considered them influential and helpful, and attributed the varied performance by the German cooperation actors in part to their varying mandates. While indicating that partners viewed the use of general budget support positively, the use of country systems for budget execution, financial reporting, auditing, and procurement was not perceived as contributing to more positive donor influence in internal policymaking. The authors stressed



that the use of pooled funding arrangements, short-term aid predictability, and bureaucratic flexibility were cooperation traits especially valued by partners. Although Germany has moved away from providing general budget support, the study indicates that the increasing use of policy reform credits offers an avenue to enable Germany to become more influential and helpful in the eyes of its partners (Guffler et al., 2020).

The BMZ plays a key role in formulating strategies guiding cooperation with partner countries. With the ‘BMZ 2030’ reform concept, the BMZ instituted a redefinition of how it conceives cooperation relationships with partner countries. This concept indicates that its country-focused cooperation will increasingly be contingent on partner-country progress with respect to good governance, the respect for human rights, and efforts to reduce corruption. A concrete expression of the new partnership orientation is the reduction of bilateral priority countries and a new categorisation of types of country partnerships (BMZ, 2020). In the debate on the implementation of this new strategy, the BMZ emphasised that partner orientation remained a central principle in German development cooperation. The concept is expressed in the organisation of continuous dialogue with partner governments, which provided input for the reflections leading to the identification of criteria for partner selection that the BMZ 2030 strategy adopts (Deutscher Bundestag, 2020).

Like other donors profiled in this analysis, Germany has a mixed performance in relation to key GPEDC effectiveness indicators. Germany scored above the DAC average with respect to its use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools, but well below the DAC average in terms of its reliance on the PFM systems of partner countries. At the planning level, Germany performed especially well in terms of aligning programme and project objectives with partner-country planning frameworks. At the implementation level, one key area of deteriorating performance between 2016 and 2018 was the use of country procurement systems. However, Germany made improvements in the extent of its use of country budget, auditing, and financial reporting systems between 2016 and 2018 (GPEDC, 2022d).

6.4.2 Coordination and Steering

STRATEGIES AND GUIDELINES

While the Coalition Agreement presents an overarching direction for all ministries and suggests that foreign, development, and security policies should be guided by a common strategy, the German system is characterised by a high level of ministerial independence with no common development policy strategy in place. As an example, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) formulated a strategy to promote a feminist development policy in 2023, while the Federal Foreign Office presented guidelines for pursuing a feminist foreign policy in the same year (BMZ, 2023a; Federal Foreign Office, 2023). Although the strategies are presented as complementary frameworks which reflect coordination between the ministries, their coexistence points to the lack of integration between foreign and development policy in the German system.

A general commitment to strengthened cooperation with the EU and other member states is highlighted in various German strategy and policy documents. As an example, the BMZ development policy strategy from 2018 noted that cooperation between the European Commission and member states was in need of significant improvement. However, it made little reference to concrete means of pursuing reforms apart from a brief mention of the revision of the Cotonou Partnership Framework (BMZ, 2018).

The BMZ Africa Strategy of 2023 places the ministry’s cooperation within a broader framework of German and EU cooperation with the African continent. It points to the goal being to expand and better coordinate EU cooperation and briefly makes note of German participation in joint programming and Team Europe



Initiatives. As an illustration of a commitment to joint programming, the strategy mentions Germany's engagement in joint programming in Togo, where the BMZ country strategy has been replaced by a joint programming strategy (BMZ, 2023b).³³ The BMZ 2030 concept lists closer coordination with other donors, the EU, and multilateral institutions as one point of action but does not elaborate on how coordination practices will be adapted (BMZ, 2020).

In line with the NDICI – Global Europe Regulation's statement of the preference for joint programming, internal BMZ guidance indicates that the potential for replacing a German country strategy with a joint programming document should be systematically assessed as a component of the country programming process. The decision to adopt a joint programming strategy as the guiding strategy in a given context rests with different entities within the BMZ hierarchy. In the first instance, it involves close cooperation between the Head of Cooperation at the German Embassy and the relevant regional division (BMZ, 2021).

The decision on whether to replace the German strategy with a joint programming strategy should follow a positive recommendation from a quality assurance committee and requires approval from the respective regional division and directorate at the BMZ. If this step is taken, the joint programming strategy presented together with a German chapeau paper acquires the status as the main steering document for the ODA managed by the BMZ. This document ideally depicts the entirety of financial and technical cooperation instruments falling under the remit of the BMZ in the country. The guidance signals the potential for German ministries in addition to the BMZ to participate in joint programming. If joint programming expands its scope to the ambit of other ministries as EU guidance envisages, the BMZ must seek instructions from the competent ministries. Even if a joint programming document is accepted as the replacement for the German strategy, the BMZ retains decision-making competences with respect to the allocation and implementation of funds (BMZ, 2021).

Although Germany is recognised as a proponent of EU joint programming efforts as well as the Team Europe Initiatives, the last OECD peer review indicated that Germany faces challenges in linking its own development cooperation programmes to these processes. One illustration of the persistent bilateral orientation of German aid is that its unpublished country strategies and programming documents do not reflect EU joint programming or implementation (OECD, 2021).

In 2017, the BMZ undertook a joint procedural reform (Gemeinsame Verfahrensreform, GVR) to adapt processes for steering bilateral assistance channelled through the German implementing organisations. The steering approach has three main dimensions: the formulation of a country strategy, the formulation of programmes, and the identification of modules. The programme level is understood as the mechanism for operationalising a country strategy and details how different modules fit together in the service of the broader country approach. A key aim of the GVR process was to strengthen the position of programmes as a steering mechanism. Following the current understanding, programmes encompass cooperation modalities carried out by different implementing organisations (Amine et al., 2021). Thus, steering at the programme level intends to promote synergies among German cooperation actors whose instruments and approaches contribute in different ways to the achievement of programme objectives.

The BMZ acts as the lead ministry in the preparation of intergovernmental negotiations with partners leading to the formulation of country strategies. As part of the strategy development process, the BMZ engages with other federal ministries and German implementing organisations. A broader range of German

33 The joint programming document for Togo is a joint document for the EU, France, and Germany.



organisations also provide input through the mechanism of *Ländergespräche* (country-focused discussions) to identify orientations for future cooperation. Nevertheless, other federal ministries as well as the federal states have their own competencies in setting budgetary priorities for the ODA that they oversee and may also engage with partner governments outside of the BMZ country strategy development process. Similarly to the experiences with French cooperation, the OECD DAC peer review of Germany noted that existing country strategies do not reflect the total engagement of German ministries in a given country and do not necessarily present overarching objectives, indicative funding allocations or identify results at all levels (OECD, 2021).

ORGANISATIONAL SETUP

As the preceding discussion indicates, the relationship between the BMZ and other federal ministries is a key element in understanding the specificities of the German development cooperation system and the potential for improvement in the overall coordination of development contributions. At the time of the last OECD DAC peer review, the BMZ was responsible for overseeing half of German ODA, with another 19 percent of funds coming under the authority of 13 other federal ministries. The Federal Foreign Office has the largest mandate outside of the BMZ and is particularly active on questions of humanitarian assistance and crisis response. Beyond the federal ministries, German federal states oversee decentralised cooperation programmes, amounting to five percent of Germany's ODA (OECD, 2021).

Germany is unusual among OECD DAC donors because it maintains a standalone development ministry. It is at the same time characterised by the dispersion of responsibilities for aid management across governmental actors with their own mandates, budgets, and approaches to engagement. It does not possess a comprehensive strategic framework that guides all aspects of governmental development cooperation (OECD, 2021).

The cooperation relationships between the BMZ and other federal ministries vary. Among development policy observers, coordination between the BMZ and the Federal Foreign Office has been viewed as more difficult in light of the Federal Foreign Office's de facto final authority in matters of external relations despite the principle of ministerial independence, while cooperation between the BMZ and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety, and Consumer Protection has been highlighted as a case of more smoothly functioning inter-ministerial cooperation (Bohnet et al., 2018). Bohnet et al. (2018) stress the potential for strengthened coordination and procedural harmonisation among German ministries, indicating that reviving a coordination forum for technical cooperation and ODA transparency initially created in 2010 would be one means of promoting this aim.

Inter-ministerial dynamics also influence the relationships between country-level actors and the headquarters level. The OECD DAC peer review characterised German development cooperation as a highly centralised system with BMZ headquarters playing a predominant role. Procedures such as indirect reporting by BMZ embassy staff through the Federal Foreign Office have posed a challenge with respect to introducing greater decentralisation in aid management (OECD, 2021).

Beyond the issue of divided ministerial responsibility, another feature of the German system is the separation of policymaking and implementation. Organisations in the German system are commonly identified as implementers of either technical cooperation (knowledge production, experts, and advisory services) or financial cooperation. GIZ, the National Metrology Institute (PTB), and the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) provide technical cooperation, while KfW Development Bank and its private-sector-oriented subsidiary DEG provide financial cooperation. The DEG has a profile similar to BIO



in Belgium and Proparco in France. GIZ and KfW are the most important organisations in terms of the volume of resources that they manage (OECD, 2021).

According to BMZ guidelines, the responsibilities at the level of the federal government include formulating cooperation objectives and selecting priority areas, providing funds, concluding legal agreements with cooperation partners, and reviewing and supervising German support. Implementing organisations are tasked primarily with preparatory and implementation work. This includes participation in programme development and appraisal, the conclusion of implementation agreements with the entities that execute projects, as well as the management, monitoring, and reporting on development interventions (Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2021).

At the country level, capacities for engagement are concentrated among the German implementing organisations. Due to their technical expertise in specific sectors, they are often represented in donor coordination forums, while the scope for BMZ participation may be more limited. This model presents advantages by giving German cooperation the possibility of benefitting from the combined strengths of implementers with different areas of specialisation. It also entails disadvantages due to the additional organisational complexity involved. The model raises questions about the visibility of overall German contributions and how the lines of communication between entities engaging with partners at country level and the actors responsible for formulating policy at headquarters help to facilitate a feedback loop from implementation to planning (OECD, 2021).

6.4.3 Monitoring and Reporting Practices

The guidelines for the implementation of bilateral technical and financial cooperation outline several expectations toward implementing organisations with regard to monitoring and reporting practices. Implementing organisations are expected to provide regular progress reports summarizing the achievements of development measures. These should relay information about the status of implementation in relation to established costs and timelines, challenges that arise, and whether the implementing organisation sees a need for an adaptation of the measure on the basis of experiences to date or changes in the context for implementation. Such reports collect information that is similar to the EU's EAMR, as noted in the section on EU practices above. Reporting can follow on from the reports prepared by project-level implementing entities or be based on the common format agreed within joint funding mechanisms (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2021).

In addition to such regular reports, GIZ and KfW are expected to submit final reports following the completion of a given development measure. The reports should include information about how the initiative was funded as well as the impact of interventions (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2021).

The most recent OECD DAC peer review of Germany pointed to several challenges with respect to results-based aid management. It highlighted that German results-based management practice has focused on project-level assessment and is associated with the approaches adopted by the implementing organisations. An extension of the project-level orientation to portfolios was already initiated in the context of the BMZ 2030 organisational reform process and the joint procedural reform process noted above. However, the peer review indicated that the BMZ needed to continue to adapt its approach to formulating objectives and articulating expected results in order to promote a results-based culture across the system (OECD, 2021). As noted with respect to other donors profiled in this analysis, the peer review also sees further potential for



the German government to increase the learning orientation of information on results that it collects, rather than focusing on the accountability and communication purposes of this documentation (OECD, 2021).

A study on the quality of project-level monitoring practices drawing on a sample of projects dealing with agriculture, rural development, and food security similarly identified a variety of challenges facing German development cooperation in pursuing a results-based management approach (Holzapfel and Römling, 2020). The lack of clear and comprehensive guidance from the BMZ for the implementing organisations was one problem. In the absence of a more consolidated approach, different units in the BMZ have prepared guidance related to their own work areas and implementing organisations have also developed their own monitoring procedures, leading to possible divergences in the approach taken across the system. A related challenge concerns the lack of staffing capacities in the BMZ available to adapt existing practices. The authors also point out several methodological difficulties in reporting practices, such as mismatches between objectives and the indicators selected to measure progress (Holzapfel and Römling, 2020).³⁴

In 2022, the BMZ introduced standard indicators to provide a means of aggregating results across its development cooperation modules. Such indicators apply only to the portfolios of GIZ and KfW and are designed to serve a political communication function rather than shaping the operational steering of German cooperation (BMZ, 2022). Although experts perceive the introduction of these indicators as an important step in promoting German coherence by harmonising the reporting approaches of the GIZ and KfW, other reforms such as strengthening transparency are considered necessary to advance a culture of results-based management throughout the German system (Janus and Esser, 2022).

³⁴ As Holzapfel and Römling (2020) note, the challenges that Germany has faced in developing a results-based management culture are similar to challenges facing other donors. Examples include the need to strengthen the learning orientation of monitoring and reporting and ensuring greater local ownership.



6.5 Slovak Republic

6.5.1 Partner Orientation

The Slovak Republic now has 20 years of experience as a development cooperation provider and has been a member of the OECD DAC community since 2013. One guiding ambition for its cooperation programme is the desire to transfer lessons from its own transition experience to promote democratic reform and market-oriented development elsewhere. Its current strategic framework emphasises the adherence of Slovak development cooperation to effectiveness principles including local ownership. It notes the alignment of Slovak cooperation to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the New European Consensus on Development (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and SAIDC, 2019).

The Slovak Republic has a small aid programme and ranks toward the bottom of the OECD DAC community in terms of its ODA to GNI ratio. In 2021, it provided just over USD 150 million in ODA, or 0.13 percent of Slovak GNI. At the same time, the Slovak Republic has made policy commitments to contribute 0.33 percent of GNI in ODA as part of a collective EU goal of reaching the 0.7 percent ODA target by 2030 (OECD, 2022c). Roughly three quarters of the Slovak Republic's overall aid budget in 2021 was provided in the form of core contributions to multilateral organisations, with its support to the development activities of the EU via the contribution of the Slovak Republic to the EU budget accounting for the lion's share of funding to multilateral organisations – 87 percent of the total (OECD, 2022c).

The 2019 strategy indicates that sectoral cooperation priorities should derive from an assessment of partner needs, the capacities within the Slovak aid system and the results of monitoring and evaluation missions. Under the strategy, three countries are highlighted as programme countries: Georgia, Kenya, and Moldova. The programme designation implies a greater financial commitment, a more comprehensive approach to bilateral engagement, and the dedication of additional human resources to managing cooperation. Beyond the programme countries, the Slovak Republic names a variety of partner countries, grouped within several priority regions. Engagement in the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood presents a clear priority. However, the Slovak Republic also has partner countries in the Middle East, East Africa, and South Asia (Afghanistan). The Slovak Republic provides assistance through various means, including project subsidies, support for capacity building in public administration, grants to civil-society organisations, and microgrants via embassies. Stakeholder engagement extends to civil-society organisations and public- and private-sector actors (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and SAIDC, 2019).

As Figure 2 indicates, the public sector was the main implementation channel for Slovak bilateral development cooperation between 2017 and 2021, with 40 percent of aid disbursed via public sector entities in this period. Multilateral organisations were another key implementation channel, accounting for the delivery of 35 percent of Slovak bilateral aid (OECD.Stat, 2023). Apart from its core funding, non-core contributions to multilateral organisations have predominantly had a programmatic character rather than consisting of tightly earmarked funds (OECD, 2022c). Support via civil-society organisations reflected a further 16 percent of bilateral support. Project-type interventions were by far the largest type of aid provided and represented 86 percent of bilateral disbursements between 2017 and 2021 (see Figure 3). Core contributions and pooled programmes and funds were a distant second, reflecting approximately ten percent of disbursements. Contributions to specific-purpose programmes and funds managed by implementing partners were a key priority area within the 'core contributions' category (OECD.Stat, 2023).



6.5.2 Coordination and Steering

STRATEGIES AND GUIDELINES

The legal basis for Slovak development cooperation is provided by the Official Development Aid Act of 5 December 2007 (Act 617/2007 Coll.), with additional guidance on priorities and budgetary allocations flowing from government manifestos and budget laws.³⁵ The 2007 Act established the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation, the mandate of which has been adjusted through additional legislation, most recently in 2019.³⁶ The Act outlines principles for cooperation, the roles of governmental actors in managing cooperation, and the cooperation tools that can be used.

Five-year strategies are a primary planning tool in Slovak development cooperation and are developed under the purview of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. The strategy documents provide an overview of the legislative framework for aid, the selection of main geographical and thematic priorities, and the choice of specific instruments and also convey characteristics of the development cooperation management approach.

The 2014–2018 strategy stated an intention to engage actively in the formulation of EU development policy and noted the potential to use the Slovak Republic’s Council Presidency in 2016 as a platform for increasing the engagement of newer EU member states (the Central and Eastern Europe states, Cyprus and Malta) in the EU development policy arena. The strategy signalled a commitment to align development cooperation with the EU’s Agenda for Change, emphasizing the necessity of concentrating its aid resources to limit fragmentation as one illustration of this goal.³⁷ In a similar vein, the strategy briefly noted the Slovak Republic’s support for EU joint programming as a means of fostering a division of labour with other relevant aid providers. In addition, it stated an interest in expanding the participation of Slovak entities in EU development cooperation funding schemes and favoured linking key programmes with EU activities to facilitate this (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2013).

The strategy named ten priority countries, divided into the groupings of programme countries (Afghanistan, Kenya, and Moldova), project countries (Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Ukraine), and a single country with exceptional development and humanitarian needs (South Sudan). The strategy left the possibility of extending aid beyond these priority countries open (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2013).

35 hub.unido.org/bilateral-development-partners/slovak-republic

36 slovakaid.sk/en/strategy-of-sr-and-agenda-2030. The current version of the law underpinning Slovak cooperation is accessible in the Slovak language via the following link: slovakaid.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/novelizacia_zakona_392_2015.pdf

37 The Agenda for Change was an EU strategy published in 2011. It encouraged the EU and member states to allocate aid in line with the division of labour agenda and advocated the increased reliance on joint programming (European Commission, 2011). The European Consensus on Development succeeded the Agenda for Change as a common strategic framework for the EU and member states in 2017.



One main element of the 2014–2018 strategy was the presentation of eight distinct cooperation programmes. These included:

- The Development Interventions Programme to guide more comprehensive cooperation with the three programme countries and South Sudan. For these countries, the strategy indicates that country strategy papers outlining objectives and selected modalities will be developed.
- The Transformation Experience Sharing Programme implemented with technical assistance.
- The Business Partnership Programme to encourage linkages between private-sector actors in the Slovak Republic and developing countries.
- The Humanitarian Aid Programme
- The Governmental Scholarships Programme
- A Programme for Sending Development Workers and Civil Experts to Developing Countries
- A Development Education and Public Awareness Programme
- A Capacity Building Programme focused on developing the capacities of Slovak stakeholders and entities to enable their strengthened position in development cooperation.

In addition, the strategy outlined ten primary instruments for Slovak cooperation. This included: three grant schemes; the supply of goods and services; provision of expertise; a startup scheme for business partnerships; trilateral cooperation; funding earmarked for multilateral organisations; concessional loans; and financial contributions (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2013).

The 2019 DAC Peer Review of Slovak development cooperation indicated that the 2014 strategy provided clear guidance for the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC) with respect to aid programming. However, it also suggested that the Slovak Republic could benefit from a stronger cross-governmental orientation in its policy framework and emphasised the potential for further focusing priorities to provide a stronger sense of direction for Slovak development policy (OECD, 2019a).

Incorporating recommendations from the DAC peer review, the strategy covering the 2019–2023 period focuses on identifying how Slovak development cooperation is aligned with the SDG agenda. With respect to collaboration with the EU, it makes note of Slovak engagement in joint programming processes in Kenya and Moldova, and highlights the goal to promote synergies between EU aid and Slovak bilateral cooperation as well as with the international organisations to which the Slovak Republic contributes. The strategy also mentions the potential for the additional participation of Slovak actors as implementers of EU cooperation (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and SAIDC, 2019).

The 2019–2023 strategy noted nine areas of practice highlighted in the DAC peer review to support the continued adaptation of the Slovak development cooperation system. The strategy reflected ambitions to: 1) transition toward a more results-driven aid approach instead of responding mainly to project proposals; 2) introduce sectoral programming; 3) refine geographical priorities; 4) promote a more strategic approach to humanitarian aid; 5) improve the strategic basis for funding to international organisations; 6) foster policy coherence; 7) improve engagement with the private sector; 8) enhance partnerships with other cooperation providers; and 9) introduce administrative reforms to promote efficiency (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and SAIDC, 2019). Like the previous strategy, the 2019 strategy outlined a



variety of tools used by Slovak cooperation, such as development, humanitarian, development education, and capacity-building projects, volunteer programmes, export credits, and embassy microgrants. Additional modes of cooperation include bilateral cooperation agreements with partner countries and framework agreements with Slovak development organisations (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and SAIDC, 2019). The strategy serves to indicate how capacities will be strengthened within the Slovak administration itself in addition to outlining the approach to engagement with varied partners.

In addition to publishing an overarching strategy, the Slovak Republic publishes country strategies for its limited number of programme countries. These documents present a short analysis of development challenges facing a given country, outline Slovak priorities and the forms of engagement in the country, and include a summary of the main objectives and indicators used to measure their achievement (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and SAIDC, 2021).

ORGANISATIONAL SETUP

At the governmental level, the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic has an important budgetary authority in the development cooperation arena because it oversees the transfer of contributions to the EU budget and therefore formally controls a large share of the ODA budget. Beyond its EU budget mandate, the Ministry of Finance also oversees contributions to international financial institutions and engages in partnerships on issues relevant to its economic mandate, including public financial management.³⁸ However, it is the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs that participates in EU-level decision-making on development cooperation (OECD, 2019a).

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has a legislative mandate to act as the national coordinator for ODA to promote consistency and coherence across government entities overseeing pieces of the ODA budget. It has faced challenges in exercising this role due to its lack of involvement in the planning processes of other ministries (OECD, 2019a). Nevertheless, in partner countries where the Slovak Republic has embassies, coordination at embassy level is perceived to function smoothly, with the Ministry's diplomatic corps serving as key focal points for other Slovak entities implementing cooperation projects (OECD, 2019a).

While the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs operates as the key policy actor in the Slovak aid system by formulating overall guidance and strategies, SAIDC serves as the main implementing entity for Slovak aid.³⁹ As an implementing agency, it manages the tools outlined in the medium-term strategies. One main function is to prepare calls for proposals and assess the proposals for project funding. It also carries out public communication functions and manages relationships with diverse cooperation stakeholders such as NGOs, academic institutions, and private-sector actors (SAIDC, 2022).

SAIDC has undertaken internal reforms as Slovak development cooperation has expanded. The OECD DAC peer review of Slovak development cooperation in 2019 pointed to changes in the financial handbook providing a budgetary basis for funding applications, the standardisation of project application procedures, and the introduction of clear project selection criteria as signs of strengthened capacities at SAIDC. At the same time, the review noted that dispersed priorities posed a challenge for the organisation and advocated a streamlining of project approval procedures (OECD, 2019a). SAIDC completed an EU pillar assessment in December 2020 (SAIDC, 2022). The 2019 cooperation strategy noted the contribution of the pillar

38 See www.mfsr.sk/en/european-international-affairs/development-cooperation

39 slovakaid.sk/en/samrs



assessment process in supporting management reforms within SAIDC. It also highlighted the need for capacity strengthening measures such as increasing expertise on ODA topics in the Slovak system (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and SAIDC, 2019).

SAIDC lists four collaborations with the EU on its website:

- A grant contribution implemented via an Irish partner to the AgriFi challenge fund in the context of EU joint programming efforts in Kenya.
- The Slovak Republic's first delegated cooperation project implemented on behalf of the European Commission providing support for local media in Moldova.
- A project funded by the European Union Trust Fund for Africa with participation from partners in the Visegrad Four countries (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and the Slovak Republic), with SAIDC acting as project coordinator.
- Involvement in one component of the Team Europe Initiative 'Investing in Young Businesses in Africa (IYBA-SEED)', which aims to support the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems.⁴⁰

Beyond SAIDC, another implementing entity within the Slovak development cooperation system is EXIMBANKA SR, the national export credit agency. EXIMBANKA's ODA role focuses on the provision of concessional loans to promote Slovak investment in developing countries.⁴¹ The current development cooperation strategy envisions a strengthened development cooperation role for EXIMBANKA that extends beyond its export credit mandate and enables access to funding beyond the Slovak public administration, notably at the EU level via the External Investment Plan (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2019).

6.5.3 Reporting and Monitoring Practices

The 2014–2018 strategy articulates a commitment to results-based management as an extension of the Slovak Republic's adherence to the Busan Principles. The strategy envisions the adoption of a complex system of monitoring and evaluation and the publication of data according to an open standard as expressions of this objective. It assigns monitoring responsibility for bilateral projects to Slovak embassies in cooperation with SAIDC. The matrix of indicators for assessing the implementation of the strategy refers primarily to organisational aspects, such as the formulation of strategies in particular areas, improving the quality of monitoring and evaluation, and strengthening the capacities of the Slovak public administration (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2013).

The commitments to results-based management and the publication of development cooperation data are reaffirmed in the 2019–2023 strategy. The strategy summarises goals and targets within the Slovak Republic's priority geographies and identifies the linkages of cooperation priorities with components of the SDG framework. The 2019–2023 strategy follows the model of the earlier strategy in outlining a variety of indicators that relate to the improvement of the quality of the development cooperation system itself. A table appended to the strategy articulates the connection between objectives and targets set out in the strategy and indicators from the SDG monitoring framework. Many of the indicators highlighted in this

⁴⁰ See slovakaid.sk/en/european-projects

⁴¹ See www.eximbanka.sk/en/english/products/concessional-loans-to-selected-developing-countries.html?page_id=214526



context refer to funding provided or mobilised to support specific aims (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and SAIDC, 2019).

SAIDC presents an overview of progress in development cooperation via an annual report. As an example, its 2022 report provides extensive information about the activities conducted in the preceding year, outlining the calls for proposals made and detailing the financial commitments to different priority areas. The report also describes the achievements of a long list of completed projects, including information on the number of beneficiaries supported in numerous cases (SAIDC, 2022). The OECD DAC peer review of Slovak development cooperation noted that while the Slovak Republic showed a commitment to results-based management via extensive project monitoring, attention to formulating more specific objectives would be one prerequisite for building a more robust results management system (OECD, 2019a).



6.6 Spain

6.6.1 Partner Orientation

The legal basis for Spanish development cooperation has recently been reformed in connection with the approval in February 2023 of an Act on Cooperation for Global Solidarity and Development. At the one level, the legislation serves to align Spanish cooperation with the international agendas that have evolved in the 25 years since the passage of the previous legislative framework, notably the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. At another level, it seeks to strengthen the position of Spain as a development cooperation actor. The legislation aims to reverse a long-term trend toward declining aid by recommitting Spain to providing ODA amounting to 0.7 percent of GNI by 2030 and proposes several organisational reforms to enhance the capacities and the effectiveness of the main Spanish implementing organisations, including strengthening their abilities to better align with European and multilateral partners.⁴²

Although Spain is a large European donor with respect to aid volume, providing USD 3.5 billion in ODA in 2021, its ODA/GNI ratio is low when seen in the context of the OECD DAC aid providers. Reaching 0.25 percent of GNI in 2021, the Spanish ODA ratio remains far short of stated goals. A large share of Spanish aid is provided via the multilateral system. In 2021, two thirds of Spanish aid was provided as core support to multilateral organisations and a third to the bilateral programme. Spain's support for EU development activities funded via the Spanish contribution to the EU budget accounted for a large share of this core multilateral support, or some 65 percent of the multilateral contribution in 2020. Spain has had a strong geographical focus on cooperation with Latin American and Caribbean countries and has also prioritised cooperation around the Mediterranean and in West Africa. The Latin American focus shapes the emphasis of cooperation with middle-income countries in its aid programme (OECD, 2022d). Along with the overall expansion of the aid budget, it is expected that Spanish development cooperation will increasingly prioritise cooperation with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly with lusophone countries in the region.⁴³

As Figure 2 indicates, Spain stands out from the other donors profiled in this analysis thanks to the large role that NGOs and civil-society organisations have played as an implementation channel in the bilateral aid programme. Roughly half of Spanish bilateral aid was disbursed via NGOs between 2017 and 2021. Implementation through public-sector entities accounted for another 23 percent of disbursed funds in this period. Non-core support to multilateral organisations reflected 19 percent of the total (OECD.Stat, 2023). The funding that Spain has provided to civil-society organisations has overwhelmingly been provided in the form of earmarked project support rather than core funding (OECD, 2022d). This contributes to the high share of project-type interventions in the aid portfolio. Between 2017 and 2021, project-type interventions represented 65 percent of country-level aid disbursements (OECD.Stat, 2023).

Although Spain's reliance on public-sector entities has been low compared to other DAC aid providers, the GPEDC monitoring framework offered a positive view of Spain's performance with respect to the use of partner-country systems in planning and implementation. Spain scored above the DAC average in using country-owned results frameworks and planning tools. Spain performed especially well with respect to alignment with partner-country strategies and planning frameworks but performed less well in terms of adopting partner indicators in project planning, and poorly in terms of the use of partner monitoring systems.

42 See www.exteriores.gob.es/en/Comunicacion/NotasPrensa/Paginas/2023_NOTAS_P/20230209_NOTA08.aspx

43 See donortracker.org/donor_profiles/spain



Spain was also an above-average performer in relation to the extent of its use of partners' public financial management systems in the part of its aid programme implemented by public entities. In terms of indicators related to budget execution, auditing, and financial reporting using partner systems, Spain performed above the DAC average in 2018. However, it scored below average for its use of country procurement systems. The GPEDC monitoring exercise pointed to slightly below-average performance in untying aid and the need for improvement in providing data to international platforms promoting aid transparency (GPEDC, 2022e).

6.6.2 Coordination and Steering

STRATEGIES AND GUIDANCE

Spanish development cooperation sets out its priorities for action in a four-year planning framework known as a Master Plan. Spain's Fifth Master Plan covered the time period 2018–2021. An evaluation of the outcomes achieved during the implementation period for this Master Plan indicated that it especially served as a foundation for further reform of the Spanish cooperation system, with the revision of the legal basis for cooperation and the introduction of new monitoring and accountability tools taking steps forward. At the same time, the evaluation pointed to shortcomings of the Master Plan as a strategic framework. Among these was the lack of ownership of the strategy by cooperation stakeholders due to their limited opportunities to provide input and the absence of a budgetary framework connected to the plan to provide a clear indication of priorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, 2022).⁴⁴

In line with the broader priorities outlined in legislation and in the Master Plan, bilateral partnership frameworks referred to as MAPs provide a basis for multi-annual cooperation programmes with partner countries. The MAPs are prepared through participatory processes that include a variety of Spanish stakeholders at the headquarters and country levels as well as dialogue between partner-country governments, the Spanish embassy, and Spanish implementing entities. Generally prepared for a four-year period, country strategies have the flexibility to align with partner-country planning cycles (OECD, 2022a).

The Country Partnership Framework Ethiopia-Spain for the period 2022–2027 serves to illustrate the content of the MAP.⁴⁵ The document starts with an analysis of the development context in the country and situates Spanish cooperation against the backdrop of the engagement of other aid providers. Importantly, the document highlights aspects of European development cooperation before providing an historical perspective on Spanish engagement in the country and outlining the areas where Spain identifies its comparative advantage. This is followed by an assessment of the prospects for aligning Spanish cooperation with the government's strategic objectives. One specific conclusion drawn from that analysis is that a stronger alliance with the EU in the context of the Team Europe initiatives is one means of promoting greater Spanish added value (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2022).

The partnership framework document provides information on a variety of dimensions of Spanish cooperation, including guiding principles, modes of implementation, cross-cutting policy concerns, and the approach to risk management. In an annex to the strategy, Spain outlines contributions to coordination and harmonisation and underlines its intention to participate actively in EU policy dialogue and foreign action in the country. It similarly expresses a commitment to the Team Europe Initiatives as a means of concentrating

⁴⁴ A Spanish language version of the 2018–2021 strategic plan is accessible via the following link: www.exteriores.gob.es/PoliticaExterior/Documents/V%20Plan%20Director%20de%20la%20Cooperaci%3%b3n%20Espa%3%b1ola.pdf

⁴⁵ This example is chosen only because an English version of the country strategy document is publicly available.



European development efforts but notes that the TEIs do not serve as an exclusive forum for pursuing this objective (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2022).

The most recent OECD DAC peer review of Spanish development cooperation highlighted several positive aspects of the MAP as a steering document. The assessment praised the role of the participatory approach in building good alliances with stakeholders, made note of the substantial preparatory work that other donors might benefit from, and drew attention to the value of seeking a comprehensive planning framework for Spanish cooperation in a given context. At the same time, the review summarised limitations of the MAP approach. First, although the MAP offers a multi-annual planning framework, financial allocations remain dependent on annual budgetary authorisations. Second, there is a possible disconnect between the strong role that the technical cooperation agency plays in orchestrating the MAP consultations at the country level and its actual decision-making role, as many programming choices revert to headquarters. Third, the review raises questions about the degree to which MAPs encompass the totality of Spanish efforts within the country, as stakeholders such as civil-society organisations do not necessarily feel bound by the guidance it presents (OECD, 2022a).⁴⁶

ORGANISATIONAL SETUP

As the actor with responsibility for the formulation of the development cooperation Master Plan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation (MAUC) has exercised a central steering role within the Spanish cooperation system. The steering function is linked to a secretariat within the MAUC tasked with coordinating with other governmental ministries and decentralised cooperation actors (OECD, 2022a). The MAUC nevertheless faces challenges in exercising a political mandate to promote coherence across the system due to limited capacities and its own limited budgetary authority in the development cooperation arena. In 2021, just over 25 percent of planned ODA fell under the jurisdiction of the MAUC. By contrast, the Ministry of Finance and Civil Service had authority over 36 percent of planned ODA resources due to its role in managing contributions to the EU budget. Another challenge to the overall steering function of the MAUC is that other government ministries have developed their own cooperation mechanisms. Even the technical assistance entities that fall under the jurisdiction of the MAUC have their own strategies, priorities, and approaches to allocating funds (OECD, 2022a).

AECID is considered the main implementing agency for Spanish aid, though the share of the overall ODA budget that it administers has been relatively small. In 2021, AECID was expected to manage 15 percent of ODA funds (OECD, 2022a). AECID is responsible for managing several types of instruments, including the management of geographical programmes, contributions to multilateral organisations, civil-society support, and humanitarian assistance. As the new law on international cooperation is implemented, AECID is expected to gain additional competence in shaping development strategies along with a transfer of personnel from the MAUC. At the same time, the MAUC's secretariat for international cooperation will retain leadership responsibilities in the elaboration of policy guidance (SEEK Development, 2024).

The International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP) also implements technical assistance, focusing on the mobilisation of Spanish public administration support for twinning projects. COFIDES, the Spanish development finance institution, has a dual mandate to promote the internationalisation of Spanish companies and sustainable development objectives.

⁴⁶ Further documentation on planning and reporting in Spanish development cooperation is primarily available in Spanish. Additional examples of country strategies can be accessed via the following link: www.cooperacionspanola.es/catalogo-cooperacion-espanola



AECID, FIIAPP, and COFIDES are all pillar assessed institutions and carry out cooperation projects on behalf of the EU as a funder (Jones et al., 2019). Through these implementing agencies, Spain has played an important role in carrying out EU-funded projects via delegated cooperation agreements as the third-largest recipient of delegated EU funds behind Germany and France. In 2021, AECID indicated that it was implementing 86 ongoing agreements with the EU, with a combined project volume of EUR 521.4 million (Spanish Cooperation, 2021). The diverse approaches that Spanish implementing agencies pursue, even among entities providing technical assistance, has limited the opportunities for joined-up work and learning across the Spanish system (OECD, 2022a).

The OECD DAC peer review highlighted several operational challenges facing Spanish implementing agencies. It noted that the regulations and procedures enabling multiyear funding commitments can vary depending on the instruments selected. This is a challenge to manage even under the roof of a single agency, AECID, and can act as a constraint in promoting useful synergies between grants, loans, and technical cooperation administered by the agency. There is similarly a perceived lack of flexibility with respect to procurement procedures, and long programme approval processes may further hamper Spanish cooperation actors at the country level. A heavy administrative burden also exists with respect to the provision of grants and subsidies, with complicated screening processes and rules concerning the reimbursement of unused funds providing key examples. The overall picture presented in the peer review is that implementing agencies are strongly constrained by headquarters-level administrative obligations, while the resources they administer as well as their own human resource capacities are limited in scope (OECD, 2022a).

6.6.3 Monitoring and Reporting Practices

During the period of the implementation of the Fifth Master Plan, Spanish cooperation undertook efforts to improve the guidance for the formulation of monitoring frameworks. A main avenue for doing so was the manual developed to guide the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of country partnership frameworks. This promoted the adoption of results matrices aligned with objectives from the SDG agenda. The evaluation of the implementation of the Master Plan nevertheless referred to monitoring as ‘the principal unresolved issue of the period’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation, 2022: 8). The evaluation indicated that only nine of 28 partnership countries produced monitoring reports related to their planning instruments in the period studied; it also highlighted that updated guidance does not exist for numerous instruments. The evaluation signalled that the development of a set of 32 accountability indicators for Spanish cooperation would provide a foundation for the further development of a common monitoring system. In addition, the evaluation noted that the future preparation of mid-term and final reports by technical cooperation offices at country level would be desirable to strengthen monitoring practices but also recognised that additional human resource commitments would be necessary in order to support these objectives (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation, 2022).

The country partnership strategies referenced above present a results framework that lists objectives defined by the partner country alongside lines of action reflecting Spanish cooperation priorities and defines agreed development results to monitor (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2022). The country partnership strategy indicates that monitoring reports should include a strategic and a technical dimension. It also calls for the preparation of a monitoring report in the third year of the strategy’s validity followed by an updated report in the final year of the strategy period. Monitoring reports include a strategic and technical dimension and assess different facets of implementation, including internal management and delivery issues. Monitoring reports are expected to provide information on whether there is a need for



corrective measures if things are not proceeding according to plan (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, 2022).

The OECD DAC peer review of Spain pointed to recent improvements in monitoring practices based on the country partnership frameworks where intermediate results linked to Spain's development contributions are monitored on an annual basis. However, the review also suggested there is potential for the further consolidation of approaches to monitoring within the Spanish cooperation system. Implementing agencies have their own monitoring systems and limited effort has been made to aggregate findings from diverse sources to provide input for Spanish aid decision-making (OECD, 2022a).



6.7 Sweden

6.7.1 Partner Orientation

The Policy Framework for Swedish Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance from 2016 outlined Sweden's core aid objectives and the main elements of its approach to providing assistance. The framework identified the perspective of the poor as the point of departure for development cooperation. It was one of five perspectives (together with the promotion of human rights and democracy, peacebuilding, gender equality, as well as environmental protection and climate change) that were expected to guide development cooperation decision-making. The Framework took the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development as a starting point. It emphasised Sweden's commitment to development effectiveness principles, and highlighted the central importance of adapting development cooperation to partner-country strategies. It also expressed a preference for using partner procurement systems and providing untied aid. The framework similarly indicated support to implement aid through PFM systems. At the same time, it highlighted the risks associated with using country systems in challenging contexts and called for assessment and dialogue where country-level institutions are not considered to be suitable as implementation partners (Government of Sweden, 2016).

In December 2023, Sweden presented a new strategic framework for its development cooperation. While it retains an emphasis on the thematic priorities and effectiveness commitments outlined in the previous policy framework, the new framework signals an intention to increasingly foster trade-related growth. It also seeks to adopt a more comprehensive view of the purpose of aid, linking development cooperation more explicitly to the pursuit of Swedish foreign-policy objectives (Regeringskansliet, 2023).

Sweden stands out from the other donors profiled in this analysis for the smaller share of its aid that has been implemented via public-sector entities. For the 2017–2021 period, only one quarter of Swedish aid was disbursed through the public sector (see Figure 2). By contrast, Sweden relies to a greater extent on multilateral organisations as implementation partners. Multilateral organisations served as the implementation partner for 34 percent of Swedish aid in the period (OECD.Stat, 2023). While Sweden also provides significant core funding to multilateral organisations, its reliance on multilateral entities as intermediaries for aid delivery in part reflects the challenges of managing a steadily expanding aid budget, as financial resources have increased while administrative capacities in the Swedish aid system have stagnated (Keijzer et al., 2018). The 2023 strategy indicated an interest in reducing the share of aid provided as core support to multilateral organisations while increasing the share of aid directed to civil-society organisations (Regeringskansliet, 2023).

Consistent with its support for multi-stakeholder ownership, Sweden has also channelled significant support via civil-society organisations. Aid disbursements to CSOs amounted to nearly 30 percent of Swedish aid between 2017 and 2021. Sweden also stands out from most of the other donors profiled in this study due to the high share of country-level aid characterised as core or programme-type contributions. This was the single largest type of aid Sweden provided between 2017 and 2021, accounting for 56 percent of the total at country level. Contributions to specific-purpose funds and funds managed by implementing partners represented the largest subcategory of aid under this heading (OECD.Stat, 2023).

In line with interests in promoting democracy and fostering civic engagement, Sweden emphasises the importance of engaging with civil-society organisations and the private sector as means of strengthening local ownership. While still acknowledging the value of cooperation with public-sector actors, the Swedish approach has thus been considered to promote 'multi-stakeholder ownership' of development cooperation, implying that the interests of a spectrum of societal actors should be reflected in the cooperation priorities that are set and the implementation channels that are chosen (Keijzer et al., 2018).



As a consistent champion of development effectiveness, Sweden performs well on GPEDC monitoring indicators, reflecting adherence to the Busan effectiveness principles. Its use of country-owned results and planning tools was above the DAC average in 2018. Sweden nevertheless follows a general trend by displaying a higher level of strategic alignment to country-determined planning frameworks, a lower alignment to the use of country-specific indicators, and a still lower reliance on data from government monitoring systems. Sweden relied on partner-country public financial management systems to a higher degree than the DAC average in 2018, with particularly strong performance in the use of government financial reporting systems. Sweden's commitment to untying aid and promoting aid transparency is high. While Sweden received high marks in terms of annual aid predictability, Sweden scored slightly below the DAC average with respect to medium-term aid predictability (GPEDC, 2022f).

6.7.2 Coordination and Steering

STRATEGIES AND GUIDANCE

At the broadest level, the framework for Swedish aid decisions is provided by the annual budgetary process, providing the Swedish parliament with responsibility for setting out the overall size of the aid envelope and outlining political priorities to guide appropriations. Although the parliament has the discretion to specify appropriations in detail, in practice it provides flexibility to the government to determine how ODA funding is distributed within the larger budget. It therefore falls to the government to make decisions on questions such as the distribution of aid across countries, the division between humanitarian and development assistance, and the level of support to specific organisations (EBA, 2018).

The government sets ODA priorities in more detail via instructions to the Swedish entities charged with implementing the budget and through the development of multi-annual strategies (EBA, 2018). Strategies are developed with respect to regional and country programmes, thematic programmes, and support for individual multilateral organisations. The main purpose of Swedish development strategies is to specify the objectives that will be pursued in a given context, leaving questions of how to operationalise these priorities to the entity responsible for implementing the strategy (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017).

Strategies are based on Sweden's general development policy framework and international commitments; they are expected to incorporate perspectives on gender, climate and the environment, and conflict. They are meant to be adapted to the context and flexible, and should encourage finding cost-effective solutions, allow for experimentation, and promote learning. For the strategies to serve as a steering document, they are expected to incorporate results-based management principles throughout the process of their development and implementation (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). The strategies designate the government entities that are charged with implementing them. The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) is the main implementer, but the same strategies may, for example, also inform the activities of the Folke Bernadotte Academy, whose mandate includes efforts to promote peace, security, and development in conflict-affected states.⁴⁷

The guidelines for the preparation of development strategies explicitly note the possibility of Sweden participating in EU joint programming processes as a means of promoting an improved division of labour among aid providers. They also highlight that it is possible for Sweden to replace its bilateral strategy documents with an EU joint programming strategy. However, the guidelines do not provide an indication

⁴⁷ Information about the work of the Folke Bernadotte Academy is available on its website: fba.se/en



of what conditions must be met in order for a joint programming strategy to replace the Swedish strategy. Similar to the German case, the replacement of a bilateral strategy with an EU strategy would still require a chapeau document highlighting Sweden's contribution within the joint programming framework (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). However, in Swedish geographical strategies, references to EU cooperation are mostly limited to general statements of support for joint programming in the context of a broad commitment to strengthening coordination with other aid providers (Lundsgaarde, 2022).⁴⁸ As an example, reference to EU cooperation in Sweden's regional strategy for Africa is primarily captured in the following statement toward the end of the document:

'Sweden will strive for coherent and effective aid coordination, not least with the EU and the multilateral system. Opportunities for cooperation and synergies with other donors and actors will be sought. The EU is a key development policy actor in Africa and has a formal partnership with the AU. Based on the "Team Europe" approach, Sweden will work toward effective implementation of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), Global Europe' (Regeringen, 2022: 9).

With regard to the process for formulating strategies, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs initiates the strategy development process by issuing instructions to the implementing entity, which then prepares a proposal based on an analysis of the specific context and lessons learned from the previous strategy period. The strategy includes a financial allocation for the strategy period. Implementation of the strategy is monitored annually through summary reports on progress, with more detailed reviews taking place toward the end of the strategy period (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017).

The new policy framework published at the end of 2023 noted that the proliferation of different types of strategies in Swedish cooperation has complicated overall development cooperation steering and therefore suggested future adaptations in strategy development and implementation. The policy framework proposes a shift from the preparation of country strategies that are focused on the aid relationship to strategies that reflect the broader cooperation context. The gradual adoption of such new strategies is presented as one means of reinforcing the long-term orientation and results-driven character of Swedish cooperation (Regeringskansliet, 2023).

ORGANISATIONAL SETUP

As the entity responsible for the preparation of budgetary proposals and the formulation of development strategies, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has a primary role in the definition of Sweden's cooperation priorities. Its overarching mandate is solidified due to its authority over country-level cooperation through Swedish embassies. The integration of an international development policy role within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is considered an asset in terms of promoting broader coherence between foreign and development policy (OECD, 2019b). In 2020, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs directly oversaw the management of more than 50 percent of overall Swedish ODA (OECD, 2022e). A key explanation for this is the responsibility of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the management of core contributions to multilateral organisations, a priority area for Swedish cooperation.

The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) acts as the main implementing entity for the bilateral aid programme. In 2020, it was responsible for managing just over 47 percent of Swedish ODA disbursed through government agencies (OECD, 2022e). Sida's role is to translate the broad orientations outlined in

⁴⁸ English versions of Sweden's development strategies are publicly available through the following link: www.government.se/international-development-cooperation-strategies



government strategies for geographical and thematic cooperation into funding commitments to particular initiatives. In assessing the means of implementing strategies, Sida can either build on established partnerships or prepare calls for proposals to invite innovation in addressing specific goals.⁴⁹ In line with the aim of adapting responses to local contexts, Sida can provide funding through different channels including grants to CSOs or delegated cooperation agreements with multilateral organisations. It has had less of a tradition of cooperating with private sector actors, though the agency has been a pioneer in using guarantees as a financing tool (OECD, 2019).

Sida also carries out a knowledge generation function in the Swedish setting, preparing a variety of publications and informational materials relevant to the bilateral cooperation programme. As one example, a short note from 2023 outlines Swedish engagement with the EU as a development policy actor. In addition to spotlighting Sweden's participation in EU policymaking processes, the note highlights that Sweden had provided EUR 500 million in funding to projects that are a part of Team Europe Initiatives by 2023 and expected to commit a further EUR 600 million to participation in TEIs. The profile illustrates Swedish engagement by stressing its commitment to a regional TEI dealing with Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Africa as well as an example of Sweden's implementation of a delegated cooperation project dealing with radioactive waste in Moldova. The brief points out that Sweden has also carried out transfer agreements with the EU on a limited scale, thus relying on the EU to manage Swedish funding (Sida, 2023b).

The decentralised character of Swedish aid decision-making is considered an asset for the system (OECD, 2019). Nevertheless, decisions on country-level programmes can take place at multiple levels of Sida's organisational hierarchy for three main reasons. First, funding choices can be related to the implementation of thematic strategies, where decision-making authority rests at the headquarters level. Second, the level of delegated decision-making can depend on the country context, with the capabilities of the mission to exercise adequate control constituting a main criterion for assessing the viability of delegation in a given context. Third, the locus of funding decisions may be determined by the scale of funding to be approved. Funding thresholds designate which level of Sida's hierarchy, from Heads of Cooperation at country level at one end of the spectrum to Sida's Governing Board in the case of exceptionally large interventions. The bulk of Swedish funding decisions are taken either at the level of the Head of Foreign Mission / Head of Cooperation or Head of Unit within Sida (EBA, 2018).

The distribution of decision-making authorities for the funding portfolio can vary widely across partner countries. As one example, the Swedish Embassy in Mozambique only had approval authority for 34 percent of Swedish aid in the country in 2014. Budget support, civil society support, and research cooperation were among the areas where decision-making authority at the headquarters level applied. The example of Mozambique points to limitations even in the context of full delegation of decision-making to the embassy, as the established thresholds can shift the locus of decision-making to higher levels (EBA, 2018).

6.7.3 Monitoring and Reporting Practices

Sweden's development cooperation is characterised as having a strong results-based management orientation. It also distinguishes itself from other aid providers in how it interprets the function of results monitoring and reporting. The 2019 DAC peer review of Swedish development cooperation praised Sweden's innovative approach to results-based management, highlighting the emphasis on demonstrating long-term results aligned with SDG commitments. Rather than pursuing a standardisation of results indicators to apply

49 See www.sida.se/en/for-partners



across interventions, the Swedish approach emphasises tailoring monitoring and reporting practices to the context; it therefore allows partners to shape the manner in which results are assessed and reported. Another relevant feature of the Swedish approach emphasised in the peer review was the attention to the role of results monitoring in contributing to adaptive programming. This suggests that the learning function of monitoring and reporting is underlined in the Swedish context rather than a focus on monitoring as an accountability mechanism (OECD, 2019b). At the same time, the peer review notes challenges for Sweden in implementing the adaptive programming approach due to a need to expand staffing capacities at Sida and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the difficulties Sweden has showed in adopting partner monitoring systems (OECD, 2019b).

Strategic frameworks for Swedish cooperation underline the contribution of results monitoring to development effectiveness. The general policy framework stresses that monitoring and reporting procedures should be harmonised with those of other aid providers to the extent possible. The framework indicates that Sweden should also pursue the objective of strengthening partner systems for monitoring, reporting, and evaluation (Government of Sweden, 2016). Guidelines for the elaboration of strategies emphasise that there should be attention to how to define and assess results at all stages of the strategy development process, promoting the formulation of measurable objectives and the collection of reliable data on how well objectives are being met (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017).

As noted above, the strategies have provided a basis for annual country-level reporting through the mechanism of ‘strategy reports’. The strategy reports present a traffic-light system that draws attention, on the one hand, to the evolution of the development context in relation to key objectives and, on the other, to the perceived performance of interventions across Sweden’s portfolio to respond to these key challenges. Strategy reports thus combine an assessment of the changes in the overall setting for implementation as well as the achievements of Swedish contributions in the strategy period. In line with the learning orientation associated with the Swedish approach to results management, strategy reports are expected to derive implications for the continued programming of funds, noting areas that should be discontinued, possible reorientations, or areas where the maintenance of the status quo is justified. Country strategy reports make reference to the status of EU joint programming in a given country, whether Sweden participates in EU-delegated cooperation arrangements in the country, and both the overall number of TEIs and the number of TEIs in which Sweden participates (Sida, 2023a).

Like other areas of Swedish cooperation, future monitoring and reporting practice will be guided by the orientations presented in the 2023 policy framework. Despite the support for a more comprehensive approach to country strategies and a continued emphasis on robust results monitoring, the new framework notes the potential for streamlining results management by limiting the number of objectives that strategies pursue. The new framework also suggests fostering improvements in aid transparency, among other things by simplifying and streamlining the government’s reporting formats vis-à-vis the Swedish parliament, among other considerations on how to strengthen effectiveness (Regeringskansliet, 2023).

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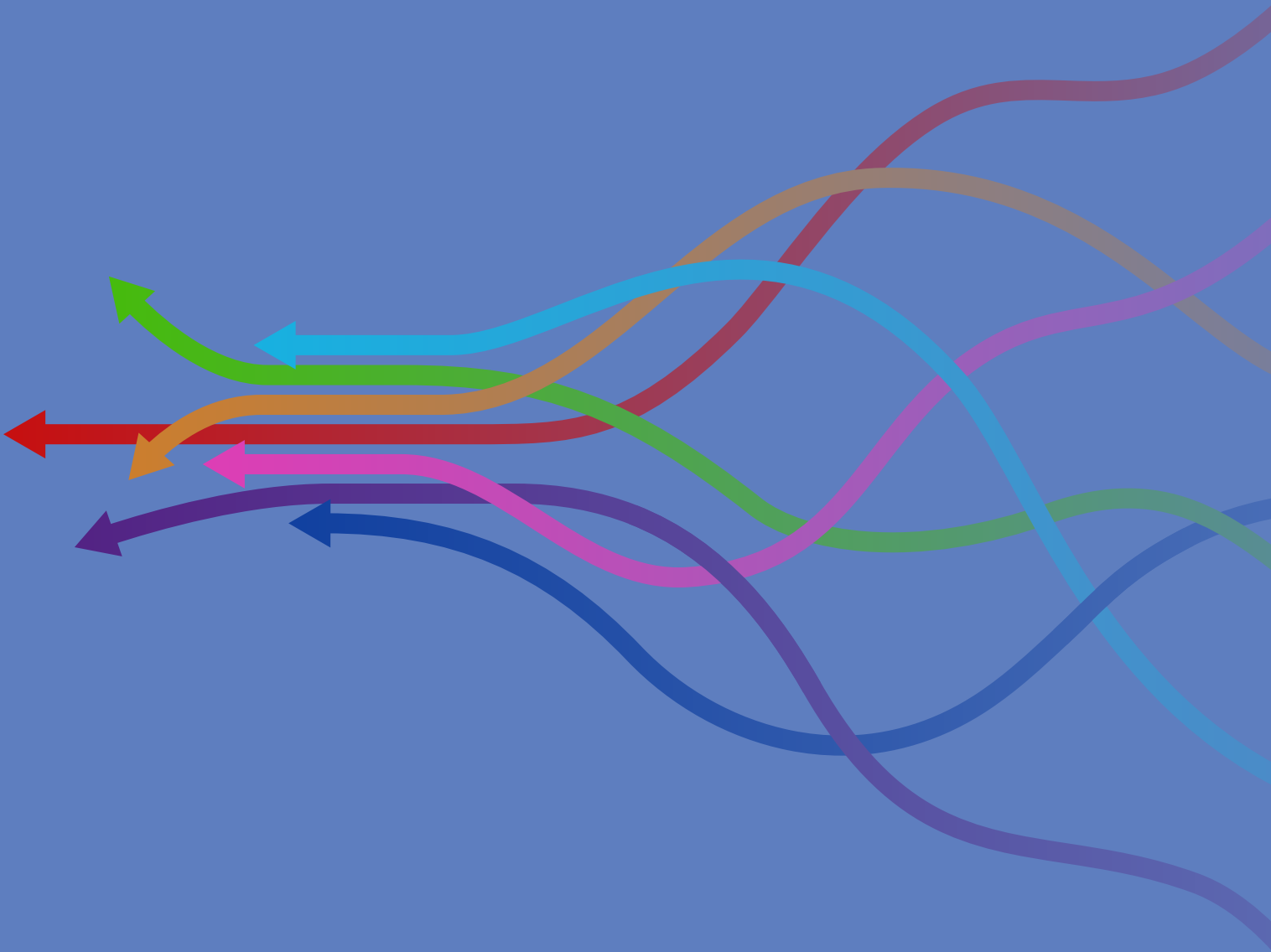
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