**Topic 3. How can we ensure a (gradual) implementation of synchronisation?**

Who was there?

Udo Weber, Embassy of DE in Uganda; Fritz Meijndert, Embassy of NL in Burundi; Lucy Andrews, Dfid HQ; Aldo Biondi, ECHO regional office in Kenya; Harry De Backer, EEAS Southern Africa Division; Marc de Feyter, Embassy of BE in Tanzania; Aidan Fitzpatrick, Embassy of IE in Malawi; Håvard Hoksnes, Embassy of NO in Ethiopia; Bernd Kruger, Embassy of DE in Ethiopia; Heinz Habertheuer, Embassy of AT in Ethiopia; Jorge Peralta Momparler, ES MoFA Madrid; Karina Dzialowska-Vacher, EU- DEL Comoros; Pieter Dorst, Embassy of NL in Rwanda; Carolin Stetter, Ministry, BMZ DE; Saffia Diop, EU-DEL in Tanzania; Pierre Laye, FR Embassy in Comoros; Veronica White, JP consultant; Helena Lagerlöf, SE MoFA Stockholm

Key insights:

Synchronisation is a theoretical question, it will never be *fully* possible. However there is a lot we can do and we need to be as flexible as possible and adapt to changes. NL has found flexibility by adding years of strategies awaiting for JP to be synchronized. SE also has a flexible system, while it is more challenging for DE more difficult. A number of MS have fixed programming cycles for all their partner countries, and other MS have no fixed number of years. DE has a complex national system puzzle with allocations to different countries depending on another. The political will is there and HQ is looking into how to do this in practice with a solution of indicative commitments after their three year strategy cycles.

Better to synchronize to electoral cycle since that is more certain and predictable than NDP. In certain countries it does not matter. This was contracted by the other groups with the argument that elections can happen at any time, so it has the same type of uncertainty.

From a humanitarian perspective there is a lot of experience on how to align, synchronize and adapt to each other´s plans to make better use of humanitarian funds. So the humanitarian experience is that if there is willingness it is possible in practice even if it is complicated in theory.

We need to remind ourselves what we want to achieve with synchronization and then it should not be so difficult. Need to complicate less and just do it.

The EDF can be synchronized through revising the MIP. Two of the groups raised doubts that this would happen in practice since the EDF is more or less fixed for the next 7 years. We still do not know how changing MIPs, will work in practise.

Many NDPs will start in 2015 or 2016 to adapt to the post 2015-agenda. That will pose a practical problem to program all strategies at the same time, similar to the current situation now in EC/EEAS with the programming 2014-2020.

Ideally, EU should act more like one and represent EU in our contacts with partner governments. However certain MS would not agree to that, for visibility reasons or because they are simply so big on their own.

The main consensus points:

Decentralisation of decision-making to country level is key.

The field can agree on how synchronization should be done and collectively propose that to all HQ.

What level of synchronization do we really want to see? There are certain disadvantages of full synchronisation for partner countries in particular.

To find the right timing/sequencing of EU-discussion on joint response to NDP, and bilateral negotiations with partner governments and decisions in capitals on what to support is key.

Our joint response, including the indicative amounts, should contain not only the 11th EDF but also what remains under the 10th EDF. That would increase our transparency and effective delivery of results within the period of the national strategy that we are responding to.

What questions remain?

We need clarification on when we should be synchronized and synchronized to what?

Partner governments care about the implementation of the results, so how relevant is synchronizing to a NDP which will not always be fully implemented?

Do we at all want to become fully synchronised, is it a good thing? Especially looking at it from a partner country point of view?

Is it really a good solution for partner countries to have fully synchronised systems? What if all donors decide to withdraw at the same time? In a number of countries donors are a big % of ODA to a given country and what will that do to EU relation with that country if we negotiate such big amounts in one go?

What about the timing of the synchronization. Are we either too late (considering programming 2014-2020) or too early for post 2020? Or is this a good time to try to achieve synchronization to be able to do it from 2020?

Should the EU perhaps re-think the way we do development entirely and give up country strategies by MS. For some MS easier to have a joint strategy than to synchronize all our different strategies.

What do we really want to synchronize, the dialogue with the government or strategy period? How important is it really (according to the presentation from Ghana at expert meeting in Bxls in November it is not all that relevant).

How do we do with the regional dimension?

How do we do in more fragile states? Framework agreement covering several years combined with yearly plans?

What practical next steps // Follow-up-questions?

Next step: Proposals from the field on how synchronization could be done.