



Minutes

Technical Seminar on Joint Programming

DEVCO/EEAS/EU Member States

12 November 2015

The meeting was attended by 17 MS (see list of participants in annex). The agenda and the presentations are attached. Key messages and conclusions include the following.

- Participants were informed that Commissioner Mimica has recently made a **firm commitment** to promoting Joint Programming (JP) and, where the conditions allow, proceeding in the direction of progressively replacing EU programming documents with Joint Programming Strategies.
- Overall **positive messages** from Member States (MS) and their embassies/field offices on JP. MS see JP as progressing well and consider it as a mid/long-term endeavour. It is a new way of working which naturally requires time and has the potential to provide a space for the EU and MS to work jointly on long-term challenges (i.e. SDGs, migration, etc.).
- Exchanges were very fruitful on the **issue of replacement of bilateral programming documents by joint strategies**. While this is for some MS not fully possible yet, for others this is already good practice and is considered an incentive to expand JP. FR and DE have strong political backing of JP towards a substitution of their programming documents. It was agreed that MS and the EU will explore together which should be the "minimum requirements" for JP strategies to replace bilateral ones (inspired by the "core elements" of the EU Multiannual Indicative Programmes / National Indicative Programmes). There was substantial support that future JP documents should fulfil these requirements. It was also agreed to jointly put together a list of potential countries where substitution would be possible in 2016/2017.
- **EU Delegations and EU Member States' Embassies play a key role** and should proactively engage in JP processes. EUD should be provided with the right incentives and adequate support to ensure effective coordination.
- **Result frameworks** are indispensable elements for the next generation of JP. Monitoring keeps the JP documents alive.
- **Knowledge sharing, communication and visibility** need to be reinforced. There are information gaps including between capitals and country offices.
- **Technical support (consultants, support by the HQ) and facilitation** is having good results and should be reinforced.
- MS stressed the importance of JP as a **tool to deliver on the SDGs**.

- A **meeting at technical level** will take place at the beginning of 2016 with a view to make rapid progress on the "replacement issue" considered unanimously as key for the future of JP.
- **Council Conclusions** on JP should be considered for the FAC/DEV in May 2016 in close consultation with the HRVP and the NL Presidency.

Below are noted the main discussion points and conclusions for each session of the seminar.

Opening session

Aida Liha Matejicek, head of unit in DEVCO on "Aid and Development Effectiveness and Financing" welcomed the participants reminding that JP is a key commitment for the EU and MS, which is at the core of the Agenda for Change. She shared recent positive political signals regarding JP. In the recent EU DG's meeting (20-21st October 2015), messages of support to JP were given and the possibility of replacement of EU programming with JP documents was positively considered by a number of MS. Commissioner Mimica has also recently reconfirmed the EU commitment to promoting JP and considering replacing EU and MS bilateral programming documents with JP documents, where the conditions allow. He expects - by the end of the mandate of the Commission in 2019 - to have JP rolled out in as many countries as possible.

Wolfram Vetter, acting head of Development Cooperation Coordination Division in the EEAS, added that the assessment based on recent HoMs' reports reveals that Joint Programming while progressing well, indeed needs continued political and technical support. Already four years have passed after the last Council Conclusions on JP in the run-up to Busan, and new Council Conclusions on JP could be on the table of our Ministers (May 2016). This will be useful to take the process a step further by addressing current challenges such as substitution and synchronisation. Council Conclusions could also root the JP firmly in the 2030 agenda, making it a tool to implement the SDGs. He also mentioned the interesting trend of increased use of JP in difficult contexts (as in Libya or Lebanon) with the objective to reinforce the coherence and visibility of EU support to transition processes, encouraging a "conflict sensitive joint programming".

Session 1. Joint Programming – Moving at different speeds

DEVCO (Lino Molteni and Virginia Manzitti) made a presentation on the state of play based on HoM reports and other feedbacks received by a number of EU delegations (see PPT in annex). The discussion highlighted the following.

Overall MS consider that JP is progressing well. While the EU pointed out that some Heads of Mission (HoMs) reports may reveal a sort of "JP fatigue", several MS do not have the same perception and instead shared positive feedbacks, reminding that JP is complex and is important to remain "realistic" on its development.

However, the comment was made that in some cases EU Delegations could and should develop more leadership and vision on JP. Linked to that, it was noted that the "personality factor" should not

jeopardize JP. The suggestions were made to include JP in the job description of HoCs, to provide incentives for more active engagement, to put JP on the agenda of HoCs annual retreat.

Monitoring and information sharing on JP processes should be improved, for more and better communication and transparency. The "JP tracker" is useful but should be improved, regularly updated and accessible at HQ and country level. It was suggested that the system should include a one page descriptor of the situation in each country. More information on JP regional trends should also be interesting.

JP is country-driven, field offices have an "open mandate" to implement it and this generates new working methods that require flexibility. Communication between capitals and field offices is key.

"Result frameworks", which start to be systematically incorporated in JP strategies, are considered indispensable to "keep JP alive" and "out of the shelves". Overall more attention should be put on achievements of JP, beyond the focus current on "process" aspects.

MS stressed the importance of JP as a tool to deliver on the SDGs. Alignment with partner countries cycle and ownership are also essential element for JP development.

Technical support (consultants, support by headquarters) and facilitation also had good results and should be reinforced.

Section 2. "EU working together"

Veronica White, team leader of the consultant team working on JP, made a presentation focused on a number of cases reflecting positive EU joint initiatives generated by JP (see PPT in annex).

HoM reports have shown that a lot of "joint EU work" is happening. This includes joint implementation that appears to be a natural development of JP. There are others forms of EU Joint work to be noted. JP changes the work culture, creates trust, improves mutual knowledge and facilitates working together in sectors. These side effects of JP should be capitalised and supported.

Section 3. "EU roadmaps for engagement with Civil Society" –

A brief update on the EU Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society ("CSO Roadmaps") was presented by J. Perrot – DEVCO B2 – Civil Society and Local Authorities (see PPT in annex). The following comments were made.

CSO Roadmaps are built on principles similar to those of JP (coordination with EU MS, improved impact...etc.). EU should better streamline the two processes while being aware of the differences – especially in situations where CSO and partner government are on opposite sides.

EEAS pointed out the need to also coordinate with other EU processes among which "EU Democracy Support" and Human Rights Country Strategies. All three can feed the analysis phase of JP.



Section 4. Building on good practices cases – how to move forward

DEVCO (Jost Kadel) made a presentation on how to proceed to improve the quality of JP documents (PPT attached). He briefly went through JP strategies for Kenya, Mali and Cambodia as examples of good practice. Regarding how to move forward, two scenarios were presented: i) JP documents to replace bilateral programming documents in parts or in full or ii) JP documents to serve as umbrella for the bilateral programming and/or implementations documents.

Participants agreed that developing a standard format for JP documents is not the way forward, as local conditions under which we are programming are too diverse. However it is important and helpful to clarify what are the "minimum requirements" of programming documents for MS and the EU.

A results framework should be systematically included in Joint Strategies. Good practice indicates that results frameworks which are not overly detailed help to guide and facilitate the policy dialogue.

5. Lunch presentation by ECDPM: "Stuck in the middle of a crossroads? Best Practice in Joint Programming and Prospects for EU Joint Cooperation Strategies"

Presentation of the ECDPM draft study by Damien Helly, Deputy Head of the Strengthening European External Action Programme and Greta Galeazzi, Policy Officer). Brief informal wrap up of findings and of the discussion is attached. The study was co-financed by NL¹.

6. JP Documents as bilateral programming

Wolfram Vetter made a presentation on how EU intends to substitute bilateral programming documents (see PPT in annex).

Since 2011, Council Conclusions on EU common position for Busan refer to the possible substitution of bilateral strategies with Joint Programming ones. The advantages seem evident: relatively simpler procedures, no double adoption of bilateral and joint programming documents leading to less transaction costs.

For the EU, substitution would imply that the JP document replaces the Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (DCI)/National Indicative Programmes (EDF) /Single Support Frameworks (ENI). For MS, JP documents would replace their bilateral programming documents. The regulations (legal basis) and the programming guidelines for the EU-instruments allow for substitution, but there are specific requirements to meet. To replace EU Programming, a JP document needs to contain the following elements: (i) priority sectors, (ii) specific objectives, (iii) expected results; (iv) performance indicators and (v) indicative financial allocation, both overall and per priority area. As far as the EDF is concerned, the Cotonou provisions would also have to be fulfilled.

Complementing the presentation, and to illustrate the fact the MS are making steps forward in JP, France and Germany presented their position on JP and substitution of their respective programming documents in Mali. Both MS States have strong political backing of JP towards a substitution of their

¹ The study will be published by end of 2015/early 2016 and circulated to all participants of the Technical Seminar.

programming documents; substitution of their bilateral programming documents was possible in Mali (for both) and in other countries for FR. Some resistance in the field and visibility issues need to be addressed (FR). Both countries worked hard on preparing and communicating pro-active guidelines. For DE, the JP documents to serve as bilateral cooperation strategy should contain an analysis of high quality, a joint results framework and the German contribution should be distinct. A legal reform in DE during 2014 (in a context of emergency crises which postponed normal programming cycles) gave more room as programming documents do not need to be signed by the partner country and they are not legally binding.

Germany is ready to go for replacement in as many countries as possible, as this would bring a substantial reduction in transaction costs in the Ministry (no need to draw up full strategy document per partner country). Clear call for the EU to join this trend, to lead by example. It is not enough to refer to the parallel JP strategy in a couple of lines to the NIPs/MIPs. MIP structure could be good to start with.

Some concerns were put forward over the legal nature of the exercise and role of the partner country. In some countries the agreements are legally binding; other countries do not usually sign programming documents with the partner country. Some MS need their own programming document for their government to approve.

As for the EU, substitution of EU (EDF/DCI/ENI) programming has not yet taken place, only annexing of the JP to the MIP in some countries. The upcoming reviews of the DCI/EDF and new programming cycle of the ENI as well as new planning cycles of several partner countries in 2016/2017 are opportunities to promote JP, incl. through substitution. The idea is to initiate this process in a few selected countries where JP processes are already well advanced and a review might be planned [the same approach could be taken in countries without a review].

A discussion followed on an initial and tentative list (not yet consulted internally or with EU Delegations) of the proposed countries for substitution. It made clear that further thought should be given to the selection of countries in consultation with geographical colleagues. The question was raised whether it is possible to ex-ante draw up a list of countries. This should rather be defined by the level of ambition / objective chances of success (depending on country context). There was substantial support from MS that future JP documents should fulfil the requirements for substitution.

The discussion at the next meeting in January will also include a set of "minimum requirements" (content-wise, to fulfil EU MS and EU programming document requirements) that can facilitate the process of substitution. It is advised to keep the discussion at technical level before raising it to Council (CODEV, etc.).

Annex: ECDPM: Stuck in the middle of a crossroads? Best Practice in Joint Programming and Prospects for EU Joint Cooperation Strategies

According to ECDPM, EU Joint Programming has the potential to give the EU and MS more leverage and visibility and achieve better development effectiveness. However, their perception is that the application of JP is uneven: stuck in the middle of a crossroads.

ECDPM mapped positions of Member States' and EU institutions towards JP and developed a comparative profiling tool, offering insight into the behaviour of the most active European Member States and EU institutions vis-à-vis JP. The purpose of the tool is to identify areas for improvement and generate a debate on JP within the MS. The profile is based on four dimensions: political commitments, institutional coherence, instrumental flexibility and practical capacity with accompanying indicators.

ECDPM identified elements for a conducive environment for JP in the context of the partner country: a minimal degree of stability to engage in JP, the government is generally favourable (or indifferent), the EU family in-country already strives for common positions and there is consensus among donors on the added value of JP. A non-conductive environment for JP consists of the opposite elements.

A number of best practices were identified by ECDPM. At headquarters level these include a.o.: sustained political commitment from EU and MS leadership and a facilitating and supporting role of consultants. At field level best practices are a.o.: leadership by the EU delegation, providing incentives to staff and promote buy-in by MS.

For the future of JP, ECDPM developed three scenarios: (i) renaming/rebranding JP as EU Joint Cooperation Strategies which become a strategic priority for HR/VP, Development Commissioner, Global Strategy and development cooperation; (ii) keeping the current status quo: pragmatic but less ambitious (stuck in the middle) with significant political commitments; and (iii) a free riding world with JP declining and MS avoiding collective endeavours in external action.

The discussion focussed a.o. on providing incentives to human resources (staff assessment) which was considered as a workable option. Renaming JP as EU Joint Cooperation Strategies could clarify the confusion which currently exists between JP and Joint Implementation. An alert was made that reducing JP to only processes and coordination takes away the attention from what it is really about: leverage and impact.