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EU INSTITUTIONS AND MEMBER STATES' COOPERATION IN FRAGILE SITUATIONS AND PROTRACTED CRISES

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SUMMARY

Ever since the EU ventured into development cooperation, questions were raised on how its institutions and member states could better coordinate their activities. Numerous initiatives were launched to put into practice their repeated commitment to work more closely together, particularly in situations of fragility and protracted crisis. In this paper we analyse three specific policy initiatives where EU institutions, member states and other non-EU players are working together.

These are:
- the operationalisation of the humanitarian-development nexus in pilot countries,
- the Sahel Alliance, and
- the EU Trust Funds.

The three initiatives have so far managed successfully to bring together all the relevant actors, thus signaling the political commitment to have a joint, quick and effective response to complex challenges in fragile contexts. They have also agree that this response should combine short-term action with more structural engagement, in an integrated manner.

Yet, in practice, the implementation faces coordination obstacles, often because of the top-down and headquarters' driven way these initiatives were conceived and led, and of their inability to link up with other ongoing processes on similar themes or regions. This, in turn, affects negatively the buy-in and ownership of actors at field level.

Our analysis suggests that incentives and disincentives for the EU institutions and the member states to work more closely together are determined by a particular set of trade-offs:
- How to address the practical constraints to coordination while also maintaining a high level of political interest?
- How to accelerate procedures to allow faster and more flexible responses while preserving coordination and inclusive processes that are more time-consuming?
- How to increase EU collective action and visibility while respecting the desire of the individual donors to maintain a high profile on certain topics and/or leadership role in certain areas?

It is important to be realistic about what can be achieved and adjust the level of ambition accordingly.

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Acronyms

AFD:	Agence française de développement
ADB:	African Development Bank
DEVCO:	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (European Commission)
ECA:	European Court of Auditors
ECDPM:	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ECHO:	Directorate-General for Humanitarian aid and Civil Protection (European Commission)
EDF:	European Development Fund
EEAS:	European External Action Service
Enabel:	Belgian development agency
EU:	European Union
EU GS:	European Union Global Strategy
EUTF:	EU Trust Funds
G5 Sahel:	G5 Sahel group of countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger)
GIZ:	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, German development agency
HQ:	Headquarter
HR/VP:	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission
JHDF:	Joint Humanitarian Development Framework
LRRD:	Linking relief, rehabilitation and development
LuxDev:	Lux-Development S.A, aid and development agency of the government of Luxembourg
PIP:	Programme d'investissements prioritaires
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
WB:	World Bank
3D Approach:	Development, Defence, Diplomacy

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) and its member states have repeatedly committed to working more closely together in the area of development cooperation, most recently in the new European Consensus on Development[1] and the Global Strategy for the European Union[2]. Although the development effectiveness agenda has lost political traction in recent years, the need to improve donor coordination remains high and numerous initiatives have been taken to move this forward. A closer look at some concrete initiatives is useful to better understand the incentives and disincentives for effective coordination between the EU and the member states in various contexts.

This discussion paper looks at three recent policy initiatives that hold the potential for strengthening cooperation between the EU institutions and its member states:

* The operationalisation of the humanitarian development nexus in pilot countries (called by the Council of the EU)
* The Sahel Alliance (launched by two member states: France and Germany), and
* The EU Trust Funds[3] (established by the European Commission).

While each of these initiatives emanate from a different EU actor, they all share a common objective: that of enhancing donor coordination in protracted crises and fragile situations. All three initiatives are also open to other actors, including non-EU countries and organisations.

As the EU itself has stated on numerous occasions, it is especially in these contexts that more coordination between the EU institutions and the member states should be sought in order to address challenges more effectively.

Table 1: Presentation of the three initiatives

	Operationalisation of the Humanitarian-Development nexus in pilot countries	Sahel Alliance	EU Trust Fund for Africa
When?	Launched May 2017	Launched July 2017	Launched November 2015
Who?	Council of the EU	France, Germany - joined by the EU, World Bank, UNDP, African Development Bank	European Commission
Why?	To take forward the nexus between sustainable development, humanitarian action and peace and security, with a view to systematise cooperation,	To contribute to the improvement of living conditions in the Sahel region, by focussing on youth employment, rural development, food security,	To deliver concrete results in a rapid and effective manner, by focussing on supporting vulnerable and marginalised population groups (including migrants

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[1] New European Consensus on Development - Our world, our dignity, our future, 2017/C 210/01, June 2017.
[2] Global strategy for the European Union's foreign and security policy, June 2016.
[3] For the purpose of this briefing, we focus mainly on the analysis and feedback on the experience of the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

	enhance the use of best practices and the generation of evidence.	energy and climate, governance, decentralization and access to basic services, and security.	and forcibly displaced people, their origin and host communities, and victims of trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling).
Where?	Chad, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda, Myanmar, Iraq	Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger	<u>West Africa & Lake Chad</u>: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal <u>Horn of Africa</u>: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda <u>North Africa</u>: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia

This paper looks at the above initiatives through a lens of collaboration, examining the extent to which they contribute (or not) to stronger cooperation between the EU institutions and the member states. The research was conducted from January to May 2018. The methodology used was based on desk research supported by over 40 interviews[4] with EU officials and representatives of EU member states based in Brussels, EU capitals and in partner country offices, as well as with representatives of NGOs and research institutes.

2. Operationalisation of the Humanitarian-Development nexus in pilot countries

Efforts to bridge the gap between EU humanitarian aid and development cooperation are not new and have been reiterated in many EU policy documents in recent years. The EU institutions have been striving towards linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) through various mechanisms and instruments[5] with more or less success over the past decade[6].

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4   See list of interviews in Annex. This research did not involve any field visits.
5   In 2011, Commission services developed a methodology to design a 'Joint Humanitarian Development Framework' for transition situations, which integrates different views, the analysis of ongoing and/or planned EU interventions and the identification of strategic priorities.
6   Medinilla, A., Herrero Cangas, A., Deneckere, M. 2016. 'Living apart together': EU development cooperation and humanitarian aid in situations of fragility and protracted crisis. (Discussion Paper 206). Maastricht: ECDPM.

Origins and conception of the initiative

Following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and as part of the EU's new strategic approach to resilience[7], the EU and its member states have focused on addressing the root causes of vulnerability, fragility and conflict while simultaneously meeting humanitarian needs and strengthening resilience. In doing so, member states felt the need to be more concrete by looking at country specificities. The EU Foreign Affairs Council, thus, made a call at the highest political level in May 2017[8], urging the EU institutions to further operationalise the humanitarian-development nexus and to and take forward this approach, starting in a number of pilot countries, namely: Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, Uganda, Myanmar, and Iraq.

Initiated by the EU member states meeting within the Council, this 'pilot country' exercise has been approached as a primarily headquarter-driven process, whereby the Commission was mandated to implement this approach through six of the EU delegations. The main objective of this exercise is to systematise cooperation between humanitarian, development and other relevant actors on the ground in situations of fragility, protracted crises, forced displacement and other humanitarian crises. In particular, it seeks to address implementation challenges on the ground by enhancing coordination internally within the EU institutions and between the EU institutions and the member states, as well as externally with other actors. While the process builds on a long history of attempts to bridge EU humanitarian aid and development cooperation, the pilot country exercise now also explicitly includes conflict prevention and peacebuilding, in a so-called 'triple nexus' approach whereby all relevant actors (humanitarian, development and diplomatic actors) are asked to work together to address the root causes of vulnerability, fragility and conflict and build resilience. The process applies not only to the EU institutions but also to the EU member states and other non-EU actors, including emerging donors, UN departments and agencies, regional and multilateral development banks.

In practice, however, the pilot country exercise remains essentially focused on improving cooperation within the EU institutions, particularly between the European Commission's DG DEVCO (Directorate-General for Development and International Cooperation), DG ECHO (Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). So far, the degree of involvement of EU member states has been mixed. While they are indeed very interested in the process at HQ level, at field level they only engage where they have country offices in the selected pilot countries, when these countries also correspond to priority countries for them and/or when they carry out both humanitarian and development interventions in these countries. This is certainly not the case for the majority of EU member states in the six pilot countries. Therefore, at the end of day, only a handful of member states are actively engaged in the pilot country exercise.

The selection of the pilot countries was a unilateral decision from the European Commission in Brussels, neither the EU delegations nor the EU member states were consulted in the process, which created a certain sense of irritation and reinforced the perception of yet another HQ-driven process that was imposed on the actors on the ground. Several member states had initially requested to expand the list of pilot countries to match their own priorities and country presence. One explanation for the selection of the six pilot countries (chosen from an initial list of 14 countries in which the EU institutions were already implementing nexus approaches) is that they present a wide range of different situations and stages of humanitarian and protracted crises, highlighting the variety of challenges and contexts in which the nexus should be applied. One could argue that this is not a bad thing as the pilot country process precisely aims at adopting context-

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[7]   European Commission/HRVP. 2017. Joint Communication on A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action. JOIN(2017) 21 final. Brussels, 7 June 2017.

[8]   Council of the European Union 2017. Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. Council conclusions, Brussels 19 May 2017.

specific approaches and solutions. Another reason might be that the experience in operationalising the nexus was already well in motion and quite successful in these countries, thus providing the EU institutions a good story to tell when they would have to report back to the Foreign Affairs Council, within a year, on progress in operationalising the nexus, including activities with the member states.

Achievements and shortcomings

The practice thus far has been (or appears to have been) limited to a series of workshops organised in each of the pilot countries (most of them during the first semester of 2018), involving different EU member states as well as non-EU institutions (notably the World Bank and the UN). These workshops brought all relevant actors together with a view to carry out joint context analyses, as a first step towards a better exchange of information by humanitarian and development actors and more integrated approaches. The objective is to develop a common methodology shared by the EU institutions and the member states to assess the situation, define the priorities and needs that must be addressed. While joint analysis is arguably an easy thing to carry out, it nonetheless sheds light on the practical difficulties that occur when bringing various actors together, including when it comes to combining their different analytical tools and methodologies (i.e. the EU's Conflict Early Warning System, the World Bank's Recovery and Peace-Building Assessments, or the UNDP's Post-Disaster Needs Assessments)[9].

Moving from joint analysis to shared objectives, including more political objectives, proved to be much more difficult. Joint assessments have been carried out in all the pilot countries, but it seems that none of the next stages of the process (i.e. definition of joint objectives, joint planning, joint implementation) have been reached so far. Several reasons can be identified. First, from our interviews, it seems that several workshops lacked clarity in terms of desired outcome and deliverables of the joint assessments. Second, it seems that not all workshops had the right participants at the right level of expertise/skills in order to meaningfully contribute to joint assessments as well as take the necessary follow-up decisions. In some instances, the process has stalled due to the fact that decisions could not be made at country level and had to be sent back to HQ in capitals, thus adding an extra layer to the process before decisions could be made and losing momentum on the way. Third, the persisting internal debates within the EU institutions on who should take the lead in the process, as well as the lack of clear communication between Brussels HQ and the EU delegations on the level of cooperation or coordination between development, humanitarian and peace-building actors and on the advancement of the nexus on the ground have made it more difficult, and less inciting, to get all actors, including from the member states, on board.

Breaking down silos and bridging cultures remain important challenges in the humanitarian-development nexus[10]. The workshops seem to confirm the persistent difficulty to bridge the gap between principled humanitarian action on one hand, and political solutions to protracted and complex crises on the other. A major obstacle to the operationalisation of the "triple nexus" is that humanitarian actors often refrain from engaging in dialogues involving a strong political dimension, thus preventing any agreement on common objectives and possibly on more practical forms of cooperation between humanitarian, development and political actors. At the same time, some argue that the involvement of the EU member states in the pilot country exercise is one way to bring in more political actors around the table and to make more operational linkages between the various dimensions.

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[9]   The EU has a "Support Office for Post Crisis Assessment and Recovery Planning" which provides support to EU delegations and EU services in Brussels in the planning, undertaking and reporting of disaster- and conflict-related needs assessment missions.

[10] Medinilla, A., Herrero Cangas, A., Deneckere, M. 2016. 'Living apart together': EU development cooperation and humanitarian aid in situations of fragility and protracted crisis. (Discussion Paper 206). Maastricht: ECDPM.

The most advanced process was found in Iraq, where the different humanitarian, development and political actors - from the EU and other international players - were able to agree on clear political objectives (i.e. the political stabilisation of the country) and define a strategy to this end, fully taking into account the Iraqi government's priorities. This is due to the very advanced international efforts in the country, the strong ownership of the Iraqi government and the organisation of the international conference for the reconstruction of Iraq in February 2018, which created a strong momentum for integrated action. Success, in this case, appears to be more contextual than a result of the pilot country process itself.

There are still challenges in linking this new initiative with other ongoing similar processes in which the EU institutions and the member states are also engaged. According to several interviewees from the field, the nexus pilot country exercise has until now mainly consisted of repackaging ongoing LRRD processes in which the EU was already engaged, without bringing much added value to them. Some even consider that the Brussels-led exercise has not sufficiently taken these processes into consideration nor built upon other related processes (such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in Uganda), at the risk of overlooking progress made by starting from scratch. For some interviewees, other processes could also provide interesting experiences of EU institutions and member states working together in similar contexts. In particular, lessons could be drawn from joint humanitarian-development frameworks in other countries that are not part of the pilot country exercise, such as in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Turkey and even Yemen. Building on previously existing experiences is crucial in order not to supplant other locally driven processes.

A further criticism of the pilot country exercise gathered in our interviews relates to the limited degree of ownership and leadership of local and national authorities in the process. Local stakeholders and government authorities were only marginally involved in the workshops. In some countries this is due to a lack of capacity, in others to a lack of political interest or alignment of interest. A possible solution might be investing more in capacity building so that the country can have a stronger role in leading the process. Having said that, it was also pointed that the lack of a strong local government's lead can sometimes also facilitate freedom of action and enhanced coordination amongst donors on the ground.

Overall, progress in the pilot countries has been limited. The main structural constraint that we identified is the clear disconnect between the HQ-driven, often abstract interpretation of nexus or integrated approaches, and the reality on the ground in specific (protracted) crisis situations. As a result, the pilot country exercise was in many cases received as a largely bureaucratic task, not necessarily responding to a clear demand or interest articulated at country level. The strong call of the Council instructing the Commission to prioritise nexus approaches seems to have been oblivious of the long-standing efforts that are already being deployed at field level, illustrating once again a certain disconnect between HQ and field level. Such disconnects risk creating parallel processes and duplicating efforts, or even bringing progress achieved in some instances back to square one. In turn, this gap negatively affects the potential to bring EU institutions and member states more closely together.

3. The Sahel Alliance

The Sahel Alliance was set up in July 2017[11] as a joint initiative of France and Germany, together with the EU, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the UNDP as the other founding members. The Alliance is presented as an international cooperation platform aimed at strengthening donor coordination in the Sahel region in order to deliver faster and more effective aid, especially for vulnerable populations in remote areas. Since the Alliance is less than a year old, it is not possible to assess the concrete impact reached on the ground. Our study, therefore, limits itself to analysing the added value of the Alliance with regard to the broadening of the spectrum of actors involved and the increased visibility it is giving to the Sahel.

A promising high-profile initiative

An important feature of this initiative is its strong politically driven nature, notably from the French President Macron and the German Chancellor Merkel. The creation of the Sahel Alliance was one of the outcomes of the Franco-German Ministerial Council in July 2017[12]. This strong political push has been instrumental in profiling and giving visibility to the initiative, and creating a real momentum, which has led to increased dedicated resources for the Sahel, as demonstrated at the International High Level Conference on the Sahel in Brussels in February 2018. This momentum also confirms the growing importance of the Sahel as a geostrategic region for the EU with regard to migration and security challenges.

While the Alliance was initially conceived by a small group of actors, it is open to other countries and organisations, including other EU member states. As a matter of fact, it has since been joined by Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom ahead of the official launch of the Sahel Alliance at the Sahel Conference. Several other EU member states (Luxembourg, Denmark and the Netherlands) have expressed their interest in joining the Alliance. The United States' Agency for International Development and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation currently participate as observers. While the adherence of new countries indicates an increasing mobilisation of development actors for the Sahel region, it is also a way for other EU member states to be inside the room and well informed, as well as an opportunity for them to give more visibility to their own actions and interests in the Sahel.

The Alliance is often presented as the 'development pillar' of the international community's broader engagement in the Sahel and, in particular, as a complement to the support to the G5 Sahel joint military force[13]. Indeed, beyond fighting terrorism and stopping migration flows, the Alliance also aims to enhance the long-term stability of the Sahel by promoting an integrated approach to address the development and security challenges in region that cannot be overcome with a military approach alone. While there seems to be a general consensus on the so-called 3D approach (development, defence, diplomacy) that needs to be applied in the region, there were nonetheless some internal debates within the Alliance on the place and importance to give to the (internal) security dimension. The Alliance was initially not intended to focus on that aspect, but the EU made it conditional to its participation that security be one of the main priority areas of the Alliance, in line with the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel.

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[11] https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/29876/alliance-sahel-will-reinforce-eu-work-stability-and-development-key-region_en

[12] https://www.france-allemagne.fr/IMG/pdf/fiche-alliance-sahel.pdf

[13] In 2014, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger set up the "G5 Sahel" group of countries to foster close cooperation in the region and tackle the major challenges that these countries face.The G5 Sahel Joint Force is an African-led initiative bringing together the G5 Sahel countries and supported by the EU, the African Union and the United Nations.

The Sahel Alliance focuses on six main development issues: youth employment and education, rural development and food security, energy and climate, governance, decentralisation and access to basic services, and security. For each of them, a number of common objectives and simple target result indicators have been defined, to be achieved by 2022. The first tangible results measured against these indicators should be visible and reported within the first year already, as of September 2018, and will then be re-assessed three, and then five years later. Going forward, this could lead to the setting up of a joint results framework between the various donors engaged in the Sahel in the longer term. This would constitute a significant step towards more coordination between the main multilateral and bilateral development partners in the region.

The Alliance has announced the implementation of over 500 projects worth €6 billion of investments over the next five years[14]. Although it is not clear how much of this envelope will be fresh money, as the portfolio of projects is essentially composed of existing and already planned projects that have been labelled 'Alliance projects'. The repackaging of projects under a common umbrella is supposed to facilitate synergies between ongoing and future projects in the region. Ambitions are high and specific indicators for the results to achieve are clearly identified. Will these high expectations be effectively lived up to?

Doubts and questions on the conception of the initiative

While the objectives of the initiative seem clear and consensual, there has been some criticism on the way the Sahel Alliance was conceived and presented to other partners.

First, it was elaborated very quickly and discussed only by a small number of actors, with very little involvement of other EU member states before it was officially presented in July 2017. As a result, the initiative was initially received with circumspection in Brussels and criticised for not having been inclusive enough. Several member states were particularly concerned about the fact that they had not been consulted regarding the participation of the EU, and questions were raised on the capacity in which the HR/VP signed the initiative (in her own name or that of the EU?). In addition, it was generally felt as a bureaucratic negotiation between Paris, Berlin and the World Bank headquarters in Washington. There were initially no clear rules on how and when other donors could join the initiative.

This may be due to the unavoidable trial-and-error approach linked to the launch of new initiatives, but it seems that the strong pressure from French President Macron to act fast has also led to shortcuts in the normal consultation processes, illustrating a potential trade-off between the desire to move fast and a more time-consuming consultative and inclusive process that will inevitably go slower and may not maintain the level of political interest.

Second, the Alliance has been criticised for having been an essentially donor-driven initiative so far, largely bypassing Sahel countries in the first stages of the process. There have been serious concerns, in particular from NGOs, regarding the low level of ownership of the initiative at field level thus far, both from the partner countries in the Sahel as well as from the donor country offices (including EU delegations), which have been put in front of a *fait accompli*. The Sahel Alliance is now progressively landing and being rolled out in partner countries, with a view to explaining it better in those very countries as well as to staff in donor country offices.

One area of misunderstanding relates to whether the initiative would bring in fresh money to the countries in the Sahel. The promoters and members of the Alliance argue that it is not a pledging initiative and that it has primarily a coordination function. Yet, the G5 Sahel countries have also developed their own national and

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14   https://www.afd.fr/en/sahel-alliance-launched-eur-6bn-and-500-projects-development

regional priorities, as put forward in the G5 Sahel Strategy for Development and Security, and its accompanying *Programme d'investissements prioritaires* (PIP). The latter identifies programmes and projects requiring funding from external partners, including for the nascent G5 Sahel joint military force. The linkages are, however, still unclear between the projects labelled under the Sahel Alliance and the G5 Sahel priority projects of the PIP. Although the priorities are not far from each other, there is no matching in terms of funding and no current mechanism to ensure synergies.

Questions have also been raised on the added value of this initiative altogether, and how it fits with other initiatives and processes covering the Sahel region. Indeed, the Sahel Alliance adds a layer to an already complex juxtaposition of initiatives and strategies for the region[15], including the EU's own Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. The need for synergies and coordination between the various strategies in the Sahel has been emphasised[16], and the Alliance ought to build on these processes rather than creating parallel structures.

Early stages of implementation and remaining challenges

In terms of concrete functioning, the Alliance is organised around a rolling Coordination Unit that sits for the first year within the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). The primary task is to facilitate exchange of information (for instance, the current mapping of donor projects in the region) and sharing of good practices among the partners in the Alliance. The organisation of joint missions, analyses and training are also considered in order to accelerate procedures and seek complementarities. Some partners of the Alliance are introducing or adapting their internal procedures in order to work within the Alliance. For instance, the AFD has been subject to strong pressure from the highest level to embark on a cultural and operational shift by establishing fast-track procedures, focusing on riskier projects with rapid impact, and seeking to work more systematically with other partners. The World Bank (WB) created, for the first time, three layers of coordination: a first level, including ministers and senior representatives of the bank, who meet twice a year in order to discuss the results of the initiative. A second management level that is organised around weekly meetings of WB managers at headquarters level. And a third level of interaction at ground level, which involves also UN representatives as well as representatives of EU member states. The latter meet more than once a week and report back to the WB.

The Sahel Alliance offers new opportunities for improving coordination between existing EU institutions, member states and other donors' development assistance in the region, in a faster and more interlinked way through joint action. The strong political push and the priority given to delivering concrete results are clearly positive elements. But a number of substantial weaknesses still need to be addressed if the Alliance is to deliver on its promises. Most importantly, the Alliance needs to be framed properly by building on existing structures and frameworks as well as by making sure it includes all key actors. A main shortcoming of the Alliance, so far, is due to its excessively top-down approach in the initial stages, with a limited involvement of the G5 Sahel countries. This raises questions on the ownership and sustainability of the initiative at the local level. Furthermore, in order to increase the commitment of other EU member states and the linkages with the EU Strategy for the Sahel, the Commission should play a stronger role as coordinator within the Alliance. This would also avoid the Alliance being perceived as the crown jewel of one single EU member state.

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[15] Helly, D., Théroux-Bénoni L-A., Galeazzi, G., Maïga, I., Ouédraogo, F. 2017. "Cartographie sectorielle. Interventions relatives à la sécurité et à la gouvernance dans le Sahel", ISS, ECDPM, UNOWAS.

[16] Helly, D., Théroux-Bénoni, L.-A., Galeazzi, G., Maïga, I., Ouédraogo, F. 2015. "Sahel Strategies: Why Coordination is Imperative". (ISS Policy Brief 76).

4.   EU Trust Funds[17]

 EU Trust Funds (EUTF) are part of the EU's external action instruments aimed at addressing various types of emergency, post-emergency or thematic actions[18]. They have attracted a lot of attention in recent years as they became the new preferred *ad hoc* instrument for the EU's response to urgent challenges. Since 2014, the European Commission has set up four Trust Funds[19].

There is a wide recognition that EUTFs can bring added value in terms of rapid, flexible and effective response, notably by allowing faster EU spending and facilitating pooling of resources and coordination of EU and member states. While increasing coordination between the EU and member states is not the primary objective of EU Trust Funds, it remains nonetheless an important aspect that merits further analysis. In theory, not only do Trust Funds serve as a pooled funding modality, they also have great potential for improving aid effectiveness in fragile states, "due to the fact that they allow donors to deliver European aid to specific objectives in target regions, sharing analysis and implementing capacities under a common umbrella of a variety of European donors"[20].

Pooling of resources

One of the main advantages of EUTFs is their potential to pool resources from a variety of EU donors which could in turn also increase coordination between them. An important factor to incentivise member states, especially smaller member states, to contribute to Trust Funds lies in their governance arrangements and voting rights, which creates a level playing field between donors. In the case of the EUTF for Africa[21], the rule is one vote per donor (as long as contributions reach the 3 million EUR threshold). However, in practice, voting rights are not a big issue as all decisions are usually made by consensus among all donors without formal voting.

Yet, it appears that the leveraging effect of the EUTF has not worked fully. This is particularly true for the EUTF for Africa for which the Commission was perhaps over optimistic and has had to make regular top-up contributions to compensate for the lagging contributions of member states[22]. The Commission has recently drawn attention to the need to address a funding gap of € 1.2 billion[23] that has been identified for the three windows of the EUTF for Africa, inviting the member states to honour their commitments and increase their pledges (replenishment of the EUTF[24]). But several member states are requesting a proper evaluation of the results of the EUTF for Africa before committing new funds.

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[17]   For the purpose of this briefing, we focus mainly on the experience of the EUTF for Africa.
[18]   Hauck, V., Knoll, A., Herrero Cangas, A. 2015. "EU Trust Funds – Shaping more comprehensive external action?" (Briefing Note 81), ECDPM.
[19]   These are: the EU Trust Fund for the Central African Republic (Bêkou Trust Fund), the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (Madad Trust Fund), the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa), the EU Trust Fund for Colombia (EUTF for Colombia).
[20]   Orbie, J., Verschaeve, J., Delputte, S., Williams, Y., Steurs, L. 2017. "Improving European coordination in fragile states", Centre for EU Studies, Ghent University.
[21]   Unlike the Bêkou Trust Fund which established a weighted system of voting rights according to the ratio of contributions – and to which only four EU member states have contributed to.
[22]   https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/contributions_0.pdf
[23]   http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-3743_en.htm
[24]   The Progress report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration "highlights funding gaps on the North Africa window of the EU Trust Fund, but also for the Sahel and Lake Chad, and Horn of Africa windows which will also require further joint EU and member states funding to be mobilised in the coming months". COM(2018) 250 final.

The first ever audit undertaken so far for any EU Trust Fund is the European Court of Auditors (ECA) Report on the Bêkou Trust Fund[25]. While the report gives an overall positive assessment of the Bêkou Trust Fund, it nonetheless points to its limited influence on coordination amongst stakeholders, and thus recommends the Commission to improve donor coordination. Interestingly, while the Commission has accepted the recommendation, it also implies that, by the mere act of creating a Trust Fund, it has given "the possibility to other donors to channel their funds through the Commission", and that it "cannot impose on donors to effectively use that possibility"[26]. Beyond this rather defensive argument suggesting that the Commission has done its part of the job, and that member states have some homework to do, the important point stressed by the Commission is that "the prerequisite to act in a less fragmented and more coordinated fashion is that all donors present (and especially EU member states) accept to use the Trust Fund as the sole (or at least the major) instrument for channeling their aid". The situation seems to be the same concerning the EUTF for Africa because many donors engage on migration projects in their bilateral projects as well as through the EUTF, thus making coordination more challenging.

The question is whether the Commission has indeed made all the necessary arrangements to make it appealing and easier for the member states to channel their resources and implementation capacities through the Trust Funds?

Accelerating implementation and increasing coordinating on the ground

While the EUTFs have so far put a strong emphasis on speeding the project identification and approval process, they have not yet lived up to the expectations in terms of increased donor coordination on the ground. The pressure to deliver fast and to give high visibility to actions funded under the EUTF for Africa may have been undertaken at the expense of coordination between EU and member states.

The Commission argues that is has done its fair share of the deal by accelerating its own internal procedures (or even cut corners), in particular concerning project identification and approval. The strong pressure to act swiftly has enabled a significant shortening of the time-lapse between the identification and the adoption of a given action (from 12-18 months to three-four months). This has resulted in a mushrooming of projects in a very short time frame.

In order to further simplify and speed up the contracting process, several EUTFs[27] give an *a priori* preference to member states' agencies (e.g. AFD, GIZ, LuxDev, Enabel etc.) to implement the activities funded under the Trust Fund. The preference given by default to member states' projects appears as a major incentive to get EU member states on board to contribute to the Trust Fund (and get their money back?). It resulted in the quick approval of repackaged projects or the continuation of existing projects. Yet, there are risks and challenges posed by the acceleration of procedures[28], and this has indeed come at a cost.

First, the fast-track approval of projects means that there was very limited space (and time) to organise bottom-up consultations or to carry out sound context analyses. Local political economy dynamics as well as migration and displacement patterns were not sufficiently taken into account, leading to the adoption of rushed top-down interventions in the first generation of EUTF projects. Several interviewees considered that

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25 European Court of Auditors, Special report no 11/2017: The Bêkou EU trust fund for the Central African Republic: a hopeful beginning despite some shortcomings, September 2017.

26 See Replies of the Commission to the Special Report of the European Court of Auditors 11/2017 on The Bêkou EU trust fund, https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR17_11/SR_BEKOU_EN.pdf

27 The constitutive agreements of the Bêkou Trust Fund and EUTF for Africa give explicit priority to member states led implementation of projects under delegated agreements.

28 Herrero Cangas, A., Knoll, A. 2016."The EU Trust Fund for Africa: A new EU instrument to accelerate peace and prosperity?" GREAT Insights Magazine, Volume 5, Issue 1, ECDPM.

many selected projects wouldn't have gone through the normal screening of EDF projects which follow much stricter rules in the identification and formulation phase – yet recognise that this would take much more time.

Second, the shortcutting in the project selection and approval process has also been criticized for impinging on transparency and accountability[29]. It also raises questions about possible conflict of interests. As pointed out in a recent study, "the in-built priority for delegated agreements with member states leads to a certain dynamic of member states pushing for 'their' projects and deal-making among them that is difficult to avoid"[30].

In spite of an acceleration of procedures to identify projects, contracting still takes time. The time depends notably on the country situation, available staff in EU delegations, as well as on the level of responsiveness and flexibility of different implementing actors. A key challenge for joint action in the EUTF thus also lies on the extent to which implementing agencies are willing and able to make the necessary adjustments to their own internal rules and procedures to follow suit. Yet, it seems that member states' implementing agencies still have a certain reluctance and/or difficulty in following the rhythm and accelerated procedures imposed on them by the Commission. This is either due to the fact that implementing agencies, especially the bigger ones, are bound by their own set of complex procedures that are hard to compress, or because the use of accelerated or alternative procedures[31] might affect their own interests and preferences (for example, in terms of subcontracting, purchase of material or staff recruitment). Furthermore, working with some of the agencies is made difficult because of capacity gaps and lack of experience on some of the issues that the EUTF focuses on, such as migration, border governance and forced displacement.

Member states implementing agencies are exploring ways to strengthen collaboration and coordination among themselves (notably through the Practitioners Network[32]) building on existing practices and to use the Trust Funds as a stepping-stone to this end. Good collaboration is already happening in a number of projects under the EUTF for Africa, where joint implementation and complementarities are being sought, sometimes as early as the inception/conception phase[33]. Furthermore, for most of the projects, steering committees involving the implementing partners and the beneficiary countries are set up. In Morocco, for example, a local coordination group has been set up between several donors of the Trust Fund including the EU member states, Switzerland and Norway.

A key question here is how proactive and supportive the EU can and should be to further encourage such joint action? After having acted as an ATM for the rapid delivery of projects, at the expense of coordination, the Commission is now increasingly trying to bring more order and coordination between the various implementing entities. This is being undertaken, for instance, through the conception of programmes covering larger geographical areas instead of scattered small projects, division of labour between implementing agencies and attribution of projects based on their respective comparative advantage. Another

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[29] The European Court of Auditors report on the Bêkou Trust Fund has pointed to situations of "potential conflict of interest" when, in some instances, member states were represented in the operational committee – where decisions are made about the projects to be funded – by their respective implementing agencies.

[30] Carrera, S., Den, H., Núñez Ferrer, J. 2018. "Oversight and Management of the EU Trust Funds: Democratic Accountability Challenges and Promising Practices". CEPS Special Report.

[31] While standard PAGoDA provisions can be used by several "pillar assessed" implementing agencies in order to simplify the contractual negotiations, the latter tend to be attached to using their own procedures, notably when it comes to procurement as a way to preserve interests.

[32] The Practitioners' Network of European Development Cooperation is an informal platform that brings together European public agencies and institutions in charge of executing bilateral and EU development cooperation.

[33] For example, the project "Rapid Action Groups - Monitoring and Intervention in the Sahel (GAR-SI Sahel)" is being implemented in the G5 Sahel member states and Senegal by the Spanish Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP) as leader of a Consortium of several member states (France, Italy, Portugal).

important way is through the use of a common results framework[34] to measure the collective achievements of the EUTF against a set of jointly defined 19 macro indicators[35] covering the four strategic priorities of the EUTF. Results are communicated through a public reporting platform (AKVO Real Simple Reporting[36]) for all projects and programmes funded through the EUTF. While this is a positive step towards setting up a common monitoring and reporting system against the objectives and indicators of the EUTF, several implementing agencies still experience difficulties in using this platform and reporting on a more frequent basis, as now imposed by the Commission.

Increasing EU political clout and visibility

The EUTF for Africa is often recognised by the EU institutions and the member states as having served as a catalyst for a stronger EU and member states' engagement and collaboration at political level on migration. The EUTF for Africa was, in that regard, instrumental in obtaining an EU-Africa declaration on migration at the Valletta Summit in 2015, and now constitutes a key ingredient in the implementation of the Migration Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration[37], to which member states are fully associated. For many interviewees, the EUTF for Africa did respond to the European political sense of urgency to stop irregular migration to Europe and allowed closer collaboration and exchange of information between the EU, the member states and the national authorities of partner countries on migration related issues. This took place in the Strategic Board as well as in the meetings of the Operational Committees for the approval of projects under the three geographic windows of the EUTF for Africa.

The establishment of so-called 'migration+ groups'[38] and the nomination of migration officers in EU delegations, have also enabled good dialogue and exchange of information between the EU and member states and a better understanding of the drivers and dynamics of migration. Yet, policy alignment between the EU and its member states remains difficult, given the highly political nature of migration issues. The EUTF for Africa has notably been criticised for its narrow focus on migration management and strong calls have been made, including by several member states, for maintaining the broad-based approach envisaged under the five Valletta pillars.

EUTFs have become an integral part of the range of instruments for EU external action, some arguing that they allow the EU to be more relevant and strategic in its external policies, particularly in responding to crisis situations. The political value of EUTFs is indeed often highlighted as a positive accomplishment, as they send a strong message of commitment and are important operational tools for supporting the EU's response to crises, such as the post-conflict reconstruction in Central Africa, the crisis in Syria, the migration and refugee challenges, or for supporting the peace process in Colombia.

5. Common observations on the three initiatives: Drivers and constraints for EU coordination

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[34] https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/eu-emergency-trust-fund-results-framework-25042016_en_2.pdf

[35] https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/list_of_eutf_macro_indicators_and_their_definitions_vf.pdf

[36] The AKVO Real Simple Reporting system allows the EUTF to collect, update and store detailed programme and project information and helps to monitor, report and communicate on the fund's activities.

[37] The main objective of the Migration Partnership Framework is to improve cooperation on return and readmission and on migration governance more broadly through using EU policies, including development cooperation and the EUTF funding as leverage.

[38] The so-called "migration + groups" are groups involving the EU delegations, EU member states and few other European Countries (Switzerland and Norway are permanent members while other Countries, UN Organisations and researchers can be invited to attend depending on the agenda.

The three initiatives presented above have been analysed separately from the perspective of how they each contribute so far to enhancing European coordination for tackling pressing priorities more effectively. Due to their relatively recent nature, it is too early at this stage to draw any conclusion on their effectiveness in delivering results. However, a number of common observations can already be made with regard to the three initiatives taken together in terms of why and how they are contributing to bringing the EU institutions and member states closer together. Our analysis shows mixed results overall. Below, we make a number of observations on what seems to constitute drivers and constraints for enhanced coordination, as well as potential trade-offs that ought to be fully considered.

All three initiatives share common context-related characteristics: they all concern and apply to **countries in situation of fragility and/or protracted crises**. It is precisely in these contexts that challenges as well as the need for better coordination are the greatest. All three initiatives underline the **EU collective willingness and commitment to act swiftly and in a more coordinated manner** in fragile situations, protracted crises and conflict-affected countries. However, the **difficulty remains to ensure that these commitments taken at political level trickle down and are effectively rolled out at the operational level**.

All three processes analysed provide concrete illustrations of the so-called nexus approach (humanitarian/development/peace, development/security, development/migration) that is being increasingly promoted and followed by the EU institutions and the member states to address complex situations in an integrated manner. These **nexus approaches call for more coordination between the various actors involved** and for more synergies between the different processes at play in these contexts.

While there appears to be a general political consensus on the value and necessity of these nexuses, there are **still many challenges in putting them in practice**. All three initiatives have been confronted by internal debates on **how to articulate the various dimensions** of the respective nexus they aim to apply. Because of the variety of actors involved and their different cultural and organisational approaches (further complicated by the progressive extension to non-EU actors such as the World Bank and the UN), the exercise is made even more difficult and seems to call for someone to take the lead in coordinating the various aspects. Furthermore, making the respective **rules and procedures fit together** can be very time - and resource - consuming and may also represent disincentives for closer cooperation, unless there is a strong gain to be made, be it in terms of reduced transaction costs and increased effectiveness, enhanced policy influence and visibility, or access to new sources of funding.

In each of the three initiatives, some key incentives seem to have been particularly important in determining the level of involvement of the member states: **better access to information** (particularly true for the pilot country exercise), **not being left out** of key processes (particularly true for the Sahel Alliance), and the **ability to influence and shape decisions** (particularly for the EUTF). Potential disincentives appear whenever there are conflicting political agendas between the EU institutions and different EU member states. The latter are ready to play the game of EU coordination as long as it serves their own priorities and/or profiling. We point here to a **trade-off between EU visibility and collective action**, and the concern shared by several member states on maintaining a high profile on certain topics and/or leadership role in certain areas (such as France in the case of the Sahel Alliance).

All three selected initiatives have benefited, in different ways, from **high-level political support and sponsorship**. This is both a cause and a consequence of the strong interest and collective engagement of the EU institutions and member states to effectively and comprehensively address the challenges of migration, development and security in Africa, especially in the Sahel. Yet, our analysis also suggests that even with high political support and pressure for quick and effective EU responses, political and institutional

incentives and systems are still not sufficiently aligned to reap the full benefit of an all-of-EU approach, particularly when dealing with such highly sensitive and political issues.
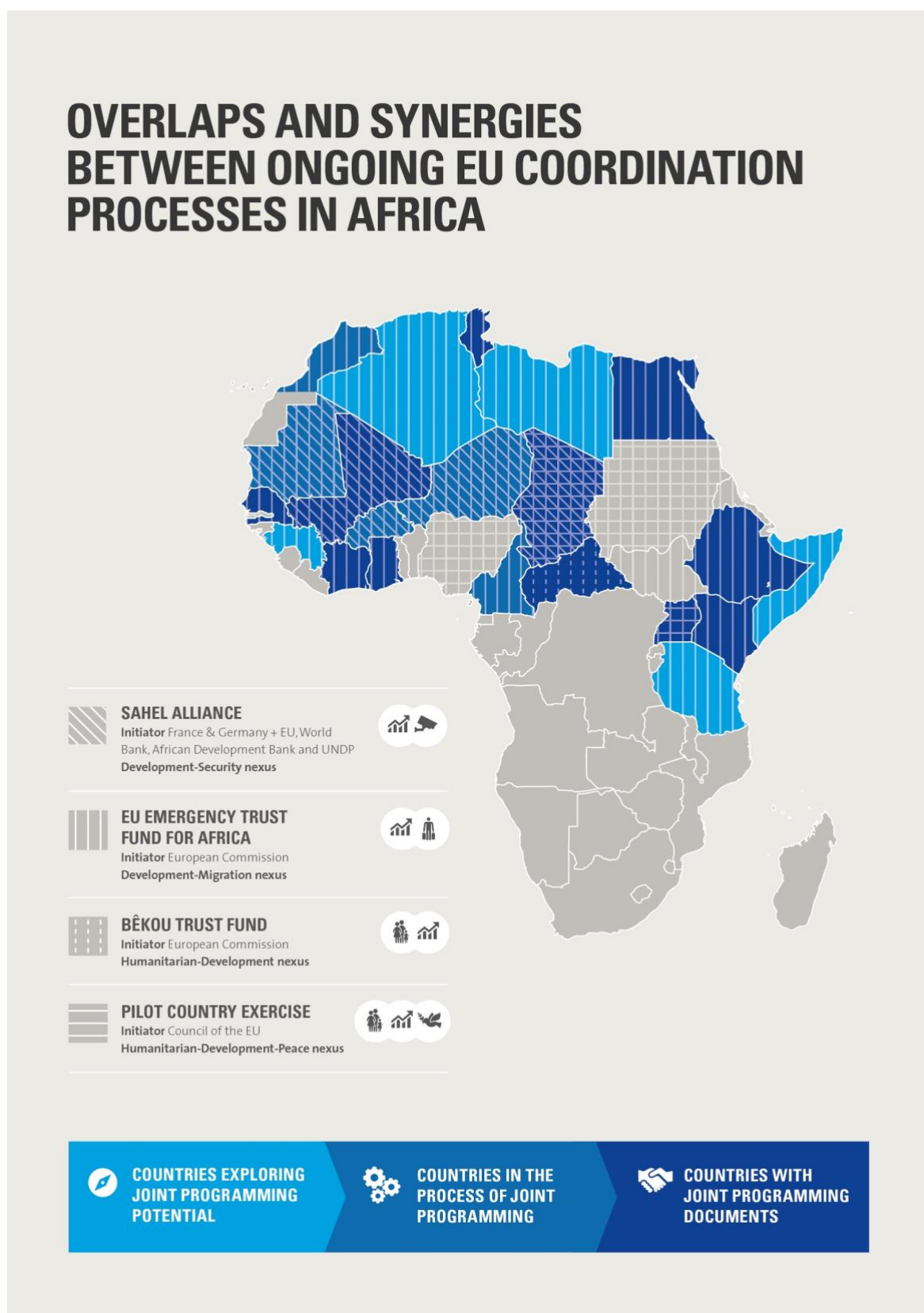
In all three initiatives, strong political support and backing has proven to be an essential - but not sufficient - ingredient for **enhancing speed, flexibility and coordination**. We have observed how such political pressure to deliver quick and visible results has been instrumental in accelerating procedures within the Commission (through the EUTF) as well as some member states' implementing agencies (such as the AFD with the Sahel Alliance). However, this **pressure for swift responses has also led to shortcutting established bureaucratic procedures** (such as project assessment and quality control) and **circumventing a number of consultation processes** that allow for stronger ownership and inclusiveness. This points to a first potential **trade-off between faster speed of delivery on one hand, and increased ownership and inclusiveness on the other**. Political interest is evidently currently more focused on speed of delivery.

At the same time, **moving too fast might hinder the local capacity to develop a real sense of ownership** of the various processes. All three initiatives show that there are tensions and a balance to be found between, on the one hand the need to act fast and to deliver quick and visible results through faster implementation procedures, and on the other hand, the need to ensure that all actions complement each other and contribute to sustainable results, increase ownership and long-term stability. Interestingly, at HQ level the EU is often blamed for not acting fast enough, while it is paradoxically criticised by some practitioners in the field for wanting to go too fast. Local ownership and empowerment have also emerged as key factors to ensure long-term stability and sustainability of the various processes.

As experience shows, and as illustrated in the pilot country exercise and the Sahel Alliance, it is important to build on processes and structures that are already in place rather than seeking to reinvent the wheel. Coordination does not take place in a vacuum and it is important to **take into account all the ongoing processes and dynamics in the country.** A first step to avoid duplications and to ensure maximum buy-in from actors already involved in existing coordination exercises is to be fully aware, to acknowledge and support efforts that are already being made at field level**,** including joint programming (figure 1).

The success of locally driven initiatives is also linked to the **human resources able to implement them**. Having the right expertise, the capacity to effectively take decisions, and a strong motivation and support from HQ is paramount. This is particularly true when it comes to the relation between the field level and the HQ. Issues perceived at field level as problematic are often linked to poor information flows and need for increased trust and mutual recognition, as well as enhanced complementarity.

Figure 1. Overlaps and synergies between ongoing EU coordination processes in Africa[39]

OVERLAPS AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN ONGOING EU COORDINATION PROCESSES IN AFRICA

SAHEL ALLIANCE
Initiator France & Germany + EU, World Bank, African Development Bank and UNDP
Development-Security nexus

EU EMERGENCY TRUST FUND FOR AFRICA
Initiator European Commission
Development-Migration nexus

BÊKOU TRUST FUND
Initiator European Commission
Humanitarian-Development nexus

PILOT COUNTRY EXERCISE
Initiator Council of the EU
Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus

COUNTRIES EXPLORING JOINT PROGRAMMING POTENTIAL

COUNTRIES IN THE PROCESS OF JOINT PROGRAMMING

COUNTRIES WITH JOINT PROGRAMMING DOCUMENTS

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[39]   The graph presents the geographic coverage in Africa of the three initiatives under consideration, illustrating overlaps and potential synergies between them as well as with ongoing joint programming processes in these countries. Joint programming processes are also ongoing in other countries in Africa (not mentioned in this graph).

6. Conclusion

The EU institutions and the member states all agree on the importance of acting together, fast and in an integrated manner to respond to situations of fragility and protracted crises. A number of recent initiatives such as those analysed in this paper are aimed at demonstrating to the world, to EU citizens and to partner countries, that the EU as a whole is taking these challenges seriously and committed at the highest level to addressing them through EU external policy in all its aspects.

Development cooperation is one aspect of the broader EU external action. It is also a shared and parallel competence[40], as defined in the Treaty of European Union. The Treaty also obliges the EU institutions and the member states to coordinate their activities. Yet, despite repeated political commitments to work more closely together, legally and politically the EU institutions and member states have limited ability to compel each other to do so.

Coordination-in-practice has not come easy and is too often bogged down to bureaucratic processes and hampered by the lack of political support and buy-in from member states, at the HQ and field level. As we all know, everybody is for coordination, but nobody wants to be coordinated. However, the EU's coordinating role in fragile situations requires, even more so perhaps than in other situations, that the member states display a high degree of willingness to be coordinated.

What, then, could and should be the role of the European Commission? A recent study on improving European coordination in fragile countries[41] argues that the EU could and should play the role of the facilitator through fostering existing joint implementation initiatives and providing common goods and services for coordination in fragile states, without necessarily seeking to label all coordination efforts with an EU flag.

Joint programming and joint implementation remain flagship EU processes to get the EU institutions and the member states working better together, pool resources, reduce fragmentation and boost effectiveness. While good progress has been made in both areas in recent years, with over 60 countries now involved in implementing joint programming at different stages, there remains a need to clarify the roles of - and to update guidance for - all stakeholders. The concept and modalities of joint implementation also need to be further clarified.

There is also a need to further explore new avenues and complementary ways to improve coordination and joint implementation that are less bureaucratic and more flexible, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected countries. In addition to EU institutionalised processes, there are examples of joint approaches that are being carried out at country level outside formal frameworks and procedures. Such initiatives are not necessarily EU-led processes, might be open to non-EU donors, can take multiple forms and entail various degrees of coordination. Looking into such examples (including good practices as well as unsuccessful experiences) can provide useful insights on the enabling dynamics and constraining factors for EU coordination at field level.

Against this background, several key questions deserve further analysis: How can the different processes at play be mutually reinforcing? In particular, how can these new "*ad hoc*" initiatives and parallel processes connect and complement each other? Should they -, and if so, how could they - be plugged into other broader

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[40] Parallel competence is a specific type of shared competence whereby the exercise by the EU of its competence does not result in Member States being prevented from exercising theirs.

[41] Orbie, J., Verschaeve, J., Delputte, S., Williams, Y., Steurs, L. 2017. "Improving European coordination in fragile states", Centre for EU Studies, Ghent University.

processes that bring the EU family (and others?) together - especially joint programming and joint implementation? What might work to further incentivise the EU institutions and the member states to work better together? How to oil the wheels of the various barriers (structural, operational, conceptual, political) for enhanced EU and member states coordination?

While there are many good reasons and incentives for the EU institutions and the member states to work better together and join forces, there are also a number of reasons that explain why the EU institutions and individual member states might not wish to fully engage in wide-ranging coordination exercises and collaborate further. It is therefore important to also be realistic about what can be achieved by paying particular attention to the implementation challenges and possible trade-offs for the EU institutions and the member states, and adjust the level of ambition accordingly.

Annex 1: List of interviewees

Institution	Number of People interviewed	
EU Institutions		
DEVCO	2	Dir B, Unit B2, Resilience, Fragility
DEVCO	1	Dir A, Unit A2, Development Financing Effectiveness, Relations with Member States
DEVCO	2	Dir E, Unit E2, Western Africa
ECHO	1	Dir C, Unit C1, Policy Development and Regional Strategy
ECHO	1	ECHO Field Office, Nigeria
EEAS	1	Africa, Division 3, West Africa
EEAS	1	GLOBAL — Human rights, global and multilateral issues, Division 5, Development cooperation coordination
EEAS	1	EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS
EEAS	1	EU Delegation to Cameroon
EEAS	2	EU Delegation to Mali
EEAS	1	EU Delegation to Chad
International Organisations		
World Bank	2	Washington and Brussels
Civil Society Organisations and Foundations		
VOICE	2	Brussels
ONE, France	2	Paris
Gates Foundation	2	Paris
Open Society Foundation	1	Brussels
EU Member States		
Denmark	1	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Copenhagen
Denmark	1	Danish Embassy in Uganda
France	1	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Paris
France	1	Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels
Germany	2	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Bonn
Germany	2	Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels
Italy	2	Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels
Spain	1	Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels
Sweden	1	Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels
United Kingdom	5	London, Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels and country offices in Chad and Nigeria
Development Agencies		
Practitioners Network	3	Brussels

Agence Française de Développement (AFD)	2	Brussels and Paris
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	1	Brussels
Academia and Think tanks		
Centre for EU Studies, Ghent University	1	Ghent
German Development Institute (DIE)	2	Bonn
Some people have been interviewed more than once		

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