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Master's Thesis

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Joint Programming: the limits to coordination

An exploratory study of the obstacles to the Joint Programming of the European Union

[NOTE! This thesis is based on interview-data kindly provided by professionals with knowledge of and prior experience with the Joint Programming process. They are anonymised as are the institutions for which they work. Views expressed by the interviewees are personal and not a reflection of the opinions held by their institutions]

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Title / Subtitle: Joint Programming: the limits to coordination - An exploratory study of the obstacles to the Joint Programming of the European Union

Topic description: Applying the tradition of practice theory, the present Master's thesis seeks to answer the research question: *What are the obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by the practitioners responsible for its implementation?*

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"… if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less…"

- John Donne, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

Abstract

The present Master's thesis sought to answer the research question: *What are the obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by the practitioners responsible for its implementation?*

Previous studies (all non-academic) of Joint Programming were reviewed in order to hypothesise four types of obstacles likely to occur during the process: (i) relational - interpersonal issues, (ii) substantive - professional disagreements between partners, (iii) institutional - set institutional factors outside of the control of officials tasked with carrying out Joint Programming and (iv) political - obstacles arising from the domestic, political context of Member States of the European Union.

Theodor Schatzki's contributions to the tradition of practice theory formed the basis of an analytical framework in order to enrich the understanding of the obstacles to be analysed. This framework consisted of four levels: 1) practical understandings, 2) rules, 3) the teleoaffective structure, and 4) general understandings.

The data was collected through interviews with five European officials familiar with Joint Programming. Two of the interviewees were from the European Union's institutions - one from the field and one from headquarters. The remaining interviewees were from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Member State X - two from the field and one from headquarters.

The analysis confirmed the occurrence of the four types of obstacles hypothesised and listed all the obstacles identified. Some were aligned with previous studies of Joint Programming while others were additional to those. Most were found in attempts to map existing development interventions and formulate a division of labour.

The discussion treated the broader implications of the obstacles identified. Three main points prevailed. First, the actual programming phase, bar the joint analysis, is undercut by intractable problems. This implies a stronger focus on what can be done in the post-programming phase to improve cooperation and joint action. Next, strong group dynamics emerged as an underestimated factor in determining succesful cooperation of any sort among European partners. Third, there were indications that politicisation of aid could be leveraged towards constructive results by thinking the political and development tracks as one.

The research concluded that there are numerous relational, substantive, institutional and political obstacles to Joint Programming. These are primarily found in attempts to map existing development interventions and formulate a division of labour.

9. Appendices   93

1. Introduction

1.1. Global context and relevance of the research

In 1989, Francis Fukuyama published his famous essay *The End of History?* He suggested that liberal democracy perhaps finally stood alone as the end-stage of human social organisation. To say that a few things have nuanced this picture in the intervening years would be a gross understatement.

The Rwandan Genocide just five years on was probably the most heinous indication of the fallibility of the global, liberal order. It was a tragic intersection of ethnic tensions, a failure to communicate and a fatal hesitance to act on the part of the international community.

Then 9/11 happened. If the Rwandan Genocide exposed the faults in the global, liberal order then the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 repudiated the idea altogether by showing that it was in no way global. Humanity had truly *"entered the third millenium through a gate of fire"* as suggested by then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, in his Nobel Lecture on December 10 of the same year (Annan 2001).

Since then, the Financial Crisis of 2008 brought dire harm to the global economy with ruin and rising inequality to follow. In 2015, an explosion in refugees and migrants from the African continent conveyed the urgency with which economic development is needed globally.

The liberal element of the aforementioned order was then heavily disputed by a number of developments in the 2010s. Two severe upset elections demonstrated this incontrovertibly: the Brexit decision of June 2016 by the British people cleaved through Europe and shook the European Union that epitomised the progress and promise of liberal order for prosperity and peace. Then came the election of Donald J. Trump to President of the United States of America, long hailed - by Westerners - as the first and most formidable defender of that order. This highlighted that all was not well on either side of the Atlantic Ocean.

These marquee moments are described because each, in its own way, exemplifies the challenges and the importance of joint European external action - the subject of this Master's thesis. Specifically, it revolves around European efforts to join up external action for development and poverty eradication in developing countries around the world. These efforts are called Joint Programming. Joint Programming, it is proposed, is and should be an integral response to global politics and the siege of the global, liberal order. If wielded

correctly it might be a tool for influencing the world in a way that aligns with European values and interests.

The Rwandan Genocide was the problem from hell (Power 2002). It was a great and terrible showcase of how much can go wrong when coordination fails at country-level, an accurate analysis of the situation doesn't take root among international partners and communications to headquarters fail to lead to the necessary actions.

The acts of international terrorism committed on that fateful September day in 2001 throw in stark relief the complexity inherent to external action where issues of humanitarian suffering, instability and extremism, and development meet to become seemingly intractable.

The Global, Financial Crisis of 2008 and the subsequent rise in inequality between and within countries relate to us how the whole system can work against our politically, stated efforts. It is not merely a question of finding the right input resulting in desired outcomes because economic forces are much too complex to control entirely. This is why it is all the more vital to implement our policies in the most effective way possible, acting on what is in our control and doing it well.

The election of Donald J. Trump to President of the United States carried with it a simple and devastating idea: Europe cannot count on the US when it wishes to advance the liberal values, which make up the ideological foundation of its progress since World War II.

The Refugee Crisis of 2015 clearly communicated to Europe its own interests in promoting stability in its neighbouring regions. It also brought forth the cracks within the European Union by calling into question values that were taken for granted just a few short years before.

Finally, the British decision to leave the European Union was the paragon of all the above dynamics in politics as it was brought about by a confluence of factors (Arnorsson & Zoega 2018). It stemmed from frustrations with the international community - the same frustrations poured forth after Rwanda. It drew on the fear of dark ideologies and foreigners as seen in 9/11 and the Refugee Crisis. It flowed from the resentment that comes from economic inequality. And it foreshadowed the distancing of old allies to be seen during the United States Presidential Election in November 2016.

This is why joint European external action is more important than ever. This is why understanding how it works, or why it doesn't is relevant. This is why this thesis is about Joint Programming.

1.2. Joint Programming and Research Question

Stated plainly, Joint Programming within the development cooperation of the European Union is an ambition to work better together at development country level as a European group of donors in order to improve development effectiveness and better advance European values and interests.

The ambition itself is not exactly new. It began with the common foreign and security policy of the Maastricht Treat from 1992 as it formulated *'the desire to coordinate bilateral development policies'* (Langlet 2017). The concept of Joint Programming began emerging with the EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour in Development Policy, adopted in 2007, as it aimed to *'reduce the administrative formalities, to use the funds where they are most needed, to pool aid and to share the work to deliver more, better and faster aid'* (ibid). However, the term wasn't formalised until 2012 as the European Commission (specifically DG DEVCO - Directorate-General for Development Cooperation) and the newly formed European External Action Service (EEAS) started driving the agenda in earnest.

The intention here is not to give a historical view of where joint programming began or how it has evolved. The intention is to just briefly outline how joint programming is understood today. The latest Guidance on Joint Programming (DG DEVCO 2018) released by the EU institutions defines Joint Programming as:

> *"the joint planning of development cooperation by the EU development partners working in a partner country. It includes a joint analysis of the country situation followed by a joint response setting out how EU development partners will provide support and measure progress."*

The aim of this thesis is to examine the obstacles to Joint Programming. Crucially, this is the obstacles to Joint Programming as understood by the practitioners who are tasked with carrying it out at the level of the developing countries. This thesis will not be a quantitative study of Joint Programming but a descriptive and exploratory study of the obstacles European officials are faced with. The research question for this thesis is:

Research question:

What are the obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by the practitioners responsible for its implementation?

To answer this question, this thesis will draw on existing literature on Joint Programming and academic literature on development cooperation. Furthermore, relevant documents published by the EU Institutions on Joint Programming will form the fundamental understanding of Joint Programming.

The chapter on theory will form an analytical framework in the tradition of practice theory for understanding and writing about Joint Programming. This framework will inform the methodological chapter as it elaborates the objectives of the data collection through interviews. The methodological chapter will also explain the reasoning behind the choice of the interviewees as participants have been picked from both headquarters and field-level. Interviews with a Member State's staff will be complemented by interviews with officials from the European Union institutions, namely the European Commission both at country level and in Bruxelles. The chapter on analysis will answer the research question by identifying a number of obstacles on the basis of codes formulated in the chapter on methodology with the help of the theoretical framework supplied by practice theory. The chapter on discussion will center on broader implications of the obstacles in relation to development cooperation. Further, there will be a brief section discussing and critiquing the methodology. A brief chapter will describe the perspectives for further research before the conclusion sums up the present Master's thesis.

2. Theory

This chapter is structured in five parts. First, the subject matter of the thesis will be related to the broader literature on aid and development, thereby communicating the outline of this thesis vis-a-vis other literature on development. Second, a clear definition and conceptualisation of Joint Programming will be laid out for the benefit of analytical clarity as it is a requisite element in order to understand the process. Third, a section will introduce the concept of relationalism and its relevance to the application of practice theory in this research. This will be the basis for the fourth section, in which relevant literature on practice theory will be introduced, including the core concepts of the research, in order to inform a theoretical framework for describing the presumed obstacles to Joint Programming. Thus, the theoretical chapter concludes by formulating a set of hypotheses to be tested in the chapter on analysis.

2.1. Development literature and Joint Programming

Development aid and development cooperation are hotly contested topics. This introduction will briefly situate this thesis in regard to the countless points of disagreement and controversy inherent to the field of development academia. This is done partly as an act of self-preservation and in order to clarify the scope of this thesis and the resulting limitations.

The following paragraphs will group development literature into four categories. These categories are idealised and, as the text will show, difficult to apply rigidly to all contributions to the field.

First, there is the discussion about the rationale behind aid as it relates to international politics and inter-state tensions. This discussion raises issues of altruism and ethical responsibilities, national self-interest and - of course - questions of race, cultural cleavages and the white man's burden (Kipling 1889). This aspect of contention is the philosophical debate around aid. It is mainly concerned with understanding the causes of aid-giving. An example of this is the paper by Olesen & Pedersen from 2010 on rationales for development aid.

Second is the effectiveness debate around aid. It is made up of a number of insightful books that each make one of two cases: Either (i) they argue that aid works and improving it is a technical question, or (ii) they claim aid is ineffectual at best and harmful at worst. The scholarly face-off between Jeffrey Sachs and William Easterly (see: Sachs 2006 and Easterly 2007) is a clear and memorable example of the effectiveness debate.

Interestingly, the academic debate between modernisation theory and dependency theory (see: Rostow 1960 & Ferraro 2008) is situated between the philosophical and the effectiveness debates around aid, as they relate both to the reasons for giving aid and the effectiveness of it.

Third, we find what may be coined the debate of development policy. It is concerned with the definition and the drivers of development. The development policy debate asks the questions: what is development and how is it achieved? Two commendable examples are Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom* (1999) and Acemoglu and Robinson's *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (2012). Situated between the effectiveness debate and the development policy debate is *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* by Banerjee & Duflo (2011). The latter is enlightening as it deflates the macro-level discussions of aid effectiveness while informing the more pragmatic debate on development policy.

Fourth and finally, there is the technical debate around aid. In short, the technical debate is unconcerned with the reasons, presumes effectiveness and is indifferent to the policy. The chief concern of the technical debate is how to implement policies most effectively for whatever reasons, and effective implementation doesn't necessarily have to be measured through development results. It may as well be measured through outputs relative to inputs. This thesis will fall within the fourth category of development discussions - the technical debate.

2.2. Joint Programming

2.2.a. - What is Joint Programming?

Per the 2018 Guidance (DG DEVCO 2018), *"Joint Programming is the joint planning for development cooperation and external action"* by European development actors at partner country level. In this context, a partner country is understood to be a non-EU country, in which development cooperation is carried out. European development actors or partners are Member States' embassies as well as European Union delegations. However, non-EU development partners are also able to join the process if they subscribe to the principles of Joint Programming.

Before going on to describe the elements expected to make up Joint Programming, the Guidance emphasises that the process is "a voluntary, flexible and tailored process designed and driven by" the European partners.

In its broadest sense, Joint Programming is taken to encompass five main elements or phases. The distinction between these has limited practical application in the analysis of this study but they have informed the interview guide as a way to structure questioning and they will be mentioned again in the discussion. The scope of this thesis is limited to phases 1 through 4 so the results framework will not be treated. The data collection would otherwise have been overwhelming.

1. Joint analysis - a cooperative analysis of the country situation, which identifies the central needs or determinants of development in the country.
2. Joint mapping of existing interventions - this is an attempt to list the interventions which are being implemented by European partners.
3. Joint division of labour - this exercise seeks to distribute sectors in which to work for the European partners in a way that enhances coherence and reduces overlaps in European efforts.
4. Joint implementation - modalities whereby EU development actors partner up for the implementation; financially or otherwise. Joint implementation is mentioned as a frequent result of the Joint Programming but not as a part of it in itself. However, it would be fair to characterise as a significant component to joined-up donor action. This element or phase also includes efforts to synchronise development planning between actors.
5. Joint results framework - a framework for monitoring the process, informing the dialogue on impact of EU assistance and enhancing mutual accountability.

The joint analysis, mapping, division of labour and results framework make up what is called the Joint Programming Document, which anchors the whole process as it does a number of things: (i) sets out priorities for support, (ii) formulate the expected results and (iii) give an indicative level of funding, broken down by priority. Further, (iv) it gives a division of labour across the priorities.

Importantly, the Joint Programming Document should seek to respond to the partner country's national development plan as developing countries should be able to set their own priorities, making Joint Programming an illustration of the EU's specific contribution to the national development plan. This is also the reason that one of the objectives of the process is to synchronise to the timeline of the planning cycle of the partner country as it enables support that is properly focused on the partner country's dispositions.

Finally, the Joint Programming Document is to be prepared in close cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders such as the host government/national authorities, parliament, regional organisations, civil society and the private sector. The above is the elements that make up a Joint Programming process as illustrated by Figure 1. The greens will be included in the data collection and treated in the analysis in varying degrees depending on the obstacles they present.

Figure 1: the what of Joint Programming

Analysis —> Mapping —> Division of labour —> Implementation —> Evaluation of results
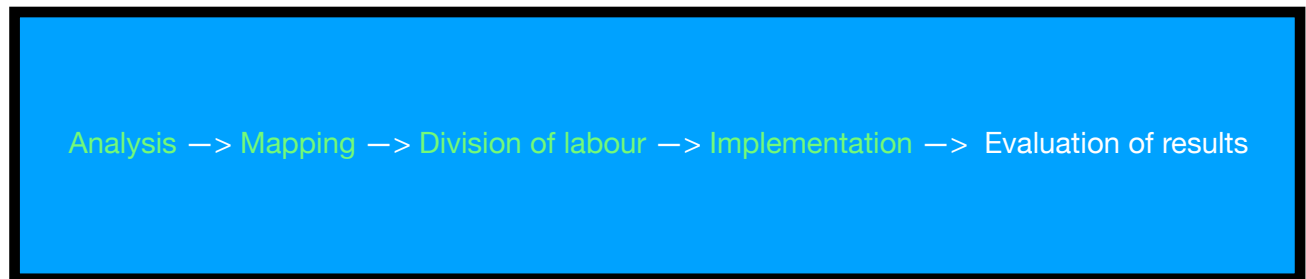
2.2.b. - Why Joint Programming

After the descriptive section, the Joint Programming Guidance briefly outlines the rationale for the process, which is elaborated here for the benefit of the reader.

For analytical purposes, the benefits have been grouped under three headlines. They are there to aid the thinking around Joint Programming. The reasons for each benefit is developed below. The headlines are: (i) benefits to the European Union, (ii) benefits to partner country (host) governments, and (iii) benefits to aid effectiveness.

Benefits to the European Union

The supposed benefits of Joint Programming to the European Union boils down to three things: European values, visibility and joint implementation.

As European donors coordinate, they will be better able to promote European values and policies such as fundamental rights and good governance. This is because the Joint Programming process is intended to increase the coherence of efforts, consolidating actions for common objectives.

Joint Programming increases visibility because it is a public endeavour towards better development cooperation. The inclusion of various stakeholders, which is carried out by a number of EU partners as a collective European effort, is a functional decision but also one that is made up of visible positive steps taken by the EU. Further, the individual partners will still benefit from the visibility of their individual actions.

Finally, the collective push towards understanding the country situation, mapping priorities and existing initiatives can help identify opportunities for joint implementation. This can save money through economies of scale and reduced overhead costs.

Benefits to the partner country governments

The supposed benefits of Joint Programming to the partner country government spring from two points: alignment with national development plans and reduced transaction costs.

An intention for Joint Programming is to align efforts with national development plans. The Joint Programming Guidance (DG DEVCO 2018) states that: *"In principle, it should respond to the partner country's national development plan"*. This is beneficial in at least two ways. First, it functionally supports the government in its policies which will aid their succesful implementation. Second, it politically supports the government because aiding its policies will lend credibility as it helps realise the government's political programme.

A coordinated process of analysis and response formulation reduces the work load for national stakeholders. In theory, a government official only needs to give her clear and honest account of the development objectives in her sector to one EU development partner and it will inform all participants in the Joint Programming process; across a whole government and countless authorities, these are considerable savings on transaction costs.

Benefits to aid effectiveness

The supposed benefits to aid effectiveness of Joint Programming is centred on reducing aid fragmentation and enhancing predictability and transparency.

Development interventions that are incoherent with those of other partners can result in efforts that are blind to the broader dynamics at play in the developing countries as well as the efforts of other donors and national actors. At best, this leads to development cooperation that is ineffectual, without lasting impact; at worst, it does harm to the independent development of the country and/or the efforts of others.

The Joint Programming process takes aim at this fragmentation by setting out from a common analysis, enriched by national stakeholders, towards coherent action. As the labour is divided between development partners - indeed, as development actors become partners - gaps are covered and overlaps are avoided.

Further, Joint Programming formulates a predictable plan for the measures to be implemented and identifies the indicators to monitor the progress. The predictability

makes it easier for implementing partners to plan. The transparency also enables monitoring of those participating in the Joint Programming, whereby development partners can be held to account for their actions, and ineffectual or harmful policies can be corrected.

Finally, the reduced transaction costs described as beneficial for the partner country government is taken to also improve aid effectiveness. This is because the workload for development partners not participating in the Joint Programming as well as other national stakeholders, such as civil society and the private sector, is also reduced. Fewer consultations are needed and predictability makes it easier to avoid overlaps on their part. Table 1 delineates the three areas of supposed benefit to come from Joint Programming.

Table 1: Supposed benefits from Joint Programming

Benefits of Joint Programming

Beneficiaries	Benefits
Benefits to the EU	- Promoting European values and policies - Creating visibility for the EU and European development partners - Joint implementation
Benefits to partner country governments	- Functional support by implementation of policies - Political support by implementation of political programme - Reducing transaction costs
Benefits to aid effectiveness	- Reducing aid fragmentation - Increasing predictability and transparency - Reducing transaction costs for other development partners

2.2.c. - Obstacles to Joint Programming

This section goes through previous research on Joint Programming to single out what has previously been identified as troublesome to the process. It is based on two papers by Galeazzi et al. (2013) and Helly et al. (2015), respectively. The obstacles to Joint Programming will be categorised according to four headlines: (i) relational, (ii) substantive, (iii) institutional and (iv) political. These will be an integral part of the framework for analysis. Each will briefly be described below.

Relational obstacles are those arising from interpersonal issues. A classic example could be antipathetic personalities across embassies, where Ambassadors or Heads of Cooperation are at odds for some reason (ibid: 45).

Substantive obstacles are those arising from professional disagreements, usually on how to best go about development in the given country. A subset of the EU actors present in a country might have their doubts about the value added by Joint Programming (ibid: 46). The actors might not operate with the same definition of a sector or a project, or they may have diverging assessments of their respective comparative value propositions in the local context (Galeazi et al., 2013: 8). Finally, each actor involved in Joint Programming might have her own understandings of the partner country situation and needs following from it, and if these are too far apart it would be difficult to conduct a division of labour (Helly et al., 2015:19).

Institutional obstacles are those pertaining to set institutional circumstances, over which individual actors have very little control. A good example would be capacity constraints, when the engagement of an embassy is undercut by scarcity of time and/or resources as Joint Programming itself requires efforts additional to the ones that make up the bilateral development cooperation (Galeazi et al., 2013: 6).

Another is whether and to what degree embassies enjoy autonomy in their decision-making (Helly et al., 2015: 21). A certain degree of autonomy makes field level coordination easier as flexibility is conducive to taking account of other embassies' efforts. It is related to the issue of capacity constraints as resource scarcity becomes less constraining, where decision-making power is decentralised to field level and independent of coordination and consultation with headquarters.

A relevant concept that is ingrained in institutionalist theory is that of path dependency (Fioretos et al. 2018). The traditional sectors of engagement for a development partner are likely ones that partner would like to maintain, as this is where the Member State presumably has a certain amount of expertise, partners and/or a wish to see things through. Inflexibility on this point can be detrimental to the Joint Programming process (Helly et al., 2015: 21).

Political obstacles are those arising from considerations of the domestic, political environment. The calculation by those involved is that some element of Joint Programming or a quality inherent to the process is detrimental to the political vision, interests and/or policy objectives of their political superiors. An example could be a hesitation to engage in the process on the part of a practitioner because of the perception that it actually reduces the visibility of their bilateral development efforts (Galeazi et al., 2013: 6). Another would be the perception that national priorities are diluted during the coordination (ibid), and as such Joint Programming is challenged by *a priori* objectives, which are defined in a domestic context.

These are the four main categories of obstacles to successful Joint Programming. Importantly, the above has left out issues arising from the partner country government as well as the local context. These have been excluded due to time and capacity constraints. A design encompassing the entire scope of relevant issues would require far greater resources than have been available for the production of this thesis. As such, the focus will be on what the EU partners can do to improve Joint Programming efforts.

The categories of obstacles described above will be the starting point of the data collection and analysis. This study puts forward the hypotheses that each of the four types of obstacles challenge the implementation of Joint Programming:

Hypothesis 1: relational obstacles are found in the Joint Programming process

Hypothesis 2: substantive obstacles are found in the Joint Programming process

Hypothesis 3: institutional obstacles are found in the Joint Programming process

Hypothesis 4: political obstacles are found in the Joint Programming process

The first part of the analysis will be dedicated to analysing the data in order to confirm or reject these hypotheses. The second part of the analysis will apply the framework of practice theory in order to get a better understanding of these obstacles and what their implications are for the process.

2.3. Practice Theory

2.3.a. - International relations, relationalism and practice theory

In order to theorise about the Joint Programming process, this thesis draws upon the tradition of practice theory. Practice theory is a recent orientation - in historical terms - of the social sciences that has sprung forth since the 1970s (Nicolini 2017: 19). It seeks to straddle the classical divide between agents and structures (Ortner, 1984). Each of these classic approaches are considered limited and limiting in the understanding of social phenomena.

Before outlining the specificities of the practice theory to be applied in this thesis, it would be prudent to briefly consider the rationale for this approach. As was evident from the introduction, this thesis has international politics as its starting point as European

cooperation - in its many forms - is considered integral to the wealth of the European countries, the health of the European ideas and the future of global governance.

Classical international relations theory draws upon certain pre-empirical assumptions about how the world works and the relevant units of analysis. Take the realist and liberal traditions by way of example. The realist tradition emphasises power and the pursuit of security by individual and state actors (Jackson 2013:61). The ends and means are given from the outset, and the results are similarly presupposed as the anarchical nature of reality induces the security dilemma and likely conflict (Brown & Ainley, 2009:103).

The liberal tradition also presupposes the objectives of actors and the appropriate measures for achieving those objectives. The risk of conflict is present (Brown and Ainley 2009: 20), but the objective is peace through the organising potential of international institutions (Jackson 2013:65). This potential can be leveraged through the activation of ideas and identities, whereby an order is reached by expanding the scope of diplomacy beyond the narrow objective of individual advancement or national security (ibid: 64).

A foundational proposition of this thesis is that such *a priori* approaches are unhelpful. An illustrative example is given in the movie *Arrival* (Villeneuve & Levine et al. 2016), where humankind is visited by extraterrestrials: the visitors touch down several places across the globe and each host country has different approaches to communicating with them. The Chinese decide to use the game of chess as the framework for translation and the game dynamics as the basic building blocks of a shared language. As a result, the Chinese eventually attack the visitors because a mishap in communication causes them to feel threatened, about which the American protagonist declares that the outcome was to be expected as chess is conflictual in its essence.

The pitfalls of presuming the units of analysis and relevant factors were clearly spelt out in the book *Diplomacy and the Making of World Politics* (eds. Sending et al., 2015). The final chapter of the book by Rebecca Adler-Nissen (ibid: 284ff.) criticises the fact that most research on international relations starts from the subjects of the social world and neglects the relations between them. This approach is dubbed substantialism and *"it claims that substances (things, beings, entities, essences) are the "units" or "levels" of analysis and that they exist prior to their interaction"*.

This substantialism, posits Adler-Nissen, is contrary to the perspective of most diplomats who view the world as a set of relations through which states, international organisations and high representatives reproduce and legitimise each other's existence by virtue of their interactions. It is in these relations that states and their diplomats formulate

interests and objectives, as well as the means to achieve them. This relationalism - as it is termed - is a long way from the more rigid assumptions about actors, their interests and the measures to be taken in pursuit of those interests found in most classical scholarship on international issues. The relational perspective might prove insightful for understanding exactly what the field is about: international *relations*. One illuminating example is Vincent Pouliot's contribution to the same book (ibid: 80ff.), which applies a relationalist, and essentially practice-oriented, lens to foster new insights into the workings of permanent representations to international organisations.

In this sense, the above literature on relationalism represent a different way to go about studying international relations, for which practice theory can provide a useful toolbox and vocabulary. The above justification leads into the particulars of the practice theory to be applied in this thesis.

2.3.b. - Foundations of practice theory

A few paragraphs on practice theory, more generally, will preface the outline of the specific theoretical touchstones that will frame the study of the Joint Programming process.

The tradition has sociological and anthropological origins. This is evidenced by Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus from his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). Habitus is understood as internalisation of the social in the human body (ibid), whereby the break with the schism between actor and structure appears forcefully.

Nicolini lucidly puts forward five assumptions shared by practice-oriented scholarship (2017). The first is the idea that the fundamental features of human life such as sociality, knowledge and meaning are rooted in and transpire through practices and their connections.

The next is that practices are unified material activities performed by multiple people. A quotidian practice would be cooking a meal, which is made up of a constellation of actions such as heating the stove, chopping the vegetables and preparing the meat. The individual activities of the practice of cooking a meal will differ depending on the meal, the culture and the materials available to the cook. However, it is a global and universally recognised practice.

Thirdly, no practice can readily be reduced to words on a page, and the focus is on the human body, its actions and the artefacts involved. The implications of this understanding is an emphasis on intelligibility (how one makes sense of things) and practical knowledge - the capacity to act without thinking first or to do so on the basis of

tacit knowledge - as opposed to viewing practices as governed by strict rules and conscious decisions.

The fourth core idea is that a necessary component of all seemingly durable elements that make up the social world is productive and reproductive efforts. These efforts are carried out by individuals, however the focus is not on the actors; it is on the practices. Actors are considered carriers of practice.

Finally, all human activity is unpredictable, 'an open event'. Agents act in the world on the basis of reasons and assumptions about causal relationships, however unconscious they may be, but the resulting conduct and its outcomes are not fully determined. Thus every point of action is potentially the beginning of new or an adjustment of existing practices. A simplified statement of the five core ideas of the practice of practice theory are listed here:

1. The fundamental features of human life are rooted in and transpire through practices.
2. Practices are organised constellations of material activities.
3. Practice is irreducible to words, and this understanding *"foregrounds the role of the body and artefacts"* (ibid).
4. All apparently permanent phenomena are constantly produced and reproduced through practices.
5. Human activity and its outcomes are non-determined even when they are steeped in preconceived conceptions of a given practice or bundle of practices.

The above has been described for the benefit of the reader and in order to contextualise the application of practice theory in this research. These ideational cornerstones of practice theory will also provide some qualifications of the conclusions that can be drawn from the ensuing research as the methodological part of the discussion will show. The theoretical frame for analysing Joint Programming will be provided by Theodore Schatzki's work, which will now be described.

2.3.c. - Schatzki's practice theory

Theodore Schatzki has put forward a frame for applying practice theory. This has been done in his main works on the approach - *Social Practices* (1996) & *The Site of the Social* (2002). The latter work elaborates and adjusts the former, and this thesis will primarily draw on *The Site of the Social*. This section will go through key terms in Schatzki's vocabulary on practices as these will be the basis for conceptualising the investigation of

Joint Programming as conducted through interviews. The framework has been chosen partly because it is widely recognised and partly because it provides a comprehensible set of constitutive parts that are conducive to analytical application.

The most concise - albeit dense - description of practices by Schatzki is that *"any practice is an organized, open-ended spatial-temporal manifold of actions."* (2005: 471). Thus, a practice is made up of several actions organised by a certain logic. This manifold of actions is open-ended, both in the sense that there isn't necessarily a clear beginning or end, and in the sense that the outcome of a practice is not given. Finally, practices can stretch over time and space.

The definition is important for analysing specific practices, as it is precisely characteristics such as open-ended, spatially wide and temporally prolonged that allows practices to have such diverse, intended and unintended social outcomes regardless of the initial logic used to organise the practice in question.

The definition can be elaborated as practices are understood as doings and sayings (Schatzki, 2002: 77) that hang together in *nexuses* of action - for the purposes of this thesis nexuses and manifolds will be used interchangeably. The nexus is held together by four components, which will be used as the building blocks of the research to be conducted. These are: (i) practical understandings, (ii), rules, (iii) a teleoaffective structure and (iv) general understandings. Each will be treated in-depth below.

Practical understandings

Practical understandings are considered to be the skills and/or abilities required to execute the actions composing practice. These practical understandings are required both for basic actions, such as typing on a keyboard, and to nonbasic actions, such as writing a diplomatic report to headquarters. Thus, a nonbasic action is itself made up of a number of different basic actions. This kind of conceptualisation can be seen as atomic in the sense that the whole is considered to be made up of many different parts, and each part is in turn made up of a number of smaller parts and so on.

Schatzki then goes on to identify three specific abilities that are especially pertinent to practical understandings. The first is the ability to perform the action, the second is the ability to identify the action, and the third is the ability to know how to elicit that action, as *"all participants in a practice are able to perform, identify, and prompt some subset of the practice's doing and sayings"* (ibid).

Schatzki then makes an important distinction between his practical understandings and similar terms in the work of other theorists of practice, namely Bourdieu (1977) and

Giddens (1984). Bourdieu and Giddens apply the terms practical sense and practical consciousness, respectively. Those two concepts are much broader as they also contain the reasoning for carrying out specific actions, and they are thus self-explanatory. Schatzki's analytical framework places the space of reasons in the teleoaffective structure treated below.

For analytical purposes, practical understandings and their relevance to the research will pertain to what this thesis coins the *practical or first level*.

Rules

Schatzki defines rules as "*explicit formulations, principles, precepts, and instructions that enjoin, direct or remonstrate people to perform specific actions*" (Schatzki 2002: 79).

In a way, this is the simplest phenomenon linking doings and sayings of a given practice. The rules of a practice will always have material representation in the form of guideline documents, instructions and the like. Further, their relation to the given practice will also be clearly stated and the practitioners will likely be aware of their implications for the exercise of the practice in conjunction with practitioners, for which other rules have been set out. The case in point would be diplomats from different embassies being subject to different sets of rules.

Rules and their relevance to the research will pertain to what this thesis coins the *regulatory or second level*.

Teleoaffective structure

The teleoaffective structure, which is not a property of the actors but a property of the practice, is made up of two elements. First, the teleological structure is a combination of ends-projects-tasks. That is, practices are conducted towards certain ends, which are achieved by completing certain projects and these are composed of tasks (ibid: 80).

The affective refers to the proposition that the teleological combinations are allied with specific normativised emotions and moods. The range of ends-projects-tasks contained within a practice are either ones that participants ought to do or ones that it is acceptable for the participants to perform - *oughtness* and *acceptability*. And this is extended to the affective sphere as certain moods or emotions are prescribed to be ones that the participants "*should or may enjoy*" (ibid).

A given combination of ends-projects-tasks and related emotions and moods will usually be temporally and spatially spread out, and divided between actors. Indeed, an individual actor will not always be able to understand the entire chain of a combination,

and the indefinite number of combinations that can be contained within a practice aren't easily grasped even for the most central or highly placed carriers of a practice.

Newcomers to a practice learn a specific set of combinations related to their particular function within the wider teleoaffective structure. Through learning, instruction and correction, they acquire not only the skills required for achieving the tasks and projects, they also learn how they relate to each other, and, ultimately, how those tasks and projects contribute towards specific ends. This implies that a person doesn't always understand the teleology of the doings and sayings that they carry out.

The teleoaffective structures and their relevance to the research pertain to what this thesis coins the *teleoaffective level or third level*.

General understandings

The general understandings are most readily understood as foundational reasons for engaging in the practice.

To Schatzki (ibid: 86), the general understandings contribute to the organisation of practices because homogenous general understandings among the participants to a practice are conducive to the workings of the practice and to constructive interactions between participants. His example is one of Shakers medicinal herb producers who share the general understanding of labour as *"a sanctification of the earthly sphere"* (ibid).

These general understandings find expression in the manner with which actors participate in the practices or in the way they articulate their own views of the practice, and in this sense it can also be understood as a mentality. Conversely, heterogenous general understandings between participants in a practice can be problematic.

General understandings and their relevance to the research pertain to what this thesis coins the *general level or fourth level*.

2.3.d. - Practice theory and Joint Programming

This final section of the theory chapter will cast what has been established about Joint Programming in a new light, the source of which is practice theory. This will help illuminate Joint Programming theoretically. The analytical outcomes and subsequent discussions will not be able to say anything definitive about the practice but will be able to point out probable trends that emerge from the data. After all, the practice approach *"should be considered and approached as a machinery to ask questions in the right way rather than a collection of answers"* (Nicolini, 2017: 26).

First, it is paramount to consider how the challenges for Joint Programming as identified in this chapter relate to the levels of analysis as framed by practice theory. The challenges to Joint Programming were grouped in four categories: (i) relational, (ii) substantive, (iv) institutional, and (iv) political.

Per the section on obstacles to succesful joint programming, relational obstacles were those arising from interpersonal issues. Substantive obstacles were those arising from professional disagreements, usually on how to best go about development in the given country. Institutional obstacles were those that arose from set institutional circumstances about which individual actors usually had very little control. Political obstacles were those arising from considerations of the domestic, political environment. How each might relate to the levels of analysis constructed by practice theory is charted here.

On the **practical level** of analysis, two types of obstacles are foreseen. These are the substantive obstacles and the institutional obstacles.
A good example of a substantive obstacle at the practical level is the challenge of defining sectors and projects - it is a basic disagreement about something tangible which stalls the ensuing work.

An institutional obstacle at the practical level is that of expertise - that is an understanding of specific tasks. A history of carrying out projects in priority sectors can give certain development partners ingrained expertise on those sector or on certain types of projects - this may result in a path dependency as the hosts of the expertise will gravitate towards development interventions that require or reward such expertise.

The **regulatory level** is foreseen to contain two types of obstacles. The first type encompasses the rules-based institutional obstacle and could be the decision-making procedures related to development cooperation programmes and their possible adjustments. This was mentioned as an issue because limited autonomy in decision-making can be constraining to embassies as they embark upon the Joint Programming process.

The political obstacles stemmed from the domestic, political context of the donor country. An example of a politically determined obstacle having the legal status of a rule would be the bilateral programme of the donor country. Bilateral programmes are the determined priorities of a donor and they will always enjoy some sort of political affirmation - further, the civil servants will have designed them on the basis of the political vision of their ministers, which are also shaped by the domestic political climate.

The **teleoaffective level** is the richest of the four levels of analysis in terms of possible obstacles as examples of all four types of obstacle are foreseen here.

The affective element especially makes relational obstacles likely. Diverging understandings of the moods and modes of being considered to be appropriate in the myriad different settings and situations in which diplomats find themselves are fuel for confrontation. However, the teleological element can also lead to personal differences as views of the correct relation between EU Member States' Ambassadors and EU Heads of Delegation as a matter of formality - more than effectiveness - clash.

Next, the teleoaffective structure is rife with possible substantive disagreements. The teleology of ends-projects-tasks is made up of a number of points where views may differ, from what is the appropriate end and the means of getting there. Issues might stem from headquarters level but can also be an expression of variation in the approaches of field-level staff among Member States and/or EU Delegations.

Third, the institutional type of obstacle is also foreseen within the teleoaffective level. A key example that is often mentioned in the literature is the question of capacity and time where the process of Joint Programming is understood to require efforts from development partners additional to those of their usual work. It is an institutional decision resting on what is considered sufficient for the work of a given embassy, even though it is may also be related to the fourth type of obstacle - the political level.

Finally, political obstacles are also foreseen to be found within the teleoaffective structure. As mentioned above, political leaders may see fit to reduce the funding for the work of their foreign service and development cooperation. This is likely to adversely affect development cooperation generally and Joint Programming specifically. Another example would be that of the objectives of the development cooperation which will to varying degrees represent domestic political priorities such as migration. In order to achieve a division of labour, there has to be a flexibility to adapt among the partners and politically chosen objectives cannot easily be changed.

The level of **general understandings** is foreseen to contain two types of obstacles. Relational obstacles are foreseen as general understandings constitute part of the personality of the carriers of practice. They are deeply held beliefs or approaches to making sense of the world. This is as simple as saying that not everybody is suited to collaborating given their personalities which is a simple condition of social life.

Then, there are the political general understandings. They can be horizontal views on European identity and Europe's place in the world. They are placed with the political as it will to a certain degree be shaped by the domestic context and the pervading approach to such questions but they may, of course, also be a matter of personal opinion.

2.4. Summary of chapter on theory

The preceding paragraphs have reviewed past work on Joint Programming in order to identify the obstacles that practitioners experience and inform the research. The relationalist underpinnings were then described as the rationale for presenting practice theory as the analytical frame for of the work.

Finally, the theoretical frame provided by practice theory was put in relation to and filled with the insights from the literature review of Joint Programming. Together, they will inform the chapter on methodology which will guide the data collection. In the analysis the frame of practice theory will be applied to better understand the nature of the obstacles presented by the data collection.

3. Methodology

The chapter on methodology will progress through three parts. The first will be a brief treatment of the philosophical underpinnings of the research and the implications for methodological demands. The second will be on the the research design which will inform the interviews to make up the data. Finally, coding as an analytical tool will make up the third part.

3.1. Philosophy of science

3.1.a. - Hermeneutics

The ontology and epistemology underpinnings of this research are hermeneutical (Fredslund 2007). This is a reflection of two main concerns.

First of all, as shown in the literature review Joint Programming hasn't been under academic scrutiny so far and the concept itself is relatively new. Thus, definitions and common understandings of key issues are likely to be fluid and imprecise. Resultantly, practitioners' preconceptions of Joint Programming are apt to be limited to their horizon of understanding and across practitioners these horizons might be markedly different. By inference, many conceptions of Joint Programming will be new productions as opposed to reproductions (ibid). Awareness of this fact is crucial to determining the obstacles to succesful Joint Programming.

Secondly, there are the preconceptions of the researcher. As a student the author has acquired a certain understanding of Joint Programming by reading guidelines and evaluations and this is brought to to the research. This was the aim of the literature review. Further, the author had some prior knowledge of Joint Programming as an intern at the Permanent Representation to the European Union of Member State X. Thus, Appendix I spells out the initial preconceptions of Joint Programming of the author before embarking on the data collection.

3.1.b. - Scientific rigorousness in hermeneutics

It is a matter of debate whether qualitative and quantitative research should be subject to exactly the same research criteria (Andersen et al. 2012:37). That being said, Fredslund (2007) put forward a number of useful criteria that may contribute especially to the methodological validity of science in the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics.

The aforementioned pre-understanding is the first important component. This has to be explicit and clear to the reader and indeed to the researcher who must never lose

sight of the fact that they themselves are subjects. Many different conceptions will be produced throughout any research project which makes transparency about one's initial preconception essential (ibid: 95).

Next, all consequential choices about the research must be reported and justified (ibid:96). This helps the reader to understand the reasoning behind the work and the perspective of the researcher whereby any decision that has the potential to introduce biases into the findings can come under scrutiny. This chapter on methodology is central to this pursuit.

The last criterion is a proper discussion of the applicability to other situations of the interpretations coming out of the research (ibid:97). This is also called analytical generalisation (Andersen et al. 2012:106). It is used when statistical inference isn't possible. Instead the arguments are laid out for why the interpretations might be applicable elsewhere by sizing up differences and similarities between the sample and the wider population (ibid). This will be part and parcel to the section on discussion of methodology.

3.2. Research design

3.2.a. - Choices of qualitative methods

The design of the research reflects the relative novelty of Joint Programming as a concept and the scarcity of academic literature in the area. This study is of a mainly exploratory nature (ibid: 72f.). However, it also has the Joint Programming Guidance and earlier studies as its starting point. Resultantly, the first part can be said to be of a deductive nature as different obstacles to Joint Programming were identified with the help of previous literature and the confirmation of their existence are then subject to empirical testing (ibid). The hypotheses to be confirmed were set out in the chapter on theory as the occurence of relational, substantive, institutional and political obstacles, respectively.

Once, these hypotheses have been tested. The inductive part of the research commences (ibid). A deeper understanding of each obstacle will then be sought by applying the frame of practice theory.

The exploratory nature of the research question, taking practitioners as the starting point, is a convincing reason to apply qualitative methods as the aim is the production of new insights in the field (Andersen et al. 2012:27).

3.2.b. - Interview & interview guide

Interviews are characterised as a particularly useful way to describe and understand the life world of interviewees and the dynamics important to their work (Kvale 1997:40) - this research has the practitioners as the starting point.

Further, interviews are pertinent tools for data collection when there is limited knowledge of the research area beforehand (David & Sutton 2004:87). This speaks to the inductive part of this study which seeks to gain a better understanding of the obstacles. Cooperating with the practitioners to confirm the obstacles mentioned above is a good platform for collecting a thick description of them and thereby getting a deeper understanding (Geertz 1973).

An additional methodological criterion is worth treating briefly. It is that of reproducibility. A classic criterion of research is the ability of other researchers to carry out the same study with the same design and thereby test the reliability of its results. For research designs using interviews, this is modified to apply in principle (Dahler-Larsen 2008:82). This is because an identical study will often be unfeasible.

Berg (2009:105) lays out a frame for different types of interviews. There are three types: (i) the structured interview, (ii) the semi-structured interview and (iii) the unstructured interview. The dual nature of this research where some hypotheses have been identified beforehand about which obstacles are foreseen and the inductive nature, looking closer at each obstacle, calls for the use of the semi-structured interview. This is because the semi-structured interview allows for a discussion of necessary themes and freedom to explore new avenues of inquiry (Andersen et al. 2012:150).

On the basis of the constitutive elements of Joint Programming described in the chapter on theory, the interview progressed in three main parts about the analysis, the mapping and division of labour, and the co-implementation. The interview guide can be found as Appendix II.

3.2.c. - Sampling

The interviewees have been chosen as a function of the research question (Schwandt 2007). Thus the present research has utilised a purpose-oriented sampling strategy. This has required a critical assessment of the types of persons most likely to have an insight into the Joint Programming process.

Further, there has been reflections on how the carriers of insight (or practice as is the case for this study) are situated organisationally. As stated by Miles' Law: *where you stand depends on where you sit*. This is further informed by Miles' (unrelated) and

Huberman's thinking on selection criteria (1994:41) which states that you do not only select interviewees but also their frames and environments. This has been particularly fruitful for ensuring interviews with those from whom most insight could be gained (Stakes 1995).

Next, it has been important for the analytical generalisation to choose participants who can be said to be typical of the persons working with Joint Programming globally (Andersen et al. 2012:162).

Taking the above into consideration, convenience sampling was also applied as the author was familiar with one of the participants and knew their work would be relevant to the research (Patton 2002:241f.). This also negated the issue of access, which can sometimes challenge studies such as this one. From there a snowballing strategy (Maaløe 2002:219) was applied where other interviewees were suggested, considered and ultimately chosen or rejected on the basis of the purpose-oriented strategy.

3.2.d. - Interviewees

A total of five participants were chosen for the interviews. All were familiar with development cooperation generally and Joint Programming specifically through their jobs in various organisations and countries across the world and this diversity was considered to be important.

The two participants from headquarters level had previously worked on Joint Programming at country level in addition to the insights they could contribute as seen from headquarters.

The interviewees are set out in table 2 in the order that they were interviewed. The order of the interviews was a matter of scheduling more than intentional choice. For the sake of their anonymity, the positions, actual and previous posts and personally identifiable information of the participants are not disclosed.

Table 2: interviewees

	Current employer	Current post	Former post of relevance
Interview 1 (I1)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Member State X	Developing country A	Developing country C
Interview 2 (I2)	European Institutions	Developing country B	-
Interview 3 (I3)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Member State X	Capital	Developing country D
Interview 4 (I4)	European Institutions	Bruxelles	Developing country E
Interview 5 (I5)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Member State X	Developing country B	Bruxelles

Apart from experience with Joint Programming, two primary criteria have been important for selecting the interviewees. The first was to include both the perspectives of European officials and Member States officials as diverging concerns were presumed to prevail depending on the political body to which the officials were attached. The second was the question of headquarters and country-level perspectives. The nature of the organisations is such that most officials will have tried both through their careers but it was considered important nonetheless for a few participants to have those perspectives close at hand.

The chapter on discussion will also treat the methodological implications of the sampling and set of interviewees where the question of data saturation will also be raised (Andersen et al. 2012:165).

3.3. Coding

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed in full (Andersen et al. 2012:171). It is prudent to note that transcribing a recording transforms it, whereby the written word becomes an interpretation of the spoken one (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:200). The interviews have however been deemed to be less important for their affective inscriptions than their analytical contents and as such the delivery of information is to a large extent disregarded in this study.

For the sake of analysis, each interview then underwent closed coding (Andersen et al. 2012:183) to confirm, first of all, that both relational, substantive, institutional and political obstacles could be found within the texts - in other words to confirm hypotheses 1-4. The closed coding of the obstacles followed the theoretical section that placed them within the levels of analysis supplied by practice theory.

As such, the closed coding of the **practical level** entailed two codes: one for substantive obstacles and one for the institutional obstacles. These were dubbed SUB1 and INS1.

The closed coding of the **regulatory level** - level 2 - applied a code for the institutional level and a code for the political level. These were dubbed INS2 and POL2.

The **teleoaffective level** was foreseen to be the richest in terms of possible obstacles and thus contains codes for all types of obstacles - relational, substantive, institutional and political. These were dubbed REL3, SUB3, INS3, POL3.

Finally, the general level of analysis drawn from practice theory was foreseen to encompass the relational and political obstacles. These were dubbed REL4 and POL4.

An explanatory overview of the initial codes can be found in table 3. As is evident, the closed coding enabled the analysis to not only confirm the presence of each type of obstacle but also place them within the frame of practice theory. Illustrative examples of each was given in the chapter on theory.

Table 3: list of codes

Levels of analysis	Type of obstacle	Code	Description
The practical level - 1	Substantive	SUB1	Challenges arising from substantive divergences on practical questions
	Institutional	INS1	Challenges arising from institutional differences on practical questions
The regulatory level - 2	Institutional	INS2	Challenges arising from institutional differences in rules or regulations
	Political	POL2	Challenges arising from differences stemming from the domestic, political context in rules or regulations
The teleoaffective level - 3	Relational	REL3	Challenges arising from relational issues at the teleoaffective level
	Substantive	SUB3	Challenges arising from substantive divergences at the teleoaffective level
	Institutional	INS3	Challenges arising from institutional differences at the teleoaffective level
	Political	POL3	Challenges arising from the domestic, political context's teleoaffective structure
The general level - 4	Relational	REL4	Challenges arising from relational issues of a general nature
	Political	POL4	Challenges arising from the domestic, political context's general understandings

3.4. Summary of the chapter on methodology

The chapter on methods described the ontology and epistemology of this study. Then, it supplied a justification for applying qualitative methods in this thesis and the research design was explained including the sampling process. The interviewees were then briefly presented along with the reasons for their selection. Finally, the coding process was laid out as well as the initial list of codes to be used for the closed coding.

4. Analysis

The chapter on analysis will analyse the findings of the interviews by way of coding. First, an overview taking the initial hypotheses as its starting point will be provided, it will also report on the prevalence of each code broadly speaking. Then each level of analysis drawn from practice theory - and the corresponding codes - will be reported in turn while giving illustrative examples and descriptions of the obstacles identified in the present research. Finally, a concluding section will summarise the analysis before the chapter on discussion.

4.1. Hypotheses

4.1.a. - Hypothesis 1: relational obstacles are found in the Joint Programming process

The hypothesis that relational obstacles occur during the Joint Programming process can be confirmed. A total of 18 comments pertaining to relational issues were recorded throughout the interviews and all the interviewees mentioned relations in some form or other as relevant and important to Joint Programming.

These took on different meanings across participants and the following is an aggregated picture. In this section it will suffice to give just a few examples. I1 considered that it could be a question of egos : *"Of course, there is - in this kind cooperation - a lot to do with egos"*. Personalities can clash and that can cause problems for the work.

I3 mentioned the importance of knowing colleagues across capitals in order to enjoy their discrete support in a range of matters such as acceptance of work done at country level without too many additions or complications to the work of colleagues at field-level: *"I'm not saying you [a colleague from another country in capital] will be the final judge but I have somebody who will be the judge"*.

I2 touched upon a general understanding of the ideal relations between EU-delegations and Member States headquarters and emphasised that Heads of Delegation from the European Union should have a positive view of potentials to be found in cooperation between European partners.

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of remarks conveying relational obstacles between interviews.

Figure 2: distribution between interviews of remarks coded as conveying a relational obstacle
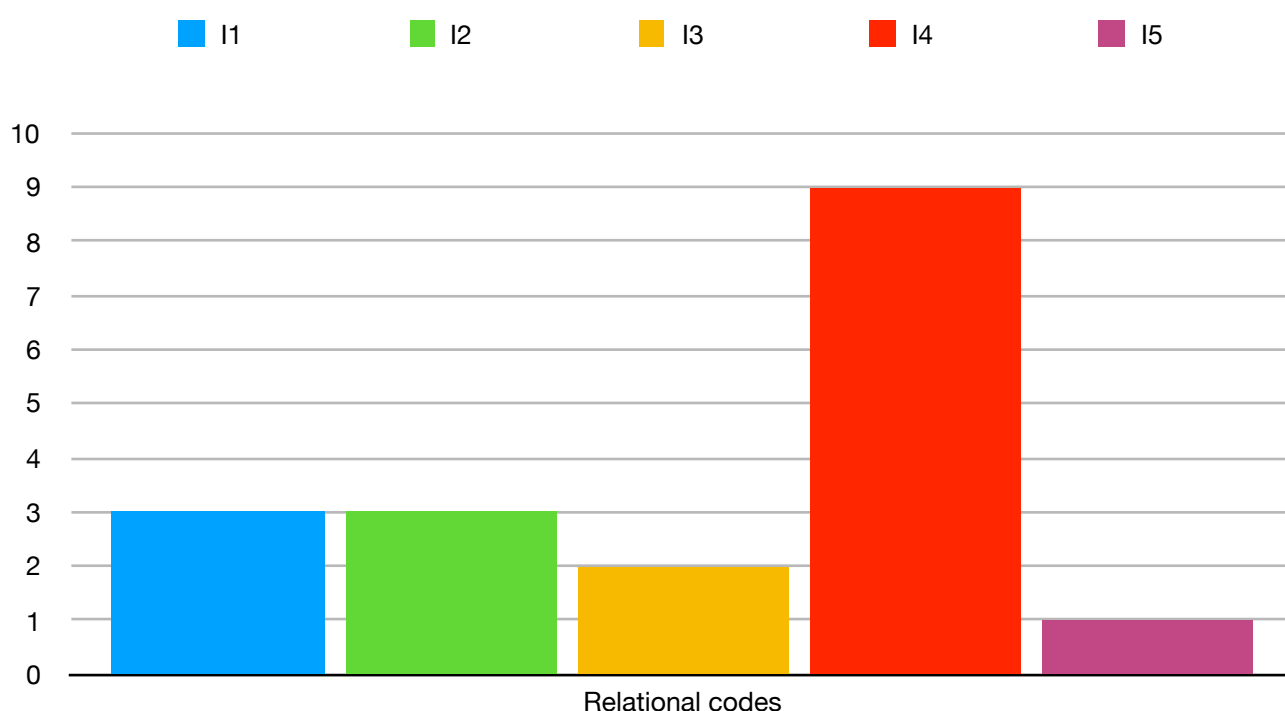
4.1.b. - Hypothesis 2: substantive obstacles are found in the Joint Programming process

The hypothesis that substantive obstacles occur during the Joint Programming process is confirmed by the data. A total of 43 remarks across the five interviewees pertained to disagreements on substantive matters about how best to go about development or cooperation in country matters.

This is a considerable amount and most were encompassed by the teleoaffective structure as will be described below. Among the notable examples is the question of how much country analysis should be carried out and how many ressources it is appropriate to spend on analysis. I4 mentioned this specifically.

I5 confirmed substantive differences on country level analysis by negation. The interviewee was pleased that the work was aided by the fact that most were in agreement about *"how they saw the political situation"*. Disagreements, then, on the political situation in a developing country will prove troublesome to the smooth running of Joint Programming as it is one of the fundamental building blocks of country level analysis.

Finally, I2 referred to disagreements between Member States about how overtly political the analysis should be where some tended to err on the side of caution by not criticising the host government too much. Where others advocated for simply calling *"a spade a spade"* when it came to behaviour on the part of the host government of which the European group disapproved.

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of remarks conveying substantive obstacles between interviews.

Figure 3: distribution between interviews of remarks coded as conveying a substantive obstacle
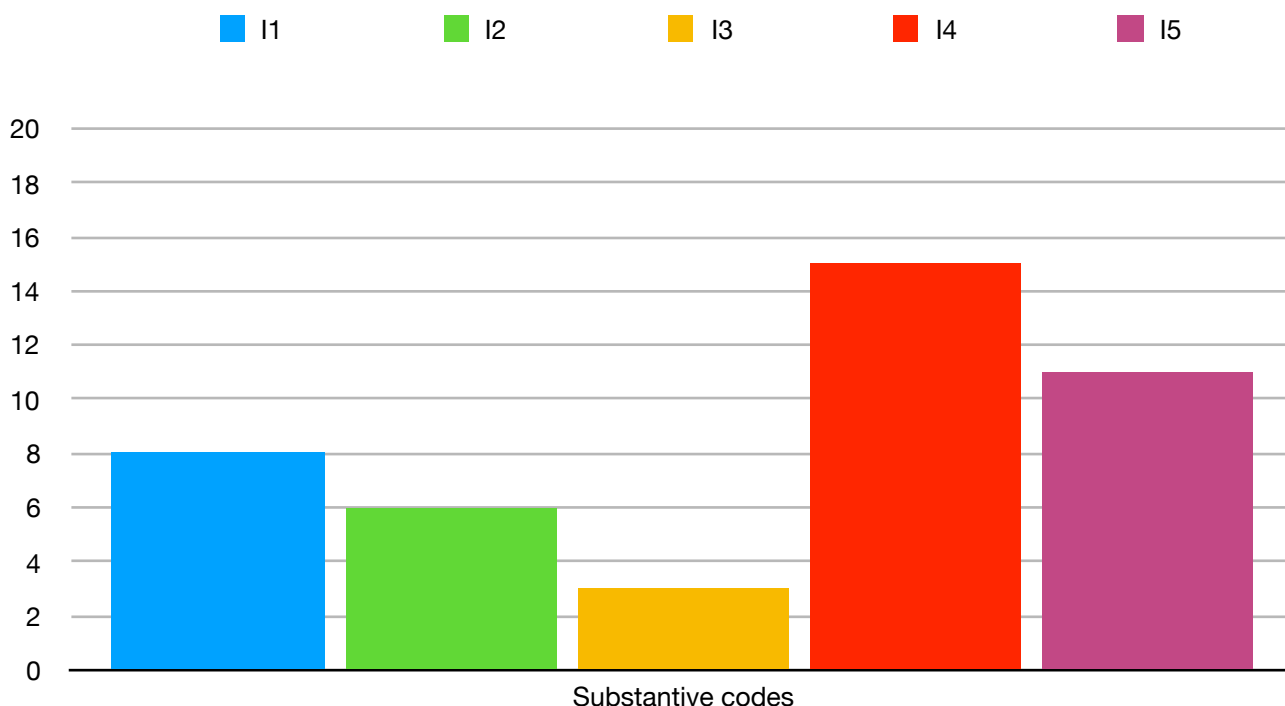
4.1.c. - Hypothesis 3: institutional obstacles are found in the Joint Programming process

The hypothesis that institutional obstacles present themselves while carrying out Joint Programming can also be confirmed. All five interviewees mentioned institutional obstacles as relevant, totalling 55 remarks coded with institutional codes.

Once again most of them were encompassed by the teleoaffective level and it will find further elaboration below. I2 resolutely put forward that *"everything to do with Joint Programming is too heavy"* and this was aimed at the toll on human resources that the process entails.

I3 underlined differences in procedures, separate resources and buildings as matters that resulted in the fact that European partners find themselves *"[...] in silos far, far away from each other"*. Presumably, this is a result of institutional differences across European partners. Importantly, however, it can also be cast as a political obstacle if ministers do not approve of more shared institutional measures although there will in some cases be scope for the bureaucrats to implement setups where some sharing takes place.

The question of resources can also be to the advantage of some Member States as was remarked by I4. They put forward the notion that those with more resources committed to country level activities will be able to dominate the work done on analysis and this will be to their advantage because then *"they will have an easier time implementing their policies" (I2).*

Figure 4 shows the distribution of remarks related to set institutional obstacles over which practitioners have little individual control.

Figure 4: distribution between interviews of remarks coded as conveying an institutional obstacle
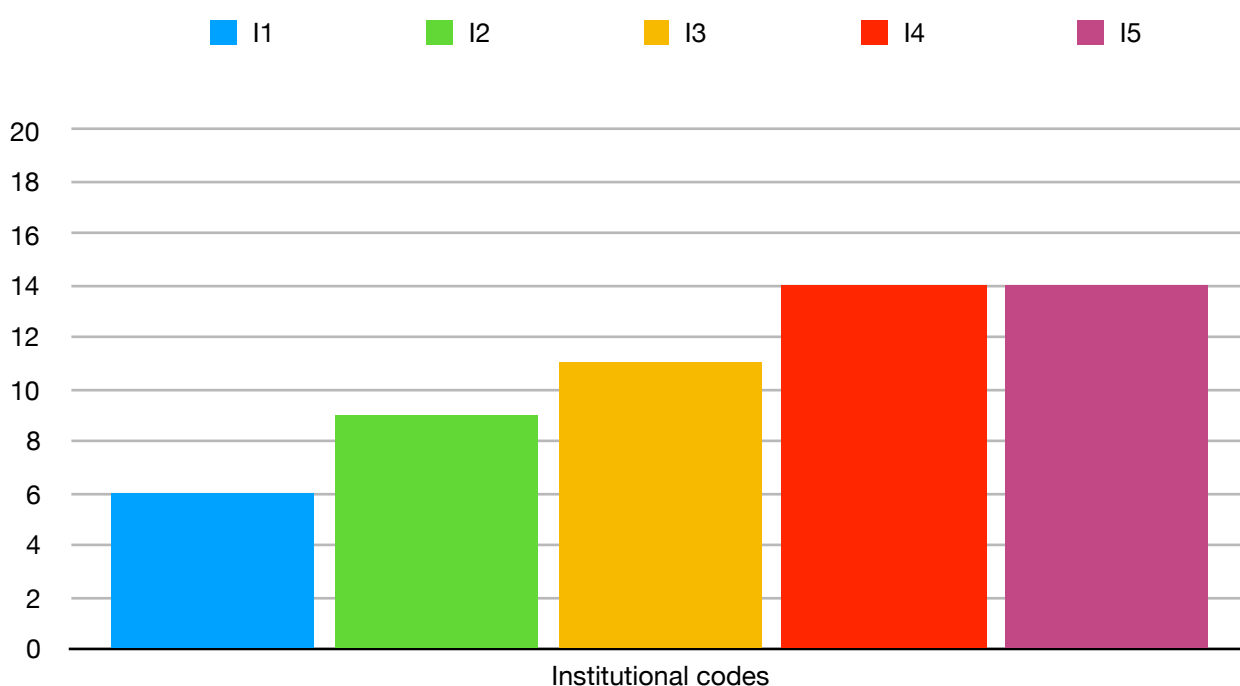
4.1.d. - Hypothesis 4: political obstacles are found in the Joint Programming process

The hypothesis that obstacles related to the domestic, political context occur during Joint Programming is confirmed by the data. These obstacles were described a total of 30 times during the interviews.

Interestingly, political obstacles presented themselves across all but one of the analytical levels provided by the practice theory framework and they will each be treated in turn. In some cases development partners were challenged by the precedence enjoyed by broader geo-strategic objectives formulated at headquarters level where *"conflicts were between those with the perspective of realpolitik and those who could allow themselves to be more idealistic" (I2).*

A more prosaic issue was that of bilateral country programmes. These are formulated at headquarters level on the basis of political objectives formulated by ministers which results in *"less flexibility",* as I5 suggested. This flexibility is necessary in order to achieve some division of labour as implied by the Joint Programming process.

A general understanding of the politics behind EU external action could also prove challenging. I1 highlighted the fact that the EU-delegation would sometimes have a narrow perspective of the EU instead of seeing the EU as the EU-delegation <u>and</u> Member States' embassies. This could be a challenge to emphasising the cooperation and partnerships which should be central to Joint Programming.

Figure 5 presents the distribution of remarks related to the domestic, political environment as an obstacle to Joint programming across interviewees.

Figure 5: distribution between interviews of remarks coded as conveying a political obstacle
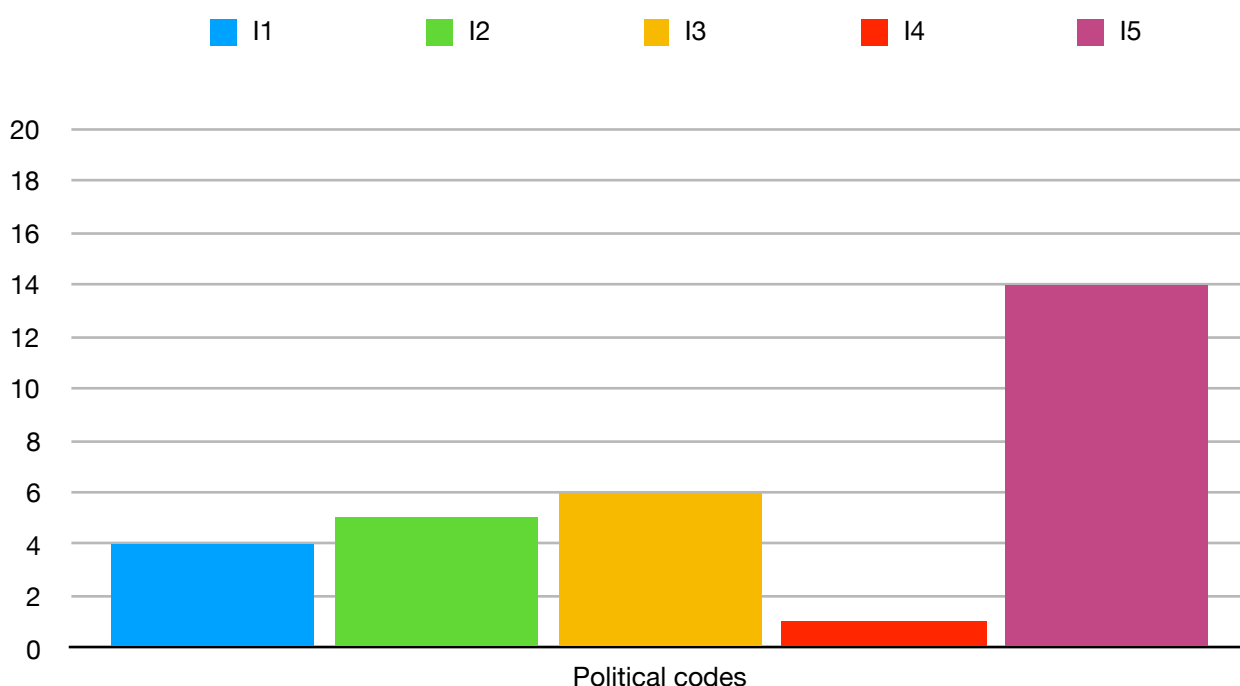
4.2. The practical level

The practical level of analysis was linked to understandings of and capabilities to do certain tasks. Throughout the five interviews, obstacles related to the practical level were mentioned 12 times, which was the fewest mentions of any of the four levels of analysis formulated by the framework of practice theory. The mentions were separated fairly equally among the substantive practical level obstacles and the institutional practical level obstacles. They are treated in-depth separately below.

As an introduction to this level of analysis, table 4 provides an overview of how these mentions were distributed between the interviewees. Notably, all participants mentioned practical level issues under at least one of the two types.

Table 4: number of codes related to the practical level

	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5
SUB1	3	1	-	1	-
INS1	1	-	3	1	2

4.2.a. - Substantive obstacles (SUB1)

I1 had three comments related to substantive obstacles at the practical level. They can be divided between two categories. The first is related to the rhetoric surrounding the efforts towards Joint Programming. I1 points out that issues have arisen around how colleagues from Bruxelles spoke about Joint Programming: *"There is a disconnect in that Bruxelles [European Union colleagues] from the very beginning has applied a wildly ambitious language on Joint Programming."*.

To I1, this has reached the point where he believes colleagues should *"consider dropping the title altogether"*. The background for this is that a development programme requires a vast amount of work to put together even for individual development partners. It requires researching the country situation, choosing three priority sectors and identifying 3-4 relevant interventions for each sector. This programme then undergoes considerable scrutiny domestically before it is definitively formulated. Going through these procedures as an individual donor is a heavy exercise in and of itself and would only increase vastly in complexity if it were to be carried out jointly between partners. The underlying point is that it shouldn't be programming done jointly. Rather, what European partners would benefit from is much less demanding and is more about looking at ways to work towards coherence between programmes than actually formulating a single one together.

This leads into I1's third statement about the substantive practical level well as he emphasises that *"there needs to be a common understanding of what a division of labour actually implies"*. A division of labour can be thorough and demanding or it can be more pragmatic by focusing on improving coordination post-programming - in implementation and ad-hoc cooperation - rather than doing it upstream.

Post-programming coherence is, however, also a noteworthy issue. While speaking about listing the interventions by European partners at country level, I2 puts forth that *"a project doesn't always mean the same thing [among European partners]"*. This is an obstacle to overcome but it doesn't require near the amount of political and bureaucratic effort that pre-programming coordination does. Freeing up resources for post-programming coherence might be a way to pick the low-hanging fruit.

I4's remark about substantive practical level obstacles illustrates this as well. Gender mainstreaming denotes an effort to infuse all interventions with an aspect of promoting gender quality (OECD). However, doing this collaboratively, let alone jointly, can be a challenge because.

> *"Individually mainstreaming gender is actually very different things. And how many of us used gender markers and how do we use them?" (I4)*

Gender markers are a system devised by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (Website of the OECD-DAC-). The gender markers ascribe one of three values to interventions depending on the degree to which they are determined to contribute to gender equality. As the quote shows, the gender markers aren't always applied in the same way.

To sum up these five remarks, the substantive practical level obstacles identified in the data are often related to specific examples of post-programming incoherence. Building on I1's remarks about the rhetoric, this might be related to the many resources spent on pre-programming efforts and the subsequent neglect of post-programming follow-up.

4.2.b. - Institutional obstacles (INS1)

The were a total of 7 institutional practical level obstacles. The first and in many ways the simplest institutional obstacle identified was related to the listing of interventions across European partners. Asked outright what made it complicated, I2 answered that *"first of all, all the Member States are not organised in the same manner"*. Usually, the coordination will take place between embassies. However, not all bilateral development systems are organised in the same way as some will have the development section embedded in their embassies. Others will have a separate development agency actually overseeing the interventions. The question of whether a development agency is embedded in a Ministry of Foreign Affairs or is a separate institution will be touched upon later in the analysis and the discussion because the implications are interesting and varied.

The second institutional obstacle at the practical level had to do with the expertise and core competencies of each European development partner. This implies a certain path dependency as a partner will more likely engage with those sectors in which it already has an expertise:

"There is also the question of competencies where the individual countries have built competencies and specific profiles which mean that one does not simply change from one sector to another." (I3)

The institutional expertise can thus act as an obstacle to changing to other sectors wherein a partner might not have the same capacity. This know-how applies to relations and entrenched ways of working as well. When asked about which differences they perceived in working with the partner country government, I2 offered the following:

"I have the impression that some of the Member States have managed to create a stronger relation with some ministries. Because there is a history behind because they work on gender [for example] for the last fifteen years, at the end you have a special relation with that minister or the Germans with agriculture"

Arguably, this could also be categorised as a relational obstacle. However, because the special relation is described as historical and continuing, it is categorised as institutional since it doesn't relate to specific persons or relationships but is an institutional-level outcome resulting from institutional-level inputs, which in this case is long-standing activity within a sector.

I5 also pointed to the importance of institutional expertise in determining priorities and areas for possible cooperation. This was mentioned in relation to the concept of delegated partnerships. A delegated partnership is a form of cooperation where one development partner has programmed a specific intervention within an area but may not have the necessary knowledge to implement the intervention and will thus ask another partner to implement the intervention, in turn paying the overhead costs.

I1 was supportive of delegated partnerships - and believed the obstacle could be an advantage - but they emphasised that it only makes sense if the implementing partner actually has a clear advantage in terms of expertise and local partnerships in the area because *"then it makes sense that it is us that implement instead of the EU-delegation or another partner without the same prerequisites"*. Follow-up questions were asked across

interviews about the delegated partnerships on the basis of I1's observation as they believed it to be *"in many ways the perfect way to conduct division of labour as well as joint programming"*.

I4 was also asked about the subject of delegated partnerships and whether they - in some ways - can lead to a division of labour. They responded:

> *"I agree that it can. It can help, perhaps more, to **reinforce** the division of labour when there is a lead partner in one sector to further support them with additional funds."* [emphasis added]

This introduces an important nuance. It might not be able to create a division of labour but it can build on comparative advantages that are already present among the European partners at country level. Thus, the EU-delegation, which is responsible for a large minority share of development funds, can emphasise its support for those partners leading the charge in a given sector, which may result in an institutionalised expertise or know-how that is conducive to a constructive division of labour.

I5 could see the idea of it but introduced another relevant caveat. Not all European partners will have the sufficient expertise to carry the burden of delegated partnerships. Giving the example of efforts to decentralise, I5 commented that their embassy for Member State X doesn't have the luxury of:

> "an expert on decentralisation, who has worked on decentralisation in five other countries, and that is where, where the division of expertise for the European Union becomes a bit hard to handle, I believe."

Institutional and substantive obstacles will also be relevant at the other levels of analysis. As will the question of delegated partnerships that are also pertinent to the question of resources and competition between European partners.

To sum up, institutional obstacles at the practical level were identified because different types of organisation across European partners could muddy the cooperation. Further, there was the question of institutionalised expertise on sectors and local partners which introduces an element of path dependency to the sectors in which European partners engage. However, there seemed to be some scope for using this to the advantage of a division of labour (or expertise).

The analysis now turns to the regulatory level of analysis and its two types of obstacles: institutional and political.

4.3. The regulatory level

The regulatory level of analysis, as developed from Schatzki's practice theory, denotes any and all written obligations and how they hamper or interfere with efforts towards Joint Programming. Throughout the five interviews, the regulatory level was coded as appearing 26 times in total. Most of the remarks were made in regards to the institutional level which are the rules, procedures and also, crucially, the resources allocated to a given embassy. However, a few were also related to the political. The political, regulatory level obstacles are denote the bilateral programming document.

The two categories of regulatory level obstacles will be treated in turn below. Table 5 gives an overview of the distribution of mentions across interviews.

Table 5: number of codes related to the regulatory level

	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5
INS2	3	4	2	4	4
POL2	2	1	2	1	3

4.3.a. - Institutional obstacles (INS2)

The institutional challenges of Joint Programming may be somewhat averted by being less rigid in the application of guidelines for the process. One of the main challenges is about synchronising programmes. This is one of the written objectives of the process because it ideally allows for much better coordination among partners if their programmes are in sync. However, it is challenging given the bureaucratic and political procedures involved. I4 expressed this by offering an alternative approach:

> "So it is about being a little more relaxed, may be relaxed is not the right word, but more relaxed in trying to find ways to have people agree on the process, priority objectives and results, and that in time as cycles come up at the national level, then as a European partner they will move closer and closer to the Joint Programming".

This lends synchronisation less importance but it might prove to be the better process as it is far less cumbersome. Thus, Member States can contribute constructively without

committing themselves to demanding procedural, bureaucratic strains that may end up derailing the whole process and disincentivising positive engagement.

For I2, this was an explicit goal for the process. Getting the overall agreement on the strategic objectives *"and if you apply this, timing is less important because, you know, the document will stay there"*. The document is the strategic objectives mentioned by I4. Once again, this gives more weight to the post-programming cooperation.

Procedural differences were also relevant to the way in which interventions are compiled and listed to gain an overview. I5 mentioned the question of multi-annual projects and programming as one such obstacle as this complicates efforts to synthesise programmes and interventions coherently.

I4 mentioned per diem rates as a central issue for coherent action. Per diem rates are the compensation given to local partners. When these aren't the same across partners it results in asymmetrical motivations:

> "One of the key problems has always been per diem rates. When you pay in different projects different per diem rates. Are you creating disincentives for communities to participate in one partners' programme implementation as opposed to another partners' programme implementation?"

Next, I4 noted the issue of decision-making procedures. These are also different across countries as some European partners have delegated much of the decision-making to country-level colleagues; others have retained decision-making authority at headquarters. The latter is particularly challenging *"because they need to be able to engage with discussions at country-level, make decisions with country-level colleagues"*. This is simply an institutional decision over which embassies have little influence.

I5 highlighted another important role played by directions from headquarters. This is about the pressure or the insistence on joint European external action which has gone missing to a large extent:

> "Before, according to the aid management guidelines, the first thing you had to say was: what does the [local] government want? And the second was: Hvad are the others [development partners] doing? If you couldn't, clearly, explain yourself: what are the others doing, and why aren't we doing it with them? Why don't we align? Why don't we engage in a harmonised approach with the others? Then headquarters would shot you down. That doesn't happen anymore."

Thus, the an insistence on the part of the institutional support network could force a European perspective and this has, seemingly, faltered somewhat.

Finally, delegated partnerships also pose issues in relation to procedures that are applied rigidly or understood differently among partners. I3 mentions that after engaging in a delegated partnership, the European Commission *"demands I don't know how much documentation that we don't have"*. Elsewhere, a question of exchange rates resulted in Member State X having to pay back some funds *"because of exchange rate differences"*.

In conclusion, the rigid application of procedures and rules can be challenging especially in the programming phase. This can be offset somewhat by a more pragmatic approach. Further, headquarters play an important role in giving some leeway to embassies and can engage constructively by applying some pressure for European cooperation. Finally, procedural issues still plague the post-programming cooperation through delegated partnerships.

4.3.b. - Political obstacles (POL2)

The question of political obstacles at the regulatory level can be condensed to the fact of bilateral programmes. All development actors have their individual programmes, and they are formulated along political lines and are subject to political confirmation domestically. I1 points out that there might be an initial motivation to work towards Joint Programming but *"it is quickly diluted by the countries' own priorities"*. I2 concurred and simply stated that a key challenge is that European partners *"don't share programming"*.

This challenges the division of labour. If a European partner is politically committed to engage in certain sectors, then little will change that even though the a division of labour might be fruitful. I3 continues that *"if our government has a priority called growth and employment then we will - of course - engage in growth and employment"*.

Individual country priorities also seep into the analysis. If a European partner has identified certain sectors as a priority area of intervention then this will bias its approach to analysing jointly:

> "Clearly, the analysis is never conducted in a vacuum. It is carried out where you already are, and you already have nationally defined objectives, and you know, that the analysis will lead to some priorities and a strategy, then you know what analysis to do to reach those objectives that have been formulated beforehand" (I3)

This will likely have implications for the quality of analysis. An analysis will ideally base itself on the situation at country level and the needs of the developing country. When European partners already have a rough idea of which interventions they wish to carry out in that country, then the analysis will not be based on facts alone and will end up skewed towards pre-defined objectives as as a result.

Thus, the division of labour is obstructed by written obligations upon the European partners formulated by the bilateral country programmes. Further, these pre-defined objectives may affect the quality of the analysis.

4.4. The teleoaffective level

As previously noted, the teleoaffective level is much the richest in terms of possible types of obstacles. Throughout the five interviews, the codes at the teleoaffective level applied a total number of 93 times which is a considerable amount. However, they were distributed between the four types of obstacles which will be analysed separately below.

Table 6 provides an overview of the distribution of teleoaffective codes across the types of obstacles and the five interviewees. Notably, the substantive and institutional types were most prevalent.

Table 6: distribution of obstacles on the teleoaffective level between obstacles and interviews

	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5
REL3	1	1	1	7	1
SUB3	5	5	3	14	11
INS3	2	5	5	9	8
POL3	1	2	4	-	8

4.4.a. - Relational obstacles (REL3)

Relational obstacles at the teleoaffective level presented a total number of 11 times across the five interviews. The examples given below, while not exhaustive, are illustrative of the wider remarks. Two main relational questions were identified at the teleoaffective level - the first is that of competence and the second is that of group dynamics.

I3 put forward the importance of a dynamic European Head of Delegation who is passionate about their work and *"have an easier time unifying the European partners"*. I3 contrasted the first one they had experienced who was such a figure with the second one. The second I3 had experienced was less dynamic and engaged, and then *"it becomes a lot*

harder". This highlights how central the European Head of Delegation is to the work and it is not only related to his or her substantive capabilities, it is also a question of an ability to unite the other European partners. This idea will find further expression below.

The question of uniting the group is also pertinent to group dynamics. I4 put it in concise terms in *"that a lot of the comments from the field is that joint programming has helped build trust and relationships between European partners at country level"*. The importance of positive group dynamics will also be elaborated below. Notably, one of the things contributing to this is if European partners engage actively in the joint analysis part of Joint Programming because that means *"you can have more of a debate between colleagues because hopefully that builds more of a working relationship with participating colleagues"*. This comment was made while speaking about the trade-offs between having a thorough joint analysis versus contracting out the analysis to external consultants.

The interest in the good working relationships actually extends beyond the European Union partners. I4 added that it was *"worth mentioning that Switzerland and Norway often want to join our Joint Programming process. As a likeminded external [actor], they see added value"*.

Another important issue was the role of headquarters. I2 was quoted above as an advocate of having contacts at headquarters who understand the process and country-level situation as it could contribute to constructive feedback. I4 further backs this observation as they underlined the importance of flexibility from headquarters in approaching the work done in the developing country for Joint Programming and equally to ensure that colleagues at headquarters *"feel that their key interests are somehow reflected in the discussions [at country level]"*.

I5 contributes to the understanding of the role of relationships in Joint Programming as they mentioned that the social sectors where many development partners are often engaged probably has stronger cooperation and *"a more consolidated group of donors"*. The positive group dynamics can then be presumed to have some role in shaping effective development cooperation.

Interestingly, the group dynamics were most heavily emphasised by I4 who is located in Bruxelles and works with development cooperation in a more horizontal manner. This is a reflection of the feedback I4 receives from colleagues in countries.

Taken together, relational obstacles at the teleoaffective level is related to the objective of engendering group dynamics perhaps as an end in itself. Others do not emphasise this aspect. The positive group dynamic, presumably, also has implications for

the effectiveness of development cooperation as it could lead to a more consolidated group of donors.

4.4.b. - Substantive obstacles (SUB3)

The code for substantive obstacles at the teleoaffective level was easily the most prevalent. It reflects the fact that many issues will arise because there are professional disagreements about the ends of development cooperation and the tasks and projects required to achieve those ends. In total, 38 comments were coded with SUB3. Certain quotes have been selected to represent the recurring themes.

First, the joint analysis is central to the question of substantive obstacles. It has to have buy-in and this requires participation from the European partners because if the analysis is contracted out there is a *"risk that it remains a separate document"*, said I4. They may not fully share the analysis on what should be the objectives and prerequisite actions to achieve them.

According to I4, if there is more engagement in the analysis where - by way of example - they *"contribute text, then you definitely have a better understanding from everybody of what is in the analysis"*. This is teleoaffectively relevant in two ways. It relates to how the work of doing the analysis is perceived: is it considered a meaningless and cumbersome obligation? A task, rather than an end? Then contribution will be less thorough and the analysis, perhaps, less rich.

It also, importantly, relates to how the analysis is used to achieve substantive agreement about the appropriate objectives for the development cooperation. A rich analysis that engenders a sense of ownership on the part of the European partners will also go quite a way towards agreement on what is most relevant in terms of action at the ground level.

I5 nuances this even further, as they believed the analysis had to be applied to something *"concrete"*. If the analyses aren't aimed towards specific ends, then this would challenge the participation and, ultimately, the utility of the analysis: *"In some ways, those joint analyses have to be motivated by something [concrete]"*.

This presents a threefold dynamic. First, is there a concrete aim for the analysis? If so, then it will enjoy support. And is the analysis perceived to be an end in itself? If so, then it will be richer and result in more engagement and ownership on the part of the European partners. Is there ownership over the analysis? If so, then it will be more relevant and useful to the ensuing work. Here, I5 observed that *"we are all [European partners] very conscious of the fact influence is achieved when we are together"*.

Secondly, the substantive challenges at the teleoaffective level follow from an overall view of how best to go about development cooperation. I1 expressed some doubt as to how meaningful some of the exercises within the Joint Programming process are. One example is the mapping (or listing) the different interventions:

"We have some large donors, who are outside the EU, so there, I think in some way, if you are to spend a lot of time mapping - also now when the Brits are leaving with whom we've been closely engaged bilaterally - then it makes more sense to do a broader mapping"

This scepticism also pertained to the efforts towards synchronisation. To I1, this would never be feasible which goes against one of the stated objectives of Joint Programming. I1 put it unequivocally when saying that *"everybody's hopelessly unsynchronised, often with our own programmes. How would we ever be able to create a synchronicity between us?"*.

On the issue of how to best organise the development cooperation and learn from joint efforts. It wasn't merely a question of quality but also the approach to doing development cooperation overall: *"Are implementing partners ministries and government, mainly civil society, [or] do you build capacity within national structures or communities?"*. This touches on the foundations of development cooperation, its means and ends.

Differences can be a challenge but I2 points out that complete harmonisation in approaches isn't necessarily the way forward. They appreciated the diversity and saw it as an asset, rather than a hindrance:

"For instance, we [European Union] abandoned for a long time culture and if we didn't have diversity, other Member States also having a programme then nobody would be doing culture which I think would be a mistake. For me, it is a question of offering other paths and enlarging the scope of the possible. Maybe it is financially speaking not the most efficient. If you think about Denmark having an office and Sweden and Spain etc. OK, if we closed all the offices and put all the money in the EU. Then we would have economies of scale. But you will lose this diversity which makes it alive. And we should keep it even if it has a cost."

This observation is highly relevant. It speaks to the idea that economies of scale come with an intangible cost because it precludes heterogenous ways of working. What it actually

means to have development cooperation be *"alive"* is not within the scope of this study but it is an alluring notion.

The above leads into the question of delegated partnerships once again. Asked whether these forms of cooperation would be a good way forward for joint action, I4 was initially positive but also hesitant about how much delegated partnerships should be used:

> "Because maybe there are other agencies such as the UN [United Nations] or others who may be better placed to achieve what we want to achieve in that they have slightly different relations to government, they're able to mobilise different stakeholders or they may bring very specific things to the table that we want to support because we believe also in supporting multilateralism."

This statement also shows that the aim of development cooperation is not merely development effectiveness, it is also a question of advancing certain values and ideals. The same argument for Joint Programming that it enhances implantation of European values can be said to apply to partnerships with multilateral organisations such as the UN. This is valid and arguments can be made that supporting multilateralism promotes European values as well.

When asked why engagement from headquarters in efforts such as Joint Programming has been waning, I5 suggested that it might not be regarded as neither the means nor an end in itself to the same extent as it has been. Thus, the intended outcomes for such exercises hasn't come about at quite the pace that was foreseen but this might be countered by the point that such things take time and are riddled with challenges as this study shows.

Finally, I5 resurfaced the question of the integration between political and development-oriented external action. At the practical level, an obstacle was the institutional setup of embassies, whether or not political and development sections were aligned and could draw on each other's expertise. The representatives of many Member States are simply not used to thinking in an integrated way about political external action and development cooperation. To I5, *"this is another barrier to getting the acting better together to improve. It is, if this isn't taken very seriously also at the level of Heads of Mission then it is very difficult."*. As mentioned above, this will also be taken up in the discussion.

Third, there is the relationship to the government. Here, there are differences in opinion as to how to best go about it that isn't only a reflection of whether or not political and development counsellors work together.

It can be an issue of how to handle relations with the government in the developing country, as remarked by I1: *"You always see some core beliefs around how critical to be in a dialogue with the government"*.

This was also relayed at the beginning of this chapter by I3 where disagreements arose as to what to call the spade. I4 concurred with this as it wouldn't always be obvious when it came to the analysis, *"how political that needs to be"*.

Fourth comes the working relationship with headquarters colleagues. As shown at the beginning of this chapter, it was important to I2 that there are colleagues at headquarters with some understanding that country-level personnel should have some leeway.

I2 held out hope that the Joint Programming process could proceed without too much interference from headquarters because what was needed was a simple, strategic Joint Programming document but he was concerned that the European headquarters *"might consider it to be insufficient or too simple"*.

I2 noted that between colleagues in their country, colleagues from different Member States had *"a good [common] understanding [of the country situation]"*. I5 concurred (note that I2 and I5 are based in the same country) and remarked that *"down here [developing country B] we are very much in agreement about the situation but we are maybe not always so much in agreement with our respective headquarters"*.

I4 had observed similar situations across countries. They offered the suggestion *"that a good joint response really requires country colleagues to have a little bit of flexibility vis-a-vis their headquarters"*. This reveals a central dichotomy between country-level staff and headquarters staff and this is notable as many discussions center on how country-level colleagues can improve cooperation amongst themselves. Asked outright whether a lot of the issues arise between the field level and headquarters as opposed to between country-level Europeans, I4 answered: *"To a great extent, that is definitely an issue"*.

Substantive obstacles at the teleoaffective level were grouped around four categories: how to go about the analysis, how to approach development cooperation generally, how to conduct a dialogue with the host government and how to handle relations with headquarters level when field-level staff are often in agreement across Member States.

4.4.c. - Institutional obstacles (INS3)

Institutional comments at the teleoaffective level were coded 30 times across the five interviews. This number is second only to the substantive obstacles at the teleoaffective level and is a reflection of the many institutional decisions that are based on a judgement of the necessary means to reach given ends. This section progresses in three parts; (i) resources, (ii) delegated partnerships and (iii) institutional incoherence.

Resource scarcity

Resources play a major role for these obstacles as decisions on how to allocate resources across an organisation are usually not subject to much political scrutiny but is considered the purview of bureaucracy. At the beginning of this chapter, I3 was clear about the toll Joint Programming, as they knew it, can be on human resources. Further, I3 related these issues to the decision-making procedures (the regulatory level) because they have implications for how many resources are required to engage actively in the process (the teleoaffective). Whether or not these resources are to be committed is, ultimately, a management decision. Staff of Member State X is more, in a sense, more fortunate because decision-making is more decentralised, however:

> *"the vast majority are centralised, so they have to clear back at home, and the Commission also has to receive a lot from Bruxelles, which quickly produces some unnecessary and heavy procedures that are sometimes outside of the context" (I3)*

I5 concurred in that the process is *"extremely time-consuming"*. Notably, I5 still considered the pursuit of Joint Programming worthwhile, even if it does require resources that *"we [Member States] have to supply ourselves to a large extent"*.

When asked about exercises such as mapping, I4 expressed considerable hesitance *"because it takes a lot of time"*. This is interesting as it is usually considered an important core to the exercise of Joint Programming whereby European partners develop a much better sense of each other's European programmes. However, a valid argument might be that an in-depth overview of every intervention is not all that applicable in the context of the daily grind of implementing development cooperation.

Incidentally, this was the argument for contracting out the work of analysing the country situation, briefly mentioned above. A clear contract assignment, funded partly or wholly by the European Union, would free up the resources of European partners and make the exercise more easily manageable for Member States.

Resource scarcity was not merely challenging when it came to analysis and mapping, but also formulating the common objectives and strategy that is supposed to be the outcome of the initial analysis. Even if the strategy is intended to be overarching, it still has to strike the difficult balance of reflecting the priorities of all partners, the host government while still staying operational and selective. I2 emphasised that it can be a challenge to *"find the time to write something"*. This leads into a paragraph on institutional obstacles to delegated partnerships at the teleoaffetive level.

Delegated partnerships

Resource distribution among the European partners was deemed consequential to delegated partnerships as a tool for joint action. I1 posited that the delegated partnerships would have to take into account additional personnel costs if Member State X were to be able to implement them. I4 chimed in with a complementary observation about the need for participating partners *"to have human resources to contribute or it could be dominated by 1-2 partners who have more resources at country level"*. In short, bilateral decisions on resource allocation has a bearing of whether and to what extent a partner can engage in delegated partnerships.

Overall, the idea to use delegated partnerships more frequently was positively received by interviewees. As seen above it could reinforce some divisions of labour and thus contribute to some of the core objectives of the Joint Programming effort. However, more than the consequences of asymmetrical distributions of human resources, I2 was concerned with the potential for competition. The current level of application of delegated partnerships struck them as well-functioning but if the usage was to be increased it might result in *"a problem because people are gonna come say: 'And me?'. For me, it is uglier"*. It is an important insight that elements of competition crop up when significant swathes of development funds can be delegated to Member States' implementing agencies, thereby expanding their portfolio and area of responsibilities.

More than speculate about this possibility, I4 actually confirmed the dynamic as emerging as their colleagues at country level had started to notice that some Member States' development agencies were starting to become *"much more pushy"*. One colleague of I4 had put it, stating that *"Member States' agencies are interested in cutting up the pie of the European Union funding"*. As delegated partnerships are increasingly employed, being aware of this will be crucial to their success and to the prospect of coherent and coordinated European external action.

Institutional incoherence

Institutional structures and logics of working were also cited more generally as challenging. I4 found the scope for improved cooperation to be constricted by the aforementioned silos: *"For the moment we don't share buildings, [...] human resources, [...] don't share HQ. We are in silos. far away from each other"*. This is a good example of the way institutional logics are perceived to influence outcomes indirectly. Asked what sharing buildings would mean for the development cooperation, I4 responded that sharing of human resources, expertise and, interestingly, a canteen because that would mean *"eating with the people, speaking, exchanging"*. I4 then referred to their current group of colleagues with whom they enjoyed a hard-won *"level of intimacy [...], and how easy we work together"*. This level of intimacy will also be treated under the code REL4.

Institutional differences in means and ends was determinant of more than intimacy. It also affected the closeness of political and development agendas and whether a synergy could be found between those two as is often the case for our country, posited I5, because *" we are - in the context Member State X - closer to the political than most of the others because we have the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our development agency in the same pillar"*. This was expressed above and will be treated in the discussion below.

I5 didn't lay all the blame at the foot of the European Union institutions or other Member States. They acknowledged the role of domestic traditions (or lack thereof) for coordination and coherence: *"I've been to Bruxelles myself and heard what Member States say in the Council, what they say in the Political and Security Committee and what they say at the level of developing countries"*. Further, I5 expressed some sympathy towards European officials that were obligated to carry out the political declarations of the Council in development cooperation efforts, only to find Member States being obstructive, or at least hesitant, at the level of developing country.

To sum up, the institutional prioritisation could lead to scarce resources which are an important obstacle to effective Joint Programming. Further, these scarce resources related to the use of delegated partnerships in joint action in that the application requires additional resources and the modality will be most beneficial to those who are able to implement them qua their resources - this could lead to competition in some cases. Finally, institutional incoherence played a major role because sharing facilities could engender better cooperation. This dynamic was also relevant to Member States' own coordination which is sometimes lacking to the detriment of cooperation.

The political obstacles at the teleoaffective level have to do with the domestic, political environment and what that environment perceives to be the ends and means of development cooperation. The code for political obstacles at the teleoaffective level appeared a total of 14 times through the five interviews with three primary categories of remarks. These centred around the way ambitions for Joint Programming was shaped by the domestic expectations, the way domestic politicisation posed problems and, third, considerations of political visibility.

Ambitions for Joint Programming

The level of ambition transmitted from the political level domestically to country level carries weight for how the implementation is pursued. A high level of political ambition as to the ends of Joint Programming can prove problematic if they are too rigid as *"expectations were created, namely from Bruxelles, about what Joint Programming was about" (I1).* I1 considered the literal implementation of the political declarations surrounding Joint Programming to be detrimental to the overall objectives such as development effectiveness and improved coordination as it was drowned out by bureaucratic exercises.

Moreover, the domestic politics of Member States can play a role. It was considered unrealistic to truly achieve a division of labour when Member States will have a new minister once every two years or so as observed by I5: *"Two years later we'll have a new minister then it is not only an agreement with the host country we have to change, it is actually also an agreement with the wider group of donors.".* Thus, there can be some hesitance to commit and engage in a true division of labour, at least between sectors.

I3 bluntly stated that *"we will never get there. I have a hard time seeing the our Parliament making decisions on the basis of what other EU countries have decided to do in a given country".* The question of sectors can be sensitive politically and few ministers will relinquish their authority to choose the sectors in which the development cooperation under their purview should engage.

Domestic politicisation

Another factor stemming from domestic politics is the degree of politicisation. I3 was quoted earlier for contrasting considerations of *realpolitik* to idealistic aspirations. I1's statements align with this and they at one point commented that some Member States *"probably often also because of internal political priorities express tougher and more*

direct political opinions [in dialogue] with host governments". This is different from the substantive differences over what is most effective in dealing with government; this springs from considerations of the domestic politicisation of the proper approach.

I5 acknowledged the dynamic. They were witnessing striking examples of *"political rhetoric that is enormously strong"* among a number of Member States and this had some spillover effects to other Member States. To I3, this was also related to the general foreign policy *"which could pose challenges".* These examples showcase how relations with the host government are influenced by domestic political considerations and the broader foreign policy objectives.

This dynamic further contributes to the general approach to development cooperation which has, traditionally, been more long-term - as I5 expresses:

> "Because we know well that if we are to drive change on education or health or in the development of the private sector, we know well, that we can't only have a perspective of three years. We have to have a 20-year perspective but that is not really how we operate anymore, is it? I think that is part of the whole political momentum, which gives many inputs to aid, but also means that we - all the time - have to relaunch and reformulate many things"

This long quote is provided in full because it illuminates the results of the politicisation of aid which will be taken up in the discussion. Politicisation seems to create some dynamism and interest but it comes, at least partly, at the cost of the long-term perspective. That is the perspective that acknowledges the long-haul efforts required to bring about meaningful change.

Political visibility as an objective

The final political consideration from the domestic context of European partners is that of visibility. Joint Programming is sometimes eschewed because it is perceived as restrictive of the visibility of bilateral development efforts. I5 simply saw certain initiatives as popular *"because it is something Macron and Merkel have agreed upon".* Thus, political visibility is an important - often restricting - factor when it comes to the priorities and pressures originating from the domestic context.

I2 actually countered this idea. To them, political visibility was a point in favour of Joint Programming efforts and joint action generally. This was part of the discussion of sharing facilities as European partners and to I2 *"in terms of visibility it would be*

fantastic". Although, this may have been referring to the visibility of the European Union as a whole whereas bilateral concerns might not have factored into the answer.

I5 chimed in here as well, when they were asked whether it wasn't possible to act jointly as the European Union and still have bilateral visibility as an individual country, the answer was *"Yes, that would also be my claim".* So, emphasising bilateral visibility domestically does not run against the grain of good Joint Programming, depending on how it is perceived.

To sum up the political obstacles at the teleoaffective level, these were linked, firstly, to strong political pressure from Bruxelles on Joint Programming efforts which would sometimes result in heavy implementation processes. Coupling these with waning enthusiasm from the side of Member States resulted in mismatched engagements. Further, the politicisation in the donor country of aid was a source of problems as the long-term perspective became less pronounced. Finally, political visibility as an end - which will also be treated below as an underlying understanding - could sometimes lessen interest because Joint Programming was perceived to reduce bilateral visibility but there was a claim that the two weren't necessarily mutually exclusive.

4.5. The general level

Per the chapter on theory, the general level of analysis includes what might be called fundamental understandings about the world. One example would be perceptions of cause and effect. Personalities are another example of something general and in this study they can pose relational obstacles. The two codes for general levels of analysis appeared a total of fourteen times altogether and will be analysed separately.

As an overview, table 7 show the distribution across interviewees. All participants mentioned at least one type of general level obstacles.

Table 7: number and distribution of codes at the general level of analysis

	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5
REL4	2	2	1	2	-
POL4	1	2	1	-	3

4.5.a. - Relational obstacles (REL4)

The relational obstacles at the practical level are to be understood as prerequisite understandings of the role of relations and individual actors in enabling cooperation. These understandings or logics are of a fundamental nature. They are not, for example, differences in opinion about what is the best relationship with government as was the case for relational obstacles at the teleoaffective level. These are issues of personality and less tangible factors such as group dynamics.

Asked how the cooperation between European Union Heads of Mission worked, the interviewees were largely positive. I2 pointed out that to become an Ambassador for a Member State of The European Union one has to have a minimum level of general competence and relational ability:

> *"You cannot be crazy, just play chess and drink tea. So it is a group of intelligent people with maybe - that is one difference - some of them like to talk, a lot. We are more technicians so we will talk but we will talk when it is needed."*

This quote does more than establish the competence of EU Ambassadors, it relays a fundamental feature of cooperation for officials at a more senior level. They are used to the strategic, political thinking that trades in broad strokes and longer terms and their conversations reflect this.

Two dynamics might be inferred from this: first, the quotidian details of ensuring cooperation, information sharing about technical specificities and the like might not be their strong suit. Second, egos can be a point of difficulty for the cooperation. I1 concurred with the second point. They shared that at most of their postings, there seemed to have been an *"in-built conflict"* in having an EU Head of Delegation and separate Ambassadors from the Member States because the EU Head of Delegation sometimes wants to be in charge of everything.

I3 enriched these observations while speaking about the role of the EU Head of Delegation. There was the competence and dynamism mentioned above but, additionally, a fundamental understanding of relations between the Member States and the European Union institutions played factored in to the work: *"Is he very much the [European] Commission's man who fundamentally believes that Member States are in the way?"*. The alternative was a person who was able to see scope for cooperation between the European Union and the Member States. This gets at a general understanding of the European Union

as a political body - and the relations between the Member States and the institutions put in the world to serve the will of the European peoples.

The second important relational obstacle (or prerequisite) mentioned during the interviews was the question of group dynamics. When speaking about the delegated partnerships, I1 was doubtful that they were being used strategically but *"there is definitely an element of having - in many ways - from the EU strengthened the 'esprit de corps'"*. Having to work closer together on concrete and practical partnerships was helpful because it engendered a more positive working relation between European colleagues.

The importance of a good working relationship among European colleagues at country level was highlighted by I2 as well when asked what common facilities could be shared between EU Member States. To them, it was so important to reach *"the level of intimacy like we have and how easy we work together"*. Cooperation leads to intimacy which leads, in turn, to improved cooperation. This might be obvious insight but when the positive group dynamics are absent, issues will arise and the achievement of those group dynamics aren't always prioritised given the emphasis on resources and human resources that was presented above.

Terms such as group dynamics and European identity were a frequent feature of the interview with I4 - as can be seen in the table above. Having heard it in other interviews, it was an opportunity to ask about the implications of positive or negative group dynamics, or why they had mentioned it so often. The answer was long and winding, and it would not be economical to quote it in full. The overall rationale for a good working relationship between European colleagues was the *"importance of a single voice"*. The single voice is a coherent European approach to agendas, political situations and country developments. That way other stakeholders can know *"exactly what we're working on and striving for."*

This single voice then had two primary audiences. The first audience was the non-traditional development partners which arrive in developing countries with *"different agendas and part of those agendas might be things we aren't too happy about"*. I4 quoted a colleague as having mentioned China, specifically, as a central, non-traditional actor in developing countries. This insight puts the objective of Joint Programming into another light with a more urgent (and political) hue because it brings into question the advancement of European values and interests:

> *"There was a feeling that in some regions it is particularly important reinforce European identity, what it stands for and reinforce our visibility as a group that believes in certain things: human rights, gender [equality], multilateralism."*

The second audience was the other traditional donors. I4's perception was that *"by having a European dynamic in the development coordination, the larger architecture"* could challenge actors such as the World Bank, the United Nations and African and Asian Development Banks.

This was considered positive because there might be instances *"where maybe we might want to put a different perspective through or might not necessarily see eye-to-eye"*. This was not done combatively. Often, it was simply a question of respect: *"All colleagues I've spoken to feel we get more respect from our development partner peers when we are together and have a coordinated message"*. The awareness from partners of having a European group made an impression and helped get joint messages across.

The positive group dynamic was thus was contributing factor to having a single voice and concrete cooperation can help build that and overcome some of the classic conflicts between European Heads of Mission in developing countries. Group dynamics will be explored further in the discussion.

4.5.b. - Political obstacles (POL4)

The political obstacles at the general level of analysis stem from the domestic, political context but they are considered to be so pervasive - all-encompassing - as to not be separate political agendas confined to one side of the political spectrum but underlying logics or dynamos of power of which any politician has to take account if he or she hopes to enjoy any relevance to the politics of the day. Their appearance in the present research can be divided into the logic of political visibility and into issues of high political sensitivity - these are like a regular political agenda except for their omnipresence in political rhetoric.

The **first** to be treated here is that of political visibility. I4 cited a wide understanding of the necessity for the European Union's institutions and Member States of acting in unison for achieving any staying power. However, when it came to prioritising the messaging, the European Union as a single actor was at the forefront: *"It is pretty clear - above the cooperation - that it is the European Union as such that takes up most of the attention of the EU-delegation."*. This implies that the visibility of the EU takes center stage; sometimes to the detriment of the cooperation. It is a natural focus for the delegations of the European Union to advance the EU as a monolithic actor. However, it might not always sit well with the Member States of the European Union.

I5 acknowledged this as a force to reckon with among those that might challenge cooperation and European unity in action. Certain changes had taken place surrounding

the underlying thinking around aid as a unified tool of action - this was embodied by the instrument of budget support:

> *"And then I also think that aid has generally become more politicised; we want more visibility for ourselves. I think that is as true for Member State X as all the other countries. I think, we've generally become much more politically interested and politically critical of all that is related to budget support"*

The challenge of politicised aid showed itself through support to certain initiatives. These may or may not enjoy the backing of country-level personnel but if they were considered useful political platforms they would find pushed by headquarters colleagues.

In an exchange about a specific regional initiative with joint European action as a central tenet in which I5 saw few prospects, they wondered out loud why it was considered to be such a good innovation as opposed to more traditional joint efforts. I offered the option of political visibility to which I5 replied in the affirmative. Such initiatives will typically have flashing headlines and unanimous endorsement by charismatic political leaders but they may lack ground-level approval.

Second, dynamos of power in a political context are those agendas with such a strong saliency among voters and in the public debate that it defines the politics of a whole country. They cause shifts in the political landscape and they permeate every sphere of politics. I2 offered one such example, which shaped the approach of Sweden - gender equality. I2 called it a certain sensitivity and a *"gender bias"*. It is best perceived as a dominant attitude about what is most important and should be top of the agenda. This could challenge - or in some cases enrich - the process of joint analyses, according to I2.

Another such example was given by I3. They were referring to the unlikelihood of a true division of sectors among European partners. I3 had a hard time imagining one partner getting out of the water sector because it was too crowded *"or oh by the way, don't do migration because that is what everyone else is doing"*. The general nature of this political obstacle helps understand the conundrum of divisions of labour. No European politician would be able to state that they don't do migration management. They would lose too much because of the salience migration enjoys in many European, public debates. Notably, I3 mentioned the question of organisational decisions in this regard. The politicised nature of an integrated Foreign and Development Service acted as a conductor of the agendas of high salience throughout development cooperation.

A more positive example would be the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Speaking about the prospects of joint results frameworks (mentioned briefly in the chapter on theory), I2 was discussing which indicators would be used and he *"would not be surprised that at the end of the day we decide the we will only take indicators from the SDGs"*. This is because the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals have grown strong roots in many political contexts. Anchoring results frameworks in the 2030 Agenda is seen as a legitimising factor and the Global Goals may be a dynamo of power of their own.

The political obstacles at the general level thus had two main categories: (i) the logics of politics which was visibility in this instance and (ii) agendas of high salience - here called dynamos of power - which are so pervasive as to have become a logic of their own.

4.6. Summary of the analysis

The chapter on analysis progressed in five main parts. First, broad data regarding the hypotheses was analysed. Sections 2 through 5 treated each level of analysis drawn from practice theory.

The initial **four hypotheses** were confirmed and the following types of obstacles to Joint Programming were uncovered: (i) relational, (ii) substantive, (iii) institutional and (iv) political.

The **practical level** of analysis included two codes: one for the substantive obstacles and one for the institutional obstacles. The substantive obstacles at the practical level were caused by differing conceptions of projects and application of modalities after the programming phase. It was speculated that these might be because many resources are expended in the programming phase. These observations largely confirm what was proposed in the review of previous evaluations of Joint Programming.

Regarding the institutional obstacles, two main obstacles were remarked upon. First of all, European partners are not organised in the same way with some having an integrated service doing foreign policy and development policy, where others had those two separated. Second, ingrained institutional expertise created some reluctance to change sectors and could make Member States inflexible to division of labour. However, the modality of delegated partnerships could leverage this to an advantage.

Institutional obstacles at the **regulatory level** surfaced because of the rigid application of procedures which were especially challenging to the programming phase. Institutional prioritisation from headquarters of Joint Programming was instrumental for

ensuring engagement. Additionally, the procedural issues challenged the use of delegated partnerships.

Political-level regulatory obstacles were caused by the bilateral country programmes which obligated Member States to specific engagements challenging division of labour. The joint analysis was also affected by pre-defined objectives introducing a bias to the analytical work.

Relational obstacles at the **teleoaffective level** could appear when tensions arose in the group dynamics and the prioritisation of that as an end in itself was central.

Substantive obstacles at the teleoaffective level were grouped around four categories. The first was how to go about the analysis where some considered it cumbersome. Second was how to approach development cooperation generally where different Member States have different modalities of engagement. Third was how to conduct a dialogue with the host government: some were more overtly political where others preferred a more discreet approach. Fourth was the relation with headquarters colleagues. Interestingly, field-level staff would often be in agreement but cooperation with their respective headquarters wasn't always optimal.

The institutional obstacles at the teleoaffective level arose because of inadequacy of resources for engaging in Joint Programming. This proved a hindrance to the use of delegated partnerships as well. Further, different facilities and less interaction between Member States' staff didn't help cooperation.

Strong political pressure from Bruxelles would result in heavy implementation processes. Long-term perspectives on development cooperation were suffering from a politicisation of aid. Finally, political visibility - when treated as an end in itself - could sometimes reduce enthusiasm for the Joint Programming process.

Relational obstacle were observed at the **general level** of analysis. When there wasn't a good group dynamic, it would worsen coherence and this was considered to challenge the effectiveness of a single European voice. Concrete examples of cooperation could help this positive group relationship along.

The political obstacles were grouped around two mechanisms. The first is political visibility as an underlying logic where it wasn't treated as an explicit end in itself but simply an invisible force presumably decreasing attractiveness of European coordination. However, it was also advanced that these considerations could be reconciled. Next, there were the agendas of very high salience - here called dynamos of power. These are so encompassing that they essentially transcend the level of political agenda and become something to which all have to relate themselves. Gender equality was an example for the

Swedes and migration was relevant to the Danes. The 2030 Agenda appeared as a possible global dynamo of power.

Delegated partnerships emerged as a modality with some potential for achieving some of the benefits ascribed to Joint Programming and merits a separate mention. The modality has the good fortune to steer clear of some the issues pertaining to the programming process, and the analysis indicates that it might, in fact, help work towards a division of labour, engender good working relationships and further development effectiveness.

4.7. Preliminary answer to the research question

The above is the in-depth analysis of the data guided by the theoretical framework formulated in the chapter on theory. The framework drew on previous (non-academic) studies of Joint Programming and the practice theory framework presented by Theodor Schtazki. The research question of this study was: *What are the obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by the practitioners responsible for its implementation?*

The question is very broad in the sense that obstacles can take many forms as was apparent in the analysis. Further, it can be argued to include obstacles specific to the developing countries in which Joint Programming takes place. However, the chapter on theory clarified the scope to be those obstacles that occur between European partners (Member States and the institutions of the European Union).

Below table 8 provides an exhaustive of overview of all the obstacles found during the analysis of the data. This table is not complete in the sense that all possible obstacles are shown but it covers the obstacles to Joint Programming as identified in the present research and is thus a preliminary, unprocessed answer to the research question. The table is grouped into the four levels of analysis formulated by practice theory and is divided between those obstacles that are to be considered new insights vis-a-avis earlier studies of Joint Programming and insights that merely confirm what has already been observed in earlier studies.

Table 8: obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by the practitioners responsible for its implementation

	New insights	Confirming earlier studies
Practical level	- Expertise leading to a path dependency challenging division of labour - Different definitions of a project - Diverging applications of concrete development modalities	- Differing understandings of what Joint Programming and division of labour actually implies
Regulatory level	- Prior objectives skewing engagement in the analysis	- Lack of autonomy in decision-making - Lack of systematic support and emphasis on Joint Programming from headquarters - The fact of bilateral country programmes - Too rigid an application of procedures
Teleoaffective level	- How to conduct the country analysis and how many resources to expend on it - European partners working in silos with different partners, modalities and the like - No clear view of added value in mapping exercises - Overall differences in approaches to development cooperation between Member States - Different opinions of how to conduct a dialogue with host government - Disagreements between field-level and headquarters - General politicisation leading to a loss of long-term perspective	- Capacity constraints in the shape of human resources - Lack of ownership of analysis - Incoherence internally in Member States on commitments and priorities across headquarters, in Bruxelles and in developing countries - A perceived reduction in bilateral visibility and influence as a result of Joint Programming - Weak group dynamics - Lacking leadership, competence and relational ability of central European officials such as Head of Mission or Head of Cooperation - Foreign policy objectives overriding development objectives
General level	- Disproportionately overriding domestic policy concerns leading to overlaps - Political visibility as an underlying logic standing in the way of coherent action	- Personaliities and resulting relationships among European partners - General disagreements about the proper relationship between the Member States' embassies and the EU-delegation

5. Discussion

The practice of Joint Programming is a complex, layered process. Going through the interviews while applying the levels of analysis provided by Schatzki's framework the myriad obstacles and their diverse origins emerge effortlessly and intertwine just as easily. This makes the task of discussing the results of the analysis a rather challenging one. However, the framework of practice theory aids the thinking by dissecting those dynamics that are especially pertinent to discussing the obstacles. The discussion will progress through the following sections as it seeks to synthesise some of the obstacles into more general insights.

First, the programming phase versus the post-programming efforts will be discussed. Second, the question of group dynamics will be treated. Finally, the politicisation of development cooperation will be discussed. Before wrapping up the chapter, a brief section will be dedicated to a methodological discussion of the present research.

5.1. Programming phase versus post-programming efforts

As evidenced by the analysis there are several obstacles to Joint Programming in the true sense of the word. Programming <u>jointly</u> requires (1) a shared analysis of the country situation, (2) an overview or mapping of the current interventions by Member States divided by sectors, (3) a division of labour and (4) subsequent follow-through/ implementation. This section will posit that the first three elements to Joint Programming - the so-called programming phase - takes up too much attention by attempting to solve complex, even intractable, problems. This is to the detriment of the subsequent follow-up.

Obstacles appear already at the **practical level** of the practice. The analysis pointed to issues of different definitions of projects which bogs down the mapping of current interventions, making it a bothersome, bureaucratic process which isn't all that useful. Then, there was also the question of institutional set-ups where some Member States have integrated foreign and development policy to a greater extent. This makes it easier to have the analysis be informed by political counsellors but it may go against the approach of other Member States, which have separate foreign affairs and development policy organisations.

Thus, the analysis becomes a difficult balancing act between different institutional set-ups and their resulting implications for the process. The aforementioned issues pertain to phase i and phase ii. Especially the issue of different institutional set-ups is hard to

surmount but it seems that valuable resources are expended nevertheless which will be treated in a paragraph on the teleoaffective structure.

Next comes the **regulatory level**. Here, too, the programming phase swallows up a disproportionate amount of energy. Taking the procedures and rules surrounding the programming process, these have been rigidly applied which the chapter on analysis clearly showed to be cumbersome. This critique was applied to phases 1 through 3 of Joint Programming. The same was remarked about the post-programming modality of delegated partnerships but this was mostly related to documentation which could be centrally modified to match Member States' own procedures without too much (if any) political or institutional resistance. This strengthens the argument that hassles around the programming phase hurts the subsequent follow-up.

Political obstacles at the regulatory level were identified by the analysis, namely the bilateral programming documents. These were anchored at headquarters with political confirmation and proved a clear challenge to phase 3 of division of labour. Sectors couldn't simply be divvied up between European partners because they were obligated beforehand. This also runs the risk of grinding gears as they try to turn towards that which is ultimately unachievable, in the words of one interviewee. Moreover, the bilateral programming documents biased the approach European partners had to the work on country analysis as they often knew where they wanted the analysis to end up. The shared analysis (phase 1) and the division of labour (phase 3) were thus hurt by the fact of programming documents and their pre-defined objectives heading into the analysis.

Third, there is the **teleoaffective level**. The substantive obstacles were centred on how to go about analysing the country and the approach to development cooperation generally. Another substantive obstacle at the teleoaffective level was that of communication with headquarters level where the country-level staff are often in agreement among each other but run into trouble when they need headquarters confirmation.

This speaks to putting less of an emphasis on the programming phase where headquarters - in some Member States - want heavy involvement as opposed to the post-programming phase of working out the specifics where country-level staff have much more room to implement their mutual points of agreement. The only significant substantive obstacle for the post-programming phase was how to conduct a dialogue with the host government. This will need to be worked out but expending less energy on the programming phase may free up resources to iron out disagreements on this point.

The much-maligned issue of capacity and resources is included in the teleoaffective structure by the institutional obstacles herein. It is considered within the teleoaffective level because it is related to the understanding of ends-means-projects. Scarce resources - it can be argued - is a difficult parameter to change as these are subject to political priorities in the donor countries and executive-level institutional decisions.

The relative permanence of being strapped for human resources is thus a good argument for a less rigid, more pragmatic approach to Joint Programming. This approach underpins the view that the programming phase should enjoy relatively less prominence in comparison with the post-programming efforts of finding ways of cooperation within sectors and existing modalities.

However, it does highlight that a certain level of ambition about Joint Programming should always be matched by the requisite level of resources to actually do the job. The final institutional obstacle at the teleoaffective level that is worth mentioning here is coordination between field-level staff and their respective headquarters. Headquarters are more likely to engage with the strategic discussions going on in the programming phase and the resulting disagreements between field-level and headquarters will, presumably, occur more frequently in this phase. This is another argument for moving the focus to what can be done in the post-programming phase.

Two primary political obstacles at the teleoaffective level of analysis speak to putting less of an emphasis on the programming. These are the mismatches in the resources allotted to the process and overall enthusiasm conveyed from headquarters level. Here, Bruxelles can be somewhat overzealous and the Member States' headquarters symmetrically unengaged.

Next, there is the question of seeing political visibility as an end in itself; when that is the case then the incentive to participate positively can be somewhat reduced which might be disruptive to the programming. Then, it is preferable that the field-level staff focus on what they can control: the post-programming specificities.

At the general level of analysis, two main points are in favour of focusing on the post-programming and implementation efforts. The first is relational in that relations between Member States personnel is crucial to having constructive cooperation, and this is achieved not by processes, which are perceived to be cumbersome but might be by smaller, concrete examples of cooperation - ad-hoc coooperation. This would let things emerge organically as opposed to being forced upon staff who might not feel they have adequate time to expend on the programming phase.

Second are the issues of high salience (political obstacle) which force the hand of some Member States in terms of the sectors in which they can engage; this is an insurmountable challenge to having an actual division of labour in terms of sectors. Thus, this might be an argument for focusing on implementation specificities as heavily politicised priorities are not easily replaced.

To sum up the argument, phases 1 through 3 of the Joint Programming timeline are riddled with complex - sometimes intractable - obstacles at all levels of analysis provided by the framework of practice theory on which relatively few resources should be spent. This speaks to spending a bit more effort on the post-programming specificities of finding ways of working together within sectors and with existing modalities.

A central caveat to include about the preceding paragraphs is the fact that most interviewees agreed that the work on a shared analysis of the country situation was largely without troubles. There are nuances, minor disagreements, and different emphases but in developing countries European partners tend to agree on the whole. Thus, it was mostly in the mapping and the division of labour that significant issues would arise. A possible synthesis of these observations could be: the work on a shared analysis is carried out thoroughly within resource limitations and the subsequent phases on mapping and division of labour take a backseat to working out the kinks in the post-programming phase.

Importantly, other than its superficial treatment of delegated partnerships as a modality of cooperation, seems to deserve some attention in terms of achieving strong group dynamics and working jointly effectively, this study cannot illuminate to any meaningful extent what those post-programming efforts could look like specifically. It can merely observe how the actual programming phase of the practice of Joint Programming is severely hampered by a number of factors as shown above. This might be a fruitful area of further study as will be seen in the brief chapter on perspectives for further research. The following section does, however, point to the potential of improving group dynamics.

5.2. Group dynamics

The introduction to this thesis set the stage by pointing to the shift in geopolitics towards emerging economies with China being the main player. This section will posit that group dynamics between European staff in developing countries have been neglected somewhat, which is problematic for a number of reasons as will be shown the following paragraphs. Thus, Joint Programming going forward would do well to think of the working relationship

between European staff as an end in itself, even as a geopolitical necessity in the face of new and non-traditional donors.

There are several points in favour. Starting at the **practical level** of analysis, substantive obstacles arose because European partners had different understandings of a project or how to apply specific modalities in the development cooperation. It might be argued that this could be countered by closer cooperation and communication between European partners as they would gain a better understanding of each others' daily jobs and approaches. This might even lead to cross-fertilisation thereby improving the development effectiveness of each Member State. Even as I2 was a supporter of diversity in approaches, there might be gains to be had nevertheless.

Insofar as the institutional obstacles at the practical level are concerned, the expertise embedded in embassies challenged a division of labour but the same diversity in expertise might be leveraged to a positive force if each European partner has a better idea of each others' respective areas of expertise and where these might come into play during more pragmatic ad-hoc forms of cooperation. Thus, strong working relationships within the group might be able to overcome substantive obstacles while institutional ones might be leveraged to advantages instead.

Next, there was the **regulatory level** where there had been issues regarding the delegated partnerships and the surrounding requirements for documentations as well as other procedural issues. This might be offset somewhat if communication flowed more freely and more frequently between European partners. Having strong group dynamics allows for more informal exchanges and for a better mutual understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses and these might nip certain procedural problems in the bud.

The regulatory level presented a political obstacle as well in that bilateral country objectives could bias the analysis. Strong, ongoing cooperation and communication among European partners might help avoid these biases or at least reconcile them because it might be conducive to greater mutual understanding of the points of origin of their respective objectives and what they might mean for a shared analysis - maybe even how they can play into the process constructively. This relates well with I2's championing of diverse approaches but these would surely benefit from greater mutual understanding between the diverse approaches.

The **teleoaffective level** of analysis of relational obstacles, in fact, pointed to some existing dispositions towards group dynamics. There seems to be - more or less tacitly - an awareness of how good working relationships can lead to considerable improvements in results. These are, after all, diplomats. However, there doesn't always seem to be the same

appreciation that strong group dynamics require human resources to develop or the returns of such dynamics are underestimated by many (or overestimated by the present research). In any case, the analysis indicated that a more consolidated group of European partners could lead to more effective development cooperation.

Substantive obstacles at the teleoaffective level are where the argument for promoting a good group dynamic really comes into its own. Better working relationships before Joint Programming might more easily lead to agreement on how to go about the analysis, and even if there will still be differences in approach to development cooperation generally, there might be scope for mutual learning. Further, conducting a dialogue with the host government might be easier when done by a coherent group.

It is doubtful whether the good working relationships will reduce resource demand stemming from Joint Programming as was one of the institutional obstacles identified. Establishing those relationships also require work as mentioned above. Further, considering the usual rotation of 2-4 years of any country-level diplomat the work will have to be continuous if European Union external action is to keep on enjoying the fruits of it. The argument here would be that the fruits are well worth the investments required. And this is also where the thesis becomes overtly prescriptive as this section shows clear arguments in favour of expending the required resources given the number of obstacles that might be overcome as a result. The recommendation might even go as far as promoting shared European buildings and facilities in developing countries.

The political obstacle at the teleoaffective level relevant to group dynamics is that of reconciling the diverging levels of engagement from headquarters level, where Bruxelles could be quite pushy, the Member States' might be less so. Reconciling this at ground-level might be helped immensely by strong relationships among officials there.

The **general level** of analysis provides a few strong arguments in favour of a consolidated EU in developing countries. The first is that the single, European voice which was promoted by I4 as indispensable to advancing European values requires a strong group dynamic and a sense of European identity. Thus, a general understanding of the group as European and the import that bears for engaging in developing countries is - goes the argument - a force to be reckoned with. It is in the interest of European values and would improve the place of Europe in a changing global environment.

A second is somewhat similar to the one mentioned at the regulatory level on understanding respective objectives. When European partners interact regularly and positively, they will have an easier time identifying and understanding the implications of the dynamos of power that govern political logic in each others' countries. This might help

them (to help each other) reconcile those dynamos when they, inevitably, meet and have to be implemented at country level.

Finally, the logic of political visibility which is prevalent at the level of general understanding might be surmounted by an innovative, coherent group working towards shared aims. However, the data is somewhat lacking when it comes to backing up this claim.

The preceding paragraphs treated the question of group dynamics, European identity and good working relationships. The argument was that these should be treated as ends in themselves and as an underlying logic for the work that is done in developing countries day-to-day. This is because, a strong, coherent group that is used to working together will have an easier time overcoming some of the obstacles. In some cases, a well-coordinated group might even be able to leverage those obstacles to their advantage. In fact, the analysis showed that there is an emerging understanding of the importance of these relationships.

Importantly, it is outside the scope of this thesis to say anything definitive about what might help these group dynamics along. Vincent Pouliot in *Diplomacy and The Making of World Politics* (eds. Sending et al., 2015: 80ff.) has done some interesting research on working groups in multilateral organisations and how they produce certain mechanisms such as forums effects. The forum effect can be understood as a softening of a national stance in the face of colleagues with which one has to interact frequently over a longer period of time. This is somewhat like the argument that a strong group dynamic would engender better understanding of respective positions to the benefit of all. Thus, some features from the cooperation at multilateral organisations might be applied with similar results. One such example could be frequent meetings and a strong component of socialising new members to the group. More generally, the above is well-aligned with the literature on relationalism as advanced in the chapter on theory.

5.3. The Politicisation of Aid

The last thematic point of discussion is on the politicisation of aid and development cooperation. This issue recurred throughout the interviews and certain insights was gleaned from the analysis which it might be fruitful to treat here.

In order to promote lasting change for the better, it is necessary to apply a long-term perspective to development cooperation. It requires sustained efforts towards conscious objectives. I5 put forward the notion that increased political awareness of

development cooperation as a policy area was detrimental to sustained efforts as priority sectors were more liable to change.

This dynamic was underpinned by the observation that certain priority areas were heavily politicised - the dynamos of power - such as migration. This would, presumably, lead many to choose migration management interventions as a staple in their development interventions as I3 suggested but if everybody is doing it then the risks of incoherence and overlaps or redundant efforts increases. In this way, too strong a political emphasis on specific sectors or areas of intervention might not be helpful to the stated objectives of development cooperation. This is closely tied with the observations put forward by Robert Putnam in his conceptualisation of 'Two-Level Games' (1988). In this case, the game has (at least) three levels: (i) the domestic political context, (ii) the fora of the European Union, and (iii) the developing country in which cooperation is to take place. Additions specific to the scope of this study might be that certain priorities are fruitless but politically popular or examples of stopgap, unreflecting action.

Further, the logic of political visibility as treated both at the teleoaffective and general levels of analysis might hamper development outcomes if certain initiatives are deemed to be politically expedient and will thus be allocated human resources and funds above and beyond what the field-level staff consider appropriate given the realities on the ground. A derived problem could be a resulting cleavage between field-level and headquarters as field-level personnel will have a better view of what is most conducive to positive outcomes whereas headquarters will have its eyes firmly set on cues from the ruling politicians at home.

This politicisation was, the analysis showed, claimed to find support in an integrated services where foreign policy and development policy are seen as one and personnel are trained to see those areas as two sides of the same coin. However, an integrated service was also said to have benefits to development cooperation and working towards positive change, namely on political questions.

I5 spoke of issues with their colleagues when it came to engaging in questions of development. Most of their colleagues were raised as foreign and security policy diplomats; this was reflected in their approach to their job. They didn't have a natural understanding that development cooperation could be applied to a country as the means towards a political end - in this case, political reforms.

Thus, the politicisation of aid is a double-edged sword as well. It can, to some extent, be harnessed to inform development cooperation and drive political change. This requires a certain understanding going into Joint Programming but if this is in place, it

might be a strong contribution to the single, European voice that was mentioned in the above section on group dynamics.

5.4. Summary of the thematic discussion

The analysis answered the research question as it drew out a number of obstacles to Joint Programming. The preceding three sections looked at how these obstacles and their understanding within the framework of practice theory might inform broader issues on Joint Programming and development cooperation, generally.

The first section was on the dichotomy between the programming phase of Joint Programming and the subsequent follow-up. The suggestion was that many of the obstacles inherent to the practice appear in the mapping phase and the division of labour phase, and that many of these problems are difficult to solve. Informed by this, it was suggested to put the onus on the analysis phase and the subsequent follow-up as this might produce more gains for fewer resources.

The second section considered the question of the group dynamics of the European partners. It was posited that this is a somewhat underestimated contributing factor to and outcome of Joint Programming as it might help overcome many of the obstacles observed in the analysis. Further, it was proposed as a good way to ensure the coherence and communication necessary to achieve a single, European voice with which the European Union could advance its ideals and interests in developing countries in the face of the shifting global politics, including new actors such as China.

The third section concerned the way the politicisation of aid affects development cooperation. The detrimental effects were most obvious as it might lead to short-sightedness, incoherence between headquarters and field-level and a preference for political credit above the effectiveness of development cooperation - this was viewed in the tradition of Putnam's Two-Level Games. However, it was shown to also have its merits in ensuring coherence between political actions and development interventions, making it a double-edged sword.

Appendix III proposes policy guidance on the basis of this study, taking into account the obstacles as well as the the discussion of their broader implications. The guidance also helps to illuminate some of the practical applications of the insights brought forth by the present research. The policy guidance will be sent to the interviewees along with this thesis as small tokens of gratitude once this thesis has been graded.

5.5. Methodological discussion

The methodological discussion of this study will center on three questions. The first is analytical generalisation. The second is on sampling and data saturation. The third is interviews as a data collection strategy within the approach of practice theory.

5.5.a. - Analytical generalisation

The present research has not been tied to a specific country or location. The interviews were conducted as meta-discussions with interviewees about what had been the obstacles to Joint Programming in their experience. Thus, the contributions made by this study is not supposed to be applied to a context different from the one in which it was set.

Instead two clear differentiations are possible. The first comes from the Member State in question. Apart from two European officials, the interviewees were all from the Ministry of Foreign of Member State X. This can give the data a tilt towards the national policy objectives of this Member State but this would be hard to avoid unless representatives of most Member States active in development cooperation were interviewed. However, in general terms this mean that they approach Joint Programming as would the staff of a smaller Member State of the European Union with a strong tradition for development cooperation. A few other Member States match that description such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden.

An open question would then be whether representatives of a larger Member State would take another view of Joint Programming. This is not unlikely as the question of capacity constraints featured heavily in the analysis and as a factor for the interviewees. This could be counteracted by the idea that all processes have to have a value proposition for those that engage, and if this is not the case then participation is less dependent on resources.

Larger donors might also be more likely to act independently and show less concern about joined up action and communication as they might consider themselves weighty enough in the group of donors as it is. Interestingly, these two dynamics point in different directions. Having more resources would make it easier to engage but considering it needless might counteract that to some extent. If so, then it would be interesting to explore further.

Another question would be how representatives of a Member State with a relatively weaker tradition for development cooperation perceive Joint Programming and its obstacles. Perhaps it would be considered a welcome way to learn from more experienced

colleagues in the European group, or it could be considered even more of an obstacle as less experienced government officials working in development have enough on their plate as it is. Once again, these two dynamics point in opposite directions.

Another issue might be how a Member State with a development agency separate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sees the implications of organisational setups for Joint Programming. Perhaps they are blind to the implications of this as they don't see a relevant link between political and development actions - it doesn't register as a means to an end the way it does for those with an integrated service. This speaks to the way a complete, or at least thorough, ends-projects-tasks teleology of a practice doesn't register with all carriers of that practice.

The second differentiation has to do with the seniority and hierarchical position of the staff that are interviewed. All participants in the present study enjoyed some central position in relation to development cooperation and/or Joint Programming. This is likely to be conducive to the aforementioned meta-conversation about the larger puzzle but it also implies that some pieces will be more obscure.

Perhaps staff engaged in Joint Programming but in less central positions can shed light on some of the tasks and projects that make up the teleology of the practice. They may even be able to provide pertinent examples of differences in practical understandings that emerge when striving towards Joint Programming that are opaque to those at a higher level of the hierarchy.

A closer examination of their general understandings may help to clarify where things go awry for those that have to implement the practical details of Joint Programming or contribute to the wider analysis. Perhaps consequential nuances in understanding throughout the framework of practice theory among lower-level staff actually cause a disproportionate amount of the problems which arise. The methodological choices of the present studies prevent further discussion of this.

5.5.b. - Sampling and data saturation

As mentioned the aim was to have a more general discussion with the practitioners on obstacles. This allowed for some leeway in the sampling but as seen above, it affects the generalisability of the present research. This is not only relates to the positions of staff or questions on the size of the Member State, it also relates to what can be said about the nature of the developing countries in which Joint Programming takes place.

A more systematic sampling strategy in the sense of conducting a comparative study by choosing two developing countries as cases - in a most-different systems design - could

have yielded some interesting insights about the factors that affect Joint Programming. Perhaps the number of donors influence efforts towards Joint Programming in that more donor countries make the process more complex, or the make-up of the present European partners whereby a more homogenous, likeminded group of partners would have an easier go at it or, perhaps, their analysis would be easier but less rich as it wouldn't include as many perspectives. Their interventions may be too similar, and this diversity would leave too many gaps in the programming. These factors are not pulling the same direction and due to the methodology applied in this thesis, not much can be said about it. Such things as the relative poverty level and/or security situation are likely to factor in as well.

A comparative design could also be conducted by choosing to European countries and interviewing their respective representatives. This would have counteracted some of the issues about generalisability faced by this study. A mix of the two would have been an even stronger foundation for finding general insights.

Data saturation is important include here as well (Andersen et al. 2012:165). The above questions of generalisability and sampling are somewhat related to this but even given the design of this research, an argument could be made that the data collection wasn't quite as complete as it could have been.

The thematic discussion on the politicisation of aid was based on a number of observations made by the interviewees throughout the interviews and the negative aspects were, to a large extent, covered by the data. However, the nuance that a more integrated organisation, taking into account both politics and development, wasn't uncovered until the final interview with I5 as shown in the analysis. A good rule of thumb for data saturation is that it is achieved once an interview doesn't result in fresh insights (ibid).

The present study doesn't quite live up to that ideal. A couple more interviews - even within the limited sampling approach applied - might have elaborated the question on politicisation and yielded further insights. This is further underpinned by the compressed timeline of the research.

The compressed timeline had two primary implications: first, that the interviews were carried out over only a couple of weeks. This didn't allow for a thorough analysis of each interview before the next was conducted. In all likelihood, this approach doesn't allow the researcher to properly organise all the insights from each interview before going into the next one and this runs the risk of losing insights or not having them confirmed in an adequate manner.

This leads into the another shortcoming to be addressed here. That is the process of revisiting each interviewee with a summary of their contributions in order to have them

confirm or reject what the analysis of their interviews concluded. This wasn't done due to time constraints. This occasion could also have been used to give a more general summary of the results of the analysis and record their responses. These observations taken together challenge the validity of this study to some degree.

5.5.c. - Practice theory and interviews

The final methodological point of discussion has to do with interviews as a data collection strategy when applying the approach of practice theory as this has in some literature been criticised lucidly.

Nicolini (2017:29) acknowledges some of the merits of interviews as data collection on practices because practitioners are socialised into the practice largely through language. Thus, they have a reasonably precise ability to describe and make sense of the practice that they carry. However, it is considered second-best (ibid).

To Nicolini the optimal approach would be for the researchers to position themselves in *"the midst of the scene of action"* (ibid). It allows for achieving an independent understanding of the practice whereby the researchers can give their own account of it. That account, it is suggested, would be radically different than those accounts given by the carriers of the practice. This is supported by the observation that interviews are themselves practices (Silverman 2013). Engaging in the practice of interviews gives a good understanding of that data collection strategy but it may lead to a limited understanding of the practice actually under scrutiny.

While a separate account of a practice is likely to have its merits, it has its challenges as well. First, the ontology of practice theory sees practices as spatially and temporally open-ended and this undermines the whole of idea of a scene of action in which a researcher can position himself. For a researcher, it is simply too daunting a task to acquire an understanding that is adequate to engaging in a practice and seeking out the places that are most illuminating to understanding that practice.

Second, if carriers of practice are socialised through language then it requires an enormous amount of time and patience in order to intricate oneself into the practice and seeing the web of teleology and understandings on which it runs. This is not a luxury that most researchers enjoy, and this is assuming the researcher can achieve the requisite access, which would be the third concern.

This combination of factors argues against the case for an observational study, and it is indeed the issue of capacity constraints, which resulted in interviews being the preferred strategy for data collection in this thesis.

6. Perspectives for further research

The chapter on discussion gave an indication of key questions, which it would pertinent to take up following this thesis. Some are down to the limitations of the present research and others are down to its results. They are grouped in three different categories.

The first category is on Joint Programming specifically. The methodological discussion conveyed the message that research on Joint Programming would benefit from a more comparative approach, taking into account such things as the Member States from which interviewees are chosen and the developing countries in question. This would likely benefit from a most-different systems design. The results of the discussion on the programming phase versus post-programming and implementation efforts suggested that it might in the follow-up that there are gains to be achieved. Considering what actions it would be beneficial to pursue in the follow-up phase was outside the scope of this study but it might be an informative area of research in the future.

The second category might suitably be named relationalism. The ideational backdrop of relationalism contributed with some understanding of the importance of group dynamics, and this was treated in the discussion as well. Two avenues are apparent: it would be helpful to get a clearer understanding of why group dynamics seem to be so central, and studying how strong group dynamics are achieved could be relevant as well Further, it would be interesting to study how actors are socialised into practices. Understanding the means for socialising into a given practice - in this case Joint Programming or donor coordination more generally - could help understand how practices evolve. Perhaps insights and approaches from network theory (Moliterno & Mahony 2011) can inform how certain carriers of practice are more influential than others.

The third category is on the politicisation of aid. As was seen in the discussion, this subject is quite relevant to both effectiveness of development cooperation and European coherence at country level. Politicisation is mostly viewed as something negative but it seems to carry positives as well and illuminating these would be a positive step. This could also be an interesting contribution to the debate on modernisation versus dependency mentioned in the chapter on theory. Finally, understanding how political action and development interventions link up to become more than the sum of their parts would advance the scope and force of external action - European or otherwise. How can development be leveraged to aid politics and vice versa? This is already being done to some

extent when it comes to such things as the conditionality of aid (see: Kanbur 2000 or Boyce 2002). An empirical treatment of these questions would be beneficial.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

The introduction to this thesis set the global frame in which European external action, specifically Joint Programming, takes place. This global frame was argued to be relevant to the endeavours of Joint Programming and thus acted as the rationale for pursuing the present research. Then a short section presented the concept of Joint Programming and formulated the research question of this study which was:

What are the obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by the practitioners responsible for its implementation?

7.2. Theory

The chapter on theory described Joint Programming in-depth by outlining the elements that make up the process and listed the proposed benefits of Joint Programming as suggested by an official document on Joint Programming - the Joint Programming Guidance. Then a review of earlier studies of the implementation of Joint Programming provided an overview of the obstacles that had previously been identified. These studies were not of an academic nature but Joint Programming specifically has not been treated in academia on development or European external action. The obstacles were grouped into four separate categories: 1) relational, 2) substantive, 3) institutional and 4) political. Four hypotheses corresponding to each type of obstacle were put forward, proposing that efforts towards Joint Programming encounter these.

Next, the chapter on theory introduced the academic approach of relationalism as a foundational touchstone for the ensuing study. This understanding of international relations, it was argued, is more fruitful to understanding phenomena that are relational in nature and perceived as such by diplomats and other practitioners. This led into the theoretical framework informing the thesis: practice theory.

Specifically, it was practice theory as put forward by Theodor Schatzki. Relationalism and practice theory were argued to be relevant frames because the latter seeks to bridge the divide between agents and structures, which can help understand how the macro-level of global politics feed into the micro-level of day-to-day practice in external action. Schatzki's framework was then described as consisting of four elements

which were applied as levels of analysis: (i) practical understandings, (ii) rules, (iii) the teleoaffective structure and (iv) general understandings. The chapter on theory concluded by linking Joint Programming and its obstacles to the levels of analysis provided by practice theory and giving examples of where and how each type of obstacle related to each level of analysis.

7.3. Methodology

The chapter on methodology commenced by giving hermeneutics as the philosophical foundation on which the study is based. This helped inform the criteria for scientific rigorousness.

The justification for choosing qualitative methods was argued to be the relative novelty of the concept of Joint Programming and the resulting scarcity of previous academic research in the area. Further, while the study had elements of deductive research in that hypotheses were put forward about the obstacles likely be encountered while doing Joint Programming, a deeper understanding of those obstacles was argued to be an inductive venture. Similar reasons were given for using interviews for the data collection as they are considered to be a good way of getting into the life world of specific persons, which was highly relevant to the present avenue of research. Moreover, thick descriptions are often helpful to new lines of academic inquiry.

Then, the sampling strategy was presented as purpose-oriented. The difficulties of access was also instrumental for initially going with convenience sampling which then turned into snowballing sampling. This was followed by a description of the interviewees each of whom enjoyed a high level of knowledge about Joint Programming and development cooperation in a wider sense. Three participants were from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Member State X - one works at headquarters in capital and the other two were posted to anonymised developing countries. The remaining two interviewees were European officials with one being from headquarters in Bruxelles and the other being posted to an anonymised developing country.

The final section of the chapter on methodology presented the codes to be applied in the analysis of the data. These were drawn from the final section of the chapter on theory as types of obstacles were divided into levels of analysis from practice theory. This resulted in 10 codes to be used in closed coding of the data, which were transcribed interviews - the implication of transcribing interviews was briefly addressed.

7.4. Analysis

The analysis first confirmed all four hypotheses about the types of obstacles to occur in a Joint Programming process. The data was also presented as a distribution of related remarks between interviewees. Then the analysis proceeded by treating each of the levels of analysis drawn from practice theory to gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles by applying the list of codes produced in the chapter on methodology. This was summarised in Table 8, which represented a preliminary answer to the research question by listing all the obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by practitioners as found in the analysis of the data.

Some were aligned with what previous Joint Programming studies had uncovered. Among these were: (i) clearly diverging understandings of what Joint Programming actually is and what the process implies are still prevalent, (ii) centralised decision-making procedures (giving less flexibility to field-level personnel) are detrimental to engagement in Joint Programming, (iii) the position, commitment and priorities internally of an individual Member State can be incoherent and challenges engagement in joint European action, and (iv) weak group dynamics among the European partners at field-level are highly destructive; conversely, strong working relationships are predictive of succes.

Others were found to be additional to those expected from the review of previous studies. Among these were: (i) the analysis, which was considered to be one of the more functional aspects of Joint Programming, can be biased when Member States have pre-defined policy objectives, (ii) diverging opinions on how to conduct a dialogue with the host government prevail, (iii) many of the disagreements do not actually arise between European partners on the field but between a consensual group of field-level European colleagues and their respective headquarters, and (iv) disproportionately overriding domestic policy concerns - the so-called dynamos of power - lead to overlaps and ineffective development cooperation.

7.5. Discussion

The discussion drew on the insights garnered by applying practice theory to elaborate the broader implications of the analysis and provide more general answers to the research question. Here, three main thematic points were treated: a) programming phase versus post-programming efforts, b) group dynamics and c) politicisation of aid.

At all levels of the practice of Joint Programming, it was evident that the programming phase faced the most difficulties as especially the mapping exercise and the division of labour were considered to be cumbersome, even unachievable in some cases. However, the joint analysis was shown to be feasible and constructive towards greater cooperation, and post-programming specificities was a more likely endeavour to improve European coordination on the ground. The post-programming specificities, other than delegated partnerships which were treated briefly in the analysis, were not within the scope of this study. However, one aspect was proposed to be the overall group dynamics of European partners in developing countries.

Positive group dynamics among European partners in a developing countries were highlighted several times in the analysis. The positive effects emerging from the analysis for overcoming obstacles and leveraging them to constructive ends implied that good working relationships might be underestimated - both as a contributing factor to succesful Joint Programming and as an outcome of that process. Considering the introduction to this thesis, it was notable that a strong group dynamic was seen as a way to create internal coherence among European partners and improve their joint communication and reach the single, European voice with which the European Union as a unit would have an easier time advancing its objectives in a shifting geopolitical landscape.

The third and final thematic point of discussion was on the politicisation of aid. In more ways than one, it was found to be detrimental to development cooperation as it could lead to a dire lack of long-term perspective and incoherence between headquarters and field-level but it also had its merits as development cooperation could be informed and aided by taking politics into account.

Finally, the discussion turned towards the methodology of the study. Here, there were three main points of critique. The first was on the analytical generalisability of the present research which was challenged by a number of factors such as the choice of Member States from which to interview representatives. The second centred on issues of sampling and data saturation, where the former introduced some limitations to the scope of the study, which was argued to be somewhat detrimental to answering the research question in full, and the latter was argued to not be entirely sufficient. The third and final one concerned interviews as a data collection strategy within practice theory, which has its drawbacks but was ultimately deemed to be fitting to the scope of the research.

7.6. Perspectives for further research

Before the conclusion of this thesis, a brief chapter discussed perspectives for further research opened up by the present study. Here, there were three categories of future research foreseen to be fruitful.

The first was on Joint Programming specifically as a comparative approach might shed light on things that weren't covered in this study, and studying what actions after the programming phase are helpful to European coordination and coherence was also seen to be a viable avenue of research.

The second was relationalistic in nature. This is related to the group dynamics and working towards a better understanding of how and why they are of such importance as well as to achieve strong group dynamics.

The third was related to the politicisation of aid. This dynamic is often criticised as detrimental to effective development cooperation but it was seen to have positive aspects as well. It would be educational to systematically seek out the positives of politicisation. Finally, research on applying development cooperation to advance foreign policy objectives and vice versa was considered a highly interesting option for further research.

7.7. Conclusive answer to the research question

The present research concludes that there are numerous relational, substantive, institutional and political obstacles to Joint Programming among European partners.

These are primarily found in attempts to map existing development interventions and formulate a division of labour as these face intractable obstacles. This points to an emphasis on joint analysis and post-programming forms of cooperation, where some potential was seen for delegated partnerships as a modality of cooperation both as an end in itself and as a means for achieving a better working relationship.

Further, strong group dynamics were suggested as integral to the success of cooperation between European partners in developing countries.

Finally, politicisation of aid is obstructive to many efforts for effective development cooperation, although there seems to be potential for leveraging politicisation to the benefit of development outcomes given the centrality of political reforms and leadership for achieving development. Table 8a provides the exhaustive overview of the obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by the practitioners responsible for its implementation. It is identical to Table 8 and presented here as part of the conclusive answer to the research question.

Table 8: obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by the practitioners responsible for its implementation

	New insights	Confirming earlier studies
Practical level	- Expertise leading to a path dependency challenging division of labour - Different definitions of a project - Diverging applications of concrete development modalities	- Differing understandings of what Joint Programming and division of labour actually implies
Regulatory level	- Prior objectives skewing engagement in the analysis	- Lack of autonomy in decision-making - Lack of systematic support and emphasis on Joint Programming from headquarters - The fact of bilateral country programmes - Too rigid an application of procedures
Teleoaffective level	- How to conduct the country analysis and how many resources to expend on it - European partners working in silos with different partners, modalities and the like - No clear view of added value in mapping exercises - Overall differences in approaches to development cooperation between Member States - Different opinions of how to conduct a dialogue with host government - Disagreements between field-level and headquarters - General politicisation leading to a loss of long-term perspective	- Capacity constraints in the shape of human resources - Lack of ownership of analysis - Incoherence internally in Member States on commitments and priorities across headquarters, in Bruxelles and in developing countries - A perceived reduction in bilateral visibility and influence as a result of Joint Programming - Weak group dynamics - Lacking leadership, competence and relational ability of central European officials such as Head of Mission or Head of Cooperation - Foreign policy objectives overriding development objectives
General level	- Disproportionately overriding domestic policy concerns leading to overlaps - Political visibility as an underlying logic standing in the way of coherent action	- Personaliities and resulting relationships among European partners - General disagreements about the proper relationship between the Member States' embassies and the EU-delegation

8. References

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9. Appendices

Appendix I: pre-understanding of Joint Programming

My pre-understanding of Joint Programming - July 2018

From 1 September 2017 to 31 January 2018, I worked as an intern at the Permanent Representation to the European Union of Member State X in Bruxelles. I worked as an assistant to the delegate to CODEV (Coopération au Développement), which is the Council working group on development policy and cooperation.

It was here that I first heard of Joint Programming. I developed some preconceptions about the concept of Joint Programming even though my exposure to it was limited. Considering the hermeneutical foundation of my Master's thesis, I here disclose my preconceptions about Joint Programming before embarking upon the present research.

My understanding of Joint Programming was limited to the impression that it was a fairly comprehensive and global effort to improve cooperation, coordination and communication among European partners in developing countries. I understood the purpose of Joint Programming to be development effectiveness, reducing overlaps in intervention and reducing possible gaps in involvement to have all relevant bases covered. I didn't at the time see it as a means to advance European values and interests as well.

Further, it was my understanding that Joint Programming was a somewhat failed endeavour that didn't enjoy much attention in Bruxelles - or the capital of Member State X for that matter. Thus, I saw it as neglected by Member States and an agenda pushed mostly by the European Union's institutions, namely the European Commission's Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DG DEVCO) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). It didn't appear to be politicised either even though I saw development effectiveness, coming from an academic environment, to be one of the weightiest responsibilities of development policy and subsequent cooperation.

The above outlines the nascent understanding of Joint Programming I developed while an intern in Bruxelles and held before the production of this Master's thesis.

- Lars Olaf Søvndahl Petersen

Appendix II: Introduction to the interview and interview guide

The prospective interviewees were contacted with a general description of the subject of this Master's thesis as centred on the obstacles to Joint Programming as they perceived them:

> Broadly speaking, the thesis is centred on uncovering the obstacles to and preconditions for successful JP as understood by practitioners at both field and headquarters level.
>
> "As understood by practitioners" is central as I don't want to engage in abstract theoretical discussions. I want your perspective as the starting point for my analysis.
>
> Would you be available for and interested in such an interview? Of course, you would be anonymised and referenced as a [Member State/European] official with experience of development cooperation and Joint Programming.

Once they had accepted, they were each sent the following snippet of text in the days leading up their interview:

> I foresee to initially have our conversation in three parts focusing on different aspects of the JP-process.
>
> - First on the analysis
> - Second on the mapping and division of labour as well as the synchronisation
> - Third on co-implementation/financing, delegated partnerships and joint messaging
>
> The underlying questions are: How is it working? What challenges do you experience?
>
> From there we might follow up on loose ends. All in all around 45 minutes.

The above comprises all information received by the interviewees about the subject of the thesis beforehand. The last message transmitted was also an apt description of the interview guide, which is shown in Table A on the next page.

At the beginning of each interview the overall scope of the thesis was reiterated in familiar terms as they were the same used when first making contact, putting an emphasis on their individual experiences. Further, they were asked whether they consented to have the interview recorded with a view to transcribing them. They all consented. At this point, the

recording device was turned on and the interviews began in earnest. Apart from the interview questions listed below, most of which were asked in all interviews, questions specific to the individual interviews were also asked in order to have the interviewees elaborate on some of their points.

Table A: Interview guide

Research question	Interview questions
What are the obstacles to Joint Programming as seen by the practitioners responsible for its implementation?	**1. Analysis** - How were your experiences with conducting joint analyses? - What obstacles did you encounter? - What do you think were the causes of those obstacles?
	2. Mapping and division of labour - How were your experiences with the mapping exercise? - What obstacles did you encounter? - What do you think were the causes of those obstacles? - How were your experiences with finding a division of labour? - What obstacles did you encounter? - What do you think were the causes of those obstacles?
	3. Co-implementation - How were your experiences with joint implementation? - What obstacles did you encounter? - What do you think were the causes of those obstacles? - How do you see a modality such as delegated partnerships in relation to Joint Programming?
	4. Concluding questions - Do you have any points you wish to clarify before we conclude? - Do you have any points you would like to add to our discussion before we conclude? - Was anything unclear to you? - Is there something you would like to ask me before we conclude?

Policy Guidance on Joint Programming

Summary

An academic study of Joint Programming carried out in the fall of 2018 centred on the obstacles to Joint Programming as perceived by practitioners. As an outcome of the thesis, the following 9 points of policy guidance are offered - two of which are specifically relevant for the institutions of the European Union and two of which are specifically relevant for Member States.

General points

1. Ensure all relevant staff (in capitals and at field-level) have a clear and coherent conception of Joint Programming and what it implies.
2. Take the time to do the analysis. Do not get bogged down in details on mapping of interventions or division of labour. Identify opportunities for enhanced cooperation and coordination in the post-programming efforts, such as joint communications.
3. Allow field-level staff a certain autonomy and flexibility in decision-making.
4. Engender a culture of thinking political action and development cooperation as one track as each can benefit the other.
5. Emphasise strong group dynamics and good working relationships among the European partners as an end and a means to other ends.

Specific to the EU

6. To the greatest extent possible, additional resources needed for Joint Programming should be provided by the European Union institutions.
7. Explore the scope for applying delegated partnerships as a means to achieve a division of labour - beware unhealthy competition between Member States' agencies.

Specific to the Member States

8. Ensure coherence between commitments in Bruxelles fora, activities in countries and the related distribution of resources.
9. Provide the necessary political and institutional support (and pressure) from capitals to Joint Programming as a desirable end and a means to other ends such as political reforms and increased visibility and influence for the European Union and for the individual Member States.

Introduction

An academic study of Joint Programming was carried out in the fall of 2018 and centred on the obstacles to Joint Programming as perceived by practitioners. Data was collected through interviews with officials familiar with Joint Programming and development cooperation. Two were European officials - one at headquarters and another at country-level. Three were officials from a Member State - one at headquarters and two at country-level.

It followed up on earlier (non-academic) studies of Joint Programming carried out by the European Center for Development Policy Management[1] as it sought to identify obstacles encountered while striving towards joint Programming. The thesis applied the framework of practice theory to analyse the data and produce insights into the process.

The present policy guidance brief was prepared with the participants of the study in mind as a modest show of gratitude for their contribution to the study, which was a Master's Thesis within the field of Political Science. The 9 points of guidance were given in the summary and they will be briefly elaborated below.

General points of guidance

1. *Ensure all relevant staff (in capitals and at field-level) have a clear and coherent conception of Joint Programming and what it implies.*

The analysis of the study indicated that there are still some misconceptions about what Joint Programming is, and this is reflected by widely diverging applications of the process in different countries. One of the interviewees suggested that the initial language around Joint Programming had been overly strong. This had resulted in quite heavy processes marked by overambition.

This interviewee went as far as to suggest finding another name than *Joint Programming* as it implies a different, less popular process than what it can actually be. This interviewee acknowledged that the application of the term and developments in the field pointed to a positive trend towards a more useful and manageable process.

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[1] See: https://ecdpm.org/publications/one-free-early-experiences-eu-joint-programming/, also https://ecdpm.org/publications/programming-joint-cooperation-strategies/

2. *Take the time to do the analysis. Do not get bogged down in details on mapping of interventions or division of labour. Identify opportunities for enhanced cooperation and coordination in the post-programming efforts, such as joint communications.*

The study yielded a distinction between the actual programming phase and the subsequent efforts to implement and improve cooperation in more pragmatic ways. The joint analysis was largely perceived to be a positive, manageable process that had the potential to improve working relationships in the European group (more on this below), even if it had its challenges.

The real obstacles occurred when it came to the mapping exercise and the division of labour. The former was in many instances considered to be cumbersome and without apparent added value in many cases. The latter was considered to be outright unfeasible given the bureaucratic and political procedures involved in developing and reviewing bilateral country programmes as these wouldn't be liable to change at the drop of a hat. The same apparently holds true for synchronisation with one interviewee even remarking: *"Our own programmes aren't even in sync!"*.

The above suggests that a reasonable process of joint analysis can be helpful but the real gains of improved European coordination are perhaps to be found in the post-programming efforts, where synergies and ad-hoc forms of joint action can develop organically.

3. *Allow field-level staff a certain autonomy and flexibility in decision-making.*

The study was clear on this point. The European group of field-level staff is often in agreement, and many obstacles can arise in relations with headquarters. Whether headquarters wishes to see certain priorities at the fore, simply has to bureaucratically approve many decisions or is too concerned with the domestic, political context, capitals tend to obstruct and encumber the process of Joint Programming.

A more hands-off approach seems to be much the preferred option for many posted to the field. If this approach could be coupled with some institutional support when requested, then many things in Joint Programming would be better off.

4. *Engender a culture of thinking political action and development cooperation as one track as each can benefit the other.*

Politicisation of aid has been a subject of increasing attention. Often it has been cast in a negative light, and the study found a number of drawbacks. However, a discussion of this

theme with the interviewees showed that politicisation is not all bad as having an integrated service, combining foreign policy and development cooperation, which also casts development cooperation as a foreign policy tool, might have one remarkable advantage.

It implies that diplomats are trained to think about the link between foreign and development policy and each can benefit the other. A recurring issue in ensuring development is that of leadership and political reforms, which have often been lacking. Introducing some aspect of conditionality or even just political awareness to development cooperation might be a fruitful avenue for future intervention. Unfortunately, not all European diplomats are trained to do this and a truly coherent policy towards developing countries can thus have a harder time emerging. Engendering a culture of thinking those two aspects as one is a clear recommendation.

5. *Emphasise strong group dynamics and good working relationships among the European partners as an end and a means to other ends.*

A positive group dynamic was highlighted strongly by a couple of the interviewees. It was foreseen to ensure a more coherent European Union as a foreign policy actor, encompassing the European institutions as well as the Member States. This is an obvious boon to communicating clear messages for the benefit of European values and interests towards host governments, other donors including the new and non-traditional ones, namely China.

Further, many other positive effects might be observed as a result. All joint endeavours - systematic or ad-hoc - will have an easier time emerging and taking root among European colleagues with a certain *"level of intimacy"* as put by one interviewee. The same interviewee longed for much closer linkages such as sharing human resources, buildings, canteens and the like; the positive effects were evident to this person as they could improve working relationships in the European group.

Specific to the European Union

6. *To the greatest extent possible, additional human resources needed for Joint Programming should be provided by the European Union institutions.*

A constant factor mentioned at practically every turn for the interviewees contributing to the study was the obstacle of capacity constraints. Even an ideal process of Joint Programming will require work additional to that already carried out by officials in developing countries, and it is a clear issue that must be addressed.

One way of doing that would be to have the European institutions carry most of the additional costs from Joint Programming. The Member States are facing cost-cutting and political pressure to emphasise those efforts, which advance visibility of their respective governments. In a sense, the institutions of the European Union might have more freedom to support such less visible agendas as Joint Programming.

7. *Explore the scope for applying delegated partnerships as a means to achieve a division of labour - beware unhealthy competition between Member States' agencies.*

Delegated partnerships and their relevance to joined up external action was an incidental observation deriving from the study. It was proposed by one interviewee as the optimal way to enhance cooperation and continuous coordination as it was conducive to interactions and a better mutual understanding. It was also seen to be relatively cost-free.

Other interviewees concurred that delegated partnerships could be used as a way to reinforce certain constructive divisions of labour already present. Thus, this seems a promising avenue for a more strategic approach. However, it came with the caveat that delegated partnerships should be applied with a sense of fairness as it might otherwise lead to unhealthy competition between the Member States' development agencies eager to *"cut up the pie"* as put by one interviewee.

Specific to the Member States

8. *Ensure coherence between commitments in Bruxelles fora, activities in countries and the related distribution of resources.*

It was conveyed by one interviewee that the European Union's institutions sometimes face a thankless task in implementing high-level commitments made in Bruxelles by all Member States in a diverse range of country contexts with a varying degree of engagement by Member States' colleagues actually present in them.

Thus, it seems a simple suggestion to not promise more than can be kept. This means to commit to that which one actually has the resources and willingness to implement. This requires taking account of what colleagues in the field and in capitals are already doing and how much more they are able to take on, and - if necessary - to allocate resources where they are lacking towards common objectives supposedly shared by all.

9. *Provide the necessary political and institutional support (and pressure) from capitals to Joint Programming as a desirable end and a means to other ends such as political reforms and increased visibility and influence for the European Union as a whole and the individual Member States.*

Field-level staff tend to focus on that which they are instructed to by their capitals. When the political and institutional emphasis on Joint Programming goes missing so goes the willingness to engage and spend precious additional hours on something for which they are not rewarded. This is partly a question of incentives but also a question of European identity.

Joint Programming done right is a means to reach the objective of the European Union as a single acftor, encompassing all Member States and institutions. This relates to the point about thinking politics and development within the same sphere and recognising how crucial European coherence is to advancing its interests and values. The geopolitical landscape suggests that a certain sense of urgency in this endeavour might not be misplaced.