

# Evaluation of the European Union cooperation with Somalia (2014-2021)

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the strategic evaluation of the European Union's (EU) cooperation with Somalia (2014 to 2021). The evaluation was commissioned by the Unit D4 (Performance, Results and Evaluation; Internal Communication, Knowledge Management and Collaborative Methods) of the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA). The evaluation focusses on Somalia, including Somaliland. Its **main objectives** are:

- to provide the relevant external co-operation services of the EU and the wider public with **an overall independent assessment** of the EU's past and current cooperation with the Federal Republic of Somalia (hereafter 'Somalia');
- to identify key lessons and to produce **recommendations** in order to inform the responsible decision-makers, notably in the European External Action Service (EEAS) and DG INTPA, on **how to improve** the current and future EU's strategies, programmes and actions.

The evaluation covers the EU's international development cooperation with Somalia, including EU-funded regional interventions benefitting Somalia. It reviews how this assistance connects with the support of all EU services active in Somalia, including the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPi), DG for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa (EUSR), the EU Training Mission to Somalia (EUTM), the European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) and the European Union Naval Force Somalia. Moreover, it assesses the EU's linkages with the work of EU Member States (EU MS), including Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Italy, and various international actors, as well as its alignment with the development priorities of the respective governments of Somalia.

### A timely evaluation

The **evaluation is timely** in view of unfolding international and national challenges and a new Government in place that is committed to reforms and who can make use of the recommendations. These challenges include Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the change of government in some European countries, ongoing political and constitutional tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), the Federal Member States (FMS) and Somaliland, and uncertainty about the likelihood to defeat Al-Shabaab. At EU level, European actors are investing in making optimal use of the funding available under the new financing instrument **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation instrument – Global Europe** (NDICI-GE) for the programming period 2021-2027, and opportunities arising from the recently developed **Team Europe approach**.

During the evaluation period, **Somalia has gone through various political developments, periods of conflict and instability, natural disasters and limited economic growth**. A departure-point for the international support to Somalia as of 2012 has been the New Deal's peacebuilding and statebuilding goals, which translated into the Somali Compact (2013) and framed the objectives of the EU's programming for 2014-2020. Being located in the Horn of Africa, Somalia has also been influenced by regional political developments, civil wars and the growth of Al-Shabaab, which originates from Somalia but with multiple contacts in the region and beyond. More recently, the country was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, which caused a rise in food prices. In 2023, the country continues to present a high dependency on imported food<sup>1</sup> while climate change brought about Somalia's fifth major drought period since 2012, resulting in widespread starvation and high numbers of people being displaced.

After nearly **EUR 1.6 billion of EU cooperation funding spent in Somalia** from 2014 to 2021,<sup>2</sup> there is an interest to know what has been realised with it and which lessons can be drawn for future EU engagement in Somalia. In this evaluation, a number of **key issues** were identified and are reflected throughout the report findings.

- **The high complexity of engagement in such a fragile and conflict prone environment:** this complexity has put massive pressures on all stakeholders; there has been a general acceptance that success can only be piecemeal and achieved over a longer period of time.

<sup>1</sup> International Monetary Fund (2022): Country Report 22/376. December 2022.

<sup>2</sup> This includes humanitarian assistance, but excludes security-related support via EU missions/operations under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as well as the funding to the African Union (AU) for its peacekeeping missions African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

- **The need to work together, comprehensively and via integrated approaches:** without this perspective and attitude, the likelihood to use well available financial resources and achieve results in the extreme contexts of Somalia is reduced. Collaborative approaches are practiced in different constellations, comprising the interaction of EU services, their collaboration with EU MS and other international partners, national government and different civil society stakeholders.
- **The necessity to look at the EU's international development cooperation from a broader perspective:** the engagement of all EU services needs to be considered and judged against the background of a wider geopolitical and continuously changing context in the Horn of Africa. An assessment needs to take into account experiences at the operational level, policy dimensions and the wider political context, which is also in line with the EU's own policy commitments to comprehensive and integrated approaches.
- **The promotion of the New Deal's peacebuilding and statebuilding goals:** in this context, the potential of working with innovative approaches – in particular, budget support in combination with sector-wide programmes and projects – is of key interest to inform the EU's learning about how fragile countries can be assisted. Learning about such approaches are of particular importance as the fragility of the context demands for interventions which touch on the very core functions of a partner country, including constitutional and security issues.

Looking ahead, experiences and lessons learnt by EU actors at headquarters and field level may help to: i) further tailor EU support to the dynamic and very diverse Somali context, ii) develop more effective and strategic engagements together with the FGS, FMS and international partners, iii) further innovate approaches in support of particular sectors and mainstream them across different intervention areas, and iv) seek ways to further strengthen the EU's engagement with EU MS in this strategically located region of the world.

#### Overall assessment

**Considering all elements of this highly complex engagement of the EU in Somalia, the overall assessment of the EU's international development cooperation and its linkages with the actions of other EU services, EU MS and international partners is positive.** Four more specific messages emerge in relation to this assessment:

- The EU, despite having worked with Somalia before, had to proceed via a 'learning by doing' approach to navigate its way during the early years of the evaluation period. The EU's engagement in Somalia, with the programming for 2014-2020 being largely based on the statebuilding ambitions and objectives of the Somali Compact, became a prominent EU test-case for putting the New Deal into practice.
- The period 2017/2018, following the London Somalia Conference 2017 and preceded by the launch of the EU's Global Strategy (2016), made the EU's cooperation more comprehensive and strategic in its engagement with Somalia. The EU increasingly promoted an integrated approach to cooperation and became one of the five key strategic international partners for political and policy dialogue with Somali authorities. The other key partners are the World Bank (WB), United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA) and United Nations (UN).
- Considering that nearly EUR 1.6 billion of EU international cooperation funding and EU humanitarian assistance was channelled into Somalia between 2014 and 2021, the outcome and impact of its investment has however been considerably less than expected according to the ambitions laid out in the National Indicative Programme (NIP) 2014-2020. This can be attributed to the complexity of the context, characterised by political and clan conflicts, unsolved constitutional issues, the conflict with Al-Shabaab and Islamic State in the northern part of the country, persisting capacity challenges within FGS and FMS institutions, and the humanitarian crises caused by a combination of natural and man-made disasters, compounded by the effects of climate change.
- Considering the central place of Somalia in the geopolitically relevant Horn of Africa and the need to promote regional stability – which is also in the wider interest of the EU and EU MS – there is a need to further rank Somalia as a priority area of international development cooperation and keep a high level of investment. The EU needs to further upgrade its support, refine its collaboration with EU MS and ensure that it remains at the strategic forefront of policy and political dialogue with Somali authorities, in concert with other key international partners.

Conclusions	
Main conclusions	Justification
<i>C1 – A responsive programming, but with a need for updates</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU support to Somalia was broadly aligned with country priorities, adapted to local context and responded to the policies and strategies set for its engagement at global, regional and country levels, including its guidance for working in fragile contexts.</li> <li>• The EU manoeuvred well through the difficult period 2020-2022, characterised by the international community's (including the EU) interruption of the political and policy dialogue with the Farmajo's government (except for the dialogue around the electoral process), the related postponement of budget support until the political/constitutional crisis was resolved and the COVID-19 outbreak.</li> <li>• The EU's Council Conclusions for Somalia (2016) are outdated and do not sufficiently clarify the EU's engagement at country level and its linkages with the strategic goals of the EU's Regional Strategy for the Horn of Africa (2021).</li> <li>• Strategic guidance on civil-military coordination for Somalia – relevant for the EU's promotion of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus, but under the responsibility of United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) – is considered outdated.</li> </ul>
<i>C2 – An appropriate set of instruments and modalities was used</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU successfully developed and deployed its support via a variety of financing instruments, modalities, channels and the promotion of cross-cutting issues.</li> <li>• Despite the difficult country context and comparatively few capable organisations available to work with in Somalia, the EU managed to find workable solutions that functioned without compromising the very nature of the EU's engagement.</li> <li>• The EU worked mainly via the project modality, but also implemented general budget support as of 2017/2018. The use of budget support considerably enhanced the EU's role as a strategic partner, providing opportunities to leverage macro-reform policy dialogue in key areas as constitutional reform, security, Public Financial Management (PFM) and the education sector.</li> <li>• The support to resilience and food security via the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and sizable Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) consortia was overall well set up; however, strategic dialogue with FGS and FMS on how to engage more effectively was limited due to insufficient Somali capacity and priority setting.</li> <li>• Despite doubts about the value added of a new budget support programme, such a programme appears essential to provide an entry point for leveraging reforms.</li> </ul>
<i>C3 – A progressively integrated approach was promoted and implemented</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU adapted its support as of 2017 based on a recognition that all EU services had to work much more closely together and advanced its comprehensive EU integrated approach with success.</li> <li>• Evidence of successful collaboration is strong for the cooperation and the political sections of the Delegation of the European Union to Somalia (EUD) with FPI and DG ECHO, and between headquarters and the field.</li> <li>• Collaboration between the EU services and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions (EUTM and EUCAP) has slowly improved during the recent years with more regular coordination meetings.</li> <li>• The EU-internal and EU/EU MS dialogue on the postponement of general budget support was lengthy and difficult due to different views on stopping, postponing, modifying or continuing with this support.</li> </ul>
<i>C4 – Institutional arrangements display several dilemmas</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU's current institutional set-up is the outcome of a generally successful monitoring, evaluation and learning process, resulting in more attention given to flexibility, location, human resources and synergy between the different EUD sections.</li> <li>• But, considering the scope of the EU's engagement in this complex environment, there is room to improve on the timely mobilisation and fielding of staff, working conditions and the number of staff.</li> <li>• Operational delays were not uncommon and COVID-19 has created additional obstacles to implementation in the years 2020 and 2021; however, overall, programmed funds were eventually disbursed.</li> <li>• Due to difficulties with recruiting qualified staff for the political section, cooperation staff were increasingly drawn into political and security related matters at the expense of time for cooperation-related work.</li> <li>• The EU's attention to visibility has been noticeable, but EU's visibility has not fully reflected the prominent role the EU plays in Somalia.</li> </ul>
<i>C5 – Effective synergies have been developed with other forms of cooperation and other donors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Besides working closely with Somalia, the EU collaborated and coordinated successfully with different multilateral organisations, bilateral partners, and international and national NGOs.</li> <li>• The EU's collaboration and coordination with EU MS were broadly satisfactory and the EU showed added value and complemented the work of EU MS. However, the EU put comparatively more energy into its partnership with the other four big players in Somalia, the WB, USA, UK and the UN (also in the political domain), partially due to the EU's strong</li> </ul>

	<p>engagement on macro-reform issues and the delivery of social services, and partially due to constraints on the staffing levels at the EUD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Team Europe approach launched in 2021 has created a new momentum for enhanced EU/EU MS collaboration, with a focus on the Green Deal.</li> <li>• Partnerships with non-traditional partners of Somalia, like the Gulf states or China, were difficult to establish due to the exclusive bilateral character of their engagement.</li> </ul>
<p><i>C6 – Overall effective support was delivered to civil society and cross-cutting issues were, with some variations, well addressed</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU paid considerable attention to working with NGOs and other civil society organisations (CSOs) to strengthen civil society; civil society actors highly appreciated the support provided by the EU for promoting local governance and the development of a social contract.</li> <li>• The EUD’s attention to the “localisation agenda” via Calls for Proposals tailored to local NGOs and NGO-platform organisations was highly appreciated and contributed to strengthening the capacities of these CSOs and platforms.</li> <li>• Civil society support also paid attention to the civil society/local government interface, though mostly from the angle of CSOs and their communities. Attention to local governments, and their role in local governance processes, was more limited.</li> <li>• The cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, human rights and attention to vulnerability were strongly promoted via projects strengthening CSO capacities and other projects across sectors, though with some variations.</li> <li>• Conflict sensitivity and do-no-harm principles were taken on board in projects, although in a less explicit way; they were rather organically included by organisations used to work in areas of conflict and protracted crises.</li> </ul>
<p><i>C7 – Results are positive though insufficient to trigger systemic change</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU support was truly relevant for Somalia – considering the country situation – and the EU proved a relatively effective supporter of peace and security, (local) governance, PFM and the education sector in which some reforms were achieved over the years.</li> <li>• But development progress in Somalia has been slow, piecemeal and not visible in all regions and sectors of the country, due to the unresolved constitutional crisis, conflict, capacity deficits throughout institutions and natural and man-made disasters. Somalia is today still extremely far from being a state which could function on its own.</li> <li>• Support in the domains of justice sector reform, resilience, food security and (local) economic development is appreciated, although it has brought mixed results – among others due to a lack of governance, capacity and national resources.</li> <li>• For the same reasons, the resilience and livelihoods of vulnerable communities, including women, young people, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees, remains extremely low.</li> <li>• Puntland and Somaliland have made comparatively good use of the assistance provided by the EU which was underpinned by a relatively stable security situation and comparatively better governance in the two regions.</li> </ul>
<p><i>C8 – Overall engagement of the EU is positive but a further strategic engagement is required</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EU has been dealing with a very volatile and complex context that has required a flexible way of engagement. In particular, during the early years of the evaluation period, the EU had to go through a learning curve about what it means to work in Somalia. The EU then gradually evolved into a strategic partner in concert with several other international supporters producing positive results – in as far as the country situation allowed for it.</li> <li>• Generally, the EU performed more positively with regard to its interventions for macro-reform issues and key statebuilding sectors. In other sectors less progress is noted, in particular, those where assistance took place via a multitude of projects spread across different areas in a context of low capacity and lack of governance, such as food security support.</li> <li>• Despite practicing a more strategic approach, the EU is still drawn into a wide variety of areas – partially as a result of expectations by a range of EU and non-EU stakeholders, and partially as a result of the significant challenges persisting in all domains. As such, focusing and targeting the EU’s support remained a challenge.</li> <li>• The EU has started to work as of 2019 with European Development Finance Institutions (DFI), including the European Investment Bank (EIB), to promote responsible and sustainable investments in the country, whereby some progress was made, in particular regarding the support to private sector operations. But, without adequate infrastructure, favourable investment climate and business environment, EU’s actions towards incentivising DFIs investments remain challenged.</li> </ul>

## Main recommendations

### **1. Clarify the role of the EU's international development cooperation within the overall strategic EU approach to Somalia through updated EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusion**

Continue to frame EU support to Somalia under the broad peacebuilding and statebuilding goals of the New Deal, but, to make the EU's international development cooperation more effective, clarify the strategy politically via updated EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions. Specific attention should be given to: i) inviting additional EU MS and their implementing organisations to take up a more active role in Somalia, ii) the political implications of specific instruments and modalities such as budget support and European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+); and iii) strengthening linkages between bilateral and regional engagements.

### **2. Formulate a Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus guidance and an updated civil-military guidance for Somalia**

Formulate an HDP nexus guidance for cooperation with Somalia to clarify the division of labour between the different EU services and their type of engagement in view of the EU's strong support to both stabilisation and humanitarian assistance. The guidance should be produced by EU institutions but take note of the work of EU MS on the HDP nexus. Insights from the recently conducted EU study on the implementation of the HDP nexus (2022) should be taken on board.

Promote progress to achieving an UN-OCHA update of the civil-military cooperation guidance for Somalia.

### **3. Promote the successful mix of instruments and modalities across the EU's cooperation**

Enhance learning from EU's overall successful and innovative combination of instruments and channels of support in areas such as education, and explore how this can be replicated in other sectors and subsectors.

Continue providing general budget support as long as it provides opportunities to leverage macro-policy and sector-policy reform, and access to policy dialogue.

Continue testing and learning from new programme approaches such as Inclusive Local and Economic Development (ILED) in support of territorial development.

### **4. Deepen and widen the EU's integrated approach in Somalia**

Build on EU's positive experiences gained from promoting and implementing an integrated approach involving DG INTPA, EEAS, FPI and other DGs, and reinforce efforts to deepen this integration with regard to the EU's missions and operations under the CFSP.

As for the EU missions operating under the CFSP, efforts should focus on a better use of – mostly human – resources and a regular update of mandates and division of labour in a rapidly changing environment.

### **5. Improve on recruitment of staff, review staff numbers, working hours and assess the effects of a split EUD between Nairobi and Mogadishu in 2025/2026**

Undertake efforts to improve on the timely recruitment and fielding of EUD staff for the cooperation section and the political section of the EUD.

Review the number of available EUD cooperation staff so as to ensure an adequate technical accompaniment of different sectors and ensure that working hours and staff leave are in line with the EU-internal recommendations made in 2017.

Assess the split of the EUD between Nairobi and Mogadishu towards the end of the current funding period (2025/2026) to form an opinion about the pros and cons of a full move of the EUD to Mogadishu, in view of a possible improvement of the situation of the country.

### **6. Foster the overall flexible cooperation approach but improve on visibility**

Continue to nourish EU's overall flexible cooperation approach in view of Somalia's ongoing politically fragile, conflict affected and generally unpredictable country, regional and global situation.

Invest more in the quality of EU visibility and outreach to the Somali public via more sophisticated and communication-savvy approaches, including actions to counter fake-news and hate-speech via social media, high-level visits of EU representatives and their engagement with the media.

### **7. Continue successful cooperation with international partners and use opportunities of TEI**

Cherish the EU's positive and successful partnerships with key international strategic players, the WB, USA, and UK in particular, and improve its collaboration with the UN where necessary.

Extend the quality and intensity of exchanges with EU MS engaged in Somalia and seize opportunities for enhanced collaboration provided via the more recently designed Team Europe Approach and specific Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) as well as the Global Gateway.

### **8. Enhance bottom-up development support and widen the "localisation agenda"**

Further intensify and widen support for bottom-up development processes, in particular, via interventions to strengthen the linkages between civil society and local governments.

Extend the “localisation agenda” by funding more local NGOs and CSOs, potentially also via bigger contracts, to further strengthen ownership and effectiveness of interventions.

Draw up a roadmap, similar to the civil society roadmap, on how to support local governments in the country in as far as they are available.

#### **9. Explore opportunities to expand and mainstream cross-cutting issues**

Do more to foster the promotion of conflict sensitivity, gender, youth, attention to vulnerability and human rights as cross-cutting issues where relevant, and pay attention to transformative approaches and intersectionality, in particular, when dealing with gender in line with orientations provided under the Gender Action Plan III.

Explore opportunities to better mainstream youth and human rights and formulate do-no-harm approaches more explicitly.

#### **10. Keep peacebuilding and statebuilding goals central to cooperation efforts**

Further support statebuilding via constitutional reform and interventions to strengthen the rule of law, but with adaptations to pay more attention to traditional legal and justice systems.

Build on EU’s significant investment for peace and security to further act as a strategic partner engaging with Somali and international stakeholders with a common and clearer approach. This should include the development of a more comprehensive approach to also address Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Somalia.

Build also on the successes achieved in PFM and the education sector by remaining engaged and expanding on the sustainability of interventions and outcomes. In this regard, continue with general budget support to leverage political and sectoral change, to move towards more direct funding modalities in the education sector and to ensure the EU has a voice at the dialogue table.

#### **11. Work towards an improved EU support to resilience and the productive sectors**

Invest in institutional and individual capacity strengthening to improve food and nutrition security to mainstream these objectives in its programming, and to further build the evidence of its impact across the HDP continuum of action.

In this regard, a better monitoring of the EU contribution to food and nutrition security objectives should be applied more systematically, e.g., by integrating relevant food and nutrition security indicators in the design of future programming.

Develop and implement this approach in the framework defined by the EU Green Deal and related Farm to Fork Strategy, whereby programming should take on the recommendations of the recently completed EU Assessment on Sustainable Agriculture Food Systems.

#### **12. Uphold efforts to mobilise resources beyond international cooperation funding**

Continue to mobilise substantial resources to meet needs and demands for assistance, also reflecting Somalia’s geopolitical relevance for the EU, but carefully consider EU’s capacities on the ground to respond to expectations expressed by EU MS and other international partners.

Given the need for substantial resources to develop the country, enhance efforts – in as far as possible given the country’s situation – to mobilise resources through development finance (EFSD+) and by teaming up with EU MS, leveraging risk-sharing mechanisms.

In view of substantial EU MS contributions via development agencies and DFIs, ensure that close coordination between EU and EU MS is upheld, so that development expertise can be shared, and investment portfolios (in which DFIs can invest) can be prepared using their own instruments.