

Evaluation title	Title: Evaluation of the European Union’s cooperation with Tajikistan		
Lead EU Service	European Commission Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA), Unit D4	EU Delegation(s) involved	Tajikistan
Associated EU Services	European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (NEAR), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), and Service for Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI). European External Action Service	Main policy areas addressed by the evaluation	
Evaluation budget	EUR	Contractor	Consortium composed by Particip, Ecorys, ECDPM, Mancala Consultores Leader of the Consortium: Particip GmbH
Date of approval of final report	December 2022	Date of the response	
Additional information	<i>(Including link to the published report if available)</i>		

Recommendations from the independent Evaluation		Response of the EU services (to be updated one year later)
R1	<p>EU HQ and EUD should spell out more clearly and explicitly the linkages between the support for i) bilateral and regional support and ii) development and non-development cooperation in order to maximise complementarities and synergies.</p> <p><u>Details:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MIP 2014-2020 was vague on the interfaces between regional and bilateral as well as development and non-development cooperation (particularly trade). While the MIP 2021-2027 mentions such potential linkages more often, it does not go beyond broad 	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>This recommendation is relevant but only partially applicable to the EUD Tajikistan’s responsibilities. The regional programming is conducted under the leadership of INTPA services who would be better positioned to respond. Interfaces with the bilateral cooperation and regional as well as bilateral and non-development cooperation will indeed be pursued and sought if and where feasible. EUD has already actively engaged in strengthening synergies (interfaces) in sectors such as TVET, water or energy.</p>

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<p>mission statements and fails to explain how envisioned synergies are supposed to be achieved. It is therefore recommended that the AAPs for the respective interventions conceptualise and elaborate on how exactly regional-level and non-development support will contribute to the objectives of bilateral development cooperation and vice versa. It would be useful to begin with a mapping of all relevant interventions in each sector, followed by detailed strategic considerations on how support at different levels contributes to the achievement of the stated objectives.</p>	<p>The suggested mapping exercise and detailed strategic considerations is rejected as its usefulness is questionable. First, the sectors where improved interfaces are feasible are limited and it is necessary to focus on those few.</p> <p>Second, one needs to take into consideration the HR limitations that do not allow to engage in all analytical exercises.</p>
<p>R2 EU HQ and EUD should improve the strategic approach to the bilateral cooperation programme through the sequencing of objectives</p> <p><u>Details:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the long funding cycle of seven years, prioritisation and sequencing are crucial to provide clear and structured pathways to change, comprising of realistically achievable milestones that sequentially build on each other. Sequencing is also an important tool to manage expectations. The MIP 2021-2027 has already come into force and it would therefore be unrealistic to propose retrospective sequencing. However, the MTR of the MIP will offer an opportunity to introduce a time-bound approach to the confirmation and reformulation of existing and the addition of new objectives. 	<p>Accepted</p> <p>We fully agree on the relevance of this recommendation. A sequencing of the MIP (in the form of an implementation plan) has already been done and discussed with and approved by the INTPA management. It will be important to use the MTR as suggested.</p>
<p>R3 EU HQ, EUD, EU MS, IFIs and the Government of Tajikistan should collectively develop theory-of-change-driven approaches to budget support and blending which establish clear criteria and perspectives for the application of these modalities.</p> <p><u>Details:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While it is certainly sensible not to give any guarantees for budget support or far-reaching blending operations during the current programming period, it would be advisable to develop clearer perspectives on the conditions and criteria that would guide any decisions on the provision of budget support and the more extensive use of blending. Therefore, the EU together with partners should establish a working group to develop and specify the pathways towards budget support and a more prominent application of blending. Ideally, deliberations should be based on theories of change that clarify and define the anticipated logical chains from outputs to impacts for these modalities. 	<p>Rejected</p> <p>One should distinguish between Budget Support and blending. These are not the same instruments and the partnerships are of different character.</p> <p>As for Budget Support, the recommendation is no longer of relevance as the criteria and perspectives have been clearly laid out during various dialogues with the government. In fact a Budget Support operation has already been formulated (awaiting approval by the NDICI committee before end of 2023). The theory of change concept forms integral part of the action which has been developed in close cooperation with relevant development partners.</p> <p>As for blending, the establishment of a working group as suggested would imply that all members share the same objectives when it comes to reforms. This is not the case. IFIs are interested in their loans being repaid, which is not always compatible with reforms. EU Member States are hardly present in Tajikistan and recently (and after these recommendations were made), GER as the only active MS has decided to withdraw officially from the bilateral cooperation with Tajikistan.</p>

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	<p>A more prominent application of blending is not a goal in itself. It is a question of additionally and quality. The track record of some blending projects in Tajikistan is not positive and the additionally of EU grant money questionable. Blending partners are very limited and with the GER withdraw (losing KFW) only EBRD remains. Last but not least, we have EFSD+ guarantee mechanism that is seen to be more suitable for many actions that were in the past done under blending.</p>
<p>R4 EU HQ, EUD, implementing partners and the Government of Tajikistan should develop firm approaches to the scaling up and country-wide implementation of pilot projects and thus ensure the sustainability of project support.</p> <p><u>Details:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In all three priority sectors project support has resulted in tangible results in pilot areas and settings. The next logical step would be the systematic scaling up and national rollout of the piloted approaches to ensure the comprehensive implementation of reform processes and their sustainability. The EUD should therefore place a strong emphasis on the facilitation of concerted action involving first and foremost the Government but also implementing partners to expand the outcomes and impact of the chosen project support beyond the pilot areas. Furthermore, new projects should only be started if they offer the potential for upscaling and replicability. 	<p>Accepted</p> <p>We fully agree to the recommendation, although there are limits in how much EUD can facilitate concerted actions, especially with IFIs.</p>
<p>R5 EU HQ, EUD and implementing partners should intensify their efforts to systematically mainstream gender and a rights-based approach into EU-supported actions and strengthen related dialogues with the Government of Tajikistan to ensure that cross-cutting issues are well aligned with and contribute to the implementation of national strategies and plans.</p> <p><u>Details:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender mainstreaming needs to go beyond a box ticking exercise and should contribute to the implementation of the current national gender strategy (2021-2025). This requires stronger collaboration between projects and the Government on gender aspects in sector reform strategies and plans. The MIP 2021-2027 explicitly states that it is based on the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, applicable human rights covenants and the international conventions relevant for the GSP scheme such as the ILO Conventions and applicable UN frameworks. So far interventions have not reflected this requirement and there is thus the need to mainstream the rights-based approach into all actions at the 	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>The rights based approach and gender mainstreaming has been done for all actions under the new MIP. Most recent example are the <i>Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation</i> project in the south of Tajikistan and the Budget Support operation which is under approval. A thorough reflection from gender and rights-based perspective has been performed during the formulation phase of these actions, and subsequently gender sensitive indicator(s) was introduced where relevant. These exercises were carried out in close consultation of the relevant national policy documents on gender and human rights, including National Development Strategy until 2030, and the National Strategy on the Advancement of the Role of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan until 2030. Hence, the actions are contributing to the implementation of the national policies on gender.</p> <p>However, we agree that collaboration with Government on gender and rights-based aspect of the interventions in certain sectors is not as strong as one would wish. This can be explained, partially, with a fact that these topics are not of a priority for the Government and therefore it hinders the</p>

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<p>earliest opportunity. Specific objectives, indicators, baselines and targets as well as mainstreaming procedures and approaches across interventions should be introduced.</p>	<p>development of a strong collaboration when it comes to mainstreaming the gender and rights-based approach in reform processes.</p> <p>GSP+ discussion including HR conventions as per UN framework are ongoing and the dialogue is active. It is not clear on what basis the statement <i>“So far interventions have not reflected this requirement”</i> has been made given that at the time when the evaluation was conducted no action under the new MIP had been approved.</p>
<p>R6 EU HQ, EUD and implementing partners should implement a systematic approach to conflict sensitivity across the country programme. This effort should be supported by EU MS.</p> <p><u>Details:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EU is well aware of the regional security dynamics and its implications for Tajikistan. However, while the MIP 2021-2027 has strengthened the perspective on security and stability, this stronger emphasis as compared to the previous programming period is not yet reflected in current programming and in the implementation of interventions. Approaches to increasing the security-stability focus of the cooperation programme should i) include the mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity into the programme cycle, ii) require that implementing partners conduct research with a conflict sensitivity focus during the inception phase of projects, including conflict analysis and stakeholder mappings, iii) integrate conflict sensitivity indicators and measures in action documents and log frames as well as iv) conduct regular conflict-sensitive reporting based on continuous monitoring in programme/project areas. 	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>The MIP2021-2027 has paid great attention in selecting and addressing priority areas and sectors (green and inclusive economy, human capital development, natural resources management, efficiency and resilience) through an integrated approach, considering the fragile contexts and in a “conflict sensitive manner”. The programme design under the MIP 21-27 of the first three Action Documents on energy (16-12-2021), drinking water supply (3-8-2022) and education (under adoption) have so far consistently strived to mainstream the guiding principles embedded in the MIP (conflict and climate sensitivity, gender equality, meaningful engagement of local civil society, focus on youth, great attention to prosperity, resilience, working better together etc.), in a general perspective of promoting peace, stability, economic development and modernisation. Depending on the sectors involved, the chosen partners, the geographical scope and the identified time period, conflict sensitivity aspects are and will be considered during all phases of the project design (proposal, inception, regular monitoring and reporting activity), always considering the fragile contexts present in Tajikistan.</p> <p>A further element supporting this approach comes from the cooperation with EU Member States in the context of the regional Team Europe Initiative, which intends to promote regional cooperation among five Central Asian countries in a context of tense relations between KG and TJ and between KG and UZ and of instability in AF and IR, as well as geopolitical change in the relations with RU and CN. Support to strengthening of regional institutions such as the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and regional dialogue on energy, is expected to have positive effect on trust building and dialogue between the countries.</p> <p>While we will certainly keep working on the elements mentioned above and therefore recommendations listed under i) and ii) are in general terms welcomed and taken, developing a more specific and full oriented conflict sensitive approach, by developing specific indicators (item suggested iii) and by producing a regular reporting (item suggested iv), appear overambitious within the given resources and timescale.</p>

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<p>R7 EU HQ and the EUD should encourage and provide institutionalised settings for a stronger civil society involvement in the design and implementation of individual interventions.</p> <p><u>Details:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EU should strengthen stakeholder participation at the level of individual interventions, especially during the design processes. This can be achieved through a mandatory requirement to consult relevant CSOs during the planning phase of an intervention and the establishment of a formal process to guarantee that CSO views feed into the design process. At the same time, the EUD should organise an annual exclusive CSO forum that discusses and takes stock of the state of implementation of the current MIP and individual action plans. The exclusivity of such a forum will make sure that CSO voices are heard and not overshadowed by government viewpoints. 	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>The Civil Society Organisations have been actively engaged during the formulation of the new MIP and they are consulted on the level of individual interventions if and where relevant. This depends very much on the sector and type of implementation, because the areas that CSO are active in Tajikistan and have expertise on is not very broad, but limited to certain specific sectors. Therefore, consulting CSOs in designing phase of all interventions and implementation processes is not technically possible</p> <p>Annually, EUD organizes the Civil Society Seminar – a platform that gives the voice to CSOs to express their views concerning certain topics. Although not exclusively, but often the engagement of the EU in Tajikistan and its interventions is discussed and reflected upon during those annual seminars.</p>