

External Evaluation of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (2014 – mid 2017)

Final Report – Executive Summary

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Lead Implementing Partner in
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Evaluation of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace

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Executive Summary

Objectives and context of the evaluation This Midterm Evaluation of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) is one of several parallel evaluations of External Financing Instruments under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, and feeds into the required Midterm Review report of the External Financing Instruments. The Midterm Review started in June 2016 and is to be finished by the end of December 2017, as per the Common Implementing Regulation Article 17.

The Midterm Evaluation covers all three components of the IcSP: (a) responses in situations of crisis and emerging crisis (IcSP Regulation Article 3); (b) conflict prevention and capacity building in pre- and post-crisis situations and to build peace (Article 4); and (c) global and trans-regional as well as emerging threats to peace, international security and stability (Article 5). It assesses whether the IcSP is fit for purpose to deliver EU resources towards EU external policy objectives, both at the start of the evaluation period (2014) and at present (mid 2017), and considers the current place of the IcSP – its unique function as well as its complementarities and synergies - within the wider set of the EU's External Financing Instruments.

Context The global peace and security context of the IcSP is fast evolving. The Instrument has to adjust to a number of recent and emerging threats and trends, such as the rise of hybrid conflicts¹, the securitisation of development and peace², and the highest recorded levels of refugee and migration flows. The IcSP is also part of the global peace and security architecture; a collection of structures, norms, capacities and procedures that has evolved to avert and resolve violent conflicts and threats to international security, and which remains incomplete and at times fragile, and faces several challenges.

As an EU instrument, the IcSP operates within the framework of EU policy and priorities. Internationally, the EU is committed to Agenda 2030 and the IcSP addresses several elements of the Sustainable Development Goal 16. At the core of EU external policy, however, is the Treaty of the European Union, and particularly Title V and Article 21, which sets out the broad principles of the Union's external actions. Key EU peace and security priorities are given in several documents, including the recent *"Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy"* (2016) (the 'Global Strategy'), and the European Commission's Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development (November 2016).

Methodology and challenges The IcSP Midterm Evaluation is evidence-based, guided by the intervention logic of the Instrument and applies a mixed methods approach that combines quantitative and, more importantly, qualitative data. The approach is focused on answering several evaluation questions that cover EU evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, efficiency, added value, coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies and leverage).

The evaluation involved the review of over 400 documents (decisions, action documents, previous evaluations at project and Instrument level, annual reports, and other documents), about 140 key informant interviews, participation in and extraction of data from a consolidated survey administered to EU Delegations for all External Financing Instruments midterm evaluations, and an Open Public Consultation process. Evaluation hypotheses and preliminary findings were validated during the field visits that covered eight selected partner countries. It is worth mentioning that for the Midterm Evaluation, the IcSP baseline had to be built ex-post, which required substantial research and the preparation of additional outputs.

Key challenges to the evaluation include conceptual and technical elements. A core difficulty is evaluating a largely political instrument, which has political outcomes, with a results-based and technically premised evaluation methodology and without a pre-existing baseline. Other challenges include data over-abundance in

¹ "Hybrid conflicts" are defined as "violent conflicts or situations of widespread violence where elements of grievance, greed, and/or extremism are intertwined – and where climate changes may play a role", but also that involve a mix of internal country and cross-border dynamics. See Appendix 1 for more details.

² The concept of 'securitisation' typically refers to how a certain issue (e.g. migration, terrorism, etc.) is socially constructed as a threat. Here we use a different, but complementary view of "securitisation"; which covers actions and programmes that are aligned to national security interests (of EU Member States and partner countries) and supportive of partner country government security objectives. Within the IcSP portfolio, Counterterrorism and Countering violent extremism, organised crime, cyber security, and stabilisation (and sometimes migration) activities are part of a securitised portfolio. We do consider such actions and programmes as often necessary, but note that when not designed using a conflict-sensitive and 'do no harm' approach, they may generate unforeseen challenges.

some areas and scarcity in others; extrapolating macro-level conclusions on topics such as impact and sustainability when few actions and programmes have been completed; and striking a balance between a sufficiently deep understanding of individual IcSP interventions and maintaining a broad view to assess performance of the Instrument as a whole.

Main responses to the Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Question 1 Relevance

Across all Articles, the IcSP responds to the priorities set out in Article 21 of the Treaty of the European Union. It supports the Global Strategy (notably the realms of security, promoting state and societal resilience in the EU's South and East), takes an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, supports cooperative regional orders, and promotes global governance. It also contributes to the Sustainable Development Goal 16 of Agenda 2030. IcSP actions and programmes balance EU priorities and beneficiary country needs.

At the action/programme-level, some improvements are needed in Article 3 to better ground and time actions to the contexts they are implemented in, including a more robust assessment of hybrid conflict dynamics. Challenges for actions in Article 3 and Article 5 programmes include potential negative knock-on effects on EU cross-cutting priorities if actions and programmes in securitised sectors³ are not supported by 'do no harm' and conflict sensitivity analyses.⁴

Evaluation Question 2 Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability

The evaluation found that most actions and programmes (across Articles 3, 4, and 5) are **effective**, and that the Instrument has on the whole delivered on its commitments. Actions and programmes translate EU political priorities into interventions that yield meaningful outcomes. Available project reports and evaluations show good results on mainstreaming conflict prevention, democracy and good governance. IcSP processes have led to the effective identification and implementation of actions and programmes. On the other hand, there have at times been challenges to translate political commitments (e.g. to intervene in particular countries or in relation to specific issues, like migration) into suitable actions that align country needs/priorities with EU political priorities. Also, the mainstreaming of gender and human rights in the Instrument's interventions can be improved.

The **impact** of the IcSP is defined as its contribution to addressing root causes of conflicts and threats, as well as bolstering EU and partner capacities in the longer term. It is especially difficult to measure Instrument-level impacts at present for two reasons. First, most projects initiated under the IcSP are still ongoing today and evaluations of actions and programmes are limited in number. Second, political achievements depend on a complex mix of legislative, normative or behavioural factors and interaction with other actors. Nonetheless, there is evidence of programme-level impacts. Programmes under Articles 4 and 5 often build on initiatives started under the Instrument for Stability (the IcSP predecessor), and outcomes have been embedded into the systems and structures of implementing partners. Examples can be found in interventions in such areas as capacity building in law enforcement and counter-terrorism, or Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear risk mitigation amongst others. Stakeholders note that IcSP future impact will benefit from more emphasis and investment in seizing windows of opportunity for peace⁵ (Article 3), and a better strategic framework to underpin support to regional and global peace and security architectures (Articles 4 and 5). The final IcSP evaluation will be able to generate insights on impact as the Instrument's monitoring systems are now operational.

Similarly, overall **sustainability** levels of IcSP actions are likely to become clearer in the future. There are several promising examples, which are helped by the emphasis placed on capacity-building across Articles 3, 4, and 5. With regard to Article 3, sustainability is not the most important consideration in designing actions as these interventions are not programmable and respond to demands and opportunities as they present themselves. However, sustainability, where possible, can benefit from better formulation of exit or transition

³ See footnote 2 for a short definition of how 'securitisation' is applied in the Midterm Evaluation.

⁴ The application of a "do no harm" approach is taking the necessary care to ensure that an action or programme does not have negative effects on efforts to promote peace and stability. It means considering the potential impacts of an action or programme on a range of factors (such as human rights, good governance, community cohesion, local conflict dynamics, etc.) and making adjustments in the design and implementation phases to mitigate the risk of negative knock-on effects.

⁵ The concept of a 'window of opportunity for peace' typically refers to the early signs that a ceasefire, basic talks between conflicting parties, or a peace process may be possible. In peace mediation practice, an inter-changeable term is 'peace ripeness', which can also be facilitated and promoted through actions that begin to prepare or encourage parties to talk.

strategies for actions and programmes across all Articles. Aid effectiveness principles are applied where relevant in Article 3 actions, and broadly across Article 4 and 5 programmes.

Evaluation Question 3 Efficiency

Available evidence shows that the IcSP is **efficient**. The percentage of administrative costs to total budget is 1% in the IcSP, which is lower than in other External Financing Instruments. Budget execution (time taken from commitments to payments) is satisfactory. However, the evaluators were not able to access sufficient data to draw conclusions on the justifiability of costs. Aspects of the IcSP Regulation that promote efficiency include flexible management procedures to accelerate contractual procedures and direct selection of implementing partners.

At the action/programme-level, there are cases in Article 3 where delays are seen in the period between needs identification and commitments. While these delays are often justifiable, there remains scope for improvement. New reporting tools for Articles 3 and 4, and a Manual of IcSP Outcome Indicators, were developed in 2016. *Theories of Change* are also more widely used to stimulate thinking and analytical feedback on change processes and this promotes efficiency. Monitoring in crisis or conflict affected contexts remains, however, a significant challenge, not least because of security and access limitations.

Evaluation Question 4 Added Value

IcSP value added is seen at different levels. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts where it is deployed, the multilateral nature of the IcSP and the European values⁶ it promotes are attributes that enhance its acceptability to beneficiary governments, key stakeholders, and implementing organisations. Its niche (including priorities given in the Regulation, such as for the Kimberley Certification Scheme), flexibility, and ability to take risks are broadly complementary and appreciated by Member States and other donors. The IcSP remains an important source of funding for many groups in a period with significant funding cuts to the United Nations and European Non-Governmental Organisations. Within the EU context, and in relation to the EU's External Financing Instruments, the IcSP's speed, flexibility to adapt to evolving contexts, and political influence/leverage are valued. There are other comparative advantages of the Instrument, such as the direct contracting ability, bridging function, expertise/niche role and possibility to engage with specific stakeholders. It also supports the EU's efforts to mainstream conflict-sensitivity in other External Financing Instruments.

At the action/programme-level, there are several examples, such as in Counter Terrorism and Organised Crime programmes under Article 5, where the IcSP has created entry-points and taken risks that other donors could or would not do. Similarly, under Article 3 there are examples where no other donors were willing or legally able to fund certain actions (e.g. a demining project in Colombia involving the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army alongside state actors).

Evaluation Question 5 Coherence, consistency, complementarity and synergies

As with its value added, IcSP coherence, consistence, and complementarity and synergies are seen at different levels. Externally, the IcSP is currently among the largest funds globally dedicated to peace and stability. However, coordination on systemic challenges between the IcSP and other (EU Member States and non-EU) peace and security funding instruments appears limited. In relation to EU external actions and institutions, there is evidence of functional interfaces between the IcSP and Common Security and Defence Policy missions, as well as with the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. Among EU External Financing Instruments there appears to be significant and growing programming on peace and security, which partly results from EU efforts to mainstream conflict prevention. Effective synergies between these and the IcSP are hampered by the lack of flexibility and lengthy procedures of most External Financing Instruments. Within the IcSP, there is variation in how joined-up actions and programmes are between Articles 3, 4, and 5. Although actions and programmes under each article are aligned to meet the objectives of the Instrument itself, they also have been used in furtherance of the objectives of other External Financing Instruments: to 'gap fill', as a forerunner for interventions by other (larger) Instruments, and as a funding Instrument of last resort.

Evaluation Question 6 Leverage

It is difficult to isolate the contribution of actions/actors to leverage political dialogue or change in general. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the IcSP has contributed to EU policy and political dialogue with beneficiary

⁶ Such as support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law as laid out in the TEU.

governments in several countries, which in turn has supported a range of outcomes in IcSP actions and programmes. However, the use of the IcSP to contribute to policy and political dialogue with beneficiary governments is not consistent and depends on the timeliness and relevance of actions, as well as political will of the EU and partner countries to engage in such dialogue. In terms of catalysing additional donor funding for IcSP actions, there is some indication that IcSP funding has been complemented with parallel financing by other donors, but less so when it comes to co-financing and joint programming.

Conclusions Despite its limited size (budget for 2014-2020 is € 2.34 billion), the IcSP makes significant contributions to EU policy priorities and external action strategy. Overall, it has delivered on its commitments, yielded important outcomes, and is responsive to a fast-evolving peace and security context. It is a relatively efficient instrument, where flexible management procedures that accelerate contractual procedures and direct contracting of implementing partners are widely praised. It is extensively used by EU Delegations, particularly because of its speed and flexibility, and its value added also rests in the promotion of European values in a sector that is increasingly affected by securitisation. The Instrument reaches out to other External Financing Instruments, but its articulation with these is at times challenged by cumbersome Commission procedures. It is an important Instrument that contributes to deepened political dialogue and greater profile for the European Union. The IcSP's relevance will further increase in the years to come.

However, for the Instrument not only to continue to be fit for purpose, but at the same time to enlarge its potential for impact and positive external effects, there are several questions to be considered: (a) how to leverage the Instrument's position to engage in strategic dialogue with other global peace and security funds on systemic challenges, including funding cuts in the sector; (b) how to find the right balance between non-securitised and securitised actions/programmes in the Instrument's contributions to EU security priorities and global commitments; (c) how to bolster the strategic framework and synergies with the European External Action Service and other EU External Financing Instruments in work to strengthen international and regional peace and security architectures; and (d) how to ensure that the evidence-base that underpins the design of IcSP actions and programmes reflects the rise of emerged threats and hybrid conflicts.

Recommendations

REC1: Ensure IcSP continuity post-2020 The European Commission, European External Action Service, European Parliament, and European Council should ensure IcSP continuity post 2020.

REC2: Build an IcSP baseline The Service for Foreign Policy Instruments and DEVCO B5 (DG International Cooperation and Development (Unit B5)) should build an IcSP baseline⁷ that enables better future performance measurement.

REC3: Improve the overall strategic framework for the IcSP This needs to include: (a) the development of an European External Action Service and European Commission strategic framework that sets directions and principles for efforts to strengthen the global and regional peace and security architecture and address the global funding deficit for peace and development; (b) systematically monitoring and assessing levels and types of peace and security programming in the European Development Fund, other EU External Financing Instruments, and funding modalities; and (c) defining, beyond existing guidance, a comprehensive approach to 'do no harm' and conflict-sensitivity in actions/programmes in securitised sectors.

REC4: Engage in strategic dialogue on systemic challenges with other peace and stability funds The European External Action Service, together with the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments and DEVCO B5 should regularise strategic dialogue with other peace and stability funds on systemic challenges affecting the sector.

REC5: Address identified action/programme-level challenges in the IcSP The Service for Foreign Policy Instruments and DEVCO B5 should ensure continued IcSP performance by addressing action/programme level challenges identified in the Midterm Evaluation.

⁷ A "baseline" is defined here as the measurement of conditions at the start of a project or programme, against which subsequent progress can be assessed.