

Joint European Commission (EC) – [Practitioners’ Network \(PN\)](#) Action Plan on mobilisation of European Public Sector Expertise (PSE) in international development cooperation

(follow -up on the [Phase I](#) and [Phase II](#) of the Study on “The EU and its MS mobilising PSE for Development”)

1. Background

In 2019, at the PN Annual Meeting of the General Assembly, PN members acknowledged the added value of mobilising the public sector expertise (PSE) for development cooperation.

In line with the European Commission’s proposal for establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (2018), and in response to the new European Consensus on Development (2017), the European Union Global Strategy (2016) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular implementation of SDG 16 and 17, the overall recommendation by the PN was to pursue further analysis and awareness raising aimed at mobilising PSE in the European Union (EU) external action.

As a first step, a study of the different organisational setups, legislative and administrative procedures and modalities used by the EU and its Member States (MS) organisations to mobilise PSE was commissioned jointly by the EC and the PN in 2020. The study, now concluded, consisted of 2 parts: a mapping (phase I) of the existing operational structures, regulatory frameworks, delivery tools and bilateral initiatives to mobilise PSE; and an analysis paper (phase II) on the strategic potential of European PSE as an innovative cooperation modality with partner countries. The study outlines a number of recommendations for the EU and its MS institutions.

It is therefore a timely opportunity for the PN to discuss and translate the main findings and recommendations of the study into concrete actions to maximise the potential benefits of European PSE.

2. Objectives

This draft Action Plan sets out a vision of how the EU and its MS could scale up their regular technical assistance through the mobilisation of European PSE as an additional instrument to build capacity in partner country governments through peer-to-peer exchanges and institutional partnerships.

Peer-to-peer support is widely recognised as a cost-effective alternative to traditional forms of international development support to partner countries.

European public sector expertise in particular can promote European values and interests, as well as standards and policy approaches. It is well suited to the Team Europe approach and has proved to be effective in mobilising European expertise from Member States who may not have large bilateral development cooperation programmes. PSE is an area where the European Union has a distinctive added value compared to other donors, rooted in our strong public policy models.

The proposed Action Plan aims at improving the performance and mobilisation of European PSE without requiring fundamental changes in the way EU and its MS 'do business'. Rather, the Action Plan aims to maximise the full potential and benefits of PSE in programming, designing and implementing a value-based and geostrategic technical/expert assistance in order to strengthen the public administration capacity of partner countries.

3. Expected results

The main findings and recommendations of the joint EU-PN "Study on the EU and its MS mobilising PSE for Development" are discussed with all relevant actors (both policy makers and implementers), to raise awareness on the strategic role that PSE can play in development cooperation.

A joint EU-PN Action Plan is developed and successfully operationalised.

4. Targeted stakeholders and approach

Taking into consideration that European development cooperation is an area of shared competence between the EU and its MS, a wide range of actors from both the EU and MS need to be involved in order to assure that actions draw on the best expertise available, are inclusive and a product of co-creation. Actors include:

- From EU MS: national decision makers and administrators, especially representatives of ministries, public administration institutions and Member State organisations, as well as experts employed by public agencies that provide and/or promote the mobilisation of the PSE.
- From EU institutions: Council, European Commission and EEAS.

Actions would be developed both at the policy-making and implementation level. Smooth exchange between these levels is needed to ensure synergy amongst actors so as to address different needs and challenges faced respectively by the EU and MS institutions in the mobilisation of European PSE.

In addition, it is important to promote and support public-private dialogue (PPD) which helps building trust between regulators and the industry and lay the foundation for joint problem analysis and identification of reforms that contribute to a more conducive environment in partner countries.

Different perspectives over time (short-term and medium-long term) and different types of activities (organisation of visibility/dissemination events, exchange of good practice and coordination and drafting of documents) will also be needed.

All above-mentioned approaches should be implemented building on existing EU and MS structures where the mobilisation of PSE is already being addressed.

5. Foreseen actions

In the following areas /topics, as per the study recommendations:

- **Propose and agree on a common definition of PSE** as the form of expertise that mobilises international institutional partnerships between peer administrations and experts from/through public institutions:
 - Exchange of ideas about different approaches based on common features around the content, goals and actors involved to find a common terminology.
- **EU and MS reflections on the feasibility, format and follow-up of a shared guidance on European PSE enshrined in one official document:**
 - Joint Commission-PN Action Plan on PSE developed and agreed at CODEV and PN, also EUDGx meeting.
 - Commission guidance to support EUDs in future design of actions, including on how to combine capacity building tools, such as EU Twinning and TAIEX, other PSE programmes, trilateral cooperation and/or wider technical assistance in the most effective way.
 - Council conclusions prepared to agree on terminology and strategic role of PSE.
 - Increase political support from EU MS.
 - Reflect on how to best ensure an inclusive and efficient PSE system that builds on the different expertise available across countries, organisations and sectors.
- **Use of PSE as a form of expertise in technical assistance that helps to achieve the SDGs, facilitates international partnerships and potentially support the objectives of EU external action:**
 - Initiate an exchange of PSE experiences and practices in Member States that provides input into the Council Conclusions and supports the policy changes needed in EU institutions and Member States to enhance the role of PSE in European cooperation system.
- **Use of PSE as a complementary expertise through the overall EU and its MS cooperation cycle, the NDICI programming exercise and Team Europe initiatives**
 - Provide information to country based colleagues on how PSE can be ‘plugged into’ the EU and MS programming exercises to increase its use, notably in Team Europe efforts in support of policy and political dialogue. This would entail for the EU including a clear reference to mobilising PSE in Multiannual Indicative Programmes, Annual Action Programmes and individual Action Documents.
 - Where appropriate, promote the use PSE in Team Europe Initiatives, notably animating country level discussions and exchanges with national partners on the most appropriate forms of technical assistance.
 - Continue piloting PSE as a component of wider EU funded actions, for example blending and guarantees under EFSD+ or, when the implementation modality is budget support, as part of the wider complementary technical assistance.
 - Ensure that the mobilisation of PSE in EU-funded programmes is undertaken in a way that is open to all MS to ensure continued advancement of the inclusiveness agenda.
- **Improving coordination, synergies and learning exchange amongst EU and its MS to enhance full awareness of PSEs benefit:**
 - Raise awareness about the strategic importance of PSE possibilities that Joint Implementation offers.
 - Facilitate the sharing of learning and the building of collective data on PSE through short-term exchanges, expert missions and workshops between public sector experts of Member States – TAIEX to EU MS.

- Assess the need for establishing PSE coordination mechanisms and/or dedicated agencies in Member States, including ways to better combine the technical expertise of Member States' public administrations and the development expertise of MS Development Organisations (MSOs).
 - Ensure that exchanges of information on investment actions are guided towards development results (SDGs) and transformational impact, via structured policy dialogue mechanisms (with partner countries) that are nurtured by PSE
 - Reflect on the possible use of innovative financing instruments to promote PSE operations in partner countries.
 - Exchange on the role of the public sector in promoting and facilitating public-private dialogue and partnerships.
 - Collect evidence on the achievements and success of PSE interventions to be able to showcase the effectiveness and impact of PSE at development cooperation project, administration and partner country level in terms of capacity strengthening.
- **Overcoming of operational/administrative/financial constraints and challenges to wider the use of PSE:**
 - Further incentivise the involvement of EU MS public experts in international PSE assignments through a compilation of existing incentives that have shown they work and further exploring new incentives within MS structures.
 - Compile the best practices for dealing with administrative and legal challenges faced by MS in mobilising experts for PSE assignments (short and long term).
 - Explore whether the existence of mandated agencies or coordination mechanisms for PSE in EU MS helps partner countries to access and make use of PSE.

6. Implementation of actions at EU & MS level

A. Informed and structured discussions and exchanges on learnings and practices/experiences/methodologies to nurture the broad exchange process that leads to a robust policy on the role and place of PSE in European development cooperation system:

- **Practitioners' Network:**
 - Annual General Assembly Meeting:
 - Promote CEOs strategic discussion on the use of PSE in technical assistance components of TEIs, including the implementation of the *policy first* principle and the need for a comprehensive synergy between technical and financial cooperation.
 - Steering Committee Meeting:
 - Approve the Action Plan (29/06/2021).
 - Effective Partnerships and Implementation working group:
 - Share and compile relevant practices dealing with improving incentives and tackling administrative/financial/legal/procedures related constraints for mobilising public experts in PSE activities.
 - Promote the use of the Team Europe Guidelines (Joint Implementation dimension) to further extend the use of PSE.
 - Share and compile relevant practices on PSE activities; gender dimension of PSE mobilisation (inclusion of the gender approach, gender analysis).
- **Twinning and TAIEX NCP focal points:**

- Presentation of the study results at the annual meeting.
 - Include agenda point on PSE beyond Twinning/TAIEX.
- **European Commission services:**
 - Further coordinate and facilitate discussions and consultations with a wide range of actors from the EU and MS institutions to exploit the full potential of European PSE in a co-creative manner.
 - Organise ad hoc events/TAIEX activities for MS (including MSOs) willing to exchange and share advice on relevant practices to overcome administrative-legal-financial-operational constraints for the mobilisation of PSE while promoting the inclusiveness of the European cooperation system. This will build a 'PSE network' among Member States and their experts.
- B. Discussions/exchanges, draft of policy documents to provide guidance on how to strengthen collaboration between EU Member States and the EU:**
- **Council Presidency:**
 - Council Conclusions on PSE detailing concrete actions that Member States will take at national level to promote the use of PSE in development cooperation, including the mobilisation of their national public experts.
 - CODEV Meetings: discussions about above mentioned policy document(s), PN updates, inclusiveness agenda and tailored approaches with Middle Income Countries (MICs) and More Advanced Developing Countries (MADCs).
 - Other Meetings of corresponding Council Working Group level linked to Civil Service or where this area is being discussed: include discussions and exchanges on legal issues (challenges) for wider PSE mobilisation (incompatibilities, deployment).
 - **European Commission (INTPA):**
 - Include PSE on Communication (with EEAS) on MICs (based on Council conclusions adopted on 14 June 2021) and/or inclusiveness.
 - Include PSE elements in the update of the Working Better Together as a Team Europe Guidelines (end 2021) to further promote the mobilisation of PSE and raise awareness of country based colleagues of its potential role in support of joint programming and implementation of Team Europe initiatives.
- C. Organise specific events (covering both the implementation and policy-making dimensions) to disseminate Study results and recommendations, and contribute to raising awareness about the strategic importance of PSE:**
- High Level Event (spring, under PT Council Presidency) – FIIAPP, before the end of 2021 date TBC.
 - [Info Point – DG INTPA](#), 6 July 2021.
 - Awards on PSE as of 2022 (annually) to contribute to showcase achievements and success of PSE interventions.