



PRACTITIONERS' NETWORK

FOR EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION



# Improving European coordination in fragile states

Executive summary

Carried out by



This document is the executive summary of a study carried out by the Centre for EU Studies (CEUS), Ghent University in 2017. The study entitled “Improving European coordination in fragile states” was commissioned by the Practitioners’ Network for European development cooperation.

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“Bidonville à proximité de la décharge Koshe Reppi.”

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## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

This document synthesises the main findings of three separate but interrelated studies commissioned by the Practitioners' network for European development cooperation. Together, these studies aim to better understand the challenges and opportunities for European practitioners to coordinate in situations of crisis and fragility, allowing to formulate recommendations for EU actors involved.

- > **Literature review:** in-depth review of literature on donor coordination and joint implementation in fragile states (academic literature, policy documents, evaluation studies)
- > **Headquarters level analysis:** mapping and understanding of coordination initiatives at HQ levels across Europe (Based on 57 interviews with officials in Brussels and other European capitals)
- > **Field analysis:** identifying and evaluation of interesting practices of joint implementation and provision of common goods and services in **Niger, Palestine, DRC and Haiti** (Based on 155 interviews with officials and stakeholders)

By 2030 two-third of the world's poorest will live in a situation of conflict and fragility. Fragility relates to a heightened exposure to risk combined with a low capacity to mitigate or absorb these risks. Based on multiple dimension of fragility, countries have been classified to suffer more or less from fragility.

Table 1: Fragile States Index 2017 (data from Fund For Peace)

Very high alert		High Alert		Alert			
South-Sudan	113.9	<b>DRC</b>	<b>110</b>	Guinea Bissau	99.5	Cameroon	95.6
Somalia	113.4	Chad	109.4	Burundi	98.9	Liberia	93.8
Central African Republic	112.6	Afghanistan	107.3	Pakistan	98.9	Mauritania	93.7
Yemen	111.1	Iraq	105.4	Eritrea	98.1	Congo	93.4
Syria	110.6	<b>Haiti</b>	<b>105.3</b>	<b>Niger</b>	<b>97.4</b>	North Korea	93.3
Sudan	110.6	Guinea	102.4	Cote d'Ivoire	96.5	Mali	92.9
		Zimbabwe	101.6	Kenya	96.4	Angola	91.1
		Nigeria	101.6	Libya	96.3	Nepal	91
		Ethiopia	101.6	Uganda	96	Rwanda	90.8
				Myanmar	95.7	Timor-Leste	90.5

Fragile contexts have become a key priority for development actors at the bilateral (e.g. DFID), regional (e.g. EU) and multilateral level (e.g. New Deal, UN, World Bank). This is bound to be challenging as fragile states constitute extremely difficult environments in which to achieve sustainable development. As stated in the Stockholm Declaration (2016), this stems from the fact that they suffer from violent conflicts, climate-related crises, natural disasters or migration flows, often in combination, resulting in an increasing concentration of extreme poverty and crises within their borders.

Figure 1: ODA to fragile states (data from the OECD-DAC)

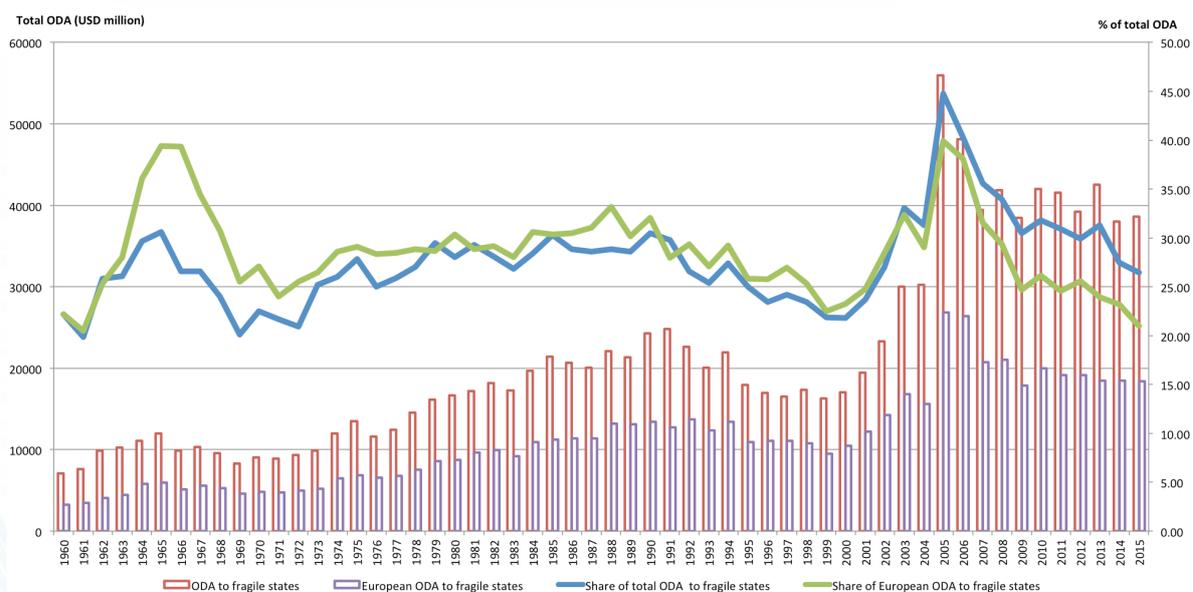
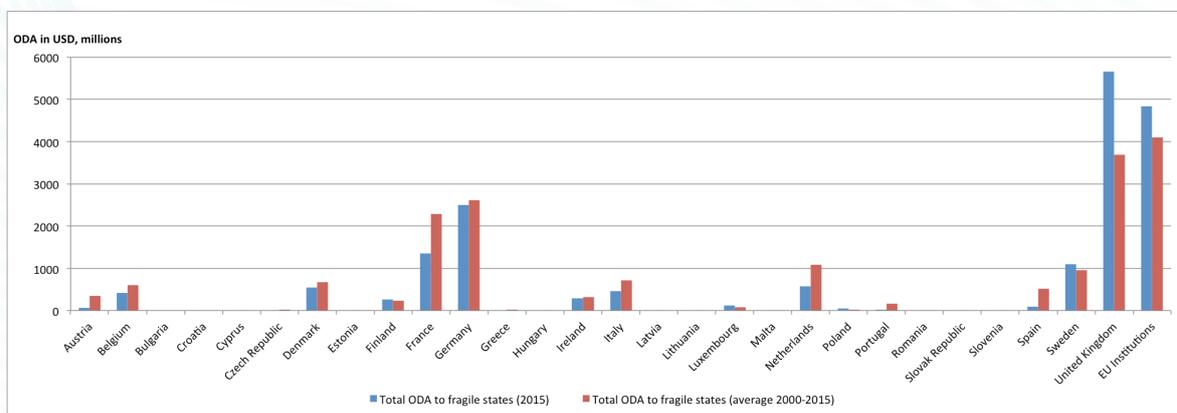


Figure 2: ODA to fragile states from EU donors (data from the OECD-DAC)



Aid flows to fragile states strongly increased since the 2000s (fig. 1). Also European aid budgets to fragile states have been growing, with all EU members spending a considerable amount of their ODA in such contexts (fig. 2). These data partly obscure that the number of fragile states and the total amount of ODA also increased in this period.

Nonetheless, the study shows that EU and international donors acknowledge more and more the particularly complex situation of fragile states and the need for improved donor coordination. On the one hand there are numerous instances where the development community failed to address chronic crises despite the allocation of resources, like in Afghanistan, Iraq or Haiti for example. On the other hand, there is a shared observation amongst development practitioners that modalities of coordination show insufficient adaptation to contexts of crisis and fragility. The study therefore looks into the types of coordination mechanisms which are adapted and successful in fragile contexts.

This study confirms that there is a near-consensus – in the literature, at headquarters (HQ) and at field level – on the need for (European) donor coordination in fragile states. Although the spirit of the Paris Agenda and the momentum that this created for coordination has clearly waned at HQ level, we equally notice a growing coordination dynamic through (1) shared analysis and trainings from EU institutions, (2) the emergence of trust fund initiatives, (3) the application of joint programming, and most notably (4) field-driven coordination initiatives. Research into 10 coordination practices in Niger, Palestine, DRC and Haiti confirms many constraining but also some of the enabling factors for European donor coordination. Specifically, the field phase reveals four factors that together enable successful coordination:

- (a) mixing ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ joint implementation;
- (b) involving a small number of like-minded actors;
- (c) aligning with the partner country; and
- (d) providing flexibility for practitioners while also guaranteeing political backing.

Finally, we argue that the EU could and should play a facilitator role through fostering existing joint implementation initiatives and providing common goods and services for coordination in fragile states.

# THE CASE FOR DONOR COORDINATION IN FRAGILE STATES

The downsides of aid fragmentation are widely recognized. Aid fragmentation undermines overall aid effectiveness. A lack of coordination imposes high transaction costs on donor countries and partner countries, since duplication and competition lead to inefficiency and even wastage of scarce aid resources. **These problems of aid fragmentation can be overcome through improved donor coordination.** There is a consensus in the literature that coordination initiatives can contribute to improved aid effectiveness in fragile states, eventually leading to better development outcomes. Across countries and sectors, improved coordination contributes to a better global aid allocation pattern, e.g. by addressing the issue of aid darlings and orphans; and within countries, donor coordination contributes to more aid effectiveness by reducing transaction costs for donor and partner countries. **Through improved coordination, both donor and partner countries are able to reduce transaction costs, as such ensuring more value for money.**

Fragile states are especially vulnerable to aid fragmentation and ineffectiveness. Ineffective development programmes are more likely to occur in situations of fragility. Fragile states tend to have lower aid absorption capacity and they also face a highly fragmented aid landscape. This is especially true of (post) crisis situations where both development and humanitarian actors operate. Furthermore, situations of fragility can rapidly evolve in the contexts of crises, making donor coordination all the more relevant.

The European and international donor community places strong emphasis on improving donor coordination in fragile states. The importance of coordination was strongly highlighted in the High Level Forums (HLFs) on aid effectiveness in Rome (2003), Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011), each of which stress the need of coordination in fragile states. In addition, the OECD's Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States (2005) and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (2011) emphasize the benefits of donor coordination in fragile states. The EU has actively engaged with these debates. The 2009 European Report on Development aimed to 'overcome fragility in Africa' by 'forging a new European approach' which includes 'a better coordination between the EC and its member states'.

## DONOR COORDINATION: WHAT IT MEANS AND WHERE WE ARE

The wide-ranging consensus on the need for more and better coordination obscures the fact that there is **much confusion about what coordination means and what should be coordinated.** Donors and governments can coordinate information exchange, policies, aid allocation, aid instruments, procedures and/or programming. Coordination can involve the simplification and ultimately the harmonization of procedures, practices and requirements in planning, implementation, disbursement mechanisms and evaluations. The most basic definition is that different actors work together to solve a collective problem. A more comprehensive one concerns *"the activities of two or more development partners that are intended to mobilize aid resources or to harmonize their policies, programmes, procedures and practices so as to maximize the development effectiveness of aid resources"*.

### Six relevant dimensions of donor coordination:

- > **Objectives:** donor coordination can also serve political objectives (e.g. influence vis-à-vis country) in addition to the main objective of aid effectiveness
- > **Governance:** number of donors involved (small vs. large), relationship with partner country and other stakeholders (challenges of ownership in fragile context)
- > **Scope:** coordination of policies, aid allocation, instruments, procedures and/or programming; coordination at national, subnational and/or sectorial level
- > **Timing:** ex ante coordination (e.g. joint programming) or ex post coordination (e.g. joint evaluations)
- > **Level:** policy formulation (e.g. INCAF), programming (e.g. EU JP) and/or implementation (e.g. common funds)
- > **Degree:** spectrum from basic to complex approaches (cf. fig. 3)

Figure 3: Donor Coordination Spectrum



**Overall progress on donor coordination in fragile states is limited**, according to existing literature. Although the issue has featured prominently on the international agenda for over a decade, most fragile states continue to suffer from low levels of donor coordination. Most progress has been made at the policy level, whereas fewer improvements have been made at the programming and implementation level. At the same time, however, our literature review and HQ analysis show that the ‘spirit’ of the Paris Agenda (see Box 3) and the momentum that this created for increased donor coordination has clearly waned. **However, we do not know much about donor coordination at field level. No comprehensive studies into this exist.** Case studies show that all coordination initiatives suffer from shortcomings, which have again not been systematically investigated.

## GROWING IMPORTANCE OF EU JOINT IMPLEMENTATION

Importantly, the new European Consensus on Development introduces the concept of Joint Implementation (JI). However, there is no clear definition within policy documents nor is there any academic research on the concept. As a working definition, we define JI as a set of arrangements that seek to advance coordination in the field at the implementation level and distinguish between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ forms. **Soft JI** includes joint efforts for sharing analytical and logistical capacities, as well as joint missions and sharing of staff. **Hard JI** implies more tangible budgetary and institutional commitments, such as the pooled funding arrangements. These are summarized in Table 2 which will guide the field research.

JI can also involve more ‘bottom-up’ coordination by practitioners for the shared provision of public goods, e.g. when it comes to joint studies, shared logistics, joint analysis, joint mapping exercises, joint field visits and common reporting.

Table 2: Coordination in the field

Joint Implementation		Provision of common goods and services	
Soft JI	Hard JI	Research capacity	Coordination Units
Joint analysis	Budget support	Staff trainings	Mutualisation of services
Cartography	Common Reporting, Financial requirements, results based approach	Remote management	Third party monitoring
Joint Civil society consultation	Common funds	Regular Security Briefings	Joint/shared logistics (e.g. office)
Joint Secretariat	Trust Funds	Joint Secretariat	Joint analysis
Joint engagement/exit strategies at country, sector or project level	Division of labour (sectorial, sub/cross-sectorial, geographic)		
Per Diems	Delegated cooperation		

Whereas such initiatives, as highlighted by the PN (Working Paper Series No.1), seem promising in the sense that they provide public goods without strongly increasing coordination costs and can provide the building blocks for wider donor coordination schemes such as JP, research on this topic is lacking.

## COORDINATION AT HEADQUARTERS LEVEL: MECHANISMS

The paradox emerging from the HQ research is that, while the number of new HQ centered initiatives on European coordination is limited and interviewees criticize national capitals’ limited interest in stimulating coordination (“coordination is not on the agenda of capitals. It happens at country level. This is an obstacle to coordination”), reflecting the waning spirit of ‘Paris’, we also witness a growing coordination dynamic. General operational initiatives on European coordination towards fragile states have barely been found. However, we see a growing relevance of some mechanisms that are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Coordination mechanisms emphasized at HQ level

Mechanism	Description	Example	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>Joint Programming</b>	Joint planning of development cooperation by the EU development partners working in a partner country	Joint programming initiative in Palestine	See Box 1	See Box 1
<b>Trust Funds</b>	Pooled funding modality, established for a specific development purpose with contributions donors	EU Emergency TF for Africa	See Box 2	See Box 2
<b>PN working groups</b>	Practitioners' Network Thematic Working Groups. The Practitioners' Network is a platform of 15 European development cooperation organisations with a public service mission	Crisis, Fragility and Migration (CFM) Working Group	Information exchange; consensus building; focus on practitioners; expert knowledge; involvement of the EU (EC as Observer)	informal network, high transaction costs for members, Brussel's based
<b>Capacity4Dev</b>	European Commission's (DG DEVCO) knowledge sharing platform for development cooperation	Public Group on Fragility and Crisis Situations: information sharing, panel at EDD, trainings at ESDC, documents on Joint Programming in DRC	Information exchange; diverse actors including EU officials; easily accessible (online)	Diversity of actors with few common features, low involvement of participants, accessible to everyone (public)
<b>Shared analysis</b>	Organized by DEVCO B2 resilience and fragility and EEAS Conflict Prevention, Peace-Building and Mediation Instruments Division	Conflict Analysis and Early Warning System analysis tools; conflict analysis workshops	Promoting a common understanding of the root causes of fragility	Limited involvement of practitioners
<b>Joint trainings</b>	Organized in the framework of the EEAS-based European Security and Defence College	Joint DEVCO-EEAS training on 'Fragility, Security and Development in a Changing World'; 'Conflict Analysis', 'Security Sector Reform'	Contribute to common EU approach; both DEVCO and ECHO; Member State participants	Mainly 'Brussels bubble', less development practitioners
<b>MRI (Mutual Reliance Initiative)</b>	Delegation of tasks, on top of co-financing, between AFD, KfW and EIB	Pilot phase (14 projects in SSA, North Africa and the Middle East); now all regions / all sectors	Effective division of labour, enhanced mutual knowledge; higher leverage	Not specifically targeting fragile states
<b>EU blending Facilities</b>	enabling to blend EU grant with financial institutions' loans to leverage investments	AfIF, African Investment Facility	Exchange of information; coordination on pipeline amongst Financial Institutions; alignment to defined priorities	Not specifically targeting fragile states

Noteworthy are two sets of EU activities that do not qualify as coordination narrowly defined, but nevertheless have the potential to forge coordination:

- > **Shared analysis:** Shared analysis could facilitate common EU action. The European Commission and the EEAS have developed Conflict Analysis and Early Warning System analysis tools. Also, interactive conflict analysis workshops are considered. The 'Guidance note on the use of Conflict Analysis in support of EU external action' highlights this approach, yet also emphasizes the benefits for EU staff and the drawbacks of involving other stakeholders. The participation of development practitioners in the design, implementation and evaluation of these shared analyses exercises (shared analysis vs. joint analysis) seems very limited.
- > **Joint trainings:** Trainings could also catalyse a European approach to fragile states. In the framework of trainings organized by the EEAS-based European Security and Defence College, DEVCO and ECHO cooperate to integrate the development and humanitarian aid perspectives. Examples are the joint DEVCO-EEAS trainings on 'Fragility, Security and Development in a Changing World', 'Conflict Analysis' and 'Security Sector Reform'. Organizers acknowledge the relevance of "mixing development people with the military crowd". However, the trainings seem largely directed towards the 'Brussels bubble' and target more foreign policy oriented officials and diplomats, whereas development practitioners seem not aware of these opportunities.

The HQ phase revealed several enabling and constraining factors for donor coordination in fragile states. While many are context-sensitive, recurrent ones are the weak state apparatus of fragile states, securitization of aid, donor interests and identities, institutional factors, individual factors, and budgets. All these factors can work in both enabling and constraining ways. For instance, weak state capacity entails a higher need for coordination but it also makes it more difficult. Further complicating the analysis is that **the purpose of coordination is not always clear**. In addition to the well-known aid effectiveness concerns, interviews reveal also other motives such as political impact with the partner government, and migration and security related interests. **Despite the strong case for coordination in fragile states, it may be less development-friendly when underlying political, migration or security purposes prevail**. How exactly enabling and constraining factors, as well as the motives behind coordination, play out in practice remains a matter for empirical (field) analysis.

Two coordination activities in which the EU has been strongly engaged in recent years are **Joint Programming (JP)** and **Trust Funds**. Boxes 1 and 2 summarize main insights from the three phases of the study.

#### Box 1: Joint Programming

In recent years, JP has been strongly promoted as a key approach to reduce aid fragmentation. It emerged from the EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour (2007) and is set to become the new norm for European donor coordination. EU Joint programming is understood as the joint planning of development cooperation by the EU development partners working in a partner country. JP exercises are still in an experimental phase, with only recently a number of divergent practices from which lessons could be drawn. Based on first experiences, the literature is rather critical. It has thus far not lived up to its full potential to become a useful coordination tool. The biggest advantage seems to be improved information exchange. However, JP remains relatively limited, being implemented with different scopes in about 57 countries, out of which only 30 have developed a joint strategy as a result of the JP process. The claim that JP paves the way for JI only materialised in a small number of countries (i.e. Kenya and Cambodia). In some cases (e.g. South Sudan), JP demonstrated a lack of flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, raising questions about its applicability to in fragile situations. Our HQ and field research equally provide a mixed picture of JP in fragile states. In those instances where JP appears relatively successful, **it builds on pre-existing collaboration between donors and/or agencies**. It is widely recognized that effective **JP should be primarily steered from the field and requires strong leadership from the EU Delegations**. There is scope for improvements in this regard. For instance, the EU could do more to streamline procedures, contracts etc., and it could provide trainings to EU member states agencies and practitioners. While interviewees in Palestine were cautiously optimistic about JP (with the EU+ including also Norway and Switzerland), in the DRC and in Niger questions were raised about the EU's willingness to effectively proceed with the whole exercise. It does not seem to be a priority of the EU Delegation in these countries. Even in Palestine, a significant number of interviewees take a wait-and-see attitude towards the implementation of JP and point to difficulties of implementation. **Bottom-up coordination practices between about 4-5 donors are perceived to be more successful** than grand schemes such as JP. Ideally, JP should be implemented in a way that it facilitates such small coordination practices.

## Box 2: Trust Funds

Trust funds (TFs) are **increasingly popular instruments for donor coordination in fragile contexts**. TFs serve as a pooled funding modality, typically large in scale and established for a specific development purpose with financial contributions from one or more donors. In fragile states, TFs typically address natural disasters, wars or post-war interventions and global and regional critical issues. They potentially reduce the costs of information sharing, administration and coordination and serve as a stepping stone for other coordinated actions. Furthermore, they can increase tolerance for the risks of using country systems in fragile situations. **The literature, however, reveals a number of shortcomings to TFs from a coordination perspective**. First, TFs are often too ambitious as they take insufficient account of the local context in fragile states, often due to strong involvement of the HQ level. Second, TFs tend to be less aligned to partner country systems than other aid modalities, e.g. due to the earmarking of funds for specific sectors and priorities. Third, proliferation of TFs risks aggravating aid fragmentation instead of contributing to improved coordination. **Several of these critical points on TFs in which the EU is involved came back in our HQ analysis**. Interviewees recognize that TFs potentially provide an avenue for European coordination, specifically targeted at fragile states. In a paper dating from February 2017, the members of the PN also acknowledge the trust funds' huge potential for contributing to building up efficient and visible European aid architecture, while providing the flexibility to act fast in contexts of crisis and fragility. In 2017 existing EU Trust funds are the Bêkou Trust Fund, the MADAD fund, the Colombia trust fund, and the EU's **Emergency Trust Fund for Africa**. The latter, however, was criticized for being limited in transparency of decision-making processes at HQ level (e.g. limited input in decision-making, unclear technical guidelines. . .) and for lacking ownership by partner country governments (e.g. TF managers based in Brussels). On ownership, the **Colombia Trust Fund** was cited as a better practice because the trust fund manager is based in Bogota. In relation to the Emergency Trust Fund, several interviewees expressed the feeling of 'going backwards in terms of coordination'. This critique emerged even more outspokenly during the field research in Niger. Several practitioners criticized it for providing tons of new aid without stimulating coordination amongst donors and without involving local stakeholders. **The EU Emergency Trust Fund is so far being seen not only as a missed opportunity for enhancing European coordination, but even as an initiative that diverts attention away from on-going programmes in Niger and potentially thwarts existing initiatives**.

## COORDINATION AT FIELD LEVEL: PERCEIVED NEEDS VERSUS CONSTRAINTS

Field research in Niger, Palestine, Haiti and DRC reveals a **near-consensus amongst practitioners and diplomats that (European) coordination is even more necessary in a fragile state context**. Resonating with the HQ research, the rationale behind coordination is barely questioned and there is a consensus on the need for working more together. However, **when enquiring into best practices of soft and hard JI and the provision of common goods and services, using Table 2 as a guideline, the number of given examples turned out to be very limited**. On JI, existing cooperation initiatives mentioned were usually not very innovative, in the sense of inspiring other sectors and countries. Second, on common goods and services, the checklist led to interesting discussions on how coordination should ideally be pursued, but interviewees often had to remain silent on already existing practices.

Instead, interviewees in the field phase mostly elaborated on the obstacles against European coordination. The most frequently cited constraints are summarized in Table 4. Together, these confirm that (almost) "everyone wants to coordinate, but nobody wants to be coordinated".

Table 4: Constraints to coordination at field level

	European donors and practitioners	Partner county
<b>Individuals</b>	dependence on committed individuals; quick staff turnover	individual agendas of policy-makers and officials
<b>Ideas</b>	different visions on principles and/or approaches; waning Paris spirit (see Box 3)	different visions on principles and/or approaches; much support for Paris Declaration
<b>Institutions</b>	limited flexibility and no incentives from HQ; high transaction costs	capacity constraints; weak donor-wide coordination structures
<b>Interests</b>	political interests HQ; domestic politics (populism, migration) in Europe; competition for resources; visibility	no interest in coordination

### Box 3: Influence of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness from 2005

The principles of the Paris Declaration – Ownership, Alignment, Harmonisation, Results and Mutual Accountability – set the framework for coordination in development cooperation. Remarkably, **practitioners in the field were more positive, compared to the European capitals and existing literature, about the Paris principles. However, ambiguities on what exactly these principles involve in fragile states also became clear.** Practitioners hold three different perspectives on the actual relevance of Paris:

#### PRACTITIONERS' VIEWS ON 'PARIS'

- > **Defending Paris:** the majority of European practitioners that we interviewed do not dispute the continuing relevance of the Paris principles, all the more so in fragile states (**Paris = a development principle**)
- > **Criticizing Paris:** a minority of European practitioners is critical and even cynical about today's relevance of the Paris principles, especially in a context of fragile states (**Paris = the capital of France**)
- > **Paris upside down:** a subtle but potentially far-reaching discursive shift whereby the Paris principles are re-interpreted – also by those defending them – to allow for political influence with the partner government (**Paris = a political strategy**)

The third view can be called '**backward alignment**': **donors determining what the government's policy should be rather than the other way around.** This is alarming because it undermines the rationale behind the Paris principles and allows for political interests to overshadow developmental goals. Given the weakness of most ministries in fragile states, assisting the government without unduly influencing it proves to be dancing on a tightrope. As will be shown, the most successful examples of coordination in fragile states are precisely those where donors manage to somehow align with the partner government.

## INTERESTING PRACTICES IN THE FIELD

Despite the constraints, a number of interesting practices of European coordination in Niger, Palestine, DRC and Haiti emerged. **Those are practices that involve at least two European donors and that are perceived by stakeholders to be relevant for drawing lessons on coordination.** Some of these coordination practices (or 'cases') at field level are more successful than others. Table 5 summarizes the main evaluation criteria: perception and relevance.

Table 5: Evaluating successfulness of coordination practices

(1) Stakeholders' perception:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- How do they perceive the coordination as such?</li><li>- How do they perceive its impact and relevance?</li><li>- Do they perceive it as a model for other sectors and/or countries?</li></ul>
(2) Effective relevance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Primary documents, secondary literature and other evaluations</li><li>- Coordination 'dynamic'; attracting more participants</li></ul>

Following this approach, we classify the coordination practices alongside a **continuum from most to least successful**, as summarized in the first column of Table 7. More (successful) examples of coordination were found in Palestine than in the other countries. This can be explained by country-specific (more enabling context in terms of governance and human development) and donor-specific (interests in risk-sharing) factors. Coordination proved most difficult in the DRC and Haiti. These countries also score much lower on governance indicators, which again suggests the importance of ownership and alignment. However, within each country we found more and less successful practices. **For each of the 10 coordination practices, an analysis was drafted as an annex to the study.** Table 6 synthesizes the main data.

Table 6: Interesting practices of European coordination in RDC, Palestine, Niger and Haiti

Case	Emergence	Mechanism(s)	Membership	Instruments mobilised	Common goods and services	Strengths	Weaknesses
FISAN Food security	Field, 2012	Support for credit scheme	LuxDev, SDC, SK, IFAD, possibly AFD and KfW	Technical assistance; linked to EU budget support conditions	capacity building; Joint studies; Joint pilot initiatives	Highest political support by the President	Not yet adopted in law; Unequal state-donor relationship
JFA/BTC-GIZ Education	Field, 2010	JFA: Pooled Fund; Del cooperation; BTC-GIZ: Joint management structure	JFA: BE, FI, IE, NO, KfW; BTC & GIZ, others (e.g. EU, SDC)	JFA: Budget; Policy dialogue; BTC-GIZ: technical assistance – hiring consultant, co-funding activities	JFA: joint analysis; common disbursement, procurement, audit; BTC-GIZ: Joint missions, workshops, communication	JFA: Reduced transaction costs, DOL; Good relations with ministry; Risk sharing; BTC-GIZ: DOL; Flexible	JFA: alignment (procurement); BTC-GIZ: uncertain relations with the PA; weak sector-wide coordination
AREA C Social infrastr	HQ & field, 2014	Pooled Fund ; Transfer agreements	EU (lead), DK, FR/AFD, UK	Budget; Informal technical working group	Joint funding, joint reporting etc; information exchange; Pol backing	Risk sharing; less transaction costs; informal (4 musketeers)	divisions within EUs; political sensitivity in Europe
GIBS Health	Field, 2005	Donor wide coordination (plenary & sub-groups)	GE, BE, DFID, SE, EU, many non-EU	Meetings; Permanent secretary	Info sharing; common positions towards govt; common commitments	Example for other sectors; harmonizing admin issues	Parallel structure, alignment; implementation
FAO Agriculture	Field, 2016	Pooled fund	EU, AECID, DK, NL, SDC, FAO	Budget; Joint project steering committee and Programme Management Unit	joint reporting, monitoring etc.;	Lower transaction costs; influencing Pal & Isr govts; critical mass	Different views; Admin complexities; Competition, duplication; Alignment
KINSHASA Fragility	HQ and field, 2015	Joint Workshop; Task force; reflection group	EU, BE/BTC, GE, DFID, FR/AFD, GIZ, KfW, NL, SE	Budget (COM and BE); Facilitated by Acropolis	information exchange, joint analysis; common table, action plan?	Chatham House rules; common understanding	from operational to information sharing; lost momentum
PARIS Schools	Field, 2009	Joint working group	MTPTC, SDC, IDB; AECID, UNICEF	Centralised & de-centralised decisions	Technical plans, practical guides; Meeting space; Seconded expert	Scaling up of the initiative; alignment; large donors	technical capacity; long process and delays
FCS Health	Field, 2005	Pooled fund	AFD, WB, AECID, UNICEF, GAVI	Budget	Technical assistance; co-financing	alignment & ownership; Less transaction costs; reliability	Low execution rates; Hidden transaction costs; pol dialogue
HR/IHL Human rights	HQ & field 2004	Pooled fund for secretariat	NL, DK, SE, SDC, NO (left)	Budget	Joint secretariat	Stable funding; Risk sharing and hiding	High transaction costs; Unclear future; political backing
PAFMIR Vocat training	Field 2015	Del cooperation	EU, AFD	Budget; missions; joint studies, action plans, evaluation, communication	Technical assistants	Lower transaction costs; AFD expertise	Time consuming procedures; Administ requirements; absorption capacity; ownership.

These extensive empirical accounts were consequently analysed comparatively. From this approach, **four enabling factors for coordination emerged**, which appear to a more or lesser extent in the 10 cases (as visualized in the number of bullets in Table 7).

Table 7: Continuum and enabling factors

	Soft & hard JI	Small & like-minded	Align with partner	Flexibility & political backing
FISAN	•••	•••	•••	•••
JFA/BTC-GIZ	•••	•••	•••	•••
AREA C	••	•••	•••	•••
GIBS	•	•	••	••
FAO	••	•••	•	•
KINSHASA	•	••	•	•
PARIS	•	••	••	••
FCS	••	•	•••	••
HR/IHL	•	•••	•	•
PAFMIR	•	•••	•	•

Least successful -----most successful

From this comparative analysis derives the **main finding of the study**, that most successful coordination practices typically combine four different enabling factors:

- a. mixing soft and hard joint implementation efforts
- b. involving a small number of like-minded donors
- c. findings ways to somehow align with the partner country
- d. providing sufficient flexibility for practitioners, while guaranteeing political backing from HQ

#### (a) MIXING SOFT AND HARD JOINT IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS

The most successful practices creatively combine soft and hard JI mechanisms. They go beyond the set-up of a single mechanism, instead forming clusters of various coordination mechanisms that mutually interact. What makes some cases more successful than others is that they are not isolated practices: they constitute clusters of various – hard and soft, formal and informal – instances of coordination at different levels.

Table 8: Mixing soft and hard joint implementation

Case	Soft JI	Hard JI
FISAN	LuxDev, SDC, SK, IFAD (core) ; GIZ-AFD Joint studies; Joint pilot initiatives; informal coordination	Credit scheme
JFA/BTC-GIZ	NO, IE, BE, DE, FI (+ EU and SDC) Joint missions; joint trainings; joint workshops; informal meetings; Joint video	Pooled Fund; Delegated cooperation; Co-financing
AREA C	EU , AFD, DK, UK Shared analysis; informal meetings (4 musketeers)	Transfer agreements Council Conclusions

#### (b) INVOLVING A SMALL NUMBER OF LIKE-MINDED DONORS

Achieving a mix of soft and hard JI activities is easier when there are 4-5 like-minded donors at the centre of the cluster of cooperation activities. Ideally, such a small number of donors embark on coordination efforts, creating a dynamic that attracts more members. Two factors are key to achieve this. First, **like-mindedness**, referring to shared ideas on doing development in a fragile context. The most successful cases display a clear consensus on the root of the problem and how it should be addressed (see Table 9). Secondly, **critical mass**, referring to the involvement of at least one large donor (in terms of budget), technical expertise and experience within the group. When these conditions are present, small groups create a dynamic attracting more members, similar to a concentric process of incremental coordination efforts.

Table 9: Like-mindedness in small groups

	Participants	Like-mindedness
FISAN	LuxDev, SDC, Denmark, IFAD; possibly AFD and KfW	<b>Developmental:</b> Need for investments for small producers in agriculture and food sector, at decentralized level; existing systems need to be strengthened
JFA-BTC/GIZ	Belgium, Ireland, Finland, Norway, Germany (KfW)	<b>Institutional:</b> Education should be addressed through governance reforms at ministry; results-based management
AREA C	EU, Denmark, AFD, UK	<b>Political:</b> Two state-solution; social infrastructure in Area C should be possible if Israel does not formally object

This does not necessarily mean that all participants should be EU member states, nor that coordination by EU member states would be more successful. Some relatively successful cases include non-European donors (GIBS case) and other organizations (PARIS case). Interestingly, like-mindedness also does not mean that all participants should be practitioners (or diplomats). In some cases (the PARIS example in Haiti, the KINSHASA workshop, the JFA in Palestine) the diplomat-practitioner mix was perceived as an advantage.

### (c) FINDING WAYS TO ALIGN WITH THE PARTNER COUNTRY

While nobody expects full ownership and perfect alignment in fragile states, the field research shows that continuous efforts in this direction are key. **The most promising practices of coordination are exactly those that have somehow managed to deal with the challenge to involve the partner government**, for instance by engaging one of the stronger Ministries, or by involving a strong semi-governmental institution.

Table 10: Aligning with the governmental level(s)

Case	Dealing with governmental level(s)
FISAN	Strong support from President; Involvement of Ministry of Agriculture (technical assistants); alignment with government strategy on food security initiative ; The facilities are coherent with existing instruments (eg ANFICT, BAGRI): catalyse the already existing national financing mechanism through enhanced and active coordination
JFA - BTC/GIZ	Strong and reform-oriented Minister of Education; Close involvement of Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance and Planning; Core goal of JFA is strengthening public management of Ministry of Education ; Interaction sector wide (sub-) working groups
AREA C	Closely aligned to political agenda of Palestinian Authority (Area C territory); EU-Palestine Agreement 2013; aligned with Ministry Action Plan 2012; Implemented by strong semi-governmental institution; Involvement of Ministry of Local Government

### (d) PROVIDING FLEXIBILITY WHILE GUARANTEEING POLITICAL BACKING

Resonating with the findings of the HQ research, both flexibility and political support are key ingredients for successful coordination.

- > **Institutional flexibility:** this is all the more necessary in the often-volatile context of fragile states. Instead of receiving institutional incentives for coordination, practitioners complain about cumbersome procedures required by HQ and constraints inherent to the coordination mechanisms in the field. The most successful cases show that a **clear division of labour (albeit not necessarily formalized)**, **regular meetings (with a clear calendar)**, a **focal point and well-functioning secretariat (perhaps rotating)**, and a **relatively short chain of delegation (e.g. delegated cooperation, co-financing, transfer agreements)** enable coordination.
- > **Political backing:** political backing from HQ is all the more important in fragile states, because development efforts easily risk becoming politicized and even backlash into domestic sensitive discussions. In this regard, coordination has also proven to be useful for donors in terms of **risk sharing and even hiding behind each other**. This proved particularly important in Palestine (sensitivities of the Palestine-Israel conflict), but also in Niger (sensitivity of migration).

When these factors are lacking, coordination becomes dependent on **committed individuals**. While we found quite some examples of individuals who managed to stimulate coordination despite institutional hurdles, dependence on committed individuals makes coordination vulnerable. Individual efforts can only be effective and long-lasting if they are embedded in a wider ideational and institutional context. In general, and following a 'sociology of institutions' perspective, the **interplay between institutional (flexibility) and ideational factors (like-mindedness)** is key to understanding why some practices work better than others.

## WHAT ROLE FOR THE EU?

In the literature, three different roles for the EU can be identified:

- 1) **Just another donor:** the project of the 1990s when the EU became a full-fledged donor;
- 2) **Harmoniser:** the project of the 2000s focusing less on 'giving' and more on 'coordinating';
- 3) **Political force:** the project of the 2010s concerned with foreign policy coherence.

This study suggests a fourth '**Facilitator role**', which may become the new project for the EU relations with the Global South, including fragile states. This facilitator role is identified by the present study as **the most promising role for the EU in donor coordination in fragile states**. The EU can play a key role without large aid budgets (donor role), imposing common visions and approaches (harmonizer role), or political force (political role). Connecting to this study's main findings, the EU could:

- a. **Foster synergies between 'soft' and 'hard' joint implementation**, by providing analysis and studies, joint missions, trainings, workshops etc. in areas where EU countries (are planning to) coordinate, and supporting the creation of instruments and action plans where cooperation remains limited to 'soft' JI
- b. **Focus on already existing cooperation practices of small groups of like-minded actors**; instead of promoting EU-wide coordination, it would be more realistic and promising to facilitate existing bottom-up instances of cooperation between some like-minded groups
- c. **Stimulate administrative reforms** that reduce the bureaucratic burden for practitioners engaging in European coordination, whilst **providing political backing** where necessary.
- d. **Facilitate political dialogue between coordination groups and the government(s) of fragile states**, as most European donors and practitioners struggle to find ways to align with local government(s).

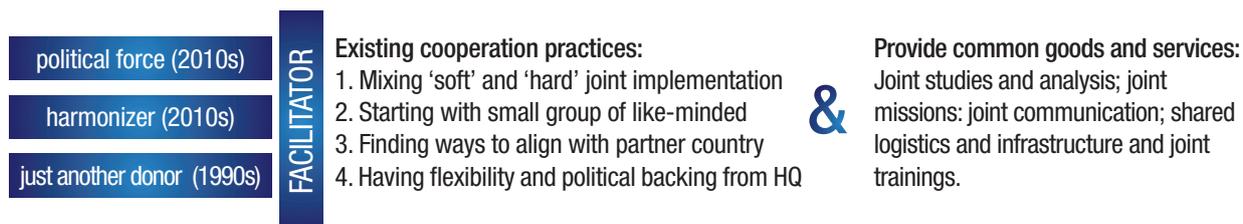
Indeed, the most successful cases in our field research have in common that they emerged bottom-up from a small group of like-minded donors. This may be more promising than grand EU schemes such as JP and Trust Funds, although the latter would ideally facilitate already existing coordination schemes. In fact, the EU has already, at least to some extent, played a facilitating role in the most successful coordination practices that we have examined.

Table 11: EU facilitating role in most successful cases?

EU Facilitating Role	
FISAN	Déclencheur for EU budget support
JFA/BTC-GIZ	joint communication (video); delegated cooperation
AREA C	funding and leading donor; political support; EU interest section

Specifically on the EU's facilitation of 'soft' joint implementation, there is a strong consensus amongst interviewees in the field on the need for common goods and services that are currently underprovided:

- > **Sharing infrastructure and logistics:** we could not find evidence of common infrastructure and logistics, while interviewees recognize much scope for improvement.
- > **Sharing studies and analysis:** the study revealed a need for sharing information on various specific and country-related topics. A (large) number of existing studies, audits and evaluations are not publicly available. The EU could promote a more open research and information culture.
- > **Joint communication:** the EU can facilitate communication of coordination schemes (even if it does not participate). This is important given the need of visibility and public support for international aid.
- > **Joint missions:** joint missions can spark new cooperation initiatives. Joint missions facilitated by the EU and involving practitioners are scarce and should be organized at several stages of the project cycle.
- > **Joint trainings:** both at HQ and field level, joint trainings are often not known amongst practitioners. Trainings should involve practitioners and their existence could be better communicated. Showing the need for more joint trainings, several European practitioners that we interviewed were not aware of basic tools of European cooperation such as JP.



Such a facilitator role is desirable because it stimulates those factors enabling successful coordination. Providing common goods and services such as joint analysis, joint missions, joint communication, and joint trainings is also feasible, as it does not require large budgets or high-profile foreign and security instruments. There is a lot of low hanging fruit that is currently underexploited. Finally, a facilitator role reflects the EU's *raison d'être* as a supranational institution providing functional solutions to collective action problems.

## A NETWORK OF PRACTITIONERS, A EUROPEAN INITIATIVE

It was agreed on 23 February 2007 to establish an informal European network of development cooperation practitioners. The Practitioners' Network is an open platform for exchange, coordination and harmonization between European development cooperation organisations with a public service mission. It is comprised of fifteen Members and one Observer (the European Commission). The Practitioners' Network is open to all European non-profit national bodies with a public service mission which directly implement European or bilateral development assistance and which agree to the objectives, values and commitments of the Practitioners' Network. The Practitioners' Network is governed by its Charter and its budget is entirely based on its Members' contributions.

The Practitioners' Network aims to strengthen cooperation, links and complementarity between European development players with a public service mission, creating opportunities for cooperation and synergies at the implementation level. It enables the exchange of information and experience between practitioners and provides feedback on European development policies from a practitioner's perspective, while enhancing the visibility of its Members.

The goal of the Practitioners' Network is to contribute to coherence within the EU donor community and, at the same time, benefit from the wide range of organisations active in this field in order to encourage an integrated, pluralistic and innovative approach to European development cooperation, implemented as efficiently as possible.

Various Thematic Working Groups have been created to allow Members to exchange views and work on topical issues, which reflect the priorities of the Practitioners' Network, at both operational and strategic levels. Currently, there are 4 Working Groups.

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