



## Press Release

Luxembourg, 14 June 2018

### EU support for Sahel helped to improve internal security, but progress remains slow, say Auditors

**The EU Sahel Missions have helped strengthen the internal security forces in Niger and Mali, but progress has been slow due to challenging conditions and operational inefficiency, according to a new report from the European Court of Auditors.**

The EU runs civilian Missions in Niger and Mali under the Common Security and Defence Policy that provide training, advice and equipment to strengthen the capacity of the national internal security forces. The European External Action Service (EEAS) plans and manages operations; the European Commission manages the budgets. Funding for Niger over the period 2012 to 2017 was €69 million and for Mali from 2014 to 2017 it was €66 million.

*“Insecurity in the Sahel region of West Africa impacts negatively on the development of the region and on the interests of the European Union”, said Bettina Jakobsen, the member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report. “The EU Missions in Niger and Mali have played an important role, but progress with regard to strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces has been slow and limited.”* The auditors found that Mission staff did not receive adequate practical guidance and, in the case of Niger, pre-deployment training. The EEAS and the Commission did not provide enough support and in some cases applied procedures unsuited to conditions on the ground.

The auditors identified shortcomings affecting the operational efficiency of the EU Missions. These shortcomings were due to a combination of two-year mandates and annual budgets, which do not encourage medium or long-term planning, as well as a high number of staff vacancies. Even though the Missions are not intended to be permanent, there is no clear exit strategy, say the auditors.

The Missions did address sustainability, but with little success. This was partly due to lack of ownership by the host countries, and partly because the Missions did not devote adequate resources to ensuring sustainability and following up on the training given and the equipment supplied.

The Missions suffered from weak performance indicators and did not adequately monitor and evaluate the achievement of tasks, say the auditors. EEAS impact assessments were not linked to monitoring and evaluation.

*The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors’ special report. The full report is available at [www.eca.europa.eu](http://www.eca.europa.eu).*

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The auditors make a number of recommendations to the EEAS and the Commission:

- take measures to improve the operational efficiency of the Missions;
- improve the occupancy rate of staff posts in the Missions;
- set mandates and budgets to match operations and provide for an exit strategy;
- increase the focus on sustainability;
- improve indicators, monitoring and evaluation

### **Notes to Editors**

Niger and Mali are fragile states in Western Africa. They are young parliamentary democracies with weak economies and developing public administrations. Ranking 187th and 175th respectively out of the 188 countries ranked in the 2016 Human Development Index, they are home to some of the poorest people in the world. Niger and Mali are the sixth and eighth largest countries in Africa and are located in the southern part of the Sahara desert. Many migrants pass through these two countries on their way to their final destination.

Despite a peace agreement signed in June 2015 and the presence of foreign peacekeeping forces, extremist groups are still active in northern Mali, and the national security forces face a number of challenges. The number of casualties remains high and there are numerous terrorist attacks. Niger's security is threatened by the instability in neighbouring Libya, Nigeria and Mali. The government faces challenges such as the fight against human traffickers and other illegal activities.

The ECA presents its special reports to the European Parliament and Council of the EU, as well as to other interested parties such as national parliaments, industry stakeholders and representatives of civil society. The vast majority of the recommendations we make in our reports are put into practice. This high level of take-up underlines the benefit of our work to EU citizens.

Special report 15/2018 "Strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali: only limited and slow progress" is available on the ECA website ([eca.europa.eu](https://eca.europa.eu)) in 23 EU languages.