

Special Report

European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: Flexible but lacking focus

(pursuant to Article 287(4), second subparagraph, TFEU)



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Action Fiche: A document that contains all relevant information about a project or programme
CA	Constitutive Agreement: The document establishing the EUTF for Africa
Commission	European Commission
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIP	External Investment Plan
EUDEL	EU Delegation
EUTF for Africa	EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa
HoA	Horn of Africa window/region
IcSP	The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
MS	EU Member States
NoA	North of Africa window/region
OpCom	Operational Committee
REF	Research and Evidence Facility
SLC	Sahel and Lake Chad window/region
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
TF	Trust Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- I. Since January 2013, the Financial Regulation governing the EU budget has allowed the European Commission to create and administer European Union trust funds for external actions. These are multi-donor trust funds for emergency, post-emergency or thematic actions.
- II. The European Union Emergency trust fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (the 'EUTF for Africa') is aimed at fostering stability and helping to better manage migration by addressing the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration. It was agreed at the Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015. It supports activities in 26 countries across three regions of Africa (referred to as 'windows'): the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and North of Africa.
- III. We examined whether the EUTF for Africa is well-designed and well-implemented. We conclude that the EUTF for Africa is a flexible tool, but considering the unprecedented challenges that it faces, its design should have been more focused. Compared to traditional instruments, the EUTF for Africa was faster in launching projects. It has, overall, managed to speed up the signing of contracts and making advance payments. However, projects face similar challenges as traditional instruments that delay their implementation.
- IV. We found that the objectives of the EUTF for Africa are broad. This has allowed flexibility in terms of adapting the support to suit different and changing situations, but is less useful when it comes to steering action across the three windows and for measuring impact. The Commission has not comprehensively analysed and quantified the needs to be addressed by the trust fund, nor the means at its disposal. We also found that the strategic guidance provided to the managers of the three windows has not been specific enough, and the pooling of resources and capacities of donors is not yet sufficiently effective.
- V. Concerning the implementation, we found that the procedures for selecting projects varied between the windows and that the criteria for assessing project proposals were not sufficiently clear or documented. Furthermore, the comparative advantage of funding projects through the EUTF for Africa was not always well explained.

VI. While the EUTF for Africa has adopted a common monitoring system, it is not yet operational and the three windows use different systems for monitoring performance. We found that project objectives were often not SMART and indicators used for measuring project performance lacked baselines. The audited projects were at an early phase of implementation but had started to produce outputs.

VII. The EUTF for Africa has contributed to the effort of decreasing the number of irregular migrants passing from Africa to Europe, but this contribution cannot be measured precisely.

VIII. Based on our audit, we make a number of recommendations, which should be implemented as soon as possible, given that the EUTF for Africa is expected to end in 2020. The Commission should:

- improve the quality of the objectives of the EUTF for Africa,
- revise the selection procedure for projects,
- take measures to speed up implementation,
- improve the monitoring of the EUTF for Africa.

INTRODUCTION

About EU trust funds

1. Trust funds (TFs) which are established for a specific development purpose, with financial contributions from one or more donors, are generally administered by an international organisation such as the World Bank or the United Nations. Since the 1990s, TFs have been used increasingly as a financing vehicle for international cooperation. They are often set up in response to crises such as natural disasters or conflicts.

2. Since 2013, the Financial Regulation, has allowed the Commission to create European Union trust funds (EUTFs)¹. EUTFs are composed of funds pooled from the EU budget or the European Development Fund (EDF), together with contributions from one or more other donors, including Member States and non-EU donor countries. EUTFs for emergency or post-emergency action can be implemented either directly by the Commission or indirectly by entrusting budget implementation tasks to specific bodies².

The EUTF for Africa

3. In 2014, the number of migrants attempting to reach Europe via its southern borders increased drastically, prompted by instability in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Eritrea and Afghanistan, as well as across the Sahel and Lake Chad regions. Many migrants from different regions in Africa have lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean trying to reach Europe. These regions

¹ Article 187 of the Financial Regulation (Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1)) provides the legal framework for setting up EU trust funds for external actions. In the Financial Regulation 2018 (Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1)), which entered into force on 2.8.2018, this is provided for in Article 234.

² Article 58(1)(c) of the Financial Regulation 2012, now Article 62 (1)(c) Financial Regulation 2018.

became the focal point of the EU's external migration policy, particularly since the closure of the so-called Balkan route in 2016, following the EU-Turkey deal.

4. In April 2015, the European Council decided to respond to this crisis, by calling for an international summit to discuss migration issues with African states and other key countries. The summit took place on 11 and 12 November 2015 in Valletta (Malta). It resulted in a common declaration and an Action Plan built around 5 priority domains and 16 priority initiatives. In addition, on 12 November 2015, 25 EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland and the European Commission signed the Constitutive Agreement³, officially establishing the EU Emergency trust fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (the 'EUTF for Africa'), with its accompanying strategy.

5. The EUTF for Africa is the third out of four TFs⁴ managed to date by the European Commission ('the Commission'). It benefits 26 African countries⁵ across three regions (referred to for administrative purposes as 'windows'): the Sahel and Lake Chad (SLC), the Horn of Africa (HoA) and North of Africa (NoA). The countries covered by the EUTF are shown in *Figure 1*.

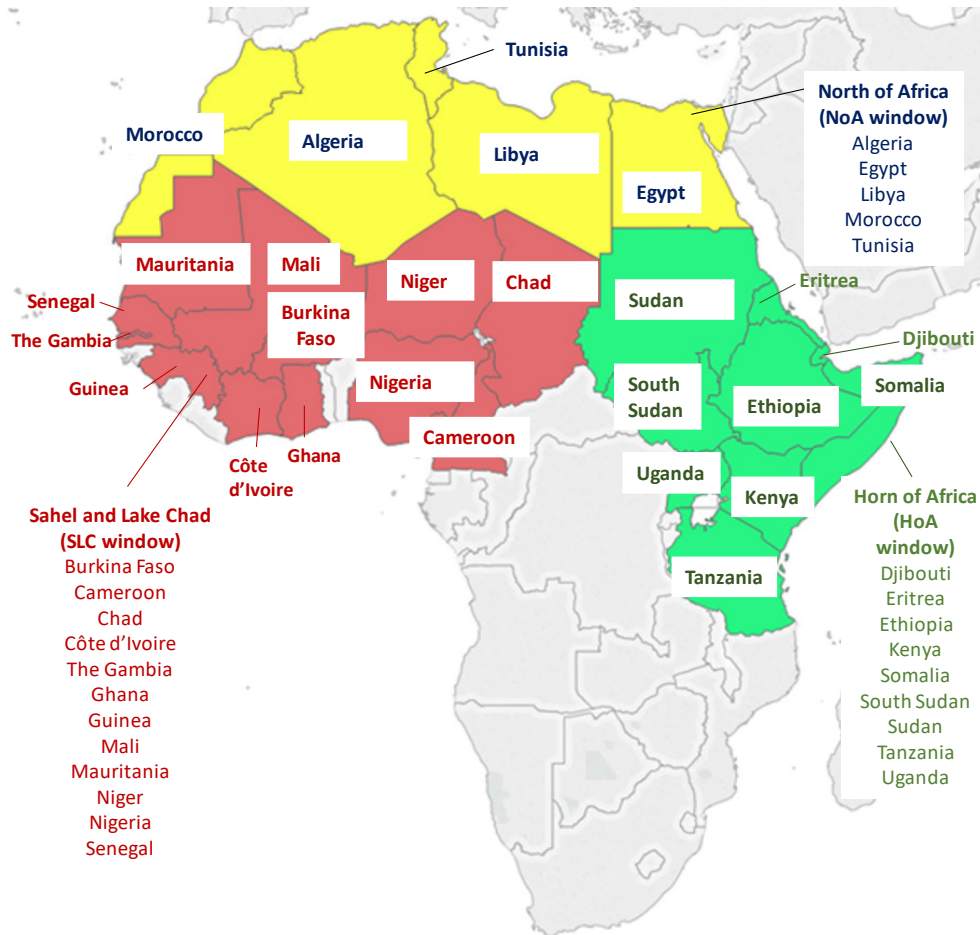
³ The Constitutive Agreement is a document drawn up by the European Commission, EU Member States and other donors.

⁴ The other funds are: (a) the Bêkou TF for the Central African Republic, established in July 2014 to support the country's exit from the crisis and its reconstruction; (b) the Madad TF, established in December 2014 in response to the Syrian crisis; and (c) the Colombia TF, established in 2016 to support the post-conflict process.

⁵ Initially, the EUTF for Africa covered 23 countries. The TF Board decided to include Ghana, Guinea, and Ivory Coast at its second meeting on 13.12.2016.

Figure 1 – Countries covered by the EUTF for Africa

(The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the European Union)



Source: European Commission, '2017 annual report of the EUTF for Africa'.

6. The Constitutive Agreement of the EUTF for Africa established the governance and management bodies:

- (a) a Trust Fund Board chaired by the Commission (DG DEVCO) and assisted by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and other Commission services. It is composed of representatives of the donors (EU Member States as well as other countries, which have contributed at least €3 million) and the Commission acting on behalf of the European Union. No African country has so far decided to participate in the EUTF for Africa as a full voting Member. Donors that have not made the minimum contribution

participate as observers⁶ (see ***Annex I***). Where relevant, representatives of countries concerned and their regional organisations may also be invited as observers. Since 2017, the European Parliament has been granted an observer status. The Trust Fund Board provides strategic guidelines on the use of the funds;

- (b) an Operational Committee (OpCom) for each window to examine and approve the actions financed by the TF. It is composed of representatives of the Commission⁷, the EEAS as well as representatives of the donors (EU Member States as well as other countries), which have contributed at least €3 million. As for the Trust Fund Board, donors that have not made the minimum contribution, non-contributing EU Member States, countries concerned and their regional organisations may attend meetings as observers. The European Parliament representatives do not have observer status at the Operational Committee meetings;
- (c) the management of the trust fund is ensured by the Commission (trustee) which acts as the secretariat of the Trust Fund Board and of the Operational Committees. It is responsible for the implementation of the actions financed by the trust fund and delegates the management tasks to members of its staff (TF Managers) in compliance with the rules of procedure (see ***Annex II***).

7. The EUTF for Africa is expected to run from 2015 to the end of 2020. At the end of August 2018, contributions to the EUTF for Africa totalled €4.09 billion. The greatest part (€3.6 billion, representing 89 % of total contributions) consisted of transfers from the EDF and from the EU budget. EU Member States, together with Norway and Switzerland, contributed €439 million (11 %). ***Figure 2*** compares the contributions to all EU trust funds.

⁶ EU Member States that have not contributed to the EUTF for Africa may also participate as observers.

⁷ Staff from DG DEVCO (chairing the SLC and HoA OpComs), DG NEAR (chairing the NoA OpCom), DG ECHO, DG HOME, and staff from the Foreign Policy Instrument.

Figure 2 – Contributions by EU Members States and other donors to the EU trust funds as of 31 August 2018

EU Trust Funds			
Name	Total contributions (million euro)	MS and other donors' contributions (million euro)	MS and other donors' contributions as a percentage of the total
EUTF for Africa	4092	439	11 %
EUTF Békou	240	66	27 %
EUTF Colombia	96	23	24 %
EUTF Madad	1571	152	10 %

Source: Monthly Report on the Multiannual Implementation of the EU trust funds as of 31 August 2018, European Commission, DG Budget. All figures are rounded.

8. The EUTF for Africa, when it was first established at the end of 2015, represented 1.5 % of all Official Development Assistance to the countries it covers.

9. Due to the different types of emergencies and the difficult local situations, the EUTF for Africa includes activities stretching from emergency assistance to development aid.

AUDIT SCOPE AND APPROACH

10. Our performance audit examined whether the EUTF for Africa, is well-designed and well-implemented. We covered the period from its establishment in late 2015 until the end of February 2018. The first part of this report examines the design of the EUTF for Africa (its objectives, the Commission's needs analysis and funding). The second part examines specific aspects of the EUTF for Africa's implementation (selection procedures for projects, the monitoring system and the outputs delivered by the audited projects).

11. We carried out the audit between November 2017 and March 2018. Our work included desk review of document evidence, such as programming documents, progress, monitoring and project evaluation reports, as well as relevant documentation on trust funds mechanisms in international organisations (UN and World Bank). We carried out on-the-spot visits to Niger and the EU delegation to Libya⁸. We interviewed EUTF for Africa staff in

⁸ The EU Delegation to Libya was relocated to Tunis due to the outbreak of armed hostilities in late 2014.

DG DEVCO, the EEAS, DG NEAR, DG ECHO, as well as the EU Special Representative for the Sahel, the EU delegations (EUDELS) for Niger and Libya, a number of donors to the EUTF for Africa⁹ and authorities from African countries. We took account of our previous relevant audit work and that of the Commission's Internal Audit Service.

12. The countries visited were selected from two windows, the SLC and the NoA, where the vast majority of spending of the EUTF for Africa has taken place so far. The countries with the greatest fund allocation in these windows are Niger and Libya. We examined 20 ongoing projects in the two countries. In Niger, we visited seven out of nine of the ongoing projects, but this was not possible for the projects in Libya due to the security situation on the ground. The examination of the projects was used to support our assessment of the design and current implementation of the EUTF for Africa. We use the numeric references to the projects (as indicated in ***Annex III***) throughout this report.

13. As this is by far the biggest EU trust fund, we undertook this task in 2018 in order to feed into the Commission's upcoming mid-term evaluation of the TF.

OBSERVATIONS

The EUTF for Africa is a flexible tool but considering the unprecedented challenges that it faces, its design should have been more focused

14. In this part, we examined how the Commission and the EU Member States have designed the EUTF for Africa. We assessed the strategic and operational objectives for the TF and the needs analysis underpinning its interventions. We also looked at the Commission's approach towards pooling of capacities¹⁰ of the donors active in the regions, and whether there was a tool for lessons-learned and a risk management framework.

⁹ A questionnaire was sent to all participating countries in the EUTF for Africa (21 out of 28 replied). Separate interviews were held with representatives from Member States contributing the most to the TF (Germany and Italy), those with projects in Niger and Libya (France and Luxembourg) and other selected Member States (such as Belgium, Portugal and Sweden).

¹⁰ Recital 18 of the Constitutive Agreement: 'The Trust Fund will achieve its objectives through the pooling of resources and of the capacity to analyse, identify and implement the actions and in

The EUTF is a flexible tool but its objectives are too broad to efficiently steer action and measure impact

15. The Commission set up the TF quickly after the Valletta summit in November 2015, with two purposes. Firstly, as an emergency tool to address the crises in the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and the North of Africa regions. Secondly, its main objective is to ‘address the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration, in particular by promoting resilience, economic and equal opportunities, security and development and addressing human rights abuses’¹¹.

16. As an emergency TF, the EUTF for Africa aims to provide a rapid, flexible and effective response¹² to emergencies stemming from the crises in three regions. However, the crises it seeks to address have not been clearly defined for each region (e.g. for each crisis: causes, impact on stability, links to other crises, estimated duration, most urgent needs and the estimated resources required to address these).

17. The political imperative to provide a rapid response to the migration situation prompted the EUTF for Africa to launch projects quickly. Its objectives have been kept as broad as possible, so that most actions can be considered eligible. All kinds of development projects (e.g. food and nutrition, security, health, education, environmental sustainability, etc.) and implementation methods (indirect management, budget support, etc.) can be used and indeed have been used under the EUTF for Africa. While this has made it a flexible tool, it has come at the expense of having a strategy that is focused enough to ensure impact. The

particular those of donors active in the regions. The aim is to harness the instruments and know-how of the Commission and the EU Member States so as to develop a solid European response [...].’

¹¹ Article 2 (Objectives of the trust fund) of the Agreement establishing the EUTF for Africa (the Constitutive Agreement). The Constitutive Agreement is a document drawn up by the European Commission and the participating EU Member States.

¹² Commission Decision C(2015) 7293 of 20.10.2015 on the establishment of the EUTF for Africa.

TF's objectives, from the strategic ones¹³ down to the more specific ones at regional, country or thematic level, and even those for specific priority actions, do not have clear targets and are not measurable.

18. The Trust Fund Board is meant to provide the TF's managers with strategic priorities and guidelines. These have so far also been very broad and unspecific (see **Box 1**).

Box 1 – Examples of broad guidance provided by the Trust Fund Board

At the second Trust Fund Board meeting of 13 December 2016, the Chair noted, in one of the conclusions, that 'the strategic framework of the EUTF for Africa is broad and clear enough to remain valid with migration, stability and development as centre of gravity. However, considering resources available for 2017 and the level of knowledge and evidence, the European Commission will be more selective for the actions to be proposed to the Operational Committee, in full synergy and complementarity with other EU instruments, including the European external investment plan.'

At the third Trust Fund Board meeting of 30 June 2017, the Chair concluded to:

- '- Keep focusing on implementation by collectively stepping-up operations with implementing actors;
- keep applying a balanced approach in the allocation of resources among the different strategic objectives of the EUTF for Africa and pillars of the Valletta Action Plan;
- pursue an integrated and coordinated approach.'

19. Despite a constantly changing reality on the ground, the Strategic Orientation Document¹⁴, which defines the TF's overall strategy, has not been updated since 12 November 2015, nor have the operational frameworks for the three windows been

¹³ These include: (a) Greater economic and employment opportunities, (b) strengthening resilience of communities, (c) improved migration management in countries of origin, transit and destination, (d) improved governance and conflict prevention.

¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/eu-emergency-trust-fund-strategic-orientation-document_en

updated since their approval in 2016¹⁵. As an example, the NoA window initially decided to focus only on strategic objective 3 ('Improved migration management in countries of origin, transit and destination'), but the situation in the region made it necessary to include projects related to the other strategic objectives as well. While the NoA window adapted its approach in practice, the strategic documents were not updated. This also had an impact on the clarity and coherence of the reporting (see ***paragraph 53***).

The Commission did not comprehensively analyse needs nor the means at its disposal to address them

The quantification of needs

20. The Strategic Orientation document states that the fund's interventions will be based on an integrated, evidence-based approach. In the documentation we examined, we found mainly narrative descriptions of the context and of some corresponding needs. The Commission has acknowledged that there is no quantified needs analysis and therefore no baselines¹⁶ for the TF as a whole. We also found that the needs analyses carried out by the implementing partners under the individual projects were often improperly quantified. This limits the Commission's ability to demonstrate that the right priorities have been identified and, ultimately, that actions approved are the most relevant to address them. Considering the challenges and the budget at stake (€3.3 billion at the end of 2017), being able to measure performance is an important aspect of accountability.

21. The Commission did not estimate the overall amount of money needed to meet the set objectives. Hence, it did not define the 'critical mass' needed to fund the TF. On 14 March 2018, the Commission declared, in relation to the EUTF for Africa that 'more than €1 billion is currently still lacking for the important work ahead'. This figure represents an estimate of

¹⁵ The operational framework for the three windows was approved on the following dates: SLC (15.2.2016), HoA (31.5.2016), NoA (16.12.2016).

¹⁶ By definition, baselines are clearly defined starting points from which implementation begins and improvements are assessed.

the amount required to finance projects in the pipeline rather than the amount needed to meet the TF's objectives.

Pooling of capacities of donors and lessons-learned

22. The Strategic Orientation Document states that one of the principles of the TF's intervention is 'strong research and analysis which is central to understanding the context and ensuring that interventions have a positive impact'. To achieve this, the EUTF for Africa is supposed to 'rely on research facilities, to mobilise the best available research partners, enhance the knowledge and understanding of the complex root causes of instability, insecurity, irregular migration and forced displacement, their drivers and underlying factors'. At the time of our audit, only the HoA window had developed a functioning Research and Evidence Facility (REF), established in May 2016. For the SLC and NoA windows, the Commission initiated negotiations to fund cross-regional research contracts in February 2018, by which time most of the funds had been approved.

23. As no single donor would be capable, on their own, of tackling the challenges faced across 26 countries covered by the EUTF for Africa, the recitals of the Constitutive Agreement stress that the TF will achieve its objectives by pooling resources and capacities, particularly those of the various donors active in the region¹⁷. An efficient approach to pooling requires a comprehensive inventory of each donor's experience and capabilities in order to utilise these in an optimal and systematic way. However, we found that only the HoA window had such an inventory¹⁸.

24. We also found that there is no lessons-learned¹⁹ mechanism for the EUTF for Africa as a whole. The absence of such a mechanism prevents the consistent collection of best practices

¹⁷ Recital 18 of the Constitutive Agreement.

¹⁸ The REF for this window had carried out a literature review assessing the 'state of research on migration, displacement and conflict in the Horn of Africa', which 'also considers the landscape of actors currently working on migration and conflict in the Horn'.

¹⁹ Lessons-learned is commonly understood as 'generalizations based on evaluation experiences [... of] strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design, and implementation that affect

and the design of mitigating measures for future actions. While the Action Fiche, which documents each project proposal, contains a section on lessons-learned, this is generally limited to a list of previous projects or a description of the implementing partner's experience. This may be relevant as a selection criterion for choosing implementing partners, but it is not a suitable repository for storing lessons-learned. Only in rare cases did we see examples of how lessons-learned could be used in new projects.

Risk management framework

25. Another important element is having a proper risk management framework²⁰. However, the Constitutive Agreement makes no reference to this management tool. Furthermore, Member States participating in the TF are equally exposed to risks (financial, reputational, etc.) as the Commission. Two Member States explicitly requested a specific risk assessment framework during the first Trust Fund Board meeting²¹. However, so far the Commission has preferred to rely on the internal control systems of DG DEVCO and DG NEAR, rather than establishing a specific risk assessment framework for the EUTF for Africa. In contrast, for trust funds managed by the UN and the World Bank, it is considered good practice to have a specific risk assessment framework.

The EUTF for Africa is a fast tool, but weaknesses persist in implementation

26. In this part, we examined aspects of the EUTF for Africa's implementation. We assessed the project selection procedures, the information provided to the OpComs, coordination between Commission DGs and across windows, complementarity with other EU instruments

performance, outcome, and impact.' Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, OECD 2002.

²⁰ The Financial Regulation states that 'Union trust funds shall bring [...] better Union control of risks' (Article 187 3.b).

²¹ In the 4th Trust Fund Board meeting of April 2018, two additional countries mentioned the 'need to look into the monitoring of risks across projects and to further improve monitoring and evaluation'.

and the speed of procedures. Furthermore, we examined the monitoring and outputs of ongoing projects supported by the EUTF for Africa.

The selection of projects is fast but not fully consistent and clear

Selection of projects for the three windows

27. When it comes to project selection, the NoA and SLC windows select project proposals from those submitted by potential implementing partners, after consultation with different stakeholders. If a proposal corresponds to the window's priorities, the TF manager prepares an Action Fiche (in consultation with the EU delegations). The Action Fiche is submitted to the OpCom for approval. Under this approach, the TF managers rely largely on the needs analysis identified by the implementing partners in support of their projects proposals.

28. The HoA window applies a top-down approach, whereby the TF manager, in consultation with the EU delegations, analyse the specific needs, drawing on the qualitative analysis of the REF (see ***paragraph 22***) and consultations at government level in the African countries. Based on the needs analysis and consultations, an Action Fiche is prepared, which also includes potential implementing partners, and is presented to the OpCom for approval. This approach makes it possible to focus more on the priorities set by the TF and the needs determined.

29. The NoA and HoA windows have no documented criteria for selecting project proposals. Instead, according to the Commission, they take into account each proposal's relevance to regional or national strategies, as well as potential implementing partners' specific expertise and presence on the ground. Only the SLC window's operational framework includes criteria for selecting actions²². However, we did not find any documented assessment of project

²² These criteria are: (a) respond to the two-fold logic: preventing irregular migration and forced displacement and facilitating better migration management, or building a comprehensive approach for stability, security and resilience; (b) respect the thematic and geographical scope of each contributing financial instrument and their respective regulation, especially regarding official development assistance (ODA) rules; (c) respect the specific areas of action identified in the operational framework; (d) to be complementary to other EU and Member State actions in the region; (e) to be in agreement with the beneficiary authorities.

proposals against these criteria. Therefore, we could not assess whether the projects selected were likely to be the most relevant ones. A number of Member States have regretted the absence of clear project selection criteria²³.

Information provided to the OpComs

30. The difference between traditional EU implementing mechanisms and the EUTF for Africa lies in the existence and the role of the OpComs. Article 4.1(b) of the Constitutive Agreement states that ‘the OpCom is responsible in particular for the selection of actions to be funded by the EUTF for Africa’. However, the OpComs only see those proposals, which have been developed into Action Fiches. The OpComs are not informed about those proposals, which are not developed into Action Fiches, just as implementing agencies, whose projects are not selected, are not systematically informed about the grounds for rejection. This limits their ability to improve the quality of future proposals.

31. Even though the OpComs are not provided with information on all the received proposals, they still struggled with a varied workload related to the approval of projects. For example, 28 Action Fiches (674 pages) were distributed for the SLC OpCom meeting on 14 December 2016, while the NoA OpCom had to approve only three Action Fiches (62 pages) at its meeting on 16 December 2016. Project documents were distributed late²⁴ (only one calendar week before they were due to be approved), leaving limited time for the Member States’ representatives and African countries to scrutinise them properly.

32. The Constitutive Agreement states²⁵ that if a substantial change in the nature or objectives of an action is required after its approval, the TF manager must present the

²³ Minutes of meetings of SLC Operational Committee of 14.1.2016 and 18.4.2016.

²⁴ Article 7 of the OpCom Rules of Procedure states that meeting documents must be submitted, as far as possible, at least 15 days before the date of the meeting. For example, the minutes of the 5th OpCom of HoA in December 2017 state: ‘The Operational Committee registered its deep concern about the late distribution of documentation for the meeting... Documentation should in future be distributed well in advance (three weeks).’

²⁵ Article 6.6.5.

amended Action Fiche to the OpCom for approval prior to implementation. Although the HoA OpCom was notified of changes to projects, this was not the case for the SLC OpCom²⁶. We did not identify similar cases in relation to the NoA window.

Coordination and complementarity

33. At the selection phase, it is essential that the various Commission DGs coordinate. To ensure this, the Commission has created internal mechanisms and detailed working arrangements between DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, EEAS, DG HOME and DG ECHO. These services regularly participate in internal quality review meetings (as part of the Quality Support Group) to assess projects before they are submitted for approval. Despite these efforts, there is further room for improvement in coordination.

34. The nature of the needs identified in Africa is such that they often require a cross-window response, for example between the Sahel and the North of Africa. Article 3.1 of the OpCom Rules of Procedure states that the OpCom 'shall meet in joint sessions to examine matters of common interest as required'. In practice, OpCom meetings are usually separate for each window, and there has so far only been two joint OpCom sessions²⁷. In its third meeting in June 2017, the Trust Fund Board decided to increase the focus on selecting cross-window programmes. However, despite this emphasis on cross-window cooperation, only four such programmes (out of 143) have been approved²⁸.

35. When selecting projects, the OpComs also need sufficient information to assess the complementarity of the TF's actions, i.e. to check that they do not overlap or duplicate other EU instruments and identify potential synergies. The Strategic Orientation Document lays down additional requirements to ensure that the EUTF for Africa is complementary to other

²⁶ The first OpCom meeting in January 2016 adopted project 8 in Niger. During the preparation/negotiation phase, the Member States' agencies proposed to change the action's objectives. As a result, the Description of the Action signed on September 2016 differed substantially from the Action Fiche adopted by the OpCom. The SLC OpCom had not been notified of this modification.

²⁷ These meetings took place on 16.12.2015 and on 26.2.2018.

²⁸ Two of them being the Research and Evidence Facility and the Technical Cooperation Facility.

EU instruments. One of these requirements is to finance only activities that are not already included in a National or Regional Indicative Programme. However, we identified two projects in the HoA window (which were not part of our sample), which had initially been part of a Regional Indicative Programme and, following a transfer of funds, had been taken over by the TF.

36. Despite the Commission's coordination efforts, we also found examples of projects selected by the EUTF for Africa that address similar needs to those of other EU-financed activities and thus risk duplicating other forms of EU support²⁹. The Commission has not justified why these projects are funded via the EUTF for Africa rather than other instruments³⁰. **Box 2** provides examples of projects addressing similar needs, despite coordination efforts.

Box 2 - Examples of projects addressing similar needs

Emergency assistance

Working arrangements are set up to ensure coordination between the EUTF for Africa and DG ECHO. During a Quality Support Group meeting on *Strengthening protection and resilience of displaced populations in Libya* (project 17), DG ECHO warned that 'the proposal is of a traditional ECHO intervention that would seriously overlap with existing initiatives if funded'. Despite these remarks, the Commission did not clarify, in the Action Fiche submitted to the OpCom for approval, why this project should be funded via the EUTF for Africa.

Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace

We found two projects (one financed by the IcSP and one by the EUTF for Africa) both focusing on humanitarian repatriation of migrants from Libya to their countries of origin. They both support

²⁹ Article 187(3)(b) of the Financial Regulation states that EU trust funds 'should not be created if they merely duplicate other existing funding channels or similar instruments without providing any additionality'.

³⁰ This requirement is set out in Section 2 of the Strategic Orientation Document, on complementarity (p. 11): 'The Trust Fund will cover the gaps, both in geographic and in thematic terms, not covered by other means or by other development partners (including EU Member States). This will need to be indicated for each project approved [...].'

activities in the area of community stabilisation and were awarded to the same implementing partner running partially over the same period. Furthermore, they both include certain activities, such as rehabilitation work and support to social cohesion and take place in the same cities – Sabha and Qatroun.

37. In addition, the Commission recently established the External Investment Plan (EIP), aimed at addressing ‘specific socioeconomic root causes of migration and fostering sustainable reintegration of migrants returning to their countries of origin, and strengthening transit and host communities’³¹. The Trust Fund Board stressed the need ‘to ensure complementarity with other instruments such as the future EIP, blending mechanisms, etc.’. However, we found no documentation as to how the coordination between the EUTF for Africa and the EIP is to take place or measures taken to maximise complementarity between selected actions under the two instruments.

38. The examples above show that the EUTF for Africa did not apply a sufficiently clear division of labour between the fund and other instruments, or between the intervention of DG DEVCO, DG NEAR and DG ECHO. For Libya, the Commission is preparing a matrix of interventions for the health sector, but this is not standard practice for other countries and sectors. Such a document, if extended in all sectors, would facilitate the quality review process for project selection and maximise the complementarity of actions on the ground.

Speed of procedures

39. The fast selection of projects³² was one of the ways in which the EUTF for Africa was expected to provide added value. This put pressure on the Commission to speed up procedures and select projects for funding swiftly. Our analysis shows that the selection of

³¹ Regulation 2017/1601 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 September 2017 establishing the European Fund for Sustainable Development, (EFSD), the EFSD Guarantee and the EFSD Guarantee Fund, Article 3 – Purpose.

³² Recital 10 of the Commission Decision C(2015) 7293 of 20 October 2015 states ‘The Trust Fund will [...] provide the EU and its Member States with a swift and flexible instrument to deliver immediate and concrete results in sensitive and rapidly changing fragile situations’.

projects under the EUTF for Africa was indeed faster compared to traditional EU instruments³³. The TF has made it possible to speed up the different phases, reducing the time taken from identification and formulation, to contracting and until the first payment takes place (see **Figure 3**). All parties interviewed during this audit welcomed the speed with which the TF had managed to devise projects and commended its rapid response to a variety of urgent needs.

Figure 3 – Indicative comparison of speed of procedures

Phase	Definition	EUTF for Africa, all windows (in days)	EU Budget and EDF (in days)	Time saved on average (in days)
1. Identification/formulation	Average number of days between Quality Support Group and approval by OpComs or EDF/DCI Committee	33	133	100
2. Contracting	Average number of days between approval by OpComs or EDF/ENI/DCI Committee, and contract signature	270	423	153
3. First payment	Average number of days between signature of contract and authorisation of first payment	30	42	12

40. However, it should be noted that several EUTF for Africa projects were initially identified under other EU instruments and later on taken over by the TF. In some cases, the extra speed has come at the expense of giving the OpComs enough time to thoroughly assess proposals before approving TF projects (see **paragraph 31**).

41. In terms of contracts, half way through its lifespan, the EUTF for Africa has signed contracts worth 45 % of all available funds (see **Figure 4**). Although the EUTF for Africa has, overall, managed to speed up the signing of contracts³⁴, other existing emergency instruments are still faster in this regard. For instance, the IcSP, which intervenes in similar

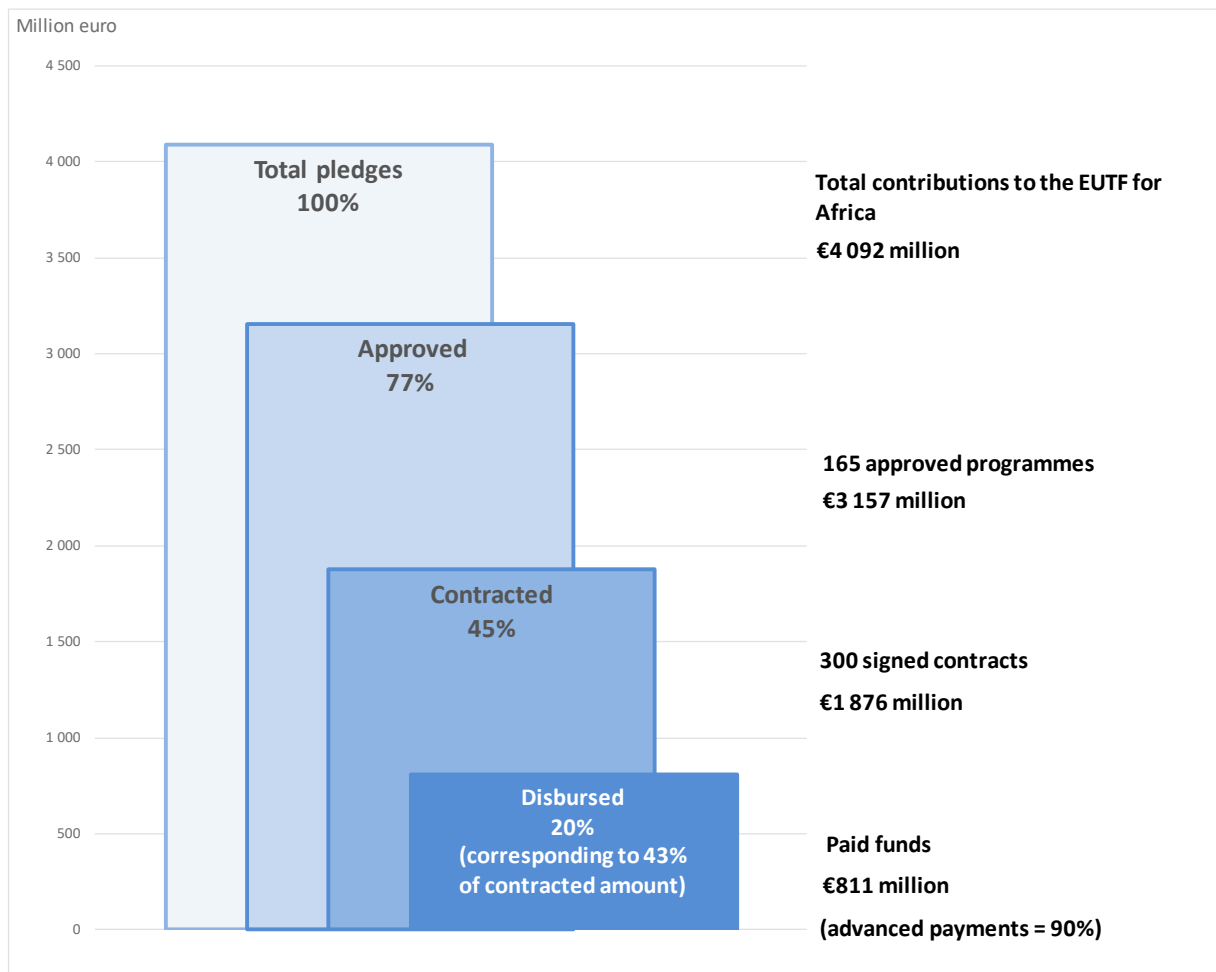
³³ By ‘traditional development instruments’, we mean the European Development Fund and instruments under the EU budget that can finance activities in the 26 African countries covered by the EUTF for Africa, namely the European Neighbourhood Instrument and the Development Cooperation Instrument.

³⁴ The Commission’s efforts to speed up contracting includes: sending letters to Member States and holding discussions with Member States’ implementing agencies at the Practitioners’ Network for European Development Cooperation, a coordination platform composed of 15 MS implementing agencies.

areas as the EUTF for Africa, has the option to use 'exceptional assistance measures'³⁵. For these measures, 86 % of all contracts are signed within four months³⁶ (compared to 270 days for the EUTF for Africa) once the Commission had adopted a financing decision. The EUTF for Africa is an emergency tool and therefore greater speed for signing contracts could have been expected.

³⁵ Article 3 of Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 of 11 March 2014 establishing an instrument contributing to stability and peace.

³⁶ Annual activity report 2017 - Service for Foreign Policy Instruments – Annex 12 'Performance tables', p. 139.

Figure 4 – Budget execution at the end of August 2018

Source: Based on European Commission data on the state of implementation of 31 August 2018 published on the EUTF for Africa website. All figures are rounded.

42. In terms of project implementation, the EUTF for Africa had only limited impact in speeding up the process compared to traditional development aid. The TF faced similar challenges as traditional instruments. This is in turn reflected by the low level of payments (see **Figure 4**), which for the most part (nearly 90 %) represents advance payments or concerns budget support³⁷. According to the Commission, the complex and challenging environment in which the EUTF for Africa operates is the most common cause of delays as implementing partners often cannot intervene in conflict-affected areas.

³⁷ Budget support to Niger (project 12) accounts for 7 % of the total disbursed funds.

43. Nevertheless, due to the exceptional context in which the EUTF for Africa operates, it would be reasonable to expect that the Commission systematically assess the possibility for applying accelerated measures and discuss this with potential implementing partners. One way to accelerate the start of implementation is to make project preparation costs eligible, starting from the date of the approval of the project (i.e. once the essential conditions for the project have been decided and where appropriate). Indeed, the Commission guidelines on emergency situations permit such an approach.

Box 3 - Example from Niger where projects could have been implemented more quickly had financing been authorised immediately

Project 10: 'Support for training and labour market integration for young people in the Agadez and Zinder regions'

The OpCom approved the project on 18 April 2016. However, the recruitment process for the Head of this project could only start after the signing of the contract in November 2016. Making project preparation costs eligible as soon as the project was approved would have mitigated the consequences of the long recruitment process and, hence, reduced the time taken to start the project implementation.

44. We found that in most cases the Action Fiches presented to the OpComs for approval, did not specify the expected start of project activities, but rather referred to the overall duration of the projects (ranging from 12 to 60 months for the projects examined). Therefore the OpComs cannot take this aspect into account when approving projects, or consider alternatives to ensure a faster start of implementation.

Projects have started to deliver outputs, but a system for monitoring results across the windows is not yet operational

Monitoring

45. In 2017, the three EUTF for Africa windows adopted a common monitoring platform for all projects, containing their logframes³⁸, targets and corresponding actual values for each specific indicator. The Commission has recorded most of the targets for the TF projects in this monitoring system, but no result values are yet available. Not all implementing partners are willing to enter information on the common platform and the majority are not contractually bound to do so. This is due to the fact that the system had not yet been developed or foreseen at the time the contracts were signed and the Commission made no such provision in the financing agreements.

46. At the time of the audit, the Commission had developed a set of 19 aggregated indicators for this monitoring platform, common to all three windows. However, some of these indicators overlap, and the link between these and the higher-level indicators found at the TF's overall results framework is not always clear (see **Box 4**).

Box 4 – Weaknesses related to the 19 aggregate indicators

- There is a potential overlap between indicators 2.3 (Number of people receiving nutrition assistance) and 2.4 (Number of people receiving food-security related assistance). The definition for both indicators includes training on agricultural practices;
- the indicators do not cover the full range of projects of the EUTF for Africa (for example, project 6);
- linking/mapping these common output indicators to the thousands of indicators at project level and then to the TF's overall Results Framework, as well as to the Valletta Action Plan priorities, is a very difficult task. The HoA window has decided, on its own initiative, to outsource this task to technical experts.

³⁸ An outline of a project containing objectives, targets and indicators.

47. So far, the SLC window has chosen to use the CAD system (Collect, Analyse and Disseminate), while HoA is using the MLS system (Monitoring and Learning System). The NoA has taken steps to set up its own monitoring and evaluation system. The plethora of information and monitoring systems means there is no single, comprehensive overview of the results achieved by the EUTF for Africa as a whole.

48. Furthermore, there is no clear demarcation between the implementing partners' monitoring responsibilities and those of the Commission or EUDELS. For example, in one project in Niger (project 7), the entire project budget was spent in 12 months, instead of the foreseen 36, and mainly addressed one objective shared with other donors (direct assistance to migrants). The other two objectives, governance and actions linked to development, was mostly left unaddressed. We also noted a pattern of delays³⁹ in projects related to security, border management and similar areas.

49. At the time of the audit, no ROM⁴⁰ reports had been issued for any of the projects included in the audit. The Commission had visited all projects implemented in Niger at least once, which allowed Commission staff to follow the projects. In Libya, due to the difficult security situation, the Commission had not been able to visit all ongoing projects. However, the Commission was examining the possibility of introducing third-party monitoring (i.e. contracting monitoring to local parties). An essential part of monitoring is to check projects periodically against their project logframe. The majority of the audited projects only contained provisional logframes, to be completed following a project inception phase, i.e. only after the relevant contract had been signed. At the inception phase, the implementing partners consult the final beneficiaries and identify the specific needs of the population or administration. In agreement with EUDEL, they develop or update the indicators and targets.

³⁹ Project 11, delayed by 3.5 months; project 5, delayed by 7 months, and project 4, a two-year project, which now needs an extension in order to deliver its main results.

⁴⁰ Results-oriented monitoring. The ROM system was established by EuropeAid in 2000 to strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and transparency of development aid. It is based on short, focused, on-site assessments by external experts. It uses a structured and consistent methodology against five criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, potential impact and likely sustainability.

According to the Commission, this approach provides some flexibility in a difficult context and makes it possible to gather data not available at the outset. However, even after the logical frameworks were updated, the audited projects lacked measurable targets and therefore the specific objectives were still not SMART⁴¹ (see **Box 5**).

Box 5 – Examples of unspecific objectives in the SLC window

Project 8: ‘support the implementation of structural and short-term measures’

Project 9: ‘support to the delegated project management’

Project 10: ‘the steering of educational actions is improved’

Project 10: ‘the employability of the young is improved’

50. The usefulness of some indicators was limited. In one project (project 10), an indicator was based on a subsequent political decision by the local authorities. This type of indicator is weak, as the implementing partners have no influence on such decisions and cannot be held accountable. We also found indicators based on beneficiaries’ opinions (e.g. outcomes of surveys), which are subjective and difficult to verify. Other indicators were included in the framework because the implementing partners used them for their internal reporting. This increases the administrative burden on the EUTF for Africa.

51. A proper baseline makes it possible to assess the progress made in relation to overall needs, in both relative and absolute terms. Baselines were a weak point in all of the logframes we analysed, even those that had been revised. In most cases, the baseline value linked to specific indicators was zero or marked ‘N/A’⁴², making it impossible to present the

⁴¹ Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timed.

⁴² This applies to the following projects: 4, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 18, 19 and 20.

progress made in relative terms. In one case, the indicators had no baselines but were measured anyway⁴³. Such measurements do not provide any useful information on progress.

Outputs of ongoing projects

52. At the time of the audit, the projects funded by the EUTF for Africa were generally at an early phase of implementation, but the audited projects in Libya and Niger had started to produce their first outputs (see **Box 6** for examples). In Niger, the audit team visited, among other projects, the migrant transit centre and one of the 15 established migration observatories in Agadez and held interviews with police investigators involved in dismantling trafficking networks. In Libya it was not possible to visit any of the ongoing projects due to the security situation.

Box 6 – Examples of outputs in ongoing audited projects

According to the progress reports delivered by the implementing partners (validated by the Commission) we noted the following examples of project outputs:

Niger

Project 7: provided acceptable living conditions to migrants in the Migrant Transit Centre in Agadez (one of four in Niger). Over 9 000 migrants passed through these centres in 2017;

Project 8: created 15 observatories to monitor the local consequences of migration and identify potential mitigating actions;

Project 11: dismantled 7 national and 12 international trafficking networks thanks to joint police investigation teams in 2017.

Libya

Project 19, under one of its objectives:

- supported 4 709 migrants with voluntary return assistance,
- provided humanitarian assistance to 19 605 migrants in the form of non-food items and hygiene kits in different detention centres,
- performed rapid needs assessments for migrants and provided medical assistance to over 6 000 migrants,

⁴³ In project 7 indicators provided figures showing the achievement of targets on assistance at the transit centres and assisted voluntary returns (e.g. 380 %, 415 %, 225 %, etc.) but without any baseline estimate for comparison.

- The protection unit provided housing support to 929 persons (including pregnant women and unaccompanied children). The technical cooperation unit trained 21 government officials on human rights and vulnerability assessments.

53. According to Frontex figures, the global number of illegal border crossings of migrants to the EU shows an overall peak in 2016, followed by a decrease in 2017 (see **Figure 5**). The EUTF for Africa is one of many instruments - EU and non-EU – contributing to the improvement in the figures, which are uneven across the three windows.

Figure 5 - Illegal border crossings of migrants into the EU, originating from the regions covered by the EUTF for Africa

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Sahel and Lake Chad	42 601	65 297	114 814	76 889
North of Africa	10 773	21 603	19 393	27 912
Horn of Africa	46 536	70 875	42 850	17 984
Total EUTF for Africa	99 910	157 775	177 057	122 785

Source: ECA based on Frontex data from 2014 to 2017.

54. The EUTF for Africa 2017 annual report does not report comprehensively on the results achieved so far, but instead reports on the number of projects approved, funds spent and examples of outputs delivered. Although the annual report is a single, consolidated document, reporting is not consistent between the three windows. For example, under Chapter 3 ('Strategic orientations, implementations and results') the annual report presents tables for each window allocating the funds between the priorities supported under the relevant window. However, the broad objectives of the EUTF for Africa leaves a high level of discretion for TF managers when deciding upon the classification of projects. This means that funds allocated between priorities and windows cannot be easily compared.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

55. Facing significant challenges, the EUTF for Africa was created as an emergency trust fund to contribute to address the crises in three regions in Africa. It also strives towards achieving long-term stability and development goals.

56. We conclude that the EUTF for Africa is a flexible tool, but considering the unprecedented challenges that it faces, its design should have been more focused. It has not defined which particular crises (e.g. per regions, per countries, the causes and impact on stability) the TF is meant to address. While the broad objectives of the TF allow flexibility, this has come at the expense of having a strategy that is focused enough to steer action across the three windows and supports the measuring and reporting on results. Furthermore, the strategic guidance provided to TF managers has so far not been very specific (see **paragraphs 15 to 19**).

57. The Commission did not comprehensively analyse the needs to be addressed by the TF or the means at its disposal. When needs were identified, we found that they were not quantified, just as a critical mass of funding had not been defined. Furthermore, we found that the pooling of resources and capacities was not carried out in an optimal and systematic way. In addition, an appropriate lessons-learned mechanism had not yet been developed (see **paragraphs 20 to 24**).

Recommendation 1 –Improve the quality of the objectives of the EUTF for Africa

The Commission should propose to the Trust Fund Board a review of the existing objectives and priorities of the EUTF for Africa to make them more specific and achievable. It should take into account the particular challenges of the three windows, and to the extent possible, include targets and baselines. In this exercise, the Commission should, in particular, use:

- (a) the outputs of the Research and Evidence Facilities;
- (b) the capabilities of all donors; and
- (c) a lessons-learned mechanism for the TF as a whole.

Timeframe: end of 2019.

58. The procedures for selecting projects vary between windows. We found no documented assessment of project proposals against predefined criteria. OpComs have predominantly been forums for approval of projects, but we found that the information

provided to them was not always complete or delivered in sufficient time to allow well-prepared decisions (see [paragraphs 27 to 32](#)).

59. The comparative advantage of funding projects through the EUTF for Africa was not always well explained and we found examples of projects addressing similar needs as other EU instruments (see [paragraphs 33 to 38](#)).

Recommendation 2 – Revise the selection procedure for projects

The Commission should:

- (a) establish clear common criteria applied across windows and document the assessment of project proposals against these criteria;
- (b) provide the OpComs with a list of received proposals that have not been developed into an Action Fiche, including the reasons for their rejection, by the TF Manager;
- (c) inform the OpComs of any substantial changes to already approved projects (i.e. changes in objectives, budget and duration);
- (d) create a dedicated section in the Action Fiche demonstrating the comparative advantage of supporting the project through the EUTF for Africa rather than through other forms of EU support.

Timeframe: mid 2019.

60. Compared to traditional instruments, the EUTF for Africa was faster in launching projects. It has, overall, managed to speed up the signing of contracts and making advance payments. However, projects face similar challenges as traditional instruments that delay their implementation. While the EUTF for Africa operates in an exceptional situation, the Commission has not made full use of accelerated measures. Such measures could facilitate the work of the implementing partners and allow project activities to start quicker (see [paragraphs 39 to 44](#)).

Recommendation 3 – Take measures to speed up implementation

The Commission should identify all accelerated procedures that can be applied to the EUTF for Africa and enhance their use in consultation with potential implementing partners where relevant.

Timeframe: end 2019.

61. The EUTF for Africa adopted a common monitoring system. However, it is not yet operational and the three windows have so far used different systems for gathering budgetary information, monitoring and evaluation. We found that project objectives were often not SMART and indicators used for measuring project performance lacked baselines. The EUTF for Africa has contributed to the effort of decreasing the number of irregular migrants passing from Africa to Europe, but this contribution cannot be measured precisely. The audited projects were at an early phase of implementation but had started to produce outputs (see [paragraphs 45 to 53](#)).

Recommendation 4 – Improve the monitoring of the EUTF for Africa

The Commission should:

- (a) make the common monitoring system fully operational;
- (b) include SMART objectives in the project logframes, and improve the quality of indicators by establishing quantified baselines and targets.

Timeframe: mid 2019.

This Report was adopted by Chamber III, headed by Mrs Bettina JAKOBSEN, Member of the Court of Auditors, in Luxembourg at its meeting of 16 October 2018.

For the Court of Auditors

Klaus-Heiner LEHNE

President

ANNEX I**EU MS and other donors contributions (pledges and received contributions) as of
31 August 2018**

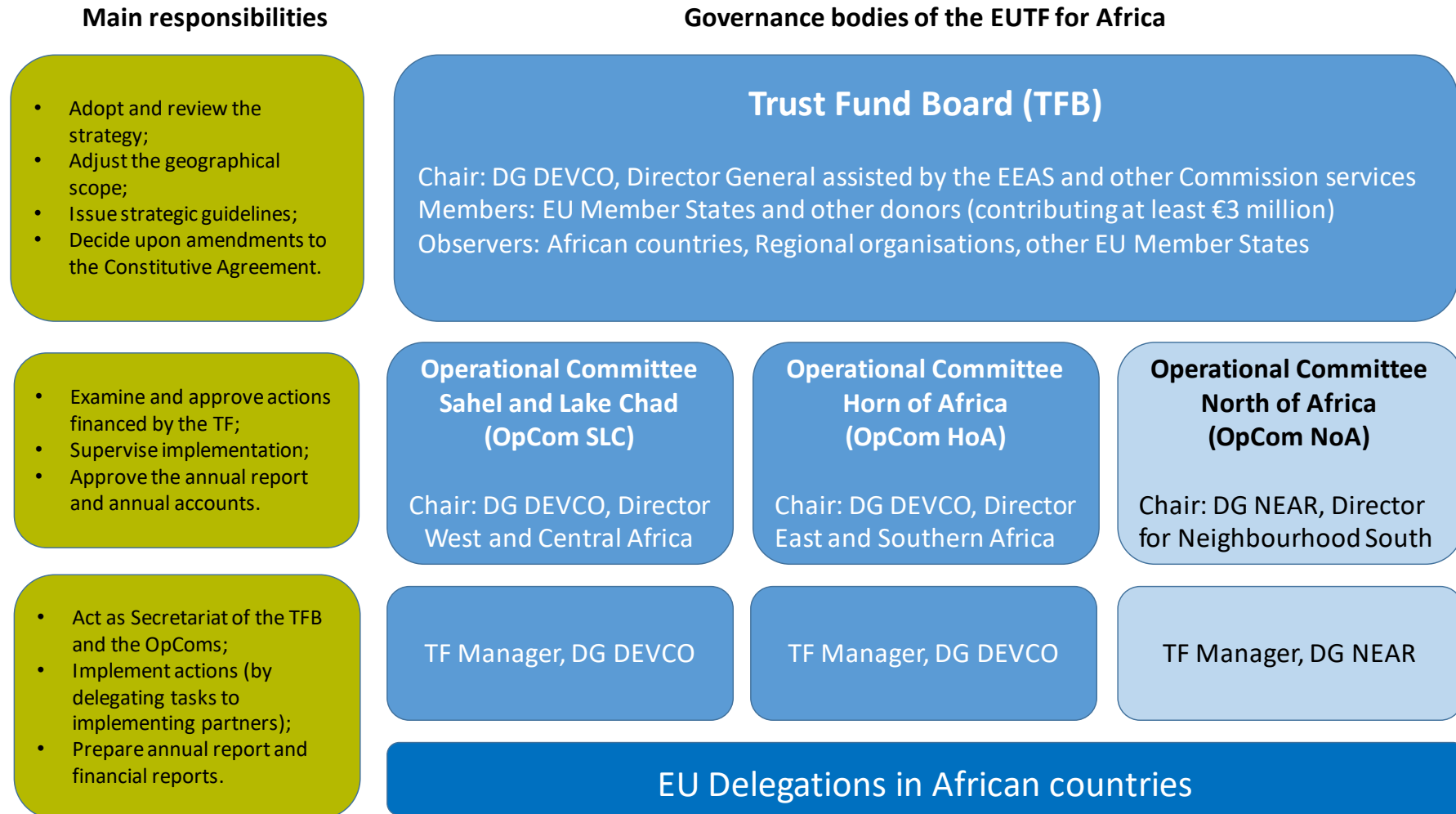
The countries that have pledged contributions of at least €3 million, securing voting rights in the Trust Fund Board and the OpComs, are highlighted in grey.

Country	Contributions pledged (euro)	Contributions received (euro)
Austria	6 000 000	6 000 000
Belgium	10 000 000	9 000 000
Bulgaria	550 000	550 000
Croatia	600 000	600 000
Cyprus	100 000	100 000
Czech Republic*	10 411 624	10 411 124
Denmark	20 045 876	20 045 876
Estonia	1 450 000	1 450 000
Finland	5 000 000	5 000 000
France	9 000 000	9 000 000
Germany	157 500 000	139 500 000
Hungary*	9 450 000	9 450 000
Ireland	15 000 000	2 600 000
Italy	110 000 000	108 000 000
Latvia	300 000	300 000
Lithuania	200 000	200 000
Luxembourg	3 100 000	3 100 000
Malta	325 000	175 000
Netherlands	26 362 000	23 362 000
Norway	8 865 381	8 865 381
Poland*	10 550 748	10 550 748
Portugal	1 800 000	1 800 000
Romania	100 000	100 000
Slovakia*	10 350 000	10 350 000
Slovenia	100 000	100 000
Spain	9 000 000	9 000 000
Sweden	3 000 000	3 000 000
Switzerland	4 100 000	4 100 000
United Kingdom	6 000 000	2 800 000
Visegrád group (CZ, HU, PL, SK)*	35 000 000	35 000 000
Total External Contribution	439 260 629	409 510 629

*Individual contributions to the €35 million pledge made by the Visegrád group are reflected in the figures of each respective country.

Source: European Commission EUTF for Africa website, 'Financial resources'.

Governance bodies of the EUTF for Africa and main responsibilities



Source: European Commission.

ANNEX III

Audited projects of the EUTF for Africa

EUTF Themes	
1	Greater economic and employment opportunities
2	Strengthening resilience
3	Improved migration management
4	Improved governance and conflict prevention

#	ID	Title	Theme				Implementing Partner	Budget (€ million)			Duration of Action (months)	Action Fiche approved on	EUTF Signature on	Days between Approval and Signature
			1	2	3	4		EUTF	Co-funding	Total				
Cross-Windows														
1	REG-REG-01	Research and Evidence Facility for the Sahel and Lake Chad Region and the North of Africa	X	X	X	X	Multiple partners	8.0		8.0	60	30.10.2016 By written procedure	25.9.2017	330
2	SAH-REG-02	Technical Cooperation Facility	X	X	X	X	Multiple partners	5.0		5.0	60	14.1.2016	4.11.2016	295
Sahel and Lake Chad Window														
Regional Project														
3	SAH-REG-01	Appui à la coopération régionale des pays du GS Sahel et au Collège Sahélien de Sécurité				X	MSA	7.0		7.0	24	14.1.2016	10.7.2016	178
4	SAH-REG-03	Support to the strengthening of police information systems in the broader West Africa region (WAPIS)				X	Int. Organisation	5.0		5.0	24	18.4.2016	18.5.2016	30
5	SAH-REG-04	GAR-SI SAHEL (Groupes d'Action Rapides - Surveillance et Intervention au Sahel)			X	X	MSA	41.6		41.6	46	13.6.2016	23.12.2016	193
6	SAH-REG-09	La voix des jeunes du Sahel	X	X	X	X	NGO	2.2	0.3	2.5	12	28.3.2017 by written procedure	15.5.2017	48
National Project: Niger														
7	SAH-NE-01	Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism (MRRM) Phase II			X		Int. Organisation	7.0		7.00	36	14.1.2016	1.8.2016	200
8	SAH-NE-02	Renforcement de la gestion durable des conséquences des flux migratoires (ProGem)	X				MSA	25.0		25.0	36	14.1.2016	30.9.2016	260
9	SAH-NE-03	Projet d'appui aux filières agricoles dans les régions de Tahoua et Agadez	X	X			MSA	30.0	37.0	67.0	52	18.4.2016	20.9.2016	155
10	SAH-NE-04	Appuyer la formation et l'insertion professionnelle des jeunes filles et garçons des régions d'Agadez et Zinder en vue de contribuer au développement socioéconomique de ses deux régions	X				MSA	6.9	18.4	25.3	36	18.4.2016	7.11.2016	203
11	SAH-NE-05	Création d'une Equipe Conjointe d'Investigation (ECI) pour la lutte contre les réseaux criminels liés à l'immigration irrégulière, la traite des êtres humains et le trafic des migrants			X	X	MSA	6.0		6.0	36	18.4.2016	22.12.2016	248
12	SAH-NE-06	Contrat relatif à la Reconstruction de l'Etat au Niger en complément du SBC II en préparation / Appui à la Justice, Sécurité et à la Gestion des Frontières au Niger (AJUSEN)			X	X	MSA MSA Budget Support	6.0 4.0 70.0		80.0	60	13.6.2016	30.8.2016 19.12.2016 19.12.2016	78 189 189
13	SAH-NE-07	Renforcement de la gestion et de la gouvernance des migrations et le retour durable au Niger (Sustainable Return from Niger - SURENI)			X		Int. Organisation	15.0		15.0	36	14.12.2016	11.4.2017	118
14	SAH-NE-08	Plan d'Actions à Impact Economique Rapide à Agadez (PAIERA)	X			X	NGO NGO NGO Techn. Assist.	1.1 3.5 2.7 0.6		8.0	18	14.12.2016	14.1.2017 7.4.2017 20.2.2017 7.3.2017	31 114 68 83
15	SAH-NE-09	Soutien à la résilience institutionnelle et communautaire dans la région de Diffa			X		Int. Organisation	12.0	1.0	13.0	36	14.12.2016	7.6.2017	175
North of Africa Window														
Regional Project														
16	NOA-REG-03	Technical Cooperation Facility (TCF): Formulation of programmes, Implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and Communication activities			X		Int. Organisation Tbd Tbd	2.2 2.0 1.0		5.2	36	23.5.2017	15.11.2017 N/A N/A	176 N/A N/A
National Project: Libya														
17	NOA-LY-01	Strengthening protection and resilience of displaced populations in Libya			X		MSA	5.9	1.0	6.0	30	16.6.2016	06.1.2017	204
18	NOA-LY-02	Supporting protection and humanitarian repatriation and reintegration of vulnerable migrants in Libya			X		Tbd International Organisation (*)	3.0 16.8			36	16.12.2016	N/A 2.6.2017	N/A 168
19	NOA-LY-03	Managing mixed migration flows in Libya through expanding protection space and supporting local socio-economic development			X	X	International Organisation (*) Int. Organisation Int. Organisation Int. Organisation MSA	38.0 13.0	5.0	95.0	36	12.4.2017 by written procedure	2.6.2017 22.5.2017 31.5.2017 9.6.2017 12.6.2017	51 40 49 58 61
20	NOA-LY-04	Support to Integrated border and migration management in Libya - First phase			X		MS	42.2	4.1 (**)	46.3	36	28.7.2017	8.12.2017	133

(*) Activities implemented by this Int. Organisation in Libya have been merged into one single contract NOA-LY-03-01 Protecting vulnerable migrants and stabilizing communities in Libya.

(**) This amount includes parallel financing of €1.84 million from the EU's Internal Security Fund.

MSA stands for Member State Agency.

Tbd stands for "to be decided".

Source: EUTF for Africa.

REPLIES OF THE COMMISSION TO THE SPECIAL REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

“EUROPEAN UNION EMERGENCY TRUST FUND FOR AFRICA: FLEXIBLE BUT LACKING FOCUS”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

III. The EUTF was designed as an implementing tool with flexible objectives to be able to respond to needs and emerging challenges originated by the complex crises, each of different nature, affecting the three regions.

IV. The Commission had relevant information and took it into account when formulating the strategic objectives of the EUTF for Africa. For each objective and priority policy area, needs assessments are featured in the Strategic Orientation document, the Regional Operational Frameworks, country-specific Operational Frameworks and, to some extent, in the minutes of the Board meetings.

Needs assessments are complemented by country-based analyses that EU Delegations carry out on a regular basis in partnership with partner countries and in consultation with Member States and civil society.

V. The Commission does not consider necessary to establish a list of general and common criteria to be used while assessing action documents, but will take measures to ensure that these clearly explain the link between the proposed Action and the Strategic Objectives defined.

Action documents are identified and developed through an inclusive and consultative process involving many actors both at Headquarters and country level.

VI. The Commission recognises the need to further enhance some features of the common monitoring system for the EUTF for Africa. The Commission is taking measures to include SMART objectives to the possible extent in project logframes and to further improve the quality of indicators.

VII. The Commission considers that the EUTF may have an indirect impact on illegal border crossings to Europe, along with other EU instruments. Its main drivers are however to support stability, save and protect people, create economic opportunities and legal pathways. In almost three years the EUTF for Africa has brought results and demonstrated that it is a swift and effective implementation tool, which has facilitated dialogue with partner countries, has applied innovative approaches, and has produced concrete results by pooling together funding and expertise from a variety of stakeholders.

VIII.

First indent: The Commission accepts this recommendation.

Second indent: The Commission partially accepts this recommendation.

Third indent: The Commission accepts this recommendation.

Fourth indent: The Commission accepts this recommendation.

OBSERVATIONS

16. The preamble of the Constitutive Agreement of the EUTF for Africa clearly mentions the internal challenges and partially interlinked crises, which affected the countries of the three windows of the Trust Fund. These include first of all political crises in Libya and Yemen, internal conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan, Mali and Nigeria (the threat of Boko Haram) and a number of terrorist attacks which have turned the whole region in a crisis situation. Identifying and reporting on specific aspects of each prevailing crises in the regions would have considerably delayed the setup of the EUTF in a context of emergency.

17. The objectives of the EUTF for Africa have been kept quite broad on purpose to be able to respond to needs and emerging challenges originated by the complex crisis, each of different nature, affecting the three regions.

The EUTF Result Framework is planned to be updated to reflect the evolving nature of the EUTF and better define its overall objective.

The three operational windows are working to better identify specific objectives, targets and baselines. The work of the Monitoring and Learning System (MLS) for both the Horn of Africa and the Sahel in close cooperation with Monitoring and Evaluation for the North of Africa window aims to improve overall monitoring and evaluation system in order to better report against the established priorities.

Box 1 – Examples of broad guidance provided by the Trust Fund Board

Following the conclusions of the Chair at the end of the second and third Board meetings (held respectively in December 2016 and June 2017), the Commission has submitted a number of strategic priorities for the three windows which have been discussed extensively with Board members and partner countries taking into account challenges/needs prevailing at that time. Moreover, the fourth Board Meeting held in April 2018 has agreed to focus on a set of six priority criteria in the development of future activities for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel / Lake Chad, taking into account also the level of available resources for new programmes:

- Return and reintegration (IOM / UNHCR);
- Refugees management (Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework);
- Completing progress on the securitization of documents and civil registry;
- Anti-trafficking measures;
- Essential stabilization efforts in Somalia, Sudan and South-Sudan and in the Sahel;
- Migration dialogues (Gambia, Ethiopia, etc.).

For the North of Africa window, the Board confirmed that the window will continue to focus on:

- Protection of vulnerable migrants, assisted voluntary return and sustainable reintegration, and community stabilization (including through support to municipalities along migration routes);
- Support to integrated border management;
- Support to labour migration and mobility;
- Support to improved migration governance.

19. It has not been necessary to amend the overall strategy of the EUTF for Africa adopted by the Board in November 2015. The Operational Committees regularly discuss the priorities for the upcoming period which was captured in the minutes of the OPCOM and subsequently used by the Trust Fund Managers to guide the identification and formulation of new Actions.

The North of Africa window reports on all its actions under Strategic Objective 3 as a result of a deliberate choice to address specific challenges in the region linked to migration management and governance. All activities, including individual actions that appear to fall under other Strategic Objectives, are considered to target and benefit migrants in the regions and ultimately to address migration management issues.

The North of Africa window is considering updating the country specific operational framework developed for Libya.

20. The Commission had relevant information and took it into account when formulating the strategic objectives of the EUTF for Africa. For each objective and priority policy area, needs assessments are featured in the Strategic Orientation document, the Regional Operational Frameworks and, to some extent, in the minutes of the Board meetings.

Needs assessments are complemented by country-based analyses that EU Delegations carry out on a regular basis in partnership with partner countries and in consultation with Member States and civil society.

The width, variety and evolving nature of activities carried out under the EUTF do not allow calculating the proportion of overarching needs addressed by each EUTF project.

21. Since its inception, the EUTF has been able to attract resources from several EU sources of funding as well as EU Member States and other donors.

The Commission indeed calculates the evolving funding gap of the EUTF for Africa based on the pipelines of programmes, which are reviewed based on needs and evolving challenges, and the availability of resources across the three windows of the Trust Fund. The Commission would be unable to cover fully the needs in partner countries with existing or forthcoming financial resources.

22. Building on experience gained so far from the Research and Evidence Facility, as of August 2018, 4 REF contracts have been signed for the Sahel and Lake Chad window for a total amount of more than EUR 5 million. Further studies are foreseen to be financed under the current indicative pipeline.

The North of Africa window, together with the Sahel and Lake Chad window, signed a cross-regional contract in April 2018 with a Consortium led by Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime with a special focus on monitoring the trends of migrant smuggling and human trafficking in the Greater Sahara and the Maghreb regions. The implementing partner produced its first output in July 2018.

23. Recital 18 of the Constitutive Agreement (CA) indeed indicates that the EUTF Africa will mobilise resources and know-how of donors, including EU Member States, active in the three regions to develop a solid European response to crises and related challenges. As a result, delegated cooperation with EU Member States has been widely used by the Commission. The CA of the Trust Fund does not require however an analysis of the capacities and expertise of each donor operating in the three regions. Trust Fund Managers, relying on the work done by the Delegations, thoroughly assess the operational capacity, presence on the ground and degree of expertise of implementing partners, including with EU Member States, at the level of each individual project.

24. As implementation of the EUTF programmes started between the end of 2016 and the end of 2017, concrete results have started being visible in 2017. In the absence of a specific mechanism for the whole Trust Fund, “lessons learned” are shared regularly with implementing partners through ad-hoc meetings. Mechanisms to learn from project implementation are in place and financed under the Research and Evidence Facility, the Technical Cooperation Facility (TCF) and the MLS. EUTF teams will continue collecting best practices resulting from individual projects including through mid-term and final evaluations, *ad hoc* studies, Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM reports), which will be shared.

25. The Commission shares the view that risk management is an essential element of the Trust Fund for both the Commission and donors. The Commission also acknowledges the request made by two delegations at the last Board Meeting to have a Risk Assessment Framework for the whole Trust Fund. Based on the work carried out so far in this area, the three operational windows will present a joint Risk Assessment Framework in the fall of 2018.

Common reply to paragraphs 27 to 28:

Proposals are identified through a consultative process. These consultations also include national governments and a range of different stakeholders, including civil society, local authorities, as well as EUTF partners, other donors, international and multilateral organisations present in the country or region.

For the Sahel and Lake Chad and North of Africa window, the selection process is based on the operational frameworks developed with EU Delegations in consultation with partner countries and adopted by the respective Operational Committee, as well as on the relevance of proposals against these strategies.

In its initial phase, the EUTF for Africa was expected to ensure rapid selection mechanisms for quick and swift responses to migration and security challenges, which required specific expertise on migration issues and in an emergency context.

29. The Commission does not consider it necessary to establish a list of general and common criteria to be used since the EUTF is not working on the basis of submission of proposals. The Commission will take measures to ensure that Action documents clearly explain the link between the proposed Action and the strategic objectives defined.

In the SLC window, although the assessment against selection criteria included in the Operational Framework has not been documented, the consultative process with concerned services of the Commission, the EEAS and EU DELs ensures that selected actions are compliant with these criteria.

30. Art. 6.3 (a) of the CA indicates that the Operational committee is responsible for the approval of “actions to be funded by the Trust Fund”. The CA does not specify whether the Operational Committee is called to examine or review all the proposals which are received by the Trust Fund Managers or EU Delegations.

The EUTF applies a decision-making process, which, with some limited exceptions, does not use the call for proposals modality to select projects as it is the case under more traditional mechanisms. Project ideas received through different channels, are reviewed and discussed at different levels, in cooperation with concerned delegations, Member States’ representatives and other stakeholders as appropriate.

Only those that are retained are developed into action fiches to be assessed through internal review mechanisms and sent to the Operational Committee for its consideration and approval. Reasons for rejection of project ideas are therefore discussed informally with the concerned implementing agencies.

31. The Commission is fully aware of the delays incurred at times in the submission of proposals to the members of the Operational Committee. The Commission has apologised for such delays at the concerned meetings and committed to provide documents including Action Fiches in line with the rules and procedures of the Operational Committee.

32. As is done for the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and Lake Chad will inform and get the approval of the next OPCOMs when a substantial change is made in an approved Action Fiche.

In the case of the North of Africa window, there have been no substantial changes. Members of the Operational Committee have been duly notified about non-substantial changes during the Operational Committee meeting.

33. The Commission highlights the fact that interservice coordination through formal and informal consultations has been and continues to be an important part of the selection and formulation phase for EUTF projects.

Coordination with other services has significantly improved, in particular as the EUTF for Africa became a key tool to translate political priorities and implement activities in a context of an emergency along the Central Mediterranean Route. The Commission and the EEAS then engaged into a regular and substantial dialogue, including through weekly meetings.

35. At the early stages of the EUTF, a number of actions submitted and approved by the OPCOM addressed similar needs to other EU instruments (e.g. Ethiopia NIP/RIP). It was considered that these actions were fully consistent with the EUTF objectives, and that their funding under the EUTF would speed up the preparatory process and their implementation, thus creating a strong comparative advantage. As a result, the OPCOM approved these actions.

Since July 2017 the Commission has used a standard template when proposing to the EDF Committee a transfer of EDF funds to the EUTF. This template sets out the justification for using the EUTF as implementing mechanism.

Box 2 - Examples of projects addressing similar needs

On emergency assistance, DG NEAR took good note of DG ECHO's comments during the Quality Support Group and afterwards. The comments on the type and modalities of intervention were taken into account at the contracting phase to respect the mandates of the different instruments. However, as regards the objective and the beneficiaries targeted by the project, in DG NEAR's view there is no overlap. DG ECHO responds to humanitarian needs of populations affected by the conflict in Libya, based on their vulnerability, whereas the EUTF responds to basic and emergency needs of vulnerable migrants and refugees stranded in Libya and their host communities. The EUTF project responds to a gap identified as regards protection and health care for migrants and refugees, in particular for those outside of the detention centres (no programme was targeting these populations at that time).

On the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, the two projects referred to cover the same type of activities in the same locations. The EUTF project was meant to expand the IcSP project, which was conceived as a pilot project. Building on lessons learnt from this pilot, DG NEAR incorporated and expanded the activities in a wider programme that started on 1 May 2017. The Community Stabilisation component has been prolonged and expanded with new locations. The Community stabilisation component of the IcSP project in the South of Libya was initially foreseen to end on 31 October 2017, and finally extended until 30 April 2018. As for the support to Assisted Voluntary Returns, funds under the IcSP project had already been exhausted when the EUTF project started.

37. Under the chairmanship of the Director General, DEVCO has established a number of Strategic Steering Committees for respectively the EIP, Trust Funds and for Programmes implemented through NIP's and RIP's. One of the roles of these committees is to ensure complementarity between the different instruments.

38. The EUTF complements and works in synergy with other political, policy and development-related instruments.

EU Delegations have a leading role in the identification and formulation of EUTF Actions and are fully knowledgeable about ongoing and planned EU-funded actions as well as activities funded by other donors at country level.

Moreover, coordination processes through well-established formal and informal consultations between Commission services ensure the complementarity of EUTF – funded interventions.

39. The Commission appreciates the observation from the Court stating that the EUTF for Africa has made possible to speed up procedures in different phases (identification and formulation, contracting and until the first payment).

40. The Commission recognises that in a limited number of cases occurred in the initial period of the Trust Fund; the proposals adopted by the Operational Committee had been previously identified and/or partially formulated under other EU instruments. This was due to the necessity to deliver swiftly and to provide immediate responses to the existing migration and security crisis and the critical challenges affecting partner countries. These projects previously identified under other instruments were in line with the EUTF priorities. The Commission is committed to provide documents including Action Fiches to the Operational Committee on time.

41. Reducing delays and speeding-up implementation of EUTF programmes has been a consistent challenge and a priority since the inception of the Trust Fund. The Commission has repeatedly caught the attention of Member States agencies on the necessity to shorten delays, adapt their internal procedures and accelerate the pace of implementation. In addition, it should be considered that EUTF operations are carried out in complex and fragile environments, which often affect a normal implementation of activities and induces longer discussions with implementing partners.

The target of 4 months to signing contracts does not apply to all IcSP operations (i.e. the average contracting period of all IcSP operations is longer and closer to the EUTF Africa), but to those under the scope of article 3. These operations are not comparable to the EUTF for Africa as they focus on providing a short-term response to crisis, with a standard duration of 1.5 years. The EUTF for Africa has a more diverse scope and wider objectives than just crisis response, with operations extending from 3 to 4 years. The EUTF for Africa contracts are hence more complex and require the investment of more effort and time.

However, it is acknowledged that improvements of the implementation speed may be possible.

42. A ratio for payments under the EUTF of 30 days versus 44 days under traditional instruments should not be considered as "delayed disbursements". In fact, disbursements are by default progressive. In 2016 and 2017 the EUTF for Africa was not at cruising speed in terms of disbursements but rather at a start-up phase. Figures on disbursements are due to increase during years 3 and 4 of the Trust Fund's life.

It is too early to reach conclusions about the level of payments in the EUTF. Whereas the Court uses figures from 2017 in their analysis, the EUTF effectively started to approve programmes in 2016.

In addition, the level of payments should be assessed against the amount of contracts signed rather than programmes approved. With this perspective, the payment rate exceeds 43% for the short period analysed.

43. The TF Africa makes extensive use of all accelerated measures when and where it is deemed relevant and justified.

The argument of eligibility of costs from the date of the project approval cannot be applied in all cases indiscriminately as it could easily conflict with the principle of sound financial management. The use of retroactive financing and other exceptions, while they are widely used by in the EUTF for Africa, cannot be applied indiscriminately but with caution, on an *ad hoc/case by case* basis.

Box 3 - Example from Niger where projects could have been implemented more quickly had financing been authorised immediately

It should be noted that the implementation pace of the mentioned project in Niger has been delayed as a result of the deconcentration process carried out in summer 2016, with project management being transferred from HQ to the EU Delegation in Niger.

44. The contracting process is highly dependent on the speed with which the implementing partners are able to provide draft contracts after a programme is adopted. Moreover, the Commission has the obligation to ensure quality control of signed contracts. As a result, the Commission is not in a

position to inform the Operational Committee about the expected starting date at the time of the programme adoption.

45. The Commission recognises the need to further enhance some features of the monitoring system to make existing processes easier and more user-friendly. Technical assistance has been put in place to accompany implementing partners in the improvement of logical frameworks, data collection and mapping of indicators towards the common output indicators and encoding in the EUTF reporting platform.

46. A set of 41 common output indicators have been agreed on during the second quarter of 2018. Actual values of these indicators agreed by all windows are already available in the EUTF reporting platform at decision level, as reported in the first quarterly report of the HoA MLS. The time lapse between the approval of programmes until the production of first results needs to be considered. With time, there will be more data available to report as most projects enter into the implementation phase. As described, the aggregation of encoded values across windows, especially for the common indicators, facilitates a collective reporting for the entire EUTF Africa.

Box 4 – Weaknesses related to the 19 aggregate indicators

According to the revised list of 41 EUTF common output indicators, indicator 2.3 (nutrition) takes into account the number of people benefiting from nutrition related treatment and/or sensitization to improved nutritional practices, including cooking demonstrations; whereas indicator 2.4 (food security) takes into account the number of people whose livelihoods and food security have been supported through social protection schemes, technical training in agricultural practices, support to agricultural production, and land development.

- The extension of EUTF common output indicators from 19 to 41 was intended to cover as much as possible the activities carried out under the EUTF. Despite our efforts and considering the scope of EUTF programmes, some individual activities remain only partially covered.
- The mapping exercise of common output indicators against logical framework is done by programme managers in dialogue with implementing partners and with the support of the technical assistance provided by the Commission.

47. The harmonisation of the M&E frameworks is a high priority for the Commission and is currently being addressed. For this reason, the EUTF for Africa has developed a single common list of common output indicators for the aggregation of output results. The global M&E system provides an overview of the results achieved so far.

Moreover, the SLC and HoA window will use the same contractor for their MLS, and whilst the NoA window uses a different one, both entities will be in close consultation and coordination to ensure a coherent and harmonised monitoring and reporting system that likewise can provide collective lessons learned for future programming and strategic direction.

48. All projects mentioned by the Court have been contracted under the PAGODA framework (Pillar assessed delegation agreements in indirect management). The particular sensitive context of security, border management and similar areas necessitates intensive dialogues with stakeholders involved and explains delays.

On the example in Niger, quick achievements under the migration component can be explained by large and pressing needs in this area, due to instability in Libya and the adoption of regulations in Niger. Funds were then reallocated to provide such support. Most other activities have been funded by other donors or by a related EUTF regional initiative ('SURENI') implemented by IOM.

49. The Commission acknowledges that further improvement is needed towards the identification of SMART specific objectives. Indeed, the three operational windows are working to better identify

specific objectives and baselines. The work of the Research Facilities will be used to fill the gaps in the baselines for the measurement of specific objectives.

Moreover, one of the tasks of the MLS is to revise the Logframes of the actions and check the need to either revise the proposed indicators, targets or the agreed results in order to make them more SMART-compliant, if required.

The first programmes having been approved in 2016 (with the exception of one programme), there were only 36 ROM reviews in 2017 and 38 planned in 2018.

In parallel, DG NEAR is working on the setting up of a third party monitoring for Libya, as a response to the risks entailed by the remote management of the projects implemented in this country. A study has been commissioned by the EUDEL and issued a number of recommendations on which the TF is currently building to set up its own third party monitoring framework. The TF is currently identifying the stakeholders best placed to perform this monitoring and able to deploy competent staff on the ground on a temporary basis.

The Commission would like to stress that the Monitoring and Evaluation for the North of Africa window, implemented by ICMPD, is also revising project log frames in order to ensure SMART indicators.

50. The Commission is enhancing its efforts in increasing the quality of EUTF logframes. The potential inclusion of indicators used by implementing partners for their internal reporting is assessed during the formulation of an action and these are only included whenever they are relevant and contribute to enhance the quality the monitoring.

51. In most cases, the lack of baselines can be justified by the urgency to formulate and approve EUTF actions to address particular needs, as well as the conditions on the ground often marked by the lack of available and reliable information. Nevertheless, during inception phases, implementing partners are supposed to further collect data on baselines and analyse the situation on the ground.

53. The EUTF may have an indirect impact on illegal border crossings to Europe, along with other EU instruments. Its main drivers are however to support stability, save and protect people, create economic opportunities and legal pathways.

54. The 2017 Annual Report (AR) of the EUTF for Africa provided, for each regional window, an indication of progress achieved in 2017 and of a number of preliminary results achieved. This issue of the AR was not meant to provide a comprehensive overview of the results achieved by the EUTF for Africa as a whole due to the fact that at the end of 2017, a great number of project were still at an early stage of implementation. The tables included in the AR show, for each region, approved programmes by priorities of the regional operational frameworks rather than by strategic objective of the Trust Fund, which means that each regional window reported against its own priorities. The Commission will consider reviewing the layout of the next issue of the AR to take into account the observations of the Court.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

56. The preamble of the Constitutive Agreement of the EUTF for Africa clearly mentions the internal challenges and crises which affected the countries of the three windows of the Trust Fund. These include the political crises in Libya and Yemen, internal conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan, Mali and Nigeria (Boko Haram) and a number of terrorist attacks. These partially interlinked conflicts have turned the whole region in a crisis. The Commission recognises that the objectives of the EUTF for Africa have been kept quite flexible on purpose, in order to be able to respond to needs and emerging challenges in the three regions as needed.

57. The Commission had relevant information and took it into account when formulating the strategic objectives of the EUTF for Africa. For each objective and priority policy area, qualitative

needs assessments are featured in the Strategic Orientation document, the Regional Operational Frameworks and, to some extent, in the minutes of the Board meetings. These are complemented by country-based analyses that EU Delegations carry out on a regular basis in partnership with partner countries and in consultation with Member States and civil society.

Funding gaps are calculated based on the pipelines of programmes, which are reviewed according to needs and evolving challenges, and the availability of resources across the three windows of the Trust Fund. The Commission would be unable to cover fully the needs in partner countries with existing or forthcoming financial resources.

Since its inception, the EUTF has been able to attract considerable resources from several EU sources of funding as well as EU Member States and other donors.

Recommendation 1 – Improve the quality of the objectives of the EUTF for Africa

The Commission accepts this recommendation.

The Strategic Board of the EUTF for Africa has reviewed at each of its meetings the strategic priorities to reflect evolving needs, emerging challenges and inputs received from different stakeholders, keeping also into account the availability of financial resources. In April 2018, the Strategic Board has in fact agreed to focus on six priority criteria for HoA and SLC as indicated in the minutes of the meeting:

- Return and reintegration (IOM / UNHCR);
- Refugees management (Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework);
- Completing progress on the securitization of documents and civil registry;
- Anti-trafficking measures;
- Essential stabilization efforts in Somalia, Sudan and South-Sudan and in the Sahel;
- Migration dialogues (Gambia, Ethiopia, etc.).

For the North of Africa window, the Board confirmed that the window will continue to focus on:

- Protection of vulnerable migrants, assisted voluntary return and sustainable reintegration, and community stabilization (including through support to municipalities along migration routes);
- Support to integrated border management;
- Support to labour migration and mobility;
- Support to improved migration governance.

The pipeline of projects and funding gaps presented to the Board meeting on 21 September 2018 followed the above four priorities.

58. The EUTF for Africa does not operate on the basis of project proposals submitted by external partners. Trust Fund managers coordinate the identification and formulation of actions taking into account the agreed strategic orientations. Project ideas, received through different channels, are reviewed and discussed at different levels, in cooperation with concerned EU delegations, Member States representatives and local stakeholders as appropriate.

Only ideas that are retained are developed into action fiches to be assessed through internal review mechanisms and sent to the Operational Committee for its consideration and approval.

The Commission reiterates its commitment to provide Operational Committee members with timely and complete documentation to enable them making well-prepared decisions.

59. At the early stages of the EUTF, a number of actions submitted and approved by the OPCOM addressed similar needs to other EU instruments (e.g. Ethiopia NIP/RIP). It was considered that these actions were fully consistent with the EUTF objectives, and that their funding under the EUTF would speed up the preparatory process and their implementation, thus creating a strong comparative advantage. As a result, the OPCOM approved these actions.

In the particular case of Libya, the EUTF has ensured that no conflicts with ECHO's humanitarian mandate and with ongoing actions within IcSP occur, while filling the identified gaps in terms of protection of vulnerable persons.

Since July 2017 the Commission is using a standard template when proposing to the EDF Committee a transfer of funds to the EUTF. This template sets out the justification for using the EUTF as the implementing mechanism.

Recommendation 2 – Revise the selection procedure for projects

The Commission does not accept recommendations 2(a) and 2(b), but accepts recommendations 2(c) and 2(d).

The Commission does not consider it is necessary to establish a list of general and common criteria to be used since the EUTF is not working on the basis of submission of proposals, and the Commission will take measures to ensure that Action documents clearly explain the link between the proposed Action and the strategic objectives defined.

As indicated, actions are identified and developed by the Commission (EUTF manager) into project documents through a consultative process involving many actors at HQ and country level in line with the Commission common practices (eg. DCI and EDF committees).

The OpComs will in the future be informed of all substantial changes to projects.

The Commission will revise the template of the Action Fiche to include a section demonstrating the comparative advantage of financing the project under the EUTF vs other implementing tools.

60. Accelerated measures are widely applied within the EUTF for Africa and the Commission will examine how to extend their use.

Recommendation 3 – Take measures to speed up implementation

The Commission accepts this recommendation.

61. The Commission recognises the need to further enhance the common monitoring system. A set of 41 common output indicators has been agreed on during the second quarter of 2018 and a technical assistance has been put in place to accompany implementing partners in the improvement of logical frameworks, data collection and mapping of indicators towards the common output indicators.

The three operational windows are working to better identify specific objectives and baselines at project level, including through the work of the Research Facilities.

Recommendation 4 – Improve the monitoring of the EUTF for Africa

The Commission accepts this recommendation.

The Commission is putting in place a fully operational and common monitoring system for the EUTF for Africa. Whilst keeping the necessary flexibility, the Commission is taking measures to include SMART objectives to the possible extent in project log frames and to further improve the quality of indicators. In addition, in the framework of the future MFF, the new programme proposed "Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Neighbourhood,

Development and International Cooperation Instrument” (COM(2018) 460) foresees a special provision, Article 31, on evaluation, reporting, and monitoring.

Event	Date
Adoption of Audit Planning Memorandum (APM) / Start of audit	28.11.2017
Official sending of draft report to Commission (or other auditee)	30.7.2018
Adoption of the final report after the adversarial procedure	16.10.2018
Commission's (or other auditee's) official replies received in all languages	19.11.2018

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The European Union Emergency trust fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (the 'EUTF for Africa') is aimed at fostering stability and helping to better manage migration by addressing the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration. It supports activities in 26 countries across three regions of Africa: the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and North of Africa. Our audit examined whether the EUTF for Africa is well-designed and well-implemented. We conclude that the EUTF for Africa is a flexible tool, but considering the unprecedented challenges that it faces, its design should have been more focused. Compared to traditional instruments, the EUTF for Africa was faster in launching projects, but faced similar challenges as traditional instruments that delay their implementation. The audited projects were at an early phase but had started to produce outputs.



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