The EU Engagement in Protracted Crises: Towards a Comprehensive Approach?*

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1   This article draws on a study conducted by ECDPM on EU financing instruments for protracted crises, which will be published in Burnay, M.; Hauck, V.; Raube, K. and Deneckere, M. (forthcoming). *Does the EU have the right instruments to finance assistance in enduring crises and the needs of upper middle income countries?* Brussels: European Parliament.

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Abstract

Protracted crisis situations often last for years or decades, and derive from a complex mix of factors such as violent conflict, natural disasters, poverty, natural resources scarcity, institutional fragility, political instability, and limited economic opportunity. As they feature both emergency needs and structural vulnerabilities, protracted crises require a comprehensive approach that brings different actors and policy communities together under single political leadership, focusing on a common objective of paving the way to stability, resilience and development. This article addresses the question of whether the European Union (EU) is well positioned to respond comprehensively to such protracted crises. It explores a diversity of EU financing instruments as these are 'enablers' for the EU comprehensive approach, also taking into account the role of EU Member States. In fact, the EU has a wide array of financial instruments and mechanisms available to address protracted crises and to pursue different objectives across short – and longer-term time horizons. However, their comprehensive use is seriously constrained by the fragmentation of EU decision-making, strategic incoherence, and overlapping instrument mandates. EU institutions have made serious efforts to overcome such limitations, including through a harmonization of concepts and strategies. Furthermore, mechanisms for coordination and information exchange at the political and operational levels allow for collaborative responses. However, many of these technical solutions can only bring limited results in the absence of clear political leadership driving EU external action.

Resumo

O Empenhamento da União Europeia em Crises Estruturais: no Caminho de uma Abordagem Abrangente?

Situações de crise estrutural prolongam-se por décadas e resultam de uma combinação de fatores como conflitos violentos, desastres naturais, pobreza, escassez de recursos naturais, fragilidade institucional e limitadas oportunidades económicas. Estas crises concatenam necessidades urgentes com vulnerabilidades estruturais, requerendo uma abordagem abrangente que reúna diferentes atores e comunidades políticas sob uma única liderança, centrada num objetivo comum promotor da estabilidade, resiliência e desenvolvimento. Este artigo questiona se a União Europeia (UE) se encontra bem posicionada para responder de uma forma holística a crises estruturais, examinando de uma forma detalhada os instrumentos financeiros da UE e considerando o papel específico dos Estados-membros. Nele se observa a presença de um vasto conjunto de instrumentos e mecanismos disponíveis, que permitem à União Europeia gerir uma variedade de desafios associados às crises estruturais e prosseguir uma diversidade de objetivos, em horizontes temporais de curta e longa duração. Contudo, a sua abrangência encontra-se limitada pela fragmentação dos processos de decisão da União, pela sua incoerência estratégica e pela sobreposição de mandatos. As instituições europeias têm desenvolvido sérios esforços para ultrapassar estas limitações, incluindo a harmonização de conceitos e estratégias, de mecanismos de coordenação e a troca de informação ao nível político e operacional, permitindo o desenvolvimento de respostas colaborativas. Porém as soluções técnicas apenas geram resultados limitados, em particular na ausência de uma clara liderança política capaz de orientar a ação externa da União como um todo.

Introduction

Violent conflict, in the form of crisis and of protracted crisis[1], will continue to be a foreign and development policy challenge globally in the coming years. Because of their complicated nature and the varying length of potential intervention, protracted crises are especially challenging for the European Union (EU) and its comprehensive approach. OCHA figures have shown that the number of people relying on humanitarian aid has nearly doubled in the past ten years (OCHA, 2014), while the share of total Official Development Assistance (ODA) has doubled since 2000, from 5% then to 10% today (Maxwell, 2016). Moreover, the average length of an OCHA humanitarian appeal has now become seven years, indicating that humanitarian interventions are becoming increasingly long-term engagements. Among OECD Member States, 89 percent of total humanitarian funding is directed to protracted crises, including long-running relief programmes in countries like Sudan, Somalia or Ethiopia (Grogan, Strohmeyer, 2015).At the same time, crisis situations are often not just disruptions from the 'normal path' of development; they derive from a complex mix of factors such as violent conflict, natural disasters, poverty, natural resource scarcity, institutional fragility, political instability and limited economic opportunity, resulting in protracted crisis situations that last for years, if not decades. Most countries that are long-term recipients of humanitarian aid feature emergency needs but also structural poverty and weak state institutions that do not provide social safety nets to their citizens.[2]

Between 2000 and 2014, forced displacement has also become much longer term, on average. At the end of 2014, two-thirds of all refugees (12.9 million people) were stuck in protracted displacement situations of at least three years, and half of the refugees had been displaced for at least ten years (Crawford, Cosgrave, Haysom and Walicki, 2015). Traditionally, conceptual thinking and responses to crisis situations have taken a linear approach, where responsibilities are handed over in a sequence: from relief actors, to reconstruction and rehabilitation, and eventually to long-term development. This has led to a more comprehensive understanding of crises over the recent years, recognising also their long-term nature, their multidimensional character, and a need to address needs often simultaneously. Such protracted crises require that donors address not only urgent needs e.g. through humanitarian aid or short-term stabilisation, but also the underlying political and

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1 This paper defines protracted crises as 'complex (political) situations, usually comprising elements, or a mix, of (violent) conflict, natural disaster, poverty, scarce (natural) resources, institutional fragility and limited economic opportunity resulting in enduring or recurrent crisis, sometimes lasting years or decades.' (Bennett, 2015, p. 6; Scott, 2015).

2 Of the 30 countries categorised as long-term recipients of humanitarian aid during the past 15 years, 25 were in 2013 also classified as fragile states (Swithern, 2014).

development challenges through more structural engagement in recovery and reconstruction, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development. Such a comprehensive approach would not only meet urgent needs, but also reduce them in the long term. Comprehensiveness, in this context, means that different actors and policy communities would act under a single political leadership so that their respective actions are adding up to a common objective of paving the way to stability, resilience and development.

Drawing on a literature review and a number of interviews conducted with key stakeholders (EU officials and NGO representatives), this article asks whether the European Union is well positioned to respond comprehensively to such protracted crises. Does it have the pertinent instruments, and how does such an EU comprehensive approach materialise? We offer a detailed look into the EU financing instruments, taking into account the specific role of EU Member States as well. This is illustrated with examples of situations of (protracted) crises where the EU has engaged. The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a concise overview of the instruments that the EU has at its disposal in protracted crises, as well as their added value[3]. Section 3 offers a 'reality check' to analyse and explain the limitations and challenges that the EU is facing when putting a comprehensive approach into practice. Section 4, finally, discusses how the EU has taken technical efforts to improve comprehensiveness, despite its institutional design and political dynamics. It also points at some areas for potential improvement.

EU Instruments and Mechanisms to Engage in Protracted Crisis Situations

The EU has a variety of instruments that can be used in situations of protracted crisis. They are designed for specific policies and geographical areas, and managed by different institutional actors – notably by different Directorate--Generals in the European Commission. An overview of these instruments is given in Table 1.

Like most donors, the EU has a dedicated instrument for humanitarian aid, managed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO). It allows the EU to provide quick and short-term support to humanitarian programmes for a maximum duration of 24 months, based on annual needs assessments, and in accordance with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality.

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3   Rather than providing a full, methodological analysis of all EU instruments, it focuses on those that are important for situations of (protracted) crisis. Our focus on EU financing instruments pays limited attention to the tools and instruments in the realm of Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy, which operate according to different, more intergovernmental, governance structures.

Table 1 – Overview of EU instruments and mechanisms

Financing instrument (budget allocation for 2014-2020)	Main objective
Humanitarian Aid Instrument (EUR 7.1 billion)	Providing humanitarian aid based on annual strategies and in accordance with humanitarian principles; focuses on life-saving relief in emergencies as well in longer-lasting crises, and rehabilitation and reconstruction
Development Cooperation Instrument (EUR 19.6 billion)	Multiannual development cooperation programmes with a focus on poverty reduction and sustainable development.
Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (EUR 2.3 billion)	Non-programmable short- to medium-term operations in response to (emerging) crisis situations; programmed longer-term peacebuilding and conflict prevention interventions.
European Neighbourhood Instrument (EUR 15.4 billion)	Long-term cooperation to advance towards an area of shared prosperity and good neighbourliness in the European Neighbourhood.
Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (EUR 11.7 billion)	Provides support to (potential) candidate EU Member States in adopting the EU *acquis*, based on seven-year multiannual action programmes.
EU Trust Funds (*ad hoc* contributions from EU instruments and other donors)	Trust Funds for specific thematic priorities or crisis or post-crisis situations; function according to their own governance structures.
11th European Development Fund (EUR 30.5 billion, of which EUR 740 for the African Peace Facility	Multiannual development cooperation programmes with a focus on poverty reduction and sustainable development. Contains the Africa Peace Facility to foster peace, stability and security in Africa, providing the basis for long-term sustainable development.

For instance, it is estimated that the Syrian conflict has already left 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside the country alone. Recent OCHA figures indicated that 6.6 million Syrians are internally displaced, and more than 4.5 million were forced to flee to neighbouring countries or regions (OCHA, 2016). Through its humanitarian aid instrument, the EU has mobilised a total of EUR 445 million in 2016 to address needs inside Syria as well as of Syrian refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries (European Commission, 2016a).The mandate of EU humanitarian aid extends beyond the core humanitarian task of lifesaving operations in emergencies to also include relief to people affected by longer-lasting crises, short-term rehabilitation and reconstruction action, and disaster preparedness. For instance, while the bulk of EU humanitarian aid in 2014 responded to the most severe huma-

nitarian emergencies such as Syria, Iraq or South Sudan, 17 percent of ECHO's funding was directed to 'forgotten' protracted crises, such as the Sahrawi refugee crisis in Algeria or the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh (European Commission, COM, 2015).However, DG ECHO uses short-term planning and financing perspectives, and it confronts legal EU restrictions on the funding of local actors in beneficiary countries. This makes EU humanitarian aid not suited to provide longer-term capacity-building support and to take a structural approach to protracted crises. The EU has a number of development and international cooperation instruments available to address longer-term development and capacity-building, the most notable of which are the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the European Development Fund (EDF), the European Neighbourhood Fund (ENI), and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). While the DCI and the EDF are development instruments with a focus on poverty reduction[4], the ENI is created to help foster stability, security and prosperity in the countries surrounding the EU in the East and South (Middle East and Northern Africa, Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus). The IPA, in turn, is designed to provide support to (potential) candidate EU Member States for political, institutional, administrative, social and economic reforms to comply with EU policies and standards.

In terms of decision-making and management, the DCI and the EDF are managed by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), whereas DG NEAR (Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations) is responsible for the ENI and the IPA. EU Member States also have their say on the implementation of these instruments through the so-called 'comitology procedures', where a committee of Member State representatives is engaged before the Commission can make decisions on the financing of interventions.

The added-value of these four instruments in protracted crisis situations lies in that they provide a long-term engagement perspective with a focus on capacity-building, which allows addressing structural vulnerabilities such as weak state institutions or high youth unemployment. A recent illustration was the European Commission's decision to mobilise EUR 10 million from the IPA to strengthen response capacities of countries in the Western Balkans to cope with increased migration flows (European Commission, 2015a). In addition to the focus of the EDF and DCI

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4   The EDF provides development aid for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and to overseas countries and territories. The DCI contains geographic programmes for support in developing countries in Latin America, South Asia and North and South East Asia, Central Asia, Middle East and South Africa; and thematic programmes for support in all developing countries not eligible under the IPA. The DCI also has a Pan-African Programme to support the strategic partnership between the EU and Africa.

on poverty reduction, both instruments have a legal mandate to engage in conflict prevention and resolution, state-building and peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction in (post-)crisis or fragile contexts. A good practice in this regard is the "Pro-Resilience Action" (PRO-ACT), a programme funded under the DCI, focused on resilience-building through long-term crisis prevention and (post-)crisis response in countries affected by (protracted) crisis such as South Sudan and Lebanon.

Nevertheless, the use of long-term instruments for protracted crisis remains an exception rather than the norm.[5] Development instruments function on the basis of multi-annual programming documents that identify a set of agreed priorities, and are subject to long consultation and contracting procedures that aim to ensure country ownership, financial accountability and democratic control. Thus the instruments are not well-suited for quick and flexible responses in volatile situations, where the context of protracted crisis can change rapidly and trigger unexpected needs. The instruments' multi-annual financial and planning outlook can be a disincentive to engage in fragile environments, where stability cannot be guaranteed.

To remedy this, the long-term instruments have a number of provisions that aim at making them more flexible and responsive when needed. For example there is an option of emergency procedures in crisis situations that allows for quicker decision-making, e.g. by shortening the consultation process with Member States or allowing for direct contracting without calls for proposals. Similarly, a contingency fund is available for flexible responses not foreseen in the programming. Despite such arrangements, some Commission staff members remain cautious about applying them due to concerns over transparency and good financial management.[6] Moreover, the high political pressure on development policy to show results and 'to deliver' actually discourages taking any risks.

Beyond the traditional humanitarian and development instruments, the EU can provide quick and flexible responses to (emerging) crises beyond the humanitarian remit through its Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). The IcSP has global coverage and a broad thematic scope, ranging from peacebuilding and mediation, to support to livelihoods and economic recovery, to security sector reform and linking up with humanitarian responses. It has, for example, been used to support temporary employment programmes in the Gaza Strip, to finance security sector reform initiatives in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), or to fund demining operations in Syria (to establish humanitarian access in conflict-affected zones). As such, the IcSP is a very flexible instrument that allows the EU to engage in a very broad range of crisis situations. While the bulk of the resources are used

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5   Interview with NGO representative, 15 April 2016.
6   Interviews with EU officials.

for short-term crisis response, nine percent of the total funding is reserved for longer-term support to peacebuilding, with a focus on civil society. The instrument is managed by the European Commission's service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI). FPI adopts measures after consultation with the Political and Security Committee (where EU Member States gather at ambassadorial level), which gives the financing decisions a strong political backing.

In the domain of security, EU Member States have almost fully retained their sovereignty, and instruments housed in the European Commission face both legal and political limitations to engage in security activities that have a military or defence dimension. While the EU provides a framework for civilian and military crisis management operations (under the so-called 'Common Security and Defence Policy'), such operations require consensus among the 28 Member States, and there is limited involvement of the European Commission in their implementation. That said, the Commission manages the African Peace Facility (APF), which is funded under the EDF, and managed specifically by DG DEVCO. Upon request of the African Union or of an African Regional Economic Community, the APF can provide support to both short-term Peace Support Operations (representing 90 percent of the APF resources, most of which is used for troop stipends to the African Union-led operation AMISOM in Somalia), and institutional capacity-building to the African Peace and Security Architecture[7], following the logic of 'African solutions to African problems'. The APF can only provide funding to the AU and the AU Commission, or to African regional organisations. Through the APF, the EU cannot engage directly with armed forces at the country level. To fill this gap, the European Commission recently proposed to amend the IcSP so it could also provide support to the military of countries under certain circumstances (European Commission, 2016, COM 447 final). Yet this proposal, which is yet to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council at the time of writing, is likely to be both politically and legally contentious, as it would extend the European Commission's influence in the security sphere, which is traditionally considered to be within Member States' remit. In addition, it raises concerns over the so-called 'securitization' of development cooperation funds.

The most recent innovation in the EU's portfolio is that the European Commission can establish – since the adoption of the 2013 EU Financial regulation (European Commission, 2013) – EU Trust Funds to address post-crisis situations. Since the

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7 The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) comprises a set of structures and decision-making processes to implement a comprehensive peace and security agenda in Africa, including through early warning and conflict prevention, peace support operations, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. The main pillar of the APSA is the Peace and Security Council, which is supported by the African Union Commission, the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System, the African Standby Force and the Peace Fund.

introduction of this funding mechanism, several EU Trust Funds have been established to address the crisis in the Central African Republic (Bêkou Fund), to provide a regional response to the Syrian crisis (Madad Fund), and to address the root causes of irregular migration in Africa (Emergency Trust Fund for Africa). EU Trust Funds bring several advantages. First, they allow the Commission to pool resources from different financing instruments under a single management structure. The Madad Fund, for example, allows to provide support under one framework in Syria's neighbouring countries, where otherwise three different instruments would have to be mobilised separately.[8] Second, EU Trust Funds are open for other donors to contribute (notably Member States), which allows for donor coordination and risk-sharing. Third, because EU Trust Funds have their own decision-making and management procedures, with no consultation on financing decisions through comitology procedures with all EU Member States or involvement of the European Parliament, they allow for a quicker and more flexible response.[9]

In summary, the EU has a wide array of funding instruments and mechanisms at its disposal. This comprises the ability to provide lifesaving relief to people in urgent needs, support stability and security, reduce poverty and promote economic and human development, and prevent future crisis or conflict. Overall, it allows the EU to address a variety of challenges associated with protracted crises across different short- and longer-term time horizons.

From Theory to Practice: Fragmentation and Policy Incoherence

While the diversity of EU financing instruments and mechanisms allows to develop a comprehensive engagement in protracted crises, in practice, it faces several limitations and challenges as instruments do not always succeed in pursuing jointly-agreed objectives, or they simply fail to link up. This section will explore how the institutional and political organisation of the EU, including the dichotomy between the EU institutions and the Member States, contributes to a fragmentation of decision-making and policy incoherence.

Fragmented Political Leadership and Dispersed Governance of EU Instruments

First and foremost, EU external action is characterised by a fragmented political leadership, with different Directorates-General (DGs) in the Commission and different commissioners responsible for development cooperation, humanitarian aid,

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8   The ENI for Lebanon, the IPA for Turkey and the DCI for Iraq.
9   Comitology rules apply for the creation and extension of EU Trust Funds, as well as their liquidation through EU budget resources. Financing decisions taken under the Trust Funds are taken in accordance with the Trust Funds' own decision-making rules (D'Alfonso and Immenkamp, 2015).

and neighbourhood policy —–although all external action commissioners now regularly meet under the 'Stronger Global Actor' project team. Moreover, Member States tightly retain their political control over the security domain, which is not properly reflected in the governance of Commission-led financing instruments. With different instruments managed by separate DGs (DEVCO, NEAR, ECHO and the service FPI), coordination requirements are very high, and a coherent mobilisation of instruments in crisis situations cannot always be realised. There is institutional space for DGs to simply operate in parallel because of a dispersed system of governance without unified leadership on top. Moreover, the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU's diplomatic service, occupies a hybrid position: autonomous from the Commission but 'a service' and not properly an institution. The EEAS is nevertheless tasked with the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and supports and coordinates aspects of wider EU external action.

In addition, EU comprehensiveness cannot ignore the Member States. They help shape the responses under the EU instruments (e.g. through comitology consultations or Trust Fund boards) and as such may bring their own political priorities to the table. Moreover, Member States also have their own tools to address protracted crises, ranging from development funds to military engagement, and often have developed their own versions of a comprehensive approach, with various degrees of integration (Hauck and Rocca, 2014). The implementation of the IcSP is a case in point of dispersed EU governance, with implementation run in the Commission's FPI and notably counting on staff in EU Delegations (which are part of the EEAS), while also involving Member States in the process (through the Political and Security Committee). As the IcSP is designed for relatively small, short-term interventions, particular coordination efforts are already required during the design phase to ensure a sustainable follow-up by other, more long-term instruments. However, evaluations have found out that complementarities with other EU initiatives are often missing; the reasons range from the lack of long-term development funding available at the right time, to the little attention that the IcSP receives from non-FPI staff at the EU Delegations. This reduces the opportunity for coordination and linkages so the IcSP can feed into broader EU initiatives in a given country (e.g. Italtrend C&T, Office for Economic Policy and Regional Development (EPRD), Social Capital Bank, 2014). FPI cannot guarantee coherent follow-up under other instruments either, because these are beyond its control. This illustrates how the EU can fail to provide a coherent response to a protracted crisis situation because of the fragmented structures and competencies in which decisions are taken.

Strategic (in)Coherence at Regional, Country and Global Levels

In several contexts, the EU has gone to great lengths to develop a coherent strategic framework at regional, country and even global level guiding EU external

action, across instruments. Nevertheless, many of these have been important efforts 'in theory' that face difficulties to actually be put 'in practice'. The EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel is an example of a *regional* EU strategy that has contributed to relevant successes in applying a comprehensive approach in a region marked by recurrent conflict and state fragility. For example, the strategy contributed to comprehensiveness by creating mechanisms to coordinate between EU stakeholders in response to the Mali crisis that emerged in 2012 following the resurgence of the Touareg rebellion and the coup in March 2012 (Helly and Galeazzi, 2015). Subsequent Regional Action Plans have engaged colleagues from both the EEAS and different Commission DGs, which has helped build a comprehensive approach in the Sahel, with agreement on certain priorities and identification of instruments to fulfil them. But such a document may involve 'incoherence' beyond the EU, because 'the Sahel' as a region is composed of five countries for the EU (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Mauritania) and leaves out for example Senegal, which is considered 'Sahelian' by other international actors. Moreover, the Sahel regional strategy is not always aligned with all aspects of the EU comprehensive approach. For example, the EU also crafts policy in this region with ECOWAS as a strategic interlocutor and recipient, but Chad is not part of ECOWAS while the other four countries (together with others in West Africa) are.

The EU has not always been able to reach the successes of the Sahel strategy in other regions or countries affected by protracted crises. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is an example of insufficient strategy at *country* level. An evaluation recently found that the EU's Security Sector Reform efforts in the framework of the CSDP and later the EDF had only limited impact in the DRC, because they were designed 'from Brussels' with little knowledge of the country situation, and not embedded in a wider strategy that also took into account broader questions of governance, inclusion of civil society, human rights protection and accountability of the armed forces. The EU's efforts were also found to be insufficiently combined with political dialogue to put pressure on the Congolese government to implement its commitments (EurAc, 2016). Having a more comprehensive strategy in place, based on a good analysis of the country's political and conflict context, could have contributed to a more coherent mobilisation of EU instruments, taking into account the different interrelated challenges. The EU institutions are establishing cycles and documents of 'joint programming' and joint assessment in this regard [see section 4 below], which could serve as a more coherent basis both at broader strategic planning and field implementation.

At a *global* level, a new EU Global Strategy has been presented by the High Representative in June 2016, intended to support 'the materialisation of an EU compre-

hensive approach'[10]. This document identifies as EU priorities both the promotion of resilience and the need to address all the stages in the conflict cycle (as two out of five priorities). While the policy guidance is stated broadly, the prioritisation of resilience and a whole-of-cycle view of conflict offer a hook, and a root, for applying an EU comprehensive approach when addressing protracted crises, and as such provide backing for a more strategically coherent use of EU instruments at the country and regional levels. However, it remains to be seen which tools and mechanisms will be used to put this document into practice, notably regarding the combination of civilian and military EU action.

Different Policy Communities, Diverging Principles and Incentives
The fragmentation of decision-making and management structures is itself a reflection of the reality that the various financing instruments serve different objectives and constituents. The principles are sometimes in contradiction with each other, and with the needs in situations of protracted crisis. For instance, development aid follows the principles of local ownership and alignment with country priorities, as laid out in the Aid Effectiveness Agenda. The result is that development aid functions on the basis of slow and continuous processes of consultation and dialogue with beneficiary countries on programming and financing. This cannot be easily reconciled with the need for quick and flexible responses in volatile contexts of protracted crisis. These principles are firmly rooted within the development community's culture, including the staff at DG DEVCO managing the EU's development instruments. Given DEVCO's focus on development and poverty reduction, the adherence to the Aid Effectiveness principles creates disincentives to prioritise crisis-response concerns about quick and flexible action. As a consequence, DEVCO staff is often hesitant to use flexibility arrangements even when these are legally provided for (e.g. the EU's emergency procedures mentioned in Section 2).[11]
A related question subject to much debate is how to better link humanitarian relief with long-term development. The aid effectiveness principles recognise a central role for beneficiaries in determining how aid is being used, but this is not always easily reconcilable with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality, especially when a situation of violent conflict involves government authorities. Within the humanitarian community, there are fears that a too-close integration with the development agenda might risk an instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid for strategic or political purposes, which in the worst case could put the humanitarian worker in danger if he or she is no longer perceived as neutral. The withdrawal of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) from the preparation

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10   Interview with official.
11   Interview with European Commission official, 7 March 2016.

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process of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, where the issue of better linking humanitarian and development aid was a prominent theme on the agenda, is a good illustration of the concerns that exist within the humanitarian community (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2016). A final illustration of contradicting principles and approaches relates to collaboration with local civil society organisations (CSOs). While there is increasing recognition at the political level of the importance of strengthening civil society in building resilient, inclusive and stable societies,[12] supporting CSOs often raises concerns, not only over issues related to sound and transparent financial management, but also over their independence and neutrality in situations of (emerging) conflict or political tensions. Such diverging positions can have an impact on the extent to which, e.g. humanitarian action can be properly linked with actions of a more political nature.

In general, the institutional fragmentation at EU-level is both a reflection of, and a contributor to thinking in silos, where different professional mandates and incentives across institutions pose serious constraints to the creation of a shared understanding and more coherent responses to protracted crises.

Overlapping Mandates and Functions Across New Instruments

A final critique relates to the positioning of the IcSP and the Trust Funds in the overall EU crisis response system, as examples of instruments that seek to cover some gaps but may have negative 'side-effects', such as overlap, reduced accountability, and blurry political lines. As the Commission has the exclusive responsibility among EU institutions for managing operational funding under the EU budget, it is the Commission, through FPI, who has financial authority over the IcSP. At the same time, FPI is physically housed within the European External Action Service (EEAS) premises, which facilitates EEAS involvement in the preparation and implementation of this essentially political instrument.

This hybrid position of the IcSP leads to different interpretations on the ultimate nature and purpose of the instrument. Some within the EU institutions view the IcSP as an auxiliary instrument available to the EEAS and the Political and Security Committee (officially, a body within the Council of the EU) to respond to urgent political requests in crisis situations, independently from what other instruments are doing. Others, however, rather stress the function of the IcSP in filling gaps where other EU (development) instruments are not (yet) mobilised and pave the way to longer-term development engagements. The broad mandate and the flexibility of this instrument can have advantages, but it risks not being optimally used

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12 See e.g. the discussion on the localisation of humanitarian aid, United Nations, 2016. *One humanity: shared responsibility. Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit.* UNGA Seventieth session.

in the absence of a clear political priority-setting and fragmented leadership on EU external action.

Finally, the establishment of the EU Trust Funds risks creating overlaps in mandates with other instruments. This is particularly the case for the IcSP, which also has a focus on emergency response extending into the security-development nexus sphere (even if Trust Funds have a country or regional scope, whereas the IcSP can be used worldwide). While a degree of thematic overlap is not problematic per se (as it gives some flexibility in where to mobilise resources), it does raise questions on how to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity. Given that the IcSP has political backing from all Member States at ambassadorial level through the Political and Security Committee, it has a strong political basis. By contrast, the EU Trust Funds have less political foundation, and are not agreed by all EU Member States. Despite drawing significantly on EU budget resources, decisions under the EU Trust Funds are not subject to the regular Member State consultation processes (comitology) that apply to the EU financing instruments otherwise. Instead, only donors (next to the European Commission) that have directly contributed a minimum of EUR 3 million to the Trust Fund (in addition to the EU contributions) have a vote in the Trust Funds Boards and Operational Committees, and can therefore decide on the overall strategy and financing measures. This gives a say to Trust Fund-contributing countries and to the Commission, whereas EU countries not contributing to the Fund are left out. Moreover, the creation and management of EU Trust Funds are not based on a democratic debate in the European Parliament, and the role that the EEAS plays in taking decisions (beyond its representation in the Trust Fund Committees) remains rather unclear. Finally, partner country governments are involved in decision-making to varying degrees. In the case of the Bêkou Fund, the transitional government of the Central African Republic was involved in the creation of the Trust Fund, and while they have no formal voting rights in the Board, they are fully consulted for major decisions. The Madad Fund, however, does not involve partner countries' governments in decision-making and programming, with implications for ownership (Hauck, Knoll and Cangas, 2015). Nevertheless, EU Trust Funds are still relatively new, and there is limited information available on how they relate to other instruments (such as the IcSP) in practice. How they could potentially be further delineated is an area that clearly requires further attention.

To sum up, this section has revealed that, despite the wide variety of instruments, the EU faces certain limitations and challenges in establishing a comprehensive response to protracted crises. The main risks in going 'from theory to practice' remain fragmentation and incoherence in EU policy-making, which is reflected in – and also fed by – the financial instruments. In fact, the instruments are so central to EU policy-making that they sometimes *drive* policy as 'enablers' of EU action,

while they should instead be driven by political leadership. But as this section has argued, this is sometimes disperse, contradictory, or even missing.

Reaching Comprehensiveness in a Complex World

The EU has made serious efforts to establish and improve comprehensiveness in its instrument-driven approach to protracted crises and overcome the associated limitations. Nevertheless, there are clear challenges to making the EU external action more comprehensive, as we highlight in this section.

There have been attempts to improve comprehensiveness at the highest political level. The Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in December 2009, introduced the post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, whose mandate includes ensuring the consistency of EU external action, a task in which he or she is supported by the EEAS. The High Representative (a post currently held by Ms Federica Mogherini) also serves as Vice-President of the European Commission and, in that capacity, chairs the project team 'A Stronger Global Actor', which provides a forum to the different European commissioners that have portfolios related to EU external action to coordinate their activities. However, the project team has only recently been established (when the Juncker Commission entered office in 2014), and there is so far little evidence available as to how it successfully contributes to more political leadership and comprehensive action.

High Representative Mogherini has also taken the lead over the preparation of a 'Global Strategy for the EU's foreign and security policy (European Union, 2016), as mentioned above. This document replaces the 2003 European Security Strategy, but takes a much wider scope by providing guidance for all dimensions of EU external action, including by formulating an integrated approach to conflicts and crises. As such, the document, which was welcomed during the European Council meeting in June 2016, provides a potentially useful framework for a more comprehensive engagement in crisis situations. It remains to be seen to what extent it will enjoy political sponsorship across the EU institutions, and whether a follow-up sectorial document on security and defence would offer more hints as to how the EU could address protracted crisis.

Within the EU system, both formal coordination and information exchange mechanisms have been set up to foster collective responses to crisis situations. This notably includes the establishment of the EEAS Crisis Response System. When activated, it allows the EEAS to convene on an *ad hoc* basis so-called Crisis Platforms to coordinate amongst a range of relevant bodies across the EU system on political and strategic matters in response to a particular crisis. However, while the Crisis Platforms aim to improve comprehensiveness, they have in some cases themselves fell victim to the fragmentation of the EU system. For instance, DG ECHO, the EU's humanitarian aid and civil protection office, manages its own Emergency Response

Coordination Centre, acting as the operational coordination hub of the EU civil protection mechanism for responses in- or outside Europe. A similar example regards the EU Trust Funds, which also have a role in coordinating EU efforts, with the Commission taking the lead. Without proper political guidance and leadership, this proliferation of parallel coordination bodies risks duplicating efforts and even creating turf wars, rather than solving them.

Despite such formal coordination mechanisms, a high degree of information exchange and coordination also happens through informal contacts. While this makes effective coordination dependent on good personal relations among staff members, it has the benefit of allowing some flexibility and swiftness, which is particularly valued in crisis situations. Indeed, while a certain systematisation of coordination and information exchange are needed, the EU must also avoid over-bureaucratising the processes to allow for meaningful dialogues across the institutions.

At country level, the EU aims to foster EU-wide strategising and programming. The concept of 'EU Joint Framework Documents' (JFD) is a case in point. JFDs are strategic documents that aim to integrate all dimensions of EU external action and outline EU interests and priorities in given countries or regions. These then provide a solid basis for better aligned programming of the various EU instruments in a country or region. However, research has found that JFDs in the past tended to focus more on short-term crisis management priorities, rather than on longer-term development objectives, and therefore failed to provide a useful basis for the programming of all EU instruments so that they would be able to address the various dimensions of (protracted) crisis in a more comprehensive way (Herrero, Knoll, Gregersen and Kokolo, 2015). Nevertheless, as Herrero *et al.* note, they may still shape a promising avenue in more coherent programming exercises in protracted crisis situations in the future, provided that the JFDs formulate a perspective beyond the short-term political, economic and security interests of the EU.

In a similar vein, the European Commission has provided guidance for the development of Joint Humanitarian-Development Frameworks (JHDFs) to guide transition processes out of crisis situations (Ramet, 2012). JHDFs have the aim of integrating different EU interventions across the crisis cycle, with involvement of ECHO, FPI, DEVCO and the EEAS, as well as Member States to jointly engage in conflict analysis and coordinate activities. JHDFs offer a light and flexible coordination tool, but there is currently no clarity on the leadership over JHDF processes, leaving the development and use of such frameworks dependent on individual initiatives.[13]

Beyond immediate crisis situations, Joint Programming has been used by EU institutions and Member States as a process to jointly determine a development response

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13 Interview with European Commission official, 11 March 2016.

for a particular partner country. This could particularly be beneficial in fragile contexts, and has already been successfully applied in volatile countries such as South Sudan, Haiti or Mali to better harmonise EU and Member States efforts at promoting development and reducing poverty and hunger in environments where state capacities are weak (Helly, Galeazzi, Parshotam, Gregersen, Kokolo and Sherriff, 2015). An important issue in protracted crises relates to ensuring that EU interventions across the crisis cycle take into account local political and conflict dynamics. Therefore, several EU bodies have established expertise hubs on conflict and crisis that are tasked with expanding the EU's understanding of conflict and that promote the mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity. Following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the adoption of the New Deal for Engagement with Fragile States and Situations, DG DEVCO established a Fragility and Crisis Management Unit (recently rebranded as Fragility and Resilience Unit). The institutional counterpart to this Unit in the EEAS, is the Conflict prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Division (also known as SECPOL 2), which provides expertise for engaging in conflict-affected situations. SECPOL 2 also facilitates early warning across EU institutions, allowing for regular reassessments of crisis situations to inform longer-term outlooks to (post-)crisis situations. The DEVCO Fragility Unit and SECPOL 2 (then still known as the K2 Division) have collaborated on the development of a joint conflict assessment guidance. More recently, the Fragility Unit has developed guidance on conflict-sensitivity in EU interventions and sought to ensure coherence between EU instruments and policies when engaging in fragile and crisis-hit situations. The Unit also leads training workshops on conflict- and fragility-related topics for EU staff across the system.

While such tools are valued, strong guidance and direction on how and when to use them is often missions, and the extent to which they influence implementation still depends on individual commitments of staff members and leadership in other DGs and EEAS Divisions. Consequently, this only resolves differences in mandates and biases among EU bodies to a limited extent. Other measures to boost crisis- and conflict-related expertise could involve increasing staff mobility across DGs and creating knowledge management and information-exchange tools shared by the Commission, the EEAS (including EU Delegations) and CSDP missions at Brussels level and in the field (Anthony and Lundin, 2015). The EU Delegations constitute indeed a crucial strategic asset to achieve comprehensiveness on the ground. As representations of the Union as a whole (rather than single EU institutions)[14], Delegations can act as a local coordinator between EU bodies and Member States in a given country or crisis situation, including in programming and implementation

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14 EU Delegations representing the whole Union were introduced with the Lisbon Treaty. They replaced the former European Commission Delegations, which had a less political mandate.

processes (Helly, Herrero, Knoll, Galeazzi and Sherriff, 2014). Furthermore, Delegations now also have responsibilities in the field of peace and security (Helly and Galeazzi, 2014). Especially the political sections of the Delegations can play an important role in feeding knowledge on a country's political and security situation in development instrument strategies and programming, thus promoting a more context-driven and conflict-sensitive approach. However, limited expertise and resources available to EU Delegations have limited the extent to which they can perform such tasks (European Union External Action, 2013). Much also depends on the personality of the Head of Delegation and how he or she views his or her role in promoting a culture of collaboration and comprehensiveness across the Union through regular engagement with other EU actors in the field (e.g. by inviting Heads of ECHO field offices to the weekly coordination meetings at the Delegations).

In sum, progress has been made in providing solutions to improve comprehensiveness in the complex institutional environment of the EU. Steps have been made through a harmonisation of concepts and strategies and through the creation of mechanisms for coordination and information exchange at both the political and operational levels. These efforts have often proven promising avenues towards more comprehensiveness and could be used more systematically. However, such technical solutions for coordination and comprehensiveness will continue to face limitations in the absence of clear political guidance bringing all pieces together.

Concluding Remarks

The EU is a complex environment, with many institutions and 28 Member States involved. The EU institutions have a diverse set of instruments and mechanisms available that allow it to simultaneously address the many challenges associated with protracted crises, including saving lives, ending conflict, restoring peace and security, reducing poverty and hunger and preventing future crises. However, the financing instruments designed to achieve these goals are fragmented and do not always complement each other. This is a reflection of the EU institutional environment, and of the procedures and the politics in this environment. In such a context, it has been acknowledged that a comprehensive approach was needed: much has been done to harmonize concepts and strategies, and it is already being implemented (to a certain degree). There have been serious efforts to improve comprehensiveness in EU responses to protracted crises, although these remain suboptimal or underexplored due to the absence of clear EU political leadership.

Moreover, we would emphasise that coordination and coherence are not an end in themselves, but a means for the EU to address the real challenges of humanitarian and protracted crisis, and of peace and economic development in the long term.

The comprehensive approach itself is a tool at the service of the goals, to achieve more united EU external action and more impact. As an institution, the EU invests much energy and resources in coordination, yet it is important that it does not get lost in the process and continues to focus on the goals.

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